Chrmn. Smith called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

**1. ROLL CALL**

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Sam Bergami, Bill Bevan, Alberta Jagoe, John Mager, Sharon Marrone, Richard Smith

NOT PRESENT: David Rubinstein

ALSO PRESENT:Police Chief Mello; Deputy Chief Rojee; Capt. DelMonte, D. Candido, Secty.

A quorum was present to conduct the business of the meeting.

Prior to the items on the agenda, Chief Mello took the opportunity to encourage anyone who is looking for information regarding activity involving our Department to refer to the Department’s social media sites where information is available. He added information is posted in real time and the public is encouraged to subscribe to these various sites. He also noted this information is reviewed carefully as to not taint a prosecution or investigation.

**2. CONSIDERATION OF APPOINTMENTS** - none

**3. CITIZEN COMMENTS** – available via social media

**4**. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS**

It was moved by Vice Chrmn. Bergami and seconded by Comm**.** Mager to approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting of September 12, 2022 as presented.

Chrmn. Smith referred to Chief Mello’s comments at that meeting regarding the graduation for the current cadets and asked when the graduation would be.

Chief Mello stated it is scheduled for December 15th and invitations would be sent to the commissioners in the near future.

Chrmn. Smith noted the minutes noted graduation would be in the spring.

Vice Chrmn. Bergami and Comm. Mager amended their motion to accept the minutes of September 12, 2022 noting the correction regarding the graduation.

Motion carried unanimously.

**5. Consideration of Chief on Matters of Administration**

a. Donation – gift cards from Mike Krom - Chief Mello asked that the two $25 Dunkin Donut Gift Cards be placed in the Officer Wellness Account.

It was moved by Comm. Mager and seconded by Comm. Marrone to approve the donation of gift cards from Mike Krom and place them in the Officer Wellness Account as recommended by Chief Mello.

Chief Mello explained President Obama put funding into Officer Wellness, President Biden had also done the same and here in CT. Gov. Lamont has done the same. He referred to recent incident when officers were at a site on Bridgeport Avenue for several days and that was when the Officer Wellness Account was used to provide them water, etc. while on duty for an extended period of time.

Motion carried unanimously.

b. Donation of gift cards from JFK School.- Chief Mello explained Christine Fuller, teacher at Kennedy School who oversees the Safety Patrol program at the school raised money to purchase three Starbuck Gift Cards totaling $75 and he recommended the gift cards be placed in the Officer Wellness Account.

It was moved by Comm. Jagoe and seconded by Comm. Bevan to approve the donation of gift cards from JFK School and place them in the Officer Wellness Account as recommended by Chief Mello.

Motion carried unanimously.

c. Donation to K9 Account – from Mr. & Mrs.Tom Craig. Chief Mello recommended the donation be accepted and placed in the K-9 Account to be used in the future for a purchase of a K9.

It was moved by Comm. Mager and seconded by Comm. Marrone to approve the donation from Mr. & Mrs. Tom Craig and place in the K-9 Account for purchase of a K-9 in the future as recommended by Chief Mello.

Comm. Mager asked what the cost of a new K-9 was and he was told $8-9,000 and all previous acquisitions of K-9’s have been through donation and not use of city funds. Comm Mager asked how many dogs do we have and Chief Mello explained the Department is about to embark on an emotional support program and that dog and assigned officer should be operational after the 1st of the year. He added at that time the Department will go to 3 support dogs and 1 emotional support dog.

Chief further explained the Department is aggressively pursuing a program that deals with people in crisis. He noted as soon as the program is refined and details are finalized he will report further to the Commission.

Motion carried unanimously.

d. Donation of dog blankets and Milk Bone Treats for K-9 Unit by M. DeVenero-Reichardt. Chief Mello stated donations had been accepted and given to officers for their K-9.

It was moved by Comm. Mager and seconded by Comm. Bevan to accept the donation of dog blankets and Milk Bone Treats for K-9 Unit by M. DeVenero-Reichardt. Motion carried unanimously.

e. Suggested meeting dates for Police - Commission Meetings for 2023. It was moved by Comm Mager and seconded by Vice Chrmn. Bergami to approve the meeting dates for Police Commission Meetings for 2023 as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

f. Chief’s General Comments

* Chief Mello reported that the Department had 95% participation for the funeral services of the 2 Bristol Police officers who were killed in an ambush style attack. He stated the services were held in Rentschler Field in E. Hartford and those officers who attended did so using their own time. He added Mayor Blake and City Attorney Berchem joined the Department and they were all seated together. Chief Mello noted he received many comments about the number of people from Milford including members of our current recruit class. Chief Mello stated the Department shared a social media tribute to the officers who attended and our city leaders.
* Chief Mello stated on December 15, 2022, 55 recruits from various towns, 10 of our own, will be graduating. He also noted they have started recruiting for next year and it is going as well as can be expected in this environment which is poor. He explained the new plan which includes doing rolling testing and he explained as we get a pool of applicants, every month the testing process is put in place and bring the applicants on so hopefully we do not lose them to other departments.
* Chief Mello reported a number of officers are out on long term injuries and two are out following recent surgeries. He noted at this time we are entering into post-summer when activity slows down a bit but then it gets busy again nearer the holidays. Chief Mello stated they are seeing a lot of car thefts and catalytic converter thefts. He stated it is important that the officers make those out for holiday shopping have a safe experience.

Discussion ensued regarding the sale of those stolen catalytic converters.

Comm. Jagoe took the opportunity to thank Chief Mello and compliment him on the letter he published regarding the Bristol tragedy.

**6. Report on Planning and Zoning Requests**

a. Site Plan Warehouse & Parking Lot expansion – 497 Bic Drive - it was moved by Vice Chrmn. Bergami and seconded by Comm. Mager to approve Traffic Division recommendation regarding Site Plan Warehouse & Parking Lot expansion – 497 Bic Drive.

Chrmn. Smith noted that the Commission’s concerns with regard to these requests is primarily about sight lines and Chief Mello added sight lines, traffic or potential safety hazard.

Motion carried unanimously.

Chrmn. Smith noted that although it was not pertinent to the P & Z requests, he questioned why Correspondence was no longer on the agenda and he noted it was nice to hear from people who shared comments in personal notes.

Chief Mello explained in recent times, such comments, correspondence has been received virtually.

b. Special Permit for Service Center Expansion – 470 Boston Post Rd. – It was moved by Comm. Mager and seconded by Comm. Bevan to approve Traffic Division recommendation regarding Special Permit for Service Center Expansion. Motion carried unanimously.

**7. ACCEPTANCE OF REPORTS**

It was moved by Vice Chrmn. Bergami and seconded by Comm. Jagoe to approve the following

reports:

a. Special Investigations Unit Report

b. Detective Bureau Report

c. Crime Prevention Unit Report

d. Traffic Division and Licensing Unit Report

Motion carried unanimously.

**8. UNFINISHED BUSINESS** - none

**9. NEW BUSINESS - none**

**10. COMMENDATIONS** –

Deputy Chief Rojee stated item a would be removed from the agenda:

a. Letter in File – Off. Paul Mazzara, Off. Joanna Salati.

b. Letter of Recognition – Off. David Bodnar, Off. Paige Bodnar, case 3964-21. 7/24/21 Incident when patrol officers responded to home for homicide and when they arrived it was learned the suspect fled. Further, it was noted several hours later Off. Paige Bodnar was assigned to dispatch and located the suspect and subsequently engaged in a phone conversation with that individual, developed a rapport and was able to make an emotional connection. It was explained that through this conversation the suspect was located in Stamford and when local officers there located him unfortunately he had taken his life. Deputy Chief Rojee stated he was in the dispatch area while Off. Bodnar was in conversation with the individual and it was evident that her rapport and conversation prevented any further violence to occur. He explained there is a process in place to hand such a situation off to an officer who is trained in such circumstances; however, he was present during the conversation and felt that Off. Bodnar was doing an excellent job and he did not feel the matter should be turned over to someone else.

c. Meritorious Service Medal – Off. Kevin Hilliard – case #3661-21. Also in July 2021, based on an incident at JFK School with regard to a female suspect who had made comments about suicide to a friend during a phone conversation. The call was tracked and patrol officer and his K-9 went to Mondo Ponds where he heard a female crying and she was approaching chin-deep water. The officer secured his dog and tied the dog to a tree for safety and dragged the female back to safety. She was transported to the hospital for the care she needed.

Chrmn. Smith asked when and how do our social workers get involved in this type of case.

Chief Mello explained the Department has 2 social workers and they work on the day shift only. It is their role to connect people with appropriate services and if it is during their working hours, do go to a scene if the scene is safe and their skills can help. With regard to this incident previously explained, this is not something they would get involved in. He added police officers have a lot of experience dealing with people in an emotional state.

Chief Mello referred to a presentation given to the Commission a few years ago and at that time discussed what the model would look like. He added if this service should be developed further, he would certainly see to it that information is brought to the Commission. He added there is a lot of data at this time but when you talk to the officers, it is felt this service has provided a higher level of service. He stated in terms of data it will be difficult to quantify more responsibility and additional cost. He felt it would be best to wait until the 2-year period is over and determine what can be quantified and what can be measured.

Chrmn. Smith felt we have officers dealing with issues that social workers are more qualified to handle.

Chief Mello again stated our Department only has 2 social workers, our program allows for social workers to follow up and bring in other social service agencies if necessary. He added we are dealing with at-risk groups and certainly if something occurs during the day shifts we would use their assistance. He explained critical incident teams which are going to be trained officers and considered Critical Incident Specialists will be best trained for this and skilled to be called into such a call.

Comm. Mager stated he supports the use of social workers but his concern is that we are becoming a social agency as opposed to a police agency. He noted, for example, the homeless population where social workers go and talk with them and offer advice. But with the recent incident on Bridgeport Avenue, it is important to know what the Department can do to protect the public.

Chrmn. Smith stated the whole idea of social work within a police agency is that we had officers dealing with calls that they should not be dealing with. He asked if these incidents are being monitored through the Police Dept. or the city’s Human Services.

Chief Mello explained the Department does have social services funded by the city and the state. He noted it is important that the Department has services available in real time; for example when we talk about homelessness, we have had a number of incidents that require police response but we do not know that until the officer arrives at the scene. He explained we have social workers that can work hand in hand with other social services who are not going to be available and it is that gap we are trying to fill. He stated it is a better quality of public safety response and it is important to have someone on staff who can triage those circumstances for us. Chief Mello stated it is felt having the social workers employed by the Department makes sense because of the reporting systems and policy in place.

Comm. Mager referred to other incidents such as when DCF is called in and no action takes place until a court date is set.

d. Unit Citation – Off. John Ballard, Sgt. John Binkowski, Off. Steven Carney and Dispatcher Natalia Rivera – case #2232-22 – Deputy Chief Rojee explained this incident occurred on Housatonic Drive and involved a domestic violence issue that escalated into a shooting. He stated Off. Carney was 1st on the scene, obtained information, eventually found the suspect outside the residence, The other officers were able to take the suspect into custody. It was noted Dispatcher Rivera dealt with the chaotic number of 911 calls regarding the incident and she did an excellent job getting the necessary information to the officers. Deputy Chief Rojee stated it was an excellent display of team work.

**11. EXECUTIVE SESSION** – **Consideration of Report of Chief of Police on matters concerning the Appointment, Employment, Performance, Evaluation, Health, or Dismissal of Department Employees**

**It was moved by Vice Chrmn. Bergami and seconded by Comm. Jagoe to adjourn to executive session at 7:45 p.m. with regard to the following:**

a. 3rd Quarter Probationary status of 8 Officers

Motion carried unanimously. (Commissioners present, Chief Mello and Deputy Chief Rojee remained for Executive Session).

It was moved by Comm. Mager and Vice Chrmn. Bergami to reconvene in public session at 8:07 p.m. with no further actions. Motion carried unanimously.

Being no further business to discuss, it was moved by Comm. Mager and seconded by Vice Chrmn. Bergami to adjourn at 8:07 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.

Recorded by Diane Candido

Submitted to City Clerk: November 16, 2022