Chairman Smith called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.

**1. ROLL CALL**

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

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

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

**2. CONSIDERATION OF APPOINTMENTS** - none

**3. CITIZEN COMMENTS** – none

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

It was moved by Comm. Mager and seconded by Vice Chrmn. Bergami to approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting of September 13, 2021 as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

**5. READING OF CORRESPONDENCE**

* Attny. Tom Lynch, Milford – expressed gratitude for the efforts of Officer Bodnar with regard to an incident occurring 9/10/2021 when Attny. Lynch parked his car in lot at a local gas station/convenience store and left his keys in the center console. While he was in the store, his car was stolen, Officer Bodnar was dispatched and took statement from Attny. Lynch and advised him to contact Mercedes Benz as they have a GPS tracking system for the vehicle. He noted that a short while later the car was located. He thanked Officer Bodnar for her professionalism, adding she is an excellent example of our department’s staff under the direction of Chief Mello.
* Ridgefield Police Dept. – thanking Capt. DelMonte for his participation and sitting on recent oral board.

Chief Mello stated that the amount of correspondence received through the mail is minimal as most people are sharing such correspondence via social media. He stated in the future he will include items for the record and explained members can read the correspondence at their leisure by logging into various social media.

Chairman Smith noted that some of the members have opted out of social media for many reasons.

Chief Mello stated members can still read such correspondence on social media without having a personal account.

**6. CONSIDERATION OF REPORT OF CHIEF ON MATTERS OF ADMINISTRATION**

a. Informational – suggested meeting dates for Police Commission for 2022

b. Donation to K9 Unit – Mr. & Mrs. Tom Craig – Chief Mello acknowledged a donation of $100 from Mr. & Mrs. Craig asking it be placed in the K9 Unit and Chief Mello recommended that donation as stated.

It was moved by Vice Chrmn. Bergami and seconded by Comm. Mager to approve the donation of $100 from Mr. & Mrs. Craig and place such donation into the K9 Unit as recommended by Chief Mello. Motion carried unanimously.

c. Informational – Safe Driving Awards to: Off. Ballard, Off. Binkowski, Det. Catino, Sgt. Degnan, Det. Gallagher, Off. Goldfuss, Sgt. Kranyak, Off. Lennon, Off. Loschiavo, Off. Owens, M/Sgt. Youd.

d. Chief’s General Comments

* Regarding the distribution of packets to the Commissioners, Chief Mello recommended that the delivery of hard copies of the agenda and material packets stop and all information be sent to members electronically. He noted this will cut down on labor costs from the hand delivery of packets.

Both Comm. Mager and Chrmn. Smith agreed that this would be a better option.

It was moved by Comm. Mager and seconded by Comm. Rubenstein that henceforth all Police Commissioner packets for meetings, including agenda, will be delivered in an electronic format to members’ respective email addresses. Motion carried unanimously.

* Chief Mello noted with regard to the conclusion of the summer season and explained for many years there were dedicated patrols at all beaches in the city. He added officers were at all beaches and it was necessary to use overtime account for paying those officers. He referred to the past when there was less problems at the beaches and the use of officers in those locations was suspended. He went on to say that now we find it is back to being our busiest times during beach season as we receive many complaints and it was necessary to assign officers 7 days a week, day and night. As well, it was necessary to have a traffic enforcement officer at the beaches which generated a considerable amount of money from fees and fines. Chief Mello stated it has become necessary to put in an overtime account to fund this cost for next year and members will see that when they review the budget in the near future. He added the department is still being praised by local residents for having officers at the beaches.

He also referred to the request for dash cams in our proposed budget and there is a price increase for this equipment.

Chief Mello stated there is a strong need for parking enforcement attendants at Walnut Beach and the Department will be looking at taking on non-police parking attendants.

With regard to the upcoming academy graduation which is scheduled for 11/17, Chief Mello explained at this time the class lost one officer and there is one who has not yet passed his state test and he is waiting for those results. He added we will be having 9-10 openings by the end of this February and this is a trend seen in all departments. He explained with these openings we have fewer officers to be on the patrol and we have reduced special assignments as well. He stated officers want to take their time off as well as weekends and nobody wants to work overtime any longer. Chief Mello explained the department does not have enough officers to staff and it has become necessary to hold over many officers at the end of their shift. He stated this has a strong impact on the morale of the department.

Chief Mello also noted people are leaving the police departments and there is difficulty recruiting good people. He stated there simply is not enough officers and we have had to cancel days off and he was certain there will be grievances due to this in the future. He referred to statistics stating crime is down based on numbers in 2010 but looking at years 2018 and 2019 there was a sharp increase in crime. He explained he has a plan on how to address that and there will be further discussion regarding that when the members review the budget as submitted.

With regard to recruiting, Chief Mello is hoping to get 200 applicants but it is probable that there will be less than that. He noted test scores are down and he questioned whether we lower our academic or background standards. He added there is also officers that have tenure and are close to retirement but while still here they no longer have a desire to be an officer. Chief Mello stated administration is working very hard to keep people motivated and engaged and it is our responsibility to come up with a solution.

Chief Mello stated at this time there are 5 female police officers in the graduating class and there is no adequate space for them. He noted there are issues in the locker rooms and because of that they have taken the gym area from the building and are looking to make bigger area for more male and female locker rooms. He added it is necessary to dig up all the floors in that gym area and replace the sewer traps and that project will take a while to complete. He added Public Works has started working on this project and trying to find solutions for the interim.

Another issue found this year is one of the boilers is broken and needs to be replaced. Chief Mello stated Public Works has been working on this and the Public Works Director has been able to expedite this work thus far. He added there are other areas of the building that need to be re-purposed. Chief Mello explained under the American Rescue Dollars Act, we have been approved to hire two social workers and 2 interns in the area of social work. He stated funding was available for such work but it is still necessary to have adequate facilities for the officers now.

**7. REPORT ON PLANNING & ZONING REQUESTS**

a. Vehicle Dealership -1698 Boston Post Road – motion was made by Comm. Rubenstein and seconded by Vice Chrmn. Bergami to approve Traffic Dept. recommendation regarding Vehicle Dealership -1698 Boston Post Road.

Comm. Rubenstein felt it was important to note there is a loop for trailers to unload off the street and that is important and he commends the dealership for pursuing that.

Motion carried unanimously.

**8. ACCEPTANCE OF REPORTS**

It was moved by Vice Chrmn. Bergami and seconded by Comm. Rubenstein 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.

**9. UNFINISHED BUSINESS** - none

**10. NEW BUSINESS**

a. On Street Parking Change – Dockside Brewery, 40 Bridgeport Ave. – it was moved by Comm. Mager and seconded by Comm. Rubenstein to accept Traffic Division recommendation regarding on-street parking change – Dockside Brewery, 40 Bridgeport Ave.

Chrmn. Smith stated this is long over-due and felt it was a good recommendation.

Motion carried unanimously.

**11. COMMENDATIONS** – none to report

**12. EXECUTIVE SESSION**

**Consideration of Report of Chief of Police on matters concerning the Appointment,**

**Employment, Performance, Evaluation, Health, or Dismissal of Department**

**Employees**

Motion was made by Vice Chrmn. Bergami and seconded by Comm. Rubenstein to adjourn to Executive Session at 7:31 p.m. for the following matter:

1. Consideration of the performance of four (4) employees

Motion carried unanimously.

(Commissioners present, Chief Mello and Deputy Chief Rojee and Capt. DelMonte remained for Executive Session)

Motion made by Vice Chrmn. Rubenstein and seconded by Comm. Mager to reconvene in public session at 7:46 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.

Being no further business to discuss, it was moved by Vice Chrmn. Bergami and seconded by Comm. Jagoe to adjourn at 7:46 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.

Recorded by Diane Candido

Submitted to City Clerk November 9, 2021