Chairman 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, D. Rubenstein, Richard Smith

ALSO PRESENT:Police Chief Mello; Deputy Chief Rojee, Capt. Delmonte, Officer Hemperly, D. Candido, Secty.

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

**2. CONSIDERATION OF APPOINTMENTS** - none

**3. CITIZEN COMMENTS** –

* R. Silver, 58 Governors Ave. – asked if it was more appropriate to address the Commission at this point or when the matter comes up on the agenda. Being advised this would be the better time, she went on to say the residents appreciate the time and effort put into this concern. She noted at the last meeting she referred to a street in New Haven that had speed humps and that Street was Clinton Avenue. Further she stated the sign placed back in the middle of the North Street intersection has been helpful in slowing down traffic and though it was recently removed she assumed that was due to the impending storm. She referred to her personal experience of cars that do not come to a stop when a pedestrian is approaching that cross walk.
* Susan Morse – Governors Ave. – also directed comments to the sign in the middle of the North Street intersection noting it has slowed down traffic because it is necessary to stop and swing wide to turn on to Governor. She referred to recent incident when someone blew through the walk sign and there was an officer there at that time who subsequently pulled that driver over. She noted this is a recurring issue. She also stated she appreciates the time the Police Dept. has given to this matter.
* Candace Mayer – Governors Ave. – also echoed the comments of the previous speakers and referred to photos from another town with a similar situation and how the matter was address to the betterment of everyone.
* Trista Simoncek – 61 Governors Ave. – noted that the traffic in the area has become very fast and the sign in the middle of the intersection does help but not everyone abides or pays attention to it. She added as many new people move into the area they may not be tuned into the challenges presented in this area.
* Michael Mercurio – 17 Governors Ave. – noted he has lived in this city for 77 years and resided on Governors Ave for 42 years and feels the solution to the problem is a stop sign on North St. at Governors and another at the intersection of Maple. He noted Governors is a one way street and there is no “legal” traffic leaving Governors at North Street. He added he is not aware of any intersection with stop signs at all corners that has had the number of problems as this intersection.
* Teresa Gorman – 43 Governors Ave. – supports all of the neighbor’s comments and would like to stress the volume of traffic coming down Governors Ave. She felt at this time the volume of traffic is reduced because of the pandemic. She stated residents are supporting any traffic measure that could be implemented at this intersection.
* Anita Fernandez – 88 Governors Ave. –supports and echoes the comments of previous speakers.

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

It was moved by Comm. Rubenstein and seconded by Comm. Bevan to approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting of November 9, 2020 as presented.

Comm. Mager noted a misspelling of resident name, specifically Candace *Mayer* which was misspelled *Mager.*

Motion carried unanimously with this correction.

**5. READING OF CORRESPONDENCE -** Chief Mello noted over the years the hard copy mail received is small in portion to what is received electronically. He stated he continues to bring forward those letters received via mail and not email correspondence.

Bill & Donna Kramer – Harvest Lane – expressed appreciation to the Department for all they doing these difficult times.

Police Chief, Bristol, CT – expressing appreciation to Capt. Alexopoulos for serving on a specific search committee for that Department.

Ignatowski Family – expressed appreciation for support at recent funeral of family member.

Rev. M. Buckley, Kingdom Life Church – expressed appreciation to the officers in our city and commended them for their work and assistance during these difficult times.

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

a. Off Duty Weapon Authorization (2) for Officer Emily Sopchak – Motion was made by

Comm. Mager and seconded by Comm. Bevan to approve Off Duty Weapon Authorization (2)

for Officer Emily Sopchak. Motion carried unanimously.

b. Chief’s General comments – Chief Mello stated he continues his work on various committees regarding Police Accountability and Transparency adding considerable work has been done on this and requirements have been completed under the Police Accountability Bill for officers’ misconduct. He explained the 1st phase of Use of Force Policy has been completed. Further he noted there are a number of things that have occurred and he explained police officers are required to meet specific mandates for drug testing and mental health assessments and these requirements have been introduced into the upcoming budget adding approximately $300,000 into our proposed budget. Chief stated efforts have been made to take advantage of state reimbursements to implement body cameras and dash cams have been removed. He explained to replace these items would be expensive but the law requires they be put back into use. Chief stated these increases are reflected in the proposed budget. Further, he noted he has had a budget meeting with Mayor Blake and he noted that police cars will no longer be part of the department’s budget but will be part of the city’s vehicle acquisition plan. He informed Commissioners he would be happy to answer any questions on the proposed budget and he will make members aware what dates the budget hearings are so they can watch those virtual hearings.

**7. REPORT ON PLANNING & ZONING REQUESTS - none**

**8. ACCEPTANCE OF REPORTS (action on this matter was taken at the end of the meeting)**

It was moved by Vice Chair 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.

**9. UNFINISHED BUSINESS** - none

**10. NEW BUSINESS**

a. Traffic Study – North Street at Governor’s Ave.

b. Traffic Study – Governor’s Ave at Length – addendum to 2016 report

Chief Mello explained this area of the city is the most traffic studied area and there is a long history of traffic studies with a considerable amount of data. He noted that this most recent study has a limited amount of data due to the pandemic and traffic flow and that has been taken into consideration. Further, the formula is based on what is the 85 percentile and those counts have been compared to what we have had in the past noting that while there is valid concerns it is the recommendation that a traffic light at the Governor’s Avenue/North Street intersection would be best; however this recommendation requires the services of a Traffic Engineer. It was further explained that speed humps or speed bumps might divert traffic elsewhere but it was felt that would not be the case in this area. After discussion with Public Works and Fire Dept. officials regarding speed humps, it is known these devices can present problems for snow plows. Chief Mello stated supporting the idea of some re-engineering of the North Street area continues but he urged the Commission to proceed carefully. He added speed humps or speed bumps are the most sought after traffic solutions in this city.

Officer Hemperly reviewed the report and the data reflecting accident history on North and Maple Street and that data reflected 13 accidents there in the past 5 years or average of 3 per year over a 10-year period. With regard to pedestrian involved accidents at that intersection, there were no pedestrian accidents over the past 10 years and there are no concerns reflected from Durham Bus Company who provides the school bus transportation for the Milford schools. He stated with regard to all the other measures taken into consideration involving pedestrian safety would have to go through a Traffic Engineer.

With regard to a round-about at that area, the main issue is they will create less conflict points.

Officer Hemperly noted that with regard to a traffic control signal at the intersection, there are 9 different points to be considered and if 2 of those 9 points are met a traffic light should be put in. The study did reflect that traffic traveling in that area daily is down due to the pandemic but numbers at peak hours warrant the benefit of a traffic light; however with a traffic light we may see some minor rear end collisions and a traffic light would have major cost considerations.

Further he explained a multi-way stop could be a good way to calm traffic but reviewing the data there is only one criteria/warrant met and that is accident volume which reflects an average of 3 collisions per year except for this year when it was higher. He explained higher speed before and after a stop sign is often the case as the driver is looking to make up for lost time from stopping at the sign. He also noted as time progresses, cars may stop or there may not always be a car coming off Maple and we will see people not stop at the sign which will increase the chance for more pedestrian accidents.

Officer Hemperly stated looking at traffic island or bump outs, a 6 – 10 ft. island in the middle of North Street will force a vehicle to slow down to proceed around the island and a bump out would be the same scenario.

Chief Mello stated stop signs are not a way to control speeding cars and the issue on Broadway is a good example of that. He noted when people approach a stop sign every day and see no other cars coming each time, they tend to ignore the stop sign. He added bump outs or traffic signals seem the best alternative and a stop sign would be in lieu of a more effective solution.

He addressed the Governors Avenue study and the concerns about wrong way driving, effectiveness of the speed sign and a possible speed hump. He stated the recommendation for the wrong way driving concern is to add more one-way signs to make them more visible, a speed feedback sign. He stated that using the 85 percentile formula the data shows prior to 2018-19, 33 mph was evident and now that is down to 30 mph and it was felt the sign showing the driver’s speed has been effective. He added with an average speed of 30 mph and no accidents there has not been a huge speed issue on Governor’s Avenue.

Chief added with regard to speed humps vs speed bumps, it was felt the effect would be to lower speed and that would be minimal considering the average speed now is 30 mph. As well speed humps will cause traffic diversion which would mean there possibly could be traffic back up at the nearby 5-way intersection on North Street. He also noted the noise issue could be a disadvantage citing other towns that have used them and it is felt it would have a minimal effect on Governors Avenue. The Director of Public Works stated it would cause some issues with snow plowing and Asst. Fire Chief Fabrizi noted that speed humps would slow down emergency vehicular traffic. Chief Mello stated Governors Avenue is a one-way road with a lot of traffic volume, there would be some increase in noise with speed humps/bumps and cars slowing down will cause traffic congestion. Chief Mello stated the Department has been studying this area for so long and he felt it is important that the Commission take into consideration whether Governors Avenue is the appropriate place for this measure. He noted when this type of traffic control is put in, we will begin to see other requests for similar traffic or speed control.

Chairman Smith stated the best solution would be a traffic light but the cost factor is prohibitive.

Chief Mello explained if it is cost prohibitive, then we would have to move on and either way we need the service of a Traffic Engineer. He stated if that is rejected, the final recommendation is to put a 3-way stop sign and there is good data and research in terms of that recommendation.

Comm. Jagoe complimented the Traffic Dept. for the work done on this area over the years. She referred to the concern about cost prohibitive solutions but it is necessary to ask city leaders to get the traffic light. She felt we should ask for it and let the city leaders help to get this accomplished.

Chairman Smith noted one of the responsibilities this Commission has is to manage requests and our data does not support that noting there have been no pedestrian accidents at that intersection.

Chief Mello stated there are right-of-way issues at the intersection and looking at the accident history we know that history does not demonstrate the need.

Comm. Jagoe stated we have looked at this issue many times over the years and always come up with the traffic light is the solution. Based on that, she felt we should pursue that.

Chairman Smith questioned the cost estimate on bump outs and Chief Mello stated he did not have that information at this time and he felt we should start looking at developing criteria and we need the service of a Traffic Engineer to do that. He added there will be other requests and they will be data driven. Further he noted the number of close calls is the variable in the history of this intersection.

Chairman Smith addressed the speed issue on Governors Avenue and 82% are at 30 mph or below and he questioned how that lines up with the city average.

Chief Mello stated most speed zones have built in cushions and when Officer Hemperly refers to what speed humps will do, it would bring it into the acceptable percentile range. He added not all streets are created equal, some are one way driven, some are wider, or have curves or road narrowing but there is a lot of volume on this particular residential street.

Chairman Smith noted 15% of the cars travel over 30 mph but how does that line up with other streets speeding rate.

Chief Mello stated in order to be fair we should have real numbers to answer that.

Chairman Smith noted if we begin to respond to 15% of cars speeding we will open up further issues.

Comm. Bevan referred to the stop sign coming from Maple Street which is solar powered and he stated he has been told a car has taken that sign down.

Chief Mello stated he did not recall that happening.

Officer Hemperly stated he did not recall any accident taking that sign down.

Comm. Bevan stated the sign was there for a month and he questioned if there was any impact. He referred to conversation with Ald. Vitali who travels Governors Avenue often and he being adamantly in favor of a speed hump on Governors Avenue. Comm. Bevan felt there should be more signs telling drivers what the speed limit is and perhaps a speed limit sign as you enter would be helpful. He also noted there are road signs on Governors Avenue that need to be repaired.

Comm. Rubenstein asked if there would be state funding for a traffic signal and Chief Mello stated the city leaders would know better about the funding.

Comm. Rubenstein stated the data does not seem compelling about the speed issue but it does seem apparent that it shows the need for action at that intersection.

Chairman Smith stated it will be necessary to provide further nuances to support the recommendation for a traffic signal.

Officer Hemperly stated the 2002 and 2008 study along with this year’s study shows we meet the volume of warrants for 8 continuous hours and peak hours. He stated a traffic control signal addresses many of the concerns that are seen at that location.

Comm. Mager noted the crosswalk signs in the middle of the road are effective and he asked if reconfiguration has ever been explored.

Officer Hemperly the site lines on Bridge Street were looked at and only at that intersection. He added all accidents this year had to do with vehicles coming off Maple Street.

Comm. Mager noted 18 years worth of studies warrant traffic control and he suggested we make a motion that we support traffic control at that intersection and then it would be up to the city to implement that.

Comm. Jagoe referred to comment regarding actions taken will bring other requests or hear concerns from other neighborhoods but she pointed out how many times the residents from this area have come before this Commission to address this matter. She stated the residents are concerned and we need to do something to help them.

Chairman Smith echoed those comments. He felt we need to respond to the outcry from these residents.

Chief Mello stated it begins with commissioning a Traffic Engineer study which will be helpful to our Department. He added the residents have been patient with us in this matter.

It was moved by Comm. Mager and seconded by Comm. Jagoe to seek out Traffic Engineer Study at the intersection of North Street and Governors Avenue.

Comm. Bevan assured the residents that the Commission is not looking to put this matter off for another few months but this study will be beneficial and he supports this recommendation.

Comm. Smith stated he is hopeful the neighbors would be pleased with this next step.

Motion carried unanimously.

Chairman Smith felt this is a constructive next step and assured residents the Commission is committed to partnering with them to address their concerns.

c. Traffic Study – Joe Holt Way, Alley B, Alley C – Borough of Woodmont – it was moved by Comm. Mager and seconded by Comm. Bevan to approve Traffic Study regarding Joe Holt Way, Alley B, Alley C. Motion carried unanimously.

**11. COMMENDATIONS** - none

**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 Chairman Bergami and seconded by Comm. Jagoe to adjourn to Executive Session at 8:19 p.m. regarding the following:

1. Probationary ratings for two Officers.
2. Consideration of the performance of two Officers.

Motion carried unanimously.

Chef Mello, Deputy Chief Rojee, Capt. Delmonte and commissioners present remained for Executive Session.

It was moved by Comm. Rubenstein and seconded by Comm. Bevan to reconvene in public session at 8:39 p.m.

It was moved by Vice Chairman Bergami and seconded by Comm. Marrone to uphold the Chief’s recommendation regarding disciplinary action of four officers. Motion carried unanimously.

Being no further business, it was moved by Comm. Rubenstein and seconded by Comm. Jagoe to adjourn at 8:39 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.

Recorded by Diane Candido

Submitted to City Clerk December 17, 2020