(Meeting relocated to Training Room due to the number of attendees)

Chairman Smith called the meeting to order at 7:07 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 Rahn, Ald. Vetro, D. Candido, Secty.

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

**2. CONSIDERATION OF APPOINTMENTS** - none

**3. CITIZEN COMMENTS**

* Melissa Grey – 16 Spruce Circle – shared concerns regarding the encampment (homeless people) on Wampus Lane noting she has made several attempts to speak with various members of the Mayor’s staff and the Mayor. She noted they graciously heard her comments but nothing has been done to rectify the situation in the residential neighborhood. She referred to the large fire in that area and stated she is concerned about her safety and the safety of her household. She added she is uncomfortable living across from this situation adding the size of the encampment has grown within the last year. She added she thought the fire would be something to reflect the need to clear up this problem.
* Joanne Perini – 189 Homestead Avenue - noted she lives across from the encampment and often hears gunshots, adding those who live in the swamp area have propane tanks, generators and televisions. She expressed her concern about the big area of marshland being occupied.
* Ann Berman, Chairman, Milford Environmental Coalition – noted the group had looked at the area a few years ago and most recently was disappointed to see the mess in the area and expressed her concern for the safety of the residents who live in that neighborhood. She offered suggestion of perhaps locating a place in town where these homeless people can gather during the day and be off the street. Also suggested identifying a person in the group who could take charge of the group and ensure they are following laws and rules and are being responsible.
* Caitlyn Broderick – 1 Spruce Circle – noted there are many young children who live in the area near the Wampus Lane encampment and because of the amount of drinking that goes on there she has had to leave her home on occasion.
* Dominic Cotton – 60 Corona Drive – understands both sides of the issue regarding this encampment and has heard from several neighbors regarding the health and safety issues. He noted he has had conversation with other groups regarding this issue and felt there are rules that people have to follow and if they are unwilling to follow the rules on this property that is allegedly owned by the city, there must be a level of enforcement that follows. He stated if people choose to not follow the rules regardless of their mental health, they need to be removed from the property. He referred to the similar situation on the New Haven Green and there were rules followed in order to rectify that situation. He felt if someone is given the opportunity to receive help and they choose not to then they must face the circumstances.
* Sally Grey – formerly of 16 Spruce Circle – noted she has recently moved from the neighborhood but she stated the encampment has grown in size. She expressed concern about the possibility of a fire in that area becoming out of control very quickly. She stated she has spoken to Mr. Johnson about the situation and he led her to believe the city would not want to be sued or involved in a legal case if this type of matter was not handled properly.
* David Grey – 16 Spruce Circle – referred to comments made by previous speakers who shared their concerns and fear for their safety in their own neighborhood. He noted that the residents of this encampment set off fires every night and the large fire that was set ablaze in recent years required the support of area fire departments. He stated when someone is endangering the life of others, something needs to be done as it is no longer a laughing matter.

It was also noted that the fire trucks coming to tend to the large blaze could not get into the area because the encampment is far into the woods.

* Ald. Brian Anderson, 5th District Aldermen – noted residents have clearly articulated the threat cause by this encampment. He stated public safety trumps all other consideration.

Chairman Smith stated Chief Mello and the entire department as well as this body recognized the seriousness of this issue. He stated there is a Homeless Task Force in place in this city and they continue to meet to address these concerns. He further noted if the law is being broken, city officials are responsive to that.

Chief Mello noted that the city has been dealing with the homelessness issue for many years. Officials continue to do research on this problem and reminded those present that homelessness is not illegal. He stated it is the job of this department to keep people safe and at the same time protect the constitutional rights of everyone. Chief Mello acknowledged the fact that people feel the department has the authority to remove people and take their property and that would be a violation of the Constitution. He further added the Criminal Justice Reform is not going to put homeless people in jail. Chief Mello explained people from the Health Dept and mental health advisors talk to the people in these areas and try to advise them of places they can go to for help and these efforts have sometimes been successful. He also noted the number of homeless people has declined.

Chief Mello suggested to the neighbors to call the Fire Dept when the fires are noted and they will go to put the fires out but there is no statutory authority to ban these people from these areas. Chief Mello noted the strategies used to address this issue is sometimes helpful.

Mr. Cotton asked if it was possible for one of the concerned residents could go with an officer or someone from a social service group to speak to the group about their concerns and Chief Mello stated that would be another strategy that could work.

Discussion ensued regarding whether or not the property where the Wampus Lane encampment is was city owned or privately owned and Chief Mello noted if it was privately owned then there would be a level of enforcement.

Chairman Smith asked Mr. Rosen of the Mayor’s Office to bring the suggestions offered tonight back to the next Homeless Task Force Meeting.

Mrs. Grey noted when she has called the Fire Dept to report a fire, they then go to her house to tell her the fire has been put out and she was concerned about that. Chief Mello stated he will let dispatch know when there is a reported fire call, noting it is Wampus Lane homeless encampment fire, they should not go to the home of the person reporting.

He further emphasized the fact that the department would respond and go to the area if a call is made regarding gunshots.

Mr. Johnson, Open Space and Natural Resource Agent, explained DEP regulates hunting and defines the area and the season and there is no legal hunting on Wampus Lane. He reminded the residents that the police can help monitor behavior in these areas when concerns are made with authorities.

Mr. Grey stated all the concerns brought forward should be rationale to address these offenses and he did not feel it was fair that the residents have to deal with this on a daily basis.

Discussion ensued regarding an officer’s use of force when there is evidence of crime.

Mrs. Grey felt it is necessary to make change happen so this situation will be taken care of.

Chief Mello stated if the people in the encampment are committing violation, they will be addressed and handled properly by the department. Regarding the generators and propane tanks, the Health and Fire Department must address those concerns.

Mr. Cotton asked who should the residents talk to regarding these ongoing concerns and Chairman Smith stated it should be brought to this body and the Chief as demonstrated this evening.

Mrs. Grey stated felt because this encampment is not in plain sight it is not being addressed and Chief Mello stated all of the encampments are important and the safety of people, no matter, where is equally important. He emphasized the fact that the Wampus Lane problem is as important to him and the department as was the area behind the library.

* Justin Rosen, 394 Gulf St. – recent graduate of Citizens Police Academy and John Hotchkiss of 74 Buckingham Place also a recent graduate of Citizens Police Academy were pleased to present a $1,000 donation to the Milford Police Department in recognition of the offering of this very good program for residents of Milford.

Chief Mello expressed his gratitude for this donation and stated he will recommend the donation be placed in the Citizen Police Academy account to help assist in the funding for the next class.

* Ald. Vetro thanked Chief Mello and commended him for the excellent presentation made to the Board of Aldermen regarding the proposed 2019-2020 Police Dept budget.

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

It was moved by Comm. Rubenstein and seconded by Comm. Mager to approve the minutes of the April 8, 2019 meeting as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

**5. READING OF CORRESPONDENCE**

* Chief Glenn Eidman, Creve Coeur Police Department - letter of appreciation for training class at Academy
* Letters of appreciation and thanks to Officers Luth, who represents a fine example of our Department. As well similar letters of recognition and thanks to Officer Mazzara and McMahon
* Wendy Gibbons/Lou LaVecchia, Milford Prevention Council – thank you for the Department’s participation in the recent Drug Take Back Day as well as the valuable assistance of the Citizens Alumni Academy.
* Sgt. Adam Pillsbury, CT State Police Fire & Explosion Unit – expressing gratitude for our assistance in the fire and explosion incident both at Shakespeare Theater in Stratford and Silver Sands State Park. Specifically acknowledged the assistance and help of Sgt. James O’Keefe, Det. Rick Mahoney and Officer Bryan Jock

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

a. Safe Driving Awards for Officers David Bodnar, Chris Lennon and Zachary Milslagle. - informational only

b. Donation from Citizens Academy - $1,000 – Chief Mello recommended the $1,000 donation from the Citizens Academy be placed in the Citizens Police Academy Donation account. Motion was made by Comm. Rubenstein and seconded by Comm. Marrone to approve the recommendation of Chief Mello to place the $1,000 donation from the Citizens Academy be placed in the Citizens Police Academy Donation account. Motion carried unanimously.

c. Chief’s General comments – Chief Mello noted the Autism Awareness Car was highly visible in the community in the past month.

He was pleased to report the Police Academy Class are involved in a running program at the Boys & Girls Club. He added that connection with those youngsters is important and the officers will be doing a summer program with them as well.

Further, Chief Mello stated the Department is raising money for Ch. 3 Kids Camp hoping to have two kids sponsored by Milford’s Police Department along with the PBA.

Comm. Mager asked what the cost is per child and he was told $500.

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

a. Vehicle Service Center – 1698 Boston Post Rd – Motion was made by Comm. Rubenstein and seconded by Comm. Bergami to approve Traffic Division recommendation regarding Vehicle Service Center – 1698 Boston Post Road. Motion carried unanimously.

b. Dental Surgery Center – 708 Boston Post Rd – Motion was made by Comm. Rubenstein and seconded by Comm. Marrone to approve Traffic Division recommendation regarding Dental Surgery Center – 708 Boston Post Road. Motion carried unanimously.

c. Contractors Building and Storage Yard – 17L Shelland St. – Motion was made by Vice Chair Bergami and seconded by Comm. Marrone to approve Traffic Division recommendation regarding Contractors Building and Storage Yard – 171 Shelland Street. Motion carried unanimously.

**8. ACCEPTANCE OF REPORTS**

It was moved by Vice Chairman 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**

a. Bird Scooters Study – remains on the table

**10. NEW BUSINESS** – none

**11. COMMENDATIONS**

Letter of Recognition for Officer Dominic Bailey – case #1174-19 – Deputy Chief Rahn explained on 3/9/19 officer was dispatched to 57 Grant Street to find an unconscious female in the home. Officer Bailey, without hesitation began CPR and also noted another individual in the house. While continuing chest compressions, Officer Bailey remained calm with the other individual and continued CPR until the medics arrived and transported the female to the hospital where she was noted in stable condition.

**12. EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Motion was made by Vice Chairman Bergami and seconded by Comm. Rubenstein to adjourn to Executive Session at 8:20 p.m. for consideration of Report of Chief of Police on matters concerning the Appointment, Employment, Performance, Evaluation, Health or Dismissal of Department Employees. Motion carried unanimously.

1. Consideration of the performance of three employees (3)

Chief Mello, Deputy Chief Rahn and commissioners present remained for Executive Session

It was moved by Comm. Jagoe and seconded by Vice Chair Bergami to reconvene in public session at 8:32 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.

Being no further business, it was moved by Comm. Jagoe and seconded by Vice Chair Bergami to adjourn at 8:32 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.

Recorded by Diane Candido

Submitted to City Clerk May 15, 2019