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

**1. ROLL CALL**

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Bill Bevan, Alberta Jagoe, John Mager, David Rubenstein. Richard Smith

COMMISSIONERS NOT PRESENT: Sam Bergami, Sharon Marrone

ALSO PRESENT:Police Chief Mello; Deputy Chief Rojee, Lt. Chila, 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 Comm. Bevan to approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting of April 12, 2021 as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

**5. READING OF CORRESPONDENCE**

* P. Brennan, widow of retired Milford Sgt. Haigh expressing gratitude for honor guard at the recent funeral services of her husband.

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

a. Unclaimed cash from the Court in the amount of $17.85 – as recommended by Chief Mello, a motion was made by Comm. Jagoe and seconded by Comm. Bevan to accept the unclaimed cash from the Court in the amount of $17.85 and deposit same to the DARE Donation account. Motion carried unanimously.

b. Informational: Safe Driving Awards for: Off. Milton Andrade, Off. James Cox, Off. Dan Hemperly, Off. Kevin Hilliard, Det. Richard Mahoney, Lt. Sean Moore, Off. Mike Moreno,

Off. Keith Ruggiero and Off. J. Rivera.

c. Chief’s General comments – Chief Mello explained the Department has had significant challenges during the past year due to the pandemic. He stated that much of the overtime funds were not used and therefore that unused money was returned to the general budget. He expressed much concern over the recent carjacking along the I-95 corridor which has skyrocketed as our officers are working hard to protect the public. He explained that the individual(s) committing these crimes are found to be dangerous people and known to carry guns. Further he cited several instances of car robberies and purse thefts, some in daylight, at the mall and other big stores. As well there have been challenges at our city beaches including disruptive behavior and fights. In particular he noted that it is the role of our officers to enforce parking restrictions put in place and with summer upon us it has been necessary to place 2 (sometimes 3) officers at Walnut Beach, 1 on a bike and 1 on ATV as well as 1 officer at Gulf Beach. He explained that it has become evident when the police vacate these areas that is when the problems occur.

As well, he noted that since police officers did not take vacation time in the past year they are looking to take that time now and the department is using an enormous amount of overtime that was not budgeted. He added the overtime money will run out very quickly if it is necessary to continue to assign officers to these areas. He felt it could be approximately $100,000 in additional costs. He explained there are occasions when there are just as many police officers at a beach as there are in the entire city adding and emphasizing that people have the right to feel safe in these areas. Chief Mello stated part of the challenges they are facing is when Silver Sands gate is closed because the park has reached its capacity level, people try to get to other beaches, usually Walnut Beach. He stated the parking kiosks are working well and generating a good amount of revenue but officers are now doing a lot of enforcement in the resident parking area and timed parking area. Further, he noted in the next budget he will include a plan to hire seasonal parking staff.

Chrmn. Smith questioned why staff did not use their vacation time last year and he was told simply because of the pandemic and they could not travel and the department did not have a need for extra staff for beaches and bars which were not open.

Chief Mello also explained our officers are no longer working at Stonebridge as it was found that officers working there were taking a lot of verbal abuse. He stated officers are working in the entire entertainment area of downtown for bar control.

Chief Mello added in the past there was an overtime account for beaches and that was in place for years but due to budget cuts that was taken away but he felt it should be put back.

Chrmn. Smith questioned under what circumstances the Mayor has the ability to exercise parking rules beyond this Commission.

Chief Mello explained the department was provided a list of streets included in the emergency parking and we were told we were responsible for enforcing. He added perhaps it would be best to ask the Mayor or the City Attorney this question but he stated the department is getting many complaints about the emergency parking order in the East Broadway area adjacent to Silver Sands. He explained there is no off-street parking on E. Broadway and many of the homes are rentals in that area and have no place to park.

Lt. Chila explained at present there is an average of 150-175 tickets per weekend, $85 ticket for every hour.

Chief Mello stated this takes a lot of officer time and it has become necessary to take officers from a shift to handle this problem leaving the rest of the city vulnerable. He felt this matter is worthy of discussion for better options to address this problem in the future.

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

a. 51-53 Roses Mill Rd – Mixed Use Building (Roses Mill Plaza) – Motion was made by Comm. Rubenstein and seconded by Comm. Mager to approve Traffic Division recommendation regarding 51-53 Roses Mill Rd – Mixed Use Building (Roses Mill Plaza). Motion carried unanimously.

b. 140 Clark St. – Zone change and Special Permit w/Site Plan Review – It was moved by Comm. Rubenstein and seconded by Comm. Mager to approve Traffic Division recommendation regarding 140 Clark St. – Zone change and Special Permit w/Site Plan Review. Motion carried unanimously.

c. Fratelli’s Restaurant – 246 New Haven Ave – Permanent Outdoor Patio Addition – It was moved by Comm. Rubenstein and seconded by Comm. Mager to approve Traffic Division recommendation regarding Fratelli’s Restaurant – 246 New Haven Ave – Permanent Outdoor Patio Addition.

Chrmn. Smith questioned the intention of the parking lot being readjusted to make up the loss of spaces and Lt. Chila explained in this case there is an adjacent parking lot where additional spaces will be added.

Comm. Rubenstein asked if there must be alternative parking spaces available to create such spaces and Lt. Chila explained that is left up to P & Z as officers are only concerned with site lines.

Motion carried unanimously.

d. 93 Boston Post Rd – Site Plan for Mixed Use Building – It was moved by Comm. Rubenstein and seconded by Comm. Jagoe to accept Traffic Division recommendation regarding 93 Boston Post Rd – Site Plan for Mixed Use Building. Motion carried unanimously.

e. 230 Old Gate Lane – Establishment of a Truck Dealership in former CT Limo Bldg – It was moved by Comm. Rubenstein and seconded by Comm. Jagoe to accept Traffic Division recommendation regarding 230 Old Gate Lane – Establishment of a Truck Dealership in former CT Limo Bldg.

Comm. Mager asked if this dealership was going to be bigger trucks and he was told yes but it would not change the site lines going in our out of the lot.

Motion carried unanimously.

**8. ACCEPTANCE OF REPORTS**

It was moved by Comm. Mager 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**

1. Review of Parking violation categories – Chief Mello explained it is the intent to move #23 Residential Sticker required to an $85 violation based on the request from the Mayor’s office. He added an ordinance has already been crafted for this.

Chief stated it is necessary to add a category on the ticket and that would be #4 and would result in a $85 per hour violation. He explained a non-resident is anyone who does not have a resident sticker on their vehicle and at this time officers are seeing many residents who are upset because they do not have their stickers yet. He cited especially the Walnut Beach neighborhood as well as many of the streets adjacent to the shore in Woodmont.

Lt. Chila stated several streets are within the executive order from the Mayor that was put in place during the pandemic and is currently in effect until July 20th.

Comm. Mager questioned if the Commission was asked to make this $85 fee permanent outside the executive order time constraint and he added this goes back to conversations in the past that it was necessary to make the fine significant enough so people will obey the rule because of the cost. He referred to similar problems in Greenwich and Westport.

He felt it should be high enough but not cumulative and there should be a level of forgiveness at the appellate procedure if a resident has not yet got their sticker.

Chief Mello stated definitely the department is committed to fair treatment of everyone and if one is a resident and can prove that we will give them a pass the first time but they need to follow through and get the needed sticker. He added residents are given a grace period through 7/1/2021.

Chrmn. Smith asked what the point of a $85 fee was and Chief Mello explained someone can park in the beach parking lot for $40 per day for non-resident or can park at a kiosk for $5/hour but it is unknown if the people receiving the tickets are necessarily people wanting to park at the beach or not. He felt it will be necessary to look at this at the end of the year and determine what the need will be.

Chrmn. Smith stated he is not a supporter of people not being able to park on public streets but in this case he also did not understand why people are parking on streets that are blocks away from the beach when there is adequate beach parking. He stated he felt it is a substantial fine.

Chief Mello added it is necessary to have parking available for residents to park for free and parking for people who will have to pay but the data must support this.

Chrmn. Smith stated he was not comfortable with the premise.

Comm. Mager stated once the data is accumulated there needs to be assurance that residents who need to park on residential streets will have that ability. He suggested funneling out of town guest to appropriate parking spaces. He also stated he found the cumulative nature of the fine repugnant and he felt it is necessary to accumulate the data on this matter.

Chief Mello stated residents and home owners on E. Broadway are concerned about where they should park.

Chrmn. Smith noted that when people purchase house in certain areas they know there are parking issues such as on E. Broadway.

Chief Mello addressed the issue of Silver Sands reaching capacity and closing and consideration must be given to what is the capacity level at Walnut Beach and it is also necessary to educate people about what is allowable and what is not. He felt the Recreation Dept. should address capacity limits and there is a need for someone responsible who can enforce city rules but there should not be a police captain having to be pre-emptive.

Chrmn. Smith questioned what is to stop any neighborhood to request these type of parking restrictions.

Chief Mello stated he is not in favor of the expanded parking ban as it stands and he felt it needs the data to support it. He added the kiosks are all in and there are many spots adding we are in a different place now then we were when the plan was originally approved.

Chrmn. Smith stated he understands “residents only” on streets close to Walnut Beach but to go farther north he did not. He stated he would rather table this motion or deny it and wait for the data to determine the need.

Chief Mello reminded commissioners that the ordinance has been drafted and passed and this $85 fine is by ordinance now and the Board of Aldermen have control of it now not this commission. He again explained there is not a mechanism to enforce $85 fine on our current tickets.

Chrmn. Smith asked who designates which streets are included and he was told this body.

Comm. Jagoe asked where is this request coming from and she was told the Mayor’s office.

Chrmn. Smith felt as long as we designate the fact that after this order expires we get to decide where the signs go up and those fines are levied.

Comm. Rubenstein agreed with comments made by Comm. Mager and added the way this is being designed does not follow the city motto of being a little city with a big heart.

Comm. Mager stated none of the parking violations should be directed to excluding anyone to public beaches and our motion is to protect the health and safety of individuals. He felt the fine needs to be more than what it would cost to park. He also addressed the other issue of residents who want their friends/relatives to visit and that should be a different case. Comm. Mager felt a list of streets that have excess parking because of beach goers would be helpful. He asked if the cumulative nature of the $85 fine is included in the ordinance and Chief Mello stated it was and will make a copy of that ordinance available to members.

Chrmn. Smith added as a commission, we can look at some recommendation from the Traffic Division as to what streets this may be appropriate for and come up with a plan to preclude these parking fines on outskirt streets.

Chief Mello recommended making this consistent with the ordinance and by the end of this season (9/30/2021) he would provide commissioners with the data as to what streets need to be included.

Comm. Mager felt there should be a caveat to the recommended motion for changing the group number on the ticket and that should be this commission have enough data to decide what would be appropriate. He stated he has a problem voting on a motion that would allow all these problems to come to fruition.

Chrmn. Smith felt we did not have the authority to tell our officers to not enforce an ordinance.

Comm. Bevan questioned the $85 ticket put into place last year and he was told it was an emergency order. He questioned how it becomes cumulative and he was told additional tickets are given every hour.

Chrmn. Smith stated we missed our chance to address this before the Ordinance Committee and we cannot change the $85 unless the ordinance is changed. He stated he did not support the $85 fee and added it will be difficult for our police officers to charge this post-pandemic. He explained if we do not consider this the person will only be charged $30 as that is what the ticket says.

Chief Mello stated he is not sure what the answer to this is but there is an ordinance in place and he would have to defer any further questions to the City Attorney. He felt the downside of doing nothing is the fine will be $30 and we will see more cars parked in the roadway and if that happens it will impact the data.

Further Chief Mello stated the department has always enjoyed the confidence of this commission and it has meant a lot for him personally to hear this and he will pass these comments on to his staff. He agreed it is necessary to move forward on this matter.

Motion was made by Comm. Rubenstein and seconded by Comm. Bevan to increase the ticket price to $85 and move parking violation category #23 to group 4.

Comm. Mager felt our hands are tied because of the ordinance and he stated he has faith in the department to execute what is just and appropriate and for those reasons he would vote in favor of the motion.

Comm. Bevan added based on the fact this is already in place via an ordinance is why he seconded the motion and he stated we must designate streets and look at the data in the future.

Motion carried unanimously.

Chief Mello agreed that it would be the correct course of action for us to look at the data in the fall if there is a strong desire to lower the fine that could be done. He felt what those restrictions are and where they go needs to stay with our authority. Further he emphasized the credibility of our department is at stake because if people think something is unfair it reflects back to us.

Chrmn. Smith added the discussion tonight was good.

**11. COMMENDATIONS**

a. Certificate of Commendation for Officer Colin Lacey and Officer Stephen – case #2296-21 – Chief Mello stated he is proud of the work of our officers as explained in this commendation. He added it is evident we need to have people educated about some of the dangerous crime surrounding us.

Deputy Chief Rojee explained that back in mid-January 2021 an increase in myriad of issues was noticed along the Route 1 corridor in Milford in the parking lots of many of the stores. He explained incidents when individual(s) would do laps around parking lots and when they noticed a female walking back toward her car, sometimes not paying attention to her surroundings as she put her belongings in her car, these individual(s) would snag her purse or take it out of the car. In some cases fire arms were involved and in some cases they actually took off in the car. He stated they have seen a spike in these crimes.

In this particular case, Officer Lacey observed a car enter the mall parking lot and recognized it as a reported stolen vehicle. He followed the car and unfortunately lost sight of it temporarily. Another officer picked up on it and saw the vehicle and when the operator of the vehicle saw Officer Napoletano he fled. Officer Napoletano radioed the direction of the traveling car and Officer Lacey went to that area and observed where the vehicle was going but the vehicle crashed into an unoccupied police vehicle. The operator was taken into custody and found to be a 13 year old. Also involved was a 14 year old and two 15 year olds and a pistol was also recovered.

Deputy Chief Rojee commended the excellent work of these two officers.

**12. EXECUTIVE SESSION**

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

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

**Employees - no matters**

Informal discussion ensued regarding the progress of the Academy and Chief Mello explained South Central Criminal Justice is doing the testing for the region and they only had 65 people. He added it is evident that we are struggling to attract people and recruitment is a crisis. He stated as a result, the level of candidates has gone from a higher level to now some with academic challenges which are being addressed through the classes. As well, he stated we are hearing of officers wanting to leave and we are equipped to recruit aggressively but chose to only take the cream of the crop.

Comm. Jagoe addressed pay scales and benefits and if we are not offering enough that comes from the Board of Aldermen and asked if the aldermen are aware of the problems with recruiting.

Chief Mello stated he did not know if they were aware but in this city great benefits are offered.

Being no further business to discuss, it was moved by Comm. Rubenstein and seconded by Comm. Jagoe to adjourn at 8:25 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.

Recorded by Diane Candido

Submitted to City Clerk June 17, 2021