Chairman Smith called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

**1. ROLL CALL**

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Bill Bevan, John Mager, Sharon Marrone, David Rubenstein, Richard Smith

COMMISSIONERS NOT PRESENT: Sam Bergami, Alberta Jagoe

ALSO PRESENT:Police Chief Mello; Deputy Chief Rojee, Sgt. Kranyak, 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. Rubenstein and seconded by Comm. Bevan to approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting of June 14, 2021 as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

**5. READING OF CORRESPONDENCE**

* South Central Criminal Justice – expressing appreciation for Sgt. Degnan’s participation in recent oral board examination.
* Carl Charles, Cornerstone Christian Church – expressed appreciation for police officer’s participation in recent Fun Fest event held at the church.
* Resident – expressed thanks to the Department and praised officers for what they do to protect residents. Specifically referred to Officer Ruggiero who is often present nearby a local pre-school. Children become familiar with his presence and specifically the child of this resident looks forward to chatting with Officer Ruggiero at school. Recently children returned to school and were pleased to once again see their friend who offered the children Milford Police Dept. kiddie stuff which delighted the children.
* Alexandra Winkleman – resident of Heritage Sound area – expressed thanks to the Department for keeping residents in the Silver Sands Beach area safe.
* Resident – explained he supports law enforcement adding he went to war to protect our principles and almost died during war time. Stated he abides by and respects police and military who are sworn to protect citizens.

Chief Mello noted in recent months there have been less letters to share as most of the correspondence comes via social media. He suggested and encouraged members to subscribe to MPD Facebook to read some of the great comments and expressions of thanks received.

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

a. Donation from Peter Falcone – Chief Mello acknowledged that Mr. Falcone’s letter was read in this month’s correspondence and he has made a $25 donation to the Department which Chief Mello recommended be placed in Officer’s Wellness Account.

Based on the recommendation of Chief Mello, motion was made by Comm. Rubenstein and seconded by Comm. Bevan to accept the $25 donation and place funds in the Officer’s Wellness Account. Motion carried unanimously.

b. Chief’s General Comments – Chief Mello explained there were several big challenges for our officers over this past summer. Robberies, purse snatching, car-jacking, assaults. He referred to 6 robberies in an 11-day period of time occurring in the Route 1 district, near the Mall and Post Road and more recently at gas pumps at Costco and Cumberland Farms.

He explained there has been a real challenge with the uptick in stolen cars and youths with guns and an uptick in people who will commit a crime and then run from the police.

Through all of this, Chief Mello stated there has been an increase in disrespect and poor treatment to our officers. He stated the Department has lost one young officer who left and with regard to the Academy, there were 9 officers participating when it began and now that number is down 4 and he would expect to see more leaving.

Further he noted there have been challenges at our beaches during the summer. Officers are there and as soon as they leave the challenges would return and increase so much so that it became necessary to put officers at the beach and in the downtown area every day. He also explained bars in the downtown area stopped hiring officers so it was necessary to begin assigning and paying 2 officers to work at the downtown bars.

With regard to the beach area, there has been a presence of officers at the beach with regard to enforcing the parking rules and with the officers there, less trouble seemed to occur. Chief Mello emphasized the importance of making the commissioners know the challenges the Department faces and the fact that over $200,000 was paid in overtime costs that were not budgeted for and that money is needed by the Department.

Chief Mello explained there was beach patrols years ago and beaches had less issues so staffing was pulled back but the upcoming budget will have $200,000 to support the current needs and he did not want to take those funds away from something else in order to provide this important resource.

With regard to Police Headquarters, it was noted there are 5 female officers graduating from this Police Academy (8 officers in total) and those females currently have no lockers. It is necessary to build out from the officer’s gym for these lockers. Chief Mello explained Public Works is going to be doing this work and re-doing the men’s locker room in hopes of resolving some issues there as well.

Chief Mello provided a COVID update noting the Department is 80% vaccinated and it is his hope we will be going to mandated vaccinations but he did not think that will happen. He felt it might be a COVID test option but he certainly was not in favor of testing once a week. Further he reported the Department has had 6 break-thru infections and have had to quarantine others. Chief Mello expressed concern with regard to if there should be break-thru infections in Dispatch, there is not sufficient back up staff for that area. He stated when there have been infections, it has been necessary for staff to work 24 hour shifts. He was hopeful to see testing required twice a week and if that does not happen he will ask the city to create a policy/emergency plan to have testing done every 48 hours.

Chief Mello stated that in order to help with staffing over the summer it was necessary to pull staff from other areas of the Department and at times run skeleton crews.

Chief Mello stated the current academy class will graduate on November 15th and he related the concerns of other departments as well who cannot fill their openings because they are doing the best they can to develop a strategy to be the employer of choice by these graduates. Further, he explained for the 1st time our Department is losing people because of pay and he anticipates this Department will have a good deal of trouble competing in the future.

Chrmn. Smith noted the labor shortage is impacting all areas. He asked if there was a comparative spread sheet regarding salaries and total compensation offered.

Chief Mello stated he did not have such a form but the unions develop that information. He also added the city will have a report with different interpretation of the data shared. Further he explained many departments have incentives that may not be seen in this data such as an EMT incentive or longevity.

Chrmn. Smith stated for this Commission to argue that Milford is competitive we would need a tool to see where we stand.

Chief Mello also noted that information is compiled when negotiations are approaching and he is not sure if he can share that but he will look into it. He stated he sits on the Task Force for Police Accessibility and Transparency and has heard a presentation regarding these matters such as what attracts people today and how a department can compete.

Chrmn. Smith asked how the Commission can help to address the challenge of losing recruits and Chief Mello stated he will share with the members the information that comes out of the Task Force.

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

a. Live Work Units – 4 Oxford Rd – Motion made by Comm. Rubenstein and seconded by Comm. Marrone to accept Traffic Division recommendation to approve.

Chrmn. Smith interjected for information only that a work unit is where you do work and you live.

Motion carried unanimously.

b. School bus storage/maintenance/dispatch facility with outdoor fueling station – 615 Plains Rd. – Motion made by Comm. Rubenstein and seconded by Comm. Bevan to approve Traffic Division recommendation to approve. Motion carried unanimously.

c. Basketball Training Facility – 252 Depot Rd. Unit C – Motion made by Comm. Rubenstein and seconded by Comm. Mager to approve Traffic Division recommendation. Motion carried unanimously.

**8. ACCEPTANCE OF REPORTS**

It was moved by Comm. Rubenstein and seconded by Comm. Mager 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

Comm. Mager referred to Crime Prevention Unit noting they are not conducting site security surveys any longer and Chief Mello stated that work has been reduced and in the summer the Department is spending a lot of time handling complaints and incidents. He added they are trying to use their Crime Prevention staff in solving problems and handling complaints.

Comm. Bevan referred to the Traffic Division Report and asked if parking ticket revenue is only beach parking.

Sgt. Kranyak explained that is only parking tickets and does not include meters or funds from purchasing beach pass.

Chief Mello stated there are still a number of outstanding parking fines and it was his hope that in the future the Department can hire staff that are not trained officers who can handle issuing parking tickets.

Chrmn. Smith noted that as of 9/1/2021 the Judicial Branch made available to police departments juvenile arrest records and he was not sure how that would be of any help.

Chief Mello explained many of the cars stolen are committed by juveniles and it is unknown who are repeat offenders. He added arrest records are provided but it is unknown if there is a conviction and it is unknown how many times a juvenile has been arrested. He stated the decision was made that probation officers be available 24 hours a day so they will be on call for departments to get this needed information. He added police were criticized for not getting detention reports as they are reserved for violent crimes. Chief Mello stated this is legislators answer to providing departments more tools and personally he did not feel this will have more than a minimal impact on how car thefts, for example, are addressed.

Motion carried unanimously.

**9. UNFINISHED BUSINESS** - none

**10. NEW BUSINESS**

1. Crosswalk Request – Surf Ave/Underhill Rd – Motion was made to approve Traffic Division

recommendation.

Chrmn. Smith stated he is a supporter of crosswalks that attract a driver’s attention and he asked how effective a crosswalk is.

Chief Mello stated there is research that say white lines are better than “bricks on the road” crosswalk and white lines are universal. He added it is worse when people do not expect one, such as crosswalks short distances apart. He felt any time it is possible to put up signage or flashing lights advising of crosswalk is better.

Sgt. Kranyak as well as making the driver aware, it is important to make it more evident for the pedestrians to use these crosswalks.

Chrmn. Smith felt there should always be signage with crosswalks and he questioned why this request is being made at this time.

Sgt. Kranyak explained this request in particular is because it is near a park.

Chrmn. Smith asked if there is data that shows crosswalks are more evident to drivers than pedestrians and Sgt. Kranyak explained it is this Department’s goal to make it beneficial to the pedestrian.

Comm. Bevan referred to question posed regarding data on cars stopping at crosswalks and he stated he personally did a survey at the intersection of Daniel and River Street (near Café Atlantique) over a number of days and he found 95% of the cars did not make a full stop. Further when the brick crosswalk was installed he again did a survey and approximately 5% of the cars came to a full stop.

b. Crosswalk Request – Monroe St/Nettleton Avenue – Motion was made by Comm. Mager and seconded by Comm. Marrone to approve Traffic Division recommendation to install noted crosswalk. Motion carried unanimously.

1. Crosswalk Request – Rivercliff Drive/Edgemont Rd – Motion was made by Comm. Mager and

seconded by Comm. Marrone to approve Traffic Division recommendation to install noted crosswalk. 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 Comm. Rubenstein and seconded by Comm. Mager to adjourn to Executive Session at 7:58 p.m. for the following matter:

1. Consideration of the performance of two (2) employees

Motion carried unanimously.

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

Motion made by Comm. Rubenstein and seconded by Comm. Mager to reconvene in public session at 8:28 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.

Being no further business to discuss, it was moved by Comm. Mager and seconded by Comm. Rubenstein to adjourn at 8:29 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.

Recorded by Diane Candido

Submitted to City Clerk September 14, 2021