

PC 2013/04/03

Rochester Police Commission
Rochester, NH 03867

James F. McManus, Jr., Chairman
Alan B. Bemis, Vice Chairman
David E. Winship, Jr., Commissioner

MINUTES OF THE POLICE COMMISSION MEETING

The Rochester Police Commission held their regular monthly meeting in City Hall Council Chambers on April 3, 2013. Present at this meeting was Comm. McManus, Comm. Bemis, Comm. Winship, Chief Allen, Dep. Chief Dumas, Attorney Grossman, and recording Secretary Warburton.

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 P.M.

A. Pledge. All participated in the Pledge of Allegiance.

B. Prayer. Comm. McManus led the opening prayer.

C. Roll Call. The clerk called the roll marking all Commissioner's present.

2. **PUBLIC COMMENT:** There was no public comment offered.

3. **ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES:**

A. March 6, 2013

Comm. Winship MOVED to accept the minutes of the March 6, meeting as presented. SECOND by Comm. Bemis and PASSED.

4. **OLD AND UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

A. Budget Update: FY 14. Chief Allen noted that we are slated to present our budget to the Council on May 21. We will present Police, Dispatch and our CIP. A copy of our portion of the budget book is included and he thanked Secretary Becky Warburton for the work put into our presentation.

5. NEW BUSINESS:

- Recognition and Awards.

1. Life Saving Award – Matthew Flathers. Chief Allen noted that Officer Flathers was tied up on a work related matter. We will invite him back to the May meeting for recognition.

B. Accept Resignation Officer Matthew duChemin. Officer duChemin had moved out this way from Wisconsin with several years of law enforcement experience. He has decided to move back to Wisconsin.

Comm. McManus MOVED to accept Officer duChemin's resignation, with regret, and to send him a letter of thanks for his service. SECOND by Comm. Bemis and PASSED unanimously.

C. Regionalization of Dispatch Center discussion. Chief Allen said this past month we had discussion with the County Commissioners, our council and the Mayor on dispatch consolidation. The Council has expressed a desire to have a hard look at consolidating. Although new to NH, it is happening throughout the Country. There have been some efforts at this in the past but with the tax cap situation in Rochester this is a way to evaluate whether or not this is in the best interest of the city and county to reduce costs. We have agreed to evaluate the feasibility. I am attending a meeting tomorrow with city staff, the fire department, city manager and county commissioners to talk more about this.

Comm. Bemis said the Police Commission doesn't have anything to do with dispatch but we do want to express our feelings on how we feel about this. Having a background in law enforcement in Maine, I know they have been regionalizing and it seems to be working out well. I would support it at this early stage.

Chief Allen said there is an advantage in terms of economy. The dispatch budget right now is slightly more than \$700,000, most of that in salary and benefits. It makes sense from a dollar stance. There are operational concerns to make sure that the city doesn't see any diminished level of service that we currently enjoy and provide the citizens, police, fire and EMS. My stake in this is the operations side; the politicians will address the finance side.

Comm. Bemis commented that people already working here are concerned about their jobs. I'm sure the County Commission will look at that closely.

Chief Allen said that is a concern of mine also and all involved. No one

wants to see someone lose a job. But it's too early in this stage of things for staffing discussions and until we do feasibility study its premature to jump to conclusions. This is a complex project. We are a large city and consolidation is a big project that will take some time to fully evaluate.

Comm. McManus said he understands the dispatching for the northern towns of the County is done by the County.

Chief Allen said that the County dispatches for all the towns, except one. All of the cities have their own centers.

Comm. McManus said I'm a Rochester native. Money is a concern. The people that oversee that operation while housed in the Police building are the Police and Fire Chief's and the City Manager. We have to think of the dollar and if this city can save money on this collaboration working together, its time to look at this. We want to keep the same service we have, and it could be that the County could give that to us.

Comm. Bemis said the Mayor is thinking of setting up a study group. I think he's in favor of this. I think it fair for me to say, without speaking out of turn that it's being looked at hard.

County Commissioner George Maglaras in the audience was invited to speak to this topic.

County Commissioner Maglaras thanked the Commission for allowing him to address the board. This matter is important to the people in the County and in Rochester. You may remember three years ago we invited the Mayors and City Managers to review a number of things we might be able to do together to save taxpayer dollars. Four to five things bubbled to the surface at that time, one of them being dispatch centers. Fast forward to today, the County dispatches for ten communities. Technology changes in recent years make regionalization a reality. This comes from 2005 and

Hurricane Katrina, 180 miles of devastation and all those people couldn't talk to one another. It was a debacle. The federal government made millions of dollars available for a regional approach of information sharing relating to crime and civil processes and consolidating communications.

The County Commissioners have been asked by the Mayor and your finance committee to pursue a proposal for the City to look at what it would look like for Rochester. This has been talked about for some time for the entire county over the past five or six years and it has been proven that consolidation can work, but the devil is in the details. We have asked Sheriff Dubois to work with your Chief on data to determine call volume, the nature of that volume for consultants at the County to look at. We'd have to look at the equipment you have to see if there are cost savings there in sharing that equipment. This is all being looked at by our consultants and hopefully in a short period of time after gathering the data, we can take advantage of new technologies that exist and have equal and better service to Rochester. That is the goal we are shooting for with costs savings. The tax cap in all three cities is not going away.

Comm. McManus commented we have equipment in the center. Is there a donation in kind for any equipment we give you?

County Commissioner Maglaras said the county dispatch is a per capita basis that the towns contribute to. In a perfect world if it all came through the

county having three separate centers would not be necessary. When our technical folk's review your equipment and look at your capacities and our capacities depending on the nature of any outstanding bonding issues you may have there is room for some form of credit back to the City as part of the process. That is a dynamic that will develop out of that review aspect.

No one wants to dismantle – that is shortsighted. Some of us believe that we can share resources in such a fashion that Rochester may be a backup for the county and vice versa. Major advances in technology across the country have made so you could dispatch from a living room because it is all done on the internet with wireless transmitters. I'm excited about the prospects. I think we can do it and save the taxpayer money.

Sheriff Dubois was invited to speak. He said Commissioner Maglaras summed it up with that the office has been asked to do. We look forward to taking part in this study. Chief Allen and I have already had productive meetings, sharing data. We will present a proposal to the county administration. Anything we can do to support that effort we look forward to working with you.

Comm. McManus inquired into current personnel.

Sheriff Dubois said the folks at the County have a good labor and management team. They are extremely sensitive to those types of issues. We are not at that point just yet. The staff

in Rochester is very attractive to anything the county is doing. They are a top notch group of people and we would obviously want to take advantage of that.

Comm. McManus thanked the County folks for coming.

D. Monthly Reports

1. Operations. Patrol had a productive month with ward meetings addressing quality of life issues. The fireworks ordinance being proposed was discussed. With the onset of warm weather foot patrols in the downtowns including Gonic and East Rochester are increasing, and this is something we plan to continue moving forward.

Other issues being discussed include panhandling and second hand dealers. Both issues are set for discussion at the next meeting of the Codes and Ordinances committee. Chief Allen said in particular the second hand dealer issue is something that has been under discussion for several months. He plans to address the committee to talk about potential changes we'd like them to consider.

In the support side of operations the Communications Center had an NCIC audit. Overall we did fine but there were some areas regarding background checks that have to be kept more up to date with NCIC standards that we have to get into compliance with.

The website for the retailers is up and running. Ten have signed on with

others expressing interest. We have stepped up our efforts in the area of shoplifting and will concealment, sending out a stronger no tolerance message to deter this activity. We are seeing short term results so far this year as compared to last year.

Officer Hayes is making great progress with the second annual Wings and Wheels event scheduled at SkyHaven on June 8, 2013. Pease is not hosting the air show this year so that may add to the festivities. We expect a turnout of several thousand. We also do not have a Presidential visit conflicting with our date this year. Tracy is doing a great job with this.

We held the final truancy diversion class this period, with three parents and four children attending. Two of the students are working towards obtaining their GED and the other two are regularly attending school. We have short term results for the first round. It is a little early to determine long term success.

Det. Gahan was selected as the City Employee of the Month for April, nominated by his coworker for his work with the truancy program and recent public service announcements he has directed and starred in.

Officer Funk will hold his DARE Graduation on April 19, 2013. Officer's Blair and Harding are continuing to work on the seatbelt challenge and a mock DWI event. The school also recently did a mock lock down to test school safety measures, which went well.

Again we had more than 300 participate in the Teen Night this period. The next one is set for Saturday April 6.

2. Administration. Dep. Chief Dumas said that financially we still look to be about \$59,000 to the good in our FY13 budget projections. As previously reported we did have some issues with vehicle maintenance to keep the fleet up and running. The Dispatch budget is also in the black, by a slim margin. We have had staffing shortages, leading to overtime shifts. This is a difficult job with stringent background requirements to get quality people in there. We continue to monitor this.

On the training side of operations we have historically done a lot of our firearms training at the end of the year. This year we are doing it mid-way through to get it done.

With the resignation of Officer DuChemin, we moved to the next guy in line from those you recently interviewed for consideration of the open position. He is being backgrounded at this time.

Officer Moore will graduate from the Academy next Friday at 2:00 P.M.

Comm. McManus commented that this Commission hasn't missed attending any of the graduations of the officers they have hired.

Officer Ducharme has been released to solo patrol. He will slide

into the patrol rotation in Officer duChemin's slot.

We will be filling the open dispatch position with a re hire. Specialist Bruce Daigle who recently retired has inquired about getting his job back. For us it's a win win.

The Citizen's Academy is in its fourth week. We are discussing elderly scams and internet crimes such as sexting. This is a good group from both communities. They ask a lot of good questions and are eager to learn.

Comm. McManus said that our FY14 budget proposal is at a zero increase. We have two SRO's; one in the Middle School and one in the High School. Given what has gone on around the country how do we look for keeping those positions?

Chief Allen said that the middle school SRO is funded through a task force grant, and has been for the past two years. Because of the injury sustained to our officer on the task force, we don't have plans to dedicate an additional person to the task force at this time. Therefore the funding that was made available by sending someone to the task force won't be this year. We have discussed the same with the City Manager and asked him to include the middle school SRO funding in this years operating budget as part of what he presents to the Council. He indicated that he would and it will be up to the council to decide on that funding from there.

Comm. McManus inquired how

many vehicles we budgeted for this year?

Chief Allen said that every year we forecast out about five years on how many to replace based on mileage and repair costs. We update that every year. This year we are looking at a total of four cars; three frontline and one backline. The cars are not a luxury. Our requests are based on operational need. Once the cars get to a certain number of miles the repair bills can be significant. In fact we saw it this year. A car we were going to trade, but didn't when our request for five cars was cut to four experienced major repair bills. We operate a lean fleet. It may appear to some to be large but with the number of calls for service and the demands, when we ask for four we need four. We are hopeful that the Council supports our request to fund the CIP. We eliminated our CIP in the issues and options portion of the zero increase mandate, but we are hoping the Council gives serious consideration to putting that back into the budget.

These cars are on the road most hours of a day, in and out subject to emergency driving. They have constant wear and tear than a normal passenger vehicle. Idle time and wear and tear result in higher repair costs past the mileage issue.

The Commission asked for a definition of the back line?

Chief Allen said it is the unmarked or lower profile fleet that is a mix of Ford Taurus and Ford Focus vehicles. The front line fleet is the Crown

Victorias. We had a the fleet maintenance sergeant do an analysis of three cars, pro and con, for the Dodge Charger, Chevy Caprice and the Ford Interceptor. Our recommendation moving from the Crown Victoria that is no longer being manufactured is the Chevy Caprice based overall on gas miles, equipment replacement and performance.

Comm. McManus asked if we get the vehicles, what about the light bars?

Chief Allen said we have light bars in our CIP request. The ones we have are ten years old, acquired through a Project54 grant. They are no longer being manufactured. You can always replace light bulbs but the computer that drives the light is no longer being made. We got our money's worth out of them.

Dep. Chief Dumas discussed the recent survey that we completed at ward meetings, on line and with cold calls. He said we were assisted by an intern from Spaulding High School, Brian Chick. Brian put together an analysis of what he saw and viewed and his understanding of what it meant into a power point, which was then shared with the Commission.

The image of the Department you always think you are doing a good job, so the survey results were pleasing. We didn't cherry pick the calls. They were random. The subquestions of what we can do to change the image and how we could improve, people were looking for response times and more police officers. That won't happen with

current resources. We can always improve but this gives us a great tool where and how to improve with the resources we have.

We've been working on the mindset to be more approachable and break down those barriers reminding people we are human and we do that with community outreach, program talks, DDACTS. The education component with the youth of the City is important. We asked Brian how he felt as a person, was it reflected in the numbers he was seeing. There is a lack of direction in the kids coming up. There is a component we need to focus on. The public wants us to put more emphasis on neighborhood patrols and drug enforcement.

Overall we are pleased with the results. That does not mean we can rest on our laurels. We are thankful for Brian putting this together.

The Commission requested a letter be drafted for their signature to Brian Chick.

Chief Allen thanked Brian Chick as well. This is an important project that provides us with a bench mark where we are at and the community perception of the service we provide and where we need to go moving forward. This helps us plan our goals and objectives and will enhance the process that we use.

Comm. Bemis inquired if it would be difficult to compare population and crime from seven years ago to today? It was noted that this could be done

easily. Comm. Winship said that the public understands some calls take longer and that we are doing an exceptional job with the resources we have.

We try to prioritize our service demands. Foster's is doing a story on our DDACTS efforts where we were in January 2012 and where we are today and is the program effective in the DDACTS area. We would say yes it was effective and the things that were uncovered from the survey is exactly what DDACTS aims to do - increase our presence in high crime areas and engage, be more friendly, have more presence that's what DDACTS does. We have a high motor vehicle presence in high crime/accident areas. The results we are seeing are in line with our crime prevention efforts moving forward and I am happy with the results and where we are going.

Comm. Bemis said he thought we were doing well with the Ward Officers, but now you are saying you are using these officers on the DDACTS.

Chief Allen clarified that DDACTS is one component of our overall crime prevention strategy. The Ward Program is in addition to that. DDACTS is concentrated but we don't ignore the remainder of the city. We still have 45 square miles to cover and maintain a presence. We focus DDACTS on hot spots of crime where it overlaps with high accidents. That is how you impact crime in that area. That is the methodology behind DDACTS.

Comm. Bemis said then it takes the officer outside of that Ward.

Chief Allen replied that DDACTS is not spending 24 hours a day there. Activity occurring on specific days of the week and times of the day drives when we are in the DDACTS location. That is the concept. When they are not in DDACTS they are focused on their Wards. It is a balancing act and we have to do both.

Comm. Bemis commented that since he was elected to the Commission the emails of complaints and concerns has reduced. You are doing a good job and I know a lot of Police Officers. It is all true that personality, being nice to people, pays off. It's getting back to the Council and they are aware we need more officers and this is a tool to do that.

6. CORRESPONDENCE:

Members of the Department, including the following were recognized this month. Jillian Hall thanks Off. Ouellette for his assistance with a ride along as part of her Leadership Seacoast Program. The Local Pride Oil Company thanks Off. Turner for her work on a bad check complaint. Sgt. Chris Cost is thanked by Frank Jones of New England College for his guest lecture presentation on crime scene photography and crime scene management to a group of Criminal Justice students. Dep. Chief Dumas, Diversion Coordinator Nicole Rodler and Crime Analyst Chelsey Zeruth are

thanked by St. Elizabeth Seton Kindergarten (Mrs. Freeman's class) for reading to the class. Chief Allen is thanked by the UNH Cooperative Extension for being a guest judge during the 2013 County Activities day. Anne Akerman of Gerry's Food Pantry thanks the Department for recent donations made to the pantry. John Tobin of NH Legal Assistance thanks Chief Allen for his support at the House Finance Committee budget meeting held in Rochester on March 18, 2013. Government Channel Coordinator Celeste Plaia thanks Diversion Coordinator Nicole Rodler and Juvenile Prosecutor Scott Loignon for participating in an informational program on juvenile prosecution and diversion airing on channel 26.

Comm. McManus noted an email he received regarding Chief Allen working night shifts patrolling the city and dedicated to the citizens and taxpayers. Comm. McManus personally thanked the Chief for doing an excellent job.

Comm. Bemis concurred. He said people are talking about it; seeing you out in the community at night and are impressed by that. He said I realize you have a family and that this comes with the job, but the merchants appreciate it. People are seeing more than you think. Thank you for your hard work.

Chief Allen said I appreciate your comments. The rest of my senior management team does the same thing. They work night meetings and are doing some of the same things I am. It's beneficial for me to have the

opportunity to engage the officers and keeps me in touch and relevant and current with what officers are experiencing on the street today. That it's appreciated by so many is great, but it gives me a first hand look and it's an important thing for me to do.

Comm. Winship said he had an email from Communications Specialist Leonard that he was asked to bring to the meeting. The Specialists would like to have involvement in the regionalization discussions.

Chief Allen responded that he has regular meetings with the staff; monthly department meetings, as well as weekly meetings with various members of the Department including the unions. We try to get a good cross section of civilian and sworn. There has been communication already and I had a lengthy discussion with the head of the dispatch union last week. I'm transparent on this issue and we will continue to keep them abreast as conversations are had on this and it develops further. Involving them is something I support doing and I think it will add value to the discussion.

Comm. Winship requested that the dispatch letter be added to the record.

7. INFORMATION:

- Information Other; enclosed with Agenda: No discussion.

**8. NON-PUBLIC SESSION:
(Pursuant to: RSA 91-A:3)**

Commissioner McManus MOVED to enter a nonpublic session at 8:29 P.M. pursuant to RSA 91-A: 3, paragraph II, section A (personnel) and section E (legal.) SECOND by Comm. Bemis. The motion PASSED by roll call vote with Comm. Winship, Comm. Bemis and Comm. McManus all voting in the affirmative. The non-public session closed at 10:15 P.M. on a MOTION by Comm. McManus, SECOND by Comm. Winship and PASSED unanimously.

9. ADJOURNMENT:

Comm. Bemis MOVED to adjourn. SECOND by Comm. Winship at 10:19 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Rebecca J. Warburton,
Secretary