

REGULAR MEETING OF WESTFIELD POLICE COMMISSION

WESTFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS

January 12, 2021

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The Westfield Police Commission meeting was called to order at 5:00 pm on Monday, January 12, 2021 via remote participation and broadcast on Channel 15.

Roll Call: Leonard Osowski – Present
Felix Otero – Present
Richard Sypek – Present

Approval and Release of Minutes: Commissioner Otero made a motion to approve the minutes dated December 17, 2020. Commissioner Sypek seconded that motion.

Leonard Osowski – Yes – Felix Otero – Yes - Richard Sypek - Yes

Open Participation: Due to the emergency order by Governor Baker’s office regarding Covid-19, the public participation portion of the meeting will not be held.

Old Business: None

New Business:

A.) Interview three candidates to promote to the position of Lieutenant, effective January 16, 2021:

Commissioner Osowski said that the candidates have the option to both be in the meeting while the other is interviewed, however historically only the candidate being interviewed is present. All candidates agreed that they would rather only the candidate being interviewed to be present.

Sergeant Douglas LaValley: Commissioner Osowski asked Sergeant LaValley what the key to success when communicating with the public is. Sergeant LaValley said the key to communicating with the public is being transparent with your role and having empathy about everyone’s life and where they are in it, being able to hear all sides of a story and being able to listen without assuming what you may see. Commissioner Sypek asked where the role of fact gathering falls into the success when communicating. Sergeant LaValley said having the correct facts and being well informed is the first step. The second step is gathering facts from others and being open to different perspectives. You have to be able to mesh those 2 things together. Commissioner Sypek asked Sergeant LaValley if he would prepare questions, answers and a location in advance to conduct a press conference. Sergeant LaValley said he would gather as much information as was available prior and he would have it in a comfortable and controlled environment. Having the right information and being able to admit when you don’t have the right answers is important. Commissioner Otero asked Sergeant LaValley to explain how he organizes, plans and prioritizes his work. Sergeant LaValley said he is a very meticulous person. He has been this way his whole life. He can be organized to a fault sometimes. He typically prepares himself every day going into work, understanding and knowing things that are going on within the community. He communicates with his fellow officers and shift supervisors at shift change to understand what he may have to prepare for in the upcoming shift. He thinks everyone has their own system. He has a set of shift notes he uses after he has entered the attendance. You also have to be flexible. Commissioner Sypek asked Sergeant LaValley how often he communicates with his supervisors. Sergeant LaValley said he does this almost

once a day. Commissioner Sypek asked Sergeant LaValley how his relationship is with officers who work below him. Sergeant LaValley said it is very good. He said he has made more of an effort since becoming a sergeant to get to know the officers below him on more of a personal level. He tries to understand the situations that they might be going through especially during this past year. He considers himself as someone anyone can approach with a situation or question. He wants to be able to help everyone succeed in their career and make their job easier. Commissioner Sypek asked Sergeant LaValley what the key to developing a good team is. Sergeant LaValley said the key to building a good team is being transparent, being a good communicator and clarifying yourself when necessary. You have to strike a balance between the needs of your officers and the department. He encourages a proactive approach in his officers. He gives his officers praise, yet also will notify them if they have done something wrong to help them become better officers. He thinks both of these things are equally as important. Commissioner Osowski asked Sergeant LaValley how he has encouraged volunteering within the police department. Sergeant LaValley said he was in the community police unit for approximately 9 years. One of the things they did during that time was attending community events to develop and maintain relationships with members of the community. He said he took pride in that because he was dealing with people in a much different way than just a law enforcement role. He encourages others to get involved in different units within the department. Commissioner Sypek asked Sergeant LaValley what volunteer work he has done within the station in the last 24 months. Sergeant LaValley said being on the midnight shift is tough because he is usually sleeping during the day and he also has 4 children who are involved in many different activities. There is nothing big that comes to his mind at the moment. He is always open to helping out. Within the community he is always involved with his kid's athletics and he also belongs to a bereavement group for parents of still born children and he has worked with this group and has given speeches to medical students on behalf of this group. Commissioner Otero asked Sergeant LaValley if he has ever had to discipline an officer for violating department rules and if so, please explain the situation and process. Sergeant LaValley said fortunately he has not had anything major he has had to deal with. There have been some issues with report writing or procedures. Usually he will check with other supervisors or officers who were involved first and has only had to have a conversation about it with the person to correct the situation. Commissioner Sypek asked Sergeant LaValley how long he has been a sergeant. Sergeant LaValley said he has been a sergeant for 3 years. Commissioner Sypek asked Sergeant LaValley to explain the difference between a sergeant and a lieutenant. Sergeant LaValley said there are a lot of similarities as far as supervisory roles. A lieutenant who runs a patrol shift is responsible for communicating the mission and expectations of the department. You have to maintain a sense of morale within the unit. The sergeants deal more with the public and going out on calls. The lieutenant also needs to listen to the sergeants and go to higher management when necessary. A lieutenant also advocates for the officers to get them the training and equipment they need. Commissioner Sypek asked Sergeant LaValley to explain the difference in the administrative roles in both positions. Sergeant LaValley said they both have a responsibility to make sure policies and procedures are being followed. The lieutenant has to keep a records of officer's attendance and overtime in accordance with the department's policies and procedures. A lieutenant is also responsible for maintaining inspections of equipment. A lieutenant also is responsible for scheduling the shift assignments. Commissioner Sypek asked Sergeant LaValley what he has learned from his lieutenant. Sergeant LaValley said he has learned the importance of continually training people, to be flexible, how to be a better listener, how to set an example and how to be a team builder and leader. Commissioner Osowski asked Sergeant LaValley what the most challenging part of training staff about proper police work and procedures. Sergeant LaValley said the most challenging part is that policies and procedures are continually changing and sometimes by the time you have everyone up to speed, the outside or internal environment changes so that those procedures need to change again. You have to be flexible and recognize that that is going to happen. Commissioner Otero noted that Sergeant LaValley mentioned that there is constant change. He asked Sergeant LaValley how he

handles a policy that is changed that his subordinate may know not know of. Sergeant LaValley said that typically, when a policy or procedure changes, they try to notify as many people as they can as soon as possible. That would be done in a roll call setting. Over the last year, they have put emails out and spoke to officers individually to be sure they are up to date on all changes to policies and procedures. As a sergeant or a lieutenant it is your responsibly to be sure everyone is following all of the proper policies and procedures and to work individually with any officer that needs assistance. Commissioner Otero presented the following scenario to Sergeant LaValley: Dispatch receives a call from an individual who states "my friend called and stated they did not want to live anymore and was going to kill themselves with a firearm". The caller supplies the name and address of the friend who does live in Westfield. They also describe the vehicle their friend drives. The caller lastly states their friend has a connection to the Worcester area. Commissioner Otero then went on to ask if an officer responded to the call and the subject was not home and the vehicle was not in the driveway, how he would proceed as the shift commander. Sergeant LaValley said he would start by hoping the correct information was taken during the call and verify that information with in house records and RMV records. You would get the vehicle description along with the registration information and a description of the person out to all of the officers working that evening and surrounding areas along with the Worcester Police Department. You would want to see if that police department had any dealings with this individual to gather as much information on the subject as possible. You would want to look for any family or contacts this individual may have along with if they have any access to firearms. It's about gathering as much information as possible and getting it out to the officers. Commissioner Sypek asked Sergeant LaValley if he understands the fact pattern of the call. The call comes in someone wants to kill themselves and they may have a firearm. You go to the address and the person and the vehicle are not there. There isn't a lot of information. The original caller is calling from out of state. What would he do next as the shift commander? Sergeant LaValley said he missed that part of the question where it was stated the caller was calling from out of state. He said you would have to be sure no one was there and gather together any special response team members that are on staff at the time and any who may not be working. You will also have to be sure you approach that house safely. You also need to be sure that person is not really in the house and already harmed themselves. Commissioner Sypek said this has already been done. What would the next steps be? Sergeant LaValley said he would put out a bolo for the vehicle. He would verify all the information and the callers information with dispatch incase they need to contact the caller again. He would ask the caller if there is any further information they can think of to help find the person and the past history. They would also need to verify who this person is who is calling. Commissioner Sypek asked Sergeant LaValley if he would take any further investigative action regarding the subject possibly having a gun. Sergeant LaValley said he would check to see if the person was issued a firearms license and if they have any history with firearms. Commissioner Sypek asked Sergeant LaValley if he would try to get the subjects cell phone number. Sergeant LaValley said he would and he would try to call the person and do an emergency ping on that cell phone. Commissioner Sypek asked Sergeant LaValley how he would communicate this information within the community. Sergeant LaValley said he could do an emergency call out to the community, but they would definitely reach out to a mental health worker. Surrounding towns and departments would also be notified. Commissioner Sypek asked Sergeant LaValley if he was aware that he could be the commander of the department at that time. Sergeant LaValley said he is aware. Commissioner Sypek asked Sergeant LaValley if he has ever been disciplined by the department in the past, what has he learned? Sergeant LaValley said he has learned how to understand the situation, to listen to the message that was passed on to him and to become a better person and police officer. He also learned to use it as motivation to be a better police officer and supervisor. Commissioner Sypek asked Sergeant LaValley on a scale of 1-5, 5 being the best, how does he rate his ability to accept responsibility for his actions and admitting fault when necessary. Sergeant LaValley said he rates himself a 5. Sergeant LaValley thanked the commissioners for their time and consideration.

Sergeant Scott Phelon: Commissioner Osowski asked Sergeant Phelon what he feels the key to success when communicating with the public is. Sergeant Phelon said he believes it is being reasonable and trying to do your best to see things from their point of view as well as your own and to try and put yourself in their shoes, especially if the person is the victim. Commissioner Sypek asked Sergeant Phelon if he was called upon to give a press conference how he would handle it. Sergeant Phelon said he would give them as much information as he could without compromising the investigation. You would also have to explain if and why you need them to clear the area. Commissioner Otero asked Sergeant Phelon to explain how he organizes, plans and prioritizes his work. Sergeant Phelon said any major issues need to be put first. You then move down based on the seriousness of the task. You have to move down the list accordingly. Commissioner Sypek asked Sergeant Phelon how he prioritizes his work now. Sergeant Phelon said he is currently assigned to the detective bureau. He has to start his shift by checking to see if there are any pressing issues. He also starts his shift by reviewing the daily logs to see if there is anything he needs to assign to himself or another detective. He meets with his fellow detectives to see what they have for the day and to see if they need any assistance. He then moves on to his own cases to see if there is anything time sensitive. That is the priority. He would then go on to any older cases. He is currently only working on a few cases. He typically has 5-10 cases at a time. As a supervisor, he is responsible for other things within the bureau so his case load is smaller than a detective without a supervisory role. Commissioner Sypek asked Sergeant Phelon how he manages not only the cases he is working on, but also the cases the other detectives on his shift are working on. Sergeant Phelon said he usually keeps track of everyone's case load. If someone has a major case going, you would not assign them anything else. Each detective specializes in a certain area, so as long as they are available, the cases are assigned accordingly. He communicates with the other supervisor in the detective bureau as well to be sure the cases are being assigned fairly. Commissioner Sypek asked Sergeant Phelon what the key to developing a good team is. Sergeant Phelon said he thinks a lot of what he just said is important. He tries to see people's strength and to put them in the best place to succeed. Commissioner Sypek asked Sergeant Phelon how mentoring fits into his day. Sergeant Phelon said that is a big part to try and teach fellow officers as they go and help them improve their weaknesses. Ideally you want to put people in the position they want to be in, but sometimes you need to push them out of their comfort zone. Commissioner Osowski asked Sergeant Phelon how he has encouraged volunteerism within the police department. Sergeant Phelon said he participated in the "No Shave November" fundraiser for Shriner's Hospital and one of the detectives runs the cadet program and they do an annual toy drive for local families. He encourages this event. Commissioner Otero asked Sergeant Phelon if he himself has tried to generate volunteerism. Sergeant Phelon said he has previously coached, but he has 3 small children at home, so he does not have a whole lot of free time to dedicate to those types of activities. Commissioner Sypek asked Sergeant Phelon if he has done any volunteering around the station. Sergeant Phelon said he has not. Commissioner Otero asked Sergeant Phelon if he has ever had to discipline staff for a violation of department rules and regulations. Sergeant Phelon said he has been lucky. He has only had to speak to an officer about minor things. Commissioner Sypek asked Sergeant Phelon to explain the difference between a sergeant and a lieutenant within the department. Sergeant Phelon said for the most part in the patrol division, the lieutenant makes the line-up for the year. The lieutenant is inside all the time, whereas the sergeant is out on the street. The lieutenant is in charge of how the shift is run. Commissioner Sypek asked Sergeant Phelon if he understands as a lieutenant he would be the unit leader. Sergeant Phelon said he does understand this. Commissioner Sypek asked Sergeant Phelon how he would channel his subordinate's ideas. Sergeant Phelon said he would be open to it and evaluate it to see if it's something that is possible and beneficial to enact. It would depend on how major of change it is. If it is not a major change, you could try it out yourself. If it is a major change, you would bring it up the chain of command. This happens a lot at staff meetings. Commissioner Sypek asked Sergeant Phelon what he has learned from Lieutenant Dickinson. Sergeant Phelon said Lieutenant

Dickinson has been very good and open to any ideas he has brought before him. They talk about it and see if it is something worth doing. He has been very open to discussing different things. Sergeant Phelon thinks this is an excellent trait to have. He and Lieutenant Dickinson have a great relationship and they work well together. They have different styles and it works well. Commissioner Osowski asked Sergeant Phelon what he feels the most challenging part of training staff in proper police work procedures. Sergeant Phelon said with the way things are right now, it is important to be able to correct any mistakes without completely being too negative and discouraging. You have to try to use minor mistakes as a teaching moment instead of being angry and too negative to move an officer in the right direction instead of pushing them to a jaded and negative attitude. That would lead to worse performance. Commissioner Otero presented the following scenario to Sergeant Phelon: Dispatch receives a call from an individual who states "my friend called and stated they did not want to live anymore and was going to kill themselves with a firearm". The caller supplies the name and address of the friend who does live in Westfield. They also describe the vehicle their friend drives. The caller lastly states their friend has a connection to the Worcester area. Commissioner Otero then went on to ask if an officer responded to the call and the subject was not home and the vehicle was not in the driveway, how he would proceed as the shift commander. Sergeant Phelon said he would need to be absolutely sure the person is not there and once that is complete, he would put the call out locally over WMLEC, which is a channel dispatch can use to talk with other departments. Depending on the time frame, he might put out a state wide broadcast on CJIS. If they received more specific details from the caller about where the subject was looking to go, they could also contact that department to look for the person. Commissioner Sypek asked Sergeant Phelon what other steps he would take and what else he would do to find their location. Sergeant Phelon said he would contact dispatch to put a ping on the cell phone. He said that sometimes a ping can give such a large radius as to where the phone is that it doesn't always work. He would also look to get more information from the caller to see if they know when the person left or where they may be going. If they have information as to where the person may be going, they can try to get someone over there to locate the person. Commissioner Sypek asked Sergeant Phelon what he would do about the firearm issue. Sergeant Phelon said he would put that out to any other agencies that might come in contact with the individual. He could also check records to see if the person has a firearm. Even without a record of it, they may still be in possession of a firearm. Commissioner Sypek asked Sergeant if he has ever been disciplined by the department in the past, what he has learned. Sergeant Phelon said he has not been disciplined. Commissioner Sypek asked Sergeant Phelon on a scale of 1-5, 5 being the best, how he rates his ability to accept responsibility for his actions and admitting fault when necessary. Sergeant Phelon said he rates himself a 4. He has had some minor cruiser accidents and if it's his fault, it's his fault. Trying to blame someone else is not helpful. Sergeant Phelon thanked the commission for considering him.

Sergeant Gibbons: Commissioner Osowski asked Sergeant Gibbons what he feels the key to success when communicating with the public is. Sergeant Gibbons said he thinks honesty and transparency are the most important keys to success when dealing with the public. He said that starts mutual respect to have an open dialog. Commissioner Otero asked Sergeant Gibbons to explain how he organizes, plans and prioritizes his work on a regular day. Sergeant Gibbons said for him personally his family comes first. He said that is very important in any career. From there, he would put other officers ahead of himself. He said when he was a patrolman he had 2 situations that stood out to him about his superior officers. One was when he was working a road detail job. The sergeant that day who was handing out the assignments took the worst position and let the officers who were below him take the better spots which would be in the shade. The other situation was when he was working on a detail with a different sergeant and the sergeant was setting up lunch times for each officer working the detail to take a lunch break. The sergeant put himself last. Those 2 instances have stuck with him. He believes in order for the department to move in the right direction there needs to be mutual respect between the officer and

the superior officer. That is achieved through leading by example. He would take care of the people underneath him. Commissioner Otero asked Sergeant Gibbons how he organizes his day at work. Sergeant Gibbons said he is in the community service unit so when he starts his day, one of his first responsibilities is to do the roster for the next day. From there, he hands out the road details for the day. His other tasks come from his direct supervisor. During the shift he supplements patrol as need be. He tries to be a team player. Commissioner Sypek asked Sergeant Gibbons what shift he is on now. Sergeant Gibbons said he works the 4-12 shift. Commissioner Sypek asked Sergeant Gibbons who his immediate supervisor is. Sergeant Gibbons said that his immediate supervisor is Lieutenant Bard. Commissioner Sypek asked Sergeant Gibbons if he has many changes from day to day in terms of organization and planning. Sergeant Gibbons said every day is pretty much the same regarding the start of his day. Throughout the day, since he is in community policing, he does a lot of follow up calls from the day before regarding domestic violence calls and other similar calls. Commissioner Sypek asked Sergeant Gibbons what the difference between a lieutenant and a sergeant are within the department. Sergeant Gibbons said a sergeant works directly with the officers on the street. He oversees how they are interacting with the public and on calls. The lieutenant oversees the entire shift. He has the full responsibility of the sergeants and patrolmen underneath him. The lieutenant is not on the street working directly with the public. Commissioner Sypek asked Sergeant Gibbons if he understands he would be taking on a much bigger role as a unit leader. Sergeant Gibbons said he does understand this. Commissioner Sypek asked Sergeant Gibbons how he would handle new ideas from his subordinates if he was a lieutenant. Sergeant Gibbons said he is 100% behind this. He said he is open to thinking outside of the box. When he was in patrol for 2 years as a sergeant there were incidents that were occurring at the Hubbard Street basketball courts. People were coming over from other cities and causing problems. They had extra patrol units watching that area for about a week. Two officers came up to Sergeant Gibbons and asked if they could go out there in plain clothes to identify the individuals and see what is going on out there. He was 100% supportive of this and within a week or so after that the problems stopped. Commissioner Sypek asked Sergeant Gibbons who handles discipline within his unit right now. Sergeant Gibbons said his lieutenant does. Commissioner Sypek asked Sergeant Gibbons if he understands that would now be his role and if he has any problems with that. Sergeant Gibbons said he does understand it would be his role and he has no problem with it. He said he believes in progressive discipline. He does not feel you should start right off with a suspension. He said you first need to speak to the individual to find out why he or she is making the mistakes. Commissioner Osowski asked Sergeant Gibbons how he has encouraged volunteerism within the department. Sergeant Gibbons said one of the aspects of community policing is doing a lot of outreach within the community. They have done 2 toy drives that received recognition in the paper and from the community. They also did a Thanksgiving turkey hand out at the Boys and Girls Club. Personally, on his own he has done some things that have never really been brought up. Last year, an individual within the community came down with covid. Sergeant Gibbons and another officer within his unit took it upon themselves to buy the individual's entire family dinner with their own money and brought it to his house for his family. There were 2 other occasions when he was a patrolman. On one occasion, he responded to a trespassing call with another patrolman. The call location was at a gas station. They went and talked to the individual who was sleeping in the carwash. Obviously he was down on his luck. Rather than just brush him off and tell him to leave, Sergeant Gibbons and the other officer bought the individual Dunkin Donuts and got him a ride to his destination. Another time he responded to a call for a man in the Stop and Shop bus stop. It was raining. Sergeant Gibbons said he realizes that you can't treat everyone like they are a criminal. He spoke to this individual and realized he was also down on his luck and having a really bad night. Sergeant Gibbons bought the man dinner. Commissioner Otero asked Sergeant Gibbons if he has ever had to discipline staff for violating department rules and regulations. Sergeant Gibbons said there was an instance around 2019 with 2 officers on his shift. It was brought to his attention by his lieutenant and he was asked to address it, which he did. He sat with both officers and they talked it out. There

were no further issues after that. Commissioner Sypek asked Sergeant Gibbons what the key to developing a good team is. Sergeant Gibbons said it goes back to mutual respect. If the officers know he respects them and the work they do, then he believes they will respect him back. He said when he was in patrol one of the things he learned early on was when you respect your commanders, you want to do a good job for them. Not because they tell you to, but because you want to. Commissioner Osowski asked Sergeant Gibbons what the most challenging part of training staff in proper policies and procedures is. Sergeant Gibbons said getting the staff as a whole on board. There are many different personalities. You need everyone to buy into it. If you have mutual respect with them, they will be more on board. Commissioner Otero presented the following scenario to Sergeant Gibbons: Dispatch receives a call from an individual who states "my friend called and stated they did not want to live anymore and was going to kill themselves with a firearm". The caller supplies the name and address of the friend who does live in Westfield. They also describe the vehicle their friend drives. The caller lastly states their friend has a connection to the Worcester area. Commissioner Otero then went on to ask if an officer responded to the call and the subject was not home and the vehicle was not in the driveway, how he would proceed as the shift commander. Sergeant Gibbons said he would first advise his officers to make entry into the house. Just because the car is not there, does not mean the individual is not in the home. If the individual was definitely not in the home, he would then have the cell phone pinged to try and get a location. He would also put out a bolo for the vehicle. He would have dispatch call the Worcester Police Department and the state police to put out a bolo. Commissioner Sypek asked Sergeant Gibbons what he would do about the firearm. Sergeant Gibbons said he would run the individual through our IMC system to see if they have an LTC and if not he would run the person through NCIC to see if there are any firearms registered to the individual. Commissioner Sypek asked Sergeant Gibbons if he is familiar with WMLEC. Sergeant Gibbons said he is. He said he would have a broadcast put out over that. Commissioner Sypek asked Sergeant Gibbons if he had ever been disciplined by the department in the past, and if so, what did he learn? Sergeant Gibbons said he has not been disciplined. He did have an incident with a traffic accident. He was 100% at fault and he took the blame for it. Commissioner Sypek asked Sergeant Gibbons on a scale of 1-5, 5 being the best, how he rates his ability to accept responsibility for his actions and admitting fault when necessary. Sergeant Gibbons said he rates himself a 5. He said he takes 100% accountability for his actions. He feels you will never grow as an officer if you don't accept responsibility and learn from your mistakes.

Chief Valliere said he would like the Captains to speak to the commission before he does. He doesn't want their opinions to be affected by his.

Captain Pitoniak said all 3 candidates did a great job. All of the sergeants brought up good points. They all have great strengths. They all have the time on the job and time being a sergeant. They are all educated. When he was listening to the interviews he was amazed at Sergeant Gibbon's answers. They were spot on. The other sergeants had great answers too, but Sergeant Gibbons is at the end of the pile right now. Captain Pitoniak said this is a hard decision. He said Sergeant LaValley has an education and more time on the job, however Sergeant Phelon has an education as well and more time as a sergeant. Only Sergeant Gibbons has done any volunteer work within the department, but he also likes that Sergeant LaValley is part of the support group he spoke of. Captain Pitoniak said he believes Sergeant Phelon will be the best fit for this position.

Captain McCabe said that his retirement date is April 28, 2021, so his response is untethered. He said his decision goes back to a question that some answered well and some not so well. The question was how you would rate yourself on a scale of 1-5 of your ability to take responsibility. He said as you move forward in this career you have to lead with the confidence of the people who are underneath you. You have to learn by your mistakes and take responsibility for your mistakes. When you talk about team

building, as stated by Sergeant Gibbons, you team build by setting your own example and making sure your house is clean. He said all 3 candidates are likable people. He said that Sergeant LaValley said he would take 100% responsibility for his actions, but Captain McCabe does not see that as being what Sergeant LaValley does. Captain McCabe said he has been in a disciplinary position since 2008 and knows that you have to take responsibility for your actions. If you are not willing to do that, you cannot lead. That being said, Sergeant Phelon and Sergeant Gibbons accept responsibility for their actions. That being said he sees the two of them being in the best position to be able to lead the department as a lieutenant. His first vote would go to Sergeant Phelon. The reason he isn't suggesting Sergeant Gibbons is because he knows Sergeant Gibbons likes to be in the heart of the action and he isn't sure if he's ready to be sitting behind a desk.

Chief Valliere said he thinks all 3 individuals gave excellent interviews. He thinks all 3 could do the job. He wants to stress the fact that Captain McCabe has 12 years as a lieutenant. Captain Pitoniak was a lieutenant for 11 years. Chief Valliere was a lieutenant for 13 years. They know better than anyone what is needed to be in that position. He too was shocked by Sergeant LaValley's answer to his ability to be responsible for his actions. Chief Valliere said there has been a number of incidents that he himself has personally documented since 2017. He has tried to talk to Sergeant LaValley about it and he has habitually never stepped up. He said as stated by Sergeant Gibbons, you have to learn from your mistakes, step up, own it and move on from there. He said he has had times when he was a lieutenant and a captain where a supervisor would come into his office and explain a situation that has happened with an officer. The supervisor suggested to the officer to come in and talk to him. Usually when he sits down with the officer, they get constructive and move on from there. He hasn't had that luck with Sergeant LaValley. He said Sergeant Phelon gave a good interview, but he has some growing to do in the patrol side of things. Chief Valliere said he only feels this way because Sergeant Phelon has been in the detective bureau. Chief Valliere said he thinks Sergeant Gibbons gave a great interview and he has no doubt that he can do the job, however he thinks Sergeant Gibbons needs more time. Chief Valliere said his choice for this position is Sergeant Phelon.

Commissioner Osowski said he thinks all 3 sergeants did a great job. His vote is for Sergeant Phelon. He said that the chief and the captains are there every day and he trusts their opinions.

Commissioner Otero said that he thinks all 3 sergeants gave excellent interviews. He agrees with Captain McCabe and Chief Valliere regarding Sergeant LaValley's response. He would never have expected him to give the response he did. Commissioner Otero was disappointed in that answer. He said Sergeant Gibbons is not making this easy. He said Sergeant Gibbons was amazing and has a huge future ahead of himself. He was very impressed with his interview. He said all 3 did well. Commissioner Otero said that his vote is for Sergeant Phelon.

Commissioner Sypek said that all 3 sergeants did an outstanding job. They are all qualified. He said he has spent a lot of time researching their files and spoke to as many people as he could about each sergeant. He said he was very impressed with Sergeant Gibbon's answers. He said Sergeant Phelon nailed the hypothetical question. He said Sergeant LaValley has a lot of experience, but he has to lean on what Captain McCabe said on the issue of accountability and responsibility. He said he knows Sergeant LaValley is very capable, but when Commissioner Sypek reviewed his file and spoke to people within the station, that answer wasn't what he was looking for. Commissioner Sypek said these candidates will be before the commission again. When Captain McCabe retires, it is going to open up more positions within the department very shortly. Commissioner Sypek said he is going to have to lean on the experience of the chief and the captains and his vote is for Sergeant Phelon.


Commissioner Sypek made a motion to promote Sergeant Scott Phelon to the position of lieutenant for the Westfield Police Department effective January 16, 2021. Commissioner Otero seconded that motion.

Leonard Osowski – Yes – Felix Otero – Yes - Richard Sypek - Yes

Announcement of Next Regular Meeting: The next meeting of the Westfield Police Commission will be held on Tuesday, February 9, 2021.

Motion to Adjourn: At 6:42 pm Commissioner Otero made a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Sypek seconded that motion.

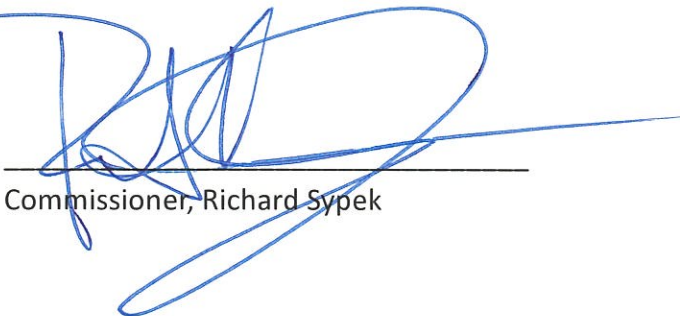
Leonard Osowski – Yes – Felix Otero – Yes - Richard Sypek - Yes



Commissioner, Leonard Osowski



Commissioner, Felix Otero



Commissioner, Richard Sypek

APPROVED FOR RELEASE ON

2/9/21