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REGULAR MEETING OF WESTFIELD POLICE COMMISSION
WESTFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS
April 13, 2021

The Westfield Police Commission meeting was called to order at 5:30 pm on Tuesday, April 13, 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 March 9, 2021. 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.) Appoint Retired Officer William Ullrich as a Special Police Officer: Commissioner Otero made a motion to appoint William Ullrich as a Special Police Officer for the Westfield Police Department. Commissioner Sypek seconded that motion.

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

B.) Appoint WSU Police Officer Sean Coughlin as a Special Police Officer: Commissioner Otero made a motion to appoint Sean Coughlin as a Special Police Officer for the Westfield Police Department. Commissioner Sypek seconded that motion.

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

C.) Interview and Appoint one Acting Police Captain:

Lt. Eric Hall: Commissioner Osowski asked Lieutenant Eric Hall why he wants this position. Lt. Hall said that throughout his career he has always sought to get promoted and climb the ladder when he could. He sees the direction the department is going in and he wants to be a part of it in a more meaningful way. Commissioner Osowski asked Lt. Hall why the commission should choose him for this position. Lt. Hall said if the commission looks at his track record within the department they will see that he has done as much as he can within the department with every opportunity that has been given to him. He has worked in patrol and community policing. He is able to work with the community. He is one of the department’s hostage negotiators. He also works within the community with other organizations such

as the YMCA and Noble Hospital. He thinks he has demonstrated a good commitment to the community. He has also worked within the department in positions that required knowledge of budgeting and supervising personnel. He thinks he would be an excellent fit to move into this role. Commissioner Otero asked Lt. Hall what accomplishments in his law enforcement career is he most proud of. Lt. Hall said a few years back he was selected as one of Business West's 40 under 40. They select 40 individuals from the community that exemplify strong leadership and strength in their field. There have been a lot of things throughout his career that he's proud of but the thing that made him most proud was working with the community. Commissioner Otero asked Lt. Hall what he sees as some of the biggest issues facing the department. Lt. Hall said there are many issues. He said just turning on the television you see there is a big disconnect between the public and police. He said he doesn't think it's primarily the fault of police departments but he feels there is a lot police can do to reconnect with the community. Commissioner Sypek asked Lt. Hall what challenges he expects going forward in light of threats to defund the police. Lt. Hall said he does not completely disagree with one end of the spectrum of defunding the police. He doesn't believe the police should be defunded, but he thinks they should be supplemented. There are things that police officers are clearly not trained to do. They have basic training on recognizing mental health issues, but they are not trained to fix those issues. They have training in recognizing drug use, but not fixing those issues. The police have always just acted as a liaison to other agencies. Some other states have members of other agencies working in the departments to assist the police with these types of issues. They are able to offer the help to citizens that officers are not equipped to provide. So while he doesn't believe in taking money away from the departments, he believes the departments should be funded to make partnerships with other organizations that can pick up where policing leaves off. Commissioner Sypek asked Lt. Hall how he anticipates handling the challenges of recruiting new officers. Lt. Hall said he sees officers leaving early across the country in light of what has been happening in policing. He said it's not going to be easy. He said he feels they need to branch out more and bring in more diverse candidates. He said he doesn't necessarily mean ethnicity, but more social service type people who want to do a little bit of both. Commissioner Sypek asked Lt. Hall what he has done personally within the department to promote a better working environment. Lt. Hall said he has done a lot through his time in community policing. There are several units within the department and there's always friction between the units. He tried to foster the team work approach within the units and still does that now. Commissioner Sypek asked Lt. Hall what his thoughts are on encouraging volunteerism within the department. Lt. Hall said it's tough to volunteer directly for the department because there are sometimes liability issues, but there is a lot of volunteerism that goes on outside of the department. He said he has been on the board of directors for the YMCA for around 15 years now. He has co-chaired the ball for Noble Hospital twice. Within the department the patrolman have put together no shave November to benefit Shriners Hospital. Commissioner Sypek asked Lt. Hall on a scale of 1-5 with a 5 being the best, how does he rate himself on accepting responsibility. Lt. Hall said he thinks everyone would like to rate themselves a 5 but he doesn't think that's accurate. He said he is probably around a 4, but there is always room for improvement. He said everyone including himself makes mistakes. He thinks accepting responsibility when called out not only by a supervisor, but also from someone who is below you in rank is huge when gaining trust within the department.

Lt. Stephan Dickinson: Commissioner Osowski asked Lt. Dickinson why he wants this position. Lt. Dickinson said he has worked with the Chief when he was a detective in the narcotics division. They both had the same goal and worked very well together. More recently the Chief set forth to have a more professional work place within the department with a limited budget. Lt. Dickinson said he is of the same mind set. He believes as a captain he would be able to go further with that not only working with the Chief but with the department. Commissioner Osowski asked Lt. Dickinson why the commission should choose him for this position. Lt. Dickinson said he believes he is a great candidate. He has 16 years of supervision experience in the department, from a sergeant to a lieutenant. He has worked in special

units. He believes he has the respect of his peers. He promotes teamwork and he thinks he would be a good candidate. Commissioner Otero asked Lt. Dickinson what accomplishments in his law enforcement career is he most proud of. Lt. Dickinson said he is proud of quite a few, but there are a couple that come right to his mind. Shortly after being hired in the department, there was an opportunity to become a community police officer. He applied for it and was selected for the position. He was the first off site community police officer. That was one of his first major accomplishments. He is also very proud of his years working in the narcotics division. He has been a supervisor of specialized units including the detective and community police divisions. In addition, he has assisted inside the building by fixing up the classroom and the detective bureau. Commissioner Otero asked Lt. Dickinson what he thinks are some of the biggest issues facing the department now and in the future. Lt. Dickinson said that the department is going to face pressure from the reform bill going forward. He thinks that may be a hurdle that the department will eventually have to overcome. Commissioner Sypek asked Lt. Dickinson what challenges he expects to see going forward in light of the threat of defunding police departments in regards to recruiting new officers. Lt. Dickinson said he feels if the department was not a civil service department they would have a larger pool of candidates to choose from. He said he has in the past worked closely with Westfield State University. They have a large criminal justice program. He had interns he recruited from the college. He thinks that would be a great asset and an avenue for recruitment. Commissioner Sypek asked Lt. Dickinson what he has done to promote a better work environment within the last 10 years. Lt. Dickinson said he has worked in the detective bureau mostly during that time and has tried to build morale and teamwork including working more with patrol and attending roll call. Commissioner Sypek asked Lt. Dickinson on a scale of 1-5 with a 5 being the best, how does he rate himself on accepting responsibility. Lt. Dickinson said he is between a 3 or a 4. He said there is always room for improvement. He said he is always trying to learn and improve himself.

Chief Valliere said both candidates had excellent interviews. Both are highly informed and well spoken. He said this is no doubt a tough decision. They are both highly professional and accomplished. He said the department is lucky to have both candidates. He has worked with both Lt. Hall and Lt. Dickinson. He said they know each other very well. He feels in this case, Lt. Dickinson is a step above. He said Lt. Dickinson always leads by example. He succeeds in every position he is in. When he was looking to renovate the class room, Lt. Dickinson was one of the first members of the department to volunteer to help. That room is generally used for the patrol officers and not the detective bureau, yet Lt. Dickinson was right there helping.

Captain Pitoniak said he agrees with the Chief. Both candidates gave great interviews. Lt. Dickinson does have more time on the job. He believes Lt. Dickinson is a go getter and is always looking to better himself and the department. Captain Pitoniak went on to say that while he thinks Lt. Dickinson is the best choice for now, he believes Lt. Hall will be the best choice for the future captain's position.

Commissioner Osowski told both candidates that they both did a great job. He said his vote will be for Lt. Dickinson. Commissioner Otero said he is so proud of this department and both candidates. He said this is a tough decision, but he is going to vote for Lt. Dickinson. He did say he was very impressed with Lt. Hall as well. Commissioner Sypek said this is an incredible difficult decision. He said he has known Lt. Hall for a long time and has worked with him in the private sector. He said Lt. Hall is a class act and interviewed very well. He said he has met Lt. Dickinson a few times and he is very conscientious and well respected within the department. He said he promised to be an objective commissioner when he first became a commissioner for the police department. He said in the end, he has to go with the opinion of the Chief and Captain. That being said, he will have to vote for Lt. Dickinson.


Commissioner Sypek made a motion to appoint Stephen Dickinson as Acting Captain for the Westfield Police Department, effective April 26, 2021. Commissioner Otero seconded that motion.

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

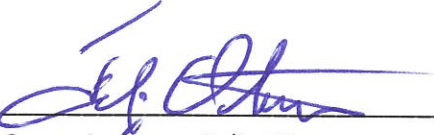
Announcement of Next Regular Meeting: The next meeting of the Westfield Police Commission will be held on Tuesday, May 11, 2021.

Motion to Adjourn: At 6:15 pm Commissioner Otero made a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Sypek seconded that motion.

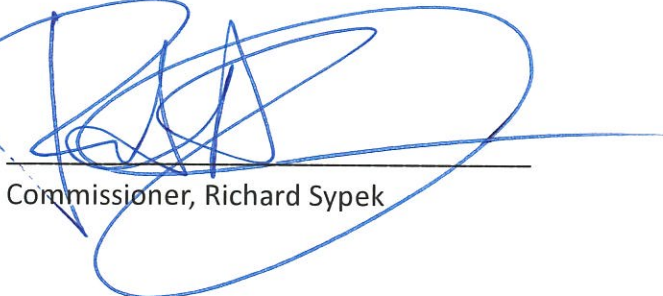
Leonard Osowski – Yes – Felix Otero – Yes - Richard Sypek - Yes



Commissioner, Leonard Osowski



Commissioner, Felix Otero



Commissioner, Richard Sypek

APPROVED FOR RELEASE ON

6/19/21