

REGULAR MEETING OF WESTFIELD POLICE COMMISSION

WESTFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS

June 14, 2021

The Westfield Police Commission meeting was called to order at 59 Court Street, Westfield, MA, at 5:30 pm.

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

Commissioner Osowski notified everyone present that tonight's meeting is being recorded by the Chief's Secretary. Peter Currier from the Westfield Evening News is also recording tonight's meeting

Approval and Release of Minutes: Commissioner Otero made a motion to approve the minutes dated April 13, 2021. Commissioner Sypek seconded that motion.

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

Open Participation: None

Old Business: None

New Business:

A.) Interview and appoint one Full-Time Temporary Lieutenant:



Sergeant Douglas Lavalley: Commissioner Osowski asked Sergeant Lavalley to explain the role of a lieutenant. Sergeant Lavalley said the role of a lieutenant is more in line with the management aspect within the police department. Some duties include maintaining discipline and moral, promoting teamwork between the different units within the department, and communicating effectively through all chains of command. A lieutenant also has to evaluate his or her personnel, maintain records on them, and be a support system for them and a liaison. Commissioner Otero asked Sergeant Lavalley what qualities and experiences he possesses that will qualify him for this role as a lieutenant. Sergeant Lavalley said he has been a member of the police department for 25 years, including his years as a reserve officer. He has worked on all 3 shifts within the department and has experience in different units within the department as well. He was part of the community police unit for 11 years. He has been a part of the marine unit and the ATV unit. During his time in the community police unit he worked with the community in different aspects. He worked with landlords, business owners and residents in the community. It taught him to look at things from a different perspective rather than just a law enforcement perspective. It taught him patience and problem solving skills. He feels he pays a lot of attention to detail when it comes to his work. He is always present when he is at work. He feels he is a good communicator and very organized. He also knows, he doesn't always have all the answers, but as the supervisor, it is his job to find them and get them to the people who need them. Commissioner Sypek asked Sergeant Lavalley what he would do in his new role to ensure consistency, high morale and departmental effectiveness. Sergeant Lavalley said he would aspire to have team building concepts. He would help his shift understand and accomplish the goals of the department. He said team building comes from communication and trust. He said allowing people the ability to access training, supporting them and being there to answer questions are all ways he will ensure departmental effectiveness. Commissioner Sypek asked Sergeant Lavalley what he sees as some of the new challenges within the world of

policing and how he would address them. Sergeant Lavalley said there has definitely been defiance and many challenges to police officers. He said he thinks this has a lot to do with training. This last year, he took training classes that were offered through the MPTC. Two of those classes were fair and impartial policing and the other class was de-escalation training. He thinks the Westfield Police Department has always done a good job, but there is always room for improving. He thinks they should broaden their perspective in certain areas given the recent situations that have happened. Everybody comes into this world as a 10 and by the time the police deal with them, they can sometimes be at a 1. The only thing they have is their dignity and self-respect. A police officer needs to understand that they need to treat everyone with dignity and self-respect. Even when a situation results in a negative outcome for someone, if a police officer continues to do things with good judgement and good manners, studies show almost 75% of people will still support the decision making that police officers do.

Sergeant Michael Gibbons: Commissioner Osowski asked Sergeant Gibbons to explain the role of a lieutenant. Sergeant Gibbons said that if you are in the patrol unit, you have complete authority over the shift. As a lieutenant for a patrol unit, you delegate assignments based on the man power. You have a disciplinary role if any issues arise on your shift. You would also have control of the sergeants on your shift to make sure that any orders coming from the chief or captain's offices are delegated down from the sergeants to the patrolman. If you are in a bureau, you run the bureau. You oversee the day to day operations. Commissioner Sypek asked Sergeant Gibbons to explain the difference between a sergeant and a lieutenant. Sergeant Gibbons said the main difference is that a lieutenant has more authority. A lieutenant is also in charge of the sergeants. Sergeants are on the street more and see the day to day operations of the patrolmen. Commissioner Otero asked Sergeant Gibbons what qualities and experiences he possesses that will qualify him for this role as a lieutenant. Sergeant Gibbons said he thinks mutual respect is key in this role. He said if your subordinates respect you, they will do a good job for you. Respect works both ways. Commissioner Sypek asked Sergeant Gibbons what he would do in his new role to ensure consistency, high morale and departmental effectiveness. Sergeant Gibbons said he again believes it is about mutual respect. You cannot ask someone to do something that you yourself would not do. He said as a sergeant he does not put anything beneath him. He tries to be a team player. He books prisoners if patrol is busy. He drives them to Ludlow. He will bring them in from the street. He doesn't think that because he is a sergeant it is beneath him. He thinks as long as you are respected the mission will be accomplished.

Sergeant Michael Kane: Commissioner Osowski asked Sergeant Kane to explain the role of a lieutenant. Sergeant Kane said that a lieutenant oversees a shift, makes sure the guys are getting the job done, tries to have a good working relationship with the guys and tries to keep them as motivated as possible. He or she should also keep in line with the street sergeant to promote unity. Commissioner Otero asked Sergeant Kane what qualities and experiences he possesses that will qualify him for this role as a lieutenant. Sergeant Kane said he has been a supervisor for 8 years. He considers himself to have a good working relationship with the guys. He considers himself a good communicator. He knows how to talk to people. He is a team player. Commissioner Sypek asked Sergeant Gibbons what he sees as some of the new challenges within the world of policing and how would he address them. Sergeant Gibbons said he thinks recruiting and motivating good guys who want to do the job would be one way. He would promote and advocate good community relations.

Captain Dickinson said that after listening to the interviews tonight and also speaking to the individuals himself privately, he believes Sergeant Gibbons would make a good lieutenant. Captain Pitoniak said he agrees with Captain Dickinson. He said all 3 candidates did a good job on their interviews, but Sergeant Gibbons is the best candidate. Chief Valliere said he didn't see anything that separated the candidates during the interviews. He knows all 3 candidates and their work skills. He thinks Sergeant Lavalley still has some proving to do. He thinks Sergeant Gibbons would be the best choice this evening.

Commissioner Osowski said he agrees with the opinion of the captains and chief. Commissioner Otero said it was very close for him between Sergeant Gibbons and Sergeant Kane. However, Sergeant Gibbons has more experience. Commissioner Sypek said he is also on the fence. He said there is another retirement coming up so whoever isn't promoted tonight will have another opportunity very soon. He said when he is in this type of predicament all he can do is rely on the recommendations of the captains and chief.

Commissioner Sypek made a motion to appoint Sergeant Michael Gibbons as a Full-Time Temporary Lieutenant for the Westfield Police Department effective June 19, 2021. Commissioner Otero seconded that motion.

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

Commissioner Sypek amended his motion to change the effective date of Sergeant Gibbon's promotion to temporary lieutenant to June 26, 2021. Commissioner Otero seconded that motion.

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

B.) Interview and appoint one Full-Time Sergeant & one Full-Time Temporary Sergeant:

Officer Brendan Irujo: Commissioner Osowski asked Officer Irujo to explain the role of a sergeant. Officer Irujo said that a sergeant is the first line supervisor in the department. His job is to supervise the officers in their day to day performance. Commissioner Otero asked Officer Irujo what qualities and experiences he possesses that qualify him for this role as sergeant. Officer Irujo said he has been a field training officer and a CPR instructor for the last few years. Both of those roles require him to train and supervise his fellow officers. After field training is complete, the officers who were most recently trained have a tendency to continue to look to the field training officers for help as needed. He feels both of these roles have prepared him to become a sergeant. Commissioner Sypek asked Officer Irujo what he sees as some of the new challenges within the world of policing and how would he address them. Officer Irujo said the biggest concern right now is excessive use of force. Training is crucial to know when force should and should not be used. Officer Irujo feels that potential candidates may be more hesitant to get into policing right now. He thinks educating students in the criminal justice field at events such as career days or outreach through commercials and advertising will help put a positive outlook on what policing is about and possibly draw in more candidates.

Officer Matthew Schultze: Commissioner Osowski asked Officer Schultze to explain the role of a sergeant. Officer Schultze said that a sergeant is the front line supervisor. The job of a sergeant is to be seen by your patrolman, make sure that they are doing their job and be proactive yourself. He is a firm believer that leaders lead from the front. He feels that this approach helps with respectability and credibility. Commissioner Otero asked Officer Schultze what qualities and experiences he possesses that qualify him for this role as sergeant. Officer Schultze said he started in law enforcement in 2009. At the end of 2009 he joined the Springfield Park Rangers. They are pretty much the environmental police unit for the City of Springfield. They put him through the reserve academy. At the same time, he was also working as a security supervisor at 6 Flags New England. He was also a 911 dispatcher for Wilbraham. He has done most of the duties that a sergeant would perform during his time both at 6 Flags New England and while a 911 dispatcher. Commissioner Sypek asked Officer Schultze what he sees as some of the new challenges within the world of policing. Officer Schultze said that while law enforcement has always been scrutinized, it has been more so as of late. There is a bigger push for accountability and body cameras. His philosophy has always been to try and be as moral and ethical as he can.

He is a big supporter of body cameras or dash cameras. These can be helpful to keep officers in line and to show the public that 99.99% of the time, officers are doing the right thing. Commissioner Sypek asked Officer Schulze if he has worked in the detective bureau previously. Officer Schultze said he has not. He has primarily worked in the patrol division on the overnight shift.

Officer William Cavanaugh: Commissioner Osowski asked Officer Cavanaugh to explain the role of a sergeant. Officer Cavanaugh said a sergeant is the first line supervisor. The sergeant works hand in hand with the patrolman but is also accountable to the lieutenant, captains and chief. The sergeant sets the tone for what the patrolmen do. The sergeant is responsible for everyone who works under them. Commissioner Otero asked Officer Cavanaugh what qualities and experiences he possesses that qualify him for this role as sergeant. Officer Cavanaugh said before he joined the department, at the age of 21, he worked at Westfield State University doing student security. He was self-sponsored through the reserve academy. From there he worked in West Springfield as a Special Police Officer. He also worked at Western New England University. He went through the SSPO Academy which is held by the state police. He thinks this is relevant because Westfield is a college community as well. From there, he was appointed as a full time officer in Westfield. He then attended the full time academy. He has a Master's Degree from Westfield State University as well has a Law Degree. He used to think his calling card was his education, however within the last few years, he believes it is his work ethic and his involvement within the department. He is consistently one of the top officers who work extra shifts both in house and outside details. Since 2018 he has been a field training officer. He has trained approximately a dozen officers. He is proud of the officers he has trained. He thinks being a field training officer and a supervisor are similar. He feels the leaders in the department set the tone. He believes law enforcement is a family concept. Commissioner Sypek asked Officer Cavanaugh what he sees as some of the new challenges within the world of policing. Officer Cavanaugh said he thinks it starts with understanding. He said balancing policing with public relations is crucial. He said the outreach work done by the community policing department here in Westfield and following up on calls helps to build the relationship with the community, including business owners.

Officer Brian Freeman: Commissioner Osowski asked Officer Freeman to explain the role of a sergeant. Officer Freeman said that a sergeant is the first line supervisor. A sergeant works with the patrol officers, mentors and helps train the officers. Commissioner Otero asked Officer Freeman what qualities and experiences he possesses that qualify him for this role as sergeant. Officer Freeman said he has been working for the Westfield Police Department for approximately 20 years now. He has worked in every area of the department, with the exception of the traffic bureau and the marine unit. He has done his best at each job. He feels he is prepared to handle every situation that comes his way. Commissioner Sypek asked Officer Freeman to elaborate on his experience within the detective bureau. Officer Freeman said he has been in the detective bureau since 2012 and enjoys the type of work that comes with it. Commissioner Sypek asked Officer Freeman what he sees as some of the new challenges within the world of policing. Officer Freeman said he feels the Westfield Police Department has a very good relationship with the community. He said the department needs to keep working with the community to keep their trust.

Officer Jason Perron: Commissioner Osowski asked Officer Perron to explain the role of a sergeant. Officer Perron said that a sergeant is a teacher, a leader and someone to rely on. To be an effective leader, you have to have good communication. Commissioner Otero asked Officer Perron what qualities and experiences he possesses that qualify him for this role as sergeant. Officer Perron said he is the most senior candidate here tonight. He has 25 years of experience as a police officer. He started as a federal police officer in Westover. He joined the Westfield Police Department in 1999 as a reserve and became full time in 2002. He was a sergeant for 4 ½ years previously. He knows what it takes to do the job and knows he can do it. Commissioner Sypek asked Officer Perron if he has done any work in the detective bureau. Officer Perron said he has not. Commissioner Sypek asked Officer Perron what he sees as some of the new challenges within the world of policing. Officer Perron said that the Westfield Police Department has a very good image in the public's eye. Even with

everything going on, he has been told more so now than ever how much the police officers of this department are appreciated. He said the department is doing everything they are supposed to be doing and they need to be sure they continue to do so.

Captain Dickinson said that he has spoken with all of the candidates before the meeting and after listening to the interviews this evening, he feels Officer Irujo would be a good candidate for sergeant. He said based on the experience Officer Freeman has, Officer Freeman would be his second choice for sergeant. Captain Pitoniak said he agrees with Captain Dickinson. All of the candidates gave great interviews. Officer Irujo did great on the exam and has been an FTO and a CPR instructor. It is a good bridge for him to know all of the other members of the department. He said his second choice is harder. All of the candidates have some type of experience or education in their favor. However, when you look at Detective Freeman's training in the community policing unit and the detective bureau, Captain Pitoniak believes he would make the best choice for the second sergeant's position. Chief Valliere said he agrees that this is a tough decision. Officer Irujo has been fantastic as a patrolman. He had the highest test score. He is great in his role as an FTO and easy to supervise. He is a go getter and follows all the rules and regulations. That is what you are looking for in the role of a sergeant. Chief Valliere said he has no doubt that Officer Irujo would be an excellent sergeant. There is no reason to bi-pass him. The second choice is tough. Chief Valliere said the only thing separating the other candidates is that Officer Freeman has twice the time and so much more experience. There is a big void that was left when Captain Dickinson was appointed as a captain. No one coming up the ranks has worked as a detective. That transition is easier when you have that experience. Chief Valliere said he is leaning more towards Officer Freeman for tonight, however there are more promotions coming up. He said he sees the maturity and change in 2 of the other candidates and he also thinks Officer Schultze did a great job in his interview tonight. Chief Valliere said that he is recommending Officer Brian Freeman for the second sergeant's position.

All of the commissions agreed with the recommendations of Captain Dickinson, Captain Pitoniak and Chief Valliere. Commissioner Sypek noted how hard a decision this was and thanked all of the candidates for their time.

Commissioner Sypek make a motion to appoint Officer Brendan Irujo as a Full-Time Sergeant for the Westfield Police Department, effective June 26, 2021. Commissioner Otero seconded that motion.

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

Commissioner Sypek made a motion to appoint Officer Brian Freeman as a Full-Time Temporary Sergeant for the Westfield Police Department, effective June 26, 2021. Commissioner Otero seconded that motion.

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

C.) Commissioners to approve Contract Signature Authorization Form: Commissioner Osowski requested a roll call to approve the contract signature authorization form.

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 Monday July 12, 2021.

Motion to Adjourn: At 6:35 pm Commissioner Otero made a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Sypek seconded that motion.

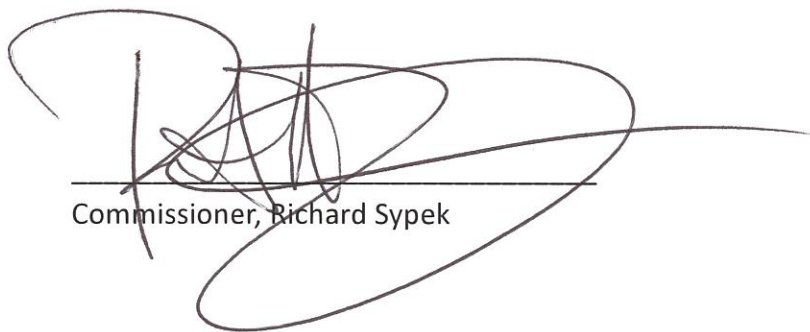
Leonard Osowski – Yes – Felix Otero – Yes - Richard Sypek - Yes



Commissioner, Leonard Osowski



Commissioner, Felix Otero



Commissioner, Richard Sypek

APPROVED FOR RELEASE ON

7/26/21