

SPECIAL MEETING OF WESTFIELD POLICE COMMISSION

WESTFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS

August 7, 2023

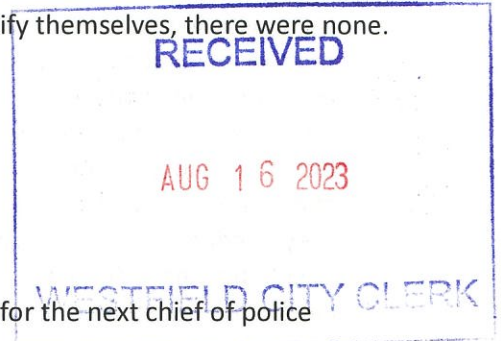
The Westfield Police Commission meeting was called to order at City Hall, 59 Court Street, Westfield, MA, in Room 201 at 3:00 pm.

Commissioner Richard Sypek asked for anyone recording the meeting to identify themselves, there were none.

Roll Call: Richard Sypek – Present
James Irwin – Present
Peter Velis – Present

A. Open participation: None

B. Old business: Continue conversations regarding the selection process for the next chief of police



Commissioner Sypek gave a brief recap of the actions from the last meeting and asked Chief Valliere if the criteria had been posted around the station through HR. The chief responded that he had not seen any postings. Commissioner Sypek advised that it should be done this week so that resumes and letters of intent can be received by September 1st. Personnel Director Anne Larkham, who was present at the meeting, advised that since it is an internal posting it only needs to be done at the station.

Commissioner Sypek discussed the independent assessment testing companies that have been contacted by the commissioners and the chief – BadgeQuest, PACT, and Public Safety, LLC. He spoke with Al Donovan from PACT, who is a retired police chief from Tewksbury, and was told the cost would be \$5,400 which corresponds to the quotes from the other assessment centers. They would need a detailed job description and Commissioner Sypek asked the chief and personnel director if one was available. Ms. Larkham said there is a job description on file but that it is very old and any changes would have to be approved through two meetings of the City Council. Commissioner Sypek said it is not pertinent right now but it should probably be looked at.

Commissioner Sypek continued with his findings from PACT, specifying that they would also require three rooms to do an all-day assessment. He said all the companies perform all-day assessments with some giving out materials in advance, while some ask for written question responses. He believes using the conference rooms in City Hall on a Saturday would be a perfect venue since it will be mostly empty. The company would put each candidate through different situations, written and verbal, and are able to give a determination almost immediately of which Commissioner Sypek approves of so as not to delay the selection process. The second company he spoke with was Public Safety, LLC which quoted \$6,500 for the same type of assessment. Russ Stevens from Public Safety informed Commissioner Sypek that they have been very busy due to the high number of police chiefs in Massachusetts that are retiring. Commissioner Velis mentioned that in his conversation with Russ Stevens he was told that having the commissioners present during the evaluations was encouraged. Commissioner Sypek confirmed the information and agreed that it would be beneficial to be able to view the evaluations and produce their own observations. Commissioner Sypek additionally spoke with Dillon at BadgeQuest who quoted \$6,000 for evaluation services using the same type of assessment protocol as the other companies. BadgeQuest also offered a set of questions used for evaluations at a price of \$1,000 should the commission decide not pursue an all-day assessment. Commissioner Sypek said he thinks it would be helpful to inquire about the details regarding the questions. Commissioner Velis said Dillon implied that BadgeQuest would be willing to offer

SPECIAL MEETING OF WESTFIELD POLICE COMMISSION

WESTFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS

August 7, 2023

guidance even if they did not acquire his company's services. He was also informed that the evaluators at BadgeQuest are all retired police chiefs.

Commissioner Sypek said all of the companies were very informative and helpful, were all in the same price range, and all could provide an assessment in one day. Some of the companies send out materials to be completed in advance by the candidates to be used during the assessments. Commissioner Irwin asked if they received a budget from the mayor for an assessment. Commissioner Sypek said they did not get a budget because the mayor suggested they did not need an independent assessment as he felt the commissioners were capable of assessing the candidates themselves but would support them in whatever they needed. The mayor would put in a request before the City Council at the next meeting should they decide they need funding. Commissioner Velis asked to discuss the concept of even having an assessment center. He questioned the thoroughness of an evaluation that can be completed in just one day. Commissioner Sypek responded that the evaluator's rankings are computerized allowing them to produce reports fairly quickly. He told each of the companies of their timeframe to have a candidate selected by the end of year, and was told by them all that the timeframe would not be a problem. If they have the candidates by September 1st and decide to go ahead with the assessments, they could be set up for October or November in order to have answers before they start doing interviews.

Commissioner Velis asked to discuss the pros and cons. The first pro would be that they are an independent agency apart from this commission which raises the question of if they would be considered the final arbiter, which he does not agree with, however, they could assign a certain amount of weight to their assessment. He said he agrees with mayor that they may not need an assessment center, and asked if they would be looking at any companies other than the three. Commissioner Sypek said he doesn't think they need to as they are all Massachusetts retired police chiefs that are highly credentialed. Commissioner Velis asked if the chief had heard any negative or positive reviews on the companies. Chief Valliere said he only sent out an inquiry to Mass Chiefs that he was looking for information on companies that did assessments at the request of the police commission, with preferably none of the companies being local. When he went to the websites to review the police departments they've worked with, none of them were nearby which lends credence to their impartial evaluation. Commissioner Irwin asked if the companies disclosed their placement success rate with previous clients, and were those departments similar in size to ours. Commissioner Velis said clearly the companies are independent from us and from the candidates. He said when he spoke with Public Safety, he made it clear that the commission's decision would be strictly based on meritocracy which is what the public expects from them – the highest level of integrity. He said their expediency may be a negative as it is unknown how they make their determinations, if they will seek recommendations from other sources, or if they decide based on their own experiences. He asked if any of the companies indicated how many members would be on their committee. Commissioner Sypek said BadgeQuest has three retired chiefs. Commissioner Velis inquired about if they will know how each member of the evaluation committee voted, or would it be a unanimous decision. Commissioner Sypek said BadgeQuest uses consensus grading and provide a final report with their notes. He said he liked that they administered essays and role-playing scenarios, and that they are also the entity that provides just the questions for purchase which he thinks at a minimum they should acquire should they decide not to purchase the full assessment. Commissioner Velis said a con is the one-day decision, the gain would be an independent authority but a loss may be \$6,500. He asked Commissioner Sypek if the mayor was for this or if the cost would be a problem to which Commissioner Sypek responded that he got the impression that whatever they asked for the mayor would recommend. Commissioner Irwin said he thinks they need an assessment as he doesn't feel they can do this

SPECIAL MEETING OF WESTFIELD POLICE COMMISSION

WESTFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS

August 7, 2023

themselves. Commissioner Sypek said he thinks they are capable, but would like to gather more information to help make that decision. He said he will make another round of calls to see what they have for materials and cost which could be a quick acquisition. Commissioner Irwin told him to ask about the success rate of placements and the size of the force. If the person they recommended was hired and lasted three years he would consider that a success.

Commissioner Velis asked what the chief and the captains think of hiring an assessment center. Chief Valliere said his opinion is that by just getting the questions they are not getting the knowledge, expertise, and experience of the chiefs, some of which were FBI graduates from the national academy as they would be in a better position to evaluate the answers. Captain Pitoniak added that he and Captain Dickinson have had multiple classes with Al Donovan so they already have a professional relationship with him.

Commissioner Velis said he would have no problem putting it to a vote now, but Commissioner Irwin said he would like to get answers to his questions first. Commissioner Sypek said they have time as they could meet like this every week if they have to for a half an hour just to keep the conversation going. He will make some phone calls to gather more information.

Commissioner Sypek asked Captain Dickinson if he had any thoughts. The captain answered that he is in favor with the mayor in that he feels the commissioners are fully capable, especially if they have the questions. The evaluators have no stake in Westfield and will decide in a day. Commissioner Sypek said the conversations he has had have been very friendly, open, and helpful, and that if he circles back with them, they will be even more helpful. If a cost can be obtained for materials, then the commission will have to do their own homework. Commissioner Velis asked Lieutenant Hall if he would care to comment. Lieutenant Hall said he agrees with Chief Valliere in that this is what the evaluators do every day. He asked about beyond just obtaining the questions and offering guidance, if they offer any training on the materials for purchase to help facilitate processing the assessment for this commission. Commissioner Sypek said maybe they could meet with them. Commissioner Irwin said he would like to hear from external sources and Commissioner Sypek agreed, but thinks they could do it in hybrid kind of scenario where they get the materials and pick their brains and compensate them if needed.

- C. New business: None
- D. Announcement of next meeting: Date to be determined
- E. Motion to adjourn: At 3:40 pm Commissioner Velis made a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Irwin seconded that motion.

Commissioner Sypek - Yes

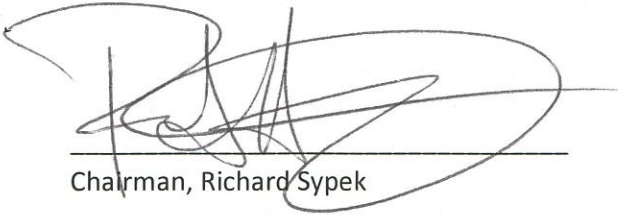
Commissioner Irwin – Yes

Commissioner Velis - Yes

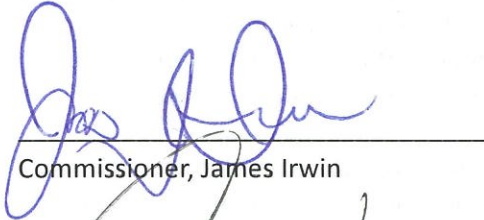
SPECIAL MEETING OF WESTFIELD POLICE COMMISSION

WESTFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS

August 7, 2023



Chairman, Richard Sypek



Commissioner, James Irwin



Commissioner, Peter Velis

APPROVED FOR RELEASE ON 8/15/2023