

# SPECIAL MEETING OF WESTFIELD POLICE COMMISSION

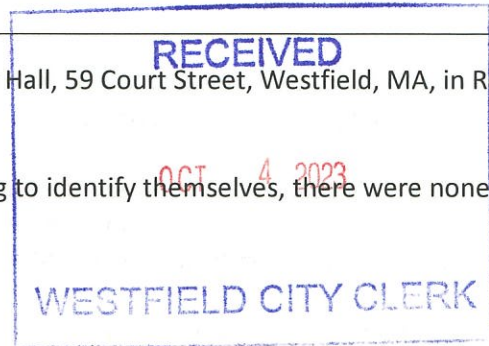
WESTFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS

August 15, 2023

The Westfield Police Commission meeting was called to order at City Hall, 59 Court Street, Westfield, MA, in Room 201 at 5:00 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. Approval and release of minutes dated May 15, 2023, July 17, 2023, and August 7, 2023

Commissioner Sypek motioned to approve and release the minutes dated May 15, 2023, July 17, 2023, and August 7, 2023. All in favor.

- B. Open participation:

Officer Jason Perron addressed the commission providing a prepared statement. Commissioner Velis asked him if this was regarding the email he received regarding his request for reconsideration of past actions. Jason confirmed and Commissioner Sypek suggested since he and Commissioner Irwin had not received the email, they would put him on the agenda for the next meeting allowing time for them to review his written statement. Commissioner Velis assured him that they will grant him reconsideration.

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

Commissioner Sypek spoke about the two proposals he received; one from Public Safety Consultants, LLC (PSC) with Russ Stevens as the consultant, and the second from BadgeQuest with Dylan Cogswell as the consultant. He said he did not request a proposal from PACT due to possible personnel conflicts. He reported on the responses he received regarding Commissioner Irwin's inquiries about success rates and the department sizes the assessment centers have worked with. Public Safety and BadgeQuest have done over 125 chief assessments with both companies working with departments of all sizes.

Russ Stevens informed him that they are trained to run the assessments on top of already having chief experience themselves. Mr. Stevens asked if the commission ran the assessments how, even though the members of the police commission are all professionals, would they know if the candidates were truthful. Both evaluation centers would put the candidates through five scenarios to assess their credibility using their experience and training. Commissioner Velis asked for clarification as to whether Mr. Stevens was implying that their commission could assess the candidates overall credibility better than this commission, or if the meaning was intended only for specific questions during the evaluation. Commissioner Sypek indicated, and Commissioner Irwin agreed, that his impression was that the meaning was only toward the specific questions and scenarios.

Commissioner Sypek reviewed the procedure for the assessments. The commissioners would meet with the company beforehand and could provide their own questions if desired, would observe the evaluations take place, and would meet again thereafter so anything not understood during the sessions could be explained. The ranking system that each company uses are similar and based upon a total overall score.

# SPECIAL MEETING OF WESTFIELD POLICE COMMISSION

WESTFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS

August 15, 2023

---

He mentioned that Russ Stevens from Public Safety has been the most interested and responsive to providing answers and information.

Mayor McCabe has informed him that they do not need to go before council for any funding as it is already in the budget. Commissioner Sypek said he would recommend hiring an assessment center and he feels more comfortable with PSC.

Commissioner Velis requested comments from the candidates and the chief as to whether they believe this commission was capable of choosing the next Chief of Police. Lieutenant Hall answered that while he believes the commission is capable it might raise questions if they do hire an assessment center and the commission does not select the candidate recommended. Commissioner Irwin did not believe the assessment would be public knowledge and would remain between the three commissioners. Captain Dickinson stated that he believes the commission is fully capable. Captain Pitoniak responded that he is confident whether the commission or an assessment center is used that the decision will be aboveboard. He does feel that should they use an assessment center the percentage of weight to be given to their decision should be disclosed before the testing begins. Commissioner Sypek responded that he does not want to put any specific number for a percentage of weight as he would use the assessment center as an objective assist in choosing a chief. He would rather treat it as a learning experience since none of them have ever done this before, and they could use that knowledge in the future when selecting for promotions to other ranks. Commissioner Irwin questioned if they use public funds to run the assessment would they have to share the results with the public. Captain Pitoniak added that a public information request may come from a union or member of the public, and they would have to provide it.

Commissioner Velis asked his question to Chief Valliere who answered that it does not matter what the candidates choose as it is only up to the commissioners on how to proceed. Ultimately he agreed with Chairman Sypek that using an assessment center would give them unbelievable insight into who they are interviewing, and their mention before of being able to determine if a response is credible applies to the candidate's answers being practical and reasonable for the given scenario. He reminded them of the tremendous amount of experience the assessment centers would be bringing and to use them to learn would be another 'tool in the toolbox'. Commissioner Sypek said he would love to see the assessment center's process to use as a learning experience and a tool.

Commissioner Velis expressed his concern over the perceived meaning of Russ Stevens' comment that the assessment center's training makes them more competent to determine credibility. Commissioner Sypek clarified that the remark came up when he asked if they could just purchase the questions. The answer was that while they could, they are just questions. Without the experience, knowledge and training, the commissioners would not know if the responses given are what they should be. Chief Valliere added that he does believe the commissioners are capable but the procedure would have to be restructured from one an assessment center would follow.

Commissioner Sypek asked Mayor McCabe about keeping results private if using public funds for the assessment. Mayor McCabe advised that using public funds would require the information to be available to the public. He said when assessment centers have been used in the past the results were disclosed, and that at times the candidate chosen was not the one recommended by the assessment center resulting in the police commission being questioned as to why they did not select the recommended candidate.

# SPECIAL MEETING OF WESTFIELD POLICE COMMISSION

WESTFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS

August 15, 2023

---

Commissioner Irwin made a motion to vote on hiring an assessment center that would conditionally be PSC. At 5:53 pm, Commissioner Velis made a motion, without seconding Commissioner Irwin's motion, to take a recess until 6:20 pm. Commissioner Sypek seconded the motion.

Commissioner Sypek: Yes  
Commissioner Irwin: Yes  
Commissioner Velis: Yes

At 6:10 pm, Commissioner Sypek reconvened the meeting. Commissioner Irwin said that if they hire an assessment company they will be putting themselves at risk to justify every decision they make. Commissioner Sypek said they should disclose how much weight they will give to the assessment center's evaluation, and his decisions will not be based upon fear of what could possibly happen. Commissioner Velis said in his experience the public chooses to hear what they want to hear. He asked if they should be hiring an assessment center for every appointment, to which Commissioner Sypek replied that this is the number one position. Commissioner Irwin said the knowledge learned will trickle down to other selections.

Commissioner Irwin made a motion to vote on hiring an assessment center for the purpose of recommendations to the commission for hiring a police chief. Commissioner Velis seconded the motion.

Commissioner Sypek: Yes  
Commissioner Irwin: Yes  
Commissioner Velis: No

Commissioner Irwin made a motion to hire Public Safety Consultants. Commissioner Velis seconded the motion.

Commissioner Sypek: Yes  
Commissioner Irwin: Yes  
Commissioner Velis: Yes

D. New Business: None

E. Next meeting scheduled for Monday, September 11, 2023.

F. Motion to adjourn: At 6:23 pm Commissioner Irwin made a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Velis seconded that motion.

Commissioner Sypek - Yes  
Commissioner Irwin - Yes  
Commissioner Velis - Yes

**SPECIAL MEETING OF WESTFIELD POLICE COMMISSION**

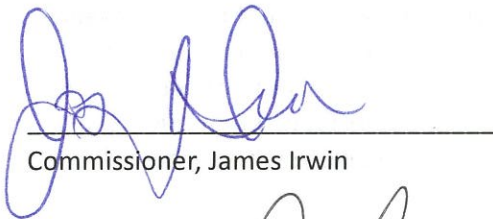
WESTFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS

August 15, 2023

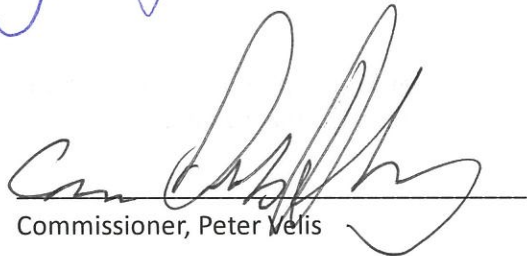
---



Chairman, Richard Sypek



Commissioner, James Irwin



Commissioner, Peter Velis

APPROVED FOR RELEASE ON 10/3/2023