

SPECIAL MEETING OF WESTFIELD POLICE COMMISSION

WESTFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS

September 25, 2023

The Westfield Police Commission meeting was called to order at City Hall, 59 Court Street, Westfield, MA, in Room 201 at 1:15 pm.

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

Chairman Richard Sypek asked for anyone recording the meeting, other than the Zoom meeting to follow, to identify themselves; there were none.

A. Approval and release of minutes

There were no minutes to approve.

B. Open participation

None

C. Old business

None

D. New Business

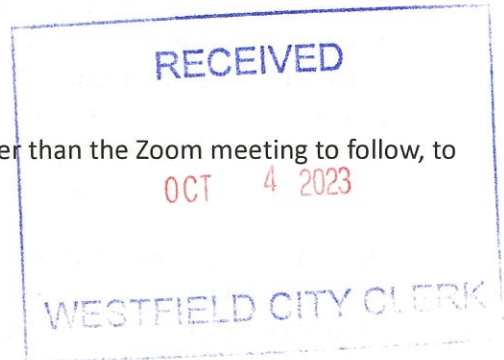
1. Conduct virtual meeting with Public Safety Consultants, LLC regarding their potential services to assess the chief of police candidates.

Chief Russ Stevens from Public Safety Consultants, LLC (PSC) attended the meeting via Zoom.

Commissioner Sypek introduced the commissioners and attendees in the room to Mr. Stevens and expressed that the purpose of the meeting was to discuss the proposal to engage PSC in the process of selecting the next chief of police.

He reiterated from the last meeting his concerns about the open meeting law, executive sessions, and how much involvement the commissioners would be allowed during the assessments. The law department indicated to him on September 15th that no executive sessions would be allowed with three candidates, and that it would not be appropriate for the commissioners to attend the assessments as it is in lieu of a Civil Service test or any other type of selection criteria. Commissioners are not allowed to watch a test, or attend a screening committee, and likewise should not attend the assessment center exercises. He has met with the law department and personnel director to go over the memo, and they are not changing their opinion. He stated that basically they are prohibiting the commissioners to get involved at all with the assessment procedure.

As he was looking forward to observing the evaluations, it is his opinion to not spend the city's money to hire a company for assessments that he cannot be involved in at all. However, he will discuss with



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his fellow commissioners regarding continuing with PSC as consultants for the question portion and any other ideas that Mr. Stevens might suggest during this process.

Commissioner Irwin asked Mr. Stevens if he has encountered this situation before. Mr. Stevens replied that he works with a lot of cities and towns and has not seen it before, but that does not make the law department's ruling nonfactual. He said in their capacity it would be worthwhile to watch the assessment center and see and hear the questions. Another option would be to do the assessment center where PSC ranks the individuals. The commissioners would not be part of that but would get to see the rankings and notes.

He continued by suggesting proceeding with an oral board process with just the commission. He asked if they assigned a weight to the resumes received such as weight for time on, time in rank, and specialty assignments. If they are going to do oral board, the same questions and time limit must be given to each candidate so they all have a fair shot. Questioning of the candidates should also be done on the same day. He is willing to help with current questions specific to what is desired in a police chief or work with the current chief to develop questions.

Commissioner Sypek told him he would be a valuable source for at least the question component and that he would work with the chief to establish questions that are relevant to the issues within the department. The questions developed would then be send for review by the Personnel department and once approved the commissioners would pick which to use for their assessment.

Commissioner Velis stated that they must err on the side of caution as some appointments could be rescinded for violation of open meeting laws, but they do desire to have consultation from PSC.

Mr. Stevens offered to be at the commission's meetings, interviews, to help decipher anything or work with personnel to develop questions. He would need to have a profile done of the department (talk with the chief, look at the job description, contracts, staffing levels, etc.) to get more background.

Commissioner Velis asked Mr. Stevens if he is aware by way of the ordinance of the authority and power of the police commission with respect to the police department. Mr. Stevens asked if it was their position to recommend an appointment to the mayor to which Commissioner Sypek informed him that the commission itself makes the appointment. Commissioner Velis asked Mr. Stevens where he was or is the chief of police. Mr. Stevens answered that his career began in Sturbridge, MA in the early 1980's, and then he was in the Connecticut State Police for 23 years. He was also chief in Hamilton, MA for about 15 years, and noted that he has worked for both small and large departments. He has been doing the assessment center for about 13 years.

Commissioner Velis asked if Mr. Stevens was aware of their timetable. Mr. Stevens said the chairman has mentioned it to him before and inquired when they are looking to have the named individual. Commissioner Sypek told him by the end of the calendar year, if not sooner.

Mr. Stevens left the meeting by exiting Zoom at 1:35 pm.

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Commissioner Sypek reasoned that they should put a motion forward to disregard the previous motion to work with PSC as an assessment center and another motion to continue with PSC in a consultation capacity to at least formulate questions.

Commissioner Irwin proposed that they continue to hire PSC as an assessment center, and also use them to assist during the commission's interviews for the questions PSC is going to present to them along with the questions they already have in place. Commissioner Sypek said the problem he has is with the opinion of the law department which states that they are asking a vendor to perform a task and to provide the commission with a numerical score and report. It is the score and report that the commission must rely on to hire. Commissioner Sypek said he does not want that, so the questions are all he is looking for right now.

Commissioner Irwin made a motion to not use Public Safety Consultants, or any other assessment center, for a full assessment, but will utilize their services as a contractual service to consult with the commission for questions and with the personnel department. Commissioner Velis seconded the motion.

Commissioner Sypek: Yes

Commissioner Velis: Yes

Commissioner Irwin: Yes

- E. Next regular meeting scheduled for Monday, October 9, 2023.

Captain Pitoniak said they are looking to hire a couple of guys for the Springfield Academy if the commissioners have any time next week.

At 1:43 pm, Commissioner Irwin made a motion to meet on Tuesday, October 3, 2023 at 4 pm and also to adjourn. Commissioner Velis seconded the motion.

Commissioner Sypek – Yes

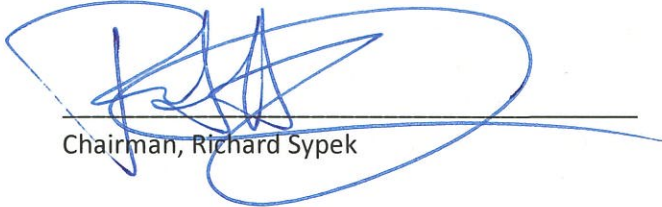
Commissioner Velis – Yes

Commissioner Irwin – Yes

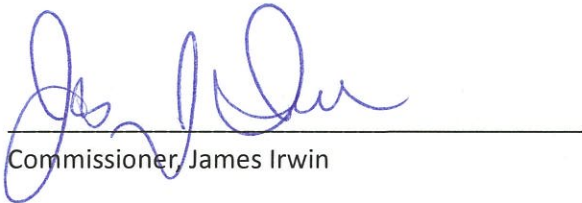
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Commissioner, James Irwin



Commissioner, Peter Velis

APPROVED FOR RELEASE ON 10/3/2023