

SPECIAL MEETING OF WESTFIELD POLICE COMMISSION

WESTFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS

October 3, 2023

RECEIVED

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WESTFIELD CITY CLERK

The Westfield Police Commission meeting was called to order at City Hall, 59 Court Street, Westfield, MA, in Room 201 at 5 pm.

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

Chairman Richard Sypek asked for anyone recording the meeting to identify themselves; Cliff Clark from the Westfield News indicated that he is recording.

A. Approval and release of minutes

Commission Sypek motioned to approve and release the minutes dated August 15, 2023, September 15, 2023, and September 25, 2023.

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

B. Open participation - None

C. Old business

Commissioner Velis suggested to discuss a timetable for selecting a police chief saying he believes they should have it completed by the end of October. Commissioner Irwin agreed the sooner the better. Commissioner Sypek said he spoke with Russ Stevens today and Mr. Stevens will speak to the chief shortly and will put together the interview questions. The questions can then be forwarded to personnel for approval and once that is done a date can be set for the interview process. He does not have a hard timeframe, but he gets a sense of urgency from the other commissioners. He does not have that urgency because they are right on track with the schedule he laid out months ago which was to get the interviews done in October/November and have a hire before the end of the year.

Commissioner Velis said it may not be a sense of urgency but he feels a sense of duty owed to the public and the department to make the selection as soon as possible. He suggests that they contact Mr. Stevens and set a deadline of no longer than 7 days to have the questions submitted. Commissioner Sypek said Mr. Stevens is working on it but he won't pin him down to 7 days. He doesn't anticipate more than a couple of weeks. Commissioner Velis asked how they felt about assuring that the selection process is completed by October 31st. Commissioner Irwin said it seems doable to him. Commissioner Sypek agreed that it could be doable by the 31st, but if that date is announced what will happen if a selection is not made by then. He will take it as a recommendation but won't accept a motion that everything will be done and hired by the 31st. He thinks they can do it but doesn't want to be held to a certain date. He suggested they put it on the next agenda to set up a date for the interviews.

D. New Business

1. Interview three new patrolmen candidates for appointment with a starting date to coincide with the first available academy. Selected candidates must meet all conditions of employment prior to attending the police academy.

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All candidates left the room except for the current interviewee.

David Antonivski: Commissioner Sypek informed him that the commission has received a background report from Captain Dickinson. Commissioner Irwin asked the candidate for a historical background since graduating high school. He answered that he enrolled at STCC for HVAC certification and an associate degree. Due to surgery he had to take a year off, where he worked at BMW of West Springfield as a sales assistant/product specialist. When his doctor cleared him, he returned to HVAC working at Western Mass Heating and Cooling and switching to Morduct, LLC when he lost the position at Western Mass HVAC. He is currently employed there now as shop tech doing fabrication and installations when in the field. He has no law enforcement experience but became interested during high school when resource officers Tracy Ploof, Frank Gaulin, and Alek Golenev encouraged him to work toward it. He did not complete his associate degree due to the surgery and with working full-time has not had the time to pursue it.

Commissioner Velis asked him if there is anything in his personality, attitude, or anything of that nature that he feels needs improvement. He responded that he gets nervous when speaking to superiors and would like to build more confidence. He does ask questions but needs to work on his composure. He told the Commissioners that he just turned 21. Commissioner Velis asked about his personal references which included his church's youth pastor, his soccer coach, and two friends from Moldova. He emigrated to the U.S. in May 2009 from Moldova.

Commissioner Sypek asked what he personally expects from a career in law enforcement. He feels he can help the Westfield community and wants people to feel safe around him. His friends would describe him as fast-paced, energetic, and sometimes loud.

Michaela Neuzil: Commissioner Irwin asked the candidate for a historical background since graduating high school. She responded that she graduated from Westfield State University in 2020 with a bachelor's degree in political science and a concentration in law. She participated in ROTC while there and was commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant in the Army Reserves. She works at Six Flags as a senior supervisor in the public safety department doing security and loss prevention, and is a 1st Lieutenant in the Army Reserves as a company commander for Higher Headquarters Detachment with the military police battalion.

Commissioner Sypek asked what she personally expects to receive from a career in law enforcement. She wants to be able to give back to the community. As law enforcement she would be there to assist the community and also make it better. Her friends would describe her as energetic, caring, and empathetic. Commissioner Velis asked what things she could bring to the job as a police officer that she gained in terms of knowledge with her experience in the military. She said she learned that communication is important especially in stressful situations where it is vital to effectively get people to understand what is happening. Another attribute is active listening as a lot of times people just want to be heard. Commissioner Velis asked if there was anything she hoped the panel would ask her. She said definitely about community policing as it is a huge passion of hers and it means building trust within the community.

Justyn Callahan: Commissioner Irwin asked the candidate for a historical background since graduating high school. He answered that he joined the Army National Guard in 2016, went to basic training, and then attended Westfield State University studying criminal justice where also did ROTC. Throughout

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college he worked various security guard jobs and is currently doing hospital security full-time at Holyoke Medical Center. He is a commissioned transportation officer in the National Guard in Framingham one weekend a month.

Commissioner Sypek asked what he personally expects to receive from a career in law enforcement. He said he is hoping to have a career that is fulfilling and meaningful and that he and his family can be proud of. His friends would describe him as loyal, trustworthy, and hard working.

The Commissioners then asked Captain Dickinson about each of the candidates, starting with David Antonivschi. He responded that all five of the officers that did the interviews felt that David is a little too young and needs to mature based on inconsistencies in his resume, application, and interviews. There were also some minor police calls in 2019 and he would like to put some distance from those. He also mentioned a post on Instagram within the past year. He said he is not a bad person and would help the department because he speaks several languages, so perhaps somewhere down the road he could reapply. Commissioner Velis said he showed definite enthusiasm and asked what kind of time period the captain thinks would be good before David reapplies. Captain Dickinson said personally he thinks a year. Captain Pitoniak said his heart is in the right place but he does need maturity.

Commissioner Sypek asked if there is any follow-up for candidates such as this. Captain Dickinson said he does contact them to explain everything and advise how they can better themselves. Chief Valliere said everyone makes mistakes but when asked the candidates need to be truthful. Commissioner Irwin said his reservation was that David said he gets nervous in front of a crowd, and when an officer is on the street crowds are going to gather.

The Commissioners reviewed Michaela Neuzil and Justyn Callahan stating they are outstanding candidates. Captain Dickinson said candidates that in the military are squared away and that is where the maturity factor comes in.

The candidates were brought back into the room. Commissioner Sypek thanked them and thanked the captains for the background reports.

Commissioner Irwin made a motion to pass on the appointment of David Antonivschi as a patrolman. Commissioner Velis seconded the motion.

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

Commissioner Irwin made a motion to accept the appointment of Michaela Neuzil as a patrolman. Commissioner Velis seconded the motion.

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

Commissioner Irwin made a motion to accept the appointment of Justyn Callahan as a patrolman. Commissioner Velis seconded the motion.

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

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Captain Pitoniak informed the Commission that the Academy start date for Michaela and Justyn will be November 13th.

Commissioner Velis told David Antonivschi that this does not mean he would never become a police officer and to work on his weaknesses and apply again in the future.

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

Due to October 9th being a holiday, the next meeting was scheduled for Tuesday, October 10, 2023.

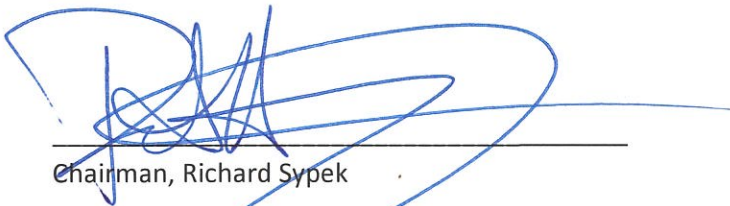
Commissioner Irwin made a motion to meet on Tuesday, October 10, 2023 at 5 pm. Commissioner Velis seconded the motion. All in favor.

At 5:51 pm, Commissioner Irwin made a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Velis seconded the motion.

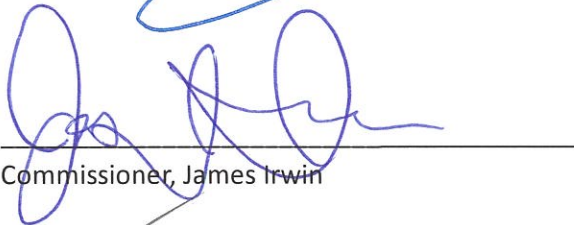
Commissioner Sypek: Yes

Commissioner Velis: Yes

Commissioner Irwin: Yes



Chairman, Richard Sypek



Commissioner, James Irwin



Commissioner, Peter Velis

APPROVED FOR RELEASE ON 10/11/23