

# SPECIAL MEETING OF WESTFIELD POLICE COMMISSION

WESTFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS

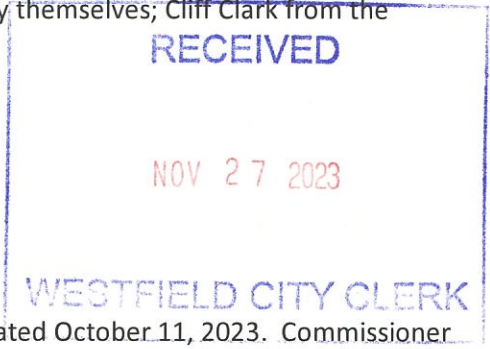
October 27, 2023

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The Westfield Police Commission meeting was called to order at City Hall, 59 Court Street, Westfield, MA, in Council Chambers at 1 pm.

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

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



A. Approval and Release of Minutes

Commissioner Irwin motioned to approve and release the minutes dated October 11, 2023. Commissioner Velis seconded the motion.

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

B. Open Participation - None

C. Old Business: Candidate interviews for chief selection process

Commissioner Sypek noted that due to the 3-member commission size the commissioners were not allowed to discuss the issues without holding a public hearing and therefore each commissioner was required to do their own due diligence, which they have. He thanked the families of the three outstanding candidates for their support. Regardless of whomever is chosen, he is confident that all three candidates will support the new chief in every way possible, as they are all vital components of the Westfield Police Department. He thanked the mayor for appointing Judge Velis and Jim Irwin as commissioners as they made his job a pleasure. Lastly, he thanked the outgoing chief, Lawrence Valliere, who has done an amazing job during his tenure as chief.

He reviewed the ground rules for the interviews which were that the candidates have been informed to turn off their cell phones, they will be sequestered, and the interviews will be done in the order they have chosen – Captain Pitoniak, Captain Dickinson, and then Lieutenant Hall. They each have three minutes to make a brief opening statement should they choose to, and likewise will be allowed three minutes to make a brief closing statement. The commission will rotate the questions with each commissioner asking three questions or more if time allows.

**Candidate #1: Captain Jerome Pitoniak**

Captain Pitoniak made his opening statement thanking the people he has worked with over the years who have been mentors to him. He said that he grew up on a farm where he learned to work hard and applied that to every job that he has had. Both parents were teachers and taught him the value of education, and his time in the Boy Scouts taught him the chain of command and leadership skills. Throughout his life he learned that if you treat people well, they will treat you well and from that he gives respect to everyone.

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Question 1: Given your experience working within the Westfield Police Department (WPD), please discuss what you see as the department's strengths as well as any areas you feel need further development and how you will address and prioritize any needs.

Captain Pitoniak responded that he believes the strength of the WPD is that they go above and beyond when they get a call from another police department, and they do the same for the citizens of Westfield. As chief, he would create a mission statement because having one would emphasize that they are a community-driven police department. He also would have a monthly staff meeting, continue to investment in training, and increase the size of some bureaus, especially the traffic bureau. He said they have been doing improvements at the station but they still need to update the women's locker room. For long-term goals, he would like to get body cameras, a canine as search or narcotics dog, and lastly a new station.

Commissioner Velis asked if he had any topic that is a priority with respect to education. Captain Pitoniak answered that each officer level receives education and as captain he has received training in budgeting, internal investigations, etc., and a new captain will need to take that training as well. Lieutenants will need to take supervisory and leadership skill training. Sergeants are first time supervisors and will need a little help coming from a patrolman's position.

Commissioner Sypek inquired about the frequency of staff meetings and if the commissioners would be invited to attend. Captain Pitoniak responded that the meetings would be monthly, set as the commission meetings are (i.e., the first Wednesday of every month) and the commissioners are always welcome to attend.

Question 2: Essential to the well-being of the community is the health of those we have entrusted to protect it. How will you promote officer wellness and safety within the department given the nature of the job and exposure to stress? For example, explain how you will deal with an officer who demonstrates drug/alcohol problems.

Captain Pitoniak explained that the city has an EAP (Employee Assistance Program), and that he grew up with a family member with a substance abuse problem and has attended AA meetings. He is willing to speak with employees about their issues. The department has also invested in the gym to promote health and wellness there and has sent a couple officers to health and wellness training classes.

Commissioner Irwin asked if there any weight restrictions for officers to which Captain Pitoniak responded that they do not. Once a candidate clears the PAT test there are no further restrictions.

Question 3: What will you implement with respect to the requirements of the Massachusetts Peace Officers Standards and Training (POST) into the Westfield Police Department?

Captain Pitoniak informed the commission that they have a minimum mandatory training. He has been involved in the internal investigations portion for four years while being a captain and they have had to terminate an employee due to the investigation so it shows they are not afraid to uphold the POST standards.

Commissioner Velis asked about familiarizing personnel in the field with the standards to which Captain Pitoniak apprised him that it is the captain's responsibility so a new captain will have to learn it.

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Question 4: What do you see as the most important quality a Chief of Police should possess and what specific philosophy will you use to lead the department.

Captain Pitoniak offered his philosophy of treating people the way you want to be treated. He gives the same respect to new officers and veteran officers, and will continue to do that for the rest of his career.

Commissioner Sypek asked what type of management style he uses. Captain Pitoniak explained that he is not a micro manager, however, he does like things done a certain way. He does realize that others have a different method and sometime it may be better from which he can learn. He does delegate because it is important for everyone to learn skills. At this point the lieutenants don't really know anything about the captain's job but they should, and the sergeants know about the lieutenant's job because they get stuck in their chair a lot.

Commissioner Velis asked if he would subscribe to an open-door policy from the patrolman to the supervisors. Captain Pitoniak said that he has an open-door policy now but he doesn't want to get away from the chain of command. He doesn't want a complaint to go around a supervisor because they will be unaware of a situation.

Question 5: Strong relationships of mutual trust between communities and their police department are critical in maintaining public safety. Please discuss the importance of the Westfield community's connection to the police department and the methods you will incorporate to provide transparency, understand the needs of and stay connected to the community.

Captain Pitoniak answered that he believes there is a great relationship with the community. He has been involved with Kiwanis, Sons of Erin, Elks Club, and the Police Association. He enjoys being a police officer, being part of the community and attending community events.

Commissioner Sypek questioned if and when a new police station is built will he have some programs to bring students in to see what it is like to be a police officer? Captain Pitoniak responded in the affirmative and is hoping to be able to hold outside group meetings in the new station in a community-style room. He also championed the current police explorer program.

Question 6: Describe two innovative programs that as chief you would like to initiate in Westfield including how you would plan to recruit new officers.

Captain Pitoniak reiterated his desire to return the traffic bureau back to a four-person staff. He believes a dedicated staff would be better able to handle the traffic issues in the city.

Commissioner Velis asked what programs would best serve to enhance morale of the police officers.

Captain Pitoniak said the officers look forward to specialty-type unit assignments such as a scuba diving team, boat patrol, and ATV patrol. Also, once the traffic bureau is back up to full staff he would like to increase the community policing unit so they can be more proactive rather than reactive to situations.

Question 7: While serving as a captain, give an example of how you have improved police-citizen relations in the community.

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Captain Pitoniak responded that he changed the form with internal investigations and put it online allowing for easier access and to be able to submit without the need to come to the station. He said there are not many citizen complaints but the few received are addressed fully with in-person conversations. He believes that it shows the department is attentive enough to not simply make a phone call but to actively listen to and discuss the problem. They also respond to the citizen to let them know the outcome of the complaint.

Commissioner Velis asked if he has confidence in the constructs of education programs available to the officers.

Captain Pitoniak answered that basic criminal law like assault and battery is covered in the academy, but most officers have not done a search and seizure or writing a search warrant, and often the detective bureau will come in to help. He would like to see that type of training offered.

Commissioner Sypek asked if he had any contacts or relations with the superior court's office in relation to search and seizure.

Captain Pitoniak said he used to work as a court officer for a while in district court and maintains a relationship with many people still there. They also confer with the ADA office a few times a year for certain things like city ordinance violations.

Question 8: If selected as police chief, how will you work with and mentor the candidates who did not get the position.

Captain Pitoniak said they talked about resurrecting the reserve program in a reduced capacity since they would not be able to work as a police officer. It would consist of monthly meetings, ride-alongs, and basic training to give them an opportunity to see if they want continue with policing.

Commissioner Sypek asked if he would delegate the job of following up with rejected candidates.

He said Sargeant Irujo starting writing a program for it but at the time they only had one candidate that was not that interested.

Question 9: What is your overall position if selected as chief for the operation of the police department regarding relationships to the community and most importantly the morale of the officers.

Captain Pitoniak said he leads from the top – he is always in a good mood and puts the department first. He is always trying to make things better (the station, the gym) and, although there will be a new station someday, this is their house now and he like to keep his house in order. He is not afraid to help anyone with any job.

Commissioner Velis asked with the realities of the modern world would he consider employing a task force of retired police officers to assist him, and requested highlights for the community to be safe.

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Captain Pitoniak detailed the SRT team that trains regularly but they are not always working and need to be called in. He feels they are well schooled in active shooter training but there is always more room for that type of training.

Commissioner Irwin asked if the current lieutenant and sergeant staff will follow his same practice to lead by example.

Captain Pitoniak said over the years they've had people with different styles and it has changed with the way the younger officers react to authority and work. They are not really into working a lot of overtime or that style of work, but he thinks people can still be motivated by your actions and he hopes he can do that with them.

Commissioner Sypek asked what relationship does the WPD have with outside sources in the event of an active shooter.

Captain Pitoniak said they have always had a great relationship with Southwick, the State Police in Russell, and the military base as they have staff employed there. They have used the base for trainings and for a shooting range.

In his closing statement, Captain Pitoniak summarized the mutual respect with the officers, his involvement in the community, his handling of the budget, and his confidence in being able to perform the job as chief.

At 1:51 pm, the Commission took a short break reconvening at 1:57 pm.

## **Candidate #2: Captain Stephen Dickinson**

Captain Dickinson began his opening statement quoting 'If you find a job that you love, you don't work a day in your life.' He found that job thirty years ago when he began serving with the WPD, the community at large, and the City of Westfield always giving 110%. He served in the US Navy submarine force for eight years and his military background created the highly motivated and dedicated person he is today. He is a team player, because in the military it is a team effort and they rely on each other.

**Question 1:** Given your experience working within the Westfield Police Department (WPD), please discuss what you see as the department's strengths as well as any areas you feel need further development and how you will address and prioritize any needs.

Captain Dickinson responded that every evening he reviews what he did that day and reflects on how he could do better. He said the strengths are the great crew, chief, and commission and everyone enjoys coming to work. The younger officers have a different mentality than the older officers and they work with that to bring them forward. A weakness is that the majority of the department has been on the job less than ten years so the experience on the street is an issue.

Commissioner Velis inquired about how important community policing is to him and if any changes need to be made.

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Captain Dickinson answered that he previously oversaw the community policing unit and currently it is a weakness in terms of manpower. He said patrol is the backbone of policing and community policing is the face of the police department. Community policing was started in the early 90's and he was the first officer to work in the offsite location working by himself at night. There were no education classes at that time so he bought a book and studied it to learn about and implement that knowledge in community policing. He created a landlord group to train the landlords to screen potential tenants and bring a better quality of people into Westfield. It made a huge dent in crime in Westfield.

Commissioner Velis asked about what kind of input does community policing have with the speeding problem in Westfield.

Captain Dickinson replied that when he worked as a patrolman he ran stats to see when and where the accidents were and effectively changed those patterns. Community police can have meetings with neighborhoods to discuss those same issues. The traffic bureau worked effectively in years past but right now they only have two officers. He would like to see the staffing increased and then get the department to work as a whole to see and address those issues.

Question 2: Essential to the well-being of the community is the health of those we have entrusted to protect it. How will you promote officer wellness and safety within the department given the nature of the job and exposure to stress? For example, explain how you will deal with an officer who demonstrates drug/alcohol problems.

Captain Dickinson responded that he is a big supporter of wellness as he works out every afternoon. They have BHN for mental health support for the community and for officers.

Commissioner Sypek asked how he would personally deal with an officer with drug or alcohol issues.

He answered that he believes those issues can be addressed from day one. A supervisor can bring it to the administration's attention so the best course of action can be discussed and taken. He and Captain Pitoniak have worked on getting evaluations in place which would help supervisors to work one on one with their subordinates and address those issues at that time as well.

Commissioner Irwin asked how he would address overweight officers.

Captain Dickinson answered that more officers are taking advantage of the gym now that they have new equipment. He has suggested certain medical testing that he is familiar with to some of the older officers.

Question 3: What will you implement with respect to the requirements of the Massachusetts Peace Officers Standards and Training (POST) into the Westfield Police Department?

Captain Dickinson said he is a firm believer in POST. The officers were well-trained before POST but now they are more responsible, and it gives more power to the chief. The newer officers are already learning about and working with POST in the academy.

Commissioner Velis asked what measures he would implement as chief to make sure the officers are well educated as to the consequences that could result from being decertified.

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Captain Dickinson said that every officer is well aware of the penalties and what is expected through POST. He is in charge of the certifications and is the liaison for the department with POST and therefore he knows they are aware of what is expected of them through POST and the department's rules and regulations. He is a huge advocate for training, and as there is a captive audience at roll-call for fifteen minutes, it is a good time for reminders about POST.

Question 4: What do you see as the most important quality a Chief of Police should possess and what specific philosophy will you use to lead the department.

Captain Dickinson responded that the most important quality is integrity. He doesn't have a particular philosophy but believes in leading by example. He would like to see a mission statement in place so people know what the goal of the police department is.

Commissioner Sypek asked about his style of management to which Captain Dickinson answered that his style is situational. In his position it is more democratic so he tries to get others' input into how they can develop a way to meet their goals. He is not afraid to delegate responsibilities because one person can't do everything or they will get burned out very quickly.

Question 5: Strong relationships of mutual trust between communities and their police department are critical in maintaining public safety. Please discuss the importance of the Westfield community's connection to the police department and the methods you will incorporate to provide transparency, understand the needs of and stay connected to the community.

Captain Dickinson said community policing is the face of the police department. We need to keep an open-door relationship especially with other community entities to support them.

Question 6: Describe two innovative programs that as chief you would like to initiate in Westfield including how you would plan to recruit new officers.

Captain Dickinson repeated that two things he'd like to see done in the police department is to increase the manpower in community policing and the traffic bureau. He thinks it will help when dealing with the community to show we are trying to solve issues with traffic, community policing, and landlords.

Going forward, there is a lot of unfinished business that Chief Valliere started – a new building, body cameras, getting out of Civil Service – so right now to recruit people we need to offer things to get them on board. We need to get out of Civil Service as there are officers in other departments that would gladly come to Westfield and it would help to recruit. It is an antiquated system today.

Question 7: While serving as a captain, give an example of how you have improved police-citizen relations in the community.

Captain Dickinson said as a captain he has not, but he works through individuals like Lieutenant Hall in community policing. He is available 24/7 for officers, commissioners, and the community.

Question 8: If selected as police chief, how will you work with and mentor the candidates who did not get the position.

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Captain Dickinson said he has always sat down with individuals who did not get specific jobs to let them know why and similarly he spoke with the candidate that was recently rejected. This is another reason why he feels they need evaluations to let people know what they need to work on.

Commissioner Sypek asked as chief would he consider implementing someone within the department to setup a program to help recruit and/or mentor candidates not hired so we don't lose them.

Captain Dickinson replied that it would be more geared to when we are out of Civil Service because right now the people that are leaving are going to other jobs offering more money. Some go to the state police, but some can't pass the PAT.

Question 9: What is your professional vision for the WPD and how will you engage members of the department to move your vision forward.

Captain Dickinson answered that he would meet with the lieutenants within the first thirty days one on one. He would get their input and then meet with them collectively and review. He would use a team effort to create a mission statement. Within sixty days he would meet with all the sergeants. Within ninety days he would do the same with the patrolmen.

Commission Velis asked what specifically should be implemented to keep up the morale of the officers.

Captain Dickinson said through the years he loved his job because his supervisors were hands off allowing him to do his job his way and he produced results. Giving out special details helps along with getting their input. Morale comes from the top. He would have an open-door policy, but the chain of command should be used as well. By bypassing people, it shows the communication is not working.

In his closing statement, Captain Dickinson said he appreciates the opportunity and thanked the commission and the chief.

At 3:05, the Commission took a 10-minute break.

## **Candidate #3: Lieutenant Eric Hall**

Lieutenant Hall made his opening statement detailing how he was born and raised in Westfield and attended Westfield schools, Westfield State College and received a master's degree from Western New England College. His father was a police officer for 32 years in Westfield and his mother was in probation. He has been on the board of directors at the YMCA for about 17 years and has twice served as chair. He has worked with Baystate Noble Hospital, and has done volunteer work with Saint Mary's elementary school and Westfield Little League. He has also done fundraising for the police unity tour which raises money for the fallen officer's memorial in Washington, DC, and the local Ride to Remember.

He said a team must trust you, be committed to you, and be just as driven to the same outcomes as you.

Question 1: Given your experience working within the Westfield Police Department (WPD), please discuss what you see as the department's strengths as well as any areas you feel need further development and how you will address and prioritize any needs.



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Lieutenant Hall said the biggest strength with the WPD is the staff that works there. The entirety of personnel must be as committed as the chief and as proof of that are the patrolmen attending this meeting and being invested in the outcome. It is management's job to cultivate that through professional development. The department works closely with mental health co-responders and drug addiction response teams for substance abuse disorders. He said a very small portion of what they do is actually enforcing the law; it is more conflict resolution. They could do even more work by identifying underlying problems and connect with people who can help repair those problems. This will then have a significant impact on the response that law enforcement actually needs to do to enforce the laws.

Commission Sypek asked he if is suggesting that community policing needs further development.

Lieutenant Hall responded that he does not love the term community policing because it sounds like a special tactic that should be done when it's really just the way a police department should be operating. They should be looking at how to solve problems. As the head of the community policing unit, he thinks it runs very well but there is room to allow officers to do more problem solving. By giving them more resources and training it will develop them, and being a community partner with social service agencies will deliver better services to the people they are responsible to.

His vision for a new station would include social service offices so that people in need can get help in the same building with a warm handoff, rather than being handed a business card.

Commissioner Velis confirmed with him that he agrees the unit needs more staffing, and asked him what he thinks it should be called. Lieutenant Hall gave the correct term - community services unit - which he said is closer to what they do. Commissioner Velis asked if he feels comfortable that the officers under him understand the concepts of community policing and are not apt to make a hasty arrest. Lieutenant Hall conveyed that there aren't any officers that he does not feel comfortable sending out on a call, and that they are smart enough to know when they don't know something. He explained that when out on a high-stress call they should slow the situation down and give a call to the supervisor to figure it out.

Question 2: Essential to the well-being of the community is the health of those we have entrusted to protect it. How will you promote officer wellness and safety within the department given the nature of the job and exposure to stress? For example, explain how you will deal with an officer who demonstrates drug/alcohol problems.

Lieutenant Hall relayed that he has noticed over the course of his career the change in attitude towards health and wellness where some officers will work out in the gym instead of going to McDonalds. There is already an employee assistance program and a nationwide program is setting up peer counseling. The atmosphere is that it is okay to ask for help. Regarding substance abuse within the department, the priority of the chief is to protect the department. Rehabilitating an officer would be best, but it doesn't always work, and it should be dealt with when there are early warning signs.

Commissioner Sypek asked him what he would do if he was hearing rumors or seeing problems with an individual in the department but it was not being addressed. Lieutenant Hall said in the past he has pulled officers to the side to have a conversation about the possible issue.

Commissioner Irwin inquired if he has any concerns about the physical condition of any of the officers. Lieutenant Hall said it has changed a lot over the past 25 years, but there is no one in the department that

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he would be concerned with handling a physical altercation with him. It is something to be encouraged to continue.

Question 3: What will you implement with respect to the requirements of the Massachusetts Peace Officers Standards and Training (POST) into the Westfield Police Department?

Lieutenant Hall responded that the law went into effect in 2021 and therefore it already is implemented. Specific questions must be asked of new hires.

Commissioner Velis asked if he has confidence that the current officers are familiar with POST and its functions, its operation, and that it is an oversight. In terms of education, what does he think about addressing, so they fully understand, the consequences of their actions.

Lieutenant Hall answered that POST is a new organization however a lot of the rules did not change. It is an oversight board so it is another layer to the rules. They do roll call trainings almost every day, but there is always opportunity to do more education.

Question 4: What do you see as the most important quality a Chief of Police should possess and what specific philosophy will you use to lead the department.

Lieutenant Hall said there are a lot of qualities that a chief needs to have but to narrow it down you have to lead from the front. You need to be someone the department can look up to, be a strong leader, and lead by example. His philosophy is that the community needs to help set the agenda for the police department, otherwise the direction the department takes may not be what the community wants or needs.

Commissioner Sypek asked what his style of management is, to which Lieutenant Hall described a method he read about which is to push decision making down to the lowest level possible. By doing so, it empowers them and gives them a desire to come to work.

Question 5: Strong relationships of mutual trust between communities and their police department are critical in maintaining public safety. Please discuss the importance of the Westfield community's connection to the police department and the methods you will incorporate to provide transparency, understand the needs of and stay connected to the community.

Lieutenant Hall reiterated that they cannot do their jobs without the support of the community. They are professionals and most of the time they know what they are doing, but if they are doing things in contradiction to what society wants they will run into problems. His job of running the community policing unit is to create those community connections. If there is something they can do to assist they should be doing it. There used to be monthly meetings of the nonprofits in Westfield to see how they could help one another and the WPD was involved with that. Another item is that there is a lot of work that the police department is already doing but doesn't get out to the public. We need to be better at publicizing what we do.

Commissioner Sypek asked if he thinks the department does enough community work off-shift.

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Lieutenant Hall said there are officers that volunteer in the community but there is always room for more. In an official capacity they are involved in almost everything asked of them.

Question 6: Describe two innovative programs that as chief you would like to initiate in Westfield including how you would plan to recruit new officers.

Lieutenant Hall said he was just at a career fair at WSU, and the number of organizations there trying to recruit new officers was daunting. He stated that he is not the biggest fan of civil service, as it has traditionally been a good thing, and points of it are still good, but at certain times it handcuffs us in how we can recruit, where we can recruit from, and who we can bring into the police department. Traditionally, law enforcement has always recruited from criminal justice colleges and military, but law enforcement has changed quite a bit. If they got out of Civil Service, he thinks they could start recruiting from different nontraditional areas such as at a university that specializes in sociology and psychology. There are obstacles to that because the officers still need to be physically fit.

He would also like to try to put together an incentive program that would encourage officers to volunteer off-shift in community programs to become part of the community instead as opposed to the officer that just serves the community.

Commissioner Velis questioned his objection to Civil Service and wondered if he is suggesting that Civil Service should be eliminated altogether or is he suggesting Civil Service reform. Lieutenant Hall responded that even as chief he doesn't know that he would have enough clout to get them to reform their entire process so therefore he would be open to other options besides Civil Service.

Question 7: While serving as a lieutenant, give an example of how you have improved police-citizen relations in the community.

Lieutenant Hall shared a story of connection to a problem citizen that he has been dealing with for 27 years whom he always treated with dignity and respect, and that connection helped to solve a theft. He believes in face-to-face contact with the community.

Question 8: If selected as police chief, how will you work with and mentor the candidates who did not get the position.

Lieutenant Hall feels the best thing to do is to have honest conversations with those people. It needs to be a formalized process within the department with better training for sergeants and lieutenants as well.

Question 9: What is your professional vision for the WPD and how will you engage members of the department to move your vision forward.

Lieutenant Hall repeated that his vision would be to be much more involved with other social service agencies. Problems need to be solved by the community and not rest entirely on the police department. If they could get training on how to recognize that there is a mental health concern, and get the resources to get that person help, that is the vision he has.

Commissioner Velis inquired about the morale of the department and what measures he would implement to enhance and maintain the morale.

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Lieutenant Hall pointed to pushing decision making down to the lowest level possible which empowers people, is rewarding, and gives them more experience. He also would like to have a mechanism for review or feedback as they do not have formalized reviews now so the only feedback is when a mistake is made. Giving recognition for doing a good job is equally important.

At 4:33 pm, the Commission took a break, reconvening at 4:41 pm.

Commissioner Velis spoke of conversations with Chief Valliere in which the chief mentioned his main concern was to make sure the officers cared about the department. He asked if the officers are enthusiastic about wanting to come to work is that going to make a better department? Lieutenant Hall corrected him saying that you cannot make an officer care about the department, but you can provide them the opportunity to care about it. You have to make it a place where they want to show up and want to do their job.

In his closing statement, Lieutenant Hall said he worked hard to get where he is today. His whole family volunteers in the community, it is his home, and it is where he will continue to be. He wouldn't be standing there if he didn't want to be chief of police, but regardless of whether that happens he will continue to make the department as strong as it can be. One his biggest strengths is to collaborate with people and the direction the police department needs to go is to work with other departments and services. He wants to make the department as good as he possibly can, developing the people who work within the police department to make it a place that they want to come to work every day and want to find out what they can also do to make the community better for us.

At 4:35 pm the Commission took a break, reconvening at 4:41 pm.

Commissioner Velis thanked everyone for being in attendance. As Chairman Sypek said at the onset, they can't appoint three people. A few months ago, it was articulated to the public that there would be a substantive, comprehensive, ethical process that would be put in place for the selection of the chief of police. It would be done strictly on merit and the commissioners independently did their own research. They made it abundantly clear that there would be no extraneous influences of any kind, and there were not. It was their job to give the taxpayers the most qualified person for the position and they were impressed with all three candidates. They received letters of recommendation that came from retired and current police officers, and civilians. They felt they needed to hear from people who would be under the supervision and guidance of the new chief. They looked at their experience, education, history of service, rank, special skills, personnel files, citations achieved, and substantive experience.

Commissioner Sypek stated that he did not know how his fellow commissioners will vote, but he will give his thoughts first. He said he is proud of the commission and told the candidates that all three did an outstanding job. This process has never been a popularity contest and he personally did his homework. He reviewed all the records, spoke with police chiefs in other communities, reached out and received great tips from an assessment center, personally spoke with patrolmen, ranking officers, the chief, and city councilors and has worked with all the candidates during his term as a police commissioner. The letters of recommendation were impressive and tipped the scales toward one candidate. With that being said, it is his recommendation that Captain Pitoniak move forward as the next chief.

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Commissioner Irwin thanked everyone for their time and attention. After careful consideration and pre-interviews, materials including personnel files, candidate applications, letters of recommendation, and today's interviews, he would like to recommend Jerome Pitoniak for the next police chief.

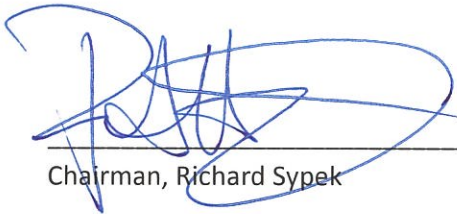
Commissioner Velis said he would like to make a nomination, with every degree of sincerity based on every thing the public just heard, it is his honor to place the name Jerome Pitoniak to serve as the next chief of police upon the retirement of Chief Valliere. He motioned for a vote; Commissioner Irwin seconded the motion.

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

D. New Business: None

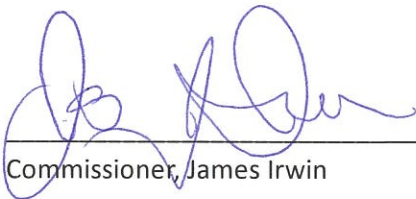
E. Announcement of Next Meeting: TBD

At 4:54 pm, Commissioner Irwin made a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Velis seconded the motion. All in favor.



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Chairman, Richard Sypek



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Commissioner, James Irwin



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Commissioner, Peter Velis

APPROVED FOR RELEASE ON 11/21/2023

