

SPECIAL MEETING OF WESTFIELD POLICE COMMISSION

WESTFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS

November 21, 2023

The Westfield Police Commission meeting was called to order at City Hall, 59 Court Street, Westfield, MA, in Room 315 at 5:30 pm.

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

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

A. Approval and Release of Minutes

Commission Sypek motioned to approve and release the minutes dated October 27, 2023.

Commissioner Sypek: Yes

Commissioner Velis: Yes

Commissioner Irwin: Yes

B. Open Participation - None

C. Old Business - None

D. New Business

1. Appoint new Traffic Control member Robert Mucha

Commissioner Sypek deferred to Captain Dickinson who had requested the agenda item. Captain Dickinson noted that the candidate meets all of the qualifications, has no issues, and is ready to go.

Commission Irwin motioned to approve Robert Mucha as a Traffic Control officer.

Commissioner Sypek: Yes

Commissioner Irwin: Yes

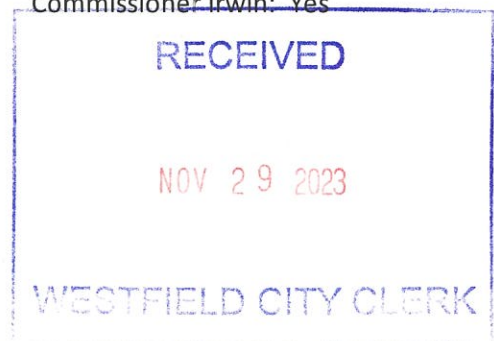
Commissioner Velis: Yes

2. Discussion of selection options for hiring of Captain's position

Commissioner Sypek outlined the options that he proposes which are:

- 1) Use Short List #1, which contains 2 candidates and will expire as soon as Short List #2 is available.
- 2) Short List #2, which is expected to be available soon, also contains 2 candidates, and would replace Short List #1
- 3) Do nothing until new chief is sworn in, and then use Short List #2 to appoint either 2 provisional captains, or 1 permanent and 1 provisional captain until the captain's exam in the fall of 2024 which would allow for a full-time appointment.
- 4) Use Public Safety Consultants as an assessment center for 3-5 candidates of which the results would be sent to Civil Service whom would rank the candidates and provide a list in 8 weeks.
- 5) Make one provisional appointment until after the new chief is sworn in, and then hold that appointment until the captain's exam in the fall.

The commissioners debated for approximately 55 minutes with the resulting arguments as follows:



SPECIAL MEETING OF WESTFIELD POLICE COMMISSION

WESTFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS

November 21, 2023

Commissioner Velis: Is not in favor of using an assessment center as the commission is qualified to choose a captain. Is in favor of choosing an appointment from the 2 candidates on Short List #1 as soon as possible as the list has been in place since 2021 and others are waiting for promotions. Questioned the previous commission's decision [on January 10, 2022] to continue with provisional appointment rather than promote from the short list.

Commissioner Sypek: Enthusiastic about using an assessment center because it would produce a full list from Civil Service with 3-5 candidates in approximately 8 weeks, and would give more control to the chief to choose his team. Without this full list the commission does not have the ability to interview 4 candidates in 8 weeks. Noted that there are no current openings for the current list, and therefore nothing to act upon, as the department has a captain and provisional captain in place. By promoting from Short List #1 it would cause the demotion of the current provisional captain, plus Short List #1 will soon be replaced by Short List #2. Stated that Short List #1 is there only due to Civil Service's error with the 2021 captain's exam. Had they not erred, there would be no Short List #1. [Due to the error, it was voted on during the January 10, 2022 commission meeting to use the MGL Chapter 31, Section 15 option regarding provisional promotions.]

Commission Irwin: Does not like that Civil Service would position candidates based on the assessment center's reports due to that influence basically choosing the captain for them. Speculated that they would be forced to choose a captain based on the Civil Service ranking, however, Captain Pitoniak advised that they would be allowed to bypass with good reason.

Chief Valliere was asked his opinion. His answer was that he has learned that having 2 captains that work together as a team with the chief is a benefit to the department and community. He supports whatever option brings in the most candidates.

Commissioner Velis asked Captain Pitoniak if he could work with either of the 2 individuals on the short list. He responded that he can work with anyone, but would rather be able to hand pick a team as best as possible. Unfortunately, Civil Service hampers that a bit. He is unable to give a straight answer to the question in an open meeting.

Commissioner Irwin made a motion to discredit option #4 – using an assessment center, Commissioner Velis seconded the motion.

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

Commissioner Velis suggested voting on each of the options. Commissioner Sypek said there was no need to vote on option 1 because option 2 will happen naturally when the exam results come out. If they vote on option 2 it means they will wait for those results and act accordingly. It will give them one captain, who is already a captain, and once the new chief is sworn in they would be able to make a provisional appointment at that time and wait for the exams in the fall.

Commissioner Irwin made a motion to accept or deny Short List #2, Commissioner Velis seconded the motion.

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

SPECIAL MEETING OF WESTFIELD POLICE COMMISSION

WESTFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS

November 21, 2023

Commissioner Irwin made a motion to accept Short List #1 as a viable option, Commissioner Velis seconded the motion.

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

The Commissioners discussed option #3, and inquired of Chief Valliere the date that Captain Pitoniak would be sworn in as chief, which would be January 22, 2024.

Commissioner Irwin made a motion to accept option #3 as a viable option, Commissioner Velis seconded the motion.

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

Commissioner Sypek suggested revising option #5 to make a provisional appointment but not have it take effect until the new chief is sworn in. He would have to look into being able to making this kind of appointment.

Commissioner Irwin made a motion to accept option #5 as a provisional appointment effective no earlier than January 22, 2024, Commissioner Velis seconded the motion.

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

Commissioner Velis suggested convening before the scheduled December meeting, making a motion to have a meeting next week for the purposes of acting definitively on all the options which were voted to be viable. Commissioner Irwin seconded the motion.

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

E. Next special meeting scheduled for Tuesday, November 28, 2023 with the time to be determined.

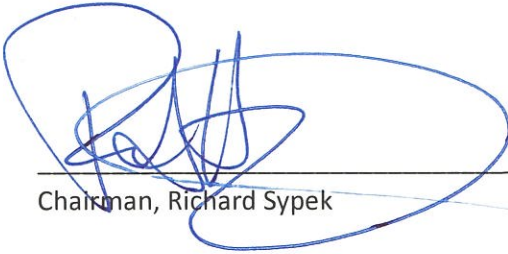
At 6:51 pm, Commissioner Irwin made a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Velis seconded the motion.

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

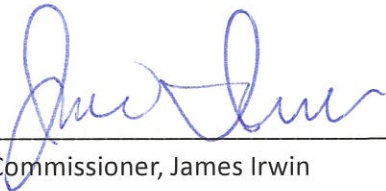
SPECIAL MEETING OF WESTFIELD POLICE COMMISSION

WESTFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS

November 21, 2023



Chairman, Richard Sypek



Commissioner, James Irwin



Commissioner, Peter Velis

APPROVED FOR RELEASE ON 11/28/2023