

ST. JOHN POLICE COMMISSION

MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING ON MAY 10, 2004

The May 2004 Regular Meeting of the Board of Metropolitan Police Commissioners of the Town of St. John was held on May 10, 2004 at 7:30 P.M., as advertised, pursuant to law. Commissioner Dodaro called the meeting to order and then led the audience in the Pledge of Allegiance. Roll call was taken with the following members of the Police Commission being present; namely, William Dodaro, Donald Farris, Rose Hejl, and Robert Long. Also present were Assistant Chief Bernard Johnsen and Town Council Liaison Charles Pearson. Representing the Law Firm of Austgen, Decker and Phillips PC was Attorney David Austgen. Commissioner Ron Vale was not present.

APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MONTH'S MINUTES

Commissioner Hejl made a motion to approve and accept the April 12, 2004 Executive Session Minutes and the April 12, 2004 Regular Meeting Minutes as presented. With a second by Commissioner Long, the motion carried unanimously.

CORRESPONDENCE / COMMUNICATIONS

Commissioner Dodaro read a letter to the Police Commission from Sergeant Fred Stamate, of Lake Central High School, dated April 30, 2004. Said letter expressed thanks and gratitude to the Police Commission and the St. John Police Department for the department's participation in a drug sweep at Lake Central High School on Friday, April 30, 2004. In particular, the letter commended Corporal Dale Poston for the fine job he did as the charge officer and coordinator of the multi-faceted sweep.

Commissioner Dodaro read a letter to Corporal David Demeter from the St. John the Evangelist Health Ministry. Said letter, dated April 2004, expressed thanks for the St. John Police Department's support of their Health Fair. Corporal Richard Conaway and Officer James Turturillo attended the Health Fair and were found to be friendly, helpful and able to provide excellent information.

POLICE DEPARTMENT'S MONTHLY REPORT

Commissioner Dodaro read the monthly report for April 2004. Commissioner Dodaro stated that from April 1, 2004 through April 30, 2004, the members of the St. John Police Department logged 14,784 duty miles and responded to 363 incidents. The investigation of these incidents resulted in 22 adult arrests with a total of 33 charges, and 3 juvenile arrests with a total of 4 charges. There were 306 traffic citations issued along with 76 written warnings and 0 parking violations. The grand total of citations issued during the month of April 2004 is 382 citations. Vehicle thefts totaled \$0.00 during the month of April 2004. All other thefts totaled \$10,450.00. Total value of recovered property was \$0.00.

OLD BUSINESS

Hiring of Officer Steven Flores – Commissioner Dodaro advised Officer Steven Flores was sworn in on April 22, 2004. Assistant Chief Johnsen stated Officer Flores is doing very well. He is a seasoned police officer, also a former St. John Reserve Officer, and a former East Chicago fireman. Officer Flores worked his first weekend with Corporal Conaway, who helped him get reacquainted with the Town, and now “he is out there fighting crime with both hands.”

Patterson Avenue Overweight Truck Complaint – Assistant Chief Johnsen advised six (6) citations were written regarding overweight truck violations since last month’s meeting. The minimum amount of manpower extended for this purpose was 14 hours 44 minutes, based on the officers who logged their time with Radio on this detail. Based on this information, Assistant Chief Johnsen stated the “juice is not worth the squeeze” regarding this matter, and he did not feel it warranted officers sitting on Patterson specifically for this purpose. Signs have been installed advising of the fines, and the Department will continue with enforcement via roving patrol in this area. Assistant Chief Johnsen stated there was a lot of truck traffic, but they had the right to be there because they were making deliveries in Town. Much discussion ensued, inclusive of conversation regarding weighing vehicles and the availability of local scales.

Commissioner Long inquired as to whether there is any follow-up done after these citations are written, such as a letter to the business owner advising that their driver has received the citation and why the driver was cited. Assistant Chief Johnsen advised there was not but that was due to the fact that the employer of every driver, who had been cited, called the station. Assistant Chief Johnsen stated he spoke to the employers personally about the citations. Further, each employer who called wanted a break on the citation because they did not tell their driver to come through St. John. Some discussion ensued. Commissioner Long stated he felt a letter should be sent to each business owner regarding the ordinance violation by their employee. Assistant Chief Johnsen stated that was a pretty good idea and that could be done. More discussion ensued regarding overweight vehicles and state laws regulating the same. Commissioner Dodaro asked Assistant Chief Johnsen to research state laws reference weight restrictions on trucks and the enforcement of the same on local roads. More discussion ensued. Assistant Chief Johnsen advised the Commission that part-time Dispatcher Cliff Wroe wrote a program in Access to track all citations written regarding these overweight vehicle violations. The program makes it very easy to see exactly which companies have drivers who are violating the Town’s ordinance, and how many times the company’s different drivers have received citations.

Mr. James Curran, of 8780 Patterson Street, advised that he has seen a reduction in the truck traffic going down Patterson Street since the officers have been enforcing overweight vehicle violations. However, he has now noticed garbage haulers from different communities now using Patterson to travel south.

Chase Stingers – Commissioner Hejl advised she has spoken with Assistant Chief Johnsen and Corporal Timothy Gardenhire regarding this matter. She has been informed that the chase stingers have been ordered, and the police officers will receive a four (4) hour training class regarding the use of the chase stingers. Assistant Chief Johnsen advised this should be occurring within the next two (2) weeks. The cost of this training was included in the purchase price of the chase stingers.

Firearms – Glock Model 22 – Assistant Chief Johnsen advised that the Glock 22s, which were ordered for the officers wishing to trade-in their Glock 35s, have been received. The reason

why this trade-in came about was due to some of the officers felt that the barrel length of the Glock 35 was uncomfortable when sitting in their squad cars and difficult to remove from the holster. The barrel length on the Glock 22 is about 1-1/2" inches shorter than the Glock 35. Assistant Chief Johnsen stated he kept two (2) of the Glock 35s; one was given to Officer Flores, and the other is being held with the hopes of providing it to another new officer that may be hired later this year.

Indiana NENA (9-1-1) Fund Raiser – Cell Phone Recycling – Secretary J. Kolodziej advised that she has contacted *The Times*, *The Post Tribune* and WJOB regarding this fund raiser, who each ran an article regarding this matter. There have been several phone calls received in Dispatch regarding turning in phones, and there has been an apparent increase in public awareness regarding this fundraiser.

REPORTS

Budget – Attorney David Austgen advised there was a ruling in Lake Superior Court on Friday, May 7, 2004, regarding tax bills and the constitutionality of the tax collection system. Tax bills were due to be mailed today, but that is not going to happen now. Attorney Austgen advised that he had a lengthy discussion today with Town Manager Steven Kil, and they will be talking to the Town Council about how this will impact the Town's budget and spending. All departments will need to slow down on spending. As of this time, it is not known when the tax monies will be received. This problem will affect every government unit in Lake County, Indiana. Some discussion ensued.

Physical Plant – Assistant Chief Johnsen advised that approximately two (2) years ago, there was a substantial amount of mold growing upstairs on the ducts and walls. At that time, the mold was cleaned up as best as possible and then painted over. However, now if you are upstairs for a period of time, you can count on a severe headache and not feeling very well. Assistant Chief Johnsen stated it his belief that if a person spends a lot of time in the police station building, it will kill you. The mold that is on the walls upstairs is the same type of mold that when discovered in schools, they close the schools down. Assistant Chief Johnsen stated that the building needs to be replaced because he feels it is not a safe, healthy environment. Some discussion ensued regarding the inspection that was completed two (2) years ago. A report was generated at the time listing the findings and recommendations of the building. Commissioner Dodaro stated that this matter will be discussed soon and an attempt will be made to determine possible solutions for the situation.

HUMAN RESOURCES

Chief of Police Position – Commissioner Dodaro advised that the Commissioner advertised for applicants, and the deadline for the resumes to be postmarked was May 4, 2004. As of today's date, three (3) resumes have been received. Commissioner Dodaro stated that tentatively, the Commission planned on conducting interviews on Sunday, May 16, 2004; however, not all commissioners will be available. Commissioner Dodaro stated he would like to have all commissioners present for the interviews. Some discussion ensued. The Commission determined interviews would be conducted on Saturday, May 15, 2004 at 11:00 A.M., 11:30 A.M. and 12:00 Noon. The Commission hoped that they could then make a recommendation to the Town Council in time for the Town Council to appoint the new Chief of Police at their May 20th meeting.

Reserve Officer Program – Release of Reserve Officer for Solo Duty – Commissioner Dodaro advised Reserve Officer Michael Moffitt has been released for solo duty.

Reserve Officer Program – Consideration of Final Examination Register Candidates – Commissioner Dodaro advised the Commission has decided to increase the Reserve Officer Force by five (5) officers. Seven (7) applications have been received for the position of Reserve Officer, and the Commission has decided to approve the hiring of the five (5) candidates who are also listed on the Final Examination Register. Commissioner Hejl made a motion to accept the five (5) candidates that are included on the Final Examination Register into the Reserve Program; namely Anthony J. Konvalinka, Jerrod S. Martin, David M. Oszust, David L. Rybicki, and Brenda L. Smith. With a second by Commissioner Long, the motion carried unanimously. Regarding the other two (2) applications received, Commissioner Dodaro advised the applications would be placed in the file and those individuals would be contacted when there are new openings. Assistant Chief Johnsen was then directed to send letters to the applicants advising of the action the Commission has taken regarding the Reserve Officer Program. Further, Commissioner Dodaro advised Assistant Chief Johnsen to get the new reserves on board and going as soon as possible. Assistant Chief Johnsen then advised the Commission of changes he has recently made to the Reserve Program, namely:

- In the past, only certain officers were allowed to train. Since now almost all the officers are FTOs, Assistant Chief Johnsen decided to allow all of the officers to conduct Reserve Officer Training, which should expedite the training process of the new reserves.
- The training program for the reserves is in the process of being revamped. In the past, it took approximately nine (9) months for a reserve to be trained. In looking at the old program and in speaking with the officers, Assistant Chief Johnsen stated he has determined areas that should be concentrated on, mainly liability issues, and has scheduled blocks of training in the Department's Training Room so that the reserves could do assignments such as the overweight truck detail, traffic control, and security issues that the Department is working on.

Town Liaison Pearson inquired as to whether a reserve officer had been recently let go. Assistant Chief Johnsen stated that he did terminate the position of one of the reserve officers, but he was going to decline naming the individual at this time. Assistant Chief Johnsen stated that the reserves in training were not coming out for their shifts, so he developed a new requirement that the reserves had to come out a minimum of three (3) shifts a month. At the beginning of each month, the reserves would have to schedule their three (3) days. He stated he understood exigent circumstances and would take that in consideration but if the reserve is in the area, he expected them to put their time in. However, this particular individual stated he could not do this at this time. In order not to waste this reserve's training, Assistant Chief Johnsen advised this individual to return his department issued equipment and if sometime in the future his schedule allows, then he could re-enter the Reserve Program with a refresher course, and he would go back to where he left off. At this time though, the individual can no longer be involved with the Reserve Program due to his inability to meet the minimum shift requirement. As of this date, the reserve has not turned in his equipment, but Assistant Chief Johnsen stated he has advised the reserve of the laws regarding conversion and exercising control of somebody's property without authorization. Some discussion ensued.

NEW BUSINESS

Equipment – Vests – Commissioner Hejl advised that she received a memorandum from Corporal David Demeter regarding body armor. Said letter advised that the whole department is in need of new body armor. The Department is in receipt of a grant that will provide funds to help with purchasing new body armor for department members. Corporal Demeter, who was in attendance, advised that the Department has been awarded approximately \$9,400 through a grant for the purchase of new body armor. He stated the grant is a 40% matching grant and went on to explain the terms of the grant. Corporal Demeter advised that the Department just bought seven (7) vests for reserve officers, and he is in the process of getting the Town reimbursed for a portion of this purchase.

At this time and reference the Glock trade-ins, Assistant Chief Johnsen stated there was a lot of paperwork involved, phone calls, mailings, etc., that had to be done. Assistant Chief Johnsen advised Corporal Demeter did all that work, which made it real easy for him (Johnsen) to get the firearms exchange completed. Corporal Demeter organized everything and did a very good job.

Commissioner Dodaro queried as to how many members of the Police Department were in need of new vests. Corporal Demeter advised that out of the 15 full-time members, three (3) had vests that were under the 5-year limit. Those officers are Officer J. Turturillo, Officer B. Sidenbender, and Officer J. Dahlin. All the other officers, with the exception of Officer S. Flores who was just hired, have vests that were purchased in 1997, which puts them well past the manufacturer's warranty. Corporal Demeter then explained issues regarding the limit placed on vests by manufacturers. Some discussion ensued, inclusive of discussion of officers' preferences in vest manufacturers, types and threat level. The Commission asked Corporal Demeter to compile a list of officers who wish to participate in obtaining new vests and include the companies that those officers have a preference for. Councilman Pearson suggested standardizing the issued vests, and then obtaining bids from the different companies for a multiple purchase. An officer would then have the issued vest to wear but if he did not like it, he could then purchase a vest of his choice. Corporal Demeter responded that he felt a vest is a very personal piece of equipment. More discussion ensued. Commissioner Long suggested getting quotes from the different vendors and then establish a standard issued vest. Should an officer prefer a vest that costs more than the standard issued vest, they would then have the opportunity to purchase the vest of their choice, and they would be responsible for paying the difference in cost. Commissioner Long stated he wanted to look at standardizing the vests, getting a price for a bulk purchase, and then make a good business decision regarding this matter.

ANY AND ALL

There were no matters of "Any and All" brought before the Commission.

MEETING SCHEDULE

The next Regular Meeting will be on Monday, June 14, 2004, with the Work Study Session being held at 7:00 P.M. and the Regular Meeting at 7:30 P.M. in the Town Hall meeting room. Any and all other Executive Sessions will be advertised pursuant to law.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Hejl made a motion for adjournment. With a second by Commissioner Farris, the meeting was adjourned.

Town of St. John, Lake County
Indiana, Board of Metropolitan
Police Commissioners

Rose Hejl, Secretary

ATTEST:

Joan M. Kolodziej, Recording Secretary