

LACONIA POLICE COMMISSION MEETING

MEETING MINUTES

JANUARY 26, 2022

3:00 P.M.

1/26/2022 - Minutes

1. **CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Whittum called the meeting to Order at the above date and time.

2. **SALUTE TO THE FLAG**

Chairman Whittum lead the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. **RECORDING SECRETARY**

Executive Assistant Lori Marsh.

4. **ROLL CALL**

4.A. Chairman Whittum recognized Commissioners present - Chairman Douglas Whittum, Commissioner Frank Mello and Commissioner Scott Davis.

4.B. Chairman Whittum recognized Staff Present - Chief Matthew Canfield.

4.C. Chairman Whittum recognized a quorum has been established and there are three Commissioner members present.

5. **PERSONNEL MATTERS**

5.A. Commendations & Awards

No discussion.

5.B. Resignations/Retirement

No discussion.

5.C. Promotions/Classification Change

No discussion.

6. **COMMAND STAFF REPORTS**

6.A. Chief - Support Division

Chief Canfield advised the following:

The Support Division, along with Detectives, have been busy. They have been looking to outfit the Command Post Vehicle that we received through Homeland Security and have been working with the company to continue with the build of that. Delivery was supposed to be this spring, but we are now looking at later in the summer or early fall, due to supply issues.

They also have been working to get the three cruisers that were approved through Capital Improvement last year onto the street. We took delivery of these in late November and December and have been working with the outfitters, but like everything else, getting supplies has been difficult. They are almost completely outfitted and will be out on the road shortly.

They have also worked on a Department of Justice Substance Abuse Reduction Initiative Grant (formerly known as Granite Shield). The \$45,000.00 was awarded recently and approved by the City Council last Monday. It goes directly to overtime money to combat drug initiatives throughout the City with high intensity drug enforcement areas.

The Department of Justice wrote and applied for the COSSAP Grant. This is the third year in a row that they have applied for this grant and were successful this time. This stems back three years when they showed interest in the PET Program that Detective Adams has been working on for almost seven years and expressed interest in providing the program statewide. They have selected a handful of police departments throughout the State to be part of the initial wave of this program. The approximate \$1.2 million grant will pay for Detective Adams' salary so he can be a Statewide Coordinator, as well as fund two additional police officer positions for our department and backfill Detective Adams' position to work on the same types of issues. Detective Adams will be working out of the Laconia Police Department, by his choice, which will enable him to be a resource for not only the person who takes his position, but also stay involved with a lot of the boards and committees that he is on. This is very big news and we are glad to have the support of the Police Commission and the City Council, because in these times of policing, particularly these types of issues, this program has brought light to non-traditional methods of policing and has seen a lot of results. The drug problem continues to be an issue and this program is a big benefit to that.

Commissioner Davis inquired when this will take effect and Chief Canfield advised the grant money has been approved and we have given the Attorney General's Office a tentative date of six months. Sometime in June we would make Detective Adams available to at least start with the program. He anticipates that prior to that he would have some informational meetings, but before we backfill the position, he would like to get some people hired and in the pipeline to replace those positions before stripping them from patrol.

6.A.i. Orders & Bulletins

6.B. Chief - Operations Division

Chief Canfield advised they have been busy as always with a number of good drug arrests. There has been a lot of good patrol activity, in addition to traffic enforcement numbers.

They have been actively recruiting to fill a full time dispatcher to fill an open position.

The Special Events Committee meetings have begun, so Motorcycle Week planning has started as well.

6.B.i. Hirings

7. COMMISSION ACTION

7.A. Acceptance of minutes from previous meeting

On a Motion by Commissioner Mello, seconded by Commissioner Davis, and passed unanimously, the meeting minutes of December 8, 2021 were accepted as distributed.

8. REVIEW OF MONTHLY ACTIVITY REPORTS

8.A. Department Monthly Highlights

Chief Canfield reviewed the Department Monthly Highlights report.

8.B. Criminal Investigative Unit Statistics

Chief Canfield reviewed the Criminal Investigative Unit Statistics report.

8.C. Budget Reports

Chief Canfield advised the budget is on track and is trending about 1% under budget.

Chairman Whittum noted that historically Chief Canfield has always had a good hand on the budget and Chief Canfield agreed, indicating that we scrutinize our spending and keep it in line, doing as much as possible with it.

8.D. Monthly Traffic Statistics

Chief Canfield reviewed the Monthly Traffic Statistics report.

8.E. Monthly Fleet Report

No discussion.

9. CORRESPONDENCE TO/FROM THE DEPARTMENT

Chief Canfield advised we received a thank you letter from someone who rode with Officer Goodheart, complimenting her on what she and the police department do.

10. CHIEF'S REPORT

Eric Adams addressed the Commission and spoke on his position and the transition that will take place. He advised the following:

Having been awarded the grant money, his position will shift to a coordination role with the seven other police departments. When the Department of Justice applied for this grant, he requested

to stay at the Laconia Police Department and not be placed in Concord. This gives him the opportunity to stay up on what is going on in the City and help the person taking his position, as well as stay involved with some of the local organizations that he is a part of.

As far as the way things will work for us, someone from within the department will apply for his position as the PET Detective. That position will do basically what he does now. When he started this position, it was more of a direct contact, dealing directly with the families and individuals who were struggling. Since then, we have acquired so many more resources in the City, which has helped a lot of people in the community, mended a lot of families in the community, and a lot of the individuals that he has worked with are now contributing back to society by working and paying taxes and such.

With this new position, it will deal more with the community organizations and keeping those communities engaged with the police departments, learning more about the services being provided, dealing with homelessness, and other issues surrounding addiction and mental health. The position that we want to put in place of him will do more of the directed services, dealing more with those individuals as well, but also try to maintain some of the things that he does. He plans on staying on some of the boards and committees that he sits on. The officer who takes his position will kind of be a "fill in" and will know what is going on with those committees and things like that, so that way they can really work on some of the issues that he and Chief Canfield discussed, such as encampments. We have a lot of concerns about those and the last thing an officer wants to see in the middle of winter is finding someone frozen to death. So trying to figure out how we can create a balance with those encampments, instead of just pushing them from one side to the other. There will be things like that the officer taking his position will handle, as well as the new Rapid Response Team.

The State has implemented what they call Rapid Response, otherwise known as the Mobil Crisis Units. These have been active for a while in the Manchester, Nashua and Concord areas. Lakes Region Mental Health just got their team up and running January 1st, which he has already utilized with a client he was working with. The gist of it is that they have a team that the police department will utilize a call number and it's set up similar to a 911 dispatch, but yet it's for mental health crisis alone. The officer calls the number and is connected with an individual. That process goes fairly fast and all stems around an officer who responds to a call and identifies there is something going on with mental health and how can we best serve that individual, instead of just putting handcuffs on them and taking them to the emergency room. They make the call, that individual does a quick assessment over the phone with the officer and/or the individual, if they are not in major crisis. Sometimes it is something as simple as them setting up an appointment to meet with the individual in an hour or so or they actually come out. During the call when he utilized the team, they came out to the scene and did an assessment right there in the parking lot. This worked great, as it was someone who had utilized Lakes Region Mental Health services at one point and they were really able to connect with that individual on a peer-to-peer basis. That person then went voluntarily to the hospital and they are now down at New Hampshire Hospital receiving the treatment they needed.

The other part is the narcotics issues going on in the City now. Right now he works more directly with trying to get people help, but the fact of the matter is there is drug trafficking and there are drugs in the City that we need to get out. Part of that position and that time will also be working with our narcotics detectives, trying to get them up to speed. The more officers we get trained in doing surveillance and other drug work, the better off we will be when they are out on the road.

The other part that he and Chief Canfield spoke about was possibly utilizing one of the other positions to work directly with the Mobil Crisis Unit. He advised he recently attended a week long training for CIT, put on by NAMI, which basically certified an officer to be an officer who is called while on shift to respond directly to those calls identified as mental health. They would actually

be trained in dealing with someone who struggles with mental health. In speaking with Chief Canfield, we would like to get all of our officers trained in this and it's nice to see that law enforcement is leaning more towards learning more about how to handle someone in crisis.

Commissioner Davis inquired if the grant application was started back in 2019 and Detective Adams advised it was and that this was the third year that we applied for the grant.

Commissioner Davis inquired if someone who is already on staff would be utilized to backfill his position and Detective Adams and Chief Canfield responded yes. Commissioner Davis inquired who would fill the new positions and Chief Canfield advised they would be transferred from within the department and we would hire to backfill their positions, as someone with institutional knowledge of the police department and the City of Laconia would be necessary to fill that specialized position .

Commissioner Mello inquired if this would be a separate division on it's own and Chief Canfield indicated we haven't hammered that out as of yet. He indicated the idea is to get Detective Adams transferred sometime in June and we don't anticipate the others transitioning any sooner and will most likely be later. Detective Adams stated that by the time this three year grant is up, we would have a good handle on having those positions in place and would have a good working knowledge, so they can present to the Commissioners and the City Council what they are doing.

Chief Canfield indicated there is a reason we are getting the two additional positions. He advised that the Department of Justice came to us and indicated they wanted Detective Adams to bring the program to other departments and make it statewide. We acknowledged that was great, and that Detective Adams has done a really good job with the program and built it from the ground up, a unique program never implemented anywhere else. But there was no benefit to Laconia in having Detective Adams teach other police departments to institute this program.

We indicated to them that we didn't mind helping out with other departments. They inquired what we were interested in seeing happen. We advised them we would like to do more focus in Laconia and do other kinds of work addressing the drug crisis, but we would make a bigger impact if we could dedicate a couple of more officers to that. The Department of Justice was able to work that into the grant and it was approved successfully.

Commissioner Davis inquired the length of the grant and Chief Canfield affirmed that it was three years, but in talking with the Department of Justice, they are hopeful we will be given the opportunity to renew the grant beyond that three year point.

Commissioner Davis inquired what the other seven departments in the State. Detective Adams responded Belmont, Berlin, Londonderry, Merrimack, Manchester, Claremont and one other that he cannot recall at this time. This is in addition to Laconia, as he will need to train someone to take his position. He advised that part of the reason for him wanting to stay in Laconia was that Laconia Police Department is his home, but also to get Belmont up and running would be a lot quicker, because he can have their officer come to our department and train both that officer as well as the officer taking his position. He indicated he knows the Belmont community well enough and they utilize a lot of the same services that Laconia does, so it will not be that difficult to train them. The other departments will take a little more time.

The grant has already been in effect since September 2021, and we should have known that it was approved at the end of September, so that process should have been gone through and we should have technically started the program on January 1, 2022. In talking with the Department of Justice it is hoped that we can extend it for a period of time to get the full three years.

Chief Canfield recognized that the City of Laconia will benefit from this program and it would not have happened without all of the hard work Detective Adams has put in over the past seven years. He indicated Detective Adams is the right guy for this job, as he built it from the ground up, and it is really appreciated.

Councilor Cheney commented that this was unanimously voted for by the City Council. He noted Detective Adams has done a brilliant job and we should not forget a Police Chief who has allowed it to happen and a Police Commission that has supported it. He advised from a City Council perspective, Detective Adams deserves 100% support and Chief Canfield and the Police Commission deserve 99% support for what they have done to make this happen. He advised he is proud of Detective Adams and proud of the Laconia Police Department and he cannot express enough how strongly he feels. He advised he comes from the "knuckle dragger" period of law enforcement and this is all new to him, having never seen all this before, but he is really impressed by it and he tried very hard to express that to the City Council the other night, to let them know that this is important and good stuff!

Chairman Whittum agreed with Councilor Cheney and noted that it is Detective Adams' enthusiasm that shows that he loves what he does and it does a lot of good. Detective Adams advised that it started with the Police Commission, the City Council and Chief Adams, and then Chief Canfield has been more than supportive and it has been great.

Commissioner Mello noted Detective Adams received an award from the National Organization of the Elks for the work he does, the year before last.

Chief Canfield advised the following:

As part of last year's goals, one was to better train our detectives in crime scene response. They completed the first of a series of different major crime courses in early December and they will continue to move forward with that this year.

He reviewed the Overdose Statistics report. He noted deaths are a lot higher than last year, which is very concerning, but having the additional resources will help.

We are working on the budget preparation for the anticipated budget presentation in the springtime, as well as we will be entering into contract negotiations sometime in February, as the Union Contract ends June 30th.

We're nearing completion of two background investigations for two patrol officers with an anticipated start date for the in-house academy of February 7th for one of those positions. The other candidate will not be able to start until sometime in June, as he is a senior in college this year. He was one of our Community Resource Officers, so as long as his background pans out, he will be looking to start in June, which will bring us to full staff.

11. OLD BUSINESS

No discussion.

12. NEW BUSINESS

No discussion.

13. OTHER BUSINESS

No discussion.

14. CITIZEN COMMENTS

Councilor Cheney repeated that both votes by the City Council Monday night were enthusiastically unanimous. Some members are concerned about expenses, particularly with new positions having to be justified, but Chief Canfield has done a brilliant job.

He wanted to bring to the Police Commission's attention his concern about parking enforcement and, particularly the equipment to do it. Tires can no longer be chalked and equipment is needed to do it now, which doesn't come cheap. He will support the idea of purchasing equipment and hopes the Police Commission agrees. He would like to get something done before the end of this fiscal year and will be checking in with Chief Canfield and the City Manager to find the funds to start with some equipment. He believes this is based on having sat around this table and listened to both the City Council and the Planning Board and he hears parking enforcement. He is aware that Chief Canfield has made an effort, which is noticeable in the statistics, but he is asking the Police Commission to encourage parking enforcement City wide.

He indicated the second part involves downtown and believes Chief Canfield will be in need of a parking enforcement officer. We need to figure out a way for more than one person to do parking enforcement downtown. He indicated a lot of discussion by the City Council and the Planning Board is regarding why people are not utilizing the parking behind the church and something needs to be done about encouraging that to free up some space downtown. The City Council authorized an Urban Planner to come in and talk about the parking garage and parking in the downtown area. There is a body of belief that the \$6 million put into the parking garage is money down a rat hole. There is another group that thinks putting \$8 or \$10 million into a new facility is a waste of money. That all has to be sugared off, but something is going to happen by either improving the parking garage or a new facility will be built. Once that is the case and the parking garage gets fixed, one of the things spoken about is assigned parking spaces for those living downtown. Someone needs to enforce that and we ought to get started now and learn in increments what needs to be done on certain days of the week. He feels we need to get ahead of this and he will do whatever he can to get what is needed to do this. He is asking the Police Commission and Chief Canfield to express to him any concerns they may have.

Councilor Cheney advised he is proud of the Laconia Police Department and wants to see it get even better. We are growing and need to keep ahead of that curve.

Commissioner Mello inquired if there had ever been discussion about a fee to park in the parking garage. Councilor Cheney indicated that has been discussed and he hopes to talk with the urban planner about that. He said at one point there was a rush to get the parking garage approved and the Mayor, to his credit, wanted to slow down and make sure the right thing is going to be done and he supports him 100% with this. More housing may start to show up downtown and urban living has started to come back. We need to look at whether people should pay, how much they should pay, or assign parking. Commissioner Mello commented that people will come to the theater and will want to park in that garage and they wouldn't give it a second thought about paying. Councilor Cheney advised that between now and when someone gets assigned to that, the police department needs to be cognizant about parking downtown. He also noted that he has heard comments recently that the appearance of officers downtown has increased and they are happy about that; however, he suggests that officers walking go back to wearing their hat to be more visible. Without their hat, they look like everyone else walking on Main Street.

Commissioner Davis inquired about how the equipment works and Chief Canfield advised it is automated parking enforcement. He described it as a hand held pdf device that takes a picture of the vehicle and it logs the time and prints out tickets.

15. **CONFIRMATION OF NEXT MEETING DATE**

The next Regular meeting of February 16, 2022 was confirmed.

16. NON-PUBLIC SESSION (According To RSA 91-A:3,II (A))

Personnel Matter

RSA 91-A:3II(a) - The dismissal, promotion or compensation of any public employee, or the disciplining of such employee, or the investigation of any charges against him/her, unless the employee affected (1) has the right to a meeting, (2) requests that the meeting be open, in which case the request shall be granted.

On a Motion by Commissioner Davis, seconded by Commissioner Mello, and passed unanimously, in accordance with RSA 91-A:3II(a), the Laconia Police Commission entered into Non-Public Session at 3:55 pm.

Roll Call Vote to enter Non-Public Session:

Chairman Douglas Whittum	Yes
Commissioner Frank Mello	Yes
Commissioner Scott Davis	Yes

At 4:03 pm, the Non-Public Session ended on a Motion by Commissioner Mello, seconded by Commissioner Davis, with a unanimous vote.

Public Session reconvened at 4:04 pm.

Chairman Whittum entertained a Motion to Seal the Minutes, moved by Commissioner Mello, seconded by Commissioner Davis, and passed unanimously, because it would affect adversely the reputation of any person other than a member of this Board.

Roll Call Vote to Seal the Minutes:

Chairman Douglas Whittum	Yes
Commissioner Frank Mello	Yes
Commissioner Scott Davis	Yes

17. ADJOURNMENT

On a Motion by Commissioner Mello, seconded by Commissioner Davis, and passed unanimously, the meeting was adjourned at 4:05 pm.