

**LACONIA POLICE COMMISSION MEETING  
FEBRUARY 15, 2023**

**Meeting took place at 3:00 p.m. in the Armand A. Bolduc  
City Council Chamber,  
Laconia City Hall, 45 Beacon Street East, Laconia, New  
Hampshire**

2/15/2023 - 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 Commission 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 reported the following:

The new office construction upstairs is nearly complete. They are just waiting on the carpet and some finishing touches. We had received an initial quote of \$50,000 to complete this project and Officer Bassett has been taken off the schedule for about 4-5 days at this point and has done all of the work and has spent less than \$5,000 so far.

The replacement of ceiling tiles due to the mold situation almost a year ago is at almost 95% complete. Parks and Recreation is just finishing up on that project.

We have had problems with the outside lights due to multiple timers for the parking lot lights and they will come on during the day and won't communicate with the old controller in the utility room. We had that synchronized and the timer has been removed and it is based on daylight, so the parking lot lights will not be on during the daytime.

We have been busy with regular grant maintenance on a number of different grants.

We have taken on a high school intern from the Laconia High School Criminal Justice class beginning May 8th and which will run until May 26th and she will be in every day of the week.

They have been planning for the tabletop exercise for Active Shooter, which will take place on March 15th, followed by full scale active shooter training at the Pleasant Street School on April 15th. In preparation for this, all uniformed officers will be going through breaching training on March 21st and 29th. This is as a result of what we read in the report from the Uvalde school shooting, where they had a lot of difficulties gaining access to the building. This will teach our officers how to get through secure doors and fortified locations.

### 6.A.i. Orders and Bulletins

No discussion.

## 6.B. Chief - Operations Division

Chief Canfield reported the following:

They have convened a recruitment team consisting of a number of different officers and they are in the process of working through their assignments and planning what they are going to contribute. Two officers on the team went down to Southern New Hampshire University on February 8th for a job fair. We currently have one vacancy, but also have the four grant positions that are new this year. So we are really looking for five officers.

They are working on planning for the Wake the Lake event in the Spring, as well as the Motorcycle Week event.

In our scheduling software called In-Time, which is the schedule for uniformed officers, we are starting to track other collateral duty times, such as meetings and special presentations and such, so we can account for officers' time and can produce a spreadsheet to show where their time is going.

### 6.B.i. Hirings

No discussion.

## 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 January 25, 2023 were accepted as distributed.

## 8. REVIEW OF MONTHLY ACTIVITY REPORTS

### 8.A. Department Monthly Activity Highlights

Chief Canfield reviewed the Department Monthly Highlights. He noted a memo is forthcoming within a couple of weeks that will delve into the statistics further and compare them for a ten year average, as current statistics show our traffic stops are considerably down. When the statistics were run for a ten year average, motor vehicle stops for 2022 are the second highest in the past ten years. Comparing to a ten year average will give a much clearer picture as to where our traffic stops stand.

Commissioner Davis inquired what an extra patrol is. Chief Canfield advised they are for any problem areas needing extra attention, such as the parking garage, which requires an extra patrol at least once per shift. Just extra emphasis on policing certain areas and being visible.

Chairman Whittum indicated he had noticed the decrease in stops and Chief Canfield responded that it is not a clear picture and giving a comparison over a ten year average has a much different look. He noted that 2020 was the anomaly, being a really high year, but that was also COVID, so we weren't doing a lot of response to calls and were doing a lot more motor vehicle stops. Other than that, 2022 was the second highest in that ten year period.

Commissioner Davis noted he does recall COVID affecting almost two years where stops did appear up quite a bit.

### 8.B. Criminal Investigative Unit Monthly Activity Report

Chief Canfield reviewed the Criminal Investigative Unit Monthly Activity Report. No further discussion.

### 8.C. Budget Reports

Chief Canfield reported there are no concerns, being almost 54% through the year and the budget looks intact.

Chairman Whittum inquired how much impact grants have on the budget. Chief Canfield responded the vast majority of grants are above and beyond the regular budget. For instance, the command post grant or the camera grants that we have received, or the radar trailers and sign boards, those would all be above and beyond. Those most likely would have been capital improvement requests, which would not have been funded. The radar boards for instance can be put in areas to quell traffic problems or get traffic count studies and just help us do our job much better. Then we have grants such as the

Highway Safety Grant, which are direct funded to provide extra patrols for motor vehicle, distracted driving or crosswalk violation enforcement, which is enforcement that is above and beyond what our budget would allow. Chairman Whittum inquired if any of the excess funds go back to the provider or can those excess funds be used by the agency. Chief Canfield advised we usually don't have excess funds, as usually those projects are usually earmarked for a specific item and quotes have been received and those quotes usually have to be submitted as part of the request for the grant, so they are usually right on.

Commissioner Davis inquired if these are Federal or State funds. Chief Canfield advised some come directly from the Federal Government, such as the JAG Grants, and others are funneled through the State from the Federal Government. Usually the guidelines are tied to the federal requirement for the money. Commissioner Davis inquired if we receive any

"State funds only" and Chief Canfield advised nothing recently. Commissioner Davis inquired how much grant funding we receive each year and Chief Canfield advised on the average approximately half a million dollars. He can get a total, but he believes approximately five million dollars has been received over the last six years or so.

Chairman Whittum inquired if most of the grant writing is done by Grant Manager McKenzie Harrington-Bacote and Chief Canfield advised she does most of the big grant applications. We usually find the grant and then will give her an idea of what it is for and we will do the legwork on obtaining any quotes/estimates necessary and then she will do the actual grant writing itself.

#### 8.D. Monthly Traffic Report

Chief Canfield reviewed the Monthly Traffic Report. Chairman Whittum noted the decrease in the number of parking tickets. Chief Canfield advised it is somewhat weather dependent and we also did not have any Community Resource Officers return during the Christmas break to do parking enforcement during that six week time frame.

#### 8.E. Monthly Fleet Report

Chairman Whittum inquired about the replacement of the totaled cruiser. Chief Canfield advised we will need to juggle that within the fleet itself, as the final insurance payout was not anywhere near the cost to replace the vehicle. The insurance payout was approximately \$16,000 and the replacement cost is approximately \$45,000 without the electronic equipment installed. The way the City's internal services fund works, they don't have the money to make up the difference, so it will be absorbed into the fleet somehow.

### 9. CORRESPONDENCE TO/FROM THE DEPARTMENT

Chief Canfield advised we received a nice email regarding an interaction he had with one of our officers on a traffic stop on North Main Street. It was very complimentary of the officer and their interaction and it's always good to hear that they came away feeling they were treated fairly and reasonably.

There was also a nice thank you note from the Salvation Army thanking us for our assistance with the kettle season.

### 10. CHIEF'S REPORT

Chief Canfield reported the following:

The new SPDR notification technology is in a test mode (integrated within our system) and is up and running. The company is receiving the notifications, so they are just working the final bugs out. We have had weekly meetings on this and expect that we will have full implementation of this beginning March 10th. We will be working to develop a community awareness and media release to make the public aware that this is coming out and highlight it. This should improve our customer service aspect.

At this month's Staff meeting, there was a presentation on the NH Rapid Response / Mobile Crisis Team. This a 24/7 support team that can be accessed through calling 988. Hopefully this will cut down on our mental health calls that tie up officers' time with transporting some to the hospital. Prior to this, when we dealt with someone who was in a mental health crisis, they would have to be seen by a clinician and the way we would have to do that was to transport them to the hospital. Hopefully this will avoid that for those who are not suicidal or homicidal and just need to see a counselor. By calling 988, this will summons a counselor and maybe peer support to their location. Depending on the situation, we will stand by with them until the team arrives. On other occasions, they will be okay for us to leave and the team will respond to their location to help them.

He has been asked to sit on a law enforcement subcommittee group through the NH Rapid Response / Mobile Crisis Team. The group was originally formed to improve the mobile crisis response process, which has kind of evolved into a mental health committee with crisis counselors, health staff and law enforcement.

On March 1st, we will be assisting with a Make-A-Wish escort for a Laconia child and will be escorting her to the airport for a Hawaii trip for both her and her family.

On February 23rd, he and Lieutenant Kevin Butler will be doing a safety presentation at Northway Bank on basic safety for their staff as part of our community outreach.

Next Wednesday, February 22nd, we are honored to be hosting the New Hampshire Veteran's Home in the community room at the police station to celebrate one of their member's birthdays. They have asked him to speak to the group as well.

He is on the Executive Board for the Regional Swat Team. Detective Tony Horan is currently the Team Leader and he recommended him for the Assistant Team Commander position. By a unanimous vote, the Board accepted this recommendation. This is a good thing for Laconia and Detective Horan is very capable and is a great asset to the team.

During last week's extreme cold weather, there was a great team effort between himself, the City Manager, the Mayor and the Fire Chief. They were in constant communication and he and the Fire Chief visited several different homeless encampments and he encouraged officers to make contact with the homeless during that cold night especially and get people into shelters if they wanted to go. It was a good outreach. Chairman Whittum inquired what the homeless reaction was and Chief Canfield advised most of them wanted to stay with their belongings and said they were all set, but were appreciative. Some of the reasons were that some had animals and animals are not allowed at either Isaiah's or the Dube building, and part was their fear of leaving their belongings and returning to find them gone. In any event, we did outreach to them and did as much as possible to let them know there is assistance available to them.

Commissioner Mello inquired about what they use for heat in the tents and Chief Canfield advised anything from gas/propane, and there is one tent that he is aware of that has a wood stove and a vent pipe going out through the side. Sometimes its just an outside bonfire.

On February 3rd, we conducted a tour of the police department for a group of kindergarten students from the Laconia Christian School.

At the last Staff meeting, we conducted a video review of body camera footage from the Memphis, Tennessee use of force that subsequently resulted in five officers being charged with homicide. It was a good and honest review and we took a look at some of the ways we do business and had some learning take-aways from that.

Over the next two months, sworn officers will be completing annual in-service training. This is training required by NH Police Standards & Training and will include De-Escalation, Ethics, and Implicit Bias.

He advised we have had two overdoses so far this year and today added another three, so we are at five overdoses year to date.

11. **OLD BUSINESS**

No discussion.

12. **NEW BUSINESS**

No discussion.

13. **OTHER BUSINESS**

No discussion.

14. **CITIZEN COMMENTS**

Councilor Bruce Cheney addressed the Commission. He advised he comes as a City Councilor and liaison to the police department. In reference to the talk about grants, he recognized Chief Canfield has done more with grants that he did in the fourteen years a Police Chief and that is important to the City, as every grant dollar brought in is a dollar that the citizens don't have to bring in. This Chief does a well beyond average job with that.

He wanted to mention that tonight there will be a WMUR presentation on school safety. An acquaintance, who works for the State, expressed to him his appreciation for how far ahead Laconia is from most other jurisdictions in the State in terms of active shooter situations and other school related situation. Councilor Cheney recognized Chief Canfield can't do this without the Commission 's help, but he has certainly done an amazing job of keeping our schools and other public institutions safe.

Chief Canfield mentioned the homeless outreach and Councilor Cheney sees the importance of this outreach. Seeing the Police and seeing the fire personally get out and talk with them has got to have an impact on them not to abuse the City of Laconia and he is impressed with this outreach.

Councilor Cheney inquired what year the totaled cruiser was and Chief Canfield advised he believes it was a 2016 or 2017. He indicated he will speak with Chief Canfield at a later point, but in his opinion the City should be able to replace that cruiser and he will do what he can to try to make up the difference.

He advised he heard some questions about parking enforcement and he has questions about

traffic enforcement. Other councilors have noted two traffic positions were funded and the traffic numbers have fallen. He doesn't believe this was intentional, but he hopes the Commission does everything it can, and he knows the Chief will, to pump those numbers back up. It's not a matter of the number of tickets issued, but rather that stops are important. Blue lights remind people officers are there and to behave themselves. Hopefully Chief Canfield and the Commission can make an effort to improve those numbers.

Chief Canfield advised he spoke earlier of the statistics and his concerns about the appearance of the monthly statistics, as it is always showing 25-30% and it's the comparison directly with the corresponding month or year. He has looked into how other cities and towns do their statistics reporting and they compare current month/year to the ten year average, which prompted him to pull our ten year average. Year 2022 was the second highest year for motor vehicle stops in a ten year period. There was only one other year that was higher. This snapshot is not a fair comparison to prior years or the ten year average. He is working on putting together a memo to explain this further and put those charts together, so the ten year average can be viewed. Councilor Cheney advised his only argument would be that if the first five years of the ten year average are bad, then it brings down the ten year average. He looks forward to speaking with Chief Canfield further about this and hopes that the department can put some emphasis on putting us back out there. He understands other things affect it, but hopes we will do a little more.

Councilor Cheney advised he so proud and supportive of the City's Police and Fire Departments and he truly believes that Laconia does a better job public safety wise than many of the other jurisdictions in the State. In his 24 years of traveling around the State once or twice a week every week going to meetings in cities and towns for 911 issues, you can't help but see what is going on and Chief Canfield has the department so far ahead.

Chairman Whittum noted Councilor Cheney highlighted Chief Canfield's leadership, and in just looking at the community outreach of meeting with the homeless, escorting the Make-A-Wish, hosting members of the Veteran's Home for a birthday celebration and a presentation at the bank, as well as having an officer attend an autism workshop, it's that outreach that thirty years ago wasn't there. Councilor Cheney advised none of these things took place in his fourteen years as Police Chief and the differences between now and then is what he would like to bring to the table at the next City Council meeting.

#### 15. **CONFIRMATION OF NEXT MEETING DATE**

The next Regular Meeting date of March 15, 2023 was confirmed.

#### 16. **ADJOURNMENT**

On a Motion by Commissioner Mello, seconded by Commissioner Davis, and passed unanimously, the meeting was adjourned at 3:41 pm.