

**PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE MEETING
JANUARY 5, 2022, 6:30 P.M.
MINUTES**

1. Call to Order

- A. Chairwoman Carol Anderson Blanks called the meeting to order at 6:32 p.m.

Attendees – Mayor Shari Cantor, Councilors Carol Blanks, Alberto Cortes, Adrienne Billings-Smith, Mark Zydanowicz, Mary Fay, Town Manager Matthew Hart, Director of Human Resources Rick Ledwith, Police Chief Vernon Riddick, Asst. Police Chief Lawrence Terra, Asst. Police Chief Robert Riccobon, Fire Chief Greg Priest, and Fire Marshal Robert Grimaldi.

2. Business Items

- A. October 6, 2021, Meeting Minutes – Approved.
- B. Petition Initiated by the Town Council of the Town of Rocky Hill Asking the General Assembly to Convene in Special Session to Address Property Crime – Mr. Hart affirmed this matter was referred to the Committee by the Town Council, but the start of the General Assembly will be in early February. Several organizations, including the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities and the Connecticut Council of Small Towns, are making many of these issues priority for the coming session. As the General Assembly will be convening shortly, he was unsure if a special session was feasible or if it was something leadership would entertain. Councilor Cortes inquired about a resolution showing support for law enforcement officials and that the issues are being addressed. Councilor Fay provided background on the original proposal, which was submitted in October, to address the crime situation. She suggested refreshing the wording to make it more current as there have been some changes since its presentation to the Council with the hope the Committee will get it into proper context and it can get back in front of the Council as quickly as possible. Mr. Hart suggested pulling together all the related legislative proposals from CCM and COST and any Police Chiefs Association priorities, presenting them to the Committee for discussion, submitting a letter from the Mayor or Chair to the members of the delegation and the appropriate committee chairs emphasizing the importance of these issues.

The Mayor agreed with providing a summary of the efforts that have gone on to update the legislature, as well as the Council; a timeline of what was raised since this was initially presented and even before, including where we are and where we need to get to. Mr. Hart stated, in preparation for the next meeting, he would pull all the various legislative proposals from the municipal advocacy groups working on these issues, prepare a letter from the Town and be prepared to testify when given the opportunity during this coming session.

3. Communications

4. Staff Reports

- A. Fire Department – Chief Priest reported a grant had been secured for bail-out equipment and all of the AEDs were replaced in the Town facilities in collaboration with Risk Management. COVID is affecting staffing daily basis. About 13% of the workforce is affected currently by COVID but people will be returning. There is no significant illness but the quarantine times are affecting the staffing levels. Emergency ~~Services~~-Management is handling the test kits that were distributed to us with short notice and the kits are being distributed using the framework provided by the State. The scarcity of the tests ~~is an issue. It~~ has driven the desire for the tests up. A written report was submitted by Chief Priest.
- B. Police Department – Chief Riddick reported COVID has hit the Department hard. At the peak, approximately 17 personnel were out. In addition, 20 personnel are either in the academy or on FTO status, a net loss of about 30 individuals from a budgeted number of 131. There now are four shifts and mandatory overtime but the officers have stepped up and understand the obligations. The year-end stats on crime are not available but will be available by next week, but Chief Riddick did go over the November 2021 stats. For calendar year 2021, \$404,000 was generated to the Town of West Hartford and of that, the net revenue to the Town was approximately \$198,000.
- C. Town Manager – Mr. Hart acknowledged Rick Ledwith, Executive Director of Human Resources, and Mayor Cantor’s plan to nominate him to serve as interim Town Manager following Mr. Hart’s departure. Mr. Hart reported far fewer test kits were received than needed, only 4,725 were received of the 8,000 expected. We reserved approximately 40% of the test kits for more vulnerable members including clients of Social Services, homebound people and those living in senior housing as well as frontline personnel, town and school district. The bulk or 60% of the test kits were made available to the general public targeting those who are symptomatic. Regarding the masks, over 230,000 were received and will be distributed as needed. They are currently looking to get a vendor under contract within the next week or so to conduct tests on a regular basis at either a town or school facility. In addition, effective tomorrow, people will be required to wear a face covering at all establishments in town. There have been questions when this requirement will be lifted and the metric being sought is 10 cases per 100,000 of population or even a little higher than this.

5. Future Agenda Items

6. **Adjournment** – Meeting adjourned at 7:39 p.m.
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