

TOWN OF WEST HARTFORD
SPECIAL PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE MEETING
JULY 12, 2023 9:00AM
MINUTES

1. Call to Order

- A. Call to Order-Meeting was called to order by Chair Blanks at 9:01

Present: Councilor Carol Blanks, Chair; Councilor Alberto Cortes; Councilor Tiffani McGinnis; Mayor Shari Cantor; Rick Ledwith, Town Manager; Police Chief Vernon Riddick; Fire Chief Greg Priest; Fire Marshal Robert Grimaldi; Assistant Police Chief Larry Terra; Assistant Police Chief Robert Riccobon, Assistant Fire Chief Hugh O'Callaghan; Emergency Management Specialist Robert McCue; Councilor Mary Faye

2. Business Items

3. Communications

4. Staff Reports

- A. Fire Department Update: Fire Chief Priest provided an update. He noted that Deputy Chief Bassett retired after 23 years of service. He provided a brief synopsis of the promotional process, vacancies and recruitment. He then spoke about flooding incidents around Town due to Excess rain lately. Also relayed that the FD has been able to procure a boat and will now be adding that to their training regimen. He spoke of FEMA and CERT, the FD passed their drill with FEMA and no improvements were needed. The FD just completed their 2nd team CERT program. He discussed his continued partnership with the PD and the tactical program which recently added four members from the FD side. He discussed grants specifically the FEMA grant for training as well as the amount of effort being put in to obtaining grants from various places. Chief Priest also discussed two camps the FD is hosting this summer. He also discussed the need for updated facilities and the fact that FD is currently operating without a training tower. Fire Marshall Grimaldi gave a presentation on lithium batteries and their hazards which include overheating and lighting on fire if not used or stored appropriately. He also discussed ideas about getting the information out to the public. Councilor Faye asked a question regarding what kind of batteries this applies to lawn mowers, power tools etc., Fire Marshall Grimaldi replied that the batteries are in almost everything we use. Councilor Zydanowicz asked a question about passing ordinance per

parking and if that makes sense? Quick answer is yes, an ordinance can be passed by the council. Vice Chairwoman McGinnis asked if there was any instance of those types of fires in West Hartford. Chief Priest answered that yes there was one a couple of years ago involving a laptop. Chief Priest discussed how to approach regulating certain things and what to stay away from. He also discussed that this is a fluid issue and it is always changing.

- B. Police Department Update: Chief Riddick highlighted two things: He expressed thanks to the Town Council, the Town Manager and the Mayor for help with purchasing the Flock cameras. He discussed a case that occurred on July 8 in which the cameras were utilized by Avon and then West Hartford. The case ended with an arrest of a person wanted for attempted murder and being extradited to NY. He also highlighted the year to date statistics for motor vehicle stops between last year and this year. Chief Riddick also discussed a rash of car break-ins that had occurred in a particular neighborhood over a four-day period and the arrest of four individuals so far in regards to break-ins with in the region. He also thanked the Fire Department, particularly Chief Priest, Fire Marshall Grimaldi and Fire Marshall Adell for their help an inspection that occurred at Division West over the weekend. He also stated there would be a follow up meeting with the owners. The Chief mentioned that MV thefts have increased 241% so far this year and that he would discuss this with the members off line regarding the issues. Chief Riddick then thanked the past and current Town Manager, Mayor Cantor and Town Council for the ARPA funds the police department used those funds to purchase a mobile command center, the VirTra 300 simulator system and flock cameras. He also thanked Bob Palmer for helping with construction to install the VirTra system. Lt. David Michael of the training division gave an over view of what the VirTra system is capable of and how useful it is in training officer in real life scenarios and de-escalation techniques. The group was then brought upstairs and participated in several training scenarios under the supervision of the West Hartford Police department trainers.

5. Future Agenda Items

6. Adjournment: 10:40