

**Waterbury Village Trustees**  
**Public Hearing on Proposed Charter Change**  
**September 25, 2012**  
**Thatcher Brook Primary School Cafeteria**  
**Minutes**

Present: P. H. Flanders, Village President; L. Sayah and N. Howell-Sherman, Village Trustees; W. Shepeluk, Municipal Manager; J. Kilgore, Moderator; A. Imhoff, ORCA Media; C. Lawrence, Village Clerk.

Public: See Attached List

The Public Hearing was called to order at 7:00pm.

P. H. Flanders explained that the Trustees have warned an Australian Ballot vote on November 6<sup>th</sup> to change the charter to abolish the police department. It is the Trustees desire to gather public input prior to the vote at this meeting and again at a 2<sup>nd</sup> public hearing on November 1<sup>st</sup>.

J. Kilgore explained the format of the meeting. The Trustees will make a short presentation and then the meeting will be opened up for questions. He explained a few house rules.

P. H. Flanders stated that the vote is binding and it is the Trustees desire to hear from the maximum number people, which is why they decided to hold the vote November. The police department budget has been discussed at past Village meetings. He explained the process if the vote is passed, whereby the Village Clerk certifies the vote results to the Secretary of State and then it is moved on to the legislature.

Information was distributed showing police statistics from 2007 through year to date 2012, information other area police departments, and a chart showing possible police department projections for 2013 costs under various scenarios.

If the authority to have a police department is eliminated, the Village police department would be phased out and coverage would be provided by the State Police. L. Sayah explained why this was being done through a charter change.

Lieutenant White spoke and indicated that this is a local decision, and he could provide information on what to expect if the police department is eliminated. He would not advocate for it, however, since coverage state-wide is limited. The State Police cover 200 towns in the State. His opinion is that the Town should have a town-wide police department. The Middlesex office covers 18 towns and when fully staffed, there are 18 troopers. There are on average 5 troopers on duty to cover all 18 towns. The response time depends on the nature of the call. There are several jobs that the local police covers that the State police will not (traffic control, foot patrol, etc.) so the State police would provide a lower tier of service.

M. Atkinson (Perry Hill): Asked about state police coverage in the Town. P. White indicated that Williamstown and Waterbury are the top two call towns.

Bob Edmunds (Village): Sounds like the VSP are spread very thin now and calls must have to be prioritized.

David Luce (Village business owner): Has a business property in the Village. Asked is statistics of state police calls were included in the charts? Those are Waterbury Village statistics only. He would be interested in seeing statistics of state police calls to Waterbury.

Tom Stevens (Village): The perception is that the Town gets free police service. Huntington pays for a contract for State police services. P. White stated that most towns are happy with VSP, but that certain towns want more service that can be provided on a default day to day basis. There are different options, and some towns contract with VSP for extra services.

Patty Meade (Village): How much does it cost for contracted hours? Depends on what the community wants to pay for, but roughly speaking it is \$55 per hour.

D. Tabachnick (Perry Hill): What is the difference for the victim of a crime for the response time between the Village and VSP? A Village officer, if on duty, would be there in minutes. VSP would depend on where the officer on duty is located. J. Feccia explained the typical hours of duty for the PD. State Troopers are not on duty 24/7 either.

P. White clarified that contract coverage is worked by troopers on an overtime basis, so services are not taken away from other non-contract towns.

P. H Flanders stated that the Village could hire the Sheriff's department to perform speed patrol on a limited basis. Someone could be appointed to do parking enforcement.

J. Wolstenholme (new business owner): Waterbury is a destination town so it is nice having a PD as it provides a sense of comfort in having coverage or the perception of coverage.

J. Feccia: Distributed a copy of the Mission Statement, and gave a history of the Village Police department. He reiterated issues with VSP response time, and the importance of having a police presence for schools and businesses. Waterbury is a busy place and growing. There is definitely an effect of having a police department.

B. Edmonds (Village): Waterbury is a destination resort, and a lot of people come through. A police presence of some sort is needed.

P. Meade (Village): Asked J. Feccia how much of the 18 hours of coverage per day is spent in the office on paperwork. She misses seeing the police walking down the street. He stated it depends on who is working and what arrests have been made. They are not out on the street as much as there are only 2 full-time officers and fewer part time officers.

D. Tabachnick (Perry Hill): Asked about paying for dedicated time for State Troopers, as this might be less expensive than having a Village Department.

E. Smith (Village): If we hire VSP at \$55 dollars per hour for 18 hours a day, the cost would be comparable to the current budget, but we would not get as many services.

W. Shepeluk: Explained the current staffing of the police department and the reasoning behind the staffing. If the vote passes and there is no Village PD, there are several options: VSP, State police, constables, etc. The other option is for a discussion with the Select Board about a town-wide department.

D. Luce: If the charter is changed, and then voters change their minds, there will be no authority to have a PD. Is there any authority to establish a PD for the Town? Town operates under general law. Do not need a charter as a town to create a police department. Can have one under the general laws of the state. Not sure about the Village if the authority is taken away – will have to research.

E. Coffey (Village): Table 2 illustrates primarily town wide PD's, not PD's that cover one square mile. Brought up the issue of merger. Brought up an officer leaving due to frustrations. Satisfaction level is low – may want merger but not with this police department. Take the long way around, abolish the police department, then merge.

P. Meade: What is underlying reasoning to be here tonight? Does it have to do with merger process? Budget? Lack of faith in status quo? P. H. Flanders stated that there have been attempts to cut budget from the floor at the last two Village meetings. Concern about how much the Village can afford. Wanted more input from Village voters so will put up a vote in November. Bill spoke about the budget in answer to E. Coffey's concerns. Waterbury has a lot more going on in the community than a town like Bradford. There is a burden on Village taxpayers as compared to Town taxpayers. Who pays for it is the debate that has been going on for years. He further explained Table 3 – 2013 projections.

E. Smith: Don't need to change the charter to address budget issues. Ballot question is to get direction from Village voters as to whether or not they want a PD. This is not an advisory vote. Village Clerk will certify results to SOS, who will then forward to legislature.

D. Schneider (TBPS): Concerned that there are no alternative actions. Concerned about the safety of the children on school grounds. Very unnerving not knowing what the alternatives are.

M. Luce: Very frustrating that they own property in Village so pay village taxes, but do not have a vote. Big impact on local businesses and business owners. Promoting business and asking businesses to come to the Village. W. Shepeluk stated that it is not up to the Trustees to decide what will happen if the vote passes, not just the Village that has a stake in this.

J. Sherman: Lives and has a business in the Village. Nice to live in a small town with a local police department. Flaws can be worked upon.

J. Wolstenholme: Sees a lot of foot traffic into the PD during the day (he has an office in that building). J. Feccia stated that there is a lot of service going on that is not documented.

M. Atkinson: Realized that they are not Village residents and feel they are 'freeloading' off the Village for police services.

E. Coffey: Asked about J. Feccia's work schedule.

T. Stevens: Stated this is a merger discussion without having a merger discussion. This vote is not about this particular police department and whether we should pay for it. It's about changing the fundamental charter and taking away the right to have a PD. No guarantee that the Legislature would approve the change. Sending messages to businesses that we are not going to protect them, and there are businesses that are trying to recover from Irene. Is there a way to take the vote off of the ballot for November? Don't know the answer.

C. Nordle (Village): It was suggested that municipalities derive authority from Statute or charter. If the Village eliminates that portion of the charter, do the statutes provide any authority to establish a PD? Will have to research.

D. Schneider: What are the implications and options? Can town and village create a police department? Do not need a merger to have a town-wide police department.

T. Stevens: Charter mandates a Village PD. What is the difference between 'shall' and 'must'? Same thing.

E. Smith: For the same price it would cost for State police, we get more getting services through the Village PD.

P. H. Flanders asked P. White who receives the fine money? Depends on how officer codes tickets, and whether they are working under contract or under VSP time. No guarantee that he could staff a trooper under contract on a full time basis.

P. Meade: Feels there is a value to having a PD. Feeling rushed by the binding vote. Is there an ability to take away the vote? Concerned that voters will be informed, and will vote based on opinions.

E. Coffey: Unfortunate that the average person doesn't get excited about law enforcement, EMS, and fire until it affects them. Need to look at quality, may need to start over fresh.

C. Nordle: Group was small, but encouraged to see that it seems everyone here is in favor of some type of police presence. General unity that coverage is needed.

P. H. Flanders closed by stating that this discussion was helpful as they wanted to hear from Village voters. L. Sayah indicated this information would help at budget time in March. N. Howell-Sherman thanked everyone for coming and participating and sharing thoughts.

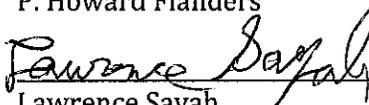
The Public Hearing was closed at 8:45pm.

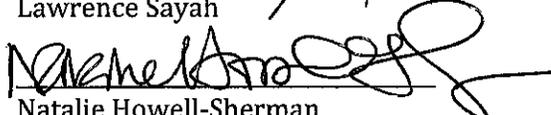
Respectfully submitted

Carla Lawrence  
Village Clerk

Approved on: Oct. 10<sup>th</sup>, 2012

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P. Howard Flanders

  
Lawrence Sayah

  
Natalie Howell-Sherman