

**Waterbury Village Board of Trustees Meeting
Main Street Fire Station
January 15, 2014**

Present: P. H. Flanders, Village President; L. Sayah, Trustee; Capt. Paul White and Lt. Matt Nally, Vermont State Police; J. Feccia and R. J. Caldwell, Waterbury PD; W. Shepeluk, Municipal Manager; A. Imhoff, ORCA Media; N. Howell-Sherman, Trustee arrived at 5:35pm.

Public: E. Coffey, G. Dillon, and A. Tuscany.

P. H. Flanders called the meeting to order at 5:05pm. He indicated that Trustee Howell-Sherman had been delayed at work and would join the meeting at her earliest opportunity.

The Trustees, municipal staff and the invited guests from VSP introduced themselves.

President Flanders outlined the issues of concern that relate to the continued viability of the Waterbury PD. He explained that the Village faced difficult circumstances in attempts to fund municipal government functions and that its property owners are having a harder time making ends meet than in past years. He cited the direct costs associated with recovering from the 2011 flood, the resulting lowering of the village's grand list, increased flood insurance costs and the impact of the loss of almost all state employees at the complex for more than two years now as the sources of the greatest pressures on the finances of the village. He stated that the costs to operate the police department represented over 80% of the Village's budget. Flanders told those present that the Trustees would present a budget to voters at Village Meeting that included a police department, but the Trustees were considering cutting back the number of hours when the Waterbury PD will be on duty. Flanders asked Capt. White to speak to the impact of this potential decision on the VSP and more particularly on the level of police services that would be provided in the Village when the Waterbury PD was not on duty, suggesting that late night hours would be cut and perhaps Sunday hours would be cut completely.

Capt. White stated that Waterbury Village was entitled to the same services from the VSP that any other community in the state received. The Village would receive services just as they are now provided by the VSP to the towns of Roxbury, Middlesex or the Town of Waterbury, outside the village limits. He said calls for service received by the dispatcher would be passed on to the VSP officers on duty when the call came in. Calls would be prioritized. True emergencies would generate an immediate response from the troopers on duty. If this type of call was received after 2:00am when the VSP goes off duty, the trooper "on call" would be dispatched to respond. Calls of a lesser emergent nature could be responded to in person by a trooper when time allowed or they may be handled by a phone call. Capt. White stated that while it was likely that a trooper would stop a vehicle for speeding on occasion during the time that Waterbury PD was off-duty, that the troopers would not conduct speed enforcement as a matter of routine coverage. In addition, he stated that VSP would not enforce local ordinances, such as parking regulations, and would not engage in "quality of life" policing. In general, this means that no visits to businesses, schools, parks, or playgrounds would be made by VSP as part of a regular routine.

Capt. White told the Trustees that 14 troopers are assigned to the Middlesex Barracks when VSP is at full staffing level. On any given day, one-third of those are on "days off", one-third work the day shift and one-third work the evening/night shift. The 3 to 5 officers on duty at any one time cover 18 different towns in Washington and Orange Counties. As the Trustees have suggested ceasing police operations at 11:00pm or midnight, Capt. White speculated about issues of concern that could crop up at the "several drinking establishments" in the vicinity of Main and Stowe Streets.

Officer Caldwell stated that he thought the proposal was a “bad idea” and that he expected bad things to happen if this decision is made. He told the Trustees that when his current shifts are scheduled to end at 11:00pm that he often gets a call back before he even gets home. He stated that in his experience the times between 10:00pm and 2:00am are the most dangerous and agreed with Capt. White that the number of bars in Waterbury increased the number of calls during that time period.

Captain White stated that he thought the direction being considered was “wrong”. He believes that Waterbury should move to a town-wide department that is on duty 24 hours a day. There is enough activity here to warrant that. He did understand that at present there was little political will to move in this direction.

Alec Tuscany spoke, not as Public Works Director, but as a resident of South Main Street. He spoke about gangs of mischievous youth whose behavior often disrupts activities in public places like Rusty Parker Park. He cited examples when these “boys” vandalized swing sets, threw rocks into the park, at the pump house building, and the general commotion they caused at the farmers’ market and during concerts. He told that private citizens put themselves in some danger when confronting these “kids” and that often retaliatory vandalism was visited against the property of these citizens. He stated that he had called the police several times about these incidents and told of the professional manner that the officers took care of the situations. He told the Trustees that he understood that the tax rate in the village was high and that affordability was an important issue. However, he stated that a police department was necessary in Waterbury and that the Village should fund its department to meet the needs of the community.

Natalie Howell-Sherman, Trustee joined the meeting at 5:35pm.

E. Coffey spoke to support law enforcement in general, but had serious questions about the ability of the current staff to do the necessary work of a local police department. He also raised questions about the ability of a 1.5 square mile Village, with its small population and modest grand list to support its own department. He said it would be preferable for the entire town to have a department, but he questioned the willingness of town residents to pay for any department that was tied to current Village department members.

Chief Feccia echoed remarks made earlier by Officer Caldwell. He stated that he believed the Waterbury PD should be given more resources and that hours of operation should not be cut. He advocated for hiring the third full-time officer in 2014, a position that had been funded in the 2013 budget. Manager Shepeluk stated that if a fully certified candidate who met the other hiring criteria of the department had been available in 2013, the third position would have been filled by now. Shepeluk said he supports a third full-time officer, but made it clear that the Trustees were reconsidering the need for that officer given the fact that no one was hired in 2013 to fill that position, especially given the current difficult financial position the village finds itself in.

G. Dillon stated that he supported a police department in Waterbury and wanted one funded and to see it succeed and thrive. He mentioned that “marketing the department” was an important role for the Chief and all the officers of the department. He acknowledged the challenges faced by a small department, especially the need to handle multiple calls with only one or two officers on duty at a time. However, if the officers could try to interact with the public by walking in neighborhoods or in parks when possible or could visit businesses to just “see how it’s going”; that can go a long way towards improving the public’s perception of the department. He said that he understands the cost issues facing the community, but that a community like Waterbury is better off having a police department. The “trick”, he said, is getting the community to believe it is getting the value that it is paying for.

N. Howell-Sherman greeted the guests from VSP and apologized for being late. She reiterated some of the points Skip Flanders had made at the beginning of the meeting about the Trustees' interest in giving consideration to cutting down some of the on-duty hours of the Waterbury PD, but she was hesitant to ask that the answers be provided a second time.

Captain White briefly summarized the comments he had made at the start of the meeting. Then he stated that while he personally hoped Waterbury would not make a choice to cut hours that he understood the concerns the Trustees had and the issues they were dealing with. He stated again that Waterbury Village was entitled to police protection from VSP and that it would be made available "without question" if a decision was made by the village to cut or even eliminate police services.

The general conversation about this issue continued for some minutes. At 6:00pm N. Howell-Sherman made a motion to adjourn. L. Sayah seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously and the meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

William Shepeluk, Municipal Manager

Approved on: Jan 22 2014

P. Howard Flanders
P. Howard Flanders

Lawrence Sayah
Lawrence Sayah

Natalie Howell-Sherman
Natalie Howell-Sherman