Public Safety Advisory Council

Meeting Minutes

May 31, 2017

Meeting was called to order at 5:35pm. The following individuals were in attendance Chief Jeff Lange, WPD Administrative Assistant Diane Hammond (to record minutes), Chief Toby Martin, Zach Reed, Jody Elwell, Colleen Gilliam, Carl Ward, Susan Power, Marie Reinhardt, John Reinhardt, Brad Sevaldson and Greg Uthoff. Members absent were Mauve Blodgett, Chief TJ Merry and Holly Giles.

Review of mission and vision statement was read by Chief Lange for review and comments from all members.

* Mr. Reinhart suggested a review of one of the bulleted items: ***To generate community interest and involvement in crime prevention, to include community oriented policing and other areas of community relations, fire suppression and awareness, and basic and advanced emergency medical care;*** With the summer here and the number of pedestrians, bicyclist, drivers, etc. there was agreement that there needed to be a media blitz sent out to the community to be increasing aware of all of these increases. It was also recommended with the July 4th holiday coming right up, another blitz be sent out informing the community of the firework ordinance and warning of the dangers of fireworks. Another immediate area of concern was fireworks in the village due to the lack of space between dwellings. (A future topic will be to review the Ordinance to reflect this if it doesn’t already do so.)
* Hot topics for Media Blitz: bicyclist, fireworks, crosswalks, boating safety, pedestrians and pets in hot cars. Once developed it will be distributed to each Town Department to post on their Facebook and webpages as well as distribution to the hotel’s, motel’s, B&B’s, waterfront/boating community, at the docks, on the Pier and in and around the down town businesses. Members of the Council offered to set up a table during Art Walk events which begin the end of June in order to distribute safety flyers/brochures.
* Chief Martin indicated the State Fire Marshall may already have something created and he will make contact with them and be sure these Fire Marshall brochures are in both area fire work businesses.
* Move to accept the Council’s mission statement with above adjustments was presented by Chief Lange, seconded by Brad, all in favor, unanimously accepted.

Chief Lange advised all members that because their original applications to be selected on the PSAC were part of a Selectman’s meeting, they along with all other distributed documents were posted to the Town’s website. After an applicant advised the Chief of the error, the applications were immediately removed from the website.

Discussions took place regarding voting procedures and eligibility to vote. Chief Martin made a motion to accept the voting members to include all that were in attendance, as well as Mauve Blodgett, Chief TJ Merry and Holly Giles. Chief Lange 2nd the motion, all in favor, unanimously accepted.

Marie Reinhardt wanted to discuss homelessness in Wiscasset. Does it happen? Chief Lange advised it does happen but it’s not prevalent in the Town of Wiscasset. There are some are some families that have taken up residency in some of the abandoned houses. There are also families that are called “couch surfers” who move from house to house, staying at each place for a few nights and then moving to another friend or families place for a few more nights. It is very concerning in the winter months. The nearest homeless shelter is in Bath and often time Bath and Brunswick ship further south due to overcrowding. Ms. Reinhart wanted the Council to be aware of the Wiscasset Women’s Female Charitable Organization which can offer assistance to homeless or women in particular. Marie Reinhardt indicated she would provide the Chief’s with a card that listed all the resources the Charity has been informed of.

Another topic of discuss brought up by Jody Elwell was “is there a problem with opioids in Wiscasset and are the departments prepared to deal with them.

* Chief Lange advised of the numerous overdoses and overdose attempts that have taken place in Wiscasset and when asked if the Department was prepared for them, Chief Lange and Chief Martin both adamantly answered, NO. We do not have the funding available to purchase the OSHA required safety equipment that is needed for this epidemic.
* Chief Martin went on to explain that the newest drug Carfentanyl and that it is five times the strength of Fentanyl and now comes in an aerosol can and is considered an airborne opioid and because of that anyone who comes in contact with the airborne opioid can overdose. Chief Lange gave the example of the Officer who died in NH after being exposed. Chief Lange was asked if the Departments were prepared for this and what would you do. Chief Lange said, “it’s what we call a bad day to be a cop”. Chief Martin went onto explain that due to the strength of the new drug it now takes up to five shots of Narcan to reverse the drug.
* Considering these issues, the Council discussed putting together a drug awareness, public safety fair, bike rodeo at the WCC for all residents, including Senior Citizen and would like to organize it for August and perhaps piggy back with the Wars of Wiscasset event at the Wiscasset Airport.

Chief Martin updated the Council on EMS and EMA (Emergency Management Agency):

* The EMA would be responsible for creating and responding to disasters, such as hurricane, flood, etc. Chief Martin attended training in Augusta and found that the County does not have an emergency shelter location. Both Chief Martin and WAS Assistant Director are working on getting approval from the Red Cross to utilize the Community Center as that emergency shelter. If approved it will provide WAS an increased opportunity for grants and would be funded by the American Red Cross and the County.
* Chief Martin advised the Council that the WAS is still in negotiations with Dresden to cover their emergency calls and expects a response by the Selectman at their meeting next week.
* Chief Martin discussed Paramedicine: Right now the WAS gets reimbursed ONLY if an individual is transported to a hospital. Paramedicine is the future and is going to be more like a home health care service, taking individuals to doctors or first care centers for things like a sprained ankle. Paramedicine includes preventative procedures and safety training in addition to 911 calls. Paramedicine require certification and a Medical Director. The WAS will be working on creating a model for paramedicine over the next couple years to meet the expectations of the communities we serve.

In the absence of Chief TJ Merry, Chief Martin was asked to give an update.

* Chief Martin advised the Council on the process for electing a Fire Chief which is an annual vote by the FD’s members the last Wednesday in June and the new or existing Chief assumes their position July 1. Chief Martin advised there could be a change in leadership as both existing Chief Merry and (prior) Chief Rob Bickford are both running for the position. The vote will take place on Wednesday, June 14.
* The Council discussed this process and made suggestions to review and update the WFD by-laws to allow the Town Manager to appoint the Chief, just as the Manager does for the Police and Ambulance departments. Chief Martin will provide a copy of the by-laws to all Council members for their review, input and discussion at a later meeting. Council members feel if the appointment process continues as status quo, the by-laws should be changed to reflect the Chief be voted in for at least a two or three-year term.
* Recruiting is a problem. The future of EMS and FF is questionable due to recruiting, training, etc. The trend is that communities are combining services. This question was posed to the “meet the selectman” and one was for and one was against. EMS currently has 13 certified people that are fire 1 and 2 certified and could be utilized to help fill the vacancies within the FD.
* Chief Martin advised that one of the by-laws was recently changed, from living in the community to working in the community.
* The Council was advised of the procedure for mutual aid for EMS, FF and PD works and the conflicts that occur within some of the mutual aid departments.

The Council requested a copy of the Fire Chief’s job description and a copy of all three emergency departments policies for their review.

Chief Lange discussed the Maine Chiefs of Police policies and procedures and advised the Council that the PD will be going through the accreditation process over the next year.

It was suggested by Chief Martin that there be a walk-through of the three departments at the next meeting scheduled for June 27th, at 530. Chief Lange advised the Council that future meetings will be held on the last Tuesday of the month.

A review of meeting discussions was started by Coleen Gilliam. Tasks that need to be completed:

* send out media blitz,
* create and distribute brochures about the safety topics.
* Diane was asked to follow up with the newspapers (or her media contacts) so they can include these safety topics in our weekly media reports or in their “off the beat” section.
* Chief Martin to provide FD by-laws
* Add minutes to Public Safety Advisory Council web page

Another comical discussion was started by a member about the “Under Cover Cop” that was at the intersection of Route One and Route 27. Chief Lange explained that he was in fact working in a plain clothes detail for that day. The officer, Reserve Officer Rubashkin, was assisting in the Seatbelt enforcement campaign grant. Chief Lange explained the three Grants that the PD received which allows officers to work outside any scheduled shift to enforcement speed limits, seatbelts enforcement and OUI details. These special duties are not paid for out of the PD budget or directly from the tax payers of Wiscasset, but come from grant money from the State of Maine bureau of Highway Safety and the Federal Government. This year the department received close to twenty thousand dollars in grant funds for just these three grants. ($18,130.45)

Meeting adjourned at 7:25pm.