

**MINUTES OF MEETING  
PUBLIC SAFETY & PROTECTION COMMITTEE  
October 23, 2023**

**To view the meeting's video recording, please click the following link:**

<https://hamden.zoom.us/rec/share/nzM0Ymho9F37ucfr3ut5drRco6x2mH5G6rpgZjE-OoFShsefDG6AUCqndGC2WcpI.zxJi39VUvk5h8WNh>

(Meeting starts at 01:44:08)

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A meeting of the Public Safety Committee was held on Monday, October 23, 2023. This was a hybrid meeting held both in person and electronically via Zoom. The meeting was called to order at 8:11 P.M. by the Chair, Adrian Webber.

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Adrian Webber, Chair; Abdul Osmanu, Vice-Chair; Laurie Sweet; Betty Wetmore; Justin Farmer; Cory O'Brien; Bob Anthony

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** None

**PUBLIC INPUT:** None

**The following items were addressed:**

**1. Order to accept a donation from Hometown Foundation, Inc. to the Hamden Police Department K-9 Unit and authorization to enter into an Indemnification Agreement with the Town of East Hartford**

-- Moved by Mr. Webber, seconded by Mr. O'Brien. DISCUSSION: Chief Reynolds explained how they were looking to increase dogs in the department and gave examples of how they save lives. He said he'd love to see 1 dog per shift and with these items tonight they can achieve that. After some discussion on the duties of the dogs the Chief said they are search and rescue dogs, not attack dogs, he then gave examples of dogs smelling bombs.

Mr. Farmer expressed his concern saying Connecticut history is not good on police dogs so he has concerns on the use of them. Deputy Chief Onofrio said Hamden has no use of force in our history. He then explained this donation from this non-profit saying there is no cost to the Town and is an expense we'd have to incur otherwise.

Ms. Wetmore asked if we had any dogs that sniff out drugs. Chief Reynolds said that's what these dogs are going to be. His emphasis is dogs for search and rescue, detection of crime.

Ms. Sweet asked how frequently we receive calls for explosives in Hamden. Deputy Chief Onofrio said in the last 2 weeks 4 times, and approximately 6 to 10 times a year.

Mr. Webber asked they're not used for tracking lost kids, etc? Chief Reynolds said they will be used for detection of explosives, guns, and yes, lost people. They will not be used to attack people.

There was some discussion on policy and use of force. Deputy Chief Onofrio cited section 24-25 of Hamden's K-9 Force Policy. There was then a lengthy discussion on drug sniffing dogs.

Mr. Farmer stated he doesn't think he'll be able to support this tonight.

Ms. Kiely asked about using the K-9 for education opportunities rather than enforcement. Deputy Chief Onofrio explained how they do that now going into schools and such. He said they already have community engagement, and their dogs are very friendly and not a threat to anybody that's not a criminal. Chief Reynolds again emphasized they will be trained for detection of harmful devices, drugs, and missing persons.

Mr. Osmanu asked for an estimate of upkeep and maintaining dogs. Deputy Chief Onofrio said the cost is already captured and allocated in the budget and there are no additional expenses.

There was then discussion on K-9 fundraising, as well as discussion on the types and ages of dogs. Deputy Chief Onofrio said the dog is a German Shephard and comes to them at approximate 1 ½ years old and comes with obedience training.

A vote was taken and the item passed with 2 opposed (Sweet) (Osmanu)

**2. Order authorizing the Town of Hamden on behalf of the Police Department to accept and expend a donation from Anna Mulvey**

-- Moved by Mr. Webber, seconded by Ms. Wetmore. DISCUSSION: Chief Reynolds explained this is a donation of approximately \$60,000 that they will use for swat vests, holsters and lights for officers, and a new police dog. Mr. Anthony asked what the liability is with the dogs and how we're covered if they hurt someone. Deputy Chief Onofrio said he believes Town insurance. Town Attorney Gruen said there has been maybe 1 incident that she doesn't remember clearly and will have to get them an answer to that. Mr. Webber thanked Ms. Mulvey for her generous donation.

A vote was taken and the item passed with 2 opposed (Sweet) (Osmanu)

**3. Order authorizing the Town of Hamden to accept and expend the 2023 Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant from the U.S. Department of Justice (\$41,830)**

-- Moved by Mr. Webber, seconded by Mr. O'Brien. DISCUSSION: Chief Reynolds said this will be allocated for motor vehicle safety to prevent pursuits and to clamp down on incidents of using a vehicle to commit a crime or flee after committing a crime.

Mr. Osmanu said it's a little confusing to him because we do traffic in our Engineering Dept. He then expressed his concern with the Star Chase Launcher and its usage, and the possible abuse of technology. He said he would like to see a policy crafted and asked

if we could explore one as a safeguard. Deputy Chief Onofrio said he thinks we would absolutely have to have a policy and that it probably can't be used without one. Chief Reynolds stated it would require a policy along with training of the equipment and the policy.

Ms. Sweet asked for a timeline of using the device and Deputy Chief Onofrio explained how it's used. Mr. Osmanu asked what the velocity was. Deputy Chief Onofrio answered similar to that of a paintball gun.

Mr. O'Brien stated he will support this tonight but at Council he'd like to talk about a policy and how it will be deployed. Deputy Chief Onofrio said he'd try to get example policies. There was then a brief discussion on policies and warranted maintenance.

Mr. Farmer stated he would rather separate the question and move on with the other stuff until they get the policy. Mr. Osmanu said if this is a motion he will second it.

(Mr. Farmer was having audio issues and not coming in clear)

Since Chair Webber could not make out what Mr. Farmer wanted, Mr. Webber moved a motion to postpone this whole item until their next meeting. The motion was seconded by Mr. Osmanu and approved with 3 opposed (Anthony) (O'Brien) (Webber)

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 9:21 P.M

Respectfully submitted,

Kim Renta, Clerk  
for Adrian Webber, Chair