

TOWN OF SEABROOK

SELECTMEN'S MEETING

JULY 23, 2014

Present: Edward J. Hess, Jr.  
Raymond Smith  
Aboul B. Khan  
William Manzi

12:00PM

Mr. Hess opened the meeting at 12:33PM and turned it over to the Town Manager.

**PRESS RELEASE - POLICE DEPARTMENT**

Also present for this meeting were Police Chief Lee Bitomske, Deputy Police Chief Mike Gallagher and Attorney Joe McKittrick.

Mr. Manzi read the statement (see attached). He asked if any Board member had any comments to add.

Mr. Khan said that in January they held a press conference and told the taxpayers they would get to the bottom of this incident and take action so this would not happen again.

Mr. Hess said the investigation went well and the officers on the force kept the department going and the town safe. He said the Chief and the Deputy Chief did a great job in maintaining the integrity of the department.

The meeting was opened for the public for any questions. Mr. Manzi said he did not want to characterize on the individual officers demeanors at this time. He was asked about the demotion of Lt. John Wasson. Mr. Manzi said the report speaks for itself and the disciplinary action taken was warranted. Mr. Manzi said the report was given as a tool for the Town to use in its findings. The report deals with each individual officer and addresses the conduct of each. Officer John Wasson was not in the video but was the supervising officer on duty at the time of the incident.

Chief Bitomske said the department as a whole has stepped up to the plate and continued to work professionally. He said he knows he has work to do to revise the policies & procedures but it is going to take some time. Chief Bitomske said this not something any Chief wants to happen but they will continue as a professional department. He said they will review each policy; some are one page policies while others are several pages. The hope is that the policies will prevent things like this from happening.

There was a question on the prior work history conduct of the officers. Chief Bitomske said he would not get into the past history of the officers.

Question asked about the risks involved with someone who is under the influence. Chief Bitomske said the officers are always at risk but they try to take the emotions of the individual into account. He stated that there is nothing in the video that he feels is justified.

AngelJean asked if better training would have prevented this incident. Chief Bitomske said good training is always key but things do happen. He said the officers do get training and of course they could always use more training but it involves overtime. Mr. Manzi said the Chief and Deputy Chief are reviewing the training regimen from a management perspective.

AngelJean asked for clarification on how the department did not know about the video. Deputy Chief Gallagher explained they get requests for discovery all the time and how they get the tape. He explained how the officer may not have seen what was on the tape. Question was asked if the officers know they are being taped. Deputy Chief Gallagher said every officer is aware there are cameras. There was discussion on what may or may not have been seen by the supervisor and dispatchers. It was stated that it is not uncommon for one not to see everything that is going on. Chief Bitomske said they are reviewing the policy on the cameras and taping so that the administration knows what is on the tape before it is released.

Question was asked as to why the video was not made public until now when it happened in 2009. Mr. Manzi said that question should be directed to Mr. Bergeron. They asked if the town was preparing an apology to the victim or is there a civil suit. Attorney McKittrick said no civil suit has come forward. Mr. Manzi said there has been no discussion on issuing an apology.

Question was asked on the cost to conduct the internal affairs investigation. Mr. Manzi said there is no final number but feels some of the overtime is attributable to this.

Chief Bitomske said they have learned from this and they look forward to moving forward within the department. He feels this is probably the harshest discipline they have handed out in the years he has been with the department.

Deputy Chief Gallagher thanked the officers for their work during this time and said they did a tremendous job getting through this difficult time.

Chief Bitomske said you cannot change how people feel, he can only move forward with the review of the policies and serve the town. Mr. Manzi said they strive to present a heightened police presence each and every day on a professional level.

Attorney McKittrick commented that the punishment issued today has never been done in the State of NH so that says a lot for what the Town Manager, Board of Selectmen and Police Chief are saying that they will not tolerate this type of behavior.

Meeting adjourned at 1:00PM.  
Minutes taken by Kelly J. O'Connor

Approved and endorsed

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Aboul B. Khan, Clerk

Date: \_\_\_\_\_