

**BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING
INFORMATIONAL MEETING**

May 27, 2009

(Subject to Approval)

PRESENT: First Selectman H. William Davis, Jr.
Selectman Carol Hubert
Selectman Kenneth Kerin
Selectman Stuart Somers
Selectman John Turk

NOT PRESENT: Selectman Barbara McLaughlin

ALSO PRESENT: Board of Finance Chairman John Michaels, Treasurer Bill Sarosky, Members of the Southbury Police Union, Assistant to the First Selectman Jennifer Naylor, Office Manager Noreen Thompson, Interested Citizens, and Members of the Press.

CALL TO ORDER

First Sel. Davis called the Informational Meeting of the Board of Selectmen to order at 7:03 p.m. at the Center Fire House on Main Street South and welcomed the interested citizens to the meeting. Mr. Davis gave a brief history of the proposal for an independent police department. He then introduced Sel. Ken Kerin.

PRESENTATION OF PROPOSAL FOR AN INDEPENDENT POLICE DEPARTMENT FOR SOUTHBURY

Sel. Ken Kerin first reminded the audience of the June 9, 2009 Referendum on establishing the position of Chief of Police in order to establish a Municipal Police Department.

He then described the over 50 year history of the State Trooper program in Southbury. Mr. Kerin pointed out that Southbury is now the largest remaining town in the Trooper program. Now only the state trooper who heads the Southbury police is a member of the State Police. The other 23 police officers are employees of the Town. Some have been Southbury police officers for over 20 years. The chief of an independent Southbury police department would be able to focus completely on local issues and not have his attention taken away on state police issues. The chief would be the only new hire.

Sel. Kerin expanded on the major points in the 6 page handout which the Board prepared. He then asked for questions from the floor.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Nicholas Patsis of The Courtyard, Heritage Road was concerned that Southbury has only 23 police officers, and would have to hire more officers for an independent police department. He said the federal guidelines were 2 officers for 1,000 of population which meant Southbury should have 37 officers. He added that the average in Connecticut was 1.7 officers per 1,000 of population which would give Southbury 31 officers. Sel. Kerin replied that Southbury has 1.2 officers per 1,000 of population but, if you remove the 4,000 people in Heritage Village and the 500 people living at the Training School, then Southbury has 1.6 officers per 1,000 of population. Sel. Kerin added that the average town has 30 crimes per 1,000 people, while Southbury has 8 crimes per 1,000 people. Mr. Patsis was also concerned that the police union would want expensive benefits in an independent police department and that a deputy chief would cost too much. Sel. Davis responded that the Southbury police officers were unionized anyway and the Town had a negotiated contract with that union. Sel. Kerin said that it was intended the deputy chief would be promoted from within.

Carol Renza of 799 Peter Road would like to see a 5-year projection of the cost of an independent police department in place of the one page statement of estimated costs in the handout. Sel. Kerin said there was only going to be a change at the top and so a CEO change analysis was all that was needed.

Bernard Kokinchak of 197 Strongtown Road pointed out that there has been a bill considered in a committee of the General Assembly to oust towns over a certain size from the state trooper program. In light of that possibility, Mr. Kokinchak felt that it would be a prudent move for the town to leave the program now. First Sel. Davis said that the Town has been on this path for some time and that is why the Town just spent \$1,500,000 upgrading its police facilities.

Robert Barnes of 107 Lum Lot Road, candidate for the Board of Selectmen, asked how long the proposed \$25,000 car for the chief was supposed to last. First Sel. Davis said the estimated life of the car was six years. Mr. Barnes also asked if the female dispatchers who were trained as matrons would be given extra pay. First Sel. Davis said they would be paid as matrons only when they acted as matrons. Mr. Barnes was concerned about there being enough opportunities for promotion within the proposed command structure to prevent turnover. First Sel. Davis said there were no guarantees; but, hopefully there would be opportunities for promotion within reasonable time.

Ken Korsu of 272 Old Woodbury Road, candidate for First Selectman, said he thought Ken Kerin did an exceptional job explaining the proposal for an independent police department. Mr. Korsu said he is 100% for the proposal. He added that both the Republican and Democratic Town Committees and the

Board of Finance were also in favor of the proposal. Mr. Korsu said that accountability for maintaining costs resides with the Town's elected officials. First Sel. Davis added that the Southbury Business Association has endorsed the proposal.

Maj. Joe McGowan, USMC Ret. of Heritage Village, said the plan sounds to him like it's been thoroughly thought out. He feels the town should promote from within. First Sel. Davis said they intended to promote from within.

Joe Ruggiero of 245 Skyview Drive was concerned that the town have the police chief sign a tight contract. Mr. Ruggiero used to live in Naugatuck where the town had a bad experience with the police chief. First Sel. Davis agreed that hiring the correct police chief under a good contract is critical.

Chad Landmon of 320 Beecher Drive, member of the Republican Town Committee, said the RTC did unanimously support the proposal and he felt that a good job has been done in evaluating the costs. He pointed out that the Boards of Selectmen and Finance will have to keep on top of the costs as was demonstrated in the budget this past year.

Stan Prybylski spoke to the importance of having a smiling and friendly "protect and serve" police culture and not a legalistic police style. First Sel. Davis agreed that local policing is a people's game.

Drew Morten of 975 Peter Road, Chairman of the Southbury Democratic Town Committee wanted to reiterate that the two Town Committees, the Boards of Selectmen and Finance and the SBA all agree that this is the right thing to do at this time.

The Informational Meeting was adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jocelyn Bagger