



DEPARTMENT OF EMERGENCY SERVICES & PUBLIC PROTECTION POLICE OFFICER STANDARDS & TRAINING

POLICE OFFICER STANDARDS AND TRAINING COUNCIL MEETING

SPECIAL MEETING

Thursday, April 10, 2025

10:00 A.M.

Classroom 4 or via ZOOM

[ZOOM Link](#)

MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting is called to order at 10:01 AM by Chief Mello.

ROLL CALL

ATTENDANCE:

Council Members Present: Chairman Chief Keith Mello (Milford Police Department), Chief Vernon Riddick (West Hartford Police Department), Chief Scott Sansom (Granby Police Department), Chief Neil Dryfe (Cheshire Police Department), Michael Lawlor (Associate Professor - University of New Haven), Chief Jonathan Mulhern (Branford Police Department), Douglas Glanville, Officer Michael Fraenza (Wallingford Police Department), Captain Ryan Maynard (Connecticut State Police), Chief Paul Melanson (Avon Police Department), Chief Fernando Spagnolo (Waterbury Police Department) (Zoom), Jon Slifka (Zoom), Mayor Carolina Simmons (Stamford; Zoom), Chief State's Attorney Patrick Griffin (Zoom), Anderson Curtis (Zoom; 10:14 AM)

Council Members Not Present: First Selectman Michael Freda (Town Administrator North Haven), Iran Nazario (Peace Center of Connecticut), Commissioner Ronnell Higgins (Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection), Chief Robert Rosado (Meriden Police Department), Pamela Mautte, David Kosciuk, Officer Florencio Cotto Jr. (New Haven Police Department), Acting Special Agent in Charge Anish Shukla (FBI)

Other Attendees: Thomas Wydra, Karen Boisvert, Assistant Attorney General Samantha Wong, Jessica Gouveia, Jessica Blank, CJ McGuffey, David Silverio, Michael Francis, Evan Fisher, Jennie

Rivera, Sarah Karwan, Charles DellaRocco, Attorney Carole Briggs, Chief Roderick Porter (Bridgeport Police Department), Marc Fasano, Rick Green

PUBLIC COMMENT -

Attorney Carole Briggs, on behalf of the Connecticut Department of Agriculture (DoAg), spoke in support of the Academy Administrator's recommendation to decline to issue the declaratory ruling.

Attorney Briggs took the position that when it comes to determining which training is required for State Animal Control Officers (SACOs), the more specific training statute (i.e., General Statutes § 22-328) applies in lieu of the more general training statute for police officers (i.e., General Statutes § 7-294d). To support this position, she cited the well-established principle of statutory construction that more specific language of a statute regarding a given subject matter prevails over general language of the same or another statute which might otherwise prove controlling. She offered case law to support this proposition.

Attorney Briggs further argued that, as a matter of statutory construction, to consider General Statutes § 7-294d the applicable training requirements for SACOs, would render the 2012 amendment to General Statutes § 22-328, adopting a specific training statute intended to cover the entire field for animal control officers, superfluous. Attorney Briggs noted, as evidence of such intent, that the legislature did not incorporate a directive to go to any other training when it amended General Statutes § 22-328.

Attorney Briggs agreed that the Attorney General (AG) Opinion cited in the Academy Administrator's recommendation is applicable. The AG Opinion reasons that, assuming an individual meets the statutory definitions of those covered by General Statutes § 7-294d, if there is no other training requirement for the individual, the individual is subject to the training and certification requirements of General Statutes § 7-294d. Applying the reasoning in the AG Opinion to the facts here, Attorney Briggs argued that since SACOs have other training requirements, they would not be subject to the training and certification requirements of General Statutes § 7-294d.

Attorney Briggs concluded her argument by restating the DoAg's support for adoption of the Academy Administrator's recommendation and making the point that there is no need to answer the specific question posed by the Petition (i.e., whether the DoAg is a law enforcement unit and whether SACOs are police officers).

Mr. DellaRocco presented argument on the Petition for Declaratory Ruling. Mr. DellaRocco disagreed with Attorney Briggs and the Academy Administrator. Mr. DellaRocco suggested that General Statutes § 22-328 addresses training on the civil aspect of an animal control officer's job only. Mr. DellaRocco argued that animal control officers also carry out law enforcement responsibilities, as authorized by General Statutes § 22-330, and that animal control officers need training by POSTC on the law enforcement aspect of the job. According to Mr. DellaRocco,

his position is supported by the AG's Opinion 93-028 and the 1995 amendments to General Statutes § 22-328 through Public Act 95-108. Mr. DellaRocco took the position that animal control officers fall under the definition of police officer in General Statutes § 7-294a(9) and that the DoAg falls under the definition of a law enforcement unit in General Statutes § 7-294a(8), that animal control officers are thus subject to the training and certification requirements of General Statutes § 7-294d, and that the training administered by DoAg to animal control officers is insufficient.

Regarding hardship to agencies that would be imposed if animal control officers were subject to POSTC certification and training requirements, Mr. DellaRocco noted that only animal control officers investigating crimes would trigger training and certification requirements under General Statutes § 7-294d, and noted that the DoAg already has two officers that could very easily get their POSTC certification back.

OLD BUSINESS

1. Request for Basic Police Training Academy - Bridgeport Police Department

Chief Mello provided the following background on this item. This item was initially presented for consideration as an agenda item at the March 13, 2025 POSTC meeting. Prior to the March 13, 2025 POSTC meeting, POSTC received two emails from an anonymous source that contained allegations concerning the Bridgeport Police Department Academy staff. The emails raised questions and concerns for POSTC members, and the item was placed on the table. Council reduced several questions to writing, and those questions were submitted to Chief Porter in a letter dated March 17, 2025. Chief Porter's response, which contained detailed answers, was received on March 23, 2025. These materials were provided to Council in its packet.

Chief Mello thanked Chief Porter for being responsive to the letter, and indicated that Chief Porter would be available for questions. Chief Mello reminded the Council of their role with regard to approval of satellite academies. Chief Mello requested that Council members only ask questions specific to the academy.

A motion was made to bring this item off the table from the March 13, 2025 meeting. The motion was seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Chief Mello also noted that POSTC received additional documentation from Chief Porter, including the recruit manual (which had been requested by POSTC), a February 4, 2025 personnel order advising that Sergeant Campo was placed on administrative leave without pay,¹ a February 11, 2025 personnel order advising that Sergeant Riettie was

¹Chief Mello inadvertently misstated the information in the personnel order, which indicated that Sergeant Campo was placed on administrative leave with pay.

transferred to the training academy, a March 7, 2025 personnel order advising that Lieutenant Collazo was transferred from the training academy to a special assignment out of the Chief's office, and a April 2, 2025 letter to the POSTC requesting that Sergeant Campo's instructor certification be revoked in light of the recent allegations of misconduct.

A motion was made to approve the Bridgeport Police Department's request for a satellite police academy. The motion was seconded.

Discussion was had.

Captain Maynard asked Chief Porter if there is an option for recruits to report sexual harassment or misconduct inside the academy to someone externally, other than the commander of the training academy. Chief Porter responded that there are policies in place that provide for anyone to go beyond the commanding officer. Chief Porter indicated that individuals can go directly to the office of internal affairs, to the chief of police, and to the labor relations office.

Chief Riddick asked about safeguards in place to protect the recruits going forward. Chief Porter advised that they have expanded the rank structure to provide more direct oversight. They also instituted additional trainings that will take place when the recruits begin the academy.

Chief Sansom asked about POST staff conducting inspections. Chief Porter reported that POST staff will be doing audits and are welcome at any time. Chief Mello reminded everyone that POST staff does audits for every satellite academy.

Mr. Glanville asked for Chief Porter's input on why the allegations came forward through an email. Chief Porter clarified that Bridgeport began the investigation on February 3, 2025, before the emails were even received. Chief Porter further explained that the policy that staff can go beyond direct command with a complaint has been in place for many years. Chief Porter assures that everyone will be reminded that those policies are still in place and the policies will be reinforced.

The motion passed unanimously.

Chief Porter stated his appreciation to POSTC in light of the importance of this next academy class. Chief Porter stated that the Bridgeport Police Department Satellite Academy, which has been a satellite academy for many years, does not take their status as a POSTC satellite academy lightly. Chief Porter expresses that integrity and ethics is of the utmost concern.

2. Petition for Declaratory Ruling received from Charles DellaRocco.

Chief Mello explained that the DoAg submitted a motion for party status, which the Academy Administrator ruled upon, but which needed to be taken up by POSTC. A copy of the motion was provided in the packet to Council.

A motion was made to accept party status for the DoAg on this matter. The motion was seconded. The motion passed. All members present voted yes, except for Chief Dryfe who abstained.

Chief Mello turned to the recommendation from the Academy Administrator to decline the request for declaratory ruling. Chief Mello noted that, as Council heard in the public comment portion of the meeting, animal control officers are subject to a curriculum and training standards set by the DoAg, they are not currently being trained or certified by POSTC, and they are not subject to POST certification. Chief Mello also noted his position that a determination on the issues presented by the Petition (i.e., whether or not animal control officers are considered police officers and whether or not the DoAg is a law enforcement unit) would not change the outcome that POSTC does not train and certify animal control officers.

A motion is made to consider the Academy Administrator's recommendation to decline to issue a declaratory ruling. The motion is seconded.

Discussion is had.

Mr. Glanville wanted to learn more about the number of animal control officers in the state and what the impact of requiring POSTC certification for animal control officers would be.

Attorney Briggs responded that there are eight animal control officers, including the chief animal control officers. Attorney Briggs provided additional information about the difference between SACOs and municipal and regional animal control officers. SACOs are primarily tasked with inspections of state-regulated facilities. These inspections constitute 95 percent of a SACO's budgeted time. They are also tasked with handling cruelty cases, but that is not their primary focus. Attorney Briggs gave further input on the burden POSTC training and certification would impose on the DoAg. According to Attorney Briggs, it would be a huge burden for the agency, and the agency would be forced to create a whole new unit and training standard without any additional financial resources. According to Attorney Briggs, presently, SACOs are trained during an 80-hour program. The program incorporates curriculum on state law related to animal control and animal cruelty, evidence documentation, courtroom procedures, and search warrants and affidavits. According to Attorney Briggs, the DoAg is currently working on giving animal control officers more guidance through additional training with investigators from States Attorney's Office and with the Attorney General's Office.

Attorney Briggs added that animal control officers are required to complete a minimum of 6 hours of continuing education each year, but indicated that they receive more training than that. Attorney Briggs stated that the additional training hours that would be required to get and maintain POSTC certification would be a burden since those additional hours would be on subjects falling outside of the scope of what animal control officers focus on. Attorney Briggs position is that the current training for animal control officers complies with the law and gives the animal control officers the training they need for the job they are doing.

Chief Mello interjected that, following the reasoning set forth by the AG Opinion 93-028, which reviewed multiple officer classifications and found that some persons who did perform police functions were exempt from POSTC certification because their governing statutes imposed independent training requirements, the decision in front of POSTC is whether animal control officers have their own robust training requirements. Chief Mello noted that, toward that end, the decision should not be based on what burden POSTC training requirements might place on the DoAg. Chief Mello also added that animal control officers are not currently trained by POSTC and he does not see any reason why POSTC would train animal control officers.

Mr. Glanville wanted to learn more about what would happen if POSTC answered the questions posed through the Petition in the affirmative (i.e., that state animal control officers are police officers and the DoAg is a law enforcement unit). Chief Mello responded that all of the state animal control officers would have to go through POSTC Certification (including attending the academy) and adhere to all POSTC standards (including training requirements). Additionally, if the DoAg would declared a law enforcement unit, they would have to be accredited as a law enforcement unit, which includes getting body cameras and putting in place necessary policies. Chief Mello again reiterated that training for police officer is very robust and specific to a number of things that animal control officers do not do. Chief Mello emphasized that animal control officers have their own training programs.

Chief Melanson wanted to know whether the DoAg follows any of the pre-employment standards that POSTC requires for police officers. Attorney Briggs responded that the DoAg does not do any of the specialized pre-employment testing that POSTC requires for police officer like psychological evaluations, polygraph examinations and drug testing.

Professor Lawlor wanted to know the how a determination that SACOs are “police officers” would impact the other types of animal control officers in the state. Attorney Briggs provided background information on municipal and regional animal control officers. There was discussion acknowledging that animal control officer jobs look different depending on the town/region and the requirements/responsibilities municipalities choose to impose upon its animal control officers.

Professor Lawlor stated it appears that any decision POSTC would make may have lots of unintended consequences and opined that this is the type of decision that should be made by the general assembly as opposed to POSTC.

Chief Riddick asked Mr. Della Rocco if he would care to opine in response to the discussion. Mr. Della Rocco provided additional information about the role of animal control officers and referred again to Public Act 95-108 and an AG opinion describing how animal control officers carry out police functions. Further discussion was had about the varying animal control officer jobs across the state in different towns/regions.

The motion passed with all voting members present voting yes, except for Chief Dryfe who abstained from the vote.

ADJOURNMENT –

A motion to adjourn was made, seconded and unanimously approved. Chief Mello adjourned the meeting at 10:40 AM.