



## EAST HAVEN DEPARTMENT OF POLICE SERVICES

471 NORTH HIGH STREET • EAST HAVEN, CONNECTICUT 06512

Mayor Joseph A. Carfora

Honorable Board of  
Police Commissioners

### HONORABLE BOARD OF POLICE COMMISSIONERS TRAFFIC & PUBLIC SAFETY SUBCOMMITTEE SPECIAL MEETING

MAY 24, 2021 AT 7:00 PM  
EAST HAVEN HIGH SCHOOL  
35 WHEELBARROW LANE  
EAST HAVEN, CT

**COMMITTEE MEMBER(S) PRESENT:** Chairman Dominic Balletto (presiding), Commissioner Joseph DiSilvestro

**ALSO PRESENT:** Chief Edward Lennon, Captain David Emerman, Captain Joseph Murgo, Commissioner Dianne Romans, Michelle Benivegna (Assistant Director of Administration & Management, Town of East Haven – Mayor's Office), Jennifer Coppola, Esq. (Ciulla & Donofrio, LLP), Town Councilman Joseph Santino, East Haven Citizens

Chairman Balletto called the meeting to order at 7:04 PM.

1. Pledge of Allegiance
2. Moment of Silence
3. Roll Call – Quorum obtained
4. Discussion to review the Subcommittee's recommended changes to the Town's Parking Enforcement and Management Plan, including but not limited to the beach area of Town.

Chairman Balletto announced that Public Comment would commence after the presentation.

Michelle Benivegna opened the presentation:

*“Good evening, everyone. My name is Michelle Benivegna, I am the Assistant Director of Administration and Management. This evening, I am here on behalf of the Administration to provide an introductory explanation of the circumstances that gather us here this evening.*

*For many years, the residents of the Town beach area have been burdened by the parking situation at and around their homes. During the summer months, some homeowners cannot even park in front of their own homes. We have all heard the reports and the stories of people parking in fire lanes, in front of hydrants, in front of driveways – and only to find, if those transgressions weren't enough, that when they left for the day, some would leave behind trash on the street and sidewalks – that is simply not fair. Quite frankly, these are not problems that are unique to East Haven, communities along the shoreline have parking congestion and safety issues too.*

*Through the years, our beach area residents have voiced their concerns, and for far too many years their concerns have fallen on deaf ears. In 2019, now Mayor Carfora, then Councilman Carfora, along with 2<sup>nd</sup> District councilmen, and life-long beach area*

*residents Joe Deko and Joe Santino, vowed to make this parking issue a priority. Given that promise, they have worked together with our Police Chief Ed Lennon and his wonderfully capable Department to present a solution which will be outlined this evening.*

*East Haven is a welcoming community, and if you take a ride down to our beach area you will see that we are working very hard to upgrade and to maintain it. With that being said, Mayor Carfora, Council Chair Deko, and Councilman Santino want to make sure that those visiting this beautiful area respect those who live by and near it, and that they follow all safety and parking protocols so that we can enjoy a wonderful summer.”*

Chief Lennon and Captain Murgo presented the Town of East Haven “Parking Management and Enforcement Plan” outlining the goals of the plan, detailing the permitted parking areas and affected streets, defining the resident and visitor parking permit process, noting the street signage and pavement markings, and explaining the electronic platform, along with the registration/appeal components (the appeal process will be revamped to an online format at a later time). Captain Murgo showed the website interface and spoke about the ticketing devices, the photo/GPS capabilities, payment options, the notification system for delinquencies and the Collections process for non-payment – all of which will be fully automated. In conclusion, we believe we have found a robust and customizable parking solution to meet the needs of the Town. Further, the vendor boasts a tremendous success rate of payment compliance thereby reducing the number of disputes. We are excited about this Plan and ask for your support.

Ms. Benivegna spoke about the designated parking lots for residents which will also be inclusive of out-of-town visitors/non-residents for a daily fee.

Chairman Balletto thanked everyone for their presentation and then introduced Deputy Town Attorney, Jennifer Coppola, who is standing in for Town Attorney Luzzi while he recovers from surgery. He went on to commend the Mayor and his staff, Town Council members, and the Chief and his command staff who have done an unbelievable job trying to work out a solution to a difficult problem which is stressful for those residents who live in the beach area.

## 5. Public Comment

- a. Daniel McCann (137 Mansfield Grove Road) – As a former Town Council member for District 2, this was a major issue for many, many years and all they ever asked for was a solution. BRAVO. BRAVO. This is fantastic – exactly what we need and a solid solution. He had some questions:
  - i. Revenue. Chief Lennon stated that the revenue goes back in to the Town’s General Fund.
  - ii. Supernumeraries/Constables. Chief Lennon believes this could be a potential Collective Bargaining issue. We do not have a staffing crisis by any means. With the support of the Town Council, we are in the process of upstaffing eight (8) recruit personnel. It takes time to find the type of officer we want for this community and to go through the whole process from completing a background investigation to approximately nine to ten months of Academy training followed by field training. We are trending in the right direction and should be in a better place by mid to late summer.
- b. Karen Martin (15 Oak Grove Road) – This all sounds like a very good plan and she can see the amount of work put into it, and it has been a long time coming. The Momauguin Cosey Beach Neighborhood Association has been working on this for several years and now [the Administration] is really coming through for us. She had several questions:
  - i. Fines. Chief Lennon noted that fines are established by the Town Council pursuant to Town Ordinance Chapter 11, Section 11-17 depending on the violation.

- ii. Enforcement. Chief Lennon explained that the plan is to utilize our school resource officers (or other patrol officers) while school is out for the summer. As this summer progresses, it will be slightly different as we come out of COVID and we are still short-staffed inasmuch as our recruit officers are still in various stages of training. Our plan is to have a full rollout by mid-summer.
- c. John Wobensmith (93 Cosey Beach Avenue) – Member of the Cosey Beach Neighborhood Association. Every summer is a problem – parking on sidewalks and too close together, trash on sidewalks and property, fighting, etc. He is so happy to see this – so pleased that this is going in to effect. He had several questions:
  - i. Parking prior to 7:00 AM. Chief Lennon explained that the hours are designated based on staffing by the Recreation Department.
  - ii. Unpaid Citation Notifications/Points to Driver's Record. Chief Lennon noted that regardless of timing, a permit violation will be enforced. We cannot assign points for parking violations – it would have to go to Collections which will negatively impact violators in other ways. We cannot enforce a judicial process in that way – the only way to assign points is for moving violations.
  - iii. Visitor passes beyond permitted times. Chief Lennon explained that street parking will not be enforced from 9:00 PM to 6:59 AM.
  - iv. Signage/Curb Markings. Chief Lennon will speak with the Director of Public Works about repainting curbs. We are also in the process of repainting several crosswalks throughout Town. Signs will be posted in specific areas where feasible; otherwise the pavement will be marked.
- d. Wendy Bellmore (57 Catherine Street) – This is really interesting. We are grateful and happy to see that the Police Commission is listening. Her concerns were:
  - i. Staffing. What is really important now is that she personally needs to know what the current day and evening staffing is going to be for the entire Town because she read that there were going to be two officers assigned to the beach – is that two officers day time, two officers evening, two officers only when there are no other problems happening in Town? How is this enforceable when there are issues with ongoing staffing problems? If there are other things happening in Town, does that mean this all gets thrown out because your officers are going to get pulled because there are not enough officers to staff the rest of the Town? The concern is how enforceable is this in the current staffing situation and how is that staffing going to be reallocated under the circumstances of more difficult things happening around the Town. Do they automatically get pulled away and we lose the opportunity to do anything with this enforcement?
  - ii. Safety Issues. Ms. Bellmore addressed Captain Emerman stating they had been promised a safety study and thought there would be funds coming from the State to do so. Although they agree that parking is a preeminent problem, the kinds of ancillary problems that result with public safety as a result of more cars, people doing whatever they do when they are having a good time, in rebellion in the heat of the moment, and then decide to go up and down streets, going too fast, a variety of different kinds of things that create all sorts of neighborhood problems. The questions are still: are you going to be able to staff? What happens when staffing gets difficult? More importantly, how does this take away from officers' time to look at other things that might be a priority like safety in the neighborhood when we have officers walking around trying to deal with cars – not trying to say that this is not wonderful. The bigger picture is about how the whole culture of the neighborhood changes dramatically when we go from the off-season to the on-season.

Chief Lennon reiterated that our intention is to utilize SROs (or other patrol officers) for identified peak times. Additionally, the only thing officers would be pulled for are major incidents which can happen several times a year, unfortunately. These supplemental officers are not assigned for only parking enforcement – they are there to address other quality-of-life issues with the influx in the beach area (including surrounding neighborhoods) with the goal of being proactive, not reactive. Also, we do have patrol officers assigned to this patrol area, every day, 24/7 who will still be handling their calls for service. We are trying to address as many quality-of-life issues as we can – as seasons change, so do the quality-of-life issues.

Ms. Benivegna added that in addition to the quality-of-life concerns that the Chief addressed, the Administration is keeping all our staff in place – beach monitors/attendants and parking attendants are all returning this year. They will be responsible for reminding people of the parking guidelines and regulations. They will be encouraged to be proactive and engaged.

Ms. Bellmore asked Captain Emerman what happened to her study. He replied that he does not believe there has been funding from the State to conduct that study. She believed that money was already coming to the budget so did that go somewhere else? Help her understand what happened to that money. Captain Emerman will look into this further.

Ms. Bellmore thinks that it is really important for the Commission to know that the Cosey Beach Association is talking with other groups that are having similar issues with speeding, blowing stop signs, just general discord and the inability to keep our streets safe. It is not only relatable to the beach area of Town - everybody wants to know about public safety. Get to work finding those grants.

Chairman Balletto invited Councilman Santino to speak on the record and asked him to extend his thanks to the Council for all their hard work to get us to this point. He also thanked the Mayor's Office for their hard work on this project.

Chairman Balletto wanted to address several comments he heard about public safety. He vehemently stated that public safety is of paramount concern and is addressed by this police department every single day. This Department works harder than he has ever seen any other Department work. Additionally, despite the COVID-19 pandemic, this Commission continued to meet and conduct in-person interviews to hire new recruits; it was a very tedious, long process to find quality candidates – it was not easy. He is very proud of the work this Department does every day. They are very concerned about public safety. The Chief is working extremely hard to get the entire force up to full complement so that he can assign personnel where needed. For anyone to assume that someone should be handing out a parking ticket instead of leaving to handle a major call is absurd – none of us would want that, if it were us on the other end of that major call, we would want every police officer available. The way our officers handle these incidents and offer assistance to neighboring towns, how they show up and volunteer to cover each other is to be commended. That is what they do for us every day to protect us and we need to remember that yes, we get frustrated, we get aggravated but crime is up everywhere. We need to give them credit.

Second, please take this information back to your neighbors, this Plan is for change. The Mayor's office, the Town Council and the Police Department are taking a leap by putting this out there and trying something. There are going to be mistakes, things that need to be changed, kinks and quirks – it is up to the community to provide constructive feedback. There is going to be a test period – it is not going to be perfect but please give us a chance and the summer to work through it.

6. Consider referral of recommendations to the full BOPC for action to be taken.

Commissioner DiSilvestro made a motion to refer the Plan to the full Commission for action to be taken; seconded by Chairman Balletto. Voice Vote: All in favor. No one opposed or abstained. Motion carried unanimously.

7. Adjournment

Commissioner DiSilvestro made a motion to adjourn; Chairman Balletto adjourned the meeting at 8:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Marsha M. Maldonado  
Clerk to the Honorable Board of Police Commissioners

*[Audio recording on file – duration 55:13]*