

Town of East Haven
PUBLIC HEARING MINUTES
December 16, 2009

In accordance with Chapter VII, Section 5 of the East Haven Town Charter, the East Haven Town Council will held the following public hearing on December 16, 2009, 7:00 p.m. at the East Haven Senior Center, 91 Taylor Avenue, East Haven, CT.

Chairman Dougherty called the meeting to order at 7:03.

Pledge of Allegiance and a moment of silence for Councilman Cofrancesco's Father in Law whom just passed.

1. Councilman Thompson read the following Ordinance for the purpose of the public hearing:

"An Ordinance Authorizing the Police Department transfer to Overtime Wages from Regular Wages in the amount of \$229,000.00."

WHEREAS, the East Haven Police Department is in need of a transfer to Overtime Wages, from Regular Wages, in the amount of \$229,000.00;

WHEREAS, said transfer is needed, in order for the Department, to best operate, to its fullest capacity;

WHEREAS, said transfer has been favorably recommended by the Finance Committee of the Town of East Haven.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT ORDAINED, by the Town Council of the Town of East Haven, that it hereby authorizes the Police Department to effect said transfer to Overtime Wages, from Regular Wages in the amount of \$229,000.00.

Chairman Dougherty opened the hearing to the public. No public comment.

Council Comment.

Councilman Riolino asked Chief Gallo about the overtime wages and if this amount, the amount spent to date, is significant or comparable to last year.

Chief Gallo reported that the department is plagued with injuries, there are 586 injury days this year, 1 person is out for a long term leave and 1 person is out for long term military leave. He also mentioned that the current union contract there is minimum man power without a clause per the contract. He states that reports still have to get done, as well as training.

Councilman Anania asked if about the transfer, by taking the funding from regular wages would that account wind up short, Chief reported that it would not.

Councilman Badamo asked about the agreement recently reached with the union, negotiated with Paul Hongo, it presents a minimum man clause. He asked if it will curb overtime.

Chief Gallo said that it will not curb the overtime. He also stated that he had no input in the union agreement. He believes it will increase spending.

Councilman Camera stated that over a half a million dollars of tax payer's monies have been spent on overtime. He then asked Chief Gallo why it is taking him so long to hire the positions which the Town Council approved.

Gallo reported that the original exam was dropped, but stated that he is still riddled with problems including the 586 injury days.

Camera stated "Chief you have done nothing to eliminate this problem."

Gallo stated that with retirements and injuries there are vacancies. He stated he will hire the 2 officers approved ASAP; however there will still be vacancies. He stated he has problems with an elevated number of sick time being used, and the lack of light duty.

Camera stated that the Town has a great Police Department and his argument is not a reflection of the department, but it is a reflection on how the spending is not under control. Camera stated, the spending has not been addressed, overtime is out of control, injuries are out of control, and the mounting problems have not been brought to the Police Commissioners or the Town Council.

Gallo stated the only way to save money is to renegotiate the current Police Union contract. Chief stated there are several items he doesn't like in the current contract and that some on the elements of the contract need to be changed. He stated that he even gave up a holiday and his wage increase.

There was a brief conversation about using trained civilian dispatchers rather than officers getting the overtime for it. Additionally using Auxiliaries Officers in some instances.

Councilman Thompson inquired again why there hasn't been the hiring of the officers. He stated that the Police Commission is in agreement about a unilateral transfer of officers from other departments, officers certified that maybe were laid off, etc. Councilman Carbo agreed, and asked why positions haven't been filled with out of work officers who are already certified and trained. There would be a significant savings to the Town.

Gallo did not directly answer this question.

Police Commissioner Krebs stated that there was a list requested from civil service to begin the process of hiring certified officers.

Councilman Anania asked why the Cops Grant wasn't used to hire additional officers.

Gallo stated that the Town was not in receipt of this grant, it went to larger cities with higher crime rates than East Haven, but suggested we could be receipt of other potential grant to fund future positions.

Erica Berg stated that although East Haven did apply for funding it was not approved, however, East Haven was invited to apply when funding become available again soon. She stated that there are several rounds of that grant and the first round went to large cities, cities in CT that received the funding were Stamford, Hartford, New Haven and Bridgeport.

These cities are the largest, crime rates are higher pr capita and they were in danger of laying off officers had this funding not been approved. The next round, available to large towns, East Haven may have a better chance at attaining the funding.

Councilman Camera, Chief Gallo and Police Commissioner Krebs stated in agreement that Erica is doing a fantastic job at attaining grants for the Town.

Gallo stated that he is confident that the grant funding opportunities are sought out and applied for competitively by Erica in the Mayor's Office.

Chairman Dougherty stated that he attends the Board of Finance meetings and after witnessing the several overtime transfers for the police department someone should be made accountable for "draining pots of money" that ultimately is tax payers' dollars going forward. He suggested that something in writing to better understand minimum costs especially since budget season is coming up. Possibly also offering suggestions as to curb overtime, sick time abuse and enforcing other management styles to curb such abuses.

Gallo stated sick time abuse has declined since Paul Hongo reached an agreement with the Union.

Councilman Santino requested bi-weekly statements to see what the over time is from the Finance Director. He also requested that the Public Safety subcommittee of the Town Council should look into some of the unnecessary costs and overtime. With the budget season coming up looking at the number realistically will help them budget. He also inquired about the damage to the vehicles in several of the police car accidents that have occurred recently. He wanted to know if the town is responsible for fixing the damage.

Gallo stated that the Town is self insured and that self insurance would pay for the damage.

No further comments.

Councilman Arpino motioned to close public hearing.

Councilman Thompson seconded.

All in Favor.

Public Hearing Closed.

Respectfully Submitted,

Erica Berg, Council Clerk