

SPECIAL SESSION MINUTES
AUGUST 31, 2021
BOARD OF POLICE COMMISSIONERS
NEW HAVEN, CONNECTICUT
VIDEOCONFERENCE AND CONFERENCE CALL VIA ZOOM

PRESENT: Commissioners Darrel Brooks; Michael Lawlor; Tracey Meares; Isaias Miranda; and Donald Walker

Interim Chief Renee Dominguez: Department of Police Service
Assistant Chief Carl Jacobson: Department of Police Service
Captain David Zannelli: Department of Police Service
Lieutenant Dana Smith: Department of Police Service
Sergeant Yelena Borisova: Department of Police Service
Sergeant Paul Finch: Department of Police Service
Officer D. Cohen: Department of Police Service
Officer Reginald McGlotten: Department of Police Service
Officer Raul Pereira: Department of Police Service
Ramon Davis: Administrative Assistant II

Audrey Kramer, Esquire: Deputy Corporation Counsel

Jake Dobosz
Lewis Johnson, Jr.
Marelyn Vega (joined - 6:21 p.m.)

OPEN SESSION

The meeting was called to order at 6:06 p.m., Donald Walker, Vice Chair, presiding. Commissioner Walker read an excerpt of the Notification/Agenda into the record.

1. Consideration and vote on the recommendation of Interim Chief Dominguez that the following candidates from Civil Service Eligibility List #21-01 (Police Officer) be hired:

#20 - Marelyn Vega
#26 - Jake Dobosz

- Commissioner Miranda indicated that Ms. Vega was having some difficulty joining the meeting. Lieutenant Smith indicated his team was also having trouble joining the meeting.
- Mr. Dobosz was asked to speak about himself.
- Commissioner Walker introduced Attorney Kramer as counsel to the Board for the evening.
- Mr. Dobosz was asked questions by the commissioners.
- Sergeant Cohen facilitated Ms. Vegas's participation by calling her on his mobile phone because her attempts to join the Zoom meeting were futile.

■ Ms. Vega was asked to speak about herself after which she was asked questions by the commissioners.

■ Commissioner Lawlor indicated that he participated in interviewing Ms. Vega a few weeks ago. They had the benefit of actual, direct communication enough to rely on technology. They extensively discussed some of what Ms. Vega had spoken about such as her work with young people at the high school, her coaching and her community involvement. It seems like especially in the last six, seven or eight years she has been extremely dedicated professional over at Wilbur Cross. Her background and her motivations are exactly the kinds of things we need at the Department. Commissioner Lawlor stated he wanted to convey his impressions based on their interaction a few weeks ago.

■ Commissioner Walker concurred with Commissioner Lawlor.

** Commissioner Miranda moved to follow the recommendation of Interim Chief Dominguez that Candidate #20 from Eligibility List #21-01, Marelyn Vega, be hired as a Police Officer

** Commissioner Lawlor seconded

** Motion passed unanimously

■ Ms. Vega was congratulated.

** Commissioner Lawlor moved to accept the recommendation of Interim Chief Dominguez that Jake Dobosz, No. 26, be hired by the New Haven Police Department

** Commissioner Meares seconded

** Motion passed unanimously

■ Mr. Dobosz was congratulated.

■ Commissioner Walker thanked both candidates.

2. Discussion and action on the recommendation to remove the following candidates from Eligibility List #21-01:

#34 - Corey Googe

#36 - Lewis Johnson, Jr.

■ Lieutenant Smith indicated that the only candidate present was Mr. Lewis Johnson, Jr. He also indicated Mr. Corey Googe had not responded to communications by the Department. He also did not go the Department to review his file.

■ Commissioner Walker asked if Mr. Johnson, Jr., wanted to be heard in a closed or open session. Lieutenant Smith indicated that he had opted to be heard in a closed session.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

** **Commissioner Meares moved to Enter Executive Session**

** **Commissioner Miranda seconded**

** **Motion passed unanimously**

The Board entered Executive Session at 6:29 p.m.

- ** Commissioner Meares moved to Exit Executive Session**
- ** Commissioner Lawlor seconded**
- ** Motion passed unanimously**

The Board exited Executive Session at 6:34 p.m.

- Commissioner Meares indicated that Mr. Lewis Johnson, Jr., preferred to be heard in open session.
- Mr. Johnson, Jr., spoke about himself after he was asked questions by the commissioners.
- Chief Dominguez indicated that part of the reason she had recommended that Mr. Johnson, Jr., be remove is because of immaturity and decision-making concerns.
- Captain Zannelli indicated that Mr. Johnson, Jr., may be a better prospect in the future. A lot of the issues had had with his employment are recent, about eight months ago including 2020. He would like to see some more time for the candidate to show some maturity.
- Lieutenant Smith concurred with Captain Zannelli. He add that time and distance will basically help him mature and straighten out his financial situation so that he will make a greater candidate in the future as well.
- Commissioner Meares stated that it matters to her that there are socio-structural issues in the world right now. And while she appreciated the explanation from Mr. Johnson, Jr., regarding his finances, it is a factor that matters to the Department in terms of their recommendation. She thought that it was real. She also thought that the forces that Mr. Johnson, Jr., described were real. This is an important issue that should not carry as much weight, personally, as some of the other issues. It was concerning to her that the way Mr. Johnson, Jr., described the overload at Marrakech was part of what motivated him to make some of the choices that he made given that a police officer's job is incredibly pressured. An officer has to be able to make good decisions and balance a bunch of pressure. The best information that the Department has to make and predict about what you will do in the future is your past behavior. She also echoed what other members of the Department had said which is that he has good values and Mr. Johnson, Jr., is interested in doing the job for the right reasons. From her perspective, she would like to see some time and distance.
- Commissioner Walker agreed with the Commissioner Meares as far as the financial aspect of Mr. Johnson, Jr.'s record in that many times when folks have financial problems, it is because they do not earn enough to care for their families. It becomes a vicious cycle. The average family in America has a week of savings. So, when something goes awry, in many case that family will be financially stressed. He would be more concerned with other issues and not the financial side of it.
- Commissioner Lawlor agreed. He stated he was less focused on the financial aspect albeit that it is a relevant factor. He is more troubled by the minimizing and rationalizing the misconduct at the previous jobs, rather than owning it. That is concerning for him. He would put that in the immaturity category.
- Commissioner Lawlor indicated, for the record, that each of the commissioners had a copy of the background investigation report regarding Mr. Googe and the bases for the recommendation to remove him. He had reviewed it. He felt comfortable voting on it even though he is not here

to articulate whatever he would want to say. It is a matter of record that the Board had access to this information.

■ Commissioner Walker stated, for the benefit of the public, that the Board's votes and opinions are not based on a small set of facts. The Board has an extensive set of information regarding each candidate. Overall, this is what the Board bases its decisions on.

** Commissioner Meares moved on the recommendation to remove Candidate #34, Corey Googe, from Eligibility List #21-01
** Commissioner Lawlor seconded
** Motion passed unanimously

** Commissioner Meares moved on the recommendation to remove Candidate #36, Lewis Johnson, Jr., from Eligibility List #21-01
** Commissioner Lawlor seconded
** For: Commissioner Brooks, Lawlor, Meares, Miranda
** Abstention: Commissioner Walker
** Motion carried

** Commissioner Lawlor moved to Adjourn the Special Meeting
** Commissioner Miranda seconded
** Unanimously passed

The next regular meeting will be on September 14, 2021.
The Board adjourned at 7:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sotonye Otunba-Payne