



**Public Hearing- Repeal Ch. 34, “Police Commissioners, Board of”
and add a new Ch. 34, “Police Commissioners”
Town Board Meeting
September 23, 2021, 7:30 p.m.
Via Zoom**

Present: Supervisor Neil Bettez, Councilman Dan Torres, Councilman David Brownstein, Councilwoman Julie Seyfert-Lillis. **Absent:** Councilwoman Alex Baer.

At 7:31 p.m. a motion was made by Supervisor Bettez to open the public hearing. Seconded by Councilwoman Seyfert-Lillis, all aye votes cast, motion carried.

Public Input:

-Tom Jelliffe- “I’m speaking today as a member of U-Act and the New Paltz Coalition for Community Safety and Well-being. I want to talk about 3 key aspects of the proposed police oversight law:

1. Disbanding the police oversight body should require due process and a full explanation, contrary to what has happened twice in recent New Paltz history
 - In February of 2019, the Board removed all members of the Police Advisory Committee without public hearing. Despite a nearly year-long process of selecting the Committee’s membership, it was dissolved after handling only one case: the complaint of police brutality against a young Black man.
 - In the winter of 2014, the Board held a public hearing on the repeal of Chapter 34. Public statements were overwhelmingly opposed. In its meeting immediately following the public hearing, the Board decided simply to “keep the law ... and act as the Police Commission [itself].” The minutes record no discussion recognizing the service of the citizen members of the Commission or officially dismissing them.

The NPPRRC and our coalition’s reports both called for strong measures to prevent such abrupt and summary dissolutions. Earlier this summer, Deputy Supervisor Daniel Torres also cited the need for such a change. However, the proposed law does nothing to address this concern that is so vital to the independence of the Commission members.

We would recommend at the very least to use language such as exists in the State’s law for Town Planning Boards: “The town board shall have the power to remove, after public hearing, any member of the planning board for cause.” (my emphasis)

2. The official Reform and Reinvention report recommended that at least two members of the Commission be people of color. Our report recommended that any oversight body have a majority comprised of individuals of color, others who are affected by police activities, or who have performed anti-racist community work. If such requirements can’t be embedded in law, the Board must make a statement that it will select members whose qualifications are in keeping with the anti-racism goals of the Reform and Reinvention process.
3. A major criticism of police oversight bodies throughout their history has been that they have no teeth in disciplinary matters. The proposed law does leave unchanged the Commission’s access to all records of the NPPD. But the law does not indicate that the Commission can conduct its own investigations, only that it “shall monitor the disposition of complaints and/or accusations.” Further, while the **existing** law says: “The Town Board cannot supersede an order or directive of the Commission on questions of promotions or disciplinary Proceedings (with certain exceptions)”, the **proposed** law reverses course completely in saying: “the authority ... to undertake the commencement and/or the continued prosecution of any disciplinary proceeding ... is reserved to the Town Board.” If you are proposing this change to conform with some legal requirement, the Board needs to find some other way to save the commission from irrelevance in just such disciplinary matters, for example by specifically authorizing the Commission to publicize its findings and recommendations.”

-Edgar Rodriguez asked questions regarding the qualifications and duties needed to serve on the Board and the process of how commissioners will be selected.

-Maggie Veve feels that the composition of the Board should be of people mostly affected by the Police.

Commissioner Baer arrived at 7:43 p.m.

Supervisor Bettez said the Town can do a better job of summarizing the responsibilities.

-Stana Weisburd suggested advertising in different places in an effort to find more volunteers.

A motion was made by Commissioner Bettez to continue the public hearing on October 7th at 7 p.m. Seconded by Commissioner Brownstein, all aye votes cast, motion carried.

Town Board Meeting:

At 7:56 p.m. a motion was made by Supervisor Bettez to open the meeting with the pledge. Seconded by Councilman Brownstein, all aye votes cast, motion carried.

Agenda: +#7 SafeCo Monitoring Contract for 59 N. Putt Corners Rd.

A motion was made by Supervisor Bettez to adopt the agenda as amended. Seconded by Councilman Brownstein, all aye votes cast, motion carried.

Public Input:

-Daniel Schneidewind spoke about the TransHudson lawsuit and urged the Board to not further extend the deferral.

-Tom Jelliffe read the following statement: “At this time I’d like to reaffirm our efforts at improving transparency of the New Paltz Town government and to ask why the Board has such a hard time engaging with members of the public on a two-way basis.

I won’t belabor the discussion around your 3-minute rule for public input, now published as a policy on your website. I would just note that, quite typically, you did not see fit to post it with the agenda for the meeting it was voted on.

You have said repeatedly that Town Board meetings are not occasions for “back and forth” with the public or for extended statements by citizens. You have invited direct contacts, such as emails addressed to the Council Members personally. We have tried that approach too:

- On June 14th we wrote to the supervisor requesting what we called a Civics 101 course to give us a better grounding in the processes of governance in the Town of New Paltz—how Board agendas are set, how the Public Meetings law operates in the Town context, what are appropriate and effective ways to communicate with Board members, the relationships of the Town Board to the other Boards, how to participate effectively in the budget process. We also suggested that this course could lead to a set of Frequently Asked Questions itself to be posted on the Town website.
- On July 5th we wrote an email on various issues pertaining to police reform and reinvention, including enhanced transparency by posting a calendar for the discussion of the recommendations of the EO 203 report, posting the Police Chief’s monthly reports prior to Police commission meetings, posting annotated draft regulations, posting budget documents in more accessible formats, and posting the documents the Town Board used to research options for a proposed independent, civilian police oversight body.
- On August 31st, we wrote to ask the Board to post the anti-racism statement prior to the Board meeting.
- On September 15th, we wrote to recommend various changes to enhance the transparency of the budget process and the ability of citizens to have meaningful input. The recommendations included: more accessible formats of currently published documents, a stand-alone document explaining the budget calendar, a budget overview giving revenue forecasts and identifying major line item changes and the need for them, a Town organization chart, a listing of individuals on payroll (already public information but not synched with the budget process), and a listing of the individual contractual expenses of each Department, such as is already published annually by the Police Department (but not synched to the budget process).

Not even one of these four sets of requests and recommendations has yet received a response. Even if these requests were outlandish—are they?—I believe public officials are duty-bound to respond substantively. Perhaps there is a cost associated with posting documents, perhaps there is a privacy concern we are not aware of, perhaps there is a technological obstacle—but those can easily be named. Possibly, you are simply too busy keeping the trains running. Even that can be said very quickly, along with a timeframe for a more complete response, even a phone call.

-Maggie Veve spoke about the composition of people that should be selected for the Commission. She also indicated that the process to apply for the Commission and the duties are unclear.

-Edgar Rodriguez read a statement regarding democracy among the Town Board and Village Board.

Consent Agenda:

A motion was made by Supervisor Bettez to approve and/or authorize the following as part of the consent agenda. Seconded by Councilman Torres, all aye votes cast, motion carried.

- a. Approval of minutes: 09/02/2021
- b. Release of escrow, PB#21-183; Montessori Site Plan in the amount of \$232.50
- c. Approval to hire the following employees as pool laborers from 09/12/21 through 11/27/21 at the rate of \$13.00 per hour: Sophie Gallo, Campbell Heiz, William Mergl, Joshua Pappace, and Alyssa Puleo
- d. Authorization of tuition reimbursement for John Wilson, NPYP, in the amount of \$1,714.94
- e. Appointment of Rebecca Whitaker to the Ethics Board
- f. Authorization for the Supervisor to sign three-year renewal agreement between the Town of New Paltz and Roemer Wallens Gold & Mineaux LLP

- g. Authorization for the Supervisor to sign contract for Phase I Environmental Site Assessment (ESA) for Selected Parcel on Brickner Lane at Plains Road to be performed by Walden Engineering
- h. Acceptance of resignation: Fred Riley, Building Department; authorization to canvass for replacement hire at a starting salary of \$24.038/hr beginning 10/07/21
- i. Establishment of Cash Bond for PB 19-00050, New Paltz Storage
- j. Authorization of the following budget modifications:

TO:				FROM:			
A	1650.400	Central Communications, C.E.	2,400.00	A	1990.400	Contingency	30,903.00
A	1650.400	Public Access	582.00				
A	5630.400	UCAT Loop Bus, C.E.	7,218.00				
A	7150.130	Moriello Pool, P.S.	8,291.00				
A	7150.230	Moriello Pool, Equip	50.00				
A	7310.400	Youth, C.E.	12,362.00				
			30,903.00				
TO:				FROM:			
SSF	9730.610	BANS- Principle	8,500.00	SSF	9710.630	Serial Bonds-Prin	8,500.00
SSF	9730.715	BANS- Interest	1,488.00	SSF	9710.735	Serial Bonds-Int	1,488.00
			9,988.00				9,988.00

Short-term Rental Discussion:

The Attorney is still working on the draft law. The County has been collecting data on the number of short-term rentals in each Town and they are willing to share that data.

A motion was made by Supervisor Bettez to authorize the Supervisor to sign IMA with the County for information sharing. Seconded by Councilman Brownstein, all aye votes cast, motion carried.

At 8:28 p.m. Councilwoman Seyfert-Lillis left the meeting due to technical issues.

Second Amendment to IGA between Town and Village-Water District #5:

A motion was made by Supervisor Bettez to authorize the Supervisor to sign the Second Amendment to IGA for Water District #5. Seconded by Councilman Brownstein, all aye votes cast, motion carried.

Authorization to use Seized Asset funds:

A motion was made by Supervisor Bettez to authorize to use of up to \$2,300.00 from the seized asset account to purchase a new patrol rifle with suppressor and suppressor adapter for ESU member, as well as approval to trade in the existing ESU patrol rifles as credit to go toward the purchase of the new weapon. Seconded by Councilman Brownstein, all aye votes cast, motion carried.

B&G hiring request:

A motion was made by Supervisor Bettez to authorize hiring a Municipal Worker II at \$25.14 per hour with a \$0.50 per hour raise at six months and \$0.50 per hour raise after one year. Seconded by Councilman Brownstein, all aye votes cast, motion carried.

Warrant:

A motion was made by Supervisor Bettez to approve the September Warrant in the amount of \$2,049,844.94. Seconded by Councilwoman Baer, all aye votes cast, motion carried.

SafeCo Monitoring Contract:

A motion was made by Supervisor Bettez to authorize the Supervisor to sign the SafeCo Monitoring Contract for alarms at 59 N. Putt Corners Rd. Seconded by Councilwoman Baer, all aye votes cast, motion carried.

At 8:33 p.m. a motion was made by Councilman Brownstein to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Councilman Torres, all aye votes cast, motion carried.

Respectfully Submitted,

Rosanna Rosenkranse
Town Clerk