

# Town of Colchester, Connecticut

127 Norwich Avenue, Colchester, Connecticut 06415

## Colchester Police Commission

Meeting Agenda

Monday, April 26, 2021, 7:30 pm

Use the link below to join the zoom meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85748213330?pwd=ZXNHWjc3bXB2b1V4VINYazdpSWJLQT09>

Webinar ID: 857 4821 3330

Passcode: 674567

Or join by phone:

1 929 205 6099 (New York)

Webinar ID: 857 4821 3330

Passcode: 674567

1. Call to Order & Attendance
2. Pledge of Allegiance
3. Additions to the Agenda
4. Citizen Comments
5. Officer Comments
6. Review Correspondences
  - a. Meaghan Kehogreen
7. Motion to Approve Meeting Minutes
  - a. Regular Meeting Minutes of March 22, 2021
8. Budget Review
9. Appropriations and Transfers
10. Monthly Resident Trooper Report (Sergeant Mike Rondinone)
11. Monthly Corporal Report (Sergeant Tim Edwards)
12. First Selectman Comments (First Selectman Mary Bylone)
13. Local Traffic Authority
14. Old Business Status Update
  - a) Shed repair and Trailer purchase status.
  - b) Firing Range
  - c) Mutual Aid Agreement – signed/completed 4/13/2021.
  - d) OT Private Road Job Increase Fee + Accounting of
  - e) 'Police Accountability Act Mandates' update
  - f) Blood-borne Pathogen *Policy* and *Certification Training* of POs status
15. New Business
  - a) Proposed 2021-2022 Budget Update
  - b) Follow-up to lighting request work orders, carpet delivery/install status, painting status.
  - c) Meeting update w/ Superintendent Burt to establish SRO Job Description and Duties

*Gayle Furrman*  
GAYLE FURMAN  
TOWN CLERK

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COLCHESTER, CT

16. Executive Session

- a. Personnel

17. Commendations/Awards

18. Project Goals

- a) Carol/Kevin Update – PC expanded web pages on Town Website

19. Chairman/Commissioner Comments

- Police Commission Chairman Presentation Activity Update:
  - a) April 6<sup>th</sup> – Colchester Business Association (CBA) 6:30pm Zoom Meeting
  - b) April 14<sup>th</sup> – BOF Budget Workshop 6:30 Zoom Meeting
  - c) April 15<sup>th</sup> – Knights of Columbus 7:00pm Zoom Meeting
  - d) April 23<sup>rd</sup> - Senior Services 10:30am Zoom Meeting
  - e) April 28<sup>th</sup> – Colchester Rotary Club 6:30pm Zoom Meeting
  - f) TBD – Lions Club

20. Adjourn

**From:** Meaghan Kehoegreen [redacted]  
**Date:** April 12, 2021 at 5:23:46 PM EDT  
**To:** Mary Bylone <mbylone@gmail.com>  
**Subject:** Police Force in Colchester

Hello Mary,

I wanted to send this email to our police commission and a representative from the local police force but was unable to find email addresses for them on the town website.

Today, I have watched video and read articles on two more very publicized incidences in this country regarding police using unreasonable amount of force with black men. At the same time, funding for the Colchester Police Force is a large and important part of our budget currently for Colchester.

I understand how difficult it must be for the local police to be lumped into the stereotypes and bad images that police currently have. What I am hoping for is our local police to make a stand and release a statement saying that they are against the use of unreasonable and unnecessary force when policing and to give details about the new training that they are going through. While I understand that the state may not have a formal training program set yet- there are numerous other opportunities to learn about our personal biases and to do personal anti-bias and anti-racist training. As a teacher, I know that while the formal state processes may take time, there are many other smaller opportunities to learn. We have been doing so much of this work this year to help us best support our students and would think our local police have been doing the same.


What is our community doing to ensure that these situations do not happen in our town? Before our taxpayers agree to spend more of their money on increasing our force size, I think it is important to have our police share their views on this.

I have repeatedly heard recently that having the SRO in our schools is important for changing police imaging. It is not the taxpayers responsibility to change police image. The power to do that is in the hands of the police and whether they choose to take a stand as a force against the racist and over-aggressive practices that are too common in this country.

I want to be clear- I am not anti-police. I am not against any individuals in our force. But I am anti-racist and I do strongly believe that change is needed in this country. I strongly believe that change comes from the local level. If each local level can take a stand and do the work, positive change will happen. The frustration that good police must have can be turned into positive action for our community and that will spread.

Thank you Mary for sharing this with the Commission and police.

Thank you all for everything you do for our community.  
Meaghan Kehoegreen

 **KC82 - Craig Scheel** kc82@colchesterct.gov [Hide](#) ▾

Thu, Apr 15, 2021 7:22 pm

To **Meaghan Kehoegreen** [redacted] First Selectman selectman@colchesterct.gov,  
**KC89 - Tim Edwards** kc89@colchesterct.gov, **michael.rondinone@ct.gov** michael.rondinone@ct.gov,  
**James Stavola** ewajlm@aol.com

Good evening Meaghan,

I was forwarded your e-mail that First Selectwoman Bylone received regarding your concerns with the current climate of policing, widely publicized use of force incidents, on-going police training, and the SRO position. I would like to address some of them the best that I can.

Police training is not a national standard, and varies greatly from state to state. In my opinion, Connecticut has some of the most comprehensive training requirements available. Implicit bias training is already included in our certification and ongoing recertification process. Certification and re-certification training also includes training in handling emotionally disturbed persons, de-escalation tactics, human trafficking, domestic violence, and less than lethal prisoner control tactics just to name a few. These training classes are required to be completed to maintain our certifications as police officers. Some of these classes have been added recently in response to calls for reform. I believe that other areas of the country are moving to raise their training standards to a level that Connecticut already operates at. If there are additional implicit bias trainings that the BOE or other town departments are completing, and recommend, the Police

Department would certainly look at adding them to our training schedule, however they would not be mandated to maintain a certification; unless, as you pointed out, that is changed at the state level in the future.

As far as your concerns about a publicized use of force occurring in Colchester; I believe that the most valuable item to be included in the police accountability bill is that dash cameras and body worn cameras are now mandated. I have been a police officer in the town of Colchester since 2010. During that time I have never had access to a functional dashboard mounted camera or audio recording microphone despite countless attempts get them operational. I could detail a lengthy account of why this has occurred; but now with the state mandates the issues must be resolved and the new cameras and data storage have been included in this year's budget request. The police union believes that access to body worn camera footage and transparency is one of our most valuable assets.

Additionally, there are approximately 700,000 sworn law enforcement personal in the US. These high profile use of force incidents that have been covered in the media recently account for an extremely small percentage of police officers. The Officer's that work here all reside locally as your neighbors, and in nearby communities. We come from a variety of ethnic, socioeconomic, and educational backgrounds. You are more than welcome to come to some of our future "Coffee with a Cop" or reach out to Sergeant Edwards about meeting some of the Officer's. We are all normal people with families who would rather be known by name, than as a uniform. I feel that getting to know some of the Officer's in your community may help you view us as individuals, rather than an institution.

We as a department respond to thousands of calls for service every year, with thousands of other citizen contacts made. In my opinion, we have an extremely low number of citizen complaints made against officer's each year. I cannot remember a single incident that a complaint was made to the police department that an Officer discriminated against an individual based on their race or ethnicity. While it is important to recognize and issue within a department and address it, I think it is just as important to recognize a good track record.

I am a staunch supporter of the School Resource Officer Program. As you wrote in your e-mail "It is not the tax payers job to change police image", and I agree with you. I do not feel that the School Resource Officer exists to change anyone's mind. Police Officers on patrol normally have to interact with people on their worst days such as at medical calls, domestic disputes, car accidents and such. Very little of a patrol officer's time, especially with our staffing, can be dedicated to building community relationships. We all signed up for this job to help people in need, and at our core is what we believe policing to be about. The SRO position is valuable in allowing the children in our schools to meet/greet and interact with a police officer on a day and setting which is not one of their worst days. I believe the positive interaction that children have with the SRO on a normal day is something that most people carry with them. I still fondly remember my SRO, Linda Nott, and have met countless people that have fondly recalled stories of their SRO or DARE Officer. I believe that the SRO program is valuable for the security of our schools, but more valuable in giving the students an opportunity to interact with and feel comfortable with us.

I would also like to like to point out that all officers are humans. Humans are not infallible, or perfect. There will be police officers in the future in this country that make mistakes through negligence, complacency, or possibly malice. I can tell you there are no absolutes or guarantees but I can tell you that we always want to recruit, hire, train and retain the highest quality officers. These officers are not only there to serve the citizens of Colchester but we have to rely on each other's judgment and competence every day to effectively do our jobs. That being said, there is currently an unprecedented amount of job openings within police departments in the Southeastern Connecticut area as well as within the Connecticut State Police. If you know yourself, a friend, family member, or former student to be of strong moral character and work ethic I would encourage them to apply to become a law enforcement officer.

I hope this helps,

Respectfully,

Corporal Craig Scheel

Colchester Police Union President.

Meaghan Kehoegreen [REDACTED] Hide v

Fri, Apr 16, 2021 10:43 am

To KC82 - Craig Scheel kc82@colchesterct.gov, First Selectman selectman@colchesterct.gov,  
KC89 - Tim Edwards kc89@colchesterct.gov, michael.rondinone@ct.gov michael.rondinone@ct.gov,  
James Stavola ewajim@aol.com

Hello!

Thank you so much for your reply. I really appreciate the time it took and I learned from it.

The information on training is super helpful- could this be publicized? I think we hear so much about how training is needed but we dont hear about the training that CT is doing already and what has been added this year. I am also very grateful the body cams are part of the budget for this year.

I appreciate your invitation to Coffee with a Cop. I know Tim and Shannon and really like them both and I love when I see them around town. I do see you as individuals with full lives. If there is one thing that both my mom and teaching has taught me its that every single human on earth- no matter their career, their socioeconomic status, their choices in life...every one of us is an individual with a full and complicated life and we deserve equal treatment and respect. This is why I emailed you my thoughts rather than posting them on a Facebook post that would rile people up. I do not see all police as one unit of an institution. But I do see you as individuals with incredible power for positive change.

Right now in this country it seems we have to pick sides. Houses either have American Flags with a Blue stripe or Black Lives Matter signs. People are either pro-police or pro-black lives matter. It should not be either or. This needs to change and you, as individuals and as a local force, have the power to influence and start that change. If you as individuals and as a local police force do not support the notion that anti-racism and police cannot function hand in hand, then you have the power to help others see that it is not one or the other. By publicly sharing the anti-bias work you are doing and by making a statement saying that while, you understand that no human is perfect, and mistakes do happen, police should be trained so that shooting a suspect is not such a quick response and that excessive force like Derek Chauvin used is inappropriate, people will listen. You, as individuals who have chosen this career and as a local force, have a voice that could be a powerful instrument of positive change. It should not be Police vs. AntiRacism. But unfortunately, until police speak up saying this and demonstrating with their actions that they believe this, it will be. It's an unfortunate role you have, one that you did not choose when you chose this career, but its a reality of the situation.

I understand the frustration that you may feel being told that this responsibility to start the change is on you simply because you chose this career hoping to serve a community and do good. It feels awkward sending this email and voicing my thoughts with you. But the more I listen and learn about the experiences of black and brown people across the country and in our own community, the more I realize that we need to make change. While we ourselves may not have caused these issues, we do have the responsibility and the power to make the positive change our country and community needs. I promise you, I am not just asking you to do this work while not doing it myself- I have been doing this work myself within the school system. It still feels awkward to be so open and express my thoughts with you but I do strongly believe that having these conversations is crucial to positive change.

You spoke of the lack of complaints for the Colchester force. Thank you for sharing and thank you for the good job you do. I agree with you that a good track record is so important to be recognized and is crucial in the positive change that I spoke about.

Regarding the SRO program: You state that you agree that the SRO position is not there to change people's mind about police imaging but then explain that the role is valuable to create positive imaging and connections. It is a very expensive position to simply build positive connections. I understand that the job description must be more than that but, as a local teacher, I am embarrassed to admit that I don't know what the role of the SRO was in the schools. I do agree that the police should have a role in the schools- through job fairs, guest speaking in classes, listening to student forums to learn about the lives and experiences of our community, attending events and participating in pep rallies and the like to build positive relationships and healthy role modeling but I am not sure that a full SRO position is needed for that or if that could possibly be part of overall community outreach that happens throughout the year.

Having an SRO in schools, while it may help build those community connections, also has the opposite side effect. An SRO, who is now retired, once said to me about a student "He will be in permanent lock up or dead in 5 years" about a student who had never gotten in trouble with the law but was a "loud mouth" around the school. Having police in schools has the unfortunate but unavoidable side effect of building bias and assumptions about certain students or student groups. SROs also have the awkward position of not knowing when to get involved and when to stay away from a student behavior situation-how do you know if the student is a special need student and just needs their case manager or how do you know if you will make a student feel criminalized when they are simply a child going through a hard time. It's impossible to know. Teachers go through lengthy training on how to deal with and respond to students and we are specialized for certain grade levels. For an SRO to be expected to know how to deal with students of all grade levels and ability levels in an appropriate yet significant way on a daily basis is unrealistic. That's simply not fair to the SRO. And not all students have blank slates with police. When I was 14, I myself had to deal with what I strongly felt was excessive force from a local police officer (the same one who is retired). Having to put those feelings aside and act professional with him as an adult when he was a SRO in the school I was teaching at was difficult for me as a adult- I can only imagine what a student would feel. That is not an experience I speak about openly and still is very triggering years later but I wanted to share to help you understand how some students may feel. The fact that part of your role as a police officer is to respond to family's worst days makes the SRO position uncomfortable for some students. The position is complicated when looked at from multiple perspectives.

And while you often deal with people on their worst days, you are also often the hero on their worst day. When you protect a person from their abusive spouse or show up at a car accident, you are the hero and people do realize and appreciate this although I'm sure you don't feel that way in this current environment. Life has become very polarized and we need all realize that its not so clear cut. I am grateful for the good you do in this community and at the same time believe you have such a strong voice that could be used for positive change.

I understand and respect how high pressure your job can be and at the same time believe that there is room for change nationally with how police respond to situations. I understand that it is not within your control to change how other forces respond to situations but I do believe that you have a voice that will be listened to. It is disturbing for many of our community residents, not just our black and brown members, to see these videos and watch the Chauvin case. To know our local police stand against that type of response and use of force would calm worried community members and help them feel good about supporting the local police. To know that you are taking anti-racism seriously and that you are taking time to learn and listen to black and brown experiences would help bring our community together.

We need to take the politics out of it and focus on doing good- which I know is why you became police in the first place.

Thank you for reading- I know I went on and on and onnn....I apologize for my essay and am grateful you took the time to read it. I really appreciate your reply to my first email and please do not feel obligated to respond to this one- you can if you want but no hard feelings if you dont. As I have said, I am grateful for all you do and

appreciate you taking the time to read and think about a community member's thoughts. I have refrained from speaking publicly at the budget meetings about these topics and instead chose to share them directly with you in hopes that you will take them into consideration.

Thank you for all you do,  
Meaghan Kehoegreen

✉ KC82 - Craig Scheel kc82@colchesterct.gov Hide ▾

Fri, Apr 16, 2021 5:40 pm

Hi Meaghan,

Not a problem. I would rather have a productive conversation than an argument. While I understand your position about educating the public about our training and track record, I am a patrol officer within the department. I think a public statement such as this would be more appropriate to be issued by department leadership such as the police commission of the First Selectman's Office who, while not sworn law enforcement, is the "chief of police" per state statute. One or both of them may be planning to release such a statement but I am not aware of anything planned at this time.

It sounds like we will have to agree to disagree on the SRO position. Regardless of if there is Officer assigned to the schools, there will continue to be calls for service at the schools which will require police response. I also understand that Sergeant Edwards and a representative from the BOE are working together to agree on some sort of daily schedule or duties for the SRO going forward. I certainly understand that with change in staffing and COVID that the position did not function this year as it has in the past.

I hope someday that things will be less polarizing. When I started my career the "thin blue line" was a representation of the police force standing between innocents and those who would do harm. Apparently now it means a variety of things to different people. I believe that if people stayed off social media and instead talked with their neighbors we would understand that we have a lot more in common that we may think.

Respectfully,

Corporal Craig Scheel

April 18, 2021

Good afternoon Ms. Kehogreen,

I have received your email letter, dated April 12, 2021, that was forwarded to me by First Selectwoman Mary Bylone, regarding your concerns over recent events in the news involving incidences in this country of police "using unreasonable amount of force with black men", and of police exhibiting discriminatory and racist treatment when dealing with people of color.

Let me preface this email by introducing myself and to explain some of the duties of the Colchester Police Commission. I am currently the Chairman of, and spokesperson for, the Town's Board of Police Commissioners whose single voice represents the consensus views of the commission.

The Town of Colchester Police Commission consists of 5-active members appointed by the Board of Selectman. The powers, duties, organization, and term of appointment for the Police Commission are governed by the Connecticut General Statute 7-276 and Section 214 of the Town Ordinances. Duties we are tasked with, just to name a few, are as follows:

- Provide general management and supervision of the Colchester Police and of the Town property and equipment used with the operation of the department.
- Exercise sole powers to hire, promote, discipline, and remove for just cause Colchester officers.
- Establish all needful rules and regulations for the department and implement suitable penalties for their violation.
- Provide recommendations for enforcement strategies to the Colchester Resident State Trooper Supervisor when the commission decides it is in the best interest of the Town.
- We are also involved in the process of recognizing outstanding police work through the recommendation and issuance of various awards and citations for bravery, lifesaving efforts, and meritorious work performed in the line of duty.

The Police Commission works closely with the Colchester Resident State Trooper Sgt. Michael Rondinone and with Colchester Police Department Administrative Sgt. Timothy Edwards. Responsibility for the daily operations of the Colchester police department rests with Sgt. Rondinone and Sgt. Edwards. All other facets involving the Police Department, as listed above, are managed, and overseen by the Police Commission. Any decisions rendered by the Police Commission, on matters within their purview and authority, are then forwarded to First Selectwoman Mary Bylone who then makes the final decision of approval or non-approval of the matter presented to her.

Subsequent to reading your letter, I must commend you for your understanding and reasonableness in acknowledging the demands and stressful situations that police officers face on a daily basis, as they put their lives on-the-line in order to protect and serve. I applaud you for not lumping and stereotyping all police officers with that small group of "bad apples" who behave badly and who act unlawfully. Unfortunately, the missteps and egregious actions of a few "bad" cops tarnish the reputation of all the other "good" cops who serve the public honorably and with distinction.

There is no place for "bad" cops whose discriminatory behavior and unlawful actions pose a danger and a threat to the public. Nor should it be acceptable for any "code of silence" culture to exist within police departments that shield, excuse, and coverup such behavior. The Police Commission therefore agrees that police reform is necessary. As a former police officer with 30 years of experience, I recognize that such reforms must come from the direction of having clear policies that address the issues of Implicit Bias existing within affected police departments. Here in Colchester, we are fortunate to have police supervisors who are trained to recognize the onset of Implicit Bias, and to address biased behavior with the police department. I am of the opinion that, it is also the responsibility of the taxpayers to work



together with police officers, possibly in a Community Policing role to form partnerships. It should be a mutual endeavor between the taxpayer and their police department. Police officers should not have to bear the entire burden.

In reference to your request that the Colchester Police and the Police Commission, "make a stand and release a statement saying that they [we] are against the use of unreasonable and unnecessary force when policing..." I want to clarify for you that, any official statements from our town police must come through the Police Commission. This does not preclude the Police Union from taking a position, however they are obligated to consult with the Police Commission before any such statements are made. Also, any public comments about training would come from the Police Commission or from Colchester Resident State Trooper Sgt. Michael Rondinone with the approval of Colchester First Selectwoman Mary Bylone.

That being said, and in response to your inquiry as to where the Police Commission stands on the matter, I can assure you that excessive force or any type of racist behavior by the police is NOT condoned nor endorsed by this Commission. The Police Commission has made it abundantly clear to our officers that use of excessive force or any type of racist/discriminatory behavior, on their part, is not tolerated. Furthermore, they have been advised that, any such complaints will be processed immediately and thoroughly investigated, and, if proven to be true (i.e., complaint sustained) disciplinary action taken will be handled swiftly and accordingly. The Commission takes such complaints seriously, and there is zero tolerance for discriminatory/racist behavior and unreasonable/unnecessary use of force.

Regarding our very own Colchester Police, I have come to know each officer and cannot say enough good things about them. There is no such evidence that our officers have been or are racist, and no incidences (nor evidence) that any of our officers engaged in excessive force when dealing with people of color. Again, should any such complaint arise, the Police Commission will immediately conduct a thorough investigation into the matter. If, as a result of the investigation, the incident is proven to have occurred, disciplinary action that follows (including dismissal from the force if warranted) will be swift and dispensed accordingly.

In addition to the many hours of police training including classes on the appropriate use of force, the Colchester Police officers attend Cultural Diversity training with the emphasis on Implicit Bias training. As was mentioned earlier in my letter, our police supervisors are trained to recognize the onset of Implicit Bias, and to address biased behavior with the police department. Neither the Police Commission nor our Colchester Police condone the actions of former Minneapolis, Minnesota Police Officer Derek Chauvin, in his handling of the George Floyd custodial arrest incident, leading to Mr. Floyd's death.

The Commission highly praises our men and women of the Colchester Police Department. Our officers provide the highest quality of police services and do so with the utmost professionalism, while putting their lives in danger each day whether wearing their uniform while on-duty or responding to assist citizens while off-duty. A case in point is, Corporal Robert Labonte's immediate call-to-action on July 18, 2020 responding to a 911 call. As the first responder to arrive at the scene, he administered CPR that saved the life of a jogger in cardiac arrest. In so doing Corporal Labonte, without hesitation, risked his own safety while performing CPR in 95-degree heat during a pandemic, until other assistance could arrive. Corporal Labonte, was one of 7 other persons honored on October 09, 2020 for their part in the cardiac arrest incident. At that award ceremony Corporal Labonte received a Proclamation from the Board of Selectman, a medal from the Connecticut State Police, and a plaque and commendation letter from the Police Commission.

The Police Commission is proud of our dedicated team of police officers who continue to provide the highest quality of service as professionals in their field of law enforcement ...and who abide by the motto to "Protect and Serve".

Ms. Kehogreen, I want to thank you once again for your letter of concern on the topic of police use of force and racism. I hope that I was able to answer any questions you had regarding our police and where the Police Commission stands on

those issues. Should you have any further questions or concerns for me, I can be reached either by phone or via my email address, as listed below.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank you for your service to our community, in your important role as teacher and educator to school children. It is reassuring to know that we here in Colchester have a wonderful school system along with quality educators who strive to provide students with an excellent education along with imparting the necessary skills for them to succeed in this world.

In the spirit of fostering a better understanding of our town's police department and the officers who serve our community, and as a conduit that provides a forum for open communication between our residents and the police, the Police Commission invites you to attend our monthly public meetings. We welcome your attendance and to hearing from you, and from any others seeking to attend, during the "Citizen Comments" portion of the meeting. The Commission meets the 4<sup>th</sup> Monday of each month at 7:30pm (unless otherwise posted in the town clerk's office or as noted on our town's website). Due to the pandemic the Commission meets via Zoom. The link to attend each Zoom meeting, is posted in the Police Commission's "Agenda" section of our website.

Respectfully,

*James Stavola*

Chairman, Colchester Police Commission

Cell phone: (860) 490-5206

Email address: [Ewajim@aol.com](mailto:Ewajim@aol.com)