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Seymour Police Department

Board of Police Commissioners

Special Meeting

Thursday, October 22, 2026

Members Present: David Bitso, Tom LaPaglia, John Duke and Robert J. Koskelowski

Members Absent: Kyle Kelley

Also Present: Chief John Bucherati, Deputy Chief Michael Fappiano and Inspector Joseph Matusovich, Town Attorney Bryan LeClerc

1) **Meeting called to order at 6:30 p.m.**
2) **Pledge of Allegiance**
3) **Public Comment:** no comments
4) **Discussion/Possible Action on BOPC being denied representation on negotiation committee for the upcoming contract negotiations**
   Commissioner Bitso clarified that the Police Commission is not challenging the First Selectperson's Charter given right to select the negotiating team. Instead, he addressed the communication breakdown surrounding the process. He recounted meeting with First Selectwoman Annmarie Drugonis on Wednesday, September 30th, regarding her prior commitment to include a commission member on the negotiating team before the contract extension began. However, Commissioner Bitso was omitted from the initial correspondence sent by HR Director Christopher Pelosi. After follow-up meetings and delayed email packets, Commissioner Bitso's formal statement was read on the record: "As a Commission, we have worked collaboratively to support the police department, the Chief's administration and the Union. We simply requested a seat at the table to maintain this progress. Amid a rising tide of state level, anti-police sentiment and shifting pension landscapes, our goal remains to attract and retain top tier officers. Over the last ten years, this department has become one of the best in the state. Despite the First Selectwoman repeatedly promising us a seat at the table over the last two years, I feel we were deceived. The Town Hall administration has lacked transparency, resulting in a coordinated effort of finger-pointing. This conflict was not created by the Police Commission; rather, the First Selectwoman denied us a continued partnership while HR Director Christopher Pelosi rushed the ground rules through. She attempted to deflect blame onto Christopher Pelosi and the Union, but the buck stops at the First Selectwoman's office. There are no issues with the union, the Chief, or his administration; we want to continue working together to make our community a great place. Yet, while she chose a team consisting of Kurt Miller, Christopher Pelosi, the Chief, and the Deputy Chief, the Police Commission has been completely locked out. This is yet another glaring example of a lack of transparency and control by her

and the town hall administration. This disappointing situation was entirely created by the First Selectwoman, brought into town hall, and managed poorly and in my opinion, deceptively and in bad faith. As elected officials, we are chosen by the people to oversee the police department. By stripping away our voice, the First Selectwoman has undermined our mission to work alongside the chief's administration and the union to foster a positive environment."

Commissioner Duke noted that "the First Selectwoman is on record promising that the Commission would be part of this process, only to pull the rug out from under us. First, she blamed the union's attorney, and then she tried to blame the union itself. When asked directly at our last meeting who was in charge, she claimed she was. Clearly, she is not. She emailed Christopher Pelosi to include a member of this commission on the negotiating team, and they openly defied her. Whether this was by design or because they are the ones actually calling the shots, too much power has been concentrated in the hands of two unelected town hall officials who seem to run everything. I understand they could take legal action. We fully respect the administration's authority to manage assignments and procedures. However, the frequent contradictions, shifting narratives, and finger-pointing are creating widespread confusion. This approach serves the administration's interests rather than what is best for our police officers and the town's residents. Furthermore, while I appreciate the presence of Attorney Brian LeClerc, this board will not be intimidated or silenced by legal maneuvering. From my perspective, we were misled and misleading this board means misleading the voters, which I will neither support nor remain quiet about."

Regarding the legal opinion mentioned by Commissioner Koskelowski, "we do not dispute that the elected official has the legal right to determine the negotiating committee's composition. While I have always advocated for a police commission member to sit on that committee, that decision ultimately rests with her. Although she previously indicated she would appoint a commissioner and ultimately changed her mind possibly due to outside influence, this board still retains a vital voice in negotiations. With the Chief and Deputy Chief present in those sessions, we can receive regular updates during our upcoming executive sessions. This allows us to review all proposals and actively intervene if any terms threaten to compromise department operations. I am disappointed that we do not have a commissioner on the negotiating board; I believe having one of us present would ensure direct feedback. However, I am glad the Chief and Deputy Chief are there to keep us informed. While I understand Commissioner Bitso has copies of the proposals from both the union and the town, I have not received them and I would have appreciated that communication."

Chief Bucherati asked Commissioner Bitso if he had a copy of the latest proposal. Commissioner Bitso clarified that while it lacks the ground rules, he did receive the redlined packet sent two weeks ago. He noted that Annmarie forwarded it to him with a message stating, "Christopher Pelosi, you must have forgotten to include Dave Bitso on this proposal." Chief Bucherati explained that details from the meeting

fall under a confidentiality clause and cannot be shared at this time. He clarified that the packet in question was from the original email, not the meeting itself. Commissioner Bitso countered that it was from the first meeting. Chief Bucherati will get the Board an update, prompting Commissioner Bitso to affirm that he understands, has no intention of doing anything wrong and strongly believes in transparency and following the rules.

Commissioner Koskelowski shared his perspective based on his extensive history with the board. Currently in his 15th non-consecutive year, he recalled serving 12 or 13 years ago when Scott Barton was First Selectman. He noted that the only time he ever resigned from the board was in 2003, a step he had to take upon becoming First Selectman because he could not hold two elected positions simultaneously. So, he had to resign from one or the other and one was paid and the other one wasn't paid. He understands the position as a First Selectman of a town or a mirror and he understands there can be complications. He talked to Annmarie recently and she said that her and Christopher Pelosi are going to negotiate the contract on behalf of the town, and Kurt Miller's not going to be part of it. He was told today that he would only show up at the meetings if she couldn't make it. So, that's state statue and that's her choice what she wants to do. However, their duty as police commissioners is to ensure that officers have the highest quality safety equipment, including proper vehicles, which requires the town to step forward. Also, their job is to make sure that officers are treated fairly. Under the new administration, the morale is probably some of the best they have seen in years in this department and it isn't because of them. This has always been the primary focus of the police commission. They can be proud of the two excellent hires made recently. While officers earned significant income over the last 18 months due to extensive private duty hours on Route 67 and Bungay Road, that work has now concluded, meaning next year's earnings will adjust. Nonetheless, the department maintains strong confidence in its current leadership. They act as their voice and they simply want to know if contract negotiations will affect the officers in this department. They deserve to be kept informed. Annmarie mentioned she is not sure if she mentioned that they should hold an executive session where they could update us and Chief Bucherati agreed.

Commissioner Koskelowski also noted that they can provide updates on the negotiations so they can flag anything that might harm the officers or the town, especially since officer safety is their top priority. The officers now have bulletproof vests, new guns, and new rifles and the department is working to keep up with fleet maintenance, even though he personally feels the Tahoe's were oversized for this department. Regardless, he has always taken this role very seriously and understands their collective frustration. When they are told something, they expect it to happen. However, having been in that position as First Selectman, he knows you have to depend on others; you cannot do it all yourself. He hopes that Annmarie steps up, as she told him she is making the final decisions. If the police commission does not have a representative on the negotiating team, the final decision rests solely with Annmarie, not Kurt Miller or Christopher Pelosi. Commissioner Duke stated that the email makes the situation entirely clear. Commissioner Bitso agreed,

adding that two weeks ago, Annmarie explicitly stated she wanted nothing to do with the negotiating team and had no desire to sit in on the sessions. Commissioner Koskelowski noted that while the First Selectperson is not required to include a commissioner on the negotiating team, she expressed an intention to do so. Commissioner Koskelowski shared that he has spent 18 years advocating for commission representation during negotiations, but it has yet to happen, regardless of who holds the First Selectperson position. Commissioner Bitso suggested that this dynamic could change in the coming years.

Commissioner Koskelowski agreed but emphasized that his primary focus remains on supporting the department and moving it forward. He explained that to avoid secondhand information, he spoke directly with Annmarie to understand her perspective, though some of her statements did not align with past events. Expressing his frustration, Commissioner Koskelowski stated that if he cannot properly perform his duties or support the officers, he will resign. He recalled telling the First Selectperson that appointing him to the negotiating team would be a conflict of interest due to his strong pro-union stance, noting he would likely concede more to the union than she would prefer. Commissioner Koskelowski then asked Commissioner Duke if his work schedule would allow him to attend daytime negotiation sessions, to which Commissioner Duke responded that it would not. When Commissioner Koskelowski asked Commissioner LaPaglia if he could participate, Commissioner LaPaglia noted that he is still learning the ropes as a new member. Commissioner LaPaglia then asked what the benefits or drawbacks are to excluding a commission member from negotiations. Commissioner Duke concluded by stating that the commission does not know the reasoning either. Commissioner Koskelowski explained that the issue stems from daytime work commitments, noting that only he, Commissioner Duke and Commissioner LaPaglia are available during those hours. He expressed concern that neither he nor Commissioner Duke would be suitable candidates due to his own conservative stances. Furthermore, Commissioner Koskelowski highlighted a conflict of interest, explaining that during his time as a police officer on the 1980–1981 negotiating team, he introduced the current minimum shift requirement. Because he implemented this clause, he felt it would be unfair to both the town and the union for him to negotiate its removal. While he suggested Commissioner Duke and Commissioner Kelley as alternatives, he noted they would only be available if negotiations occurred at night. Ultimately, he declined the role, reiterating his pro-worker stance.

Following this, Commissioner Bitso called for further comments before closing the discussion. He announced that the board would not enter an executive session or prolong the matter further. Commissioner Bitso stated that the union deserved to move forward and should not be penalized for the town's mishandling of the situation.

5) **Executive Session to discuss legal action regarding labor negotiations**
   No Executive Session
6) **Possible Action on Executive Session**
   No Executive Session No Action Taken

7) **Adjournment**
Motion to adjourn meeting by Duke/LaPaglia
Motion Passed 4-0
Meeting adjourned at 6:50 p.m.