

COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY & LICENSES
NOVEMBER 13, 2018 AT 6:00 p.m.
COMMITTEE ROOM
WOBURN CITY HALL

Voting members present: Chairman Lindsay Higgins, Alderman Michael Concannon, Alderman Darlene Mercer-Bruen, Alderman Richard Gately and Alderman Joanne Campbell

Non-voting members present: Alderman Michael Anderson, Alderman Edward Tedesco and President Richard Haggerty. Absent: Alderman Mark Gaffney

Also present: Police Chief Robert Ferullo

Application from Wig Big, Inc., 5115 Inwood Drive, for a new livery license: Representing the petitioner was Gemmesa Mercado-Johnson, 5115 Inwood Drive, Woburn, MA. Ms. Mercado-Johnson said she is the owner of a livery service and she is enjoying the work. She said her parents track her from New York on a GPS app, for her safety. She says she takes fares only by appointment and does not do random pickups. Chairman Higgins said Ms. Mercado-Johnson has submitted all the required paperwork. Alderman Concannon asked how many vehicles are on the license. Chairman Higgins said there is one vehicle on the license. Alderman Concannon asked if the vehicle is registered in Woburn. Chairman Higgins said the vehicle is registered in Woburn. Alderman Gately asked if Ms. Mercado-Johnson is renting a business office. Ms. Mercado-Johnson said she will be running the business out of her residence. Alderman Concannon asked how long Ms. Mercado-Johnson has been in the livery business. Ms. Mercado-Johnson said she has been in business since September. Motion made by Alderman Concannon and seconded by Alderman Campbell that the application for a new livery license “ought to pass;” approved, 5-0.

Police Chief Robert Ferullo: Chairman Higgins said Chief Ferullo is retiring shortly and she thought there would be a good opportunity for the City Council to thank him for his service to the city. Chief Ferullo said the department recently conducted two undercover buys at vape shops in the city and nothing illegal was sold. Alderman Gately said he is still getting complaints about commercial vehicles using Blueberry Hill Road. Chief Ferullo said the effort to implement trucking restrictions is moving forward and the city has hired a consultant who is evaluating the situation. He said truckers tend to rely on the Waze GPS app, which usually takes them off Route 128 and onto residential roads. He said the town of Wrentham is having similar problems and is set to implement road blocks on Black Friday to prevent vehicles from using residential streets to access the outlet mall in that community. Alderman Gately said he had to stop a truck from going up Garfield Avenue. Alderman Mercer-Bruen said the Woburn PD is taking good care of East Woburn. Chairman Higgins asked about the status of the search for a new police chief. Chief Ferullo said he would prefer to defer comment about his successor to Mayor Scott Galvin and the city’s Human Resources Dept. Alderman Gately asked about the status of a man involved in a serious vehicular accident on Monday at the intersection of Van Norden Road and School Street in North Woburn. Chief Ferullo said the victim is still alive. He attributed the accident to vicious solar glare, which he himself experienced arriving at the scene of the accident. He said the victim was in serious condition but is still alive and being treated at a local hospital. Chief Ferullo said

there was another tragedy at Horn Pond when a man fell to the ground and fractured his back. He complimented rescue crews for their response. Alderman Campbell asked Chief Ferullo for his opinion on the development of the Commerce Way area and the Woburn Mall. Chief Ferullo said those areas have traditionally been commercial and industrial and the only crime the Woburn PD has to worry about after 10 p.m. is the occasional car break. He said adding a residential component to the area will bring other types of crime. He said public safety and public works will have to keep up with development. Alderman Mercer-Bruen said an influx of residents who require services needs to be mitigated. Chief Ferullo said five or six years ago, there were few issues at Inwood Park, but he estimated police now make 8-10 trips there per week. He said he is concerned about what types of establishments are going to go in there. He said he is also concerned about the influx of massage therapy businesses in the downtown area. He said he thinks massage therapy may present issues for the city. Alderman Mercer-Bruen asked if the massage therapy businesses may not have accurately represented themselves when they appeared before the City Council for special permits. Chief Ferullo said this is something he would prefer to have officers from the city's vice/narcotics unit discuss in executive session. He said all he would say publicly at this point is he believes the complexion of downtown is changing, whereas those types of illicit activities were confined to other parts of the city. He said there are activities at the Red Roof Inn that are essentially going unregulated, though the officials at the Red Roof Inn continue to be cooperative. He said it was easier to track vice activities when people were posting on Backpages.com, but since the website has undertaken stricter controls of its content, it is more difficult for police to find. He said in general the department is doing more policing than community policing than it was seven years ago, when he was promoted to chief, and he would like to see more officers involved in the community. Alderman Concannon asked Chief Ferullo for his opinion about the hiring of a deputy chief. Chief Ferullo said he is absolutely in favor. He said there is a need for an operations supervisor and someone who will aggressively pursue grants. He said the chief's time is spent better as an administrator. He said the department needs to police smarter, not harder. President Haggerty said one of the issues involved with hiring a deputy fire chief was keeping the position out of the union. For a variety of reasons. Chief Ferullo said he believes a deputy police chief ought to be kept out of the union. President Haggerty said the City Council lost that battle with the hiring of the deputy fire chief. Chief Ferullo said it would be beneficial to have some more oversight on paperwork. He said in the past the department wrote on index cards and threw them in a file, but there is a lot more paperwork required these days, which he noted is an unfunded mandate that requires hours and hours of work. He said the Woburn PD needs to interact with the schools when the students are at a younger age, which requires more personnel. He said police need to build relationships with children and their parents, and in order to do that, more presence on the streets is required. He said the department currently employs just two school resources officers, one at the high school and the other at the middle schools. He said they also split duties at the elementary schools. He said SRO Edward Fumicello is going non-stop. He said SRO Anthony Imperioso is doing a lot more enforcement than the position is designed for. President Haggerty asked if there were any other recommendations of the management study conducted several years ago that still need to be implemented. Chief Ferullo said there is still a need to put more supervisory officers on the street. He said he has reluctantly considered shutting down the traffic division so those officers can bolster the patrol force. Alderman Campbell said the traffic division's work has been valuable to the city. Alderman Mercer-Bruen said eliminating the traffic division would be awful. Chief Ferullo said the department has a ¾-time domestic violence advocate and substance

abuse coordinator. He said he believes the department has to spend more time looking at staffing. He said it has been an honor and a privilege to work with the City Council. President Haggerty asked about the status of police department facilities. Chief Ferullo said the department recently acquired a new custodian, who he said is a superstar. He said the station is doing exceptionally well for a building that is 30 years old. He said there needs to be more accommodation for parking behind the station, as the department does wind up with cars that are impounded through drug-related forfeitures. Chief Ferullo said that though he is retiring, he is not going very far.

Motion made to adjourn by Alderman Concannon and seconded by Alderman Campbell; approved, 5-0. Chairman Higgins adjourned the meeting at 6:23 p.m.

A TRUE RECORD ATTEST

Gordon Vincent
Clerk of Committees