

## **Minutes of the WPCNA Meeting: 09/12/18**

Education House, 5 Homeside Lane

Guest Speaker – Captain Joseph Castelli,  
White Plains Department of Public Safety  
Criminal Investigations Division Commander

### WPCNA Board Members attending:

Bill Brady	Co-President
Chris Price	Co-Vice President
Ruthmarie Hicks	Recording Secretary

### WPCNA Board Members not in attendance:

Andrew Custodio	Co-President
Ron Palmer	Co-Vice President
Tom Osbeck	Treasurer

Bill Brady brought the meeting to order and introduced Captain Joseph Castelli, a 24-year veteran of the White Plains Police Department. He is currently the Criminal Investigations Division Commander.

### **Registration of private surveillance equipment to help solve local crimes:**

Captain Castelli:

The police department is trying to push the use of private video surveillance equipment to help solve local crimes.

An example:

3 years ago, the Hillair neighborhood had a lot of burglaries. In one instance, a girl was home alone and the doorbell rang. She did not answer the door, but video surveillance equipment allowed the police to get a good look at the area surrounding the home. As a result, they were able to ID the car involved through its plate numbers. Consulting with New Rochelle and Greenburgh authorities, The White Plains police were able to confirm that this car had been sighted in several burglaries beyond White Plains.

In another example, there was a sexual assault near the train station in November of 2017. It took a very long time, but they were able to trace the suspect through a security video that was operating that night.

White Plains is now trying to take advantage of private surveillance equipment. The police are asking for local citizens to share their video feed if there is a crime in the immediate area.

Residents and businesses may voluntarily register the location of their systems with the police department in order to help investigate local crime. There is, of course, no cost to register your equipment and the Police Department would only contact you if there were an incident within range of your cameras. The police might request to view or copy the images to assist in their investigation. The White Plains Police ***will not*** have remote or live access to your system. They will only access your feed with your specific consent.

Residents who register their equipment, can ask the police to come out and help assess individual needs with respect to surveillance and lighting.

This is a voluntary program and residents can cancel their participation at any time.

Chris Price asked if the yearly fee for security equipment (\$50) would be waived for homeowners who participate in the program.

Captain Castelli responded that such a program was not in existence. But he would bring up the idea.

Question: Could cameras be permanently mounted at the entrance of Hillair Circle to monitor traffic in and out?

Captain Castelli responded that care must be taken regarding random placement of cameras. However, the speed signs that are placed around town to slow down traffic actually have a plate reading feature. Sometimes these speed signs are put up in areas where there is an increase in burglaries as a subtle way to track traffic.

During the Hillair burglaries, it was noted that the burglaries extended to Rose and Briga Ln. across Mamaroneck Ave. These neighborhoods are near the Hutch and I-95. These burglars wanted to hit a limited area and disappear quickly.

There is a general movement away from violent crime. Most criminals are looking for quick burglaries or scams.

There have been a lot of auto break-ins. So always lock your car and never leave the keys!

Anne-Marie Encarnacao asked why the police blotter was no longer accessible. Captain Castelli didn't know that we had one online and would look into that issue.

Question: Why aren't people in a specific neighborhood informed of crimes in the area? Captain Castelli said that there are privacy issues where the victims don't want their home to be identified as the home broken into etc.

Milagros Lecuona asked about breaking and entering through garage doors. Captain Castelli mentioned that this was fairly easy for a burglar. The codes for most automatic door openers are pretty standard. Burglars can get standard codes and open the doors that way. If the door to the home was not locked in the garage, there are no locks to get around.

### **Scam Proliferation:**

#### **These scams are phone or online scams...**

Captain Castelli on modern-day scams...

- Pay us money or you will be prosecuted scam.
- Relative in a serious accident scam
- The grandparents scam (your grandchild has been arrested and needs \$5000 immediately)
- The ConEdison is about to turn off your electricity scam.

Almost all of these are either recordings or the person has a foreign accent. They also want you to pay by a green dot card, Walmart/Target gift card, an iTunes card or MoneyGram.

This is where common sense comes in. No legitimate company is going to ask you to pay in this manner.

These scams can also infiltrate a businesses email.

Any suspicious calls can be reported to the White Plains Police 914-422-6111.

#### **The mailbox scam...**

Regular mailboxes are the targets of a Phishing scam:

Using a Gatorade bottle with glue, they pull out individual pieces of mail. They steal checks and wash them and write checks for large sums and cash them. New mailboxes have been created to make this harder, but they too are being broken into.

One of the big problem is needing a subpoena to find out where the check was cashed. This situation takes a long time to sort out.

Some criminals are engaging postal employees. There are only 5 keys that open postal boxes in Westchester. With the help of employees, burglars were emptying mailboxes postal workers keys. Apparently, the postal worker was offered large sums of money for this service. Checks have been stolen in this

way from the Gedney and Fisher stations. This can also happen at a big collection center (we have one on Westchester Ave).

Unfortunately, the separation of prosecution makes things harder. If a postal employee that is the criminal, the issue is managed by the Postal Inspector General. If it is a civilian crime, the Postal Inspector Service is the agency in charge. When both are involved, they have to coordinate their efforts.

The banks are saying that this is happening so much that they are no longer charging to cancel the checks.

Email for Captain Joseph Castelli – [jcastelli@whiteplainsny.gov](mailto:jcastelli@whiteplainsny.gov)

The meeting was adjourned with the reminder that County Executive George Latimer is to be the guest next month.