

**GLASTONBURY TOWN COUNCIL
SPECIAL MEETING/PUBLIC FORUM MINUTES
THURSDAY, JULY 22, 2021**

The Glastonbury Town Council with Town Manager, Richard J. Johnson, in attendance, held a Special Meeting/Public Forum at 6:30 p.m. in the Riverfront Community Center at 300 Welles Street. The video was broadcast in real time and via a live video stream.

1. Roll Call.

Council Members

Mr. Thomas P. Gullotta, Chairman
Mr. Lawrence Niland, Vice Chairman
Ms. Deborah A. Carroll
Mr. White Osgood {excused}
Dr. Stewart Beckett III
Ms. Mary LaChance
Mr. Kurt P. Cavanaugh
Mr. Jacob McChesney
Ms. Lillian Tanski

a. Pledge of Allegiance

Led by Representative Jill Barry

2. Special Business as contained in the Call

a. Welcome and Introductions

• Town Council Chairman Thomas Gullotta

Mr. Gullotta welcomed everyone to the forum to discuss the matter of rising juvenile crime being committed in Glastonbury and across the state, which he called a communal “we” issue, not a “me” or “I” issue. He then explained the format of how the public forum will proceed.

• Town Manager Richard J. Johnson

Mr. Johnson provided an overview of some of the factors that led to this forum. While this meeting is being held in Glastonbury, many of the same issues are experienced throughout the state. Over recent months, Glastonbury has experienced an uptick in thefts of and from motor vehicles, and in most cases, these crimes are committed by juveniles. The crimes occur at all times of day, and weapons have been displayed. A couple weeks ago, shots were fired at a neighbor. There have been motor vehicle accidents with people fleeing. The police face challenges when encountering these juveniles, many of whom act with impunity because they know that there are very few consequences for their actions. He stated that a reasonableness test should be met. For example, while delivering groceries from one’s car to the kitchen, their car should not be stolen.

He stated that they have heard anger, fear, and concern from Glastonbury. Safe Streets Glastonbury and neighborhood watch programs have been established. Recognizing that this issue goes far beyond Glastonbury, they reached out to surrounding communities. Police Chief Porter has established a local task force dedicated to this issue and is working with other communities and police chiefs throughout the country, while also updating crime watch on the Town website and engaging in educational outreach efforts. Mr. Johnson concluded by stating that Glastonbury needs help from the state legislature.

b. Presentation and Comments

• Chief Patrick Ridenhour – CT Police Chiefs Association (CPCA)

Chief Ridenhour noted that, on Father’s Day in Danbury, there was a stolen vehicle on one side of town and a drive-by shooting on the other side of town. Both involved juveniles. He hopes to work on this issue together with Glastonbury.

• Attorney Richard J. Colangelo, Jr. – Chief State’s Attorney

Attorney Colangelo stated that their primary purpose is to listen and gather some ideas on what they can do with the criminal justice system. The public defenders here are all a team on this. As a parent, he seeks to find out why his children behave the way they do. He extends that approach to juvenile offenders. Instead of asking, “What is wrong with them?” he proposed asking, “But what happened?” These children need to be given the tools and skills to succeed, to prevent them from becoming adult criminals. What we are doing as a society is not working, and that is what is needed, he concluded.

• Attorney Susan Hamilton – Director of Delinquency Defense and Child Protection, Connecticut Division of Public Defender Services

Attorney Hamilton would like to hear from everyone tonight on what they see as possible solutions. If legislative reform is a potential solution, they should also talk about what is currently allowed. She suggested looking at the existing tools: how they are working and how (and where) they are not. The goals should be to decrease recidivism and promote better outcomes. Those two things seem to be discussed as an either/or, but they are not mutually exclusive goals. Everyone should be creative and thoughtful about what is currently working and how the system can do better.

• State Legislators

• Representative Jill Barry

Rep. Barry thanked residents for their advocacy and concern for this amazing town. She has been dedicated to this problem before it became an all-hands-on deck problem. She also acknowledged that this is not just a Glastonbury problem, but they have reached the point where residents do not feel safe in their homes or yards. As a resident and as a parent, she too is scared to be alone in her house, even during the day. Fortunately, she has a voice in Hartford. In recent

months, there has been a lot of finger-pointing, but all parties have been at the table, warning that things would escalate to this point. Where are the consequences for the offenders? There are so many times she can be let down again and again by most legislators who do not take this problem seriously. She proposed the following solutions:

1. Towns and police departments should be provided access to juvenile criminal background data. She pointed out that there is talk for support for addressing this issue, which she defined as an administrative fix, not a legislative one.
2. There should be flexibility in how long juveniles can and should be detained. Police should be able to hold juveniles, if it is in the public interest, and parents should have some say, if they ask the officer to hold them longer.
3. The transfer of serious juvenile offenders to criminal court.
4. Repeat offenders should be subject to house arrest, with consistent drug and alcohol testing, and consequences for failure to comply.

Recently, the Town Council wrote a letter to Governor Lamont, detailing the rise in crime in town. She then received a call from the Governor, who later announced that \$5 million will be allotted towards crime prevention. Glastonbury will receive a grant to establish a task force, which the town has already initiated. While she stated that this is not a suburban problem, their voices are the largest right now. She asked, who is speaking up for the victims in the cities? Their legislators are failing them, with their silence.

- **Representative Jason Doucette**

Rep. Doucette stated that the two specific incidents in Glastonbury over the past month have caught the attention of some of their colleagues in Hartford. This is the #1 issue right now, and they need action now. There are bipartisan discussions happening on the judicial level, trying to find the solution. They need more pre-adjudication intervention for juveniles, especially for repeat offenders. Some of those tools are available now, but they are not being utilized to their greatest degree. Making arrest history available to other towns should also happen. He agreed with Rep. Barry that this is an administrative change which can happen quickly. To make a special session happen, this needs to be addressed as a statewide problem.

- **Senator Steve Cassano**

Sen. Cassano stated that the criminals are foolish, not stupid. They started in Marlborough and Hebron last year, which do not have police departments. They got bold and organized enough to do what they are doing in Glastonbury today. The purpose of the Second Chance bill has been misconstrued. It was meant to give a second chance to repentant offenders who made a dumb mistake, not repeat offenders who commit serious, violent crimes. He encouraged residents to put their own safety first. Should their home be targeted at night, he asked residents to call the police, to turn on their lights, and to let it subside. When there is organized activity to stop them, they will leave and go elsewhere, he concluded.

• Public Comments

Kerry Wood, State Representative of New Britain: Since 2019, law enforcement has alerted them that this issue was escalating. Their goal was to make sure that it did not get to this point. They have put forward good legislation, which failed on the House floor. There is a legislative group looking at various options. She looks forward to having a special session to get this done.

Susan Bransfield, First Selectwoman of Portland: The solidarity shown between communities tonight is important. She acknowledged that this is a very complicated problem, but they must emphasize the good will that all are entitled to a good life. Their community has also been affected by these crimes. The night the Glastonbury resident was shot at, Portland also had vehicles that were broken into. Very often, it is the same suspect(s). Between January 2020 and July 2021, they had 14 stolen motor vehicles and 100 larcenies from motor vehicles, which are very large numbers for a small town like Portland.

Steve Stephanou, Acting General Manager of Manchester: The Manchester Town Council passed a resolution to address the issue of juvenile crime in a local subcommittee, but he stressed that the solution requires a regional response. He thanked Glastonbury for tonight's forum.

Anthony Palombizio, Police Captain of Manchester: No town in Connecticut is free of these issues. Getting shot at is very traumatic for a resident who does not have trauma training, like police officers do. He described an experience of a juvenile who nearly crashed his car into a resident and the police could not do anything to prevent it, even as they saw it happening. He read a statement from the Manchester Police Department and voiced his officers' concerns. There is a lot of frustration on the constraints and scrutiny put on officers who cannot provide safety to the same citizens they swore to protect.

Lisa Marotta, Mayor of Rocky Hill: At the local level, Rocky Hill has been working very hard for the past 16 months. They instituted a three-pronged approach: working with the state, passing a local resolution regarding juvenile justice, and funding additional police officers at the expense of taxpayers. Their police officers are CALEA accredited and use DNA swabbing, which very few police departments can do. She concluded by stating that they are doing their part but will not rest until state lawmakers do their job to find solutions.

Ed Charamut, Deputy Mayor of Rocky Hill: In the Northeast, many police departments are third party accredited. Everyone is investing in technology, but the problem is repeat offenders and the legislative process letting them down. Rocky Hill also made a resolution regarding this issue.

Jeffrey Levine, Town Councilman of Rocky Hill: They are frustrated by the lack of movement from state legislators. This issue needs to be addressed before it gets to the point where people lose their lives or victims take matters into their own hands.

Loretta Rivers of 16 Knox Lane in Glastonbury, lives in an apartment complex within a mile of the woman who was shot at on Talcott Road. Her neighbor had her car stolen the night before that. Two weeks prior, her new car was vandalized. She has about \$1000-\$1200 in damages. She stated that condominium/apartment management should notify tenants when these crimes happen and use better lighting and install cameras on site.

Mark Anderson of 2696 Hebron Avenue, is an 18-year resident of Glastonbury. He and his wife now both have pistol permits. He stated that these offenders are hardened criminals. Legislators who do not do anything should be voted out. They need to support the police.

Robert Clark of 160 Cider Mill Road, questioned why everyone is here tonight. They asked for this forum last year and the year before that. They have voted in politicians weak on crime who tell them that adjudication and programs will work for juvenile delinquents and career criminals. It is time to start voting with their heads, not political association.

Janet Zook of 222 Williams Street, is overwhelmed by what she has heard today. She had no idea the problem was this bad. She came in to support the Glastonbury Police Department.

Lori Andrada of 173 Long Hill Drive, is an 18-year resident of Glastonbury. Measures should be put in place, including a committee to investigate the factors to address these crimes. They also need to fix and rebuild their restorative justice system, mental health services, DCF, and other related agencies. There is a reason why children are acting in these ways. As a teacher, a parent, and a believer in a faith community, she believes that they should be viewed as “our” children. She asked, what resources do they need and what changes need to be made in the existing systems? She supports Rocky Hill’s accountability checks. She stated that they need to think of the rights of the victims, as well as the offenders.

Fran Carino, Former State Chief Juvenile Prosecutor, served as a prosecutor in the juvenile justice system for over 40 years. He explained that the vast majority in the juvenile criminal system are good children, but there is a small group of hardcore offenders who they need to concentrate on. He does not advise revising the whole juvenile justice system simply to address the 10% who are hardcore offenders. He noted two recent legislative changes which contributed to this escalating problem: the police used to be able to detain children, but now, they need a judge’s permission to do so; while detention is not an answer, it is an immediate consequence.

The other change was the sentencing procedure, which reduced the maximum length of probation to 30 months.

Dennis O'Connor of 597 Griswold Street, is a retired police officer. The death of the New Britain jogger was traumatic for him. He asked why the offender, who had 11 priors, was even out. He also asked why the police do not use LPRs (license plate readers)? They should be set up in Glastonbury. He asked why there is no reverse 911 call and the daily blotter on the police website is not updated. Politicians defunded police. It is time for changes, he concluded.

There was a short break for questions:

Q: Why would additional police presence not be a deterrent?

A: **Glastonbury Police Chief Porter**, explained that the issue of staffing has come up. While it is obvious that more officers on the street means higher likelihood of preventing or intercepting some of these crimes, the money is better spent on specialized units which can address the issue directly, such as the newly established task force. It is a more efficient use of resources. Glastonbury is a large town with lots of mileage to cover. Juveniles are no longer afraid of getting caught by the police. There seems to be a lack of concern for their own safety and for the safety of their victims. He noted that police chiefs have been warning about this for years. He asked that the legislature include the police in their conversations and take their expertise seriously.

Q: Is there actually a juvenile felony act in the works? (From Talk Radio)

A: Mr. Gullotta: It is in the works in New York State, not in Connecticut.

• **Comments by Glastonbury Town Council**

Mr. Niland has worked for over 30 years in the West Hartford Police Department. They need to stop thinking of stolen vehicles as just property theft, and cops must be allowed to use stop signals. Parents must be given the tools they need to deal with their children. An information sharing system available to all police departments must include the sharing of juvenile information. They should also bring back the policy that 16- and 17-year-olds can be detained for longer than 6 hours, with some extended time for repeat offenders. Officers should be able to write custody orders again. While putting children in jail is problematic, right now, there are no consequences. They cannot rid all crime, but they have to mitigate the problem because residents should not have to live in fear.

Dr. Beckett fears that there will be another fatality by Labor Day, in some town. These actions are far beyond any juvenile thoughtless crime. This is a small group of very dangerous people. If they are going to be physically assaulting people with antisocial behavior, they need to be removed from society.

Mr. Cavanaugh stated that this is a result of the breakdown of the nuclear family. People must be stronger at home, to teach their children how to act in public. The legislature needs to come together. Having to live with “don’t turn your lights on at night” is no way to live. The Second Chance Society legislation had unintended consequences, which they are witnessing right now.

Ms. Carroll believes that what is needed is legislation, access to a juvenile database, and a policy for pursuit. Law enforcement must be given the tools to do their jobs. She stressed that this is not a partisan issue. She thanked Rep. Barry for her solution-based approach. She also noted that it is very difficult for her own children, who abide by rules in her home, to wrap their heads around how other children go free for stealing cars and shooting at people. She urged the need for a special session to draft specific legislation before the conversation gets much darker.

Mr. McChesney has worked as a prosecutor. The Second Chance Society lessened confidence in prosecutorial discretion. They should put faith in prosecutors to make decisions on a case-by-case basis. The way to get action is to express very clearly to all parties involved that they need to act. There are things on the table that can be done immediately on the Governor’s level. He urged residents to write to legislative leadership and to Governor Lamont, and to attend other meetings to make it clear that this is a state-wide issue.

Ms. Tanski stated that this problem impacts everyone. They do not need to chase crime outside of their borders. The state needs real comprehensive reform. She agreed with Ms. Carroll and Rep. Barry that this is a non-partisan concern. She asked, what is the stone wall that our legislators are hitting in Hartford? That is a partisan problem. She urged the state legislators here to tell their leadership that they need to address this issue, or they will be held accountable. In town, they have been searching for scotch tape measures because they know this problem should not escalate any further.

Ms. LaChance thanked Safe Streets CT for putting the pressure on. In the Glastonbury she grew up in, residents did not even lock their doors. It is not the same town anymore. Car thefts have gone up only 9% across the US, but 40% in Connecticut. They need to call a special session. She thanked officers who are on the front lines of this issue. Instead of handcuffing the police, they need to allow the police to handcuff the people who are committing these crimes.

Return to public comments

Dr. Setoria Jackson of 95 Woodbridge Road, stated that her house is directly across from the woman who was shot at on Talcott Road. As a 20-year resident, she loves living in Glastonbury. Children are not doing these crimes on their own. There are adults behind these crimes who also need to be held accountable. She supports prevention measures, such as flagging when a child skips out on school, and the enforcement of existing laws and stronger laws. However, she cautioned against racial profiling in their neighborhood watches. She also supports the police.

Tim Callahan of 165 Grindle Brook Road, shared that, last month, five teenagers smashed up his car. The experience really scared him. He is putting a face to this issue. He asked why they even have a town council if they cannot do anything. The Council needs to work with state legislators. He noted that two of his five offenders are 18 years old. He does not know if that makes them juveniles or not. One of them was let out that night. Victims should have equal rights. He does not feel the urgency from the politicians in the room tonight. The next time they have a council meeting, somebody will be dead. If the criminals had killed him, he would not have had a second chance.

Julie Reed, is a Glastonbury resident who works with children who need direction and purpose in their lives. She suggested that when lawmakers write a crime bill, they pretend that these are their own children. There must be a tailored approach to this issue. She shared that her childhood was similar to the circumstances experienced by many of these underprivileged youths. However, she did not commit crimes. The reason for that, she attributes to the teachers and neighbors who helped her. This is an environmental problem, and their community needs to help these children. She suggested a program to help child offenders become productive members of society.

Fran Nikides from Wethersfield, has contacted the Governor and others at the state on this issue and received no response. Raise the Age laws are inappropriate in dealing with repeat offenders. They should be able to have a centralized database. She asked why there is a secrecy shrouding these repeat offenders, and why expectations for them are so low? She stated that by the time one is 12 years old, they know right from wrong. If things continue down the current path, there will be thugs and gangs in our society, she warned.

Chris Haaf of 39 Strickland Street, is a Republican but does not vote along party lines. He voted for Rep. Barry, who is a Democrat, because of her actions on this issue. He appreciates the comments made by the Council tonight, and he thanked Safe Streets for educating him on what is going on. He also thanked the police for being on the front line of this issue.

Rich Kohler, Owner of Elite Karate in Glastonbury, trains women and domestic abuse and invasion victims in self-defense, not a victim mentality. He has seen the escalation of these crimes, which he called ‘learned behavior’. These laws have made us soft targets, he stated.

Dale Ethier of 537 Woodland Street, witnessed the accident on Route 17 with a stolen vehicle hitting a gentleman. He asked lawmakers to imagine, what if that was their husband? People are here because they are the first to be taxed and the last to be considered. He noted that he has reached out to all the officers of all the legislators in this room and did not receive a single response.

James Stanley of 88 Sherman Road, stated that the people elected the politicians in the room tonight, who have a responsibility to represent their constituents. State legislators and the Governor are more interested in passing legislation to legalize marijuana and online gambling rather than this safety issue, he concluded.

Kristin Bourbeau of 905 Tryon Street, started Safe Streets Glastonbury, which has grown to Safe Streets CT. They need more volunteers. She asked those interested to send an email to safestreetglastonbury@gmail.com or safestreetstct@gmail.com to help grow their group. She stated that the public does not understand how the police’s hands are tied. They are unable to hold the juveniles. She urged the creation of a panel of government representatives and residents who will meet continuously until this problem is solved. She also requests a piece of legislation called Henryk’s Law, in honor of the jogger who was killed in New Britain. She asked Glastonbury Police to put more miles on their cars, not just sit in parking lots.

John Porriello of 567 Main Street, stated that catch and release does not work. They need mandatory jail time for repeat offenders and first-time car thefts, regardless of the age, and for illegal gun possession. They do not need any more studies.

Dean Chamberland of East Hartford, started a crime watch group five years ago. These children need to be reformed in one way or another. They need more numbers to stand up against this issue. East Hartford is having a meeting on Wednesday night. Their state representatives will be there, as well. He invited Glastonbury residents to attend, too.

Jennifer Jennings of 34 Cranesbill Drive, noted that her husband is a police officer. In his last 10-hour shift, the same child was arrested twice in Hartford. Now, that offender can come to Glastonbury and their officers will not have any record of how dangerous that criminal is. She asked what they are doing to protect officers? She also urged residents to look at how their legislators voted regarding the police accountability act.

Paul Richard, is a new resident who does not like what is happening in town. The juveniles have no fear of the police, so they cannot effectively do their job. There need to be consequences. After the first offense, the offenders should be tried as adults. They are seasoned repeat offenders who know what they are doing. Within reason, they do deserve a second chance, but not all the time. He noted that Rep. Barry is the only politician tonight who has presented a plan. The rest are not doing their jobs as legislators.

Miriam Theroux, Town Councilwoman of Rocky Hill, thanked Glastonbury for holding this forum. She also noted that several bills were proposed, but many of them died on the House floor. She is confident that there will be a special session with a good bill. She will file bills and testimonies supporting those bills. She encourages all residents to follow bills, testimonies, and recommendations. She is hopeful that they will get better results this time around.

Patti Beckett of 295 Dayton Road, has been a Glastonbury resident for over 50 years. While she acknowledged that everyone tonight has a common goal, instead of punishment, children should be offered rewards. They do not come out of detention centers having learned a lot. Put in adult prisons, they come out as better criminals. Adults are recruiting these children who come from mostly underprivileged backgrounds. She supports using the database that Rep. Barry suggested, and the idea of repeat offenders going into a structured mandatory program which offers services such as anger management, community building, counseling, therapy, and addiction rehabilitation classes. At the end of the two-year program, they will come out as better citizens. This is a much more positive approach than just putting them in jail, she concluded.

Kathy Labranche, stated that Grand Theft Auto is no longer just a video game. They need legislators and the police to protect residents. It appears that just listening to and proposing things is not protecting them. She supports the specialized police initiative.

Brian Comerford of 89 Stancliff Road: After listening to Sen. Cassano's tips on public safety and how residents should avoid being victims of crime, he felt compelled to say something. Dr. Beckett is right. Somebody is going to die soon. Citizens will fire back, and it will get bad. He stated that they must change the law to avoid getting to that point. He praised Glastonbury Police and suggested that state troopers bolster local police by adding additional patrols in the towns being victimized.

Jim Zeller of 210 Woodland Street, recently retired after 43 years in law enforcement. He noted that Mr. Carino is very well versed in juvenile law, so his expertise should be taken seriously. He also pointed out that Connecticut is fortunate to have a single repository for getting records. Many other states do not have this. He stated that the issue is that the judicial branch does not share the information that is available with the police. 20 years ago, he and Mr. Carino first requested access to juvenile records without having to go through the court system. That still

has not happened. He asked, what is their primary concern: public safety or rehabilitation? One cannot rehabilitate what they cannot find because they released it back out onto the street.

Anna Dubiel from Rocky Hill, shared that on June 29, she lost her friend Henryk Gudelski, the jogger in New Britain, because he got hit by someone who was arrested 13 times in 3 years. Mr. Gudelski did everything correctly. As a fellow runner, she is scared to run, even on the sidewalk, which is unacceptable. She demanded to know why the offender was let out onto the street after so many priors.

Attorney Colangelo, responded, explaining that the prosecutors in Hartford did everything they could with the existing policies in place, but he does not know the details of why he was let out.

Bianca Stanescu of 27 Dutton Place Way, voiced frustration at politicians passing the buck for the last 10 years while things have taken a turn for the worse. They live in a society where there are no consequences for actions. The fight against the family unit has been running rampant. She is against the normalization and proliferation of the single parent home, which she feels has contributed to a stark rise in crime. They need to instill value in children and teach them hard work, such as through mandated community service.

Rich Larose of 129 Belltown Road, has been a resident for 35 years. He spoke directly to the legislators in attendance, stating that they have heard various aspects of the problem tonight. It took the government just a couple of weeks to shut the entire state down over a virus. He would think that with children out stealing cars and shooting at houses, the sense of urgency would be much greater. This is a matter of will. He hopes that this is not the end of the dialogue, and that Rep. Barry is able to get some of her initiatives through.

The forum adjourned at 9:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lilly Torosyan

Lilly Torosyan
Recording Clerk

Thomas Gullotta
Chairman