

**TOWN COUNCIL MINUTES
BUDGET/MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE**

May 27, 2020, Wednesday

Via Zoom 838 6768 0083

Present: Michael Molisse, Chairman
Jane Hackett, Vice Chairman
Pascale Burga, Councilor
Christopher Heffernan, Councilor
Maureen Kiely, Councilor

Also Present: Richard Swanson, Town Auditor
Kathy Deree, Town Clerk
Richard Fuller, Chief of Police
Dave Phillips, WPD
Joe Comperchio, WPD
Keith Stark, Chief of Fire Department

Recording Secretary: Mary Barker

Chair Molisse called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM. The Town Clerk called the roll, Councilor Hackett-present, Councilor Burga-present, Councilor Heffernan-present, Councilor Kiely-present, Chair Molisse-present--with all members present.

20 055 L-Police Department

This measure was referred to the Budget/Management Committee on April 27, 2020. Chief Fuller was asked to provide a brief overview of the department. Questions were crafted by the Town Auditor and written responses were provided in advance to the committee.

Chief Fuller noted that the department has had a few staff test positive for the COVID-19 virus. This is the first time in his history that he can recall the front door of the station being closed to the public for drop in service.

Auditor Swanson went through his questions and the chief provided responses. There are 4 unfilled positions at this time. The department is operating with 4 vacancies; 2 members are fulfilling military duty and 2 are in the academy. They are holding their own. Labor contracts status- superior officers contract expires in June; the other expired last June and negotiations are in process. All positions are paid from the operating budget. He is unsure of grants – one is a month-to-month. A lot of overtime expense is a result of the pandemic, that may be reimbursed under the CARES Act.

The department is over projections for uniform patrol due to forced overtime, potential exposure coverage, and the cost of two current homicide investigations.

Vacancies- one is the result of a termination; the others are retirement. Positions won't be filled at this time because of the hiring freeze.

Overtime training- this is for mandated in-service training. Charges include overtime for the training, and overtime for coverage while members train.

Traffic unit reduced by 1 and he is planning to trade in 2 cycles. 6 Patrolmen are assigned to traffic. Cycles last a while when maintained well.

He noted that the budget for traffic signals was moved to the Asset Management line.

Investigations- there is a misalignment in the organizational chart. Manpower remains the same from FY18 through FY21.

Dispatch Overtime- one member tested positive for COVID-19 and it took some time to recuperate until she tested negative.

Radio repair – the department is looking to purchase a new system, but will still use existing units for certain things. This line is also used for repairs of the equipment.

20 071-Free Cash for Police and Fire Department Radios

This measure was referred to the Budget/Management Committee on April 27, 2020. Captain Comperchio provided information and explained there are 2 contracts. One is for infrastructure for PD, FD and EMS. The old system is based on microwaves, and the links between systems are compromised.

This measure is requesting purchase of mobile radios. The current contract will expire in June of this year. This will be used to dispatch radio consoles, remove all legacy equipment and amend to extend by 6 months for removal. Current mobiles are outdated; the purchase will enhance the system and the replacement is a digital simulcast system.

Auditor Swanson reported that he reviewed MUNIS and the funds are adequate for the request.

Chair Molisse thanked the department for managing to do the work they have with the resources available at this time.

20 055 M- Fire Department

This measure was referred to the Budget/Management Committee on April 27, 2020. Chief Stark provided an update- 4 new members were hired with a SAFER grant; then COVID hit, so the department decided to run its own training academy. Within the next few weeks they will be ready to test and get on the trucks. There were some fires the last few weeks, but without injuries. The department is dealing with 6 FF who tested positive and one whose tests keep coming back positive. They are cleaning every day and keeping up with disinfecting protocols.

Manpower- they are in the midst of contract negotiations that will resume soon. The complement is 95 firefighters, including the 4 who were hired – FY 21 will reflect the 99 complement with no changes.

The 1.4% higher budget includes all previously negotiated and non-union salaries at FY 20 rates.

Grants- the town applied for several- and they are tracking all expenses.

SAFER is in effect for FY21- the federal government pays 75% of salary for first 2 years then there is a 35/65 split in the third and final year.

FY19 training grant- members trained all in incident command systems in 3 parts. It's a younger department; this allows for everyone on the same ground.

Senior Safe program- safety skills training. If the state funds, it will continue.

Clothing allowance – this was moved to the administration line because it administers the funds.

Sick incentive, out of grade- this will be moved to track it for transparency.

Out of grade pay only applies for management.

Fire suppression rescue- 3 station houses, 3 engines and a ladder; Station 2 houses the management team.

A graph was provided listing the equipment and ages. DPW maintains the equipment in order to maintain the fleet. Sometimes equipment must be sent back to the manufacturer, and spares get subbed in; within the next five years the department will look to replacing Engine 5 and Ladder 2.

In comparison with other towns- the department chose Revere as the closest in demographics and was compared for equipment and manpower. Revere also has a regional communication system.

Overtime budget- the department needs to meet minimum staffing levels, and the overtime is estimated, based on historic use. In accordance with the CBA, the chief monitors the overtime.

Non-vehicle purchases- this budget line covers gear, medical equipment, hoses and other items needed to maintain the equipment.

The chief reviewed the various types of training which includes annual host training and pump training- they use a real life simulation (it's the best they found and have used it

every year); other miscellaneous training as needed and required to keep up with societal needs.

Maintenance program- DPW maintains apparatus. They have a strong communication between the departments.

Municipal alarm system- this funding is for the deputy chief. He maintains all radio systems. FY21 is funded for one and it runs all computers, all portable radios. The department does not have civilian dispatchers; they come in from fire suppression on 6-month rotations. There is no increase in personnel to accomplish this.

Chair Molisse asked if the 4 newest recruits are training through the in-house academy? The chief responded that one is a lateral from Winchester, and 3 are brand new, and will attend the in-house program. If not, the department would have had to wait until the academy opens, then wait the additional 9 weeks for them to complete training. This training has followed all guidelines and the trainees will be required to pass a test. He is unsure when the state will open up testing. Training includes live burn, Hazmat, EMS, and other training (in-house) still to go. There were several fires in the last week.

Councilor Burga asked if the trainees are missing a big piece by not using the academy. She asked what are other departments doing- is it a similar formal training? Chief Stark responded that the training follows all academy guidelines, including checklist and testing. Once the training is completed, they will be set up for two formal tests and then they'll be ready to go.

Councilor Kiely noted she is sorry they are not talking about the opening of Station 2 at this time, but she appreciates the department acting fiscally responsible. She likes that the training is being done in-house. She asked if they find that it's successful and if there savings? The chief responded that the academy does not cost the department. Lt. Wall has conducted 2 academies with the department already; this is his third. The on-the-job experience they are receiving is more comprehensive than the academy. Councilor Kiely asked if they would look to keep in house as more firefighters come on? The chief responded that it's a time issue. The trainers also must keep up with their other duties. He won't rule it out, but he will try for the academy next time.

Councilor Heffernan thanked both departments for their teams' essential workers who have had to be out in the middle of COVID-19 exposure in the community. He is thankful that as a community both teams have really stepped up the last few months. He commended the chiefs and their staff for their leadership to the community.

Chair Molisse agreed; he noted that public safety is on the front line. He thanked them for their service.

ADJOURNMENT

At 6:45 PM, there being no further business, a motion was made by Vice Chair Hackett to adjourn and was seconded by Councilor Kiely.

A roll call vote was taken by the Town Clerk. Councilor Burga-Yes, Councilor Heffernan-Yes, Councilor Kiely-Yes, Vice Chair Hackett-Yes, Chair Molisse-Yes. UNANIMOUSLY VOTED.

Attachment- Auditor's questions/WPD's responses

Respectfully Submitted by Mary Barker as Recording Secretary.

Approved by Michael Molisse as Budget/Management Committee Chairman
Voted unanimously on 13 July 2020