

TOWN COUNCIL MINUTES
PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE
Town Hall Council Chambers
October 2, 2017, Monday

Present: Thomas J. Lacey, Chairman
Arthur Mathews, Vice Chairman
Michael Smart, Councilor
Patrick O'Connor, Councilor
Ed Harrington, Councilor

Also Present: Ted Langill, Chief of Staff
Richard Grimes, Chief, WPD
Keith Stark, Chief, WFD

Recording Secretary: Mary Barker

Chairman Lacey called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM. This issue was discussed before with LStar and the administration, and continues to stay on their radar in light of the build-out. The two public safety chiefs were invited for their input. Chief of Staff Langill was invited to the table along with Chief Grimes and Chief Stark.

Review of Public Safety Strategies at Union Point

This matter was referred to the Budget/Management Committee on September 18, 2017.

Mr. Langill provided a handout to the committee; a memo dated October 2, 2017 – an update on the financial impact of the Union Point build-out to town revenue and services. He provided a brief history. This is a project inherited by this administration. The question of public safety is of primary concern in every discussion with LStar. It is the one component missing from everything that was presented and it became clear as things progressed and he researched the issue, that there is no clear plan in place. It will be their focus going forward, considering the amount of people and activity slated from Union Point and the potential of the build-out.

In their first two fiscal years budgets; the Mayor and administration committed more than \$3 million in operating and capital funds, which were used to fund 5 firefighters (previously covered by a grant), a new fire engine, new police cruisers and motorcycles, body armor and security upgrades, new staff and building repairs. No doubt the commitment is to continue as the plan goes forward. He explained the handout. It shows accumulated specific data on Union Point; the biggest growth is in building permits (all new growth and a significant portion – 40% of all in town), tax levies and HCA fees (interest on money received).

On the services side, there are a minimal number of students. At the last school committee meeting some Main Street addresses were included in their counts. The total

of 28 students in his memo is correct and represents less than 1 percent of the town school population.

Public safety calls to Union Point contributed to 2 percent of the town wide volume. They looked at the data a little differently. This is not a Union Point-specific issue but rather a South Weymouth issue, and they are trying to address it as such. It's that section of town which needs the expanded services. There are 616 occupied units in Union Point currently and another 400 are under construction. To put the matter in perspective, the total residential parcels town-wide is 18,350. A new census hasn't been done since the construction started. Parcels do not include commercial or industrial.

Councilor O'Connor suggested that 1000 people is a reasonable guess and it lines up with calls town-wide. Mr. Langill responded that the percentages line up with 2%; it's a relevant parallel and similar to what is happening town-wide. The chiefs can speak to the differences in the types of calls.

Councilor Smart noted the number of school-aged children in Union Point was 23 two years ago; the current number of 28, which is surprisingly low. Mr. Langill responded that the overall school enrollment is decreasing across the town. The low number is likely due to the limited number of units open, and those that are senior housing.

Councilor Lacey asked if the town manages the permits today. Mr. Langill responded that all permits are granted through the town. Before any project comes on line, the department heads provide comments that are submitted to the SRA from the town. There have been some significant comments on how some of the construction is going. There have been concerns noted on the roads regarding emergency vehicle access, turning radii, the number of hydrants and looping of the consecutive water system.

Chairman Lacey asked to hear how the Chiefs feel about their support and workforce. Fire Chief Stark responded that there is still the need to obtain more manpower. They were fortunate keeping the fire last week confined to a single building with some water issues. They are aware of the issues and are working on the hydrant issue. They will look to increase manpower and address Station 2 and add manpower to South Weymouth. He noted that this administration sees the value in what they do. He noted that it was key that the department didn't sustain any injuries. Chairman Lacey commended the department for a great job tackling a very difficult fire; the scenario could have been significantly worse, had it not been for the firefighter's efforts.

Councilor Smart asked if it is LStar requiring the looping water service? Chief Stark responded that he considers it LStar's responsibility. Councilor Smart also had questions on the construction and permitting process that might better to bring before the Building Department. He has question on the permitting process and procedures that could be in place that might have helped with the fire; standard practice in the industry to protect life and property that should be their protocol. He feels that there should be temporary lighting for searches in a property under construction. Chief Stark responded that this is an issue they are looking at and they would want it to be uniform throughout the town.

Mr. Langill responded they have started to develop a list of items that need to be incorporated into the process such as lighting, cameras and security personnel. Councilor Harrington suggested they could address and enforce surveillance or security personnel through an ordinance.

Chief Grimes noted that restoring the jurisdictional lines has benefitted the police department. They see this as a South Weymouth issue too. There are five sectors of responsibilities. South Weymouth used to be more sparsely populated and its southernmost section borders several towns. He was pleased that the administration increased staffing by 2 to 97. The national average is 2.4 officers to every 1000 population; they should have staff totaling 130. They responded to 56,000 calls last year and that is double what it was six years ago. Calls have changed in nature and it takes longer today to clear a call. The police department has a measured response mandated by laws and the community. There are areas where the department needs most assistance. The opioid crisis is driving many of their calls. They have different concerns than the fire department and they are holding over personnel and have overall staffing concerns.

Councilor Harrington noted there are jurisdiction concerns within Union Point. Residents don't realize where the boundaries lie; part of it is Weymouth and is Weymouth's responsibility. Councilor Smart noted that the boundary lines helped shape the new legislation. It also included consideration for a donation of land to the town for an anticipated public safety building. He agrees there are different standard and needs, but it was understood that as growth occurred it would include public safety considerations. As it continues to grow there will be a significant residential and commercial presence on the roadways and there will have to be a discussion on costs and a timeline.

Councilor O'Connor also agreed that the recent fire on Union Point was well handled. Public safety personnel are getting to the limit and will have to take the next steps to providing the level of service that the residents require.

Chairman Lacey noted that even in lean financial times the town was able to incrementally provide \$3 million for increases in public safety and they will continue to look at growth turning to recurring revenue going forward. Build out is several years in the future, and they are trying to gauge how this will all come to fruition. Some problems have been solved; others haven't. Commercial development will be the huge turning point. They need a calculated forecast to know when to make moves. They need to keep heading forward and do it in a sustainable way for the entire town.

Councilor Harrington suggested that visible public safety would be a great marketing tool to get the commercial aspect up- and- running.

Councilor Mathews asked if the water pressure issues were discussed before he arrived. Chief Stark responded that the pumping off Route 18 worked. He has discussed with Mr. Corkum possibly using the fire station or coast guard station on the former base. He noted that a run for Engine 5 to South Weymouth is a long one.

Chairman Lacey noted the complexity of what Union Point needs while in transition but sustainable over the long term. He is impressed overall. The subject of resources has been a challenge for many years, and for all departments. Small steps are progress and he hopes the acceleration moves sooner rather than later. Mr. Langill responded that they look ahead to the bigger picture and will continue to move forward with limited resources but keeping a net so that if decisions have to be made in a tough financial year they are in a position to do so. The administration is doing its utmost to consider the progress carefully. Chairman Lacey commended the administration and both chiefs for their work with resource challenges.

ADJOURNMENT

At 7:25 PM, there being no further business, a MOTION was made by Councilor Mathews to adjourn and was seconded by Councilor Smart. UNANIMOUSLY VOTED.

Respectfully submitted by Mary Barker as Recording Secretary

Approved by Chairman Thomas J. Lacey

Voted unanimously on 13 November 2017