

TOWN COUNCIL MINUTES
BUDGET/MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
Town Hall Council Chambers
May 14, 2009

Present: Kenneth J. DiFazio, Chairperson
Patrick O'Connor
Ed Harrington
Arthur Mathews
Michael Molisse

Also Present: Robert Conlon, Councilor
Maureen Duffy, Town Auditor

Recording Secretary: Janet Murray

Chairperson DiFazio called the Budget/Management Committee meeting to order at 6:50pm.

Mr. Wilson gave an update of recent happenings regarding the State's budget. He stated that on Monday he had announced an \$850,000 shortfall. On Tuesday this deficit had increased to \$1.8 million based on the Senate's version of the budget.

Mr. Wilson stated that the circuit breaker which should be reimbursed at 75% is being calculated at 25% reimbursement. This amounts to a \$750,000 shortfall in this account. He noted that the stimulus money, which was not included in the Town's budget, has also been reduced. The overall impact on the budget is \$2.7 million.

Mr. Wilson stated that there are currently five budgets in play:

1. The Town's budget that is before the sub-committee is a revenue neutral document
2. The Governor's budget would result in a \$1.2 million surplus
3. The House Ways and Means budget would have a \$820,000 deficit, but the House budget as passed would have a \$1.1 surplus
4. Senate budget of \$1.8 million deficit excluding the two factors mentioned
5. Governor will submit a second budget which is expected to mirror the Senate's budget

Mr. Wilson stated that the Town has a 97% collection rate of real estate taxes but expects to increase to 99% shortly. The motor vehicle excise collection rate is at approximately 89%. He noted that many people wait until the last minute to pay this tax. The collection rate is expected to climb into the 90's.

Councilor DiFazio asked if the numbers include the deficit of the town on the Quinn Bill. Mr. Wilson stated that the numbers he has given reflect the decline in all State funding.

Mr. Wilson reminded the Committee that there will be no stimulus dollars in fiscal year (FY) 2012 ; any back filling with stimulus money will leave a gap in FY 2012 with the impact felt in FY 2013. He stated that the Town needs to be prepared for several years of these difficulties.

Councilor Mathews stated that he believes that the State House has failed the towns miserably. He stated that with the numbers constantly changing, the Towns are not able to plan. He

believes that licensing fees could have brought in much needed revenue on casino gambling. He stated that there could have been much reform other than slashing state aid to cities and towns.

Councilor O'Connor stated that the Senate's budget does not include the potential revenue from an increase in the sales tax from 5% to 6 ½ %.

Councilor DiFazio asked how the town can go about renegotiating the School Department five year contracts. Mr. Wilson stated he had spoken with Ms. Livingstone who will present the current budget situation to the School Committee this evening. He noted that any renegotiation is under the sole jurisdiction of the School Committee.

Councilor DiFazio noted that he is concerned that the School Department will look to eliminate more teachers as a cost cutting measure. He asked if the Council disagrees with this, if there is anything that can be done.

Mr. Wilson stated that the School Committee has the final determination as to its budget and the manner in which the budget is expended. The legislative body only approves a bottom line budget amount.

Councilor Harrington asked if the School Committee is the legislative body for the School Department. Mr. Wilson stated that the School Committee is ultimately responsible for line item authority over movement of money. He noted that there is a School Committee budget sub-committee that can approve line item movement.

Councilor O'Connor pointed out that the five year contract calls for 1%, 2%, 3%, 4%, and 3% raises for fiscal years 2008 – 2012.

Councilor Mathews stated that he believes that the budget review process should be revised in relationship to the time that the state's budget is set.

Councilor DiFazio noted that by having this work already completed can act as a baseline so that when the actual numbers come in necessary adjustments can be made.

Councilor Harrington stated that he continues to be skeptical of the budget projections and does not share the optimism that has been presented.

Mr. Wilson gave an overview of how budgeting decisions were made. He stated that the Mayor is taking one step at a time using available revenue and available information.

Review and Discussion of Police and Fire Budgets with Chief Financial Officer, Chiefs of Police and Fire and Applicable Senior Staff

09 015L-Police Department

The overall budget increase is approximately \$120,000.

Mr. Wilson introduced Captain Tim Carr to the Committee as the provisional Chief of Police as appointed by Mayor Kay.

Captain Carr stated that the budget is based on 92 sworn police officers, 4 vacant police officer positions, 6 civilian employees, 9 dispatchers, 14 traffic supervisors, 5 reserve traffic supervisors, 1 animal control officer, 1 assistant animal control officer (part time), 1 harbor master, 1 assistant harbor master (part time), 3 launch ramp attendants (seasonal part time), 1 shell fish warden (seasonal part time)-- for a total of 138 full and part time positions within the Police Department. There are two funded vacancies: the Chief of Police, and a detective lieutenant in the investigations program. He noted that Lieutenant Greenwood has retired as is acting Chief Brian Callahan.

The total budget amount requested is \$9,755,801.59.

1. Staffing: Discuss the level of staffing for the upcoming fiscal year. Are there any unfilled positions? If so, what impact will the vacant positions have on the department?

Chief Carr stated that there are four unfilled positions. The Mayor has authorized the hiring of one officer at this time. The other three positions will not be filled until after July 1, 2009. A patrol officer is retiring next week and Captain Callahan is retiring within 90 days.

2. Overtime FY10: Explain the increase on overtime for FY10 of an additional \$35,000. What major factors are contributing to this increase?

Chief Carr stated that this overtime was to restore overtime that was cut during the FY 09 budgetary process. This will cover police security during the 4th of July festivities as well as two elections this year.

Councilor DiFazio asked whether this \$35,000 is an increase over the current amount budgeted?

Mr. Wilson explained that from FY 08 to FY 09 the budget was level funded for the Police Department. The Police Department is anticipated to meet this budget. From FY 09 to FY 10 the increase is anticipated to be \$35,000. Mr. Wilson pointed out that last year's fireworks were held in June.

3. Traffic: TRF/SUPERS: Explain the 50% reduction of this salary line item for FY10.

Captain Carr stated that this reduction actually occurred during FY 09 as part of a 2% budget decrease which was required in March 2008. The Municipal Finance Department will need to adjust the FY 09 Police Department budget to reflect the correct amount. Half of the traffic supervisors were laid off.

4. Harbor Patrol: Explain the reduction in this salary line item.

Captain Carr stated that this reduction occurred in FY 2009 as part of a 3 4/10% decrease that was required in March of 2008. Municipal Finance Department will need to adjust the budget to reflect the correct amount.

5. Training/Equipment: Under Management and Investigations, the total of these two line items increased by \$12,000. What major factors are contributing to this increase?

Captain Carr stated that the department determined a need to have funding to be able to send officers to specialized training and purchase specialized equipment to assist on-going investigations.

Councilor DiFazio asked about court fees being returned to the town. Mr. Wilson stated that this money is reflected on the revenue side of the budget. He noted that there was a slight increase from FY 08 to FY 09. There is a slight decrease from FY 09 to FY 10.

Councilor O'Connor asked if line items are used to pay for expenditures in other departments. Mr. Wilson stated that this does not happen. He noted that the Police Department has line items for their own gas, electric, building maintenance etc. Also, the DPW budget covers some police and fire items.

Mr. Wilson stated that what is allowed to roll from one fiscal year to the next is clothing allowances, and this is required by contract.

Councilor DiFazio pointed out that the overall increase is \$120,000 but salaries increased by 38%. Mr. Wilson noted that this is an issue of the alignment of personnel.

Councilor Mathews asked if there are any grants available for cars. Captain Carr stated that they are receiving two cars from a grant. He noted that two cars were replaced two years ago.

Mr. Wilson stated that two cars are expected to be replaced with money from the sale of the Fulton School.

Councilor O'Connor asked if it was feasible to leave positions unfilled. Mr. Wilson noted that this will result in the increase of overtime. Mr. Wilson pointed out that the Police Department has worked diligently to keep overtime under control.

Councilor Molisse asked how many officers are out. Captain Carr stated that there are eight at this time: three are retiring, one may come back, and two are expected back this summer.

Councilor Mathews wished the new Chief good luck as he assumes this position during this difficult economic time.

09 015M-Fire Department

The overall budget increase is approximately \$84,000.

Chief Leary stated that he is willing to sacrifice a position if necessary; however the Mayor did not see it as necessary at this time.

1. Staffing: Discuss the level of staffing for the upcoming year. Are there any staffing shortages? If so, will the delivery of service to the community be impacted?

Chief Leary pointed out that staffing is extremely short. Cuts have been felt since 2002. He stated that last year eight positions were lost to attrition.

Chief Leary stated that last year Station 2 was closed and he disbanded engine 2. He pointed out that engine 2 is currently running as engine 5. He noted that the department is staffing three engines with one or two ladders. He expects to be at three engines and two ladders on all shifts by Labor Day.

Chief Leary stated that the fire prevention bureau needs a second person. He noted that towns the size of Weymouth typically have five employees in this area.

Chief Leary stated that the number of runs in a year has reached 7,000.

Chief Leary stated that the town belongs to two mutual aid districts: Metro fire and Norfolk County District. He pointed out that Norwood is the first town to pull out of the mutual aid system. He noted that this trend may spread to other communities as the economic times worsen.

Councilor Harrington asked how much Weymouth covers other mutual aid.

Chief Leary stated that mutual aid is called for a working, one alarm fire. He stated that in mutual aid for a town such as Norwood would be that other towns respond to the actual fire but do not cover the town's station.

Councilor O'Connor asked if the town provides mutual aid to Hull. Chief Leary stated that Weymouth does cover Hull. Councilor O'Connor asked if this aid has been excessive due to the coverage of the Nantasket Beach reservation. Chief Leary stated that there is a system in place to address this.

Councilor O'Connor asked if the department is aging. Chief Leary stated that the department is actually young. He stated that he began in 1983 in Weymouth and there are only 8 employees ahead of him in seniority and three of them are leaving in July. He pointed out that he has hired approximately 37 people in the past six years.

Councilor O'Connor asked about the status of repairs to station 2. Chief Leary stated that there is a punch list of items that need to be completed.

Councilor DiFazio asked when station 2 would be re-opened. Chief Leary stated that based on the current fiscal times he would estimate that this station will not be opened for another five years. He pointed out that he would need 115-117 members to run another engine. Chief Leary stated that the station is closed because of staffing issues not because of the renovations.

Mr. Wilson asked to reserve the ability for the Mayor to respond to this statement.

Councilor Mathews noted that he questions the need to spend money repairing a station that will not be opened for another 5 years.

Chief Leary stated that \$800,000 was awarded for repairs to both station 1 and 2.

Chief Leary stated that there is not enough staff to man the apparatus to run four engines. He pointed out that the dispatcher, Deputy Chief, and his secretary are located at this site.

Councilor Mathews asked about the condition of the apparatus. Chief Leary stated that engine 1 and 3 were purchased five years ago through the capital lease program which was a five year program. He would like to consider purchasing another engine through a delayed lease program. The same vendor that the Town purchased the other engines from has an 18 month delay.

Ladder 2 was purchased three years ago. When the lease expires he would like to then purchase another ladder.

Councilor Conlon stated that carrying the town on three engines and one ladder is a precarious safety situation.

Councilor Molisse asked about employees out on injuries. Chief Leary stated that there are three members out at this time. One of the injuries is long term and he is in the retirement system. There are two other members out on work related injuries; one is expected to be out for eight weeks and the other is in a program that should take about two weeks to complete.

Councilor O'Connor asked for an update on radios. Mr. Wilson stated that there are two to three parts to this process. The Fire Department was awarded a \$220,000 grant from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) which requires a \$41,000 match payment from the town. He stated that Kevin Bulman, the electrical inspector, is leading this process.

Chief Leary stated that when the grant was applied for it was submitted for a traditional radio system. An amendment needed to be submitted to the federal government because the technology had changed. The Chief stated that he expects to have this equipment in place by September.

Councilor DiFazio asked if the Police are able to communicate on this system. This can be shared with other departments using UHF equipment. He stated that there is an end goal in place for the whole system, but since the Fire Department has the funding available, he is going ahead with the purchase at this time.

Councilor DiFazio asked about ambulance coverage for the town. Chief Leary stated that runs are based on a priority system.

Councilor Harrington asked what percentage of the 7,000 runs are ambulance related. Chief Leary stated that number is approximately 60%.

Councilor Harrington asked if there was a way to recoup any cost from insurance companies. Councilor O'Connor stated that he has pursued a fire-based ambulance service in the past. He stated that it is a potential revenue source; however it requires significant up-front start up costs.

2. Overtime FY10: Explain the increase in overtime for FY10 of an additional \$28,000. What are the driving factors contributing to this increase?

Chief Leary stated that it is difficult predicting overtime. Going into FY 09 there was a reduction of eight members of the department. In September, the department was reduced to three engines and one ladder, which drives the overtime need. He pointed out that overtime has averaged \$520,000 a year. This year was budgeted at \$507,000. With this request, the projected amount would be \$535,000.

Councilor Mathews asked about how vacations are assigned. Chief Leary stated that this is dictated by contracts. He stated that the department has 99 uniformed members and two civilians. At any one time there can be five fire fighters, two lieutenants, and one captain or deputy on vacation. This standard is maintained throughout the year.

3. Telephone Expense: Explain the 157% increase in this expense, an increase of \$5,500.

Chief Leary stated that this increase is due to the use of air cards for the mobile data terminals in all the apparatus and cars. The cost for each air card is \$40 per month.

4. Expenses: What are the most significant increases in expenses for FY10?

Chief Leary stated that \$6,500 is for vehicle maintenance to have the equipment re-certified. There is a budgeted amount per station. All of the apparatus was not sent out last year and the remaining pieces need to be sent out.

Chief Leary stated that the \$5,000 increase in Educational reimbursement is due to a Master's degree program in fire administration. Also, there are a number of junior members who are looking to take advantage of a fire science program.

Chief Leary stated that the training budget would increase by \$2,500. He pointed out the need to purchase new equipment for respirators.

Councilor DiFazio asked about the reason for the increase in salaries. Chief Leary stated that this is for the filling of the position for fire prevention and then backfilling that position.

Councilor Harrington asked if by allowing the educational reimbursement, if this is setting a precedence. Chief Leary stated that this is contractual.

Councilor Harrington asked what the percentage of towns provide their own ambulance service. Chief Leary stated that statewide it is 65% and nationwide 95% of departments provide their own ambulance service.

Councilor O'Connor noted that the exterior repairs to station 2 are almost complete. He asked about the status of interior repairs. Mr. Wilson stated that he had just signed this contract but will review this in the morning. This project was bonded about three years ago.

Councilor O'Connor stated that he does not want to be spending money for a building that does not supply apparatus. He pointed out that there are other places for the functions that are currently taking place in this location.

Chief Leary stated that the kitchen and recreation rooms are slated to be repaired. These facilities are used by the staff at this location.

Councilor Molisse pointed out that the Mayor had noted that the maintaining of Town buildings is important. He stated that he thinks that it is important to do this. These improvements were approved prior to these difficult economic times. He noted that the project has gone out to bid at a known cost.

Councilor O'Connor stated that he agrees with Councilor Molisse as to continuing and completing these repairs.

Councilor DiFazio stated that he believes that the committee needs to wait on a report from the Mayor at Tuesday's meeting before making any official comments.

At 8:45pm, there being no further business, A MOTION was made by Councilor Mathews to ADJOURN and was seconded by Councilor O'Connor and UNANIMOUSLY VOTED.

Approved by: _____
Kenneth J. DiFazio, Chairperson