

TOWN COUNCIL MINUTES
BUDGET/MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
Town Hall Council Chambers
April 24, 2007 - Tuesday

Present: Kenneth DiFazio, Chairperson
 Paul J. Leary, Vice Chairperson
 Susan Kay, Councilor
 Patrick O'Connor, Councilor

Also Present: Jane Hackett, Chief of Staff
 James Wilson, Chief Financial Officer
 Richard Swanson, Town Auditor
 James Thomas, Chief, Police Department
 Robert Leary, Chief, Fire Department

Recording Secretary: Mary Briggs

Chairman Kenneth DiFazio called the Budget/Management Committee meeting to order at 6:55 PM.

Review/Discussion on Police and Fire Department Budgets with Chief Financial Officer, Chiefs of Police and Fire and their Senior Staff

Chief Robert Leary was invited to the table to give a brief summary of the Fire Department's FY08 proposed budget, and to respond to questions from the committee. The Chief noted the driving factors in the increase to the budget for FY08 include salary step increases, the lease payment on the new ladder truck and overtime expenses.

Auditor Swanson reviewed the list of questions prepared for the discussion with the chief. The budget does not include any increase in personnel; current staffing is 108 fire personnel and 3 civilians. No administrative staffing changes are planned, although the chief noted that the organizational make up is the same as it has been since the 1960's and with changes in legislature and training he would like to see some changes in the organization. A current roster and organizational chart was provided by the chief to the committee and reviewed. The committee held a brief discussion on the chart, noting that the staffing level is at an equipment level of 4/1, and no change is made for FY08. The chief did note that only one ladder truck is currently in service, but that the new truck is expected in the next few weeks.

Salaries for FY08 include all step increases and promotions under the collective bargaining agreement, but no cost of living increases. Vacancies in the department were discussed. There is one retirement expected in the near future, and 3 employees currently

deployed on active military service; these positions are not expected to be filled prior to July 1st. The chief expects there to be additional retirements which may bring the total openings to 7 slots, and new hires will occur in September.

Replacements for personnel on military service are being filled by overtime or temporary transfers; new hiring procedures under civil service, and possibility for layoffs due to override failures in other towns was reviewed by the chief. He explained that he prefers to wait for the full number rather than list now for the one existing vacancy due to retirement.

He reviewed the sick incentive estimate of \$75,000. Personnel who do not use sick time are paid a small stipend. Jane Hackett noted this line item also includes sick incentive, plus out-of-classification pay, education reimbursements and longevity payments combined.

The auditor questioned the \$160,000 increase in the equipment line, which the chief noted includes the new ladder truck purchase. Auditor Swanson also asked if the vehicle and building maintenance figures are realistic. The chief responded that the department has scheduled out vehicle purchasing in the capital budget, and purchased supplies through the town's central purchasing.

The auditor noted the entire budget was flat; the chief acknowledged that it is, and the 4.7% increase overall from last year is due to the driving factors noted above.

A further discussion ensued on the capital improvements scheduled out over the next years. Station 3 and 5 are 7 years old and in good condition. Station 1 and 2 have repair projects which are ongoing. Station 1 needs the most work- facilities for the female employees an example, and the chief explained that funds are set aside in FY08 Capital to address these issues. Mr. Wilson noted for the committee that a year ago the town raised and appropriated funds, which were then bonded for the fire department project as well as the roof and other repair work at the DPW.

Chairman DiFazio asked for an update of the alarm box removal system, and whether there are poles available for removal. The chief noted that there are 17 boxes still in the system; the remainder have been shut down, and a list will be sent to the utilities which share them, Mass Electric first, then Verizon, etc. The chief will have a list furnished by Buzz Smith for the committee.

Auditor Swanson asked if any budget items might be supplemented by grants. The chief responded that he hoped the department will receive a \$15,800 state grant designated for equipment, but that grant funding has been cut. Their department has also applied for replacement brush trucks, but there is no guarantee the town will be a recipient.

A discussion followed on whether the department is reimbursed for expenses in mutual aid. The chief noted for the committee that when towns are called upon to respond to mutual aid, the cost is borne by the respondent. There is no charge to any town, nor any

reimbursement for mutual aid coverage. As an example, he noted that at the recent fire on Main Street, the cost of injuries received by a Quincy firefighter were borne by the Quincy department.

The chief also noted that they are reimbursed for some of their training, including HAZMAT and some one-to-one training.

Next, Chief Thomas of the Police Department was invited to the table to give a brief summary of his department's budget and then respond to questioning by the auditor and committee. He began by noting that it has been a great year for the police; he is very proud of the department's efforts.

Chief Thomas reviewed his personnel organizational chart and roster of 155 employees. The roster includes the same number of personnel as last fiscal year. He was asked if he anticipated making any organizational changes, and he responded that he would like to but it will involve collective bargaining negotiations. There is a current vacancy at the captain level, and one patrol officer on active military leave. The budget includes all anticipated step increases, but not cost of living adjustment. The chief is the only full time position of less than 40 hours; he is at 35 hours. Auditor Swanson asked if those hours are in the chief's contract. The chief noted he is not under contract. Mr. Wilson clarified that the chief's position has a job description but not a contract; he is part of the non-union personnel.

The chief reviewed the current vacancies for the committee; currently there is 1 captain, 1 detective, 1 assistant harbormaster and 1 assistant animal control position. He reviewed the options for hiring under civil service and noted that the City of Boston added the housing authority police to the civil service rehire list. If the town of Weymouth were to hire, they would be forced to take members from the civil service rolls and the chief does not feel this is in the town's best interest. There is a decision expected from Civil Service on the list, and he checks the website frequently and will wait to make any hiring decision until the matter is decided.

A discussion followed relative to some of the jobs and responsibilities within the department, including the auto attendant. The chief was also asked if he would consider out-sourcing the payroll monitoring operations, which now are being done within the department. The chief responded that this is currently in the collective bargaining agreement. The contract expires in June and this would need to be negotiated.

He was also asked if the parking enforcement officer could be utilized to generate revenue. The chief responded that he is not an advocate of a police department being used as a revenue generating source.

He also reviewed the role of the traffic supervisor and reserves.

The auditor reviewed the IT operations; the number and rank of officers involved in computer application/operations. The chief noted the department is in the process of

purchasing new software, as the system itself is fifteen years old and in constant need of repair. Mr. Limby's department offers part time support; the police officers were not hired as technical support; replacing them; however, with civilians must be negotiated in collective bargaining. He also noted there is \$50,000 budgeted for overtime to train all officers in the use of the new software.

Auditor Swanson addressed building maintenance next. The chief noted that the department makes use of the centralized maintenance for a custodian who is also assigned to the DPW, and materials purchased through central purchasing.

Auditor Swanson noted that the projections for utilities is flat; the chief responded that it was a mild winter, heating gas is at a locked in rate, and he will monitor month to month and make adjustments as necessary.

Next Auditor Swanson asked about the \$71,500 in computer services; the chief responded that this includes service contracts for several items, including 24 mobile Enhanced Video units, remote line feeds, NCIC Virtual Cop Server, 911 Logger program and the purchase of 6 vehicles.

In summary, Chief Thomas noted that although more money would be beneficial, the department will work with the town to keep costs down. He did note that overtime is not always a predictable factor.

There was a discussion with the committee as to whether the assistant animal control officer position should be filled quickly. The chief responded that eliminating the pound responsibilities has lessened the burden from the department. The department seems to be able to maintain a level of service with the manpower available and occasionally help from DPW.

Auditor Swanson noted that overall the budget is flat.

The committee commended the chief for successfully managing overtime costs within his department.

The Chairman thanked both chiefs for their input.

Chief Thomas extended a challenge to both the committee and the fire department to join him and get involved in the upcoming "Dancing with the Stars" promotion for this year's Relay for Life benefit.

At 7:45 PM, there being no further business, Councilor Kay made a MOTION to ADJOURN the meeting and was seconded by Councilor Leary. UNANIMOUSLY VOTED.

Chairman Kenneth DiFazio