

MINUTES OF BUDGET MEETING WITH THE FINANCE COMMITTEE
SATURDAY, MARCH 2, 2019

Chairman Prisco called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m. in Room 14 at the Town Hall in the presence of members Mrs. Manupelli, Mr. Schultz, Mr. Mauceri, Mr. O'Leary, Town Administrator, Michael Gilleberto, and Finance Director Liz Rourke. Finance Committee members, Abby Hurlbut, Daniel Pulver, and Alan Wolpin were in the audience. A quorum of the Finance Committee was not present.

Mr. Gilleberto stated that there are no TA recommendations at this time as was stated at the beginning of the budget process. Recommendations will be made in April after all budget hearings are complete.

Police Department budget presentation by Chief Murphy, who was joined by Lts. Brennan, Romeo, and Zimmerman. Mauceri. Chief Murphy introduced Laura Miranda, Mental Health Clinician.

Mr. Prisco asked if the department could use funding to regulate CBD, vaping, and other "legal" substances. Chief Murphy responded that it is not a resource issue.

Mrs. Manupelli asked about presence in the schools. Ms. Miranda responded that she believes that Amy goes to the schools one day per week.

Mr. Schultz asked about ability to enforce regarding marijuana influence. Chief Murphy responded that we've gone backwards in the ability to prosecute, and it is very difficult.

Mr. Mauceri asked about increase in vehicular accidents involving buildings...cars into homes and businesses. Chief Murphy said that in general, more people are under the influence. But the ability to prosecute is very difficult because of the medical aspect. The Police can't stop a car just because of a marijuana smell. Awaiting a tool to test people.

8:29 AM - Finance Committee member Vinnie Ruschioni joined the meeting. A quorum of the Finance Committee was not present.

Mrs. Manupelli asked about overdoses. Chief Murphy responded that the volume fluctuates.

Mr. Schultz asked about the drug of choice, whether it was Fentanyl. Chief Murphy responded that carfentanyl is becoming more prevalent in the area. It is an elephant tranquilizer.

Mr. O'Leary asked if the Police overdose numbers were inclusive of the Fire overdose responses. Chief Murphy responded yes, and from the audience Chief Stats confirmed.

Mr. Mauceri asked if there is data about usage of NARCAN. Chief Murphy responded that the push has been to put as much NARCAN out on the street as possible.

Laura Miranda described the referral process. Ms. Miranda has had 174 interactions with the community.

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Mr. Prisco asked why the community doesn't have a campaign to tell people where the resources are. This problem isn't getting smaller it is getting larger and we should make a big deal about it. Chief Murphy described the ongoing planning efforts and discussions about getting back into the community. There is a lot of effort, and it is targeted at the school-age population. Chief Murphy acknowledged that there is a lot of volunteer assistance in getting the message out in the community.

Chief Murphy reviewed the activities of the federal Drug Free Communities program.

Mr. Mauceri asked where the Town was in the grant cycle. Chief Murphy responded that we are in the third year.

Mr. Schultz asked what percentage of the Police Department's interactions and arrests involve substance abuse. Chief Murphy responded that the so-called professional criminal break-ins of the 1990's are now replaced with drug-related crime.

Abby Hurlbut asked about how much time is being spent on certain activities. Domestic violence was a large component. Chief Murphy to provide the Board statistics on calls.

Chief Murphy reviewed workload indicators and attributed a 24% increase to selective enforcement generated by officers. Chief Murphy reviewed grant sources. Chief Murphy reviewed a summary of the increases and decreases in the budget.

Mr. O'Leary asked about changes in drug forfeiture money use. He referred to a US Supreme Court case. Chief Murphy has heard nothing and believes that we are not affected. Chief Murphy would expect to hear from the DA on the issue.

Chief Murphy reviewed overtime.

Dan Pulver asked about overtime for staff meetings. Chief Murphy responded that the funding allows Sergeants to come into meetings.

Lt. Romeo presented the Police Department's fleet request and fleet update. Because of Ford's moving toward hybrid vehicles, there will be a greater increase in next year's vehicle costs.

Mr. Prisco asked about warrants.

Mr. Schultz asked about performance, and Lt. Romeo responded that performance is greater.

Mr. O'Leary asked if we would be phasing in hybrids. Lt. Romeo responded that he would prefer to phase in but the manufacturer is discouraging purchasing traditional vehicles through the pricing.

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Ms. Hurlbut asked if the increase in response would trigger the vehicle purchases being capital. Lt. Romeo responded that the useful life would ideally be extended to 7 years, and some of the 2012 and 2013 vehicles are still in service today more than five years later.

Chief Murphy presented the objectives for FY2020.

Mr. O'Leary asked for a comparison of the hiring timeline now compared to Civil Service. Chief Murphy responded that it was 18 months under Civil Service, now is more like 3-4 months.

Ms. Hurlbut asked about distribution of resource guide. Can a condensed version go in the water bill? Chief Murphy responded that they are working on that and other ways to get the word out.

Dan Pulver asked where exactly the Mental Health clinician is in the budget. Chief Murphy responded that it is under crossing guards.

9:31AM - Recess

9:41 AM – Reconvene

Fire Department presentation by Chief Donald Stats.

Chief Stats reviewed philosophy for budget management and efficiency and presented call volumes.

Dan Pulver asked about call volumes.

Mrs. Manupelli asked about double calls. Chief Stats described how staffing is provided.

Mr. Prisco asked about fines assessed to Edgewood. Mr. Gilleberto responded that they have not paid and we will follow up with Town Counsel.

Mr. O'Leary asked about OSHA. Chief Stats responded that we had a voluntary walk-through that went well. There were some housekeeping items.

Mrs. Manupelli asked if there is another slide on the overtime. Chief Stats responded we can discuss from the packet.

Mrs. Manupelli asked about tuition reimbursement. Chief Stats responded that it can be rolling.

Mrs. Manupelli asked if we could review the overtime in detail.

Mr. Mauceri asked if EMS revenue is up, based on the increased overtime. Chief Stats responded yes.

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Mr. Prisco said he spoke with Representative Jones and there is a lot of uncertainty in the billing in the future.

Mr. Mauceri asked about the impact of the microwave communications project. Chief Stats responded that there are no known annual costs at this time.

Mr. Schultz asked about changes and the response of the rank and file. Chief Stats responded that a number of changes have been made and there has been some cost savings, but also an offset by the increasing number of double calls.

Mr. Schultz asked if he could review what is being grieved and if everything is in effect.

Mr. Gilleberto cautioned about going too far into the collective bargaining process and that all of the changes are in effect. All of the changes are in effect.

Mrs. Manupelli asked if we could hear about the changes. Mr. Gilleberto responded that the policy changes should be reviewed.

Chief Stats reviewed the changes in policy. Changes in policy: Chief Stats described callback before the beginning of the shift, callback before a training or detail. Changes in box alarm responses.

Mrs. Manupelli asked about callback after a box is recalled. Chief Stats responded that the time for someone to report to the station decreased to 10 minutes after the box is recalled.

Mr. Mauceri said that the transition to ALS has added calls and the ability of the system to sustain a response is a concern.

Mrs. Manupelli said she is asking about callback, not station coverage. It sounds like this is a concern.

Mr. Schultz asked how many times per year an all-hands on deck. Chief replied that it was 141 instances.

Mr. Prisco said that Chief Stats said he is not really getting the numbers to report back for calls. And overtime is increasing. Are we at that point where we need to look at bringing in more people? Chief Stats responded that it is a concern, and with the OSHA and 2 in and 2 out, it is increasingly a concern. It is alarming to the Chief that we may not get that response in the future. We need to do an analysis.

Ms. Hurlbut said that a review has been done and it is more cost effective to run it this way, but it is no way to run a department.

Mr. Prisco stated the trend is not limited to Fire, newer hires in Police are also not as interested in overtime.

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Ms. Hurlbut asked about influences on overtime rate. Chief Stats responded that the ALS requirement increases the average rate as more educated firefighters are hired.

Mr. Prisco asked about changes to the system to encourage response. Chief Stats responded that to be blunt it isn't working well.

Mr. O'Leary stated that he can foresee a change in the way the department operates and is awaiting a recommendation. Ms. Hurlbut stated it isn't a cost effectiveness issue, it is a public safety issue.

Mrs. Manupelli stated that she thinks we are safe, but projecting forward there is an issue.

Mr. Prisco thinks it is a safety issue for the personnel if we don't have enough guys to come back.

Mr. Mauceri brought this up to focus on a trend. A chart showing the transports per year over time. Chief can send the chart. The concern is safety of staff and community. He can't understate the issue.

Mr. Prisco asked if there were other changes in policy.

Chief Stats responded that there were changes in mutual aid deployment.

Alan Wolpin asked if any other communities are comparable and have made changes. Chief Stats responded that they have changed what numbers they drop back to.

Chief Stats continued. Chief Stats presented Callback and EMS.

Mr. Mauceri asked about mutual aid and the response.

Mr. Schultz asked how we can make the mutual aid more balanced. System looks flawed. Chief Stats responded that it is a reflection of our system and their system.

Mr. Schultz stated that there isn't an incentive for Reading to change its system if North Reading is fulfilling the need.

Ms. Hurlbut stated that of the 128 calls to assist Reading 100 were transports. Most of the received services from Reading are fire. Chief Stats responded that most of the response from Reading is EMS.

Mr. O'Leary stated that we are being treated as a private vendor to Reading. We need to be conscious of that. Do we want to be doing it?

Mrs. Manupelli asked if we pay a fee for collection. It is shown in the presentation.

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Mr. Prisco stated that a discussion among the TA and Reading TM with the Chiefs is necessary.

Dan Pulver asked if the current mutual aid system is an issue. Chief Stats responded that it is not and he is hesitant to withhold mutual aid coverage from Reading because he feels it is a responsibility, it is good for keeping up ability. But we do need to discuss the overall staffing issue with the union, Select Board, and TA.

Chief Stats presented a new Fire Prevention position.

Ms. Hurlbut asked if this would be an officer. Chief Stats responded that it would be a captain because of the responsibility, and would be a promotion under the Civil Service law. We would backfill with a New Hire firefighter.

Dan Pulver asked if this is common, or if North Reading is an outlier. Chief responded that he tends to think we are an outlier.

Chief says that the Fire Prevention officer is a need and not a want.

Mr. O'Leary asked about civilian dispatch. Chief Stats responded that it is not being discussed right now. Mr. O'Leary stated that it should not fall off the table as we look at re-structuring.

11:24 10 minute recess.

11:34 reconvened for DPW budget. Presentation by DPW Director Patrick Bower, who was joined by Operations Manager Chris Deming, Building Superintendent Julie Spurr-Knight, Town Engineer John Klipfel, and Water Superintendent Mark Clark.

Dan Pulver asked about GIS licensing. Mr. Bower said it was for additional devices to increase to 6 devices.

Mr. Prisco stated that we have seen the importance of fresh or even temporary lines on new pavement which is a dark black color and harder to see. Mr. Mauceri agreed.

Mr. Mauceri asked if the tree positions would take care of trees on town-owned land. Mr. Bower stated yes. Mr. Gilleberto asked if it included trees in the right of way. Mr. Bower said yes.

Mr. Mauceri asked what was driving the demand on vehicle maintenance. Is it the age of equipment. Mr. Bower said it is age of equipment and other items.

Ms. Hurlbut asked about school maintenance. Mr. Bower stated we maintain those vehicles but not from within the budget.

Mrs. Manupelli departed at 12:01 PM.

Mr. Mauceri asked about cemetery work.

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Mr. Bower replied no. Chris stated that most of the work is done and the new sections are ready to go, and need curbing and paving.

Mr. Mauceri asked about status of trash contracts. Mr. Bower said we are looking at extending the current contract at the current cost or possibly a decrease.

Mark Clark presented the water department budget.

Mr. Mauceri asked about the meter program, if we are seeing more revenue. Haven't been able to see it yet, although individual people are reporting increases. Mr. Prisco informed Mr. Mauceri and the audience that he looked at his water usage and identified a leak using the technology.

Mr. Prisco stated that he had asked for information on the capital requests for the roads.

Mr. Bower presented an overview of the roads, their condition, and the Road Surface Restoration (RSR).

Mr. Schultz asked that Mr. Bower explain the cost differential for a full reclamation versus a lesser improvement. Mr. Bower responded that the lesser improvements are far less expensive.

Mr. Mauceri said it would appear we either didn't put enough money into the roads or didn't do the right projects.

Mr. Bower said that's correct and it comes down to how much money we want to put into the road program.

Mr. Bower looked at options to increase our RSR.

Dan Pulver asked about the RSR in 2012. Is there variation? Mr. Bower responded that it was 70 and does vary according to who does the evaluation.

Mr. Prisco stated that we should look at additional resources for this. Is looking at providing funding above and beyond the capital plan. He is not looking to criticize the CIPC or circumvent that process.

Mr. O'Leary departed at 12:45 PM.

Mr. Prisco asked for information about the DPW staff rooms.

Mr. Prisco thanked everyone for attending, Liz's staff for their work, and the department heads for their submissions. Mr. Prisco also thanked the Finance Committee.

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MR. CHAIRMAN, I MR. SCHULTZ MOVE TO ADJOURN.

SECONDED:	MR. MAUCERI	
VOTED:	MR. SCHULTZ	AYE
	MR. MAUCERI	AYE
	MR. PRISCO	AYE

VOTE: 3-0 (UNANIMOUS) (MR. O'LEARY AND MRS. MANUPELLI NOT PRESENT AT THE END OF THE MEETING)

ADJOURN: 12:51 P.M.

DATE

STEPHEN J. O'LEARY, CLERK