

MINUTES OF THE SELECT BOARD MEETING
SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 2021

Chairwoman Manupelli called the meeting to order at 8:03 a.m. via remote participation. Participating members were Mrs. Gonzalez, Mr. Wallner, Mr. O'Leary, and Town Administrator, Michael Gilleberto. Mr. Stuto was absent.

Finance Committee members participating were Mrs. Hurlbut, Mr. Mills, Mr. Bailey, Mr. Haggerty, Mr. Pulver, Mr. Kelliher, and Mr. Johnson.

CALL TO ORDER OPEN SESSION

Chairwoman Manupelli called to order the Open Session at 8:03 a.m.

Chairwoman Manupelli stated that the members were participating virtually and asked attendees to hold their questions until the end.

Mr. Gilleberto explained that departments were asked to scale back their requests due to economic uncertainty for FY 2022 and 2023. That fact, along with the requirement to conduct the hearing virtually, has caused him to ask departments to abbreviate their presentations. There will be an opportunity to ask questions at the end.

Chief Murphy introduced Amy Luckiewicz, Youth Substance Abuse Coordinator, Laura Miranda, Mental Health Clinician, Lt. Mark Zimmerman, Lt. Tom Romeo, and Sgt. Joe Thibodeau.

Chief Murphy presented the Police Department budget (see attached).

Lt. Romeo presented the fleet update and request.

Chief Murphy continued the Police budget presentation.

Amy Luckiewicz presented the Youth Substance Abuse grant update and request.

Laura Miranda presented the Mental Health Clinician update and budget.

Mr. Wallner stated that while the rest of the country was looking to defund the police, he highlighted that we are doing the right things such as the mental health clinician.

Mrs. Gonzalez echoed Mr. Wallner's sentiment.

Mr. O'Leary echoed the sentiment and is heartened by the good news on the hybrid cruisers. He appreciates what the police officers do.

Mr. Pulver had no questions.

Mr. Bailey asked about the plan for the federal grant.

Mr. Gilleberto asked about the plan for funding.

Mr. Haggerty had no questions.

Mr. Mills had no questions.

Mr. Kelliher had no questions.

Mrs. Hurlbut stated this was a concise and useful presentation, Thank you.

Mr. Johnson had no questions.

Mrs. Manupelli asked about specific plan for funding the substance abuse grant.

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Mr. Gilleberto responded that it could be a reserve, conservative revenue estimating, or a transfer from elsewhere. Plan to be finalized with Financial Planning Team and presented at budget reconciliation.

Mrs. Manupelli asked about training relative to the new police reform bills.

Chief Murphy said we are looking at the law and regulations. A lot of the reforms we are doing already, but we look forward to any way we can improve.

Mrs. Manupelli thanked the Police Department for its efforts. So glad to see the training for the police officers worked into the budget.

Mr. Gilleberto stated that the Fire Department was asked to abbreviate their presentation due to the scaled back nature of the requests and the virtual forum. The entire budget document is available on the Town website,

Chief Stats presented the Fire Department budget request. He also reviewed the need for a Day Officer for fire prevention, although that position is not in the budget request itself.

-Mr. Wallner stated that the department is professional and appreciates the emphasis on training. Prevention is critical. What are the general trends on some of the stats that were mentioned?

-Chief Stats responded over 50% of calls are EMS related. Lower frequency events require more training. Fire calls are down overall but we are busy.

-Mr. Wallner asked about overtime.

-Chief Stats responded that we are on track this year.

-Mrs. Gonzalez thanked the Chief and the department for a tough year. She asked about the Fire Prevention Officer.

-Chief Stats responded that the Deputy serves as the Fire Prevention Officer and that fire prevention takes away from his other responsibilities. He further stated that adding the position would increase efficiency.

-Mrs. Gonzalez asked if the Fire Prevention Officer would take on all fire prevention responsibilities.

-Chief Stats responded that no, the Deputy would still do some.

-Mr. O'Leary thanked the Chief and asked about PPP and equipment.

-Chief Stats responded that we are set for gear.

-Mr. O'Leary asked about rank.

-Chief Stats responded that he requested a captain but it is up for discussion.

-Mr. O'Leary asked if this budget reflects an influx in grant funding. Would that change if the grant was funded?

-Chief Stats said he has a rough outline of how the department would be structured including lieutenant positions.

-Mr. O'Leary asked about adding personnel. Would we be talking about changing shifts?

-Chief Stats responded that we would take a look at it. There would need to be a discussion with the union.

-Mr. O'Leary asked if the fire prevention officer would do on duty things such as smoke inspections.

-Chief Stats responded that those would probably still be with the duty crew.

-Mr. O'Leary thanked Chief Stats and the efforts of all firefighters.

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- Mr. Bailey had no questions.
- Mr. Mills had no questions
- Mr. Kelliher had no questions
- Mr. Pulver inquired if COVID protocols affect operating expenses?
- Chief Stats responded that they did but with cost recovery of outside funds the budget did not suffer.
- Mr. Johnson had no questions and stated it was a fine presentation.
- Mrs. Hurlbut stated the collection rate was 77%. She realizes Medicare reimbursement has gone down. Over the years we have had trouble getting to 10% but this seems a little lower.
- Chief Stats responded that we are about 6% lower than last year.
- Mrs. Hurlbut thanked Chief Stats for the presentation.
- Mrs. Manupelli assumes numbers are lower due to people not being out and about, and being more aware of what is going on at home.
- Chief Stats stated the calls are lower but the percentage collected is lower. We do have a system in place but collections are down. We're down only 8 runs year over year, but down 104 transports.
- Mrs. Manupelli inquired what are we doing and what can we do in terms of collections.
- Chief Stats responded that we have a process in place. The next step would be to go to third party collections, which we normally have not done because the collection rate is very low at about 10% **thndivided among the entities**. Collection continues for six months after a call.
- Mrs. Manupelli asked if we bill the insurance carrier for cost of response to accidents.
- Chief Stats responded that we bill only for transports.
- Mrs. Manupelli asked about the day officer position. Would it be under the Deputy Chief in terms of supervision? Would it be lateral to firefighters? Would it be supervisory over other firefighters?
- Chief Stats responded that it would be a supervisor of firefighters at a Captain level.
- Mrs. Manupelli asked if it would be a ranking officer.
- Chief Stats responded that is his request.
- Mrs. Manupelli asked about mutual aid. Seems like we are responding regularly to Reading and Wilmington. Does Reading have an ambulance?
- Chief Stats responded that they run one ambulance. We run two using overtime for the second. Generally it is a 3-1 or 4-1 ratio of calls, but this year it was 2-1.
- Mrs. Manupelli asked about collections from out of town runs. Did the percentage include all mutual aid calls?
- Chief Stats responded that it did. Mutual aid collection rate was slightly lower.
- Mr. O'Leary asked about collections. Is a high percentage from insurance or Medicare?
- Chief Stats responded yes.
- Mr. O'Leary stated the fall off is not from individuals.
- Chief Stats responded that is correct.
- Mr. O'Leary doesn't understand why the insurance companies would be delayed.
- Chief Stats responded the collection rate is variable; could be awaiting payment from transports in earlier years.
- Mr. Kelliher asked about lower collection rate from out of town calls. Is the billing the same?
- Chief Stats responded that it is the same process.

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-Mr. Kelliher asked if there is a difference in how the information goes to COMSTAR between in town and out of town.

-Chief Stats responded that everything is the same.

-Mrs. Hurlbut asked about Reading handling the billing?

-Chief Stats responded that anything is possible, but it generally works among all communities that the transporting agency issues the bill.

-Mrs. Hurlbut commented that we could probably save money buying Reading a second ambulance.

-Mrs. Manupelli thanked Chief Stats.

-Chief Stats thanked the Select Board and Finance Committee members.

-Mr. Gilleberto stated that the Fire Department was asked to abbreviate its presentation due to the scaled back nature of the requests and the virtual forum. The entire budget document is available on the Town website.

-Mr. Deming introduced John Klipfel, Town Engineer, Mark Clark, Water Superintendent, and Mr. Hamel, Building Superintendent.

-Mrs. Manupelli introduced Amy DiChara, DPW Administrative Assistant.

-Mr. Deming presented the re-purposing of the Fire Department ambulance to a water response vehicle.

-Mr. Deming presented the DPW budget request.

-Mr. Clark presented the water budget.

-Mr. Deming summarized the overall presentation.

-Mr. Deming expressed appreciation for everyone at DPW while he has held the Acting Director position.

-Mr. Wallner acknowledged the efforts of the DPW in responding to the pandemic, and the efforts to professionalize. They are nimble. DPW is looking to take on vehicle maintenance in the future.

-Mrs. Gonzalez echoed Mr. Wallner's comments. We got to know the department a lot better during negotiations. Mr. Deming has played a great role in leading and it was a great presentation.

-Mr. O'Leary stated the department is nimble. We often take for granted the work that they do.

-Mr. O'Leary asked how we are doing in maintaining the roads.

-Mr. Deming asked Mr. Klipfel to respond.

-Mr. Klipfel stated we have a pending capital request to stay on track. Due to COVID and the reduced funding we lost a round of extra streets. We stretched the money that we had to do more crack sealing. Hoping to get back on track this year.

-Mr. O'Leary asked about cemetery projection. Will we need another site?

-Mr. Deming responded that we have 2 1/2 unfilled sections. We're running a year and a half per section. Future sections clear cut. Small cap request will get us out another 6-7 years.

-Mr. O'Leary asked if we will continue to allow brush to be dropped off.

-Mr. Deming responded that brush pile runs with the leaf pile April - November, and plan is to keep it open. It is working out fine.

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- Mr. O'Leary thanked everyone and acknowledged the excellent work Mr. Deming has done as Interim Director.
- Mr. Bailey has no questions.
- Mr. Mills has no comments, thank you.
- Mr. Kelliher stated you have been doing a great job filling in. Thank you. You mentioned tipping fees going up. Have we considered mandatory composting?
- Mr. Deming believes that Recycling Committee looked at it. The overall cost of adding the truck and barrel was not advantageous. Abby had mentioned that Rowley is using this but with a grant offset. We believe we have time to look at it since both contracts are in place for a few years.
- Mr. Kelliher stated it is worth looking at over time.
- Mr. Pulver has no questions.
- Mr. Johnson has no questions.
- Mrs. Hurlbut stated that pretty much anything but plastic can be composted. Way more than standard recycling. Have we noticed any difference in collections up or down with the new meters.
- Mr. Clark responded the rate of collection has not changed.
- Mrs. Manupelli highlighted that the grant availability highlights why we need a grant writer.
- Mrs. Manupelli thanked Mr. Deming and the department.
- Mr. Gilleberto clarified that use is very high and we are capturing use in that number.
- Mr. Clark said we are capturing a higher amount of water, 100% of what we are using.
- Mr. Kelliher said when we approved the project the additional billed water would pay the debt service.
- Mr. Clark said he would look at the water use to confirm.

ADJOURN

MADAM CHAIR, I MOVE TO ADJOURN.

MOTION BY:	MR. O'LEARY	
SECONDED BY:	MRS. GONZALEZ	
VOTED BY:	MRS. GONZALEZ	AYE
	MR. WALLNER	AYE
	MR. O'LEARY	AYE
	MRS. MANUPELLI	AYE

VOTE: 4-0 (UNANIMOUS) (MR. STUTO WAS ABSENT)

ADJOURN: 9:54 A.M.

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DATE

VINCENZO STUTO, CLERK