



## **Town of Wilmington**

Finance Committee

121 Glen Road Wilmington, 01887

RECEIVED  
TOWN CLERK

2024 MAR 15 AM 11:43

TOWN OF WILMINGTON, MA

Finance Committee Meeting

Tuesday, February 27, 2024

Finance Committee Chairman, John F. Doherty III called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm. Members present were Theresa Manganelli, Vice-Chairman, Marianne Gallezzo, Secretary, Chris DiOrio, Brad Jackson, Andrew Levigne, Scott Neville, and David Tamang.

Present in interest: Louis Cimaglia IV, Temporary Town Manager, Police Chief Joseph Desmond, Deputy Police Chief Brian Pupa, Sergeant Dan Furbush, Lieutenant Dan Murray, Fire Chief William Cavanaugh III.

Absent: Joseph Lavino

Mr. Doherty informed the audience that public comments would be limited to three minutes.

### POLICE DEPARTMENT

Chief Desmond introduced himself to the Finance Committee. He noted that there had been rumors that the Police Department would be getting new tasers. Chief Desmond informed the committee that these rumors were false and that the department had no plans to replace the current X2 tasers this year. Chief Desmond did note that the department was looking for more funds in the operating budget, to replace tasers if need be; he suggested that this request may have led individuals to believe that the department was getting new tasers. Mr. Doherty asked how the Tasers were working. Chief Desmond stated that they had been working well, typical maintenance had been performed, and one taser had been replaced due to the device falling into Silver Lake. Ms. Manganelli asked if the town was still eligible for free replacements. Chief Desmond stated that they are still available.

Chief Desmond communicated his and the department's interest in having the best product on the market, for the protection of citizens and Officers. Chief Desmond noted that when the time comes to replace the equipment, the town will either turn in outdated tasers for a credit with Axon; or find a better product on the market to purchase. Chief Desmond added that Axon has typically been the industry standard and makes up most of the market. Ms. Manganelli requested that Chief Desmond complete a revised capital plan with the help of the town manager, to not include the yearly \$25,000 taser item.

Ms. Gallezzo asked Chief Desmond if he was aware that Augusta Maine, and communities in New Jersey are involved in a class action lawsuit with Axon, for price inflation. Chief Desmond was not aware of the lawsuit, but are innocent until proven guilty. Ms. Gallezzo expressed her concern with Axon's possible price inflation, and that more communities are joining the lawsuit. Ms. Gallezzo acknowledged that there are limited suppliers of Tasers, and communities only have so many options when purchasing the equipment.

Ms. Manganelli informed the room that the Finance Committee is in support of the Police Department having the necessary tools. Chief Desmond noted that for future taser purchases, the Police Department would like to involve the Town Manager and Finance Committee. The Finance Committee discussed how the revised capital plan should be completed. Ms. Gallezzo noted that the warrant article naming \$25,500 for Tasers should be removed from the capital plan. Chief Desmond requested clarification, that in future years, he would be able to include taser replacements in his capital plan.

Kevin McDonald requested the opportunity to speak. Mr. Doherty requested that he wait until Public Comments.

Chief Desmond continued his budget presentation, stating the budget had increased to \$6,272,000.00 from FY 24's budget of \$6,200,000.00. Chief Desmond noted that increases were attributed to recruitment and that the department would soon be down 5 Officers, which affects the overtime budget, of which 49% is driven by shift replacement. Chief Desmond informed the committee that the department has been working with the Civil Service to fill these positions and that other communities are facing the same issues.

Chief Desmond noted that the one capital item requested was for range maintenance for \$40,000.00. Chief Desmond stated that in 2016 the Police Department had gotten the range back, as it had been improved professionally to protect the environment. Chief Desmond added that maintenance should be completed every 4 to 5 years, which includes the cleanup of various metals, including cleaning the bullet trap.

Chief Desmond informed the committee that the four police cruisers approved last year, have still not been received by the police department, however, they are in the final stages of being fitted. Chief Desmond noted that delays are expected in the future and that requests for police vehicles will be made in next year's budget, to plan for these delays. Mr. Doherty asked if cruisers could be replaced every two years, as vehicles have improved over time. Chief Desmond noted that cruiser replacement is decided in consultation with the DPW and Mechanics and that the DPW focuses on running hours instead of mileage to determine the life of a vehicle.

Mr. Doherty asked Chief Desmond how IT was involved with the Police Cruisers. Chief Desmond added that they work with IT to set up the onboard computer systems and that the IT Department plays a crucial role. Ms. Gallezzo questioned the increase in the Furnishing and Equipment budget. Chief Desmond informed the committee that this budget increase was caused by the four accidents involving Police Cruisers; and although insurance replaces the vehicle, the Police Department is responsible for replacing equipment that could not be salvaged and transferred. Chief Desmond also informed the committee that regular updates, including radio systems, some of which had been used in Crown Vics.

The Finance Committee expressed their interest in looking closely at the insurance policy and finding out if some of the equipment that historically has not been covered can be added. Lieutenant Dan Murray added to the conversation, stating that the insurance company would move equipment over to new vehicles, however with the change of body style of the Police Cruisers, not all equipment could be transferred. Lt. Murray also added that the insurance company would not cover new equipment to fit replacement vehicles, and it has been the town's responsibility. Ms. Gallezzo confirmed that if equipment such as light bars could be transferred, new ones would not be purchased. Sergeant Daniel Furbush confirmed this was correct, however, equipment that was not in full operating condition would need to be replaced.

Chief Desmond informed the committee that he is concerned with the overtime budget, as the NEPBA 1 contract had finally been settled, and would need to be factored in. Ms. Manganelli asked how long it would take from receiving a list of candidates from the Civil Service to the candidates joining the town as full-time employees. Chief Desmond informed the committee that the most recent Civil Service list had 132 candidates, and only 6 had responded with interest. The turnaround time, including the Police Academy and field training, would take about a year.

Mr. DiOrio questioned that in 2018 there were 48 Police Officers and 22 Police Cruisers, and today we have 52 Police Officers, and 30 Police Cruisers. He asked the Chief to explain why the town needed 8 Police Cruisers for 4 more Police Officers. Chief Desmond explained that more cars are being counted in today's number, such as the Social Workers cars. Chief Desmond added that currently, the department should have 11 Patrol Vehicles, 2 Traffic and Safety Vehicles, 2 School Resource Officer Vehicles, 7 Detective Vehicles, 6 Administration Vehicles, 1 Animal Control Officer Vehicle, and 1 Social Worker Vehicle. Sergeant Furbush added that previously the social worker did not have a car, and that drug seizure cars were not included in the books. Sergeant. Furbush added that drug seizure cars had to be replaced by town vehicles and that the previous practice of vehicle seizure was gone.

Ms. Gallezzo asked if the department had used all the Cummings Grant funds. Chief Desmond stated that the department receives the grant funding yearly and that most of the funding has been dedicated to Community Policing, National Night Out, Explorer Program, and RAD classes. Ms. Gallezzo asked where permit and citation money was applied. Chief Desmond informed the committee that money received from those items was applied to the general fund.

Mr. Lavigne noted that arrests, summons, complaints, firearms permits, motor vehicle accidents, and citations all had increased tremendously, however, the number of Police Officers had remained the same. Mr. Lavigne asked Chief Desmond if the department had reached a maxing-out point. Chief Desmond noted that it has been a concern, and he would like to reach full staffing to make the determination. Mr. DiOrio asked if the budget had been prepared concerning a full staff. Chief Desmond confirmed this was correct. Mr. Tamang asked if the department was comfortable with the current compensation package. Chief Desmond complimented Susan L. Inman, Assistant Town Manager, Town Manager, and the Board for their efforts in establishing a competitive compensation package and felt as though the department was where it should be.

Ms. Gallezzo asked how many new hires and Officers are expected to be going to the Police Academy this year. Chief Desmond stated that he would like to see at least four Officers be hired, although he would like to space candidates out to not overwhelm current full-time employees and training resources. He noted that it had been a goal to have five Permanent Intermittent Officers, a pool of people to pool from; but the goal had not been reached due to the difficulties in recruiting.

#### ANIMAL CONTROL

Chief Desmond informed the committee that Animal Control Officer, Christopher Sullivan is one of the best Animal Control Officers around and has been a hardworking and dedicated employee. Chief Desmond acknowledged Chief Desmond added that the overtime budget had been increased.

#### PUBLIC SAFETY DISPATCH

Fire Chief William Cavanaugh III introduced himself to the Finance Committee. Chief Cavanaugh informed the committee that Public Safety Dispatch is currently short three full-time employees. This has contributed to overtime costs, filling shift for shift, and operating on a minimum of two dispatches per shift. Chief Cavanaugh explained the difficulties of the job, and the volume of work falling on employees.

Ms. Gallezzo asked if there were typically three employees on shift. Chief Cavanaugh added that a few years ago, an additional position had been added, but the department had not been able to be filled. Chief Cavanaugh added that compensation had been restructured, but despite their efforts, it has been difficult to find interested applicants. Chief Cavanaugh informed the committee that before hiring, applicants are invited

to come in and see if the job is a good fit for them, but most of them choose not to pursue the job. He explained that the ideal would be to have four staff members for the day and middle shifts, with three staff members on the overnight shift.

Ms. Gallezzo stated that she regularly listens to the Police Scanner. She complimented Chief Desmond and Chief Cavanaugh on their staff, acknowledging their professional ability. Chief Cavanaugh added that the employees are career-driven and very good at what they do. Chief Cavanaugh informed the committee that typical salary increases are reflected in the budget, as well as needed overtime. Ms. Manganelli added that as long as she can remember, she can't recall the department being fully staffed, and complimented the current staff on their ability to perform the job.

Chief Cavanaugh also informed the committee that the mental health of Dispatches has grown more important and that industry staff have experienced Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and similar conditions. Chief Cavanaugh added that the industry is moving towards regional Dispatch Centers, and he is against it; as the community does not receive the same level of attention in his opinion. Chief Cavanaugh explained that turnover and administrative differences between communities add to his concern with regional Dispatch Centers.

#### FIRE DEPARTMENT

Chief Cavanaugh acknowledged that the ambulance approved a few years ago has still not arrived, and the department is requesting another ambulance in preparation for similar delays. Chief Cavanaugh explained that there are not a lot of ambulances on the market. Mr. Doherty asked what the expected delay for a pumper would be. Chief Cavanaugh expected the delay to take about 4 years, and that a pumper had been on the capital plan for a few years and had been put off to help level fund the budget, but would be asking for one next year. Mr. Doherty asked why the pumper was being put off, and that he would like to see the department request the pumper sooner than later to offset delays. Mr. Cimaglia explained his and Chief Cavanaugh's decision to put off purchasing another pumper and would like the next Town Manager to make their determination.

Chief Cavanaugh complimented the DPW Garage for their ability and talent to keep all town vehicles up and running. Mr. Lavigne asked what would happen if one of the two current ambulances were to fall in an out-of-service state. Chief Cavanaugh informed the committee that he would do his best to scour the used market for a replacement.

Ms. Manganelli asked Chief Cavanaugh to go over the overtime budget. Chief Cavanaugh explained that the overtime budget is running lower than expected. A spike in December was attributed to the need to burn down time, concerning the IAFF contract. Chief Cavanaugh added that if time is not burned down before the end of the year, employees would lose it. Mr. Doherty asked if there were any employees out on disability. Chief Cavanaugh informed the committee that there were no employees out on injury, however, one employee was retiring, one employee transferring to the DPW, one on deployment, and one on administrative leave; for a total of 5 or so positions to fill. Chief Cavanaugh explained the hiring process for Firefighters, specifically related to the Academy and Civil Service.

Ms. Manganelli referenced an increase of eight Firefighters several years ago, noting that the goal of adding the eight employees, was to bring 11 employees to a shift, and not have to call in employees for overtime. Ms. Manganelli asked what would happen if the eight employees had not been added, and there is confusion with overtime because of this. Chief Cavanaugh explained that the department would be extremely short-staffed.

He then provided a breakdown of responsibilities for each of the 11 employees on a shift, why the 11 employees per shift are necessary, and how best practice in the industry expects 17 employees per shift. Chief Cavanaugh referenced a recent house fire, which was successful due to proper staffing, and explained his concerns with not calling in employees for overtime to reach a full staff for a shift. Chief Cavanaugh also expressed his concerns with larger construction projects of warehouses and apartment buildings in town contributing to his concerns with fully staffing shifts.

Ms. Gallezzo asked if the department was still issued a Hazmat stipend by the state. Chief Cavanaugh explained that the Hazmat function is fully funded by the state. Chief Cavanaugh noted that the Town Accountant, Bryan Perry, had removed the stipend from the budget, as it was not appropriate.

Mr. Neville asked if the department had made any progress on the feasibility study for a Fire Substation. Chief Cavanaugh explained that the department had been working with town counsel to produce a Request for Proposals to obtain land for the project. He added that the RFP should be going out shortly, and has been calculated into the budget. Chief Cavanaugh noted that growth in North Wilmington will require more resources and attention from the department.

#### PUBLIC COMMENTS

Anonymous, expressed his opposition to the feasibility study for the Fire Substation. He noted that at multiple meetings, it had been stated that the former Town Manager stated that the town was self-insured and wanted to know what the name of the insurance company was. Mr. Doherty informed the resident that the town is insured by MIIA. The resident continued, informing the committee that he was concerned about a rumor he had heard about the Explorers Program. Mr. Doherty asked the resident to remain on the subject. The resident continued, and Mr. Doherty ruled that the resident had reached the allotted time for public comment and was out of order. The resident continued, making inappropriate comments to the committee members.

Mr. Doherty asked if there were any further comments. Ms. Gallezzo asked Mr. Cimaglia about the warrant articles, referencing two Wing Mowers for the DPW. Ms. Gallezzo noted that the committee had voted to approve the purchase of a Wing Mower during the DPW's budget presentation but could not recall an additional mower in the future. Mr. Cimaglia explained that there would be one mower purchase right away and another for next year. Ms. Gallezzo asked that Mr. Cimaglia confirm, and if necessary, withdraw the warrant article.

Mr. DiOrio asked Mr. Cimaglia if he had followed up with the IT Department and the implementation of Munis. Mr. Cimaglia informed the committee that they are looking to conduct an RFP to manage the implementation. Mr. Cimaglia added that as a first step, an inventory of IT equipment would be conducted, and a policy would be issued to ensure all employees are participating in the required cyber security training.

The Finance Committee chair informed the anonymous resident that he had reached his time limit for public comment.

#### APPROVAL OF MINUTES

There were no minutes for approval

#### ADJOURN

After the discussion, being no further business, a motion was made by Ms. Manganelli for the Finance Committee to adjourn, seconded by Ms. Gallezzo and unanimously:

VOTED: That the Finance Committee adjourn.

The meeting adjourned at 8:42 pm.

Respectfully submitted,



---

Thomas F. Donahue

Recording Secretary