



Town of Wilmington

Finance Committee

121 Glen Road Wilmington, 01887

Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, February 23, 2021

Finance Committee Chairman, John F. Doherty III called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm. Members present via video conferencing on ZOOM were, Theresa M. Manganelli, Vice-Chair, Michele Kincaid, Secretary, Jonathan Dugas, Marianne Gallezzo, Andrew Lavigne and Bernard P. Nally. Leigh Martinson and Kevin Stokes were absent.

To begin the meeting Mr. Doherty read a statement regarding Open Meeting Law and public access to the meeting via technological means, then took a verbal roll call of the attendees.

FY 22 BUDGET OVERVIEW

PRESENT IN INTEREST: Jeffrey Hull, Town Manager; Kerry Colburn-Dion, Assistant Town Manager/Director of Human Resources; Bryan Perry, Finance Director

POLICE

PRESENT IN INTEREST: Joseph Desmond, Police Chief; Brian Pupa, Deputy Police Chief

Chief Desmond reviewed the request of the Town Manager to reduce the Operating Budget in an effort to offset the unforeseen costs of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Police Department would now be requesting only two vehicles instead of the original request for four, and would reduce the manpower request to focus on the Sergeant position and hold off on the patrol additions for another year. Overtime is \$675,000 primarily due to the pandemic. The remainder of the budget is mostly level-funded.

Mr. Doherty asked if any officers were out due to COVID. Chief Desmond answered that approximately \$30,000 in overtime was back-filled for COVID. Quarantines for close contact included. Ms. Gallezzo asked if this overtime will be covered by grant money. Chief Desmond said it has been submitted but not received yet. Ms. Manganelli reviewed statistics. Chief Desmond agreed that much of this is due to people staying home, with the exception of firearm permits which increased.

Ms. Gallezzo asked about uniform costs. The Chief said that some of this is for new hires, some is for maintenance. Academies are open again and the department is hoping for four open spots. Mr. Doherty asked for the timeline and the Chief said he is hopeful for April or May. Mr. Nally asked where does the Chief want to send his candidates and the Chief answered, anywhere they can as long as it is an accredited academy because they need the staff as soon as possible, to implement the additional quadrant for the Town. There was a brief review of the staffing per shift and cars available.

Mr. Doherty asked if the Public Safety building is sufficient for the Police and Fire departments' needs and potential growth. Chief Desmond noted that locker room space is limited and would be especially problematic upon the addition of another female officer as that space in particular would then be maxed.

Ms. Gallezzo asked about the number and use of patrol cars. She stated that she counted 16 in inventory. Chief Desmond said there are 9 marked cars plus 3 traffic cars that are semi-marked for patrol. Ms. Gallezzo asked about the difference she is seeing. Chief Desmond noted that the department is replacing two cars that were involved in accidents. They are 2017 vehicles and have been prioritized for replacement once the approval comes in and they will then be sent to the DPW to be re-purposed. Ms. Gallezzo asked for a breakdown of the

cars and their use. Chief Desmond said there are 6 admin. cars that are unmarked, 7 detective cars, 3 semi-marked traffic/safety cars, 9 marked cars and one ACO. When asked who uses the admin. cars he answered himself and the Deputy and Lieutenants. He also stated, after a question from Mr. Doherty, that the license plates are plain.

Before moving on, Mr. Doherty welcomed Mr. Lavigne and acknowledged that he was unintentionally excluded from the roll call, as he joined the Committee after the agenda had been created and was not listed with the others. He then invited Mr. Lavigne to introduce and speak about himself.

DISPATCH

PRESENT IN INTEREST: William F. Cavanaugh, Fire Chief; Corey Swift, Dispatch Supervisor

Chief Cavanaugh reviewed overtime. He reminded the committee that last year he increased the dispatch overtime to \$100,000 because he felt it had previously been reflected inaccurately. This year he is budgeting overtime at \$175,000 however \$50,000 of that is reimbursable through the state grant. In addition, he is hoping that this figure is an overshoot because turnaround in the department should be lower in FY22. The COVID-19 related overtime will be covered.

Ms. Manganelli asked if the renovation of the dispatch room was complete. Chief Cavanaugh said it was completed two weeks ago with the exception of a few minor odds and ends to take care of. He then gave a breakdown of the renovation and the steps taken. He praised Dispatch Supervisor Swift for successfully planning out the renovation. Mr. Nally asked if any additional equipment was needed for the communication center. Chief Cavanaugh noted that the equipment had already been changed out and that this renovation was to upgrade the furniture that houses the equipment.

Ms. Gallezzo asked for the current amount of dispatch overtime. Mr. Swift was limited by a poor internet connection and could not retrieve his figures without losing his connection to the meeting. Finance Director Bryan Perry answered that the overtime for dispatch was approximately \$128,000 year to date. Mr. Hull then reviewed the history of overtime and turnover in the department and reminded the committee that many dispatchers follow a career path into police or fire personnel positions. Mr. Doherty asked what the turn rate is in dispatch. Mr. Swift explained it is 1 out of 2. He stated that at one point they were fully staffed but then personnel moved elsewhere.

Mr. Doherty asked about the pay scale compared to other towns Mr. Hull stated it was mid to low range. Mr. Swift agreed and gave the neighboring town of Andover as an example. Mr. Swift also noted that turnover is both an industry and nationwide issue and that it is 18% even in the best of conditions. Mr. Swift said that Concord, Lexington and Andover have better retention and higher pay but different circumstances. He said it is part of the nature of this job and that Wilmington has all the same equipment and is investing in people more than in the past but that, as in in other towns, there is still turn because the job is a stepping stone for other positions.

Mr. Hull then spoke to the process of state reimbursement and how it is unfortunate that the funds go to the General Fund and not back into the department's budget, so it is difficult to see the reimbursements from the Committee's viewpoint. Ms. Manganelli agreed and stated that it would be beneficial to put a note in the budget to show reimbursement amounts. Mr. Swift then spoke about some of the grants for personnel costs, training and equipment.

FIRE

PRESENT IN INTEREST: William F. Cavanaugh, Fire Chief

Chief Cavanaugh addressed overtime first. He recalled for the committee that overtime had been reduced last year based on the department anticipating having 8 new hires finished with the academy by July 2020. The academy was then held off due to COVID-19. There were also three positions unfilled due to retirements. Chief Cavanaugh budgeted \$1.4 million for overtime in LY22 with the hope that he will be able to put some of this back into the budget unused. The new Civil Service fire list will be out March 15, 2021. It should have been released in December 2020. Hiring can then begin. There is also a long-term injury that may become a retirement. The remainder of the budget is primarily level-funded. Chief Cavanaugh noted that if not for the overtime, the budget would only increase 1% to LY.

Chief Cavanaugh then spoke about the SAFER Grant. A portion of the salary line will be offset by this grant, at 75% this year and then 35% next year. Town Manager Hull then spoke to the overtime, noting that most of this came from the academy being closed and some coming from COVID-19 quarantining and absence. He noted that he and the Chief had discussed the option to move forward with the non-EMT list, which would then take an additional year to get the candidate certified. Ultimately it was decided this would not bring in the right candidates and they chose not to pursue that option. Mr. Doherty asked what the cost is to get them EMT certification. Chief Cavanaugh replied that Town Council advised against this to avoid any show of favoritism.

Mr. Doherty asked about the difference in pay grade. Chief Cavanaugh answered that currently F1 entry level is \$1,089 and EMT is \$1,115. Mr. Doherty agreed that it would be better to hire EMT level and save money in the long run.

Ms. Gallezzo asked for the current overtime. Mr. Perry answered that it is \$748,000 year to date. She then asked about the line item for EMT Management Stipend. Mr. Hull explained that this is to cover the Chief for his role as Emergency Management Coordinator, a role he has had for a long time. Mr. Hull felt that with all that has happened in 2020 it was especially important to acknowledge that role this year.

There was then a discussion about the decline in ambulance calls and the increase in psych evaluations. Chief Cavanaugh spoke about the beginning of the pandemic, how there were fewer transports for non-emergencies as many people were afraid to go to a medical facility. He also stated that calls for falls were up, as much of the elderly had been isolated without help from family contact and were falling more. Although transports were down, calls were almost the same in number. Chief Cavanaugh also reviewed the time-consuming process of removing an ambulance from service for cleaning and disinfection if of all counters, stretchers, equipment, etc. if the vehicle responded to a suspected COVID call. He praised Lt. David Woods for securing a considerable amount of PPE from the National Guard, this very day, at no expense to the Town.

Mr. Doherty asked about the available space in the building with a full complement. Chief Cavanaugh said the building is already stretched for space and lockers. He is hopeful that if the substation comes to fruition it will help. Mr. Doherty asked Mr. Hull where the Town is at for the substation. Mr. Hull said that as most of the information falls under executive session he could not share much but did say that much of the focus is now on Andover Street. There was a brief discussion about the traffic impact, signaling and speed issues. Mr. Doherty offered that he believes the Archdiocese has land at Salem and Andover Streets and wonders if that is available. Mr. Hull and Chief Cavanaugh both said they would have to look into that and that they are looking for approximately 2 to 3 acres of land.

Mr. Dugas asked about the increase in paid holidays. Chief Cavanaugh said this increase covers new hires as well as the added Federal holiday of Juneteenth.

Ms. Gallezzo asked about the Johnson & Johnson vaccine and if any were coming to Wilmington. Chief Cavanaugh answered that the Town would not be receiving any and he shared his disappointment that the State-required emergency distribution plan is not being utilized as it should be. Local Boards of Health will not be receiving vaccines as planned so that State distribution sites will have them all.

Ms. Manganelli said she was grateful to Chief Cavanaugh and the Director of the Board of Health, Shelly Newhouse, for being at the helm of the pandemic and she said she shares his frustration with the roll out. She thanked Chief Cavanaugh.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no public comments.

OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Hull noted that Animal Control was skipped over. He stated that Animal Control Officer Chris Sullivan is doing a great job and that the budget is level funded.

Ms. Gallezzo asked Chief Desmond if his department received the rifles. He said they have been ordered but are delayed due to COVID-19 related production delays. He is hoping to have them in a month or so.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The Finance Committee reviewed the Minutes from February 2, 2021. A motion was made by Ms. Manganelli, seconded by Ms. Gallezzo, and by the affirmative roll call vote of all it was:

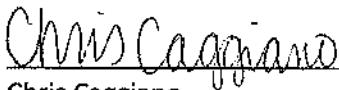
VOTED: To approve the minutes from February 2, 2021.

At the conclusion of the discussion, there being no further business to come before the Committee, a motion was made by Ms. Gallezzo and seconded by Mr. Dugas, it was unanimously and by roll call:

VOTED: That the Finance Committee adjourn.

Meeting adjourned at 8:11 pm

Respectfully Submitted,



Chris Caggiano
Recording Secretary