

## **ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING**

Tuesday, January 2, 2018

7:00 PM

Town Hall – Selectmen’s Meeting Room

Members present: Brad Cote, Connie Benjamin, Ann Hurd, Ted Kirchner, Joe Myerson, and Brian Boyle

Members absent: None

Call to order: Chairman Cote called the meeting to order at 7:02 PM. The entire meeting can be viewed by going to:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UR8ckk1mR0k>

### Agenda Item #1: Police (210), Public Safety Building (200), and Dispatchers (299) budgets

- At the outset of the meeting, our Town Accountant, Ninotchka Rogers, explained that cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs) have been built into the FY19 budget from the beginning. That way, we have a better sense of our personnel costs throughout the budget season.
- Chief Nelson and Lorraine Kenney presented the Police Department (210) budget:
  - The salary and wages segment of the budget increased by about \$21,000 from FY18 (not including the COLAs). That growth was largely due to some new hires and step increases.
  - Hired Services was level-funded at \$4,000. That includes things like physical and psychological evaluations.
  - Training and Lockup were also level-funded.
  - Office Supplies are down from \$7,650 to \$5,250 because of the bulk purchase of parking tickets last year which created a one-time bump for FY18.
  - Firearms/Supplies are down slightly to \$14,965 because we are not adding more Tasers, just paying for the maintenance contract.
  - Uniforms are up slightly, to \$22,100, due to the new hires.
  - Out-of-State Travel and Dues & Subscriptions are both level-funded.
  - Bulletproof vests are up from \$1,600 to \$3,800 in FY19 due to new people on staff. We are on a 5-year cycle for the vests, and the new officers have been added to the cycle. Also, there is the possibility that a federal reimbursement could decrease our total FY19 vest expense.
  - Cruiser Repairs, Supplies, Gas, and Tires are all level-funded for a total of \$51,700.
  - Cruiser Equipment is also level-funded at \$7,000. This line item includes things like the mobile data terminals and emergency lights.
  - The committee had a lengthy discussion regarding the “Cruiser Purchase” line item with a proposed expense of \$47,400 (vs. \$39,945 in FY18). For FY19, Chief Nelson proposed the purchase of a Ford F-150 Police Responder pursuit-rated vehicle. In Bolton, we have a number of challenging physical

- circumstances (winter weather, remote rural areas, etc.) that would be well-served by a Ford F-150. Chief Nelson presented information about the costs to purchase and outfit the vehicle, as well as some alternatives (e.g., without a push-bumper or without a light bar). He also noted that the cost of purchasing our usual fully-upfitted Ford Explorer would be \$39,945.
- After discussion, the committee agreed that the purchase of a pursuit-rated Ford F-150 would be a worthwhile experiment for the department to undertake in FY19. Chief Nelson mentioned the possibility of adding F-150s into the fleet on a rotating basis, but that decision would be deferred to a later time.
    - The Ford F-150 was the only “capital item” requested by Chief Nelson. For FY19, there are no other capital requests for either the Police Department or the Public Safety Building.
  - **MOTION:** Connie Benjamin moved to approve the Police Department (210) budget as submitted, for a total of \$1,280,312; seconded by Joe Myerson.  
**VOTING IN FAVOR:** Brad Cote, Connie Benjamin, Ann Hurd, Ted Kirchner, Joe Myerson, and Brian Boyle. **VOTED AND PASSED. UNANIMOUS (6-0).**
  - Chief Nelson and Lorraine Kenney presented the Public Safety Building (200) budget:
    - Overall, the FY19 budget decreased nearly 5.8% from FY18, down from \$215,385 to \$202,901.
    - Lorraine Kenney explained that our Maintenance budget is lower in FY19 because we completed several projects in FY18 (such as the tower generator and new servers) that won’t appear in FY19.
    - Chief Nelson explained that, with regard to Trash Disposal, he explored the possibility of utilizing our DPW to provide that service. However, in discussions with DPW Director Joseph Lynch, Chief Nelson concluded that the current Trash Disposal expense (\$4,404) is more cost-effective than a possible DPW alternative.
    - Chief Nelson and Lorraine Kenney explained that they will need a new line item number to track the Propane Radio Tower Building expense of \$1,025. This should be tracked separately from the Diesel line item for the generator at the Public Safety Building.
    - With respect to the overall Public Safety Building budget, Ted wondered why our increase from FY17 to FY19 is approximately 15%. Ted said he has a theory that our town’s overall budget should only be increasing at approximately the rate of inflation, if we are truly attempting to level-fund. Brad noted, by contrast, that the FY15 expense (\$208,897) was higher than the proposed FY19 budget (\$202,901), so a lot depends on what the specific needs are in a given year. There are peaks and valleys.
    - **MOTION:** Connie Benjamin moved to approve the Public Safety Building (200) budget as submitted, for a total of \$202,901; seconded by Joe Myerson.  
**VOTING IN FAVOR:** Brad Cote, Connie Benjamin, Ann Hurd, Ted Kirchner, Joe Myerson, and Brian Boyle. **VOTED AND PASSED. UNANIMOUS (6-0).**
  - Chief Nelson and Lorrain Kenney presented the Dispatchers (299) budget:

- Chief Nelson explained that we pay a set fee for the Devens (Nashoba Valley Regional) dispatch service, and we don't have the final number yet. Although Chief Nelson hopes that the final number will be lower than the current placeholder of \$157,472, our Town Administrator Don Lowe noted that we shouldn't assume that it is going to be lower. Our best assumption for now is to level-fund, but we will revisit this particular line item when we receive the final number from Devens.
- Don Lowe added that since we made the switch to Devens dispatch back in FY17, it has saved the town approximately \$600,000.

Agenda Item #2: Emergency Management (291) budget

- Chief Nelson and Chief Mentzer presented the Emergency Management (291) budget:
  - The only expense in this budget is for our \$3,900 subscription to the Code Red service. Code Red allows town officials to make town-wide calls to notify residents of emergency situations. Some committee members and others noted that Code Red could probably be used more frequently than it has been in the past, but without going overboard in a way that could diminish the "emergency" nature of the service.
  - **MOTION:** Connie Benjamin moved to approve the Emergency Management (291) budget as submitted, for a total of \$3,900; seconded by Ted Kirchner. **VOTING IN FAVOR:** Brad Cote, Connie Benjamin, Ann Hurd, Ted Kirchner, Joe Myerson, and Brian Boyle. **VOTED AND PASSED. UNANIMOUS (6-0).**

Agenda Item #3: Fire (220) budget

- Chief Mentzer presented the Fire Department (220) budget:
  - Setting aside the salary/wage portion, the fire department's operational budget was essentially level-funded. (\$57,403 in FY18 vs. \$58,803 in FY19.) The only increase, of \$1,400, was in the Uniforms line item. The department has contractual obligations to provide a Class A dress uniform to each firefighter. The proposed increase is to account for two potential new firefighters.
  - Brad asked Chief Mentzer for an update on the Water Holes project. Chief Mentzer said that the town is more than half-way done with the project. Brad noted that it would be beneficial for this project to appear on the town's website to show the progress that has been made. The idea is to demonstrate value to the taxpayers.
  - The bulk of the remaining discussion with Chief Mentzer focused on (1) the proposal for a new staffing plan, and (2) capital requests.
- Proposed New Staffing Plan – Two per diem Firefighter/EMTs:
  - Chief Mentzer explained that during the daytime, we have had difficulty finding firefighters to respond to calls. We are now down to a small corps of 4 daytime firefighters, and it is very rare for all 4 to be available at the same. Chief Mentzer provided data showing that, between 2013 and 2017, our response time per call has increased, while the average number of

firefighters per call has decreased. In other words, it is taking longer for us to respond to a call, and we have fewer people available to respond. In Chief Mentzer's view, the minimum number of people needed for a call response is six people.

- To address this issue, Chief Mentzer is proposing (a) in FY18, we would add two per diem firefighter/EMTs for daytime shifts Monday through Friday, and (b) in FY19, we would continue with that staffing, ideally by making those two positions full-time rather than per diem.
- Chief Mentzer and Ambulance Director Margy Diaz also noted that a large percentage of the fire department's calls are for motor vehicle accidents. (In 2017, motor vehicle accidents accounted for 32% of our total calls.) The dispatch policy from Devens is that whenever there is a potential for injury from a vehicle accident, firefighters are automatically dispatched if an ambulance gets sent. Chief Mentzer noted that it can be de-motivating for firefighters to respond in the middle of the night to a motor vehicle accident when they are not really needed, but he also acknowledged that the policy is set by his peer group of fire chiefs.
- Town Accountant Ninotchka Rogers queried whether the request for FY18 could even be granted (without a special town meeting) because it wasn't previously appropriated. She and Don Lowe wondered whether such an expense could be considered "unforeseen."
- Chairman Cote said that we will need to continue the conversation on this issue and vote on the budget at a later date after receiving more information from Chief Mentzer.
- Capital Requests:
  - Engine 4 Replacement, presented by Deputy Chief Gery Wilson and Firefighter Matt Bosselait.
    - The department is proposing to replace a 1986 International Chassis with a modern 4-person cab and a modular hook lift body system with three interchangeable bodies: a brush body, an ice rescue/command body, and a utility body. The basic idea is to invest in one prime mover chassis that can be paired with modular bodies with distinct functions.
    - Deputy Wilson noted that we already have garage space for this type of equipment. He also noted that the cost to purchase a single-purpose brush truck is about \$175-190K. Such a truck would not be used from November through March. The advantage of the proposed capital item is that it would function year-round.
      - The current Engine 4 is the primary attack vehicle for all outdoor fires and ice/water rescue incidents. Although brush fires make up only 3% of our total calls, the duration of such calls is usually quite long.
    - In response to a question, Deputy Wilson noted that they did not apply for a vehicle grant this year because they were denied for the past two years, and vehicles are not currently high on the FEMA list.

- Chairman Cote said that we will need to continue the conversation on this request and vote on it at a later date. For next time, Selectman Stan Wysocki asked that the department provide additional information regarding what percentage of calls we would be unable to make without this proposed vehicle.
- In response to a question from the town accountant about the certainty of the \$275,000 estimate, Deputy Wilson said that he has sent out RFPs but we don't have solid numbers back yet.
- SCBA Fill System, presented by Chief Mentzer.
  - The SCBA system is the equipment that provides firefighters with clean air to breathe. Chief Mentzer explained that the current air compressor is 12 years old and has failed three times in the recent past, which has diminished his confidence in the system. The estimated cost is \$44,000.
  - Ted Kirchner noted that he would like to see a compelling case for the replacement of the system, based on data that establishes the need and the impracticability of a maintenance-based solution. Chairman Cote said that we will need to continue the conversation on this request and vote on it at a later date.

Agenda Item #4: Ambulance (231) budget

- Ambulance Director Margy Diaz presented the Ambulance Department (231) budget:
  - Margy level-funded for FY19, but she also supports Chief Mentzer's request for two additional Firefighter/EMT per diem positions. Margy further noted that if the state does not permit another waiver for the student cadet EMT program, her daytime staffing needs will increase dramatically. Margy explained that the cadet program has been in place for 30 years and it is a key source of EMT staff resources during the day (7:15am – 5:00pm).
  - The Wages-EMT Call/Training line is for responding to calls or for training time. That is level-funded at \$60,000.
  - The EMT Cadet Program line (\$18,620) includes expenses for the instructors and the program coordinator. Margy noted that the Year 1 class is free to any adult in Bolton.
  - The Purchase of Services line (\$5,500) is for things like CPR instructors.
  - The ALS Services line (\$30,000) is for advanced life support (ALS) accompaniment services. When our ambulance uses ALS accompaniment due to medical necessity, we tend to get reimbursed at a higher rate, so there is some cost recovery from the patient/insurer.
  - The Coastal Medical Billing line (\$6,500) is for the billing company that brings in our receipts.
  - Everything else is level-funded and the run-rates for FY18 appear to be on target.
  - Margy confirmed that the Ambulance Department does not have any capital requests for FY19. Brad noted that even if she doesn't have a capital request

in a given year, we would still like to see an overall 5-year capital plan to help us plan for the future.

- **MOTION:** Connie Benjamin moved to approve the Ambulance Department (231) budget as submitted, for a total of \$185,778; seconded by Ted Kirchner. **VOTING IN FAVOR:** Brad Cote, Connie Benjamin, Ann Hurd, Ted Kirchner, Joe Myerson, and Brian Boyle. **VOTED AND PASSED. UNANIMOUS (6-0).**

Agenda Item #6: Advisory Committee business

- There were no minutes to review or approve.

Adjourn: **MOTION:** Joe Myerson moved to adjourn at 9:30 PM; seconded by Ann Hurd. **VOTING IN FAVOR:** Brad Cote, Connie Benjamin, Ann Hurd, Ted Kirchner, Joe Myerson, and Brian Boyle. **VOTED AND PASSED. UNANIMOUS (6-0).**

Documents Referenced

Departments' FY19 budget submissions

Handouts from Chief Nelson regarding the Ford F-150 pursuit-rated response vehicle

Handouts from Chief Mentzer providing data related to the proposed new staffing

Approved by Advisory Committee 1/10/18