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Advisory Board
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February 10, 2011 Meeting Minutes

Attending: Dan St Jean, Ron Mikol, Harold Simmons, Christine Muir, Joe Dean

Also attending: Selectmen Kevin Welch, Walter Alterisio, and Ken Leva; Police Chief James Downes

Absent: Dana Metzler

Meeting opened at 7:06 p.m.

Approve Minutes

The board postponed the review of the February 7, 2011 meeting minutes to give everyone more time to read them.

Police Department FY 2012 Budget Request

Police Chief James Downes met with the board to review the Police Department's budget request for FY 2012. He focused on wages in his narrative because he feels that is the most important under-funded item at this time.

Wages/Schedule

The chief has cut 512 hours from his current schedule to avoid overspending for FY 2011. Ron asked if the department would still be overspent if they had not lost one officer, and the chief said yes. Approximately 284 hours of the 512 were not affected by the vacated position.

Overtime

The chief has requested \$156,000+ for Overtime wages and the board's current recommendation is to level-fund the amount from FY11, which is almost \$80,000. The difference is \$76,000. The Overtime Wages line item pays for officers covering each other's court times, vacations, and holiday time off. The officer taking the vacation or holiday time is paid from the Police Wages line item.

Ken Leva asked if the amount of overtime changes by season and the chief replied that it can, depending on snow storms in the winter and increased crime rate and events requiring police presence as the weather warms up.

The Selectmen would like to work with an Overtime number of \$118,000, which they arrived at during a discussion with the Chief earlier in the week. The Chief said he calculated this amount as 284 hours times an average overtime rate.

New Hire

Dan asked when it makes sense to hire another officer instead of paying all the overtime costs. The chief said we aren't quite there yet because approximately \$76,000 of Overtime costs are related to covering shifts for vacations and holidays, yet another officer would only cover approximately \$22,000 of those costs. And Harold noted that another officer creates more vacation shifts to be covered, too.

In addition to the new officer's salary, the department incurs almost \$9500 of training and assessment costs when hiring a new person.

Priorities

Dan asked what the Chief would cut first from Overtime if we can't fully fund the FY12 request. He answered court time (\$17,500), overtime (\$27,000), and reserve officer wages (\$12,257), for a total of approximately \$57,000. The first two are variables and can't be accurately forecasted. The Chief noted that most of the officer training is state-mandated and cannot be cut from the budget.

Cruiser Lease Payment

The police cruiser lease payment for FY2012 is in the budget twice; it belongs in the New Cruiser Lease 2010 line item, acct number 0001-02-210-5850-2009-009. Joe added the correct amount in that line item and removed it from the New Cruiser Add Equip 2010 line item.

Police Expense Professional and Technical (training)

This line item request for FY12 (\$5000) is ten times higher than the amount allocated in FY11 (\$50). The Chief said this account is already overspent in FY11 and includes medical screening and psychological evaluation for the new officer, detective school, active shooting training, interrogation training, and other training classes. It was noted that the tuition costs for training come from this account but the officer's time for attending training is paid from the Overtime account.

Police Other Supplies

The increase in this line item request for FY12 is approximately \$11,000 higher than the FY11 allocation and is because the account is already overspent this year. This line item includes an \$800 clothing allowance per officer, police identifications as required by the state, bulletproof vests, a sign for the station, gear for the new officer, and a cruiser medical bag.

(While some line items are overspent, the total allocation is on target for the year so far. The overspending is likely due to the new accounting system and determining exactly which bills are paid from which accounts.)

Vests

The bulletproof vests currently used by the police should be good for another 3 or 4 years. The department received a reimbursement grant for the vests and the governor has said he will continue that program even though the federal government has stepped out of it.

Gas prices

The Chief said he is automatically given a discount of the sales tax amount; when he receives a bill from the gas station every two weeks, the sales tax is already deducted from the amount due. Kim would handle filing for any additional federal or state reimbursements.

License Plate Reader

The police department requests \$22,000 for a license plate reader to be installed in the cruiser. The camera records license plates on passing cars and checks them against a central database, alerting the officer to any fugitives, suspects, or cars under alert. It also saves a recording of cars passing the officer

so that if anyone is later searching for a particular vehicle in an area where the police were, there is a video record. This camera has the potential to generate revenue with unregistered vehicles or unpaid fines. The department's grant application for this camera was denied. It could possibly be funded through an article.

Recommendations

Harold noted that the recommended amounts in the current spreadsheet are sometimes higher than the requested amounts. All the recommendations at this point are simply a repeat of the FY11 allocations. Dan agreed that that board needs to review each budget line-by-line.

Select Board Recommendations

Kevin Welch would like to see the town's tax rate get a reduction this year. He said taxpayers have stepped up every year to fill in the budget as requested, and he feels it's their turn to get a break. But with a \$190,000 deficit based on current budget requests, we're not sure that can happen.

Kevin also suggested working with a 1% COLA initially, instead of 3%, and see where that puts the budget.

Kevin mentioned there might be an article on the Annual Town Meeting warrant to purchase a new roof for the town's property on River Street. He also suggested an article to fund a new floor in the police station.

Parks & Recreation Department FY 2012 Budget Request

No one from Parks & Rec appeared at the meeting to discuss their budget.

Meeting adjourned at 9:06 p.m.