

TOWN COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES
Wednesday, January 7, 2015

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Sullivan called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm.

ROLL CALL – ATTENDANCE

Donald Winterton, Todd Lizotte, James Levesque, Adam Jennings, Robert Duhaime, Susan Orr (arrived 7:40 pm), David Ross, Chairman James Sullivan, Dr. Dean E. Shankle, Jr. (Town Administrator)
Missed: Nancy Comai

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

SPECIAL RECOGNITIONS

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

a. Public: December 17, 2014

J. Levesque motioned to accept the public minutes of December 17, 2014 with edits. Seconded by D. Winterton.

Vote 6 in favor; A. Jennings abstained due to prior absence.

b. Non-public: December 17, 2014

T. Lizotte motioned to accept the public minutes of December 17, 2014. Seconded by J. Levesque. Vote 6 in favor; A. Jennings abstained due to prior absence.

AGENDA OVERVIEW

Chair Sullivan provided an overview of tonight's agenda.

D. Ross: I noticed a special recognitions agenda item. What is that?

J. Sullivan: Council changed the rules of procedure to add a section for presentations of special items like the Hooksett Youth Achiever or Boston Post Cane.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

None

CONSENT AGENDA

None

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

- Update on Lilac Bridge – The engineer is working with the Heritage Commission on things to be done related to how the historic nature of the bridge will be addressed. Next state meeting is January 21.

PUBLIC INPUT: 15 Minutes

None

NOMINATIONS AND APPOINTMENTS

None

SCHEDULED APPOINTMENTS

None

OLD BUSINESS

a. 14 – 101 Review of budgets and warrant articles: Police, Fire, Public Works, others as time permits.

Dr. Shankle: We'd like to take care of Community Development – there was one question from last time regarding the reducing the line 1-202.4240-434 for Code Enforcement Officer vehicle maintenance (\$4,000). Leo Lessard suggested it go to \$2,000.

D. Ross motioned to change the CEO Vehicle Maintenance line item from \$4,000 to \$2,000. Seconded by T. Lizotte. Vote unanimously in favor.

Chief Bartlett, Capt. Daigle, and Lt. Labrecque, Hooksett Police Department

J. Sullivan: Review major changes; if things stay the same we don't have to go over that.

Chief Bartlett: We are currently budgeted for 25 full time officers and 11 civilian dispatcher and support personnel. Sworn officers include myself, administrative captain, patrol lieutenant, 5 patrol sergeants, 12 patrol officers, and we currently have 2 vacancies, 1 detective sergeant, 2 detectives and 2 part time officers (one as school resource officer and one on an on-call basis). Our dispatch personnel include one dispatch supervisor and 4 dispatchers with one current vacancy. Full time salary line – we are looking for \$2,097,693.99 to cover expenses for full time salary personnel. Part time employee line we are seeking \$30,492 – which includes the school resource officer who works 30 hours/week in school district (9 am to 3 pm, M-F). The other part of that includes just over \$500 for the other part time officer – to make sure that officer receives mandatory training for certifications as if they were a full time officer. Some dollars will represent that person to cover shifts) i.e., holidays. OT line – we are looking for \$243,774. Line funding includes shift coverage for emergency response, officer court appearances, specialty events (Old Home Day and the Memorial Day parade). We took the number of personnel who receive OT and averaged 5 hours overtime/week for detectives, sergeants and patrol officers as well as 2 hours/week for dispatchers, and those averages are \$243,774. I know it's a dramatic increase over last year, but it's the same amount I asked for last year. I can't predict the number of court appearances or emergency responses. We thought the 5 hours/officer and 2 hours/dispatcher would be fair.

J. Sullivan: We are looking at the Town Administrator's budget so I want to caution all presenters that we have to have a balance.

Dr. Shankle: He spent a lot of time coming up with that number, and we disagree. I have no problem with him presenting it to you. What I've been doing is looking at past spending; so far this year he is closer to my number than his.

J. Sullivan: We are looking at the Town Administrator's budget but you can continue to present what you have been.

D. Winterton: Do you expect the OT line to decrease if the two open positions are filled?

Chief Bartlett: No, those positions are part of the calculation of the \$243,000. If every officer goes to court once a week, that is a 4-hour minimum and Concord is 5-hour minimum. I needed to have a formula for to make a prediction on overtime costs. I want to be able to say this is the reason I had this formula. It's hard to predict this formula. I'm comfortable coming to you with the formula I came up with. The 5 hours/officer and 2 hours/dispatcher is based on a full complement.

D. Ross: I understand that you are obligated to do what you are trained to do. But the reality is what can we afford and the only reasonable prediction you have is past performance. I'd be inclined to lean toward the Town Administrator's recommendation based on what has been expended so far this year.

Chief Bartlett: I understand your position and wanted you to know how I arrived at this number; it wasn't just something I pulled out of the air.

J. Sullivan: Going back to the previous year (\$147,000) who was involved in the 2013-2014 OT calculations? Did you use the same methodology you used this year? It's increased \$100,000 over 2 years.

Chief Bartlett: From what I remember, I believe Commissioner McHugh and I came here for the 2013-2014 budget and those average hour calculations were from the commission and they made sense to me. I'm not certain if \$147,000 was calculated by the rate of pay or if it was amended based on what the Council passed. The actual presented budget could have been higher.

Capt. Daigle: The figures we have used as far as the 5 and 2 hours haven't changed over the years. I think the Chief is right on the difference in salary.

T. Lizotte: I'm looking at this from the top view of the budget for town of Hooksett in terms of the \$14M budget. I know we haven't approved budgets yet, but I was thinking we might take notes from the police budget if there was some give and take in the rest of this budget or if there were ways we could find some savings. DPW/Trash, Fire and Police are the main areas we should concentrate on as what taxpayers want for services. We asked for a flat budget and got one that is \$48,000 below over the 2014-2015 budget; maybe we can take notes on critical things and hold to the Town Administrator's approach and if we find extra money, we can regroup and increase some of the other areas they have identified as things we need to shore up.

J. Sullivan: Can I ask you to comment on the NH Retirement line; there is a \$20,000 difference.

Chief Bartlett: That is because of the heightened overtime line amount. The uniform line - \$15,300 and that includes \$550 for employee ID badges and my figure of \$20,650 is to outfit mountain bike patrol officers to employ community insertion for officers to patrol (it's about \$4,800 to outfit an officer for shirts, shorts, helmets, shoes) to get that up and running. We did a pilot program last summer using detail gear but it's not conducive for long periods of time.

D. Ross: \$180 is all that has been spent this year on that line.

Chief Bartlett: There are some invoices that haven't come in yet due to the recent swearing in of 2 new officers. We are looking at about \$3,000 per officer; \$700 for ballistic vests, shirts/jackets/hats for the 2 officers will come out of this line.

D. Ross: That has been a reasonable expenditure over the years?

Chief Bartlett: Yes.

J. Sullivan: How often, on average, are uniforms replaced?

Chief Bartlett: They have an \$850 allowance for replacement items. We have a 5-year replacement program on ballistic vests; duty gear, holsters, etc. we have to have money to make those replacements on a regular basis. To outfit one officer is about \$4,500, not including the cost of firearms. We have some things in storage so if we don't have to buy things, we don't. If someone leaves, we can't issue tailored clothing to anyone so we need those dollars in the event we hire someone.

Dr. Shankle: The main difference between the Chief's figure and my figure also includes motorcycle officers he wanted to put in here. I was told to keep service levels the same and those were additions I pulled out. You will see later on that I pulled out money for motorcycles. That is what the differences are in the next few items.

D. Winterton: How many people are you outfitting for mountain bikes?

Chief Bartlett: As many as I can. Some won't want to do it, and I won't require them to do it. We have 4 that are currently certified. We borrowed some bikes from Manchester and we purchased a couple helmets for a minimal cost. I think this is something we can offer for a minimal cost and offer another level of community service. I want them to be on a more personal level with the residents and businesses in the community. There are areas you can't drive into; I was looking to expand this in the next year but we need the money to upstart the program.

R. Duhaime: Can you explain the 36 employees to me again?

Chief Bartlett: We are funded for 25 sworn officers currently; we also have 5 emergency service dispatchers and one supervisor; prosecutor; prosecutor's assistant, records clerk, administrative clerk, administrative assistant.

R. Duhaime: I thought the 2 part time officers were included in the 36 but they aren't. Do you have a budget line (contractual) for maintenance of uniforms – cleaning, etc.

Chief Bartlett: That is the \$850/year that is contractual. Motorcycle uniforms we calculated for 2 or 3 officers to ride. The most expensive item is custom boots – almost \$590/pair. That is another service we wanted to provide to the community. We can make determinations from the data collection on deployment of resources – it doesn't make sense to have one officer sitting on the road monitoring a speed problem when there really isn't one there. Software gives you enforcement times; it's a great investment to make for deployment of resources. A motorcycle officer allows for a visual community service and better traffic maneuverability. PSSG audit mentioned community relations and I thought it would be a good addition to the department.

D. Winterton: The fuel line looks like you are underspent this year so far. Would it be appropriate to move money from that fuel line to the training line?

Chief Bartlett: I don't know. I'd have to do a little more research on that. We buy gas from DOT on a state bid so we get it at whatever the state cost is. I don't know when they make cost adjustments, but the cost we pay is calculated at the beginning of the season.

Capt. Daigle: They only project what amounts to 6 months of our budget. That is the best guestimate from the state with their projections.

J. Sullivan: That could be a possible consideration for a cut or move to another area.

T. Lizotte: They could always do budget transfers. I was thinking that if there are certain initiatives and there are ways to leverage off existing funding, we can increase this initiative for the benefit of public safety. We directed the Town Administrator to give us a level budget and he came in just below. If we can find a way to leverage off existing funding sources either through revenue streams that are out there we can tap into and reduce costs, I'd think we can talk to the Town Administrator and see if there is a happy medium in regards to the different departments where we might increase or decrease lines.

Dr. Shankle: I was after level services. I think mountain bikes are a good thing. The question is if you want to spend the money on these things.

J. Sullivan: We talked about motorcycle uniforms; where is the money for the motorcycles themselves?

Chief Bartlett: Further down, we are coming to that. Moving to training and dues, a lot includes membership dues and professional fees, subscriptions, other types of professional organizations; things we need to maintain communication and membership in so we can have good communication throughout the state when it comes to contacts and networking. RAD dues (rape aggressive defense training) – RAD classes sell out so we have to maintain certification so we can continue to offer that class. Supervisors need to be Justices of the Peace so they can swear to warrants and complaints for officers; annual publications we need to have. Training, conferences, specialty schools – training is a precursor for a more professional organization, which is something I heard from the time I was hired here. The costs include travel, professional development seminars, etc. These dollars will support the recommendation from PSSG audit that we provide more training so we can have a more professional organization.

J. Sullivan: Can you explain the difference?

Dr. Shankle: In 2013-2014, \$11,296 was spent; \$6,656 has been spent so far this year. I'd like to see them spend \$25,000 before they get \$35,000. I'm a big fan of training but clearly we haven't been spending that much in the past.

Chief Bartlett: \$7,500 is for tuition reimbursement per the personnel plan. It's not always taken advantage of, but I want to have it in the budget if I have supervisors that reach that limit over the course of the year. It's non-contractual, and I do have supervisors that use it. It's not always fully used.

Dr. Shankle: Last year the Budget Committee brought up the amount of money going into training was increasing everyone's budget, and it wasn't getting spent.

J. Sullivan: Everything else looks pretty much in line with the past years.

Chief Bartlett: Let's go to the rentals and leasing: Harley-Davidson has a police motorcycle leasing program where for \$3,960 they will lease us one motorcycle. That is a one-year lease including maintenance, light boxes, siren package. You pay for the entire year, even though it's a seasonal vehicle. I don't believe it's a huge expense but it goes back to an added community enhancement tool. I think this program would be well-received in the community.

T. Lizotte: If we have 2 cruisers on the road now, it would take over one of the cruisers? What are we figuring for utilization?

Chief Bartlett: If we had it, it would be used on the day shift and the 4-12 shift; it depends on how many officers are certified to ride it. They have to go to police motorcycle training. If I have 2 cruisers on the road and replace it with a motorcycle, the car is not going to get used. I look at it as a community relations tool. There is something impersonal about a police cruiser that drives through a neighborhood. I've seen them work in the past. They are a great tool when it comes to motor vehicle and speed enforcement.

T. Lizotte: If you had to choose between mountain bikes and motorcycles, since it's a bigger amount, are you more inclined to pick mountain bikes over motorcycle?

Chief Bartlett: I'd pick mountain bikes first. For a lesser amount of startup money, we could get 2 bikes with fully outfitted officers in use. It is a lot easier to implement than motorcycles. I already have certified officers for mountain bikes.

R. Duhaime: Doesn't Auburn have a motorcycle officer? They say it aids enforcement because you aren't easily visible. We are in a town with 3 highways; I don't know if I'd want a bicycle on 3-A or DW Highway. I'd rather see an officer on a Harley on those main roads.

Chief Bartlett: Mountain bike application is limited in this area. It's a community tool; you aren't going to do any enforcement on 3-A, but if you ride through the parking lots or in neighborhoods that are congested those are the areas they will be effective. If the officer gets out of the cruiser on the mountain bike, you have to account for the time it takes to get back to the car. I think it would be a great service. We had them in the parade and people loved them.

T. Lizotte: What kind of alternative revenue sources you've had over the past year?

Chief Bartlett: Grants are available and we have received them. In order to fill those slotted positions, I had to fill shifts so officers couldn't work overtime for the grant enforcement and be on shift at the same time, so we had to prioritize. We didn't have enough personnel to utilize the grant money to its full potential, so we had to give the money back. We have to have the resources to fulfill the grant obligation.

J. Sullivan: A motorcycle patrol would take the place of a regular cruiser, so if we adopt some sort of motorcycle patrol, I'm looking at vehicle replacement of \$38,000, we just saved \$36,000 by having a motorcycle patrolman. Would that reduce the number of cruiser replacements?

Chief Bartlett: No because they are seasonal vehicles. I'm not going to put an officer out there in inclement weather. It won't be a replacement for a cruiser but will be an augmentation.

J. Sullivan: We could ultimately get longer use out of vehicles in the longer term.

Chief Bartlett: That is a possibility.

D. Ross: I can see the mountain bikes being well-received by the public. We are trying to be fiscally frugal by not expanding services. I see a motorcycle as being a big expenditure and on that is pretty overt as well. The message we are getting is to be frugal with our spending and hold our services. I think it's a great idea, but timing is the key issue here. Once we add something, it becomes part of the budget moving forward.

D. Winterton: Under PD Vehicles and Related Purchases it looks like a request for 2 new cruisers (\$74,000), but under what has been spent so far this year it's only \$36,000; do we have one on order or do we not have one coming in?

Chief Bartlett: We have one that recently came in so the numbers probably aren't updated yet.

R. Duhaime: Do you have a list of aging vehicles?

Chief Bartlett: Tab 23 lists them.

R. Duhaime: We don't have a line item for replacement of cruisers like the CIP that is budgeted every year. We moved it to the budget.

Dr. Shankle: CIP was different this year but the real difference is if it's in the budget or a separate warrant article. It was decided to put it in the budget since it's equipment.

Capt. Daigle: Some years we have asked for one, some years 2. It's been staggered. To reduce the number of warrant articles we put it in the budget.

Dr. Shankle: The intent is to go with 2 every year now.

Chief Bartlett: We are in a replace/repurpose program now. At one point we had 12 cruisers; we have reduced that by 4 since I've been here because they weren't necessary. You get about 3 years/100,000 miles out of a car.

R. Duhaime: The new SUV is included in the 12; wasn't it a higher amount for the SUV?

Chief Bartlett: \$28,000 is for the vehicle and \$8,000 is for outfitting since we can't reuse any of the outfit equipment from the older vehicles. As time goes on, it will be just conversion once the fleet is all up to date.

D. Ross: I noticed there is a motorcycle on the equipment list.

Chief Bartlett: It's a 2005 Yamaha dirt bike that we don't use. It was purchased on a grant. We are trying to figure out what the best application for it would be. I don't have anyone certified to drive it. We have an ATV purchased with grant money that we don't use either and it's unfortunate. These are things that we are trying to clean up since I've been here.

J. Sullivan: There were some areas of discussion that could result in changes and I'm not sure how that will go. We should cover the warrant article right now.

Chief: I think there are actually 2 (tab 21). The first one is "to see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$388,586.00 for the salaries, overtime, benefits, including uniforms and equipment to hire four (4) new full-time police officers. These officers will raise the total compliment of sworn officers to 29 and fund four out of the five positions approved by the voters 536 to 349 in May of 2003. This will allow the department to staff three officers and a supervisor per shift." I'm not sure what happened in 2003-2004 but it was voted to add 5 officers, but now they are not funded. Our current status of 12 patrol officers is 0.8 on the northeast average of 2.8 officers per thousand of population. Hooksett's population is 15,000 and we are at 0.8 officers/thousand. Comparative crime reports from 2013-2014, we see increases of aggravated assault by 122%; shoplifting increased as well (we had more shoplifting arrests in 2013 than Concord); fraud cases had 167% increase; weapons violation increased 50%. We had 614 arrests in 2014, 464 in 2013 which is a 24% increase. The average time associated with arresting one person is 2 officers at call, transportation, booking, processing and possible transport to Merrimack House of Corrections. Often when we have a 2-officer call there is no-one to answer calls other than the supervisor. If we have another 2-officer call we are depending on mutual aid from surrounding towns and are beholden to their availability. I would like to be a proactive force, not reactive. We had a 13% increase in calls for service between this year and last year. The only way to accomplish that is through this warrant article.

J. Sullivan: I don't recall the reasons for the change in number of officers, but it was passed and we never fulfilled the obligation to fill those. In 2003, that was prior to the 2010 census and we have increased dramatically. If not the full amount, there might be an option to do it in steps to get closer to the full complement.

Chief Bartlett: I will take anything the Council supports in terms of additional personnel.

D. Ross: I agree; why bite off more than we can chew. Can we change the way the warrant article was drafted?

Dr. Shankle: He is asking you to do the warrant article.

Chief Bartlett: This is just an example.

D. Winterton: I'd support increasing the staff. Could you enlighten this crowd to the statistic of heroin deaths in this town over the last year and a half?

Chief Bartlett: Hooksett's not immune; the last overdose death we had marked 10 in the last 13 months in Hooksett alone. The amount of narcotic traffic that runs through this town is astounding. There is a lot of crime here and to be able to be proactive to mitigate some of that is only accomplished if we aren't strictly a reactive force. We need to increase our staffing to do that. If officers are tied up on an accident, we have to rely on mutual aid from other communities. That is designed for a catastrophic incident, not to respond to an alarm. That will have to wait. These quality of life cases that affect the community – we have to have a police force to provide proactive abilities instead of reactive abilities. I understand you have a responsibility to your constituents but in my opinion we need to have a police force to mitigate those instances.

S. Orr: What is the average percentage of officers to population or recommended percentage?

Chief Bartlett: National average is 3.5 officers per 1,000 residents; in New England it's 3.0 and in Hooksett we are at 0.8. We have 12 patrol officers for 15,000 residents. We are at 1.6 if you include the full complement of officers.

S. Orr: You mentioned accidents on state roads. To what extent can state police be called to accidents on state roads?

Chief Bartlett: If a trooper is on the interstate and there is an accident in Hooksett, it's in our jurisdiction to take that accident. If we choose to call on the state for that accident, we are beholden to their availability. We can call them for assistance but they aren't the emergency responders. They come in after to help us build a case to see why the accident happened.

S. Orr: My concern is the voters are disinclined to approve warrant articles that add a big chunk to the tax rate. If we go ask for 4 officers, that is a big chunk of money. I'd rather you get 2 instead of none. I'm concerned that 4 won't pass, but this might be something voters think is very important. I'd like to see you get something.

Chief Bartlett: I'd appreciate anything to add to my current staff. Anything is better than nothing.

J. Sullivan: I see you have another request.

Chief Bartlett: We have another warrant article "To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate the sum of \$18,657.00 (eighteen thousand six hundred fifty seven dollars) for the police department to hire a part time clerk/receptionist to work no more than twenty four (24) hours per week." I have a full time receptionist/clerk who is responsible for pistol permitting, report copying, and any clerical/paperwork duties. I don't have a full time evidence technician. That was job shared by a detective. I've taken the receptionist and trained them as an evidence technician and is currently job sharing with reception. This is a crucial position. I'd like to have this so someone can work at the front counter while allowing my current receptionist/evidence tech 3 days in the evidence room to do a full audit/inventory/purge of the

entire system. We have been doing this for 18 months and sometimes there is no time. The longer it goes, the more we are open to issues down the road.

D. Winterton: I'd support every attempt at bringing in part time staff. What you are asking for in terms of cost is what we are paying for a full time person's benefits. I'd like a 2 or 3 part time staff; the benefits package is strangling us.

J. Sullivan: Seeing no further questions, thank you very much.

5 MINUTE RECESS

J. Sullivan: Now we have fire; Chief Williams, Deputy Chief Hoisington and Assistant Chief Jore. We are using the same process as with police so please highlight any changes and we'll ask questions afterwards.

Chief Williams: Our proposed budget decreased by 1.7% (about \$70,000). Savings comes from 3 senior people that have retired and were replaced by entry-level or junior people. Fire warden's part time position was not filled and was moved to my job function so there was a savings. Health insurance costs went down due to the new hires. We separated out, using our new software, the EMS from fire calls. We took EMS calls out of the ambulance revenue account. The increases are: fire hydrant rental fees; SCBA replacement parts; new software and service agreements with Fire House. There are 3 warrant articles which we can go over after.

J. Sullivan: It looks like you are pretty much in agreement with the Town Administrator.

Dr. Shankle: There are just a couple – the only one I'd like to highlight is FD Operating Equipment; I dropped it \$7,000 which is a replacement generator for Station 1 but we put it in Highway.

J. Sullivan: The OT line - I know there is a warrant article for a new firefighter; can you talk about CBA coverage? It was \$206,000 last year.

Chief Williams: This is due to contractual raises which increased the overtime. CBA is collective bargaining agreement. The warrant article was for an additional firefighter which would be funded through overtime. Page 4 of FD backup shows the lines which would be struck if we hired this position.

S. Orr: Wages has a column for incentives but I don't see that in any CBA material. What is that?

Chief Williams: In the contract, there are certain levels of certification that they get a set dollar amount as an incentive.

S. Orr: Every one of these firefighters is reaching a goal this year?

Chief Williams: This is what they have currently.

S. Orr: My impression of an incentive is if you do this, then you get this. But they continue to get it even after they have reached that goal? That is part of the contract?

Chief Williams: Yes.

T. Lizotte: You looked at the calls and figured it to be 50%; looking at the warrant for adding one firefighter/EMT at \$71,000 and saying it will offset from overtime. That is not factored in at this time?

Chief Williams: Correct. It was in the operating budget, but was removed after I met with Dr. Shankle.

T. Lizotte: We have ambulance service 24/7 and it's been indicated we run 2 per call. Couldn't we bypass a warrant article and place the \$71,000 in the ambulance fund and reduce the OT rate and get an extra benefit to the taxpayers in terms of reducing the overtime rate by \$71,000?

Chief Williams: I think we could look into it but I believe the warrant article was specific to ambulance only.

T. Lizotte: How do we calculate 50% of the calls?

Chief Williams: We took the EMS only calls out of the total number of calls.

T. Lizotte: Salary lines are a collective line so I see no reason we can't take \$71,000 from that line and add it to the ambulance fund and know that funding an extra staff person would be a savings of \$140,000.

J. Sullivan: Christine can that be accomplished?

C. Soucie: If you can relate it to ambulance, yes; it depends on how you relate it.

Chief Williams: There is a state RSA that we can get clarification from.

J. Sullivan: If we make it part of the ambulance fee, who could dispute that?

C. Soucie: A resident but they could say that about anything we make cases for.

Dr. Shankle: We saw it as adding a new position; if we are going to think how you are suggesting, it's possible. We followed the standard.

Chief Williams: At one of the last meetings, one of the Councilors had a concern about the overtime and this was a way to reduce that.

R. Duhaime: What is the call employees line on your budget?

Chief Williams: They are not volunteer – they are getting paid by the call.

R. Duhaime: Are you going to be going back to volunteer in the future?

Chief Williams: We aren't going back to a volunteer department, but we've added some call people. They aren't readily available people; they work full time jobs.

R. Duhaime: Part time employees would save the tax payer's money and would help your budget line. There are a lot of ambulance calls; how many positions do you have now you can phase in to a call employee instead of hiring a full time firefighter whose benefits and pension we have to pay?

Chief Williams: We have added 2 call people but they aren't there when we need them.

R. Duhaime: You can see the cost savings I'm looking at. I'd like to see something like that before I approve another firefighter.

J. Sullivan: In the process of looking into an additional firefighter, should we look into funding it through ambulance?

T. Lizotte: When we look at this as a total budget, we need to find revenues we can tap into to shore up different areas without increasing the burden to taxpayers. 50% of the calls are ambulance related. I'd like to consider taking one paramedic (or multiple paramedics) and fund that through ambulance revenue and reduce that on the budget and look at other places on our budget to shore up.

J. Sullivan: OK we will put that in our side notes.

D. Winterton: You said we have about 2200 calls and half are ambulance. Does that mean we have 1100 fire only calls per year?

Chief Williams: For fire alarms, rescues, fuel spills, hazmats, we do a lot more than just fires. We break it out by how many are just medicals and that is where the number comes from.

Dr. Shankle: What does "just medical" mean? When an ambulance goes to an auto accident, but does not transport, would it show up as a medical call?

Chief Williams: It would be considered a medical call.

D. Winterton: If an ambulance goes out for a heart attack call, do we send a tanker with it?

Chief Williams: We send an engine with it for additional personnel.

D. Winterton: Could we send 2 guys out in a Tahoe?

Chief Williams: Yes but they wouldn't be ready and prepared for a fire call. We are well versed in overlapping calls.

D. Winterton: Sometimes we have 6 per shift, sometimes 7. Do we add in overtime to make it 7 or do we add it to make it 6?

Chief Williams: At times we do. If we have peak times we need to fill, we will. We have 6 per contract but we are more efficient when we are at 7. That's why we are trying to bring all shifts to 7.

S. Orr: I'm not familiar with procedure. How many on average go out per call?

Chief Williams: For an alpha level medical call, it's the ambulance all by itself. If it's an echo level cardiac arrest, it could be both stations. We have priority dispatch so it's dictated by how it comes into 911.

S. Orr: Call employees – we talk about the importance of staff being properly trained and certified in ALS. Are they trained, what is their level of training, do we pay for the training?

Chief Williams: They have basic skills like a level 1 firefighter; one of the newer ones has no EMS training and the other has basic EMS training.

S. Orr: How do you choose who you hire for that position? I'd assume you would want someone with some training.

Chief Williams: It was a regular town process on how we post for jobs.

S. Orr: Did we ask for training or certifications?

Chief Williams: The standards are a little lower for a call firefighter.

S. Orr: We have 7 in the station; under what circumstances would you use a call employee?

Chief Williams: It depends on the situation, what type of incident it is. When mutual aid comes in is when we call off duty people.

Discussion of full time vs. volunteer firefighter requirements.

J. Sullivan: Can we use the ambulance revenues to offset the areas where there is some overlap? If we can find ways to use 100% of revenues generated from the ambulance service that is a good idea. You did clarify that not all ambulance calls require several different vehicles, based on your priority of calls.

Chief Williams: Priority dispatching determines who goes to each call. A full complement is not always dispatched. Alpha level calls are the ambulance only.

D. Winterton: The ambulance service expense line – we have almost \$70,000 in overtime that ends up there plus \$20,000 in retirement. If we put 2 staff in there, at 50% of the business which is ambulance, that makes sense to me. We would take it off the other budget.

Chief Williams: The RSA references what we can and can't do, but I think it's a possibility.

D. Winterton: We pay \$900 at both stations to have the sprinkler service inspected?

Chief Williams: I don't know what the service contracts are. We may have to talk to Leo.

D. Winterton: You aren't certified to tag it?

Chief Williams: We could flow test, but it wouldn't meet the full standards to put a tag on it. I'd have to refer that to Leo. It has to be done twice a year.

Dr. Shankle: We could pay to have someone certified to do that inspection but that would probably cost more.

D. Ross: The lines crossed out are legitimate savings if the additional person was hired?

Chief Williams: Yes, we would save because if we are at 7 all the time, we can run more efficiently.

R. Duhaime: On page 3 of 12, there is a line for a part time employee for \$1.

Chief Williams: We used to have a part time secretary. I don't know why it's in there.

Dr. Shankle: If you need someone to replace someone, you need that line or you couldn't pay them.

A. Jennings: You mentioned 1100 calls were ambulance only. How many of the 2200 included an ambulance? That would make it easier to justify using the ambulance funds.

Chief Williams: I don't have it but I can get it.

A. Jennings: Is there a line for occupancy permits? I want to make sure we are keeping up on those.

Chief Williams: Yes, I believe it's under office equipment.

T. Lizotte: I'd like to ask Dr. Shankle to investigate if we can utilize those funds to offset the manpower for paramedics by transferring that cost.

Dr. Shankle: 2 firefighters are tasked with emergency management unless they are fighting a fire so we can look at 2 from each shift. There is one paramedic on each shift we can look at. Another thing is if the CBA requires 6 per shift we could put the 7th person in ambulance. I'll look into all of this and come back with more information.

D. Ross: There might be a need to determine if we need to bring this to the voters. It was created with a warrant article – we may need to have another warrant article to alter the way we use the funds. When the rescue vehicles were purchased with impact fees, there may be certain verbiage in the warrant article requiring a warrant article to change it.

Chief Williams: I think that's why we need to refer to the state RSA it was written around.

D. Winterton: We are surrounded by towns whose fire budgets are a fraction of Hooksett's. Bow runs fire and ambulance for \$1.2M; we are \$4M. They have 6 full time employees and the rest they fill with call firefighters. Auburn does the same thing. Clearly the mandates we have through the CBA and state of NH have increased retirement rates. We match every dollar of salary with 29 cents to retirement funds. Because of advances in codes, we don't have as many house fires as we did. When you had the last fire, you called in other fire departments whose budgets are fractions of ours. We have a crime issue in this town. I'm not sure our fire safety issue today equates to the safety issue. We as Councilors have to address if we are using our money to provide the protective services that our citizens need, deserve and require. The bucket isn't bottomless. If there is a chance, to echo Councilor Duhaime, to add call firefighters I think that accomplishes it.

Chief Williams: We have looked at that and put on the additional 2 call firefighters. We have looked at ways to be more efficient.

D. Winterton: How many hours have we used those call firefighters?

Chief Williams: I think I've seen them twice over the past month. I don't know the exact hours.

D. Winterton: If they never get called, they are probably going to look at other towns that use them.

J. Sullivan: The issue regarding finding more part time employees in any department might be something to look at. Can we provide services needed on more of a part time employee approach, regardless of the department?

Chief Williams: Fire apparatus capital reserve fund we are currently asking for \$50,000; it has been in the CIP for 3 years. The current balance is \$152,224. The other is the SCBA replacement fund which has been in place for 7 or 8 years. We are looking for \$20,000 for that. The current balance is \$155,425.

Dr. Shankle: The warrant article for \$430,000 covers all the CIP items (tab 21) that passed last year.

A. Jennings: The current balance in each is a little over \$150,000; are those phased upgrades or saving up for a large purpose?

Chief Williams: Engine 2 replacement is in 2016-2017 and SCBA has life expectancies on the breathing apparatus we wear so that is for a complete replacement.

S. Orr: Could it be that they passed so easily because there were a lot of small numbers? If we put them all into one large one, could we risk none of them being passed?

C. Soucie: It will be one warrant article listing all the items so it's either yes or no on all of them.

A. Jennings: Can we work on the wording of the CIP warrant article, so the increase will be clear.

J. Sullivan: We are going to approve another \$430,000 broken into all the different line items. Those specific items will say "have no tax impact" but other ones will and we will clarify that.

Dr. Shankle: You're saying that you approved the 27 cents last year, so it's not on top of itself, it's again.

S. Orr: For some there is no tax impact and for some there is. Would it make sense to split them into two: one that has no tax impact and one that shows what the combined tax impact of the items are? We will still have fewer warrant articles.

C. Soucie: All of the items in the \$430,000 have an impact on taxes.

Dr. Shankle: Some that wouldn't have a tax impact have to be on a separate warrant article because that's the way they are written.

J. Sullivan: Thank you. Now we have Leo Lessard for Public works, tab 9.

T. Lizotte: Maybe we should start with the Town Administrator's budget since it's \$30,000 more.

J. Sullivan: Town Administrator is at \$214,000; highway department request is \$236,000.

Dr. Shankle: I tried to look at actuals; it's all small things.

T. Lizotte: I was looking at the total. The \$30,000 difference is in road maintenance.

J. Sullivan: Any questions on Highway Administration?

S. Orr: The \$18,720 - you had wanted to add a part time employee and that was cut?

L. Lessard: Yes.

J. Sullivan: Under vehicle maintenance the Town Administrator asked for \$100,000 and the department head asked for \$50,000.

Dr. Shankle: If you look at what was spent over 5 years, he has spent \$100,000 or more each year. It doesn't make sense to keep taking from another line.

J. Sullivan: Road maintenance – any additional questions?

S. Orr: Storm water permit – why was it there and then not there?

L. Lessard: That was for the process for the MS 4 was contracted out and then I took it over. We kept reducing it each year and hope that with the engineer coming on he can do that.

D. Winterton: Is street lights the electricity to run them?

L. Lessard: Yes.

D. Winterton: Can we switch to LED when we switch them out?

L. Lessard: PSNH was going to do it for tens of thousands of dollars but I'm going to wait until they burn out.

J. Sullivan: Any question on the Parks and Rec budget?

R. Duhaime: I'm looking at the amended budget and how large the increase was previously.

C. Soucie: Electricity and water were budgeted under DPW buildings and we re-allocated to Parks & Rec dept. That is why the increase is so large.

***J. Sullivan motioned to extend meeting to 9:40pm. Seconded by T. Lizotte.
Vote unanimously in favor.***

J. Sullivan: Building maintenance questions?

Dr. Shankle: I increased line item 436 by \$35,000 but we talked about moving things to where they make sense like the generator.

J. Sullivan: Leo do you want to highlight anything?

L. Lessard: No I'm all set.

S. Orr: What was your thought process when you put together the budget for road maintenance?

L. Lessard: I'm trying to make do with what we've got. Same as last year; it was a bad year and we went over a little bit. Hopefully the salt treatment works out.

D. Winterton: Do you get fuel under the state contract also?

L. Lessard: Diane does the negotiating for fuel and we buy from Diane. The price is going down so we are good.

D. Winterton: You have employees whose benefits almost equal salaries. I'd hope that we might consider 2 part time employees instead of one full time which would give us 3 part time employees for the same amount of money. Benefits costs are strangling us.

Dr. Shankle: Just so you know, Leo is down 5 people right now. We have been discussing hiring seasonal people instead of full time employees. We are going to advertise for that.

J. Sullivan: So this would be as people leave, not replace current employees.

Dr. Shankle: We are looking at filling open positions.

L. Lessard: We had an employee who left and we don't have an assistant crew chief in highway, only in the parks department. The way the union is set up, they can't tell each other what to do or discipline each other. I want to fill that open position with an assistant crew chief, non-union.

Dr. Shankle: We won't fill that vacant position but create a new position as assistant crew chief.

D. Ross: Is the position being eliminated?

Dr. Shankle: We will take it out of the budget and move the money over. In the contract it's an operator position, but there is still an operator; there were 2. It won't be a position that is funded anymore.

J. Levesque: What will this assistant crew chief do?

L. Lessard: He will be on job sites all the time since the crew chief can't be there all the time. He will also need operating experience so he can run a machine and supervise at the same time.

Dr. Shankle: On tab 21 there is a warrant article.

J. Sullivan: We will put it on the agenda next week to approve the job description.

***J. Sullivan motioned to extend to 9:45pm. Seconded by D. Winterton.
Vote unanimously in favor.***

NEW BUSINESS

None

SUB-COMMITTEE REPORTS

None

PUBLIC INPUT

Marc Miville, 42 Main St: It's refreshing to see a board thoroughly review a budget line by line. I haven't seen what this consent warrant article is about for \$430,000, but you bring up a whole new strategy as to what you want to accomplish for warrant articles. There were 16 warrant articles last year and they all passed but 1 and that only failed by one vote. To think everyone is going to vote for them again, not necessarily, because you are bunching them up for a total of \$430,000. That might get people thinking differently that way. I'd rethink that as there are so many variables – you are going to get so many "no" votes because you're not picking them out. Because everyone votes for them anyway, I think this obsession with limiting warrant articles needs to be rethought. I'd suggest you rethink the whole \$430,000 consent warrant article.

Dr. Shankle: I think we need to plan on meeting on Jan. 21 as well.

J. Sullivan: We will hold off that decision until next week to see how far we get.

***J. Sullivan motioned to adjourn at 9:46pm. Seconded by T. Lizotte.
Vote unanimously in favor.***

NOTE: The Town website www.hooksett.org may have attachments to these Town Council minutes for documents referred to in the minutes, reading file material, and/or ancillary documents that the Town Council Chair has signed as agent to expend as a result of the Council's prior approval of the documents.

Respectfully Submitted,

Tiffany Verney
Recording Clerk