

**STAFFING COMMITTEE  
MEETING MINUTES – October 23, 2013**

1:00 p.m. – Selectmen’s Meeting Room, 63 Main Street, Northborough, MA

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Members Present: Dawn Rand, Selectman  
Bill Pantazis, Selectman  
Elaine Kelly, Chair, Appropriations Committee  
Richard Smith, Financial Planning Committee  
Susan LaDue, Personnel Board – arrived at 1:20 pm  
John Coderre, Town Administrator  
Kimberly Foster, Assistant Town Administrator

Also Present: Mark Leahy, Police Chief  
Jean Langley, Library Director  
Kelly Burke, Senior Center Director

The meeting was called to order at 1:05 p.m.

Approval of Minutes

Mr. Pantazis moved the Committee vote to approve the minutes of the October 16, 2013 meeting; Ms. Kelly seconded the motion; all members voted in favor.

Police Chief Mark Leahy

Chief Leahy informed the Staffing Committee that the Department is currently staffed with 20 sworn officers, including himself and the lieutenant. During his presentation, Chief Leahy asked for 10 new police officers, adding that he would be agreeable with the addition of one new officer per year. He indicated that his top priority need is for a full-time resource officer at the Melican Middle School.

Chief Leahy presented the committee with data on how his department compares with other communities our size. The average is 1.77 officers per 1000 residents. Northborough has 1.37 officers per 1000 residents, which is 22.6% below the average. At average, Northborough should have 26 officers.

Chief Leahy’s presentation also included a review of the crime prevention measures that the department undertakes on a daily basis. He reviewed the statistical numbers of incidents handled by the department, as well as a historical look at how the department has been staffed since 1965. Committee members discussed the significant increase in incidents in recent years and it was determined that the increase was overwhelmingly driven by self-directed initiatives, such as 3,501 building checks, 1,308 bank checks, 479 vacation house checks, etc. The Chief indicated that he started tracking these types of preventative activities and adding them to the incident call records. The point was made that over 80% of the activities listed as incidents were preventative activities, which is

very positive, since officers doing these activities are immediately available to respond to an emergency call.

Chief Leahy expressed his disappointment that he did not receive the staffing that was endorsed by a majority of the Board of Selectmen in February 2005. Elaine Kelly made the point that boards and committees cannot bind future boards and committees, since it is impossible to know what will happen in future years. She further noted that the presentation was made to the Selectmen but never incorporated into the budget document or reviewed by the Appropriations Committee as part of the budget process.

Mr. Coderre indicated that he was not the Town Administrator in 2006, but the Staffing Committee spent a lot of time at its first meeting discussing how the economic environment has changed and the Town has since adopted comprehensive financial policies and a formal approach to measuring and protecting the Town's long-term financial condition. He mentioned that there will be another joint meeting of all the financial boards and committees in December to review the updated Financial Trend Monitoring System (FTMS) report, including the latest financial projections. A primary focus in the upcoming budget cycle will be how the Town can fund its \$28 million Other Post-Employment Benefit (OPEB) liability, which was identified in the last budget cycle as the top financial issue facing the Town.

Committee members asked additional questions regarding the various activities of the Department and were impressed at the high level of crime prevention activities provided and the relatively low amount of actual crime. Elaine Kelly asked if the request for a full-time resource officer was a priority of the School Superintendent and the Police Chief indicated that he had not spoken directly to the Superintendent about the position. Mr. Coderre indicated the position would cost approximately \$96,000 and that before proceeding, it would be important to have discussions with the superintendent and his staff to determine if this new position was a priority for the schools. The point was made that whenever you have limited resources and seemingly unlimited needs it is important to discuss those needs relative to each other.

The Committee thanked the Chief for his time and information, indicating that they will be in touch if they have more questions or require additional information.

#### Jean Langley, Library Director

Ms. Langley proposed the addition of one (1) part-time library assistant. This would enable the professional librarians time away from the desk to work on critical library jobs without frequent interruptions.

Ms. Langley also asked the Town to reassume the payment for the three pages that are currently being funded by Friends of the Library. The Friends of the Library recently expressed concern that their continued funding of \$10,000 per year for the pages would not be sustainable without cutting back funding for teen and children's programs, summer reading programs and the popular museum pass program.

Following a review of the staff's workload, Ms. Langley added that in FY2010 a decision was made to reduce the library hours from 59 to 53 by reducing hours on Monday mornings and Thursday evenings. The reduced schedule has continued to present, despite the increased library usage estimated at 400 visits per day, and the library building being expanding by almost 60%.

Lastly, Ms. Langley stressed the need for a facilities manager. She stated that the Town made a large investment in the library building and it should be protected, along with other Town buildings, old and new. She cited numerous ongoing and preventative maintenance issues that require the assistance of someone with technical expertise beyond her own.

Following Ms. Langley's presentation, questions and comments were heard from members of the Committee. In answer to a question by Elaine Kelly about the impact additional staff might have on operations, Ms. Langley responded that consideration could be given to bringing back some of the hours lost in FY2010 with the addition of a part-time library assistant.

#### Kelly Burke, Senior Center Director

Ms. Burke stated that there are three (3) full-time positions at the Senior Center. In addition there are five part-time van drivers that are fully funded by the Worcester Regional Transportation Authority (WRTA). The Bistro, operated by a part-time manager and with the help of volunteers, is open for lunch Monday through Thursday and dinner on Tuesday evenings. Approximately 1400 meals were prepared and served during the month of September. Revenues from the Bistro cover the wages for the part-time manager and all related operational costs. John Coderre indicated that the history and detail behind these positions, which are funded outside of the General Fund (tax based) budget, is available on pages 5-4 and 5-5 of the Town's FY2014 Budget Document.

Ms. Burke stated that there are approximately 3135 seniors in town. The population is trending upward, with 467 additional seniors over the past three years. Ms. Burke stated that the growth of the senior population and the success of the programs merits an increase in staffing. In addition to the one full-time administrative assistant, the Senior Center utilizes a great deal of volunteers for the day-to-day operations. Ideally, there should be two administrative assistants to provide volunteer supervision and to perform other administrative responsibilities. She also requested an increase in hours for the Bistro Manager. This would allow the Senior Center to offer a brunch on Friday and maybe add another evening for dinner.

Lastly, Ms. Burke echoed the presentation comments made by the Library Director with regard to the need for a full-time Facilities Manager. She spoke to the complexity of the geothermal heating system at the new Senior Center and the need for assistance in dealing with the various technical maintenance contracts and vendors. Similar to the Library Director, she indicated that her area of expertise is not in building systems maintenance, but that these duties are taking up an increasing amount of her time, which should be spent providing senior services.

Following Ms. Burke's presentation, questions and comments were heard from members of the Committee.

Mr. Coderre added that the new Senior Center is 14,000 square feet, compared to the former Senior Center that was just 1,400 square feet. Both the space and programs have greatly expanded, while the staffing level has remained the same. Mr. Coderre commended Ms. Burke for her innovative approach to providing services and programs in a manner that has kept the additional tax impact of the new center to a minimum. He also echoed her comments that her time is better spent on senior services and not building maintenance issues.

#### Other Business

Mr. Coderre informed the Committee that a meeting has been scheduled on December 3<sup>rd</sup> to discuss the updated Financial Trend Monitoring System and encouraged all Committee members to attend. It will be important to place staffing requests into an overall financial context so that the budgetary and tax impacts of decisions can be viewed over multiple years.

The Committee discussed the possibility of needing to hire a consultant to help analyze all of the data that is being presented, especially call data and statistics related to public safety services. Mr. Coderre stated that he and Assistant Town Administrator Kim Foster will work on drafting a scope of services for a consultant and will bring it back to the Committee for its review.

#### Next Meeting Date

Wednesday, October 30, 2013, 1:00 p.m. in the Selectmen's Meeting Room. The Committee will hear presentations from the Department of Public Works and the Planning Department.

#### Adjournment

3:05 p.m. – Ms. Kelly moved the Committee vote to adjourn; Mr. Pantazis seconded the motion; all members voted in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

Diane Wackell  
Executive Assistant

#### Documents used during meeting:

1. October 23, 2013 Meeting Agenda
2. October 16, 2013 Staffing Committee Meeting Minutes
3. Information packet – Police Chief Staffing Presentation
4. Information packet – Library Director Staffing Presentation
5. Information packet – Senior Center Staffing Presentation.