

Members Present: Gary Wells, Chair, Lisa Blazejewski, Peter Allen, Jim Tepper, Sharon Kaiser, Hank Rauch.
Absent: Beth Blumberg, Tara Howard, Ed Behn.

At 7:00 p.m. Mr. Wells called the meeting to order in Room 23 of the Forbes Municipal Building.

Approval of Past Minutes

There were no minutes to approve.

Chief Perron – Fire Department

Fire Chief, Nick Perron, and Captain Bob Rand from the Fire Department met with the AFC to discuss their budget and warrant article.

FY2016 – Budget: Chief Perron informed the Committee that his salaries and wages line item increased by \$67,831, or 2.7%, due to step and cost of living increases. His expenses have also increased due to being in the new building. Chief Perron started with his Building & Grounds line item since most of the increases are there. He explained that with the new building he has had to purchase maintenance agreements for the various electrical items that were installed. For example, the HVAC maintenance agreement will cost \$4,000/year. In addition, Chief Perron mentioned that general cleaning supplies increased to \$1,500 since they are cleaning a building three times the size of the old station. They also used the town bid process to hire someone to maintain the grounds outside the station. Chief Perron said that they need sanitizing mats for disease control (2 at \$125 = \$250), along with other sanitizing mats that will pick up hazardous materials for when fire personnel return from a call. Chief Perron noted the building UPS (uninterrupted power source) in case power goes down. They needed to purchase a maintenance agreement for the UPS system in the amount of \$1,500. He explained that the warranty covered the first 6 months so he only needed \$1,500 to finish out the year. Next year he will be requesting \$3,000 to cover the full year. The Chief noted a couple of other items such as the service for the mats at the entryways and also ice melt for \$625. He mentioned that there were no other line item changes until the cost for electricity. The Chief said he had budgeted \$14,000/yr, which would have covered the cost of electricity in the old station. Since moving in to the new building, their bills have been averaging \$3,000 per month.. Chief Perron said he is looking at \$36,000 per yr for electricity in the new building versus \$14,000 per year in the old building. Mr. Tepper asked if someone would be performing an audit to determine why the electric cost is so high. Mr. Tepper said he understands the building is bigger but with new construction it should be more energy efficient. Captain Rand mentioned that the Commissioning Agent is going through the building to figure out why the electric costs have significantly increased. There was a discussion about possible electrical sources such as the UPS system, air distribution system to control indoor air quality, and additional computers. The large overhead doors were pointed out where heat may be escaping, along with mention that the building is a single level now and not stacked. The next line the Chief mentioned that was increasing is for the gas heat. Again he had budgeted \$12,000 for the year for heat, but the bills he has received so far for the new building are around \$3,000 a month. Heating costs jumped from \$12,000/yr in the old building to \$34-\$36,000/yr in the new building. Chief Perron mentioned that Town Manager, Jim Malloy thought that some of the increase may be due to the extreme cold. There was a discussion about the electricity and heat going up. Chief Perron noted that Jim Malloy is recommending \$30,000/yr for electricity and \$30,000/yr for heat in the FY16 budget and he is comfortable with those numbers. Mr. Allen brought up his attendance at recent Municipal Building Committee meetings where he had heard the Chief mention that he may be coming to the AFC for help with additional payroll costs for when his employees were working on IT aspects of the new building. Chief Perron explained that back in the initial stages of the design process for the new station there was a whole lot of IT work that needed to be done and it was determined that our IT people were more capable of handling these needs rather than hiring outside people. Chief Perron pointed out the overtime line item for some of his key staff in the amount of \$57,000 which represents about 1,000 hours of

IT work. The Chief mentioned that he had three people retire last year that were at the top of the pay scale. He tried to hold off hiring new staff but did just recently hire two new people at the bottom of the pay scale. The Chief thinks he will be able to cover the overtime with savings from the retired personnel. The Chief pointed out that the move from the old station to the new one has been a little difficult since his budget has had to absorb additional costs for little items like new wastebaskets, cork boards, white boards, and cleaning supplies. He felt this should have been worked in to the cost of the new building. Mr. Allen commended Chief Perron on his work with the budget and the hard work of his IT people. He mentioned that the point of view from the MBC was that they were reluctant to add small items to the cost of the building that end up getting capitalized over 20 years, and would rather see these items taken out of the budget. Mr. Allen asked about flat roof and if it was holding up okay after all of the snow. Chief Perron said they haven't noticed any issues. The Chief did say that they had a good group of people working on the new Fire Station project and mentioned the architect, General Contractor, and most of the subcontractors. He felt they did a great job. Chief Perron also wanted to mention that in the overtime line there are weather related events included for extra personnel to check on the elderly and to open up the Emergency Operation Center (EOC) for people without power, which they also staff. Mr. Tepper asked about ambulance revenue and the Chief thinks they'll receive about \$700,000 this year. He mentioned that the ambulance revenue has gone down in recent years and pointed to the older communities and also the Spectrum House. If they bill for an ambulance call, Medicare/Medicaid pays about a third of what is billed out. The Chief said that the ambulance service is close to being self-supporting but he also looks at it as care for the community. Mr. Tepper noted that ambulance revenue received goes to the Town cash account with no tie to the expenses in the budget. Chief Perron informed the Committee that they are setting aside \$40,000 for the purchase of their next ambulance.

ATM – Warrant Article 12F – Radio Replacement: Chief Perron mentioned upcoming capital expenses such as the new fire trucks that the Town has started saving towards purchasing in a few more years. He also pointed out that they'll need a new ambulance soon which he hopes to pay for almost entirely out of ambulance receipts. If the vehicles that are to be replaced end up lasting, the new purchases will be deferred until the following year. The Chief mentioned that their vehicles tend to last longer due to the great care and maintenance they receive. Regarding Article 12F, the Chief said that he is requesting \$35,000 to replace 10 Motorola portable radios that are about \$3,500 per radio. He mentioned that they have a total of 40 portable radios but only the 10 oldest are being replaced. Chief Perron noted that the older radios were purchased in 2004 and are no longer supported by Motorola. Mr. Tepper asked if they will be replacing more radios next year. Chief Perron said the purchase of additional portable radios is not in his capital plan for next year but they may need to replace more in subsequent years. Chief Perron mentioned that the portable radios are a firefighter's lifeline. Mr. Tepper asked if the new radios have a GPS locator. Chief Perron said they do not - that technology is coming in the future but isn't quite there yet. Chief Perron explained that every radio is assigned to a firefighter and the radios come equipped with a red emergency button that, when engaged, allows Dispatch to tell who it belongs to. Captain Rand mentioned that WPI has been working on a GPS system for the portable radio units since the fire that occurred in Worcester that killed six firefighters. He said that in a multi-floor building it is easy to tell where in the building they are - but not what floor - so they are still tweaking the technology. Mr. Tepper pointed out that the warrant doesn't give the quantity of radios being purchased so he felt it was incomplete. He initially thought the \$35,000 was to replace all of the radios, not just a quarter of what they currently have. Mr. Allen suggested adding a footnote in the comment's section to clarify the quantity of radios being purchased.

ATM Preparation & Related Items

Mr. Allen requested a copy of the Council on Aging's report that they are presenting to the Board of Selectmen on Tuesday, February 24th. He would like to get a copy of the report prior to the AFC meeting with the COA on February 26th.

Chairman, Committee Liaison, and Department Liaison Reports

Mr. Wells informed the Committee that he is canceling the meeting scheduled for tomorrow night. He mentioned that the Country Club and Historical Commission are scheduled to come in on Thursday evening, February 19th. Mr. Wells also noted that Thursday night is the second extended open forum for residents to address the Committee with their concerns. On Monday, February 23rd, members of the School Department and School Committee are coming in to discuss Article 10 pertaining to the Gibbons renovations, and the COA is coming in on Thursday, February 26th. The Waste Water Treatment Plant is scheduled to be discussed on Monday, March 2nd. Mr. Wells hopes to begin working on votes for budget line items and warrant articles around department presentations. He has booked an extra meeting on Wednesday, March 4th, in case it is needed. The target date for completion of the R&R book is March 5th.

Adjournment

There was a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:11 p.m. The vote to adjourn was 6-0-0 in favor, with 6 being present.

Respectfully submitted,
Jessica Thomas
AFC Administrative Assistant