

Members Present: Gary Wells, Chair, Ed Behn, Lisa Blazejewski, Jim Tepper, Tara Howard, Jim Driscoll, Hank Rauch, Phyllis Jaffee, Beth Blumberg.

At 7:03 p.m. Mr. Wells called the meeting to order in Memorial Hall of the Town Hall.

Open Forum

There was no one here to address the Committee.

Approval of Past Minutes

There were no minutes to approve.

Police Department – Budget Review – Alan Gordon – Chief of Police

Police Chief Alan Gordon met with the AFC to discuss his department's FY17 budget. Regarding wages, Chief Gordon mentioned that the only increase right now is due to steps. He noted that he has two unions whose contracts expire June 30th. The Chief said that he will start pay negotiations and may have to make an adjustment in October. He pointed out that his total budget request for FY16 was \$2,863,803 and for FY17 it is \$2,868,211. Chief Gordon mentioned that he has an officer leaving after 12 years to go in to the private sector and he will be bringing in a new officer at a lower rate to replace him, which should offset any cost of living (cola) increases to his staff. Mr. Wells asked about the ages of the officers and if there was a broad spectrum or if there were retirements coming up. Chief Gordon pointed out that the next retirement will be his since he is required by law to retire at age 65. He may have two more officers following him. Chief Gordon pointed out that he has three veteran officers that were hired in the mid-1970's early 80's that are approaching retirement age. However, he mentioned that he never knows when someone will leave. Chief Gordon also noted that when his employees are out, he has to have staff to cover. He said that last year coverage was difficult since the snow storms hit us hard. Chief Gordon mentioned that in a normal year there is about \$120,000 in overtime, and some items, like holiday pay, he is required to cover contractually. Chief Gordon pointed out that there are 12 holidays and he has to multiply that by 35 employees. He noted that he tries not to go over what he has budgeted for his wages/overtime line item. Mr. Driscoll asked about one employee who gets paid through a grant. Chief Gordon said that is for a dispatcher since he gets a grant for \$38,000-\$42,000 through the FCC that he can use for either an employee or equipment. Ms. Howard asked about compensation time and also how special details are allocated. Chief Gordon said one of his officers can either take a day off or receive compensation time to use later. He referred to account #5111 where money is allocated to pay someone else to cover when an officer takes a day off using compensation time. Chief Gordon mentioned that as long as money is in that account, he cannot deny an officer a vacation day. He noted that regarding police details, whoever does the hiring pays the detail plus 10% to cover administrative costs for billing.

Regarding expenses, Chief Gordon said there are a couple of increases. He pointed out radio maintenance and equipment being up slightly. They have contracted with a company, CyberComm, to come out and maintain their system each year. They are also upgrading their radio system to fiber optics, which should be more efficient and eliminate issues with the system going down. Mr. Behn noted that money was appropriated for a new radio tower. Chief Gordon said that is still a work in progress. The company that purchased the building where the radio tower was installed is allowing the Town to keep their equipment in the building and to install a bigger tower on the roof to get rid of dead spots. Mr. Tepper mentioned that the Police turned money back in last year. Chief Gordon said that he tries to be meticulous with the budget and in his 13 years he's never gone over once. Mr. Wells noted the recent rash of bomb scares at schools across Massachusetts and asked the Chief how the police are handling these cases. Chief Gordon pointed out that the Police Department has a close relationship with the School Department

and Superintendent and they notify the police if there's anything suspicious. He mentioned that the safety of the students is important but they also want to minimize the impact of these threats so students can stay in school and continue their studies. Chief Gordon said that the Police Department has trained the schools and Town Hall staff on active shooters. They are planning on training the DPW and Senior Center staff as well. Chief Gordon said that people are taking note of the San Bernardino tragedy and members of the private sector have come to him asking for training.

Chief Gordon also wanted to warn residents of scams. They've had two people lose money from callers posing as the IRS. He said that if there's any question as to whether the call is authentic, notify the Police Department first. Ms. Blumberg asked about solicitors that call and want you to leave items on your door step. The Chief noted that residents can contact the State to see if a charity is legitimate. He also suggested that if residents want to donate to a charity they should go directly to that charity and eliminate the middle man who is usually taking a portion of what is donated. Mr. Tepper asked about door to door solicitations. Chief Gordon pointed out that people going door to door need to register with the police first and he gave the example of magazine salespeople. He also mentioned being aware of calls asking you to go on your computer, usually that is done to obtain personal information, and he also warned against calls saying you've won something. Ms. Blumberg asked about the Boy and Girl Scouts and Chief Gordon said that the police don't require charitable organizations to get a permit.

The Chief pointed out that he has one warrant article – #10F – for new cruisers. He noted that they go through MHQ in Marlboro to purchase new vehicles since they are on the State bid list. Chief Gordon mentioned that they are asking for two new cruisers at a cost of about \$47,000 each. They originally were looking to replace three cruisers but instead are going to purchase the 2014 Jeep that they've had for three years from Dan's Jeep. Chief Gordon said that every three years Dan's Jeep gives the Police Department a free three year lease on a Jeep. Dan's Jeep is offering another new Jeep when the lease is up on the 2014 Jeep in August. Dan's also offered for the Town to purchase the current Jeep for \$12,000. Chief Gordon pointed out that he has money left over from an FY14 article for purchasing cruisers since they were going to buy a Dodge Challenger but didn't have to after receiving the offer from Dan's for a free Jeep. Chief Gordon mentioned that he needs approximately \$95,000 for the two new cruisers, plus \$12,000 for buying the 2014 Jeep, plus lights and set up of the new Jeep, which comes to about \$115,000, less \$27,333 from the FY14 article = \$87,667. He noted that this will save the Town money and appreciated Dan's generosity and support. Chief Gordon referred to his handout for the Westborough Police Fleet and said that they are going to get rid of three vehicles as well. He mentioned that they are no longer going with Crown Victoria's since they prefer the SUV's, especially after last year's winter, so they are eliminating vehicles #22 and #26. He also said that the 2008 Taurus is going to go and mentioned that it is difficult to get criminals in and out of that vehicle. Mr. Wells noted that all vehicles now have idle time meters which records the idle time. There was a discussion about the idle time report, mileage report, and hours report, and how all three of these reports are used to calculate the true mileage on a cruiser. Mr. Driscoll asked if we are sure we are getting enough for the cruiser when it is out on a detail. Chief Gordon mentioned that they recently increased the rate charged from \$10/hr to \$20/hr since they looked at what other towns charge.

Fire Department – Budget Review – Patrick Purcell – Fire Chief

Mr. Wells welcomed new Fire Chief, Pat Purcell, to his first meeting with the AFC as Chief. Mr. Wells explained that the AFC usually likes department heads to review any changes to their budget. Chief Purcell mentioned that he has a slight increase to his expenses for FY17 which are mostly related to the new building. He pointed out the need for service agreements for items such as HVAC, overhead doors, kitchen suppression, the sprinkler system, generator, Plymovent, and having an uninterrupted power supply – which had the most sizable increase. Chief Purcell also said there was an increase to their communication needs for mobile radios, dispatch radios, and batteries for the portable radios. He mentioned that they had ten antennas fail this past week on their portable radios which they are hoping to upgrade soon. The Chief pointed out that their Verizon wireless account went up since they needed to add data plans to the iPads that are now included in the emergency vehicles, as well as for GPS. Regarding recording media, Chief Purcell said that they record calls at the station and have to change out discs monthly since they are required to keep a hard copy for 7 years. He explained that they now have an e-

dispatch app that is available on cell phones instead of paying for pagers for the staff. However, they do give an annual stipend of \$100-\$200 to cover the cost to the firefighters since they are using their own phones. Chief Purcell pointed out other costs that have increased which are related to repairs to their breathing apparatus and equipment, costs necessary to outfit a new firefighter, and professional dues and memberships for various associations they belong to. The Chief discussed patient billing for ambulance transports. They currently use Comstar who charges 3% of what they bill out. Chief Purcell noted that 3% is very good in their industry. He mentioned that they had 3,399 calls last year which broke down to about 2,223 for the ambulance and over 1,000 for fire. Chief Purcell said that they had approximately \$1.13 million in billing last year and noted that their collection rate is 70-75%. He explained the difficulties they encounter with collections and that he is going to be working to improve the ambulance billing process and collection efforts. Chief Purcell is also looking in to a rate increase for the ambulance since he isn't sure when the last increase occurred, and wanted to see what other town's charge. Mr. Wells asked about the breakdown between ambulance and fire calls and Chief Purcell said it is about 65-35% for the ambulance versus fire. However, the Chief noted that both the ambulance and fire are dispatched together for the safety of the patient and the staff. He pointed out that the equipment they use is heavy and they don't want the staff hurt or a patient injured. Ms. Howard asked about terrorism activity and Chief Purcell said that the firefighters are trained for mass shooters and also other situations like nerve gas and weapons of mass destruction. Chief Purcell pointed out that they did have decreases to their budget that helped to offset increases. Some of the decreases were for office equipment and telephone costs being down, elimination of medical equipment they aren't using, training and education since they took out the neonatal program and incorporated under pediatrics, a reduction in professional services, tools for radio boxes that are no longer required, and licensing for EMS is down. Chief Purcell mentioned that he understands the costs for the new building went up so he is trying to make sure all expenses are justified. Mr. Tepper pointed out the meeting he had with Chief Purcell regarding the FY17 budget and that he was impressed with Chief Purcell's commitment in getting detailed information to back up decisions made on the budget. Chief Purcell noted that he officially became Fire Chief on 11/10 and the budget was due 11/13. He pointed out that the next time he goes through the budget process that he will be more prepared after having the job for a year. Currently Chief Purcell is working on an overtime project, since there are 23 different categories for overtime, so he will have a breakdown for next year. He noted that it was a busy year with over a million dollars in fire damage, 3,400 calls, and three traffic fatalities. Mr. Rauch asked about telephone expense decreasing and Chief Purcell said that the MIS/GIS department is supporting that function now.

Mr. Behn wanted to discuss old articles with open balances. He noted CSX hazmat training where the department received \$230,000 but has only spent \$25,000 so far, and asked if we should be doing more hazmat training. Chief Purcell mentioned that they do have hazmat training but it is spaced out. Chief Purcell said that he thought the article specified that hazmat training should be done every other year over a number of years. The Chief said that he will double check to see if there are restrictions to the hazmat training and get back to the AFC. Mr. Wells asked about the status of the pumper truck repairs. Chief Purcell said those are ongoing. Mr. Wells pointed out that the article for the pumper truck repairs is from October 2013 and it still has a \$10,000 open balance. Mr. Wells asked Chief Purcell to check to see where the repairs stand and to close out that article if the money isn't needed.

Regarding salaries and wages, Chief Purcell mentioned out that the firefighters are awarded a 2% increase through their contracts. He also noted that he is asking for another Captain's position and eliminating a firefighter position, which will come in at an increase of \$13,000. The Chief explained that he is looking to improve inspection rates by having another Captain, along with decreasing overtime hours. Chief Purcell added that he'd like to increase the fee charged for inspections, which is currently at \$20 and hasn't seen an increase in 17 years. He noted that most towns charge \$50. In addition, Chief Purcell would like to have a Deputy Chief in the future, which would eliminate the extra Captain's position, since he has a heavy workload at his level. Mr. Wells pointed out that a Captain is needed on each shift. Chief Purcell said that was correct and an extra Captain would help with inspections, calls, and covering for employees on vacation so overtime isn't necessary. There was a discussion about the number of employees in the Fire Department and the Chief said that he has 22 paramedics

and 13 EMT's, who have dual roles as firefighters, since one needs to minimally be a firefighter and a paramedic in order to work for the Town of Westborough. Chief Purcell mentioned that he would like to have 8 employees per shift. He noted that we had to call other towns for back up over 80 times last year and we were called 90+ times to help surrounding towns. Chief Purcell mentioned that he has six part time firefighters that are on call. Ms. Howard asked about language barriers and pointed out the diversity in town. Chief Purcell said that they are working with the schools and the Senior Center to develop emergency information cards that are translated in to English to help them with communication. Mr. Behn asked about translation needs and whether the State offers these services. The Chief said that the State has a radio translator for 911 situations. Mr. Behn inquired about the process for bringing in a new Captain. Mr. Rauch noted that the request is with the Personnel Board but the money would be included in the Fire Department's budget. Chief Purcell said that there was one more increase. He likes to maintain a staff of three fire inspectors. He was one of the inspectors before he became Chief and performed this duty without compensation. The Chief said that he has someone on staff to replace him in that role and added a \$750 per year stipend for that employee. The Chief noted that there is a tremendous amount of work involved with determining the cause of a fire – especially if it's a crime situation and that this work is performed outside of their normal shift.

Chief Purcell mentioned that he has two articles in the warrant under capital expenditures. The first one (#10D) is to replace the ambulance using \$50,000 in Free Cash and transferring \$200,000 from Ambulance Reserved Receipts. The Chief pointed out that typically there is a three year replacement for ambulances but the one they are looking to replace is a 2008. He noted that it has 98,000 miles on it and the maintenance costs are exceeding its value. The Chief said that they will have three ambulances in total and the \$250,000 should cover all costs but it will be close. He referred back to his discussion about Comstar and stepping up collection costs for patient billings related to ambulance transports to help offset costs.

The second article (#10E) is for a 4 wheel drive vehicle. Chief Purcell mentioned that fire inspectors need a 4 wheel drive vehicle since they go to construction sites. The new vehicle would replace a 2005 Ford Explorer that is at the end of its life. The Chief mentioned that the cost for the vehicle should come in around \$36-\$37,000 and then they will need radios.

Chief Purcell wanted to thank his AFC liaison, Jim Tepper, for his time, sound advice, and help with his FY17 budget. He appreciated his assistance and will work on being better prepared for his next meeting with the AFC.

Committee Liaison and Department Liaison Reports

Mr. Wells mentioned that he sent out an article worksheet to AFC members. He highlighted Tuesday, February 16th, since he felt a number of warrant articles could be taken care of that evening by concentrating on Town employees who are usually here later on Tuesday nights. He asked about a 6 p.m. start time for the AFC meeting on 2/16 and Committee members agreed. Mr. Wells said he would book the meeting. Ms. Blazejewski said that she will work on scheduling Charter Review Chair, Bob Deysher, for a meeting with the AFC. Mr. Wells and Administrative Assistant, Jessica Thomas, will work on getting the remaining departments scheduled. Mr. Rauch noted the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee and the need to have them come in. Ms. Jaffee pointed out the change to the Recreation Department's article. They want to build new tennis courts on Lyman Street and also fix the tennis courts at the Armstrong Elementary School. Ms. Blazejewski mentioned the Recreation Department's request is under the capital article and Mr. Malloy will cover those details when he is in. Regarding the budget, Mr. Wells reviewed which departments the AFC would like to invite in to a meeting. It was noted that the Town Manager, Treasurer, Town Clerk, Planning Board, and Country Club should all meet with the AFC. Ms. Jaffee said that the Senior Center didn't feel they needed to come in. Mr. Wells agreed since their budget went down. Mr. Wells mentioned that Youth & Family Services (Y&FS) should be invited to a meeting. There was a question as to why and Ms. Blazejewski pointed out that what Y&FS asked for in their FY17 budget is more than what Town Manager, Jim Malloy, is recommending. There was also a question on the Library. Ms. Blumberg would like to know the status of the Library's outstanding articles. Mr. Behn said that he would ask Library Director, Maureen Ambrosino, for an update and perhaps invite her in after budget season is over.

Selectman, Denny Drewry, was in attendance and mentioned that as a trustee of the Soldiers' Memorials, he may have an article to move the Vietnam Memorial to the Forbes Building since residents don't seem to know where it is located in town.

Mr. Behn referred back to the budget and pointed out the Recreation Department. He had asked Mr. Malloy if salaries and wages could be covered under the Recreation Department's revolving fund and what that effect would have on the fees. Mr. Behn noted that he didn't think it would happen right away. Mr. Rauch mentioned having it as a future agenda item for April or May and it could possibly be brought up for October's Town Meeting. Ms. Blazejewski said that she will check in with the Historical Commission to make sure they are all set. Mr. Rauch suggested having the Country Club Operating Committee in to discuss how they are managing their funds since there has been a steady decline in their retained earnings. Regarding the Wastewater Treatment Plant, AFC members felt that the increase to their budget was due to electric costs going up, along with the CPI which affects their contract with Veolia, so there was no need to bring them in now.

Comments and Concerns – Committee Members

Mr. Driscoll asked about the schools and where the conversation left off regarding circuit breaker funds. It was noted that the schools are discussing what was presented to them at the AFC meeting on January 19th and will get back to the Committee.

Mr. Tepper pointed out the budget process. He didn't feel that listening to department's updates and voting on individual budgets was doing anything. Mr. Tepper wasn't comfortable with the process or level of increase to the Town's budget since it keeps going up. He felt that a large amount of these increases was based on decisions outside of the AFC's control and wanted to see Town officials more involved. Mr. Wells suggested putting this subject as a topic for discussion on the AFC's agenda for next Monday. Mr. Drewry added that the AFC may want to invite in the Board of Selectmen since they asked for a 2% cap on spending and it is well over that now. Mr. Wells felt that Mr. Tepper had a valid point and that what the AFC can and can't do is a fair topic of discussion. Ms. Blumberg agreed and thought that the role of the AFC was more reactive to the budget instead of proactive and wanted to invite in the Town Manager, Board of Selectmen, and any department heads that may be involved in the budget process. Mr. Behn discussed overrides and was in agreement with Mr. Drewry that perhaps the Town Meeting method of government isn't working. Mr. Wells noted that the AFC can discuss at the next meeting and then see about inviting in the Town Manager and Board of Selectmen.

Public Reminders for Viewers

None

Adjournment

Mr. Behn made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 10:13 p.m. The vote to adjourn was 9-0-0 in favor, with 9 being present.

Document List

Westborough Police Fleet – Police Chief Alan Gordon

Respectfully submitted,
Jessica Thomas,
AFC Administrative Assistant