

Members Present: Ian Johnson, Chair, Cliff Watts, Ronn Moody, Jo Lown, Polly Howard, John Arnold, Carolyn Spring (arrived 7:04 p.m.), J. J. Malone (arrived 7:05 p.m.). Absent: Judy Lucas.

At 7:02 p.m. Mr. Johnson called the meeting to order in the Selectmen's Meeting Room.

Open Forum

There were no requests to address the Committee.

Approval of minutes – Meeting No. 14, March 19, 2007

Mr. Watts moved approval of the minutes of Meeting No. 14, March 19, 2007. The vote to approve the minutes was 5 in favor and 1 abstention, with 6 members present.

Budget Review – Fire Department

Fire Chief Nick Perron presented the budget proposal for FY2008 for \$3,045,424, an increase of \$253,486 over last year. Chief Perron handed out a summary of the increases in his department's budget.

Salary/Wages increases:

- Line 5104 Operations. Increase of \$131,316. Includes a 3% contractual increase for the third year of the 3-year contract, 7 employees step raises, and a full year with 2 additional employees.
- Line 5104B Training. Increase of \$24,114. Includes Burn Tower Training for 35 firefighters to train 8 hours at the Worcester FD Burn Tower. This training is part of the initial firefighter training but is not done on a continuing basis. This amount would cover salary to attend the training.
- Line 5105C Still Alarm. Increase of \$15,256. These funds are used to cover costs for when multiple calls come in at one time. This line has historically been under-budgeted, and the increase reflects actual costs.
- Line 5105D Box Alarm. Increase of \$5,539. These funds are used to cover costs of multiple calls involving large facilities. As above, this line has historically been under-budgeted, and the increase reflects actual costs.
- Line 5105E Other. Increase of \$9,878. These funds are used to cover education, vehicle repairs, court time, hanging and removing holiday lights, etc. This line has also historically been under-budgeted, and the increase reflects actual costs.
- Line 5105F EMS Training. Increase of \$4,347. These funds are used to cover a refresher course and continuing education for 8 medics who are now at maximum pay grade.
- Line 5105H EMS Recall. Increase \$14,530. These funds are used to cover multiple medical calls. This line has also historically been under-budgeted, and the increase reflects actual costs.
- Line 5110A EMS Stipends. Increase \$19,500. This is a contractual increase to keep up with surrounding communities. Westborough is now in the middle of the rate in this area.

Expense increases:

- Line 5202 Building and Grounds. Increase \$3,120. The increase will cover a CAT generator maintenance agreement, a Plymovent maintenance agreement (this 5 year old system is now in need of more repairs and so is being put under a service contract), Station sprinkler and fire alarm service (to bring the system up to existing codes), and Back flow preventer maintenance (to bring the system up to existing codes.)
- Line 5203A Radio Maintenance. Increase \$2,512. The cost of the Motorola maintenance agreement to cover 40 portable radios, 15 mobile units, base station, and antenna sites, has increased. This also covers portable radio battery replacement.
- Line 5205D Protective Clothing. Increase \$2,000. These funds will cover the increased cost of turnout gear due to new standards.

- Line 5218 Training and Education. Increase \$4,000. These funds will cover the cost of four days use fee for the Worcester FD Burn and Training Building.
- Line 5223 Office Supplies. Increase \$600. These funds will cover the increased cost of supplies.
- Line 5241 Clothing Allowance. Increase \$2,198. These funds cover the cost for two additional firefighters.

Dr. Malone asked if the increase in staff had any effect on overtime. Chief Perron replied that it has had some effect but not much because of the need to respond to multiple calls at one time.

Ms. Howard asked about calls to Westborough State Hospital. Chief Perron replied that WSH and the DYS facility produce many calls each year. Medical calls to DYS are reimbursed at Medicare/Medicaid rates, but medical calls to WSH are not reimbursed.

The requests for firefighters and medics to appear in court have increased. Ms. Spring pointed out that the department could charge the attorney sending a subpoena for the time required to appear as an expert witness. Chief Perron said he would follow up on this.

Chief Perron noted that 950 times last year there were multiple medical calls, and that this has grown from 906 in 2005.

Dr. Malone asked about the \$800 for strobe light replacement. All new vehicles come with LED lights, but older vehicles still have the strobe lights, which will need to be maintained until the vehicles are replaced.

Dr. Malone asked about the replacement sirens. Chief Perron explained that the sirens must be mounted on the front of the vehicles to lessen the risk of hearing loss to firefighters, and so they get filled with snow and road salt in bad weather and break.

Line 5223B Radio Equipment. These funds are needed to maintain old equipment until it is replaced. New equipment is being phased in. The Town has asked for funds to replace ½ of the old boxes this year. Some businesses are going with telephone wiring instead of wireless as is their option.

Line 5241 Badges. These funds cover the cost for 8 badges to replace badges that get lost or damaged in the course of duties. Each new firefighter is issued 3 badges.

Line 5243 US Health and Human Services Lab Fee is the cost for the department to be certified to do blood tests. This cost is mandated by state and federal law. The state will be requiring a new Mass Ambulance Trip Reporting Information System in the near future (no deadline has yet been set.) This will require \$50,000 - \$60,000 in new equipment in ambulances that will most likely be requested in the budget next year.

Mr. Johnson asked about billing and receipts. Ambulance receipts are down from \$941,600 last year, mostly due to the decrease in Mass Health/Medicaid/Medicare reimbursement rates. They are currently paying \$1.00 less per mile than the year before. Private insurers pay higher rate but more calls come in from nursing homes, elderly residents, DYS, Spectrum House, etc, which are all Mass Health/Medicaid/Medicare calls. The department's collection rate is 90% – 95%. The primary transport is to UMass Medical Center, Worcester Medical Center, Worcester Memorial and Framingham, with some calls going to other hospitals. The department is licensed under Worcester Medical Center and buy all its pharmaceuticals there.

Smoke detector/carbon monoxide detector inspections. The Fire Department inspects all new construction and properties that are sold. Schools and hospitals are inspected three times per year, businesses once per year. New construction requires hard-wired battery back-up smoke detectors.

Article 26. Lease/Purchase Payment for Fire Pumper. (in draft warrant dated March 10.) This is to appropriate \$61,201 for the fourth of five payments on the fire pumper.

Article 27. Purchase New Ambulance (in draft warrant dated March 10.) \$160,000 for the purchase of a new ambulance. This will not increase the size of the fleet.

Article 9A Regularly Recurring Articles (in draft warrant dated March 10.) This article is to authorize a revolving fund to administer public CPR and First Aid Training by the Fire Department.

Chief Perron reported that there are some monies left over from prior year appropriations, the largest of which is \$91,000 appropriated for repairs to the station. Most prior appropriations will be used by the time of Annual Town Meeting.

Liaison Updates

Mr. Johnson reported that Mr. Len Mead will be present at the AFC meeting to be held on Monday March 26. Ms. Delude has given the minimum appropriation amount necessary for the library to maintain its certification.

Dr. Malone has learned that the cost of postage for increased water department mailings is paid out of the Water Enterprise Fund as an indirect expense.

Ms. Lown met with Jack Goodhall. The Water Treatment plant will come to the AFC meeting on April 9. They have finalized a new contract this year which will be in effect for five years, with an option to renew for another five years, and then for another five years again if necessary.

Ms. Howard gave several schedule notes.

Mr. Arnold reported that both the MIS/GIS and Veterans Services departments will be happy to answer any questions the AFC has, but neither reports any new information on their budgets. The Government Study Committee presented their interim report to the Selectmen and will return to the next Selectmen's meeting to answer questions.

Mr. Johnson will look for times in the schedule to vote on some budgets.

Comments and concerns of Committee members

Mr. Johnson was invited to attend, with the School Department, a meeting at the State House to discuss Chapter 70 funding. The state Department of Education is undergoing a five year process to reallocate funding more equitably. The goal for Westborough is to receive approximately \$5.1 million per year. Current appropriation is \$3.2 million per year. The original formula was put in place in the early 1990s to help areas which were not funding schools adequately during the recession in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Westborough continued to fund their schools when money was tight. If the DOE proposal is fully funded in the State budget, Westborough's Chapter 70 funding would increase approximately \$300,000 from the Governor's budget this year.

Dr. Malone pointed out an article in the March issue of City and Town, a publication of the State Department of Revenue. Dr. Malone also asked about the possibility of the library using trust fund monies to pay for the wireless Internet access. This may be possible depending on the types of trusts the library has – some funds may be limited in their use by the terms of the trust.

Adjournment

At 8:25 p.m. Mr. Watts moved to adjourn the meeting. The vote to adjourn was unanimous (8 present and in favor).