

CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION

Fire and Police Department Budgets

Wednesday, April 28, 2010 – 6:30 p.m.

Eileen Dondero Foley Council Chambers

City Council Present: Mayor Ferrini, Assistant Mayor Novelline Clayburgh, Councilors Lister, Hejtmanek, Spear, Coviello, Dwyer, Kennedy and Smith

Staff Present: John P. Bohenko, City Manager; Judie Belanger, Finance Director; Dianna Fogarty, Human Resources Director; Christopher LeClaire, Fire Chief; Steve Achilles, Assistant Fire Chief; Steve Griswold, Deputy Fire Chief; Dave Ferland, Police Chief; Stephen Dubois, Deputy Police Chief; Karen Senecal, Police Department Budget Coordinator and Kelli L. Barnaby, City Clerk

Commissioners: Richard Gamester and Paul Wentworth Fire Commissioners; Jerry Howe, John Golumb and John Russo Police Commissioners

Absent: Michael Hughes, Fire Commissioner

I. Call to Order

Mayor Ferrini called the work session to order at 6:30 p.m., to discuss and review the FY11 Fire and Police Department Budgets. Mayor Ferrini thanked everyone for their hard work with the budget and said the first budget the Council will be reviewing this evening is the Fire Department.

II. Introduction

City Manager Bohenko said the Fire Department has presented their budget and what effects a 96% would be to the department.

III. Presentation – Fire Commission/Fire Chief

Commissioner Gamester thanked the City Council for allowing them to make their presentation this evening on the Fire Department budget.

Fire Chief LeClaire reported that this budget represents a zero increase over the FY10 budget, further reducing the number of personnel available to respond to emergencies both during the day and at night, and will account for either one ambulance or one fire truck being out of service 20% of the time. He informed the Council that minimum staffing on all shifts will fall from 13 to 12. Chief LeClaire said that this would cause increased response times, an increase on their dependency on mutual-aid, and a 20% reduction in revenue income from ambulance patient billing.

Chief LeClaire reviewed fixed cost increases over FY10 that must be absorbed in the FY11 budget include:

- Wage increases – steps
- Health insurance
- Dental insurance
- Retirement

Budget Impacts of the 96% City Council Request:

Fire Chief LeClaire advised the City Council that a majority would be a 50% reduction in the overtime (personnel replacement) budget. Minimum staffing will fall from 13 or 12, to 11 or 10. In addition, one of the three fire stations will be out of service for a significant portion of the fiscal year as there will be insufficient overtime funds to cover customary vacancies due to annual leave, along with unanticipated vacancies caused by employee injuries/disability leave, funeral leave, etc. The Fire Commission is adamantly opposed to this devastating scenario. The administration and the members of the fire department are extremely concerned with the inability to provide equal emergency response coverage and life safety services to the entire City under this budget.

Chief LeClaire provided the City Council with a diagram that outlines standard of coverage and deployment of resources for each of the 3 districts in the City. In addition, he provided copies of the National Standards for the organization and deployment of fire suppression operations.

IV. Questions and Discussion

Councilor Kennedy asked what the impact would be to close Station 3 after 9:00 p.m. Chief LeClaire said he would recommend closing the station during the day and outlined the other areas of the City that the district covers.

Assistant Chief Achilles reported that there were approximately 50 calls in the area resulting from Station 3. Chief LeClaire advised the City Council that it costs \$20,000.00 a year to operate Station 3. He said the majority of the time the Fire Department returned funds at the end of the fiscal year. He stated that the department will attempt cross-manning and if it presents a dangerous scenario, they would not cross train.

Councilor Spear said if the department is not going to reduce staffing levels how is the department going to stop growth. Chief LeClaire said overtime has been reduced which reduces retirement costs.

Councilor Coviello asked what would response times be if Station 3 closed. Chief LeClaire responded that response time would be 10 to 12 minutes.

Councilor Kennedy asked how the Air National Guard plays into the station to provide support. Chief LeClaire responded that they cover the runway and all areas inside the fence. The department provides support to everything outside of the fence.

Councilor Dwyer said she feels the standards information provided by the Fire Chief is valuable to the City Council. She said she would support placing all firefighters at Central Station. Chief LeClaire said that all stations overlay by 6 to 7 minutes.

Assistant Mayor Novelline Clayburgh asked if there are administrative personnel that the department could do without. Chief LeClaire said that his administrative staff consists of one individual.

Councilor Smith asked how many employees are still under the payout plan at retirement. Chief LeClaire said there are approximately 24 employees.

Discussion followed regarding retirement costs.

Mayor Ferrini thanked the Fire Department for their presentation and asked the Police Commission and Police Chief to come forward with their report.

V. Presentation – Police Commission/Police Chief

Police Commissioner Howe thanked the City Council for allowing this presentation of the Police Department budget. He spoke to the time spent in creating this budget and said that the department returns under expended funds to the City.

Police Chief Fernald reported that the budget request is comprised of a combination of fixed increase costs and proposed reductions. Increases include contractual obligations, revised retirement rates set by the state, health and dental. Reductions include staffing levels, program cuts/elimination and other operating costs.

He informed the Council a level service, fixed costs budget would have required an increase of 2.65% over FY10. He said in light of the current economic climate, the Police Department significantly reduced these costs by \$153,563.00. The reductions were achieved by eliminating the Accident Investigation Team, eliminating the Explorer's program, reducing the overtime allocated for Seacoast Emergency Response Team (SERT) call outs, eliminating the Crossing Guards, eliminating the Victim Witness Advocate position and eliminating the Middle School-School Resource Officer (SRO), and reducing multiple items in the other operating lines. These reductions result in a net loss of 3.2 FTE's in FY11.

Budget Impacts of the 96% City Council Request:

The 96% of FY10 budget will require a reduction of \$575,463 from the FY11 fixed increase budget. The reductions were achieved by the eliminating the Accident Investigation Team, the Explorer Program, reducing the overtime allocated for Seacoast Emergency Response Team (SERT) call outs, eliminating the Crossing Guards and the Victim Witness Advocate positions, eliminating the Middle School-School Resource Officer (SRO) and reducing multiple items in the other operating lines. It also includes the elimination of the downtown patrol beat (4-officers), the high school SRO, 10 auxiliary officers, the traffic/back-up officers (2 officers), and a Captain position. Reducing officer staffing will have a negative impact on overtime. Patrol overtime reflects an increase. The total staffing reduction equates to 11.2 FTE's in FY11.

Chief Ferland addressed homeland security and issues related to those factors. He reported that Pease is not a separate police beat and is part of the north end. He spoke to national standards and informed the City Council that the City meets the middle or lower end staffing levels under national standards.

He advised the City Council that he and senior staff offered to meet with the Association of Portsmouth Taxpayers no less than 5 attempts and the department was turned down.

Chief Ferland said we need to move forward from the Matrix Overtime Report. He also spoke to the safety of people and urged the City Council to make the right decision when adopting the budget.

VI. Questions and Discussion

Councilor Dwyer said one of the most constant things she hears is that we have too many police officers. She said the City Council is in need of factors to put the presumptions to rest. Chief Ferland said to get ahead of a call you need to go after the quality of life issues and that takes actual officers to do that type of work.

Karen Senecal, Police Budget Coordinator, spoke to grant funding and said it fluctuates with the number of positions.

Councilor Kennedy asked if we were giving up grant funding for SRO's and does the same apply to the Victim Advocate position. Chief Ferland explained how the grant is applied and advised the Council that you cannot use a grant to back fill a position.

Councilor Lister asked if most grants are single year or multiple years. Chief Ferland replied that most grants are multi-year grants (3-years).

Councilor Spear stated that some departments are using civilians for light detective work. Chief Ferland said there are some positions by sworn officers that could be filled by civilians. He would recommend a uniform officer for the SRO's.

Councilor Coviello spoke to the Station Officer and asked if that needs to be a sworn officer. Chief Ferland explained the duties of the Station Officer and said it is a multi-faceted person and does not justify a civilian to have that position.

Councilor Smith asked how many police officers fall under the unlimited payouts that are awaiting to retire. Chief Ferland said there are 3 officers that are still part of the unlimited payout.

Mayor Ferrini said if you reduced the staff by 5 officers, does the City go to a reactive force. Chief Ferland said the 96% shows where the Police Department would lose the proactive department and go to a reactive department.

Councilor Coviello asked how many officers would lose their jobs under the 96%. Chief Ferland responded 9 officers.

Councilor Kennedy asked if we could cut the time spent by officers in the courts since the revenues go to the State and not the City. Chief Ferland said the majority of overtime is spent for the investigation of calls following a shift. Chief Ferland explained the court process.

Assistant Mayor Novelline Clayburgh expressed concern regarding overtime in the department and said that there are some officers receiving over \$10,000.00 in overtime. Chief Ferland indicated that overtime is tracking well now.

Discussion followed regarding the training of staff.

Councilor Kennedy asked about the insurance rate for the City. City Manager Bohenko said the rate went up 5.3% and spoke to our 10 year rolling average used.

Assistant Mayor Novelline Clayburgh asked if there are any administrative positions that could be reduced. Chief Ferland said there will be a vacancy in the next week and he would reallocate the duties within the department.

Councilor Coviello thanked the Police Department for their presentation.

VII. Other Business

Mayor Ferrini said as a reminder the Council will be reconvening the Public Hearing on the Budget on Monday, May 10th and the anticipated Final Budget Review will be held on Tuesday, May 11th. He announced that the May 10th meeting will be held at the Portsmouth High School Auditorium at 7:00 p.m. and the May 11th work session will take place City Hall in the Eileen Dondero Foley Council Chambers at 6:30 p.m.

VIII. Adjournment

At 9:00 p.m., Mayor Ferrini closed the work session.

Respectfully submitted by:

Kelli L. Barnaby, CMC/CNHMC
City Clerk