

Budget Recommendations Advisory Committee

November 3, 2021

6:30 PM

Town Offices, Nowak Room

Police & Fire

Draft Minutes

Members Present: Bob Kelly, Chair; Christine Soutter, Vice Chair; Corey Stevens, Nancy Belanger, Kathy Corson, Judy Rowan, Christopher Zigmont, Mark Fabian, Enna Grazier, Anthony Zwaan

Members Absent: Liz Canada

Others Present: Russ Dean, Melissa Roy, Doreen Chester, and Niko Papkonstantis

Mr. Kelly called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM.

1. Police

Police Chief Stephan Poulin was present to discuss the Police Budget. Dr. Rowan said both the Police and Fire budgets are lean this year. Line item 55043, Community Relations, has an increase to \$7,500 for a new contract with Schreiber News Agency to handle press releases for the Department.

Chief Poulin said that the Police have been looking at how to do better at community relations and social media. We removed booking photos from our accounts and put more of a focus on the community and feedback. We've been working with Jason Schreiber, who used to be a reporter for the Union Leader and Seacoast Media Group, who will act as the public relations officer for the Department. \$5,000 for the year seemed like a reasonable amount. Mr. Munck, the Deputy Chief, is still the public liaison but Mr. Schreiber will be assisting him. Mr. Zigmont asked how much time Mr. Schreiber is putting in. Chief Poulin said he's working a lot, and doing several posts a month.

Dr. Zwaan said he's concerned about whether this is necessary. The DPW does a good job on this without a line item. That said, community relations is important. Chief Poulin said Mr. Schreiber is doing weekly postings on social media, writing and distributing press releases, and working with the media on major incidents. Dr. Rowan said it's important that the Police get information out to the public. Ms. Grazier asked if Mr. Schreiber was tasked with any framing of brand/messaging, or is just creating content that has been requested by the Department. Chief Poulin said everything goes through him [Chief Poulin] for posting. Mr. Schreiber meets with the Chief once a week to pick out events and incidents to report on.

Mr. Dean said this is a good first step into something that the town as a whole has been looking at with the Communications Advisory Committee. Maybe Mr. Schreiber can broaden his areas of work with the town as this goes on. We're also working out a town Communications Coordinator, which will probably be Bob Glowacky.

Ms. Belanger said she's seen an improvement on the Police Facebook page. This is a great start. Ms. Soutter said finding someone for \$5,000 a year rather than hiring someone is a good deal. The Police focus should be public safety, not social media. Mr. Zigmont said it gets complicated when we mix public relations and communication, but this price is a bargain.

**MOTION:** Ms. Soutter moved to increase line item 55043 from \$2,500 to \$7,500. Ms. Belanger seconded. All were in favor.

Ms. Chester said we decided to increase contributions from employees for Health, a \$14,000 change. The budget will show the increases in the Departments. Mr. Dean said regarding collective bargaining, we needed to deal with whether there would be an increase in contributions for non-union employees. Some of the numbers voted on will be slightly different when the budget goes to the Select Board. Mr. Stevens said if that is the case, he will stop asking for Benefits updates, since it doesn't mean anything.

Dr. Rowan said the changes to line item 55091, Education/Training, are coming out of the recommendations of the Public Safety study. Due to a concern about stress and wellness in the Dept, there's a required wellness visit with a psychologist for all officers.

Chief Poulin said Exeter has always performed a psych evaluation on new hires, but this is an additional one-hour training with a licensed clinician. We can't force them to see a psychologist, but we can make them go to a "training." The cost is \$125 per Officer or Dispatcher. This person is working with Exeter, Rochester and Dover. Dr. Rowan said the idea is to give Officers tools to make the best decisions and not take stress into situations. Ms. Soutter asked if one hour would be effective for that. Maybe we should be doing more? Ms. Chester said the town has EAP and benefits for behavioral health. Chief Poulin mentioned that the psychologist spoke at one of the Exeter Police Stakeholders meetings, which can be viewed on Zoom.

Mr. Stevens said regarding the munitions line, he had a note about an ammunition shortage across the country. Mr. Stevens asked if anything had changed about line item 55045, Computer Equipment. Ms. Chester said the YTD spend is \$5,116. An outstanding PO for \$1,500 zeroes out the account for the year. The new budget for Police is \$3,494,076.

**MOTION:** Dr. Rowan moved to approve the Police budget of \$3,494,076. Ms. Belanger seconded. All were in favor.

Dr. Rowan said there were no changes from the subcommittee for Dispatch and Communications. Ms. Chester said the total for Communications is \$420,328.

**MOTION:** Mr. Stevens moved to approve the Dispatch and Communications total of \$420,328. Dr. Rowan seconded. Mr. Stevens asked about line item 55018, Equipment Repair, what is the YTD total? Ms. Chester said there was no YTD through 10/31/21. Chief Poulin said there is planned spending this year in that line. Some of that equipment money came from a grant. Dr. Zwaan asked if there had been changes in personnel. Chief Poulin said one opening in

Dispatch. Ms. Chester said there was an increase in NHRS in the Benefits category. All were in favor.

Dr. Rowan said there's a CIP project for body-worn cameras. The subcommittee had a discussion about using the body cameras to reduce liability. Chief Poulin said that internal members of the Department and the Stakeholder Committee are in support. The cameras would validate either way something that goes wrong. Through the LEACT in NH, the State is strongly recommending body cameras. The State Police have them. Can use camera footage for training purposes. All hardware is guaranteed, unlimited license and data storage, includes training for everyone. These are hidden inside the uniform with a little lens showing. NH is a two-party consent State with recording, if an Officer goes into a home, they can be asked to turn that camera off. It can't be on in a private or public school setting unless it's an emergency. Can't be told to turn it off in public settings, such as town buildings or traffic stops, or going into a home to serve an arrest warrant. It's very expensive, tried to get Congressional funding but didn't get it, but do have a potential DOJ grant to cover the cost. Ms. Soutter asked if they have to announce they have cameras and inform them they have the right to turn it off, and Chief Poulin said yes. Mr. Zigmont asked how the data is being reviewed and staff time compensated. Chief Poulin said we don't know how much manpower it will cost us. Mr. Stevens said it will introduce efficiencies into incident investigations as they will have exactly what happened on film. Mr. Fabian asked if this would come to the BRC every five years, and Chief Poulin said we can either re-up or walk away. If we leave, the town will have the data. The hardware goes back to the company. Mr. Stevens asked if 26 cameras covers everyone, and Chief Poulin said yes. Ms. Soutter asked how many Officers are on each shift. Chief Poulin said it varies, but no more than five. Ms. Soutter asked if we could buy fewer cameras. Chief Poulin said there's a lot of overlap and sick/vacation coverage, and the cameras have to charge, so it wouldn't be feasible.

Mr. Kelly said he'd like to see more info on the 18th about what happens in the contract with years 6 - 10.

Dr. Rowan said the Police Department has received a \$29,580 Federal Grant for Departmental Certification.

Mr. Kelly said there are two vehicles in separate vehicle replacement lines, under Leases and Purchases. This is two \$55,000 vehicles for a total of \$110,000. Replacing high-mileage vehicles with hybrids in keeping with the town's plans for sustainability. We will be voting on them with the CIP.

Dr. Zwaan asked if we're operating any electric vehicles. Chief Poulin said we have two hybrids now, and two that were ordered in April that haven't arrived.

## 2. Fire

Assistant Fire Chief Justin Pizon was present to discuss the Fire budget. Mr. Kelly asked him to discuss the labor piece of the budget. Dr. Rowan said two new Firefighters are being requested as a result of recommendations from the Public Safety study. There was also a retirement in September. Assistant Chief Pizon said we reclassified a position last year for Fire Prevention, and with the personnel changes and restructuring, we found significant savings. We lost some employees who were top step

and now have younger individuals with single or two-person plans. Mr. Kelly said it's at \$1,983,185, which includes the two new positions. The full cost for a new hire with benefits and retirement, assuming a two person plan, is \$87,946 per employee. Mr. Dean said part of the issue is the labor pool. Fewer people are coming forward to be Police or Firefighters. Assistant Chief Pizon said the Fire Academy of NH recognizes this issue. We're paying consistently with other communities but the cost of living here is higher. There's more awareness of the health concerns associated with Firefighters and the exposure to carcinogens.

Mr. Kelly asked about emergency management. Assistant Chief Pizon said we resumed drills for EZP from the nuclear power plant. There will be a graded exercise in 2022. There are three drills planned. Line item 55042, RAVE Equipment, is up \$263 over 2021. Assistant Chief Pizon said this is the reverse 911 program. We previously used Code Red, but are seeing significant savings by switching.

**MOTION:** Dr. Rowan moved line item 55042, Communications Equipment, at \$10,960. Ms. Belanger seconded. All were in favor.

Mr. Stevens said line item 55214, Physicals, is going up by a few grand. Is there a change in the YTD? Ms. Chester said \$1,936, but there's also a PO for 675. The balance is \$5950. Assistant Chief Pizon said trying to re-source this service. Convenient MD was not able to meet our needs, so we evaluated Access Sports for Physicals. The biggest increase is due to next year, since there are 14 employees that require chest Xrays. That's extra over the cost of the physical. Firefighters are either declared fit for duty or not fit for duty, the Department doesn't receive any private health information.

Mr. Kelly said the line item for Education/ Conferences is returning to the \$4,200 budget from 2020, but we've only come close to that spend once in three years, can we phase that budget back up? Assistant Chief Pizon said two employees are going to a trade show this year. Those two alone may use up the \$4,200. They learn a lot at those conferences, since they're in classes all day long and in the afternoon they're at the trade show.

Ms. Chester said the new FD total is \$3,812,348.

**MOTION:** Ms. Belanger moved the Fire Department total of \$3,812,348. Ms. Soutter seconded. All were in favor.

Mr. Stevens said regarding line item 55056, Capital Outlay, what were we going to do with the money from last year? Mr. Dean said EOC improvements, but the rescue boat needed to be replaced instead at \$14,400.

Mr. Stevens mentioned the Health division. Assistant Chief Pizon said this covers the Health Officer James Murray. Mosquito control is \$39,000, but was at least double that prior to his negotiation.

Ms. Chester said the total is \$122,925.

**MOTION:** Dr. Rowan moved to approve the Health budget of \$122,925. Ms. Belanger seconded. All were in favor.

Mr. Kelly brought the discussion to the CIP. Dr. Rowan said there's a request for replacement of the self-contained breathing apparatus, which is necessary equipment. Did all of the units need to be replaced? Assistant Chief Pizon said when working under stress, it's a challenge to expect an individual to not know what they're going to be putting on. Firefighters don't share face pieces, so would have to carry two face pieces on them. Future models would likely not be the same. This is a computer driven device that has come a long way. Both companies offer lifetime warranties, which will save us thousands over 10 years. We shouldn't piecemeal purchases so important. Firefighters wear them on every call; they have been using in Covid houses as well. Dr. Zwaan said we deferred this last year. Assistant Chief Pizon said we don't want to sink any more money into the existing units. Ms. Chester said we could put it through a lease so it wouldn't be all in one year. Dr. Zwaan asked if something this critical would still go to vote, and Mr. Dean said it would go on the warrant, since anything via lease purchase must be a warrant article. Last time we bought airpicks, we didn't have any issue with it passing at the ballot. Ms. Corson said it plays into extreme weather events too, such as flooding and fire. Anything we can do to help Public Safety is important.

Dr. Rowan said the Engine 5 replacement was to have been deferred, but the subcommittee saw a substantial maintenance report with rust and corrosion. Although the Engine is safe and passed inspection, it's not likely to do so in the future. Mr. Dean said for lease purchase warrant articles, we look at the full cost and the first year appropriation. If we're committing to a truck in 2022 and getting it delivered in 2023, we still incur the first year expense in 2022. This would be a big ticket item, with an \$80,000 payment in first year. Mr. Kelly said between the SCBA and the Engine, there were \$1M of asks. Assistant Chief Pizon said a March order of an Engine wouldn't be delivered until July of 2023. Mr. Kelly said the Maintenance folks were worried about this piece of equipment. Ms. Corson said there's a sustainability factor with trucks this old. We have to idle the truck to run the equipment. She added that there was a town that deferred their pump truck in 2020, and it ended up costing the town \$43,000 more the next year, a 12% increase. A \$650,000 truck today may cost \$60,000+ more next year. Next year, we're going to be talking about a Public Safety building. Mr. Kelly said the lease proposals are not going down over the next five years.

Dr. Rowan mentioned the replacement of Car 3, which was deferred last year. They're looking for a more versatile car which would allow passengers to put contaminated gear in the rear rather than the passenger area. Assistant Chief Pizon said we're looking to replace an old Expedition where the driver has to put gear in the back of the car, versus keeping in the back of a truck so the driver is not being exposed to contaminants.

### 3. Calendar

- a. Next Wednesday's meeting will consider Parks and Rec, Library, and Welfare and Human Services.

4. Adjournment

Mr. Kelly adjourned the meeting at 8:34 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Joanna Bartell  
Recording Secretary