



CHELMSFORD FINANCE COMMITTEE
MINUTES

February 28, 2019

MEETING: A meeting was held on Thursday, February 28, 2019 at 7:30 PM at Town Hall Office Building, 50 Billerica Road, Chelmsford

PRESENT: J. Clancy, E. Chambers, A. Tanini, K. Duffett, A. Langford and V. Parks

ABSENT: D. Goselin

ALSO PRESENT: P. Cohen, J. Sousa, G. Ryan, J. Spinney and P. Pedulla

HANDOUTS: Chelmsford Fire Department FY2020 Operating Budget Request,
Chelmsford Police Department FY2020 Budget Proposal, Chelmsford
Public Library FY2020 Budget Request

The meeting was called to order at 7:36 PM.

Approval of Minutes:

February 4, 2019:

Corrections were made to the minutes of February 4, 2019. Since a quorum of the Finance Committee members present at this meeting was not available at the start of the meeting; J. Clancy suggested tabling the approval of the minutes of February 4, 2019 until the end of the meeting.

At the end of the meeting, J. Clancy asked if there was a motion regarding the minutes of February 4, 2019. A. Tanini made a motion that the Finance Committee accept the minutes of February 4, 2019 as amended. E. Chambers seconded the motion. J. Clancy, A. Tanini and E. Chambers voted in favor of the motion. K. Duffett, A. Langford and V. Parks abstained as they were not present at the meeting. The motion carried. The minutes were approved as amended.

February 7, 2019:

K. Duffett made a motion to accept the minutes of February 7, 2019 as written. A. Langford seconded the motion. All voted in favor. The minutes were approved as written.

Fire Department - FY20 Budget:

Chief Ryan reported that the FY2020 Fire Department budget was a total budget of \$6,654,792 which was an overall increase of 1.75% over prior year. He stated that personnel services increased by 1.56% to \$6,266,792 and expenses increased by 4.86% to \$388,000. He stated that the budget maintained staffing levels at 63.5 but was a little leaner than the prior year due to five

retirements since July of 2018 being replaced with lower salary employees. Chief Ryan reported that permit fees had increased due to the National Grid walk-out and resulting moratorium on all non-emergency work. He explained that after the June 25, 2018 National Grid walk-out 41 propane permits had been issued compared to 25 being issued for the entire year of 2017.

Chief Ryan reported that of the 27,255 registered fire departments in the United States, only 8.7% were career departments and 4.5% were mostly career departments. He said that 70.8% of fire departments were volunteer departments and another 16% were mostly volunteer departments. He stated that Massachusetts was in the top five list of states with career or mostly career fire departments with 45% being in this category. He said that 25.4% of the registered fire departments in Massachusetts were volunteer fire departments and another 29.6% were mostly volunteer departments. He pointed out that this put Massachusetts in the third spot behind Hawaii and Florida with the highest percentage of career/mostly career fire departments.

Chief Ryan stated that for the population size of between 25,000 and 49,999 residents only one-third of the towns had four or more fire stations. He added that most of the towns with four or more stations also were closer to the higher population end of 49,000. He stated that of the surrounding towns Chelmsford and Billerica were the only two which had more than three fire stations with five each.

Chief Ryan provided a list of the fire station locations and ages and pointed out that other than Engine 1 at 50 Billerica Road, the stations were aging with the oldest being Engine 2 at 35 Princeton Street which was built 63 years ago. He noted that they had lost a generator at Engine two last year which had cost over \$15,000 to replace. Chief Ryan stated that cold winters and hot summers with the constant opening of the doors led to inefficiency and higher energy costs. He stated that last year had tied a 100-year record for the most days that were 20 degrees or below. He added that last August had been the hottest August on record. He added that the Center Station (Engine 1) was the most efficient as it had been built to higher energy efficient codes. J. Clancy asked why Engine 4 had the highest energy costs of the older stations. Chief Ryan replied that it was due to the mechanics bay which was housed at this engine.

Chief Ryan reported that structure fires and mutual aid calls were down, but all other areas including investigations, motor vehicle accidents, motor vehicle accidents with injuries and medical calls were up. He said that the main reason for the increase under investigations was the storm from March 13 and 14 which he had submitted for state and federal reimbursement. A. Langford asked if there would be any reimbursement help for gas from the March storm. Chief Ryan replied that he had put in for it, but he did not know.

Chief Ryan stated that in 2018 there were 8 fatal motor vehicle accidents and 9 motor vehicle fatalities. He explained that this was more than the last three years combined. A. Tanini asked if these accidents were on the highway or back roads. He replied that both were involved. He added that it was not just Chelmsford, but state fatalities were up as well. He added that federal data showed a 46% increase in pedestrians struck last year. He noted that the main cause of the rise in motor vehicle accidents and fatalities was driver distraction.

Chief Ryan stated that he tried to replace vehicles in the fire department fleet at the 10 to 12-year mark. He noted that they had an aging fleet and there may be some big-ticket items coming up. He added that he was grateful for the support of the Finance Committee for the new fire engine at last Fall Town Meeting. E. Chambers asked if the current engine would go into reserves when the new engine was purchased and if there would then be two reserve engines. Chief Ryan replied that this was correct. He stated that even the reserve engine was placed in front line status.

K. Duffett asked if the make-up of the fire department personnel was mostly younger fire fighters or if there were more approaching retirement. Chief Ryan replied that they just had the five retirements last year and there was another group that could retire right now if they wanted to. He added that the savings came from replacing the higher paid retiring personnel with lower cost replacements.

PEG Access/Cable - FY20 Budget:

P. Pedulla stated that he had previewed the PEG Access Cable Television Enterprise Fund budget with V. Parks. He reported that the main change was a 25% cut in the overall budget. He explained that his budgeting was based on the prediction of the income for the year. He stated that the “cord cutting” continued, but it had been stable in Chelmsford for the last four quarters. He added that he had attended a forum last week regarding the deregulation of cable and the FCC rule change and nobody knows what will happen. He explained that there may possibly be an appeal. He added that PEG would have to live within a tight budget for the next few years. He explained that he had decided to try to cut the budget and live within their means. He noted that they had made upgrades and a lot of improvements over the last few years such as wiring the High School for fiber, so they were in a good position to make cuts this year. He stated that the staffing and service would remain the same, but the big thing that would be cut was capital. He stated that people were happy with what they were able to provide now, and they would continue to provide the same.

Police Department - FY20 Budget:

Chief Spinney stated that the Police Department goals and objectives for FY2020 were:

- Apply community policing strategies and initiatives to prevent crime and focus on quality of life issues.
- Apply traffic related programs to minimize motor vehicle violations, reduce accidents, facilitate traffic flow and enhance pedestrian, bicycle safety.
- Continue to work closely with the school department fostering partnerships resulting in increased officer presence at all schools.
- Continue implementation of A.L.I.C.E. school safety protocols with school department and fire department.
- Continue to build on our school resource officer program. resource officer at high school, along with S.R.O. at middle schools.
- Increase usage of social media outlets to inform the public of issues and receive feedback of problem areas in town.
- Continue to work with local and regional partners regarding the ongoing opioid crisis.
 - Substance abuse follow-up program

- Unwanted medication pickup program
- Collaborative grant for full-time clinician

Chief Spinney stated that as Chief Ryan had reported, Chelmsford had an unprecedented year for motor vehicle fatalities. He added that the cause of almost all of these was lack of driver attention. He noted that this had become a chronic problem. K. Duffett asked if there were common locations for these accidents. Chief Spinney replied that there weren't. He said in addition to the highway, two were on Main Street, one was on Westford Street and one was on Route 27 at High Street. A. Langford asked if alcohol was involved. Chief Spinney replied that the cause was driver attention and excessive speed.

Chief Spinney reported that they worked with the School Department and the Fire Department to implement A.L.I.C.E. school safety protocols. He explained that they used the school building and worked with the Fire Department to do realistic drills and real-life scenarios. He added that they would be doing these drills a few times per year or at least annually. He stated that they had done a drill at Parker School last year and would be one at McCarthy this year.

Chief Spinney reported that they continued to follow-up with family after any substance abuse incident. He said that 70% of unwanted medication ended up on the street, so their pickup program was very important. He reported that he did not know how much longer they could continue to share the full-time clinician under the collaborative grant. He stated that this mental health resource was shared with Billerica, Dracut and Tewksbury. He explained that when the collaborative clinician started there were one to two incidents a month whereas now there were daily incidents. He added that calls used to take 10 to 15 minutes, whereas now they were often about 45 minutes. He stated that the number of these incidents was expected to continue to increase.

Chief Spinney reported that personnel costs for the police department were increasing by \$126,741 or 2.18% going from \$5,808,047 in FY2019 to \$5,934,788 in FY2020. He stated that this included the new collective bargaining agreement for the patrol officer's union, but nothing for the unsettled sergeant's union agreement. He added that these costs also reflected the retirement of several senior officers and the additional S.R.O. He stated that this would mean one FTE S.R.O. at the high school and two FTE S.R.O.s for the middle schools. He stated that the goal was to have one S.R.O. for each of the middle schools.

Chief Spinney reported that the total police department personnel was at 70 with 54 sworn officers which was up one officer from FY2019. He noted that 19 years ago in 2000 they had 61 officers. He said that with the additional S.R.O. the number of sworn officers would be at the 54 level. He explained that the reason they had targeted the middle schools was that this was when pressure started with things like social media and gaming. He stated that this was the age group when substance abuse often started and things like bullying and internet safety came into play. He added that the S.R.O. integration into the school added a level of safety. He said that the S.R.O. could build trust and foster a sharing of information. He noted that the S.R.O. at the high school had students coming to her to report other students who may be having an issue. He explained that in this way, she could be proactive and reach out and solve the issue before it became a problem. He stated that the payoff from having the S.R.O.'s was immeasurable. Chief

Spinney stated that this additional S.R.O. would assure that the high schools and middle schools were covered, and it would go hand-in-hand with the A.L.I.C.E. program. He added that he would be prepared to speak about this topic at Town Meeting. A. Langford asked Chief Spinney if he could elaborate a little bit about what the S.R.O. does. Chief Spinney replied that they build trust and relationships within the schools. He stated that they provided information and ran sessions on things like the dangers of alcohol. He noted that this could be a program for a class room, a small group or even one-on-one. He added that the S.R.O. could sometimes identify if there was a family in crisis. He stated that one officer last year found out about a family in crisis and hooked up with the PAL program to provide holiday gifts for the family. He added that the S.R.O. was in position to get ahead of issues and address them early. A. Langford commented that it was somewhat like preventative care. Chief Spinney replied "exactly". A. Tanini asked if the S.R.O.'s were involved with discipline. Chief Spinney replied that they weren't. He explained that they could not discipline by law. He noted that they did carefully select the person for this role as it required a certain type of personality. He added that Officer Sullivan was a "home run" in her role as S.R.O. Chief Spinney added that if the request is approved he would draw from the current patrol officers for this position and then a new hire would come in as a regular patrol officer. Chief Spinney reported that Billerica had four S.R.O.'s while Westford had two and was trying for another and Tewksbury has two and was looking for two more. He noted that the outlier was Waltham which had seven S.R.O.'s. J. Clancy asked if the goal was to eventually have S.R.O.'s in the elementary schools. Chief Spinney replied that he would take what he could get and could see an S.R.O. bouncing between issues at the elementary schools. He noted that the conversations at the elementary schools would be different than what was done at the high school and middle schools.

V. Parks asked what the number of personnel that retired from the police department was last year. Chief Spinney replied that three had retired last year and there were currently three in the police academy who would be graduating in April. A. Langford asked if they went right into patrol duty from the academy. Chief Spinney replied that they first went through three months of field training after the academy.

Chief Spinney reported that there were now eight police sergeants rather than the seven in the previous year. He explained that this was not a new position, but rather he was re-establishing a position which he had eliminated three years ago. He said that the eliminated position had been in the investigative division and he found this to be problematic. He explained that when two supervisors retired last year he took the opportunity to reorganize with minimal impact to the personnel line item.

K. Duffett asked about the high overtime line item for 2018 Actual which was at \$628,548 while FY2019 and FY2020 were budgeted at \$400,000. Chief Spinney replied that \$400,000 was inadequate for overtime. He stated that in FY2018 there were a couple of injuries which added to the overtime. K. Duffett asked if the budget would go over the \$400,000 level even in an unaffected year. Chief Spinney replied that it would go over. He stated that it was always over \$500,000. He noted that they received over \$130,000 in grant money which he used for this line item. A. Langford asked if this was a specific grant. Chief Spinney replied that he received 911 grant funds which he used for dispatcher overtime. A. Langford stated that Chief Spinney always budgeted \$400,000 for overtime even though he always went over this amount. J. Clancy added

that Chief Spinney knew that he could address the overage with grant money or from pulling from other line items. J. Clancy asked if it would be possible to see the actual town funds for this line item versus the grant money. He stated that the \$5,655,454 actual for 2018 had a lower budget to the town since the grant money was included. He suggested that a line be added to show the grant funding. K. Duffett added that it would be interesting to see the budget versus actual amounts for one year. Chief Spinney said that he would ask D. Lussier to provide the amounts that came from grants.

Chief Spinney reported that the police department expenses were increasing by \$29,037 or 3.93%. He stated that the FY2019 expenses were \$738,000 and for FY2020 they were \$767,037. He stated that he tried to replace four S.U.V.'s each year. J. Clancy asked if last year he had only been able to replace three. Chief Spinney replied that this was correct, and they had only replaced three last year and he added that he could only afford to replace three again this year. He reported that due to new lighting and energy saving measures he was able to decrease the electricity line item from \$65,000 to \$50,000. He stated that he had increased building maintenance from \$18,000 to \$40,000. He explained that \$10,000 of this was for the front walkway which needed repairs. He added that other repairs were needed in the parking lot as well. Chief Spinney reported that other changes under expenses were an increase in vehicle maintenance from \$52,000 to \$60,000, a decrease in contracted services from \$33,000 to \$28,000 and an increase in replacement equipment from \$155,000 to \$180,000. He noted that the \$180,000 was for four fully equipped S.U.V. units, but he reiterated that he thought he would only be able to replace three again this year. V. Parks asked what was included under contracted services. Chief Spinney replied that this included a press person, motorcycle lease, copy machine and the Massachusetts Police Chief's Association. He stated that they were trying to get more information out there via social media and they contracted with someone who handles this and writes the press releases for them. E. Chambers asked how many cruisers were in the total fleet. Chief Spinney replied that there were 30. J. Clancy asked if this included the backline too. Chief Spinney replied in the affirmative.

Chief Spinney reported that the FY2020 budget was \$6,701,825 which was an increase of \$155,778 or 2.38% over prior year. He stated that under animal control total personnel services went from \$106,854 to \$111,220 due to COLA. He stated that there were no changes to the animal control expenses. A. Tanini asked if both animal control officers were full-time. Chief Spinney replied that they were adding that it worked well to have the evening hours covered as there were often calls during the dinner hour or at night.

Chief Spinney provided the Finance Committee with 2018 year-end statistics. He reported that overall calls and police activity was at 35,096 incidents which was a 9% increase over prior year. He pointed out the significant increase in motor vehicle stops at 5,629 which was a 66% increase over the prior year. He stated that areas that had decreased were arrests, disturbances, breaking and entering, robberies, motor vehicle breaks and motor vehicle thefts. He stated that opioid overdoses were holding steady at 45 while the prior year had been 47. He said that there were three opioid fatalities in 2018. He pointed out that fraud crimes were increasing all over the place with Chelmsford having 120 fraud crimes in 2018. He added that elderly residents are often the target of these crimes. He gave several examples such as: calling a grandparent regarding an injured child needing funds and sending a check that requires an amount to be sent

for taxes. He added that another method used was to use a homeless person to cash a bad check. In this way, if they were caught they would take off leaving the homeless person as the victim. If they had success, they would give the homeless person a small amount and they would keep the rest. He suggested that to protect against skimmers on ATM's that people tug on the equipment, cover the key pad with a hand and simulate the entry of additional fake digits at the end of their code. E. Chambers asked about the significant increase in motor vehicle stops and the 23% increase in citations issued. Chief Spinney replied that they had hired three to four younger officers who were more aggressive. He stated that they were being proactive regarding speeding cars in neighborhoods. He noted that not all citations resulted in tickets as some would be warnings only.

Public Comment:

J. Clancy reported that next week Nashoba and the Library would be presenting their budgets. In addition, he said that L. Prescott from the CPF would be in to review their articles. K. Duffett pointed out that E. Belansky had not yet presented to the CPC regarding the façade and signage improvement program article. J. Clancy suggested that E. Belansky could be invited in to a future Finance Committee meeting. K. Duffett stated that the schools were confirmed for March 14th. J. Clancy added that the DPW and facilities could also be scheduled on the 14th which would just leave the remaining articles.

J. Clancy asked P. Cohen if he anticipated any large amendments to the operating budget. P. Cohen replied that he did not. He added that there were a few articles that there would be no action requested on. He commented that by having the Special Town Meeting in February they had probably saved one night of Spring Town Meeting. He said that he would anticipate a two-night meeting.

K. Duffett stated that they had met with Nashoba and there were now six students in the post-graduate program which was 3% of Chelmsford's enrollment. She said that she thought there had been three students in the post-graduate program last year. She stated that eventually this would be a significant issue.

A. Tanini made a motion to adjourn. E. Chambers seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

The meeting adjourned at 9:02 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Pamela A. Morrison