**MINUTES
FINANCE COMMITTEE
DALTON SENIOR CENTER/ VIRTUAL ZOOM MEETING
Monday, April 5th, 2021
5:30 P.M.**

**Members present:** Chairman- William A. Drosehn, Vice Chair- Jeff Noble, Clerk- Karen Schmidt, Susan Carroll-Lombardi, Michael Jerome, Kira Staubach-Smith

**Also present:** Interim. Town Manager & Town Accountant- Sandra Albano, Recording Secretary- Brittany Miller, Dalton Community Television, Selectman- Joseph Diver, Police Chief- Deanna Strout, Police Admin. Assistant- Rebecca Whitaker, Samuel Pascual

**Members absent/ excused:**

Chairman William A. Drosehn convened the meeting at 5:38 p.m.

**Minutes:** J.Noble motioned to postpone the minutes, K.Schmidt seconded. Roll call vote: W.Drosehn “yes”, J.Noble “yes”, S.Carroll-Lombardi “yes”, M.Jerome “yes”, K.Schmidt “yes”, K.Staubach-Smith “yes”.

**FY22 Budgets:**

**#210 – Police Department** J.Noble motioned to un-table the Police Department budget department #210 from the 3/24/21 meeting, Karen Schmidt seconded. Roll call vote: W.Drosehn “yes”, J.Noble “yes”, S.Carroll-Lombardi “yes”, M.Jerome “yes”, K.Schmidt “yes”, K.Staubach-Smith “yes”.
Q&A with Dalton Police Chief Deanna Strout:
1.) Will one Reserve Officer become full-time in FY22, if so can that reserve salary be used towards the second officer position that was requested, if so what would that dollar amount be?
D.Strout- “Reserves don’t have a salary. By Civil Service, they only have to work one shift per year. We can budget an approximate amount of shifts that all Reserves will work for the year. For this coming year we dropped it down to 272 shifts, last year was budgeted at 350 as we had more Reserve Officers last year. The Police Reform Bill has made it really difficult to hire because we have to put the untrained through the Full Time Academy now. We hire through Civil Service which means we have to go by their list – the person we’ve been offered has not been to the Reserve Academy prior to the Bill change, so the only option is to send them to the Full Time Academy which is 6 months long and won’t open again until at least September. We’re in a hiring freeze. Misty Millette has been to the Reserve Academy however, she’ll have to attend Bridge Academy or Full-Time Academy if she’s hired as full time. Officer Dottie DiMouro-Litz was reinstated through Civil Service as she was employed with us prior- so she is currently a Reserve with full-time certification. Officers Balardini and Bradley are in the queue to attend full time in the fall. Once complete, they’re assigned full-time rotations on a waiver through the State – we have to backfill their shifts 80 hours/ week. Tyler Miller was taken from Hinsdale; he was a Reserve and is now a full time officer for us this week. Overall we have two permanent Reserves that will have to attend the Bridge Academy. Typically the Police structure is the Chief with 14 officers underneath, five of which are usually part time and the rest full time. We currently have 12 officers.”
2.) If we remove the second officer position, can we deduct half of the payroll or overtime day & night since Reserve Officer Litz is already on the payroll? Pertaining to FY22.
D.Strout- “We don’t because we still have to backfill shifts. Litz will be able to fill one of those 40 hour slots. The plan is to do away with mandatory overtime that officers hate. If we put her up to full time it will only require a fill of 40 hours. We do have Sergeant Furlong out on active military leave, and it is unknown when he’ll return. Officer Baroli is currently going through the State Police hiring process, it is unknown if he will stay or leave. So should we lose either or both of those it will be catastrophic to staffing.” “Shift differentials on the day shift are contractually given. Openings will be 2nd and 3rd shifts.”
3.) Can we postpone the hiring of a second new officer by one year?
D.Strout- “Due to the new Police Reform Bill, everyone has to be at the same level of certification; the more training for our community the better; however as a Civil Service department the timing is very difficult. We only have one academy in Western Mass. that serves all. Classes were typically 55 officers but because of Covid they’re only running half classes. By law I have to get Balardini and Bradley in to the Academy because they’re on waivers. Each academy is about 6 months, new hires have to go through a field training officer program, making it about 14 months for the hiring process. Any further delay turns into 28 months.”
4.) What is the impact of hiring new officers on shift coverage?
D.Strout- “When officers go to the Academy, they get paid their 40 hours/ week. Then we have to pay to fill their shifts. Being shorthanded, my shift minimum contractually is two officers per shift. If someone calls out sick, I don’t have to backfill that with overtime. Though not seen in 8 years, full staffing is the goal and will reduce our overtime not only for financial reasons but officer wellness.”
5.) Seeking a better understanding of the impacts of Police Reform Bill on personnel such as the request for 2 full time officers and its impact on the budget going forward.
D.Strout- “December 31st, 2020 the Police Reform Bill was signed into action. The standards for police officers has risen. The analogy of it is in the medical field, they say: ‘starting next week with no notice, we’re going to have no EMT’s, no LPN’s, and no CNA’s - everyone has to be an RN now’. Legislators are having buyers’ remorse saying they didn’t understand. Dalton is one of the only Civil Service departments remaining; we’re exploring get out of it to untie our hands when it comes to hiring; but it takes time and Town vote to do it. It won’t happen this year. Now every officer needs to be at the ‘RN’ level and that costs us approximately $1,300 per new hire. At that level, they are full-time certified; very few people are going to go through that certification and then accept $18.74/ hour for 1-2 shifts/ week; with that they will go someplace offering full-time positions. Dalton will have foot the bill and the sponsorship just for said candidate to leave; we’re wasting money/ resources with this hiring strategy. The Field Training program is a minimum of 30 shifts on top of Academy training. We can’t keep hiring Reserves because they aren’t going to stay, at no fault to them who are looking for a career in policing. We’ve always had 15 officers in our department; I’m asking to get us up to 14 from our current 12. We have a couple of Reserve Officers that will remain that way permanently since they signed a waiver to not become full-time as they have full-time jobs elsewhere. The strategy is fruitless and we need to ensure retention and that is the ask. Police culture has changed; it used to be competitive. The oldest guy I have on days has only been on a year and half – our force is so young. In the last nine years the turnover rate has seemed to increase; which is not unique to Dalton, but every department has a retention issue. Keeping our environment positive is a team effort.”
J.Noble- “Do you tend to see new officers come from the local community or do you see them come from other areas of the State?”
D.Strout- “Due to the Civil Service list, we get people from all over the place. But most of our officers currently are local/ Wahconah grads/ Berkshire County. For example, someone we’re hiring now, I was her school officer when she was in 8th grade.”
6.) How was the $10K dollar Police Reform line item arrived at?
D.Strout- “The Academy requires tablets; upon sending 2-4 officers to said Academy, we’d need one for each officer. We have one tablet already; they cost about $1,500/ each. This is a new concept as the Reserve Academy didn’t require that. We opted to shift our *known* items such as that to our expense line. Tablets will be saved and re-used.”
B.Droshen suggests putting tablets towards the IT budget/ consolidating if they are more efficient to use once the Academy is done. Technology certainly ages out and that budget will only expand as it’s here to stay.
D.Strout- “We have software that we utilize for report writing that is very secure and protected from hacking. We do carry notebooks and laptops in cruisers assigned to each car. It may not be safe to carry a tablet on the street should it get dropped.”
7.) What do you anticipate the total ongoing expenses in relation to the Police Reform Bill?
D.Strout- “Specifically we have to increase our training. We have to do two range trainings/ year; officers are required 300 rounds of ammunition per range session. Ammunition is expensive now but I have explored a less expensive/ different type of ammunition for training purposes. All officers require 40 hours of in-service once we’re up to full staff. There is a subtle shift to online training. With such a young department, there are many certifications and things to be trained in like sexual assault, field training, etc. that they haven’t yet acquired.”
“The other side of the Bill is standard and relates to policy changes and giving all of our personnel/ discipline records to Post Commission by September.”
8.) Is a one-time expense anticipated?
D.Strout- “The Bridge Academy is a one-time expense; which practices getting reserve certified officers full time certified via 200 hours of training that we pay for. That’s necessary for two Dalton officers; one is a Mass Firearms Instructor so that’s 40 hours we don’t have to pay. Part of training is Firearms; and a week-long Emergency Vehicle Operations Course (EVOC). Bridge is just a temporary fix until everybody goes to the Full Time Academy from there.”
9.) Why is there an additional $2,500 for uniforms and can this be reduced?
D.Strout- “There are Academy uniforms now: T-shirts, shorts, duffel bags, equipment, etc. We have to send 2-3 officers to the Academy. Officers get $950/ year for uniform replacements already in their contracts, Reserves get $650; it was increased from there.”
10.) If we purchase two new vehicles, would we still need to increase maintenance by $3,500?
D.Strout- “Since the proposal/ in conversation with Drosehn, it was thought to refurbish our car with 30K miles on it and make it the new canine cruiser (the current canine vehicle has 100K miles on it). That should last us the duration of the dog’s life, of which we have another 4-5 years hopefully. The oldest car we have is a 2013 with 115K miles on it; it will be traded in as part of cost reduction. By assigning cruisers in a rotation it lowers mileage/ wear and tear; the fewer amount of people to drive a single car the better care is taken on it by its assigned driver. We have two 2017 cars with 74K miles and two 2019 cars: in total 4 patrol cruisers, a canine car and a desperate old spare as a last resort. The approach is to stagger/ replace cars yearly vs. aging all at once.”
11.) Does in-service training need to be increased?
“Yes, due to the Police Reform Act.”
12.) Does equipment repair need to increase?
“Equipment includes radars, lidars, breathalyzers, etc.”
13.) The repeater service program takes care of the first year so it was able to be removed from the capital expenditure line in the budget.
D.Strout- “We are also applying for a $20K grant.”
14.) The DPD server should be coming under our capital expenditure (lifespan typically 5 years).
D.Strout- “We are almost out of room on the server (1 year). One time we lost 15 days of data.”
S.Albano- “Last year we couldn’t get the grant. But we do have an authorization borrowing.”
15.) The ‘other purchase services’ line item is at a total of $6K.
D.Strout- “We have been level funded for a long time and not made any changes to our offices/ rooms until Chief Riello came in before me. He organized, which is where the expenses came from, to ensure a secure, private, safe facility as we handle arrests.”
16.) Medical went from $3,500 to $4,200.
D.Strout- “This is due to new hire psych exams and Covid testing. We had a lot of exposures because officers have to go to people’s houses. At first, Occupational Health was billing $127 for Covid testing until we made a switch to Berkshire Health Systems where the officer utilizes their health insurance and then we reimburse their copayment of $15-30.”
17.) ‘Other supplies’ has always been under budget.
D.Strout- “This year DPD has to replace their Narcan which is really expensive. Ammunition, tasers, cell blankets, and Academy material cost falls under this as well.”
18.) The paper shredder: there is room in other budgets to move it.
Comments:
J.Diver- In support of helping DPD through the Police Reform to the best of our ability.
State Representative, Paul Mark was contacted to inquire some potential funding on this.
Much appreciation was expressed from all collaborating efforts.
We will likely revisit this budget again in January.
Motion: Jeff Noble; that the Finance Committee amend the budget for Police Department #210 from the prior request consisting of $1,041,772 in salaries and $133,050 in expenses for a total amount of $1,174,822 (14.61% increase from the prior year) to now consist of $982,754 in salaries and $118,150 in expenses for a total amount of $1,100,904 (7.4% increase from the prior year). Karen Schmidt seconded.
Roll call vote: W.Drosehn “yes”, J.Noble “yes”, S.Carroll-Lombardi “yes”, M.Jerome “yes”, K.Schmidt “yes”, K.Staubach-Smith “yes”.

**Minutes:**

* **3/10/2021** J.Noble motioned to approve the minutes as presented, K.Schmidt seconded. Roll call vote: W.Drosehn “yes”, J.Noble “yes”, S.Carroll-Lombardi “yes”, M.Jerome “yes”, K.Schmidt “yes”, K.Staubach-Smith “yes”.
* **3/17/2021** J.Noble motioned to approve the minutes as presented, K.Schmidt seconded. Roll call vote: W.Drosehn “yes”, J.Noble “yes”, S.Carroll-Lombardi “yes”, M.Jerome “yes”, K.Schmidt “yes”, K.Staubach-Smith “yes”.

**Other Discussion:** All budgets are in.The current total Town Operating Budget is at a 0.23% increase.

**Adjourn:** Jeff Noble motioned to adjournat 7:24 p.m., K.Schmidt seconded. Roll call vote: W.Drosehn “yes”, J.Noble “yes”, S.Carroll-Lombardi “yes”, M.Jerome “yes”, K.Schmidt “yes”, K.Staubach-Smith “yes”.

Respectfully Submitted,
Brittany Miller
Recording Secretary

*The next scheduled meeting will be held on Wednesday, April 21st, 2021 at 6:00 p.m. at the Dalton Senior Center & Zoom.*