

JOINT FINANCE COMMITTEE AND BOARD OF SELECTMEN MEETING

February 6, 2013

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**Meeting Date:** February 6, 2013

**Called to Order:** no quorum

**Location:** 1 Avenue A, Turners Falls MA

**Selectmen called to order:** 6:01 PM

**Finance Committee Members Present:** John Hanold, Michael Naughton, Greg Garrison and Sharon Kennaugh. Lynn Reynolds was absent. There was no quorum.

**Board of Selectmen Members:** Pat Allen and Mark Fairbrother. Christopher Boutwell was absent.

**Others Present:** Town Administrator Frank Abbondanzio, Town Accountant Carolyn Olsen, Chief of Police Chip Dodge and Dispatch Supervisor and Office Administrator Marsha Odle.

### Minutes

Selectmen Moved:

To approve the minutes of January 30, 2013.

Vote: 2 In Favor 0 Opposed 0 Abstained

### Dispatch

- Other than contractual step increases, the biggest line item increases were for overtime, seminars and travel.
- In the past, most of dispatch training was "on the job" but the state now has new requirements for off-site training, which increases the overtime budget (to fill shifts of dispatchers at training), the training budget (which is charged for the dispatchers at training) and seminars.
- Ms. Odle explained that as of 7/1/12, the state requires that all public safety dispatchers must all have at least 16 hours per year of continuing education. So now all dispatchers must receive this training at the town's expense.
- If grants are awarded, some of the expenses can be covered by the grant. Since Montague is a small agency, we usually get the minimum grant award.
- Also new is a requirement that any new dispatcher must go through a 40 hour telecommunications class in addition to specific on the job training in Montague.
- The main cost impact is that training is no longer in house, so now there are seminar and travel costs.
- All dispatchers, even per diems, must be trained to state standards.
- All trainings are out in the eastern part of the state, so mileage is quite expensive.
- Mr. Abbondanzio asked if the training requirements are an unfunded mandate and suggested that the Chief contact the office of unfunded mandates for both dispatch and officer training requirements.
- There is also a new line item for Turners Falls Fire District shift, which represents \$0.50 per hour paid to each dispatcher to reflect time spent on district calls. This amount is paid to the Town by the District. When the budget was drafted it was thought that the District would pay dispatchers \$1.00 per hour beginning in Fiscal

Year 2014, but it is staying at \$0.50. So the \$8,760 for this line item can be reduced by \$4,380 and the total budget will now be \$228,679.

### **Special Article Request for February 28, 2013 Special Town Meeting**

- Chief Dodge explained that the \$24,500 being requested for the current fiscal year budget is primarily for overtime that resulted in requiring shifts to be filled for three vacancies.
- On vacancy is due to a work related injury. This employee has been out for several months and is likely to be out for several more.
- Two vacancies are due to officers attending the police academy. The state requires that newly appointed officers go to the first available academy. One of these officers will graduate next week and the other officer started this week.
- Additionally there are academy related costs that were not budgeted because the first officer was expected to go through the academy in the last fiscal year but was unable to attend at that time.
- Because of the absences, there is only 31.42% of the overtime budget left as of the end of January. The department spends \$8,000-\$10,000 on overtime a month and needs the \$24,500 to keep safe staffing levels through June. Other expenditures will be reduced to enable meeting the Fiscal Year 2013 budget, but the reductions will not affect safety.

### **Police Fiscal Year 2014 Operating Budget**

- The main increases in personnel costs are the larger step increases per arbitration, two additional officers receiving incentive pay, an increase in Holiday Pay to reflect the Fiscal Year 2014 schedule, and a \$4,000 increase in training overtime.
- Training occurring in the current year, including two officers attending the Police Academy, will not reduce the Fiscal Year 2014 Training requests as there are new training requirements for all officers. New state regulations require specific mandatory training courses. Additionally, most training must be done by outside certified instructors rather than having staff certified as trainers. This year the requirements are for 32 hours of training per officer, next year will be 40 hours per officer.
- Mr. Hanold asked about the \$2,500 budget for academy expenses in Fiscal Year 2014. This is budgeted so that if an officer is able to attend a state police academy the tuition amount is in the budget even though other related expenditures would have to be funded through other line item surpluses.
- 111F wages are wages paid to an officer who is out of work due to a work related injury. Those wages, when incurred, are charged to a separate line item, but the only impact on the budget is overtime cost to fill the officer's shifts. The injured officer's wages are simply charged to 111F rather than regular wages (where the wages were budgeted).
- The request of \$48,000 for Vehicle Supplies is an increase of \$5,000 over the current budget, but the line item is already overspent this year, and almost \$51,000 was spent in Fiscal Year 2012. One of the larger costs is fuel, which

running around \$3,300 per month. There is also an aging fleet in spite of the annual purchases of new vehicles and the older vehicles tend to have larger repair bills.

- Mr. Abbondanzio asked how the cost of getting the fuel through the current company compares to going through the DPW. The Chief will talk to Superintendent Bergeron about the option of going back to using the DPW fuel depot at the transfer station, but there were also a lot of mechanical issues at the depot. Right now having the Gulf gas cards is also more convenient for the officers. New cruisers are also very finicky about the gas, and depot gas tends to sit in the tanks for long periods.
- The Insurance line item has been increased by 10% per the budget memo. The actual cost will not be known for some time.
- Ammunition has been separated out into a new line item because the increase in training requirements also drastically increases this cost. The request is for \$8,800, while the Other Supplies request was only reduced \$2,000. This disparity is due to additional training requirements. The state now requires 3 firearms trainings (one of which is a qualification) per year. Chief Dodge hopes that this amount will be reduced in future years.

### **Police Cruiser**

- The new cruiser was purchased in late January of 2013 because Ford changed the configuration of police vehicles and there were none available until November. Then the State Police went first, and then in the order in which it was ordered. This delay is one reason for the higher repair costs this year. Current expenditures are just over \$36,000.
- The request for next year is higher because the Chief plans to purchase a SUV rather than a traditional cruiser. An SUV is routinely needed during snow events and the only SUV now in the fleet is an old vehicle used by the K-9 officer. The Chief has an estimate from MHQ of \$38,700 plus \$700 for the radio. The \$39,500 request allows a very small allowance for any additional costs that may be incurred. This will be ordered for July delivery.
- By keeping the fleet current the Chief hopes to minimize future repair and maintenance costs. If you skip a year in replacing vehicles, any immediate savings are offset by additional repair costs for the older vehicles.
- Mr. Naughton requested an estimate of annual mileage and average mpg.

### **Discretionary Fund/Special Article**

- The intention of this fund is to cover sporadic and large purchases rather than routine and smaller purchases.
- One of the concerns when the article was first created was that it not be used for things that should be in the operating budget.
- Mr. Hanold is inclined to include a police-specific component and he doesn't see the fund as intended for small purchases.

- Ms. Allen would look at past expenses of Equipment Repair and Maintenance and Supplies and see whether specific expenses have been previously charged to those accounts, in which case they should not be charged to the Special Article.
- Chief Dodge has amended the wording for the Fiscal Year 2014 to specifically include additional items. One main reason for the changes is that when the police station was built, some things were overlooked, and are just now being recognized as being needed or which now need to be replaced. Some of these issues are that the original computers and computer components are dying and need replacement. Even though the individual purchases might be only \$100-\$200 dollars, but they are integral components on the computers.
- Current language of Discretionary Account: "...the sum of \$20,000 for the purpose of funding purchases of Police equipment such as bullet-proof vests, tasers, computers, firearms, radios or similar items..."
- Proposed language for Fiscal Year 2014 request: "...the sum of \$20,000.00 for the purpose of funding purchases of Police equipment such as firearms **and firearm accessories, computers and computer accessories, police cruiser equipment, department equipment and furniture**, bullet-proof vests, tasers, radios or similar items, **PBT's and other breath test devices, police badges as well as all other necessary equipment needed to assist the police department with the carrying out of a safe and efficient operation.** (Bold language is new)
- Mr. Naughton would like to continue the conversation to clarify intent.

**Reserve Fund Transfer Requests** – postponed until there is a quorum of the Finance Committee.

**Stipends** – postponed until there is a quorum of the Finance Committee.

**Topics not Anticipated** - none

**Board of Selectmen's Meeting Adjourned at 8:15 PM**

**List of Documents and Exhibits –**

- Minutes of January 30, 2013
- Copy of Police and Dispatch budget requests
- Detail of expenditures from police discretionary article from July 2011 to current.
- Handouts from Chief Dodge with budget information

**Next Meetings**

- February 6, 2013      Police and Dispatch Budgets, GMRSD debrief, Stipends
- February 13, 2013    WPCF and DPW Budgets
- February 20, 2013    Capital Improvements Committee, budgets for Selectmen (including Workers Compensation), Veterans, miscellaneous
- March 6, 2013        GMRSD