

FINANCE COMMITTEE

MINUTES

March 14, 2019

Regular meeting of the Finance Committee was held on Thursday, March 14, 2019 at 6:30 p.m. in Room #112, Town Hall with the following members present: M. Trudell, J. Burke, M. Sullivan, R. Ardine, B. Bain, D. Shea, R. Nottebart, A. Hamilton, K. Greulich, S. Lawson, L. Van der Linden, and A. Flowers. Members absent: D. Crowley, M. Ahigian. Also in attendance was the Town Administrator J. Johnson. Police Chief J. Carmichael, Deputy Chief C. Mackenzie, Fire Chief T. Bailey and Deputy Chief P. Barry.

6:30 p.m. – Quorum being present, the meeting was called to order by the Chairman M. Trudell.

May 6, 2019 Spring Annual Town Meeting

Police Department – Chief Carmichael and Assistant Chief C. Mackenzie. provided an update on where the department is with staffing. Department consists of 43 officers, 10 dispatchers, 4 clerks, 7 crossing guards, Animal Control Officer and one Golden Retriever. (presently there are 41 officers) Staffing is ever changing due to retirements and officers transferring to other departments. Chief would like to hire three additional officers, bringing up to the 44. In addition to a patrolman, he spoke to the need to hire a full time IT person.

Chief spoke to the FY19 budget is in deficit. Department has had to hire an additional School Resource Officer with a service dog to be assigned to the schools, this takes an officer off the street. There has been training of the police officers in Alice, which deals with school violence and bullying and had to train the teachers, students and staff in Alice. With a resignation of an officer, it takes four months to replace this officer. There have been injured officers, which requires the department to fill the position with Overtime. Police and Fire dispatchers have been combined, requiring training over a four month period, The overtime line item for this training proved to be inadequate. Chief spoke to a new police exam coming up. There is a Sergeant position in the FY20 budget which most likely be filled within by a promotion. Chief would like to hire a fully trained officer, if possible, from another department. An additional officer will help but it is hard to know about health issues, things happen that are not anticipated.

The Town is increasing in size with a lot of growth, and department is trying to stay ahead of the curve. Walpole is below average in staffing. Society has changed and the number of calls have increased

Minimum Manning – Consists of one sergeant and three patrolman and this is inadequate and Chief feels there should be at least four patrolman. There are liability issues with a staff shortage.

Chief spoke to the Town changing, department deals with mental health crisis on a daily basis, and domestic violence and severity of incidents. They also deal with transient population passing through. Town has motels, number of group homes, Longview Farm TEC Collaborative etc. Long term, he would like to have a full time IT person on staff along with a patrolman.

Fire Department – Chief T. Bailey, Deputy Fire Chief P. Barry. Provided an update on their respective department. Staffing consists of Chief, Deputy Fire Chief, Administrative Assistant, four captains, four lieutenants and 28 firefighters and one call firefighter. Chief spoke to the number of calls increasing by 19.5% since 2014. They spoke to the number of the building projects being proposed and currently being built. These require an increase in the number of inspections. They work with the Zoning and Planning Boards, doing site inspections and doing plan review. Inspections can't be part of shift staffing. Town relies heavily on mutual aid. Department's #1 priority is to have a fire prevention person, which would be promoted within. It would take nine months to a year to replace this individual. Major calls of the department are medical. Fire truck that is on order is not big enough for some of the new buildings that are being constructed. Fees are adjusted every two years and are on par with other communities.

Committee discussed setting a joint meeting on public safety after Town Meeting and Town Election. Some members spoke to looking at staffing in all departments, Town is expanding and demands are increasing. There needs to be a vision of where the Town is going.

MOTION MADE by M. Trudell, Seconded by J. Burke to adjourn the meeting at 9:30 p.m., Motion Passed (12-0-0)

Respectfully submitted,

Clare P. Abril
Clerk

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