TOWN COUNCIL
FINANCE SUBCOMMITTEE
WATERTOWN, CONNECTICUT

SPECIAL MEETING
FEBRUARY 28, 2023 – 7:00 P.M.
MINUTES

WATERTOWN TOWN HALL
TOWN COUNCIL CHAMBERS
61 ECHO LAKE RD.
WATERTOWN, CT 06795.

1. Call Meeting to Order
Chair Jonathan Ramsay called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

2. Pledge of Allegiance
Chair Jonathan Ramsay led the pledge of allegiance.

3. Roll Call

PRESENT: Jonathan Ramsay, Chair
Ken Demirs
Gary Lafferty
Denise Russ
Rachael Ryan

ABSENT: Mary Ann Rosa, Vice Chair
Robert Desena
Anthony DiBona
Robert Retallick

OTHERS PRESENT: Mark Raimo, Town Manager
Susan Zappone, Asst. Town Manager/Finance Director
Joshua Bernegger, Police Chief
Renee Dominguez, Deputy Police Chief
4. Review Police Department FY 2023-2024 Proposed Budget.

Joshua Bernegger, Police Chief gave a presentation of 2023-2024 budget to the council. Mr. Bernegger reviewed the budgets for Administrative, Patrol-Detective and Maintenance & Support, Traffic, Animal Control, Communications and revenue made regarding grants, permits and private duty.

Renee Dominguez, Deputy Police Chief reviewed the budgets for traffic, animal control and the communications budget.

See attached

Gary Lafferty asked what would happen if they pass the bill, taking the police officers out of the schools would you still be short officers?

Joshua Bernegger, Police Chief answered if the policier officers came out of the school, they would be reassigned back to patrol. There would be more bench players out on patrol, that would be 4 police officers on patrol rather than two. I am testifying tomorrow against that bill, hopefully it doesn’t pass.

Chair Jonathan Ramsay asked in regards t the contracts going back two years, the wages get adjusted for their normal wages plus overtime. Their retroactive pay with the new contract that includes the overtime pay.

Joshua Bernegger, Police Chief answered the retro would be included, the pay raise that was indicated by July 1, 2021 that wouldn’t be reflected in this budget.

Denise Russ asked for the vehicle maintenance do you go out for bids in town for service to the vehicles to see if you could get a better price or is it one standard garage.

Joshua Bernegger, Police Chief answered we rotate a lot through some of the various garages in town, when we do have accidents that require body.

Denise Russ asked in regards to the $20,459 for the part time she is in for a total of $44,000, 20 is part of that 44 partnered to make it full time.

Renee Dominguez, Deputy Police Chief answered yes.

Gary Lafferty asked do both animal control officers work the same shift?

Renee Dominguez, Deputy Police Chief answered we have coverage 7 days a week having the two they both work 8-hour shifts. Our more senior works 6 to 2 Monday through Friday and the part time who is now full time she works Wednesday through Sunday 10 to 6. We have this bigger time period that we have somebody on duty and we don’t have to call somebody in on overtime. When she was part time would worked 2 to 6. We were
able to keep that 12-hour span with the two of them working and then the both working on the weekends if we had dogs at the shelter to feed the dogs and to also respond to calls for service where it's not costing us overtime.

Chair Jonathan Ramsay asked in regards to the 9 percent related to extra duty to help deal with the administrative side if I recall at the time there were comments made that there was a lot of unbilled time from prior months. Did we see an uptick on billing collecting on those older outstanding bills.

Joshua Bernegger, Police Chief answered I will refer that to Sue in a moment but the good news moving forward with Extra Duty Solutions they assume that liability.

Susan Zappone, Asst. Town Manager/Finance Director answered the older money is still coming in regularly.

Chair Jonathan Ramsay asked about the grant that was applied for relating to the body cameras, when do we receive that grant, what ends up happening to the money, does it go back to the Police Department or does it stay in the general fund.

Joshua Bernegger, Police Chief answered that would go straight I am assuming the general fund.

Rachael Ryan asked for more explanation on the crime suppression grant and what would that money go towards?

Joshua Bernegger, Police Chief answered that would go towards the hiring of police officers on overtime for the specific purpose for crime suppression. Trying to target motor vehicle theft in extra patrols and high crime areas. We would be doing a heat map assessment of where our biggest crime problems are. We are talking mainly convenience stores, our commercial auto dealership area for catalytic converters and putting on extra patrols for the purpose of crime prevention and apprehension for those type of thefts and larcenies.

Rachael Ryan asked about the police accountability laws and what are some of the details that you think could have led to the need for more officers.

Joshua Bernegger, Police Chief answered the police accountability law which passed in 2020 is a huge bill with numerous different parts to it. There are several unfunded mandates that are included in this legislation. The requirement of accreditation is one of them luckily, we are already accredited however the means in which accreditation is done now is going to be electronic rather than paper. We have to transfer everything that we have into a digital environment. Our assessment a lot of that is going to be done remotely rather than have assessors come on site scene and reviewing all of our files. We have to submit them electronically to the police officers and standards training council through software called Power DMS which is one of our budgeted software subscriptions. The requirement is to have dash cameras and body cameras, both of which we did currently have. We were fortunate the
fact that we didn’t have to put out a huge expenditure right when that bill came because we were already ahead of the curve in the areas of cameras. Many of that technology is just meeting the end of its life right now and we have to refresh it. That is why we signed new contracts this past year.

Joshua Bernegger, Police Chief added the community is more aware of body and dash cameras now and the FOI request for both of those have increased. We actually have an officer who has to go through them and that takes some time. We have an officer pulled off patrol and assign them to our Professional Standards Division to handle all these administrative tasks. In all honesty I almost need two, there is that much work to do administratively compared to what was there ten years ago.

Rachael Ryan stated I read the town times and I always read the arrest section has there been an increase in crime it seems like maybe there has been or different types of crime do you feel like that is a concern, another reason why you want more officers?

Joshua Bernegger, Police Chief answered the request for more officers is not due to an increase in crime we certainly saw a spike in crime in 2020 and 2022. The trend is improving this year the crime stats in almost all the categories with the exception of some of the minor larcenies have been dropping so that is good news. The increase in officers primarily is to provide bench players on patrol. An increase with the number of officers that we can put out on the road during any given shift having more bench players on our shifts will reduce our overtime costs.

Renee Dominguez, Deputy Police Chief added having more officers allows for us to police in a way the community dictates, how we want to be policed such as watching the stop signs, attending some community events all that the community loves.

Joshua Bernegger, Police Chief also added one of the biggest complaints from citizens is traffic related, speeding, stop signs violations and red light running. Those are three big ones and they are the most difficult for us to address just having three officers on the road.

Gary Lafferty asked with all this extra duty overtime do you see any of the officers getting burnt out at all and would that probably cause more overtime in the regular shifts.

Joshua Bernegger, Police Chief answered I don’t think we saw that we have mutual aid agreements with several surrounding communities for extra duty. That overtime is entirely voluntary for our officers if they don’t want to work it, they don’t have to. Officers are not allowed to work more than 16 hours in a 24-hour period and that’s a rarity they do that much time in a 24-hour period. We don’t allow more than 16 hours unless there is an actual emergency situation that we have to call them in for.

Denise Russ asked how many records clerks do you have in the office.

Joshua Bernegger, Police Chief answered we have two.
Denise Russ asked if $1,500 is enough for medical bills for the dog.

Joshua Bernegger, Police Chief answered there are some years where it is more money than we need and there are other years where one vet visit will blow that money out completely especially if they need surgery. This year we have had not problems except for a well visit.

Denise Russ suggested checking into animal insurance.

Chair Jonathan Ramsay asked how many animals typically run through animal control in a given month?

Joshua Bernegger, Police Chief answered I know at the pound we have 4 animals at the pound that requires daily feeding and cleaning. Our Animal Control Officers work diligently on placement for those animals. As far as call volume with Animal Control we are fairly busy with animal control and we get certain problematic dogs that are involved in bite situations that could dominate quite a bit of their time. There is a lot of roaming dogs they deal with and registrations.

Chair Jonathan Ramsay asked about the salaries under the Sergeant line item going down $80,000, is that due to one less Sergeant.

Joshua Bernegger, Police Chief answered we have 3 Lieutenants and 7 Sergeants. We just conducted a Lieutenants exam it is the first one we did in over ten years due to the recent retirement of Lieutenant Patrick Gerard. We have two other sergeants that took that exam that are on that list. Lieutenant Tim Gavialis who will be retiring at the end of 2024, I am proposing we bump up Lieutenants to four to acclimate him to the position prior to his retirement for the year of 23/24 temporarily for this one fiscal year and would likely go back to 3 Lieutenants and seven Sergeants in the following fiscal year.

Chair Jonathan Ramsay asked regarding the Patrol officers it seems like that only accounts for one new officer versus two.

Joshua Bernegger, Police Chief answered that is strictly a contractual increase in salary.

Ken Demirs asked in regards to the two new officers would that be officers going through the academy or would that be from another town the number change.

Joshua Bernegger, Police Chief answered we strive to hire certified lateral officers, we always attempt that first prior to doing new entries.

5. Adjournment.

Meeting adjourned at 7:45 p.m.
Respectfully submitted,

________________________________________
Jonathan Ramsay, Chair
Watertown Town Council

Approved: ________________________________
Susan King, Clerk
Administrative Budget

Proposed: $38,346

UPSEU: 2.25% pay increase

Crossing Guards: Increase in pay rate due to minimum wage increase

Training: Additional funds for new Dep. Chief to attend Executive Training through PERF (Police Executive Research Forum)

Maintenance Agreements:
- New contracts with Axon for Dash Cameras and Interview Room Recording equipment.
Patrol / Detective Budget

Proposed: +8.2% + $349,092

2 additional patrol officers

New Officer Costs: $75,890 salary; $5,500 uniform;

Current Staffing:

- 40 Sworn officers / 1000 residents
- 43 Sworn officers / 1000 residents
- 1.8 - 1.9 officers / 1000 residents

(Source: FBI, for towns with 10,000 - 24,999 residents)
Patrol / Detective Budget

(continued)

- Why more officers?
  - Minimum officers per shift: Current: 3  Seeking: 4
  - To continue participating in regional task forces
  - To continue utilizing school resource officers
  - Accreditation / Professionalization / Administrative Demands from increased police transparency and accountability laws.

- Notable Interest:
  - New contract for sworn personnel:
    - 2 years of raises (Appr. 6% increase
    - Step compression, Education incentive, Shift Differential, and uniform allowance all have increases
  - Budgeted for a 3% increase in overtime costs
  - Budgeted for a 3% increase in holiday pay costs
Maintenance & Support

Proposed:  +1.8%  + $3,447

- Increase in costs for motor vehicle maintenance (+ $10K)

- "Other Equipment": Seeking a Mobile Data Terminal and e-Ticket printer for the Department’s motorcycle ($7,235)

- Good news: reduced costs in Mobile Data Terminal connectivity (- $8,000)
Traffic Budget

+12%  +$840

- Total increase is in the cost of electricity to operate the traffic signals and LPR cameras in Town.
Animal Control Budget

+22%  +$21,382

- 2.25% pay raises for UPSEU

- Includes providing the Assistant ACO with full time
  hours through FY 2023-24  ($20,459)
- Reduce part time dispatchers from 5 to 3
- 1 additional full time dispatcher
- Restructure staffing:
- 2.25% pay raise for all communications personnel

+ 5% + $34,532

Communications Budget
## Revenue...

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grants, permits &amp; private duty</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GRANTS</td>
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<tr>
<td>Driving While Intoxicated</td>
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<tr>
<td>Distracted Driving</td>
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<tr>
<td>Click-it or Ticket</td>
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<tr>
<td>COPS Grant (Radio System)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Crime Suppression</td>
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<tr>
<td>Body Camera Grants</td>
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<tr>
<td>Permits &amp; Reports</td>
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<td>Private Duty</td>
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<tr>
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Thank You!!

The Watertown Police Department would like to express our sincere thanks for your continued confidence and support!!

It is our pleasure to provide service to the wonderful community of Watertown/Oakville.

Questions?