

CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION

Fire and Police Department Budgets

April 17, 2008 – 6:30 p.m.

Eileen Dondero Foley Council Chambers

City Council Present: Mayor Ferrini, Assistant Mayor Blalock, Councilors Novelline Clayburgh, Dwyer, Kennedy, Spear and Pantelakos

City Council Absent: Councilors Smith and Raynolds

Staff Present: John P. Bohenko, City Manager; Judie Belanger, Finance Director; Dianna Fogarty, Human Resources Director; Christopher LeClaire, Fire Chief; Steven Achilles, Assistant Fire Chief; Michael Magnant, Police Chief; Len DiSesa, Deputy Police Chief; Felicia Donovan, Police IT Department; Bill Irving, Police Captain, John Yeradi, Police Captain; Karen Senecal, Police Budget Coordinator; and Kelli L. Barnaby, City Clerk

Commissioners Present: Richard Gamester; Paul Wentworth and Michael Hughes, Fire Commissioners; Gerald Howe and John Golumb, Police Commissioners

I. Call to Order

Mayor Ferrini called the work session to order at 6:30 p.m.

II. Introduction

City Manager Bohenko said we are here this evening to receive presentations on the Fire and Police Department Budgets.

III. Presentation – Fire Commission/Fire Chief

Fire Chief LeClaire provided a brief overview of the Fire Department. He informed the City Council that there were 2,523 fire calls and 2,334 EMS calls for 2007. He said that there are 42 firefighters that are split between the three fire stations in the City. Fire Chief LeClaire advised the City Council that in addition to serving as the Fire Chief he also serves as the Emergency Operations Center Coordinator as designated by City Manager Bohenko. He reported that this budget reflects 13 individuals per shift day and night, which is below the national standards.

Chief LeClaire outlined the FY09 Goals for the Department as follows:

- Maintain minimum shift staffing of 13
- Construct new station in District 2
- Continue infrastructure improvements
- Maintain a lead role in regional responses to special hazards and maritime operations
- Maintain modern apparatus fleet
- Continue efforts toward International Accredited Agency status

In closing, this budget represents a 5.51% increase over FY08 for a total budget of \$6,858,583.00.

IV. Questions and Discussions

Councilor Kennedy inquired as to the line items in the budget for clothing allowance and protective clothing. Fire Chief LeClaire advised Councilor Kennedy that the clothing allowance is for the uniforms they wear on duty and the protective clothing is the gear used during a fire.

Councilor Dwyer asked if the national standard for the number of firefighters is relative to population or applies to shifts. Fire Chief LeClaire said that it asks for 4 personnel per apparatus. He said the standard is for 2 in and 2 out and that is the safe way to operate. He advised the City Council that there needs to be 3 individuals per shift and if there is only 2 the truck will not leave the building.

Councilor Dwyer asked if the department has thought about reorganization. She said that we should look to the combination of accounting. Fire Chief LeClaire said he does not feel that the department could reduce the ranks of individuals. He spoke to the tremendous amount of responsibility for officers in the department. He outlined the responsibilities for the Lieutenants and Captains.

Councilor Kennedy asked about the overtime for education line item within the budget. Chief LeClaire reported that a great deal of training is conducted during shifts but advance training is held at the Fire Academy. He said when individuals are sent to training we cover their shift which requires overtime. Councilor Kennedy suggested the department consider the hiring of an additional firefighter to reduce overtime costs. Chief LeClaire referred to the Matrix Study which analyzed overtime and the recommendation was to hire more personnel in the Fire Department. He advised Councilor Kennedy that to hire 4 additional firefighters would cost \$280,000.00 and not provide a significant savings or be cost effective.

Mayor Ferrini asked about overtime-annual leave coverage. Fire Chief LeClaire said he reviews what is spent on an average and over the years they have budgeted this on the backs of overtime. He said it was done to insure that there remain 13 firefighters per shift.

Assistant Mayor Blalock asked if going to 13/13 per shift would provide savings in overtime. Fire Chief LeClaire said it is a cost saving.

Councilor Kennedy said that the department has budgeted \$775,000.00 in overtime and the total budget for the officers in the department equals \$777,000.00. Councilor Dwyer said as you add personnel the costs increase over time due to salaries and benefits.

Councilor Kennedy requested a copy of the Matrix Study. City Manager Bohenko said he would provide a copy to all new Councilors for their review.

Councilor Spear asked about the response times under performance measures. Assistant Chief Achilles said the calls are based on calendar years and critical calls. He further advised the City Council that 1 ½ of those minutes for response include getting out of the station and onto the truck.

Assistant Mayor Blalock asked if a reduction in staff would affect response times. Chief LeClaire said response times would be affected and one of the ambulances would not operate.

Councilor Dwyer inquired as to the revenues collected for the ambulance. Assistant Chief Achilles reported said 83% of ambulance calls are transported and you cannot bill for non- transports. He said most of the individuals they serve are on Medicare and the reimbursement allowed is only 80%. He advised the City Council that they are in the process of creating an ambulance billing policy and process.

Mayor Ferrini said if there was a reduction of \$100,000.00 in overtime what kind of an affect would that have on the department. Chief LeClaire said it would involve a reduction in staff.

Councilor Kennedy expressed concern relative to the amount of funding for diesel fuel as this year we have spent more than what is being requested under this budget. Chief LeClaire said we try to conserve and this year with the receipt of the fireboat it increased our fuel costs. He said that next year we will not have the amount of training that was required this year and therefore, fuel costs will be reduced.

Mayor Ferrini thanked the Fire Department for their presentation.

At 7:25 p.m., Mayor Ferrini called for a brief recess. Mayor Ferrini called the work session back to order at 7:30 p.m.

V. Presentation – Police Commission/Police Chief

Police Commissioner Howe thanked the City Council for the opportunity to meet and present the 2009 Police Department budget. He advised the City Council that Commissioner Russo could not be present this evening because he has been hospitalized with a back injury. Commissioner Howe said the Police Department understands the constraints of the budget and the Police Commission instructed the department to create a budget that meets the 3.5% goal of the City Council. He reported that this budget includes funding for the Street Sweeper Program and the addition of an 11th dispatcher. He said that without the 11th dispatcher we are creating forced overtime for the dispatchers. He said the 3.5% is attainable due to the reorganization of the department that was presented to the City Council last year.

Commissioner Howe said we are reducing officers from 69 to 68 and reducing detectives by 1 and the reduction of 1 captain. They are also cutting training costs and they are not going to deploy tasers at the rate that was originally requested. Further, they will reduce the purchase of computers and overtime has been reduced. He said overtime is monitored diligently by the Police Chief and the Commission feels they are presenting a fiscally responsible budget.

Police Chief Magnant provided a presentation of the Police Department budget to the City Council. He discussed the launching of community active policing that took place in 1987. He said that this is a safe and vibrant community because of the type of policing provided by the department. He said community-oriented policing is proactive, community-based, problem-oriented and provide a preventative approach. He addressed the three divisions of the department – Patrol, Investigative and Administrative.

Chief Magnant announced that the Police Explorers received the award for the best in the Northeast. He reported that there are currently 15 students involved in the Police Explorer program. He also announced that several police officers received the Red Cross Hero award this year. Chief Magnant spoke to the increase in CyberCrime and reported that underage drinking continues to be a concern with 19 underage parties being broken up in 2007 with over 100 students being arrested.

Chief Magnant said that Portsmouth continues to be the place for many events and the City continues to experience challenges with growth. He discussed the need for the 11th dispatcher position. He said the study done in 2001 indicated that staffing for dispatchers was short. He spoke to the severe shortages in this area, which has required 400 extended shifts.

The PS Comm Study cited the following:

- Recommend the staffing of a third Communications Specialist on each shift
- Lack of sufficiently staffing the Dispatch Center forces the Supervisor to backfill the positions by mandating overtime thus no financial benefit is realized.
- The mandated overtime contributes to absenteeism. Personnel become fatigued and call in sick when they are unable to get rest or are deprived of social activities.

In closing, 87.3% of the budget is based on salaries and benefits. He said that this budget balances the needs of the residents and the department.

VI. Questions and Discussions

Councilor Dwyer asked if the City Council would receive a document to reflect the summary of cuts that the Police Department represented this evening. Commissioner Howe said a summary has not been prepared however; it is a reduction of \$43,159.00 to reach the 3.5% goal of the City Council.

Councilor Dwyer said that she is asking this question on behalf of Councilor Smith who could not be present this evening. What is the percentage of arrests from this program and the relationship with the Seacoast Task Force on Drugs? Chief Magnant said the Drug Task Force is run through the Attorney General's Office and the Seacoast encompasses Strafford and Rockingham counties. He said that the Police Department felt it was not meeting the needs of the City of Portsmouth and required a more local focus therefore, we created our own model and federal funding paid for 1.2 positions with overtime. He advised the City Council that they would not go back to the old model because it did not pay dividends for the City and it would be a step back for the department.

Councilor Spear asked if the budget includes a possible COLA increase. City Manager Bohenko said it only includes step increases. Councilor Spear said that ultimately the budget would be higher for all departments because it does not include COLA increases.

Councilor Kennedy spoke to revenue for outside details and asked what percentage for overtime is revenue generated. Finance Director Belanger said that outside detail is not in the Police Department budget. Councilor Kennedy asked about the need for coverage for the many events held in the community. Chief Magnant said many times the department utilizes on duty personnel to handle the events but if additional officers are required the event will receive a bill for the officers required assisting with the event.

Councilor Dwyer thanked the Police Department for looking at ways to reorganize the department. Chief Magnant said the reorganization plan is falling into place now and is a good structure that will serve the department well for the next 5 years.

Councilor Dwyer spoke to the goal of combining services for accounting and that this will provide savings to the City over time. Commissioner Howe said that there has been some consolidation.

Councilor Spear asked about the detective services for Internet crimes. Chief Magnant spoke to the knowledge and expertise required in dealing with Internet crimes. Councilor Spear inquired if the department has looked into the new fuel efficient Dodge Charger for a cruiser. Commissioner Howe said he spoke with a State Trooper that is using this vehicle and they are experiencing issues with the small gas tank and the size of the truck is not conducive to hold all of their equipment.

Councilor Kennedy thanked the Police Department for coming in with a 3.5% increase. Assistant Mayor Blalock also thanked the Police Department for their hard work and coming forward with a 3.5% increase.

Councilor Dwyer suggested adding to the departments' performance measures with a focus on underage drinking and alcohol across the spectrum. Councilor Novelline Clayburgh informed the City Council that the PTA held a meeting regarding the issue of underage drinking and the suggestion was made to create a task force made of seacoast communities that would volunteer and develop a plan to address this problem. Councilor Pantelakos advised the City Council that 85% of the prisoners in the State are there because of alcohol and drugs. She said that there is a lack of rehabilitation facilities to address these areas.

Mayor Ferrini thanked the Police Department, Police Chief, staff and Commission for coming forward with the 3.5% budget increase and said that the City Council appreciates their hard work.

VII. Other Business

VIII. Adjournment

At 8:45 p.m., Mayor Ferrini closed the work session.

Respectfully submitted by:

Kelli L. Barnaby, CMC/CNHMC
City Clerk