

# **CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION**

## **FIRE AND POLICE DEPARTMENT BUDGETS**

April 29, 2009 – 6:30 p.m.

Eileen Dondero Foley Council Chambers

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City Council Present: Mayor Ferrini, Assistant Mayor Blalock, Councilors Novelline Clayburgh, Dwyer, Kennedy and Hejtmanek.

City Council Absent: Councilors Smith, Pantelakos and Spear

Officials Present: John P. Bohenko, City Manager; Christopher LeClaire, Fire Chief; Fire Commissioners, Richard Gamester, Paul Wentworth and Michael Hughes; Michael Magnant, Police Chief; Police Commissioners, John Golumb, Gerald Howe, and John Russo; Judie Belanger, Finance Director and Valerie French, Deputy City Clerk I

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### **I. Call to Order**

At 6:45 p.m., Mayor Ferrini called the work session to order and turned the meeting over to City Manager Bohenko.

### **II. Introduction**

City Manager Bohenko began by reviewing the remaining budget adoption schedule including reconvening the Budget Public Hearing on May 11<sup>th</sup>, a workshop on May 13<sup>th</sup> to finalize overall budget deliberations and adopting the budget in June, no later than June 30<sup>th</sup>. He stated that if the budget is not adopted by June 30<sup>th</sup>, then the City Managers' budget as presented would go into effect. He further stated that due to external factors, it may be better to wait a little longer than usual to act on the budget until the final State budget is set.

### **III. Presentation – Fire Commission/Fire Chief**

After introductions of the Fire Chief and Commissioners, Fire Chief LeClaire briefly reviewed his FY2010 budget proposal.

### **IV. Questions and Discussion**

Mayor Ferrini opened the floor for discussion:

Councilor Dwyer asked if the longevity step stipends are in the amounts as were done in the School Department budget. Judie Belanger, Finance Director stated that the School contracts are written that those figures are to be included in the budget figures, but the city has a separate line-item for longevity.

City Manager Bohenko stated they could perhaps do an appendix to the budget in the future with that information and keep the real numbers in the budget itself. Dwyer stated that it shows more of the equivalency per position that way. Dwyer then asked where are hours being increased.

Chief LeClaire stated it is the part-time accounts Clerk positions that helps the one civilian full time employee with ambulance billing, etc. He stated that ambulance revenue is around \$500,000.00 per year. Councilor Dwyer asked if the billing percentage has improved. Chief LeClaire replied yes.

Councilor Hejtmanek asked if the increase in salaries includes step increases. Chief LeClaire replied yes. Councilor Hejtmanek then asked about the decrease in overtime. Chief LeClaire explained that is due to the reduction of available staffing and stated that there is very little to trim out of operating expenses. He stated when the Council sets a specific limit, the only place to cut is from personnel. He stated they are at 13 men per shift and if anyone is sick or on vacation, the staff is below recommended levels.

Councilor Kennedy stated she wants to point out that the fire department was up by one person last year in Paramedics. Chief LeClaire clarified that this was a current staff member who achieved Paramedic certification, not an additional employee.

Councilor Dwyer asked if the reduction in retirement is due to the reduction in overtime. Chief LeClaire replied yes. Councilor Dwyer stated she also finds the personnel chart confusing in regards to what Chief LeClaire explained. City Manager Bohenko stated that last year there was a long-term illness of an employee which would have meant others covering on constant overtime, so they hired a temporary employee to cover that position. There was then an employee who was planning to retire, and the temporary person would then be placed in that position once the person on sick leave came back. Chief LeClaire concurred and feels that the graph may be in error. He continued that there are 2 employees coming up for retirement and explained that 2 current temporary employees will then become permanent.

Councilor Novelline Clayburgh thanked the Fire Department for coming in with a 0% budget. She then asked if the Fire Boat has been successful. Chief LeClaire stated yes, it has been involved in several rescues. He stated they have also received funds from the PDA for training and maintenance. Councilor Novelline Clayburgh stated that training and education is down \$5,000.00 and asked if that will have a significant impact. Chief LeClaire stated that he had to take a historical perspective in deciding what to cut and this was an area that he could make adjustments.

Councilor Hejtmanek asked about the \$560,000.00 in ambulance revenue. City Manager Bohenko stated this goes into the general fund.

Councilor Kennedy thanked the Chief and Commissioners for coming in at 0% and feels that the taxpayers will appreciate it as well.

Mayor Ferrini asked for any further comments. Being none, the Mayor thanked the Fire Chief and Commissions for their hard work and patience.

Mayor Ferrini called for a brief recess at 7:00 p.m. for set-up for the next presentation.

Mayor Ferrini called the meeting back to order at 7:05 p.m.

## **V. Presentation – Police Commission/Police Chief**

City Manager Bohenko stated that it was a difficult process to come in with a 0% budget over 2009 and originally the Police Department budget came in at \$124,000.00 over. He stated they have worked hard to change that and if there are more reductions, the Council can act on that formally during the budget adoption process. He concluded by thanking the Police Commission for making some tough choices.

Commissioner Howe stated that originally they did come in 1.37% over then reduced that to .42 % and now, after having worked with the City Manager, have come in at the requested 0% increase.

Mayor Ferrini thanked the Commission and stated that their hard work shouldn't be taken for granted.

Commissioner Howe continued by stating that the School Board notified them that they would no longer be funding one of the School Resource Officer positions, which meant the Police has to absorb that in their budget.

Chief Michael Magnant reviewed his power point presentation (full text on file) which highlighted the Police Department goals and challenges of the various divisions. He also reviewed the reductions and reorganization of staffing levels over the last 10 years to the present levels which he feels are as reduced as can be to ensure safety of the public and the officers. He concluded by listing the unique attractions of the City of Portsmouth that make it a challenging and rewarding community.

## **VI. Questions and Discussion**

Mayor Ferrini thanked Chief Magnant for the presentation and for coming in at 0% increase.

Councilor Dwyer asked about applying for grants. Chief Magnant stated they have applied for COPS grants, but it is very competitive and the criteria for disbursement is not known. Councilor Dwyer asked what position it will be used on if they get the grant. Chief Magnant replied it would replace the position they just lost.

Councilor Kennedy asked if there is a way to fund the resource officer through a grant and are there any other projected grants in the works that aren't included in the package. Chief Magnant stated yes they are looking at other sources including technology, legal and prosecution and there may be something for a dispatcher.

Commissioner Howe stated he has been speaking with the School Superintendent regarding applying for grants to fund the school resource officer as well. Mayor Ferrini stated he is concerned that if positions are funded by grants and then the grants go away, then we have to fund those positions another way. Chief Magnant stated that the grants now are not the same as they used to be and if you do accept some grants, then you are not allowed to eliminate the position for a certain amount of years after the grant is completed.

Councilor Dwyer asked about the increase on page 154 of the budget in fleet maintenance. Chief Magnant stated the fleet is in good shape but the new car replacement program has been reduced and therefore more maintenance is required on the existing vehicles.

Commissioner Howe asked for clarification if the increase also includes outfitting the cars with the 2-way systems. Chief Magnant stated no, it doesn't.

Councilor Kennedy thanked the Police Department for coming in at 0% increase and understands it is difficult. She then asked about the reduction in hours of the Animal Control Officer and if there are any other officers trained to handle those duties when she is not there. Chief Magnant stated no and feels there will be many complaints by residents as a result. Councilor Kennedy asked if someone else can be trained. Chief Magnant stated there are contractual issues and dealing with 2 different bargaining groups.

Councilor Novelline Clayburgh also thanked the Police Department for the 0% increase budget. She continued that the Police Explorers group is near and dear to her heart and noted the \$2,000.00 cut. She stated they are trying to look at different fundraising options to make up for some of that cut. She then discussed the elimination of the police details at the churches stating she is concerned with the elderly people. She asked if the Churches have ever been asked to share the costs for this service. Chief Magnant stated we can ask, but in the past there has always been a huge outcry when this was going to be cut, but the Churches have never offered any money, and the details have always been put back in the budget.

Councilor Dwyer stated she is confused with the Animal Control officer position as she thought this had already been reduced last year. Chief Magnant stated no, but the previous year it had been reduced during the winter hours only.

Mayor Ferrini asked for further comments and thanked everyone for their hard work stating that the Council and citizens appreciate their efforts.

## **VII. Other Business**

## **VIII. Adjournment**

At 7:50 p.m., Mayor Ferrini closed the meeting.

Respectfully submitted by:

Valerie A. French, Deputy City Clerk I