

Town of Saugus Finance Committee

Kenneth DePatto, Chairman

Ronald Jepson
Stacy Billingsley
Theresa Katsos

George DeDomenico, Vice-Chairman

Steve Verone
Frank Perella
Steven DiVirgilio
Stephen Horlick

MARCH 13, 2019 7:00 P.M
TOWN HALL CONFERENCE ROOM

The regular meeting of the Finance Committee was held on Wednesday evening, March 13, 2019, at 7:00 P.M. in the Town Hall Conference Room.

Members present: Chairman Kenneth DePatto, Vice-Chairman George DeDomenico, Frank Perella, Terri Katsos, Steve Horlick, Rocky Jepson

Absent from the meeting: Steven DiVirgilio and Stacy Billingsley

Minutes: The Committee voted 7-0 to accept the minutes from February 27, 2019.

Chairman's Update: The Chairman told the Committee that tonight the group is starting the budget hearings. He said Mr. Jepson will send the agenda to him tomorrow morning and then it will reflect the pages, that way Committee can easily locate pages in budget based on each department. The Chairman asked if everyone would let him know if 21st or 28th work for a get together for former member Carl Mirabello. He said he would like to get a good attendance and thank him for his service. He told the Committee that tonight we are all discussing Public Safety. The Chairman also told the group that Ms. Billingsley is home sick.

Manager's Update: The Town Manager said he has no real updates, but as questions come up he can dive in.

Public Safety: Chairman DePatto thanked the Police Chief for coming. Police Chief Ron Giorgetti thanked the Committee, Board of Selectmen, Town Manager, and Town Meeting for all their hard work analyzing budget and making difficult decisions.

The Chief said in 2018, the police department responded to approximately 24,157 calls for service, made 350 Arrests, and initiated 1,721 Incident Reports. The department responded to 524 Motor Vehicle Accidents this past year and served 138 Restraining Orders. A total of 2222 Traffic citations were issued. We also logged into evidence 731 pieces of property.

He said the Department continues to reach out to the community with our Citizen Police Academy, National Night Out, District Attorney's Summer Camp, Post Overdose Opiate Outreach and National Drug Take Back. He also said they will continue to work with town departments and different groups / organizations within the Town in an effort to engage with the community and develop partnerships to proactively address the concerns of the community.

The Town Manager said he is trying to address and prioritize public safety since taking over this administration. He told the Committee that the Town has an all-time in high police and fire staffing. He

said he is trying to address the needs of the community. With the Police Department, he is looking at including three additional officers to take a first step at formulating a designated traffic unit with dedicated patrol doing radar and speed checks. He told the Committee how difficult it is to train and hire police and fire staff quickly enough following retirements, etc., as the hiring and training process is lengthy.

Chairman DePatto asked if the three additional police officer positions are all new, to which the Town Manager said yes. The Town Manager said he is trying to get a head start now but it is challenging because the hiring process is lengthy. He said he is also trying to hire beyond the three new positions because of the anticipation of retirements, etc.

Chairman DePatto said it's time for Saugus to have a dedicated traffic division. He said we have a lot of traffic, and there's a lot of new development, so he supports this.

The Town Manager explained that the budget is really a compromise. He said our needs are greater than what we have but we try to spend within our means. He said we will probably resend our financial management policies so everyone can see what we've adopted, but part of that process is prioritizing the budget. We don't come to you with an unbalanced budget. The Town Manager is responsible for spending. Recently, the Assessors office was estimating \$2 million in new growth. We estimated \$1 million, and we were approved by the DOR at \$842,000 so we have a deficit, which is why we are conservative. The Town Manager continued that we'll be OK going into the end of fiscal year. In stabilization, we have \$8 or \$9 million. He said when he went on hiatus, the administration spent \$2.2 million in snow and ice removal. If you spend \$2.2 million a year, that money would be gone quickly.

The Chairman clarified that the \$158,000 was a projected revenue deficit, not a real revenue deficit. He said that corrections occur in the budget, so there was no real structural deficit.

The Police Chief continued, saying that it's a constant effort to keep staffing at a proper level with retirements and the police academy for up to a year. He said we try to do what we can to maintain that level, but we're at the mercy of the training council and academy.

The Town Manager also informed the Committee that 111F injuries on duty are difficult to prepare for.

Ms. Katsos asked how many retirements there are this year. The Chief told her he has received notice from three members of the department who are anticipating retiring in the upcoming fiscal year.

The Chief continued to go through his budget, saying that overtime for court is level funded at \$95,000. He said the overtime training budget for \$234,000 includes all training throughout the department, along with additional trainings. He said they are looking at implementing ALICE training in the schools, and some additional training for detectives. He said the night shift differential is a contractual obligation, along with holiday pay for \$100,000. He discussed employee benefits for retirement from the military, noting that there are currently no members of the department deployed overseas, although that is always subjected to change. He said there are 6 members of the department involved in various military aspects. Chairman DePatto said he wondered when the Committee will see the Quinn bill drop off.

The Chief continued through his budget, telling the Committee that the stipend associated with the mechanic is contractual. He said the uniform allowance for officers is contractual. He also noted that sick leave incentive is double funded again. He said they have sick leave buy back within the upcoming budget due to contractual obligations.

Mr. Jepson asked to confirm that we had four new police officers in FY2019 and three more in FY2020. The Chief said yes. The Town Manager clarified that the three positions are additional to what we had last year.

The Chairman said it's important for the general public to understand that the hiring/training process is 11 months-plus, and it's also difficult to secure a space in the training academy. The Town Manager noted that overtime has been stabilized and that there's more flexibility in the salary line item.

The Chief continued with his presentation, saying that on the expense side, office equipment is level funded. Repair maintenance for vehicles is \$40,000. Repair and maintenance for communication equipment, which includes radio equipment and Verizon equipment is \$66,900. There is \$250 for advertising. He said professional technical covers IT equipment, software, user agreements, etc. The department has over 60 computers and 4 servers to make sure were operating. Professional technical education and training covers instructor fees, specialized trainings, manuals, any equipment we may need. He noted that supplies for vehicles has been increased to cover purchases and maintain oil filters, washer fluid, etc. He said prisoner supplies is the same as it was in FY19. Under uniform, he said there is a \$4,000 increase to cover additional officers. He said he is asking \$26,570 for ammunition, and under in state travel expense he is asking \$750 to cover travel within the state, parking, court appearances, etc. Gun permits is \$500.

Chairman DePatto commended the Police Chief on his budget.

Mr. Horlick asked if Narcan is in all the cruisers and at the Station. The Chief said the fire department has that. Ms. Katsos asked if we have plans for new cruisers. The Town Manager said we are looking at four new cruisers to replace and cycle out other vehicles. Mr. Perella confirmed that we are running those vehicles to short-term debt, to which the Town Manager said yes.

Dispatchers

The Chief told the Committee that for Fiscal 2020, he is requesting salary for 13 dispatchers. He's requesting an additional \$15,000 for temp positions for per diem and part-time. He is requesting \$50,000 for overtime training, which covers mandated training for dispatchers. He's also requesting \$15,000 holiday pay contractual obligation, \$7,000 for stipend for paid absence in contractual obligation.

The Town Manager reminded the Committee that these positions are a challenge to keep filled. He said they can be a stepping stone, but it's also more difficult and stressful than some police incidents. He said we had someone resign just recently. He noted that the salaries in other communities is significantly higher.

The Chief said this position takes a high level of multi-tasking and the ability to keep yourself grounded. Under expenses, the Chief said the only expense is \$10,000 for professional tech ed and training, which is books and any costs related to certification.

Chairman DePatto thanked the Chief and Assistant Charlene Berridge. He wished them good luck. He said he is looking forward to the additional patrolmen, and he's hopeful that Town Meeting will be positive about that.

Fire Department

The Fire Chief thanked the Finance Director and Town Accountant for help him formulate the budget. He thanked his assistant Michele Wendell. He thanked the Town Manager for prioritizing public safety. He said the budget he requested and the budget he got was very close.

The Chief said he has a young department, so turnover is difficult to maintain. He said we're losing firefighters to other professions and to pursue other opportunities in ways we've never seen. The Town Manager said it's a struggle for some to finish in the academy. The Chief commended his in-house instructors, saying they help expedite the training process. The Chief said the first year is critical, and that it takes five years to really get them comfortable.

The Chief said MUNIS helps forecast salaries and has done a great job. The Town Manager reminded the Finance Committee that they supported bringing in the MUNIS system, as we really were in the dark ages previously. The Manager said with MUNIS, we can run reports and use data to help make management systems.

The Chief went through his budget line by line. He summarized that this year's budget shows a commitment to helping children, seniors, and improving safety in the kitchen and with cooking. Under sick leave buy back, he said there is one retirement here that was unexpected. Under medical supplies, the Fire Chief said the lion's share goes to EPI pens. Specifically, he said he's finding it hard to find pediatric EPI pens. The Chief said EPI pens are 400 per unit. He said we utilize the pens with the retractable needle. He said we've tried to get them donated and will keep pursuing that avenue.

The Chairman asked the Chief if we get any state aid from MassDOT for hazardous material traveling through our community? The Chief said the Essex County Fire Chiefs have mobile trailers and we can call them for flammable liquids. He said our response is to call Massport because they have fully operational vehicles.

Mr. Horlick asked if the Department will be getting any new equipment to service all this new development in Town. The Chief said he has always appreciated the Committee's support. He noted that as the community grows, he hopes the department grows. The Chairman commented that because of limited resources as the Manager has addressed, one benefit is mutual aid. We would never put the taxpayers at risk. The Chief noted that the new fire truck is fantastic.

Mr. Jepson said he appreciates Tab 7 with the repair and maintenance activity. He said it's nice to see what the department goes through with maintenance.

Emergency Management

The Chief said Capt. Hughes and Capt. Phelan are doing a wonderful job. He said the equipment request is from \$10,000 to \$15,000 because we get an EMP grant based on population. He said we were using our money as a match, but we were getting less. The Chief said he is proud to say emergency management is healthy. The Town Manager noted that we streamlined a lot so when we have storm calls, they come right into dispatch.

The Chairman thanked the Chief and Assistant Michele Wendell for their hard work.

Building Inspector

Mr. Jepson asked if all three positions are filled, to which Ms. Hatch said yes. Under expenses, Mr. Jepson said the office maintenance and advertising line item was budgeted last year but not budgeted last year. He asked why. Ms. Hatch explained that the department made the request to roll this into other line items. She said they don't really have a need for advertising

Gas and Plumbing Inspector

Chairman DePatto asked if the salaries reflect a 3 percent COLA? He asked if this was on all non-union positions? The Town Manager said yes. Under expenses, the Chairman noted that supplies went up a little bit.

Electrical Inspector

Mr. Horlick asked between the building inspector, gas, plumbing and electrical, how are we doing with new development? He asked if they are able to keep up with the work. The Town Manager explained that they hire outside. The Chairman noted that salaries are just the COLA. He said expenses are level-funded.

Animal Control

Mr. Jepson thanked Animal Control Officer Harry Young. He said he does a terrific job. Chairman DePatto noted that salary is basically just COLA increases. Mr. Jepson asked if the ACO is union, to which Ms. Hatch said no. Chairman DePatto said the expenses are level-funded.

The meeting adjourned at 8:14 p.m.