

**COMBINED BOARD OF SELECTMAN AND BOARD OF FINANCE
PUBLIC BUDGET HEARING
MINUTES OF MEETING
MARCH 9, 2011**

Pursuant to the call and written notice, the Public Budget Hearing of the Board of Selectman and the Board of Finance was held on Thursday, March 9, 2011 at 7:00 pm in the Board of Education Administrative Offices, Seminar Room 300, 501 Kings Highway East, Fairfield, Connecticut.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Chairman Thomas Flynn, Robert Bellitto Jr., Ken Brachfeld, James Brown, Christopher DeWitt, Kevin Kiley, Mary LeClerc, Robert Stone, Michael Tetreau

MEMBERS ABSENT

None

ALSO PRESENT

Kenneth Flatto, Sherri Steeneck, James Walsh, Board of Selectmen, Town of Fairfield
Paul Hiller, Chief Fiscal Officer and Clerk of the Board of Finance
Linda Gardiner, Budget Director, Town of Fairfield
Bonnie McWain, Director of Finance, Board of Education, Town of Fairfield
Richard Felner, Chief, Fire Department, Town of Fairfield
Arthur Reid, Deputy Chief, Fire Department, Town of Fairfield
Thomas Christie, Chairman, Fire Commission, Town of Fairfield
Susan Barrett, Fire Commissioner, Town of Fairfield
Charlene Lebo, Fire Commissioner, Town of Fairfield
Gary MacNamara, Chief, Police Department, Town of Fairfield
Chris Lyddy, Deputy Chief, Police Department, Town of Fairfield
Josh Zabin, Captain, Police Department, Town of Fairfield
Paul Miller, Animal Control Officer, Police Department, Town of Fairfield
Norma Peterson, Police Commissioner, Town of Fairfield
Roger Autuori, Registrar of Voters, Town of Fairfield

Chairman Flynn called the meeting to order at 7:10 p.m.

Chairman Flynn thanked all of the Town's Public Safety Officials for their hard work and told them that he appreciated their service and dedication.

The budgets were reviewed as follows:

4010 Fire Chief Felner and Deputy Chief Reid presented this item to the Boards.

Chief Felner reported that the ongoing vehicle replacement program called for requesting 3 new cars in this budget. Chief Felner noted that the Board of Selectmen (BOS) had approved only one vehicle but

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the department really needs a minimum of two new vehicles.

In response to a question from the Boards, Deputy Chief Reid informed the Boards that the department received a Federal Grant for the sprinkler system at Station 2 and the Town's share of this project is the \$14K requested in the budget.

Mr. Hiller explained the overtime account situation to the Boards. Mr. Hiller reported that the 6 overtime accounts have a total budgeted amount of \$2,603,397 and have spent to date \$1,981,047 or 76%. Mr. Hiller noted that with the cost for overtime for an average week, based on usage, costing the Town \$56,601, the overtime accounts could be short about \$233K by the end of FY10-11.

Chief Felner explained that some of those overtime costs are due to 3 people out on long term sick leave and overtime needed for mutual aid calls to Bridgeport this past year (tornado and serious fires in Bridgeport).

Chairman Flynn stated that the BOF took action last year to avoid overspending in the overtime accounts, at the recommendation of the Fire Department, and yet the same situation now faces the BOF. Chairman Flynn stated that the BOF needs to understand the math that has been used for the overtime calculation.

Chief Felner stated that he disagreed with the Operational Audit suggestion to hire people rather than carry vacancies to save money. Chief Felner stated that, in his opinion that is not a valid suggestion.

Chairman Flynn noted that Mr. DeWitt had asked for the formula used by the independent auditors to produce their results and he asked Mr. Flatto when that information would be given to the BOF. Mr. Flatto reported that Mr. Bremer is talking with the auditors now but Mr. Flatto doesn't know if that question has been asked. Mr. Flatto informed Chairman Flynn that he would check on the status of that requested information tomorrow.

Chief Felner reported that his department had hoped to reduce the ISO from 3 to 2 but that didn't happen so the ISO is still at 3 (homeowners home insurance rates are based partially on the Town ISO rating).

Chairman Flynn noted that 90% of the Fire Department budget is personnel costs and he asked Chief Felner what steps the Fire Department is taking to help the Town on the revenue side of the budget. Deputy Chief Reid stated that the Department is constantly looking for grants but the grant market is very competitive.

4090 Hydrant and Water Chief Felner and Deputy Chief Reid presented this item to the Boards.

Deputy Reid explained that Aquarion Water Company gives the numbers to the Chief and they are regulated by the DPUC.

4110 Emergency Management Chief Felner and Deputy Chief Reid presented this item to the Boards.

Public Comment

Susan Barrett, Fire Commissioner

She stated that 4 new firefighters have been hired and 411 took the test so the Department now has an active list to pull from in the future thereby reducing the length of time it would take to hire and train new personnel when needed.

Charlene Lebo, Fire Commissioner

She asked the Board to support the budget. She noted that the population is increasing all the time and this department provides a much needed service.

4150 Emergency Communications Center Deputy Fire Chief Arthur Reid & Police Chief Gary MacNamara presented this item to the Boards.

Deputy Chief Reid explained that there are 4 items in this budget that the Fire Department is requesting:

1. emergency generator at Burr Street transmitter site
Deputy Chief Reid reported that there have been significant power outages recently in that area and the equipment presently runs on batteries so the Department would like to install a generator to guarantee service.
2. Radio system Narrow Banding Mandate Compliance
Deputy Chief Reid reported that this compliance needs to be done by December 31, 2012 as set by the FCC so this item can be cut this year but it must be done the following year.
3. 3 Motorola 1500 Mobile Radios
4. 8 Motorola HT 125 Portable Radios

Mr. Christie reported that the Fire Commission is an active and supportive part of the Fire Department and he is proud to be a part of this work.

Police Chief MacNamara informed the Boards that the ECC is the 911 answering point for Fairfield and dispatches both fire and police. Chief MacNamara also noted that there are currently 9 of 15 active employees. Chief MacNamara stated that the ECC is down 4 personnel so the existing staff will be doing overtime until 2 new replacements are up to speed and the department will not be at full complement until December.

CAPITAL

7 Laptops for Patrol Cars

Captain Zabin informed the Boards that some of the existing laptops are old and are no longer being manufactured. Captain Zabin also noted that the brackets/shelves that the laptops sit on in the patrol cars do not accommodate the newer versions of the laptops so they need to be updated at the same time. Captain Zabin stated that it would be prudent to take 1/3 of the fleet and upgrade to the new equipment in an effort to stay ahead of the curve. Captain Zabin also noted that 7 are really needed, 5 just won't do it. Chief MacNamara stated that every Police Department officer is fully trained on the use of computers for all aspects of their jobs.

4030 Police Chief MacNamara and Deputy Chief Lyddy presented this item to the Boards.

Chief MacNamara stated that there have been lots of changes over the past year in the area of personnel. Chief MacNamara stated that there were several retirements and new hires will be coming on board after training is completed but, in the meantime, vacancies are eating into the overtime accounts. Chief MacNamara stated that he is down 10 officers over the past year and the Department is continually filling those vacancies. Mr. Hiller noted that he is confident that the Police Department will be in line with expenses at the end of the fiscal year. First Selectman Flatto informed the BOF that a vacancy report will be available for the next BOF meeting.

Chief MacNamara stated that he doesn't hire from the active list until he has been notified of an opening at the academy. Chief MacNamara also informed the Boards that all of the costs for the initial year of a police officer's employment are \$100K including the academy, salary, testing, ammunition, etc. Chief MacNamara explained that the IT position being requested in personnel will be a civilian which

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will free up the officer currently holding that position to return to active patrol duty.

Chairman Flynn asked First Selectman Flatto to check on the number of employees allowed for the Police Department, 107 or 108, and report back to the BOF.

Chief MacNamara stated that the canine unit funding will come from the public sector in its entirety. Chief MacNamara stated that each dog is expected to last 5 years and it is his expectation that there will be funding from the public for that 5 year period at the least. Chief MacNamara said that the public has been very supportive of this endeavor and the department is looking forward to this addition to the force.

The BOF questioned how the funds for this would be handles by the Town and Mr. Hiller informed the Boards that there are several funds of this nature in town now but expenses are not tracked.

Chairman Flynn asked the First Selectman to prepare a spreadsheet as follow-up on the pricing used for fuel for the DPW, fire and police departments.

Chief MacNamara stated that automotive maintenance is going up \$10K due to the fact that Ford is no longer going to manufacture Crown Victoria cars and the department will need to stock up on different parts for the new type of vehicles that will be ordered. Chief MacNamara informed the Boards that Ford has set May 10, 2011 as the final date to place orders for the Crown Victoria cars.

4050 Animal Control Paul Miller, Animal Control Officer presented this item to the Boards. Officer Miller reported that the costs for veterinarians has gone up this past year and that is the main reason for the budget going up \$4K.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Norma Peterson, Fairfield Police Commissioner

She said she was happy to hear funding for 108 officers. she noted that the Police Department is doing a lot of community outreach.

Charlene Lebo, Fairfield Police Commissioner

She urged the Boards to support this budget and she congratulated the Department for raising \$34K for the new canine unit.

Linda Crowley, 112 Lalley Blvd

She thanked the entire police division for their work and dedication. She said that, especially in the beach area, there are always problems with cars. She said the neighborhood watch program and the canine unit are great.

First Selectman Flatto reported that Chief MacNamara is being recognized as Outstanding Law Enforcement Officer by the state organization in May.

6050 Human & Social Services Claire Grace presented this item to the Boards.

Mrs. Grace explained that the budget is up this year because the clerk position was omitted in error from the budget last year and it has now been included in this budget. Mrs. Grace also noted that this position is offset by another vacant position. Mrs. Grace thanked the BOF for their efforts in getting her center an ADA compliant bathroom. Mrs. Grace also informed the Boards that the building will be painted this

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year. Mrs. Grace informed the Boards that Operation Fuel is completely out of funds so she is able to help a little from the budget.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None

6010 Health Sands Cleary presented this item to the Boards.

Mr. Cleary stated that his budget contains a 1.89% increase and after talking with the First Selectman, Mr. Flatto agreed to reconsider some of his cuts to this budget. Mr. Cleary explained that the temporary payroll is basically school nurses and the need is rising in this area. Mr. Cleary stated that environmental staffing has been at the same level for 22 years and these employees do inspections and the like. Mr. Cleary stated that he has reorganized the management of the department and the changes seem to be working well.

First Selectman Flatto stated that Mr. Cleary has been doing a great job with limited resources and school nurses provide back up for the care of special needs students as needed.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Kate Daniello, 490 Shrub Oak Lane

She had received an email from a BOE member encouraging We The People to get out and go to the March 19, 2011 meeting. She said that email should be equal to a person attending a meeting. She said she hopes to be able to speak before 10 pm and she hopes the BOF will set a policy so that BOF members would need to read emails from residents into the record.

Chairman Flynn noted that the BOF has worked diligently to make meetings convenient over the last few years. Chairman Flynn also noted that meetings are tapes and on TV and the website has all information available. Chairman Flynn also reminded everyone that there will be a meeting held on Saturday, March 19, 2011 at the Senior Center on Mona Terrace from 9:30 – noon solely for the purpose of public comment.

Linda Crowley, 112 Lalley Blvd

The Health Department has the benefit on an unsung hero on staff with Sands Cleary. She said Mr. Cleary has improved service overall to the community and he should be commended for this work.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:40 p.m.