

Advisory Budget Committee

Minutes

October 19, 2021

This meeting was at the Barrington Town Hall with remote participation available.

Members Present: Steve Saunders, Michael Houst, Peter Royce, John Morris, and Scott Shephard

Alternates Present: Dannen Mannschreck

Others Present: Conner MacIver, Chief George Joy, and Deputy Chief Daniel Brooks

Steve Saunders called the meeting to order at 4:34pm.

Steve Saunders moves to approve the meeting minutes from the October 12th meeting. The group agrees.

Chief Joy introduced Deputy Chief Brooks.

Steve Saunders asked Chief Joy to present his proposed budget.

Peter Royce asked about how the staffing proposal is impacted by the potential deployment of an officer.

Chief Joy explained how the staffing proposal and schedule would work. The Police Department would start a hiring process early in 2022 with a plan to start on April 1st. This additional employee would keep the staffing level current when the employee is deployed. The staffing would increase by one officer when the deployed officer returns in 2023 (likely).

Chief Joy continued to explain his budget changes.

The group asked about traffic control for the Highway Department. Chief Joy explained that more Highway projects require traffic control assistance due to the increased volume of cars. Part of the overtime in the Police budget is for this purpose.

Steve Saunders asked about the cost increase in ammunition and other operating costs. Chief Joy explained that he will likely ask for an additional \$2,000.

The group discussed the vehicle replacement schedule.

Steve Saunders asked about Chief Joy's future staffing plans. Chief Joy explained that he is asking for one police officer right now. He plans to ask for additional staffing in the future. Steve followed up by asking how single and double coverage is handled through the Police policies.

Steve Saunders asked about the impact of new housing units on call volume. Chief Joy expects the call volume to increase.

At approximately 5:55 pm the Town Administrator, the Police Chief, the Deputy Police Chief, and the Select Board representative left the meeting to attend other meetings.

Chairperson Saunders indicated the Select Board appeared reluctant to add to staffing out of concern how it might affect future boards. The comment was made that decisions should be made when needed, but the Chair asked that members establish priorities for who gets added to the current staff. It was noted that the fire request involved service issues while the police request was more safety oriented. As an example, Chief Joy explained that when one officer responds it limits their use of force options by not having backup. Not only is multiple officers responding more safe, it introduces more tools in their toolkit for less than lethal response options.

Both fire and police are facing the loss of an employee because of expected deployment. With that in mind, discussion ensued whether the expense for additional personnel should be included within the budget or separated in a contingency. It was decided that having the salaries in the 2022 budget was preferable because those salaries would be in the 2023 default budget.

It was agreed that the fire and police requests for one additional person were necessary, but the library request for additional hours was not favored at this time.

COLA was recommended at the 2 ½% level.

Meeting Adjourned at 6:35 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Conner MacIver and Peter Royce.



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TA MacIver and Members of the Advisory Budget Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to meet prior to my budget presentation. I have prepared the following response to your questions:

- Will this increase cause any administrative and space requirements?
 - The additional position will increase administrative requirements slightly. Once trained and on the road, the additional officer will be adding to body camera footage (Det. Sgt. Barber's area of responsibility). It also, obviously, adds to scheduling, payroll, etc. These are all additional administrative issues which will be absorbed into normal operations and will not result in further costs.
 - The Barrington Police Department is already known to be substandard regarding space. Adding one officer will not impact us any further. We have the capability to house and the available workspace in our present condition.
- Does the town have enough vehicles to add 2 full time employees?
 - Our current fleet would support the addition of 2 FTEs.
- Is there an increased liability to the town if we don't have enough staffing?
 - The "easy" legal answer to this question is "no". There are SCOTUS cases outlining the fact that there is no duty of care owed to an individual. With that statement out of the way, lack of coverage could certainly lead to situations where liability is increased due to insufficient staffing. Further, it is unacceptable to compromise the safety of the Town and PD staff based on a generic lack of perceived liability.
- What are the details of the discussion with the road agent in regard to the "new traffic control process"?
 - During the current budget year, the Highway Department completed several projects which required traffic control. In one event, a Town employee was struck by a vehicle. During paving projects on Pond Hill Road and Beauty Hill Road, the projects had to be covered by officers from outside jurisdictions, resulting in a substantial bill for those traffic details. I spoke to Road Agent Moreau and TA MacIver at different times and it is the opinion of all involved that going forward, traffic control is necessary (this hasn't, historically, been the case). That traffic control should be provided by BPD employees due to the (much) increased cost of hiring outside details. I am fully prepared to ensure that BPD units cover those traffic control situations, but cannot do so if the overtime line is reduced.
- What impact will staffing increases have on other parts of the budget? i.e. Uniforms, training, etc. Is it included in the budget?
 - I believe that the staffing increases could be absorbed into the current budget as presented. This would, obviously, be impacted if BPD continues to be afflicted by attrition each year. The training line is not impacted much for new officers. The first year is mostly Academy and in-house training.
- Please address the COVID pandemic and the hardship in finding staff. Do you anticipate having any issues hiring?
 - The pandemic has been a burden to all aspects of the work force. Yes, I anticipate continued "issues" in hiring.