

Approved: February 27, 2020

Posted: February 28, 2020



Town Council Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, January 15, 2020 at 6:30 PM, in the Matthew Thornton Room

Chairman Koenig called the meeting of the Town Council to order at 6:30 p.m. Present at the meeting were Vice Chairman Boyd, Councilor Albert, Councilor Harrington, Councilor Rothhaus, Councilor Woods, Town Manager, Eileen Cabanel, and Assistant Town Manager/Finance Director Paul Micali. Councilor Healey was excused.

Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Koenig led in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Public Comment - None

Review of Proposed FY21 Budget

Parks and Recreation

Steven Dembow, Rental Coordinator, John O'Leary Adult Community Center (JOACC), addressed Line Item #01-13-8377-0 Adult Community Center.

Mr. Dembow noted the center continues to serve as a comfortable, affordable, and convenient meeting place for many diverse purposes ranging from financial seminars and baby showers to support groups, and, of course, being the home to the Merrimack Senior Citizen Club.

Their reputation has spread far outside of Town as rental opportunities reflect the effect of internet search capabilities as well as numerous repeat tenants. The board continues to make the facility more appealing and aesthetically pleasing. Plans for the coming year include an ambitious initiative to replace the kitchen floor with a much more suitable surface that will allow for ease of cleaning.

In addition, similar homeowner grade vinyl flooring exists in the restrooms, which is dated and in need of upgrade. They are looking to completely gut the rooms, and replace all fixtures and partitions with new, more efficient utilitarian and pleasing ones. They also want to eliminate wasteful supplemental electric baseboard heating in the rooms and restore proper warm air ventilation, which they expect will be possible by examining and mitigating present shortfalls in existing air supply delivery duct infrastructure. All improvements will be ADA compatible. Baby changing stations will be installed in both rooms to meet tenant needs and expectations.

The projects are at the top of a priority list with others such as replacement of the end of useful life composite wood dance floor and the carpeting throughout. Cost estimates have not yet been identified. The projects will not be inexpensive, and although such proposed capital improvements to the center would normally fall under the Town's budget, through prudent management and with increasing rentals, partly attributed to the improvements and updates that have been put in place in recent years, sufficient savings have been accumulated, which will be shared with the Town in covering such costs.

This is in keeping with the other projects the JOACC has undertaken and partially funded to modernize and improve the overall rental experience the center has been able to offer. Along with other expected

Approved: February 27, 2020

Posted: February 28, 2020

community partnerships, which have financially supported the JOACC in the past, these three sources of financial backing will make it much less painful than if we were to have to go it alone.

Chairman Koenig noted the identified expenditures are not included in the proposed budget. Mr. Dembow spoke of the hope to have estimates in 1-2 months.

Councilor Albert questioned the total available in savings. Mr. Dembow stated there to be a bank account for monies to be received and expended and savings intended to save for these type of expenses. He was uncertain of the balance; however, indicated that information would be provided. Councilor Albert spoke of the large costs involved with updating restroom facilities. Mr. Dembow stated his belief the existing fixtures are original to when the center was converted from the former police station (early '80s).

Asked what the rental fee is, he indicated it to be based on the number of people attending each function; 4 tiers of pricing 1-49, 50-74, 75-124, and 125-200. Asked what the cost would be for 150 people, he stated it to be about \$900 and a refundable security deposit of approx. \$350. The lowest cost rental (net cost) for under 50, which is the most common rental, is at \$285 (includes opening and closing by custodian and unlimited timeframe as long as end time does not exceed 12:00 midnight on a weekend).

Councilor Harrington stated the savings account has not been in existence for a very long period of time. Prior discussions resulted in a decision that a portion of profits be set aside to address future maintenance items.

Town Manager Cabanel questioned if they would be back before the Town in the current budget season with a request for additional funding, and was informed they would not. There is an understanding of the framework of the budget process, and they have submitted their budget as expected for FY21.

It was stated that the first project would begin with the Town's permission. Upon completion of that, an analysis of the finances would be done to determine what the second project would be.

Chairman Koenig commented last year the Town grant went up significantly as revenues from rentals were not great. Proposed is level funding. Mr. Dembow spoke of the inability to predict rental income. What is known is that rentals have increased steadily over the past few years. He believes that to be repeat renters and rentals resulting from word of mouth advertising.

Vice Chairman Boyd questioned the increase (\$6,000) in the cost of the coordinator position (subcontract), and was informed of the increased workload on the position, and the decision of the Board to compensate at a higher rate.

Matthew Casparius, Director, Parks and Recreation Department, spoke of the wide variety of recreational programs and special events the department provides (2019; 190 events serving 6,000⁺ participants). Over the past few years, growing popularity has been seen with community special events, e.g., Halloween party, Winter Carnival (800-1,000 participants at each event).

Approved: February 27, 2020

Posted: February 28, 2020

The budget is broken into two components; taxpayer funded and Recreation Revolving Fund. With regard to the taxpayer funded side of the budget, proposed is level funding with the exception of items that cannot be controlled.

Regarding Line Item #01-13-8505-0 Infrastructure, Wasserman Park Tennis Court resurfacing (\$37,000), Director Casparius spoke of cracks that have developed across the courts over the past few years. Patching has taken place; however, is a stopgap measure. The desire is to fix all 7 tennis courts by resurfacing/retexturing. Typically that activity should occur every 5-8 years. It is believed it has been approx. 15 years. The courts are used steadily every day. The high school practices and conducts matches there (does not assist with maintenance).

Town Manager Cabanel commented on having a list of capital projects (one-time costs) for which she intends to propose the use of fund balance (approx. \$650,000). This item is on that list.

Asked about the pond dredging/beach erosion control project (\$95,000 in the current budget), Director Casparius stated he and Dawn Tuomala, Deputy Director/Town Engineer/ Public Works Department, plan to meet with the State the following Wednesday. Asked about the original proposal of \$61,000, Director Casparius commented on the previous discussion of demolition of three cabins, and was informed that will be addressed in the current year's budget.

One of the cabins that had been planned for demolition had a tree land on it. Now it is an insurance claim. Consideration is being given to rebuilding the cabin to proper specifications. Further information will be forthcoming.

Brian Harris, President, Merrimack Youth Association (MYA), spoke of work underway regarding the audit. All registration information is going out this week. Chairman Koenig noted the proposed budget includes funding for the MYA assuming the contract can be renegotiated. Mr. Harris commented on the request for an additional \$3,500 to offset the audit and costs of the bookkeeper. It is anticipated the bookkeeper will cost approx. \$7,500 for the year (initial year). He is hopeful the audit information will be available by the end of January.

A financial committee was formed, which tore apart and dissected every program. Every week they spent 4-5 hours at the MYA building doing that work. There was information missing that had to be retrieved. The auditor had already been provided with about 75% of the information, and the registration information is being sent.

Town Manager Cabanel stated her understanding the Executive Committee is doing an excellent job working on this. There is some pushback and reluctance to change on the part of some of the individual programs. Mr. Harris noted the retired executive from SCORE and a representative from Merrimack Tax attend the meetings, and spoke of the assistance they provide.

Councilor Harrington spoke of the desire of the Council for the MYA to be successful, and of having observed a seriousness, that they are focused in the correct direction, and have put in place all of the items requested of them.

Director Casparius commented on the Recreation Revolving Fund, which was established 4 years ago (by user fees). The result is that all programs are entirely self-funded. Although the budget identifies

Approved: February 27, 2020

Posted: February 28, 2020

an increase in the costs of the programs, the revenue received is sufficient to cover that cost. There is no tax impact.

Another benefit of the fund is that it provides flexibility to bring in new programs on the fly rather than trying to schedule something 18 months in advance (for budgeting purposes).

He reiterated 190 programs were run in the past year. Collectively, those programs are tasked with covering a portion of the Director's salary and benefits as well as those of the Program Coordinator. Each year, the Assistant Town Manager/Finance Director provides a number to factor in for the budget (FY21 \$54,076). They take the 8 largest programs and charge off the amount proportionately to those programs. The reason for focusing on the 8 largest is because they are the largest, and it is known they will run. Naticook Day Camp covers 68% (\$36,772). Last year Naticook Day Camp had its highest attendance ever. Camp Trek sold out with a fairly extensive waiting list. Capacity will be expanded on both camps this year. Last year the Camp Trek covered in the area of 15%, and this year it will cover 23%.

Asked if he has been following proposed legislation aimed at increasing minimum wage, Director Casparius stated he has. He sits on the board for the New Hampshire Camp Directors' Association. That association retains a lobbyist to keep them informed. Her opinion was that it will likely pass the House and Senate, but that the Governor will not support it. She does not believe there would be enough votes to override a veto. Should a new Governor be elected, that could have an impact.

In preparation for such an occurrence, he has gathered data to identify what the impacts to the camp budget would be for this year as well as the next 5, based on the bill that came out last Thursday. This year, he only has 1 position (6 employees); Junior Camp Counselors, that are currently making less than the proposed \$8.50. To raise those up, would add about \$700 to the budget. Currently, the position is paid \$8.00/hr., which is \$0.75/hr. above minimum wage. If looking to continue paying \$0.75 above minimum wage, it would put the position at \$9.25. Currently the Senior Camp Counselors are making \$9.00/hr. It would be a domino effect. If doing that, the impact would be approx. \$10,000 for the current year. Camp registration has opened for this year; the fee cannot be changed. They would still be able to cover the cost, but it would be tight.

If the bill passes, in the next budget year (summer 2022), the cost of day camp would have to be raised by \$40/week. Beyond that, it would be an additional increase of \$15/week.

Councilor Albert spoke of previous discussions around difficulty finding people to fill the positions because of salaries offered. He questioned if the pay rate is competitive, and was informed they are now in a pretty good place. The past two years have seen an adjustment in the pay scales for a few positions they had struggled filling.

Should the bill pass, the impact will be far reaching, e.g., not only will the cost of staff salaries increase, but the cost of activities will increase, e.g., transportation cost, destination costs (to cover their increases).

The camp is currently on the lower end in regard to cost when comparing to others in the area. It is likely there would be some sort of reduction in attendance and additional requests for financial aid.

Approved: February 27, 2020

Posted: February 28, 2020

Town Manager Cabanel stated a review of wages was done resulting in the belief wages are adequate. There is difficulty in hiring for positions such as lifeguards, swim instructors, etc. That is something being seen throughout the State. Consideration has been given to covering the cost of Red Cross certification, with some commitment after course completion, as an added benefit.

Asked about the programs conducted during school vacation week(s), Director Casparius stated the program began 3-4 years ago (December/February/April). For the past 3 years they have focused on a program solely at Wasserman Park, which has done fairly well. February and April gain more participation (30-40/week). This February they are looking to introduce fieldtrips.

Welfare

Patricia Murphy, Administrator, Welfare Department, stated the total proposed budget to be \$164,136. She noted the portion of the budget that is State mandated noting difficulty in predicting the amount of services that will be required. State law requires that assistance be provided, and if necessary, that they go over the budgeted amount. The total increase for this portion of the budget is \$2,148.

Ms. Murphy spoke of having reduced some of the line items and increased the housing line item based on current need. She spoke of the amount of homelessness and difficulty getting individuals into shelters (backed up). In addition, rental costs are on the rise. Vacancy rate is extremely low making it harder for people to move around when prices go up.

At this point in the year, the current budget is only 44% expended (half way through fiscal year). Activity has increased since September.

Regarding Line Item #01-25-8399-0 Social & Health Services, the allocations help services in the community, hopefully reducing what has to be expended in assistance under the mandated part of the budget. This portion of the budget has been level funded. Caregivers had not made a request last year (due to management issues), but has for the coming year. They provide volunteer transportation services for elderly in the community.

Revenues last year were approx. \$9,000. Hoped for FY21 is \$12,000. Revenue is generated by individuals paying back the cost of services.

Asked if a reason was given as to why Lamprey Health Care did not submit a request, she indicated she tried to contact them. Her contact no longer seems valid. She is uncertain what is occurring there.

Ms. Murphy spoke of Line Item #01-01-8405-0 Nashua Transit System, under General Government, which is the bus transportation to Nashua for elderly and disabled. Typically a written request is made for this line to be funded; however, an oversight occurred. Funding was identified as \$32,545; however, a request is forthcoming for an increase to \$38,866 (\$6,321 increase). They have not requested an increase in several years. Information was requested and provided relative to the hourly rate to run the fleet, etc. This federal grant is a 50/50 match. They get 50% of the cost, and we (communities that use the services) are supposed to pay the other 50%. Cost to the community is based on the cost of an hourly rate of service. The letter received stated in part "For the past number of years NTS has not significantly raised our hourly rate. However, in recent years, we have largely replaced both our fixed route and paratransit fleets, and in doing so conducted a thorough review and

Approved: February 27, 2020

Posted: February 28, 2020

analysis of our hourly rate. This hourly rate accounts for maintenance costs, fuel, and vehicle depreciation.”.

Asked if she is comfortable with the increase being justified, Ms. Murphy responded given the number of years where increases have not occurred, and the explanation provided, she believes it to be justified.

Asked for the number of rides provided/people served, Ms. Murphy stated the last numbers received were 56. These are people who are elderly and/or disabled needing transportation to doctor appts., etc. There is a minimum (\$4/each way) cost to the user of the service.

Communications

Denise Roy, Chief, Merrimack Police Department, spoke of efforts to review needs versus wants. Line Item #01-05-8260-0 Telephone Line shows an increase of \$9,050, which is to cover the cost of an upgrade from copper to fiber lines. It is the operating cost for the increase (not installation). Throughout the past year, the department has suffered significant losses with the phones. The hope is that this will help solve the problem.

Line Item # 01-05-8111-0 Overtime – Other, shows an increase of \$9,977. Historically, the department has significantly gone over the budgeted amount. That will not change; there are 7 dispatchers; five work each day, and two of the shifts require 2 for coverage. Added to that is the need to consider vacation and sick time. The increase will likely not cover it, but is an attempt to get the budgeted amount equal to what is expended.

Chairman Koenig noted the prior year the amount expended was \$43,602. He questioned why the line would have been budgeted at \$21,195. Town Manager Cabanel commented what will be seen in a few lines within the Communications budget is that for some reason rather than keeping up with actual expenditures, when the budget has been presented it has been understated, and when overages occur monies are used from other line items. Attempts are being made to have the budgeted amount match actuals.

Line Item #01-05-8300-0 Travel & Meetings, shows \$1,000. It coincides with Line Item #01-05-8352-0 Education & Training. Over the last few years, they have tried to look at an area they may have been lacking in; training provided to dispatchers. The professionalism they need the dispatchers to have is great. Finding training is difficult. A review of available offerings identified the cost of three to be approx. \$230/person. To get the quality training needed and pay for the certification training (required to be certified), they have to cover the cost.

This past year, the department was able to obtain free training for the dispatchers saving a significant amount. In order to keep up with the standards the department requires, training has to occur. Asked if any training is being provided by the NHMA or Primex, Chief Roy stated they keep an eye on Primex as they send several officers there. Most of the NHMA courses are more relevant to the records division, e.g., Right-to-Know Law. Specialized training such as PowerPhone is not available.

Approved: February 27, 2020

Posted: February 28, 2020

Line Item #01-05-8504-0 Office Equipment shows a \$6,000 increase, which is attributed to computer upgrades. The computers run 24 hours/day/7 days/week, and there is a great deal of information stored on them. They have not purchased new computers in at least 4-5 years.

Asked how the computer equipment upgrade will be integrated with the commitment to using the Cloud, Chief Roy stated the information that is entered into the computers is not allowed to be stored on the Cloud as there are restrictions through the State. The information has to be stored within the department and through the State.

Vice Chairman Boyd questioned if the department is equipped with a backup drive for storing information, and if it is currently adequate for the needs. Chief Roy stated it is at this time. The department is backed up at the Town Hall.

Chief Roy noted IMC is going by the wayside. The State has not released information on who their vendor is. As soon as that information is released, the department will know better the direction that will be taken. Vice Chairman Boyd stated the concern with the department being able to provide information to the prosecutor and others. Chief Roy stated most of the information is backed up. However, with the Records Management System, if something is lost (often happens), they have to go through the vendor Crime Track. They have the information. The department does not have it anywhere in Town.

Town Manager Cabanel stated the funding is in the budget as coming out of Capital Reserve Funds. When the State makes their determination, the department will be ready to go.

Vice Chairman Boyd questioned the \$8,000 allocation under 01-05-8335-0 Maintenance-Communications Equip for the base stations and repeaters, e.g., will it enhance the ability to cover the Town from all points? Chief Roy spoke of Captain Marquis having gone out to different areas in Town with the vendor, OME, trying portable radios to identify where additional coverage is needed to avoid dead spots. Found was that no matter what is done by way of upgrades, etc., there will remain certain areas where the radios do not work. A few upgrades have been done, and it has helped. The department is moving in a much better direction because of upkeep and antennas. A firefighter went along with Captain Marquis to test the same areas. They have the same problem. They run on an analog system where the Police Department runs on a digital system (better reception).

Town Manager Cabanel and Assistant Town Manager/Finance Director Micali met with the Fire Department to discuss communication issues. The areas of most concern for them are the southeast section and up along the river. There is an antenna located on a flat roof at the mall. The belief is, were that antenna able to be moved and placed on the tower (top of ledge) the issue would be greatly improved. The owner of the tower requires, from the vendor, a response to questions relative to intended use, etc. Captain Dubreuil has been reaching out to the vendor for the past 3-4 months without response. The Town Manager's Office will look to move the process along.

Councilor Albert spoke of the topography of the southeast section. He expressed surprise with the lack of response from the vendor. He suggested the Town could place another unit down by the waste treatment plant (taller structure). Town Manager Cabanel stated that possibility was also discussed.

Approved: February 27, 2020

Posted: February 28, 2020

Chief Roy noted the line item is for maintenance of the communication equipment (service agreement), and has not increased since last year.

Town Manager Cabanel remarked in speaking with the Fire Department, they feel the information from the technician they are speaking to may not be reaching the individual(s) it should. The Police Department is the primary customer. They realize now the need for coordination with the Police Department and use their relationship to gain the responsiveness desired.

Chief Roy stated she feels confident the department is maintaining its communications well, and are in a good spot. She noted the agreement, which began with the current fiscal year, covers the cost of all calls for service, etc.

Police

Chief Roy stated her belief the Department has presented what is believed to be a reasonable request in presentation of their budget.

Line Item #01-04-8203-0 Operating Supplies, the request is for a \$6,000 increase. One thousand dollars of that would go towards supplies (surveillance, testing, and protective equipment) needed for the Special Investigation Unit (SIU). The SIU has been responsible for reducing what was being seen as an out of control increase in relation to drug activity in the Town. Although it will never go away, they are in a comfortable area. In the past two weeks, the SIU has had 1-2 arrests every day. They are concentrating a great deal on the hotel areas. She spoke of a meeting with Woodspring Suites who implemented significant changes that helped reduce the activity that was being seen there.

Councilor Albert questioned the status of the drug forfeiture account, and was informed the balance is in the area of \$15,000. Councilor Albert stated his belief monies can be drawn from that fund. Chief Roy stated that to be corrected. She noted a great deal of that goes towards having cash on hand for undercover operations. It also goes towards surveillance equipment, body wires, etc.

Matthew Tarleton, Captain, Merrimack Police Department, spoke of the increased cost for ammunition. The price is going up every year. The Academy is now requiring the department to use lead free frangible ammunition (training). There were issues at the range with splash back happening to trainees/recruits; fragments were coming back. The cost of lead free frangible ammo is twice that of lead free ammo. The ammo is needed for academy recruits, instructor recertifications, etc.

Chairman Koenig asked, and was informed the Academy is run by the State, and they are placing the additional requirement on what is sent in with the recruits/students. They are looking into other possible ways to address the issue.

Line Item #01-04-8270-0 Dues & Fees shows an increase of \$600, which is related to Deputy Chief Levesque's membership to the New Hampshire Police Association (increased cost).

Chief Roy addressed Line Item #s 01-04-8300-0 Travel & Meetings (increase of \$2,500) and 01-04-8352-0 Education & Training (increase of \$6,500). The department is fresh/new with 19 officers having less than 5 years on. In order to keep the officers professionally trained, the department requires them to be experts in everything from domestic violence laws to mental health, accident

Approved: February 27, 2020

Posted: February 28, 2020

investigation, etc. With a newer department, there is the requirement to send more officers to training. The Academy is limited through their financial constraints. They have the same classes all the time. They are not as quality as they could be. That is something she and other Chiefs in the area are working on with the Academy. It is hoped new leadership changes will bring about some change in how they operate.

The supervisors are new to that position. Chief Roy stated the desire for the leaders of the future to learn now how to run the department. In order for that to occur, we must send people out of the Merrimack area, sometimes out of the State or region to receive the training that will bring them up to the caliber the department expects.

Vice Chairman Boyd commented on the commitment made to the Fire Department last year for individuals to receive Paramedic training. The same commitment needs to be made for the Police Department.

Regarding Line Item #01-04-8503-0 Vehicles, Chief Roy noted last year was the year for the department to purchase 4 vehicles, and this coming year it is for 3. Chief Roy commented last year she neglected to note the decision for one of the four vehicles to be a pick-up truck. The truck is not used for patrol purposes. It is driven solely by the Lieutenants. It is equipped with lights and is marked up in a way that they were trying to test for. There is 1 traffic car in Town that does all of the traffic enforcement, and they were trying to test the lettering on it (reflective).

For FY21, the department is looking to purchase 3 vehicles; SUVs (Ford Explorer), which will be placed into the patrol division. Also listed is \$20,000 for a motorcycle. Captain Tarleton stated the existing motorcycle is a 2000 Harley Davidson with about 40,000 miles. ABS, traction control, and stability control are all features the current motorcycle does not have. In the interest of safety for the motorcycle officers (2), the right thing to do is replace the motorcycle. It is no longer used in a patrol capacity. It is used specifically in the summer months during the road races and parades. Also being considered is the possibility of going with something a little different; dual purpose motorcycle that would have on and off-road capabilities.

Councilor Albert noted, at one point, there were 6 officers who utilized the motorcycle, and were out doing motor vehicle enforcement, etc. There are now 2. There was a school of thought at one point that it is actually safer to patrol in a car. He has a hard time supporting a \$20,000 expenditure for equipment that will not get that much use. He indicated a desire to understand the current level of use. Chief Roy commented on the age of the existing equipment, the concern regarding safety, and of a greater level of interest in a motorcycle that has the latest safety features. Councilor Albert remarked, if the commitment is made, he would like to understand that the level of use increases.

Councilor Rothhaus noted Line Item #01-04-8503-0 Vehicles, lists the number of patrol SUVs to be purchased as four (4). Chief Roy stated it should be corrected to indicate 3. Councilor Rothhaus noted the comment box indicates 3 patrol SUVs and 1 Admin SUV. Chief Roy stated an Admin vehicle was discussed; however, removed from the proposed budget. Proposed is the purchase of three (3) SUVs.

The next comment box states \$35,000 each, which does not add up. Assistant Town Manager/Finance Director Micali stated the vehicles themselves were \$35,000. Fit-up is about \$5,000 on each.

Vice Chairman Boyd commented on past remarks relative to the desire for increased enforcement in the Town's conservation areas. He suggested there would be increased opportunities for that and that having a two-wheeled vehicle with that level of mobility would have a level of utility the department could utilize in an emergency situation. Chief Roy remarked one of the areas discussed previously in regard to conservation properties is getting officers out there. Unfortunately, the only tool they have (OHRVs don't always fit on the trails) is bicycles. When we have 3 officers on the street and are asking one to take a bicycle and go 1, 2, 3 miles into the woods, if something were to happen, it takes that officer time to get back to the car, put the bike on the car, and respond. The department has shied away from that unless having enough personnel on a shift to be able to accommodate it. A motorcycle is permitted on the street, is much quicker, and can certainly go faster than an officer can on a bicycle.

Police Detail

Chief Roy spoke of the continued discussions that have occurred over several years regarding the growth experienced in Town and the direction of the department, and of the support of the Town and Council. She stated the request of the department to be for the addition of two (2) new officers, which would bring the total up to 44.

The Town has always been divided into 4 sectors. However, it has never been mandatory that 4 sectors be staffed. The mandatory minimum has been 3 sectors and a supervisor. 72% of the time it is 3 sectors and a supervisor. When that occurs the other sectors are increased to cover the 4th sector. The result is adding calls to the other sectors, which adds to response time, etc.

The desire is for the minimum to be 4 sectors and a supervisor on the 1st and 2nd shifts. Noted was that the department requires 2 officers to go to hotel calls because they do not know what they will find when they arrive. In such an instance, sector 4 and sector 3 would be going to the hotel call. Typically the supervisor goes to ensure everything is okay. That means you are leaving 1 person to cover the rest of the Town. If a domestic call were to come in, which requires 2 people, they would not have 2 people to send.

Chief Roy stated concern for the safety of the officers. Having the ability to have 2 officers respond to certain calls is of great importance. Calls are more complicated, and investigations are more complicated and time consuming. She stated her belief eventually we will get to the point where we will have to consider 24 hrs./day - 7 days/wk. having 4 sectors covered and a supervisory. For now, have the 1st and 2nd shifts covered by a minimum of 4 officers and a supervisor is the way to go.

Chairman Koenig questioned why the department would continue to have 4 sectors rather than dividing the Town into 3 sectors and broadening the areas. Chief Roy commented there are occasions where the department does have enough people to have 4 sectors covered.

Councilor Albert stated his appreciation for the request citing examples of times when multiple calls come in that require more than 1 person to respond. He spoke of the amount and type of growth in Town. There is the need to keep up with the calls for service. Asked to provide an explanation, Chief Roy commented when the sectors were divided it was based on calls for service and the population in different areas, e.g., Section 3 is likely the smallest, but that is where most of the businesses are. Sector 4 has a large conservation area in it.

Approved: February 27, 2020

Posted: February 28, 2020

Chief Roy noted the funding request to be for \$154,247. Understanding the additional cost is a burden on the taxpayers, the plan would be to start 1 officer in July and another in January to allow for savings.

Vice Chairman Boyd requested the Council be provided with a breakdown of the number of calls in Sector 3 that were to the outlets and extended stay hotels. Chief Roy noted the number of calls to the outlets in 2019 was slightly over 1,000.

Asked if the direction would be to hire and put two officers through training or to hire experienced officers, Chief Roy responded she would love to be able to hire experienced officers and save the Town the cost associated with training. However, the pool of applicants is much less when seeking experienced officers, and, at the end of the day, the desire is to hire the individual best suited for the position.

Asked if the SRO position has been filled, she stated his position at the high school has, but his position in the patrol division has not. There are currently 2 vacancies in the department; one officer made the decision to leave police work altogether. There is one supervisor out with a back injury.

Councilor Rothhaus requested an email identifying staffing situations, e.g., what shifts are covered, etc. Chief Roy indicated the information would be provided.

Councilor Albert commented on the length of time it takes to hire and get an officer through the academy (a year). In order to shorten the time period at the academy, a few agencies are doing all of the end of the academy stuff, e.g., homeland security certifications, etc., in the few month run-up before getting into the academy.

Noted was that officers having just graduated from the Academy will be with his/her training officer (8-12 weeks). That individual is not counted because, although certified, he/she has not yet passed the training portion.

***There being no objection, the Council took a five-minute recess at 8:56 p.m.
The Council reconvened at 9:01 p.m.***

Library

Debra Covell, Chair, Library Board of Trustees, spoke of having been before the Council in November. Councilor Healey has questioned the increase (\$2,000) under Line Item #01-15-8202-0 Maintenance Supplies. The Library was proactively supporting SB142, which was requiring that school districts provide feminine hygiene materials free in the ladies' restrooms. The Trustees felt it was the appropriate thing for the Library to do as well. This past year the Trustees paid for the installation of the receptacle and the year's supply of products. As the first year, it is not yet known what the ongoing cost will be.

Another question posed was regarding Line Item #01-15-8300-0 Travel & Meetings. Although proposed at level funding, the total amount has not been expended in prior years. The reasoning for leaving the \$6,000 in that line is that there is a number of staff that has been either promoted, openings that will result in new staff members, etc., and the desire is to ensure training is available. Yvette

Approved: February 27, 2020

Posted: February 28, 2020

Couser, Director, Merrimack Public Library, is the President-Elect of the New Hampshire Library Association, which will involve additional travel.

Janet R. Krupp, Treasurer, Library Board of Trustees, spoke of a wage study done in 2017 and the desire to begin implementing the recommendations. The schedule was implemented for wages for professional and supporting staff. The result is an increase in salaries. However, due to personnel turnaround, Line Item # 01-15-8103-0 Wage –Supervisory, will show a decrease for FY21 (min. of \$5,000).

Line Item #01-15-8131-0 Health Insurance shows a decrease, which is based on an error in the quote provided.

Line Item #01-15-8450-0 Library Materials shows an increase of \$8,875. Two databases were added; Universal Class (online courses) and Consumer Reports. There are over 500 online courses that range from math, sciences, and writing to self-help, do-it-yourself projects, etc.

A line was added for Library of Things (\$2,000). As discussed at the November meeting, looked at for next year is instruments.

The Trustees have decided to pay for \$11,000 of various materials for the Library.

There is no scheduled Capital Reserve Fund purchase for FY21.

Councilor Albert questioned the cost (\$2,000) associated with video games. Yvette Couser, Director, spoke of the demand, and an update and increase in the collection in response. In the Library of Things, video game consoles are able to be checked out.

Vice Chairman Boyd questioned if the fee associated with the GMILCS consortium has increased, Line Item #01-15-8353-0 Computer Services. Ms. Krupp stated her belief it has remained constant. Director Couser commented the only cost that usually goes up is the van delivery. It is a separate company they contract with. They have restrictions around the number of bags, the weight, etc.

In the consortium, there was a change in membership where New England College absorbed the New Hampshire Institute of Art, and the New Hampshire Institute of Art was a separate GMILCS Library. Now it is absorbed, and they have not figured out how the dues will change.

Councilor Albert questioned if Library staff utilize the New Hampshire Municipal Association (NHMA), and was informed they do. Director Couser and another staff person along with one of the Trustees attended the Right-to-Know Law training.

Town Manager Cabanel noted a request has been made of the NHMA for a list of employees that have participated in their programs. The information will be provided the Council.

Comments from the Press - None

Comments from the Public – None

Approved: February 27, 2020

Posted: February 28, 2020

Comments from the Council

Assistant Town Manager/Finance Director Micali spoke of the discussion around attempts to reach the vendor, OME, regarding having an antenna placed on the tower at the outlets. During the discussion, he received an email. OME has responded, and the information has been forwarded to the owner of the tower seeking information on the cost. Town Manager Cabanel informed the Council, although it was believed OME had not been responsive, Captain Dudash learned they had been responsive as he located their response in spam email.

Councilor Albert commented on discussion of the potential tax rate. There is an ongoing theme on Facebook regarding conversations around limiting growth. With the new Park Place coming in by the outlets, he wonders if something similar to an impact fee could be enacted. The growth impacts police, fire, health inspector responsibilities, etc.

Town Manager Cabanel stated impact fees were previously a simple thing to do. Now you assess a certain amount, and after a short period of time, you are required to prove that there were a certain number of calls relating specifically to the facility, and if not proven, the impact fee has to be returned. It is a burdensome process. She commented a facility such as Park Place pays a huge amount of taxes.

Councilor Rothhaus stated his belief the Planning Board has been able to have developers address issues such as traffic lights and things of that nature. With impact fees, he does not believe that would be the case. He spoke of the increased value to the community with development, which offsets some of the costs. Noted was that the outlets pay over \$2 million in taxes.

Councilor Harrington noted over 70% of the tax revenue received goes to the school. Town Manager Cabanel stated Town functions represent 19% of the tax rate.

Councilor Albert stated the desire to look to encourage developers who want to bring in affordable housing for senior citizens.

Councilor Harrington reiterated with 70% of the tax revenue received from properties such as the mall going to the schools, there remains very little to address the increased need for services. Such properties have no financial impact on the schools, but do have an impact on Town services. The Town cannot dictate to a private property owner what he/she can or cannot constructed on their property providing it is within the criteria established by ordinance. With development, there is an evaluation done on what the impact would be to the schools, e.g., increased number of students that will result from the development. Typically the impact has to do with increased Town services, e.g., police, fire.

Adjourn

MOTION made by Vice Chairman Boyd and seconded by Councilor Woods to adjourn the meeting. **MOTION CARRIED** 6-0-0

The January 15, 2020 meeting of the Town Council was adjourned at 9:42 p.m.

Submitted by Dawn MacMillan