

TOWN COUNCIL WORK SESSION  
ON 2011-2012 BUDGET  
April 7, 2011 – 6:00 P.M.

Present: President Gary Cote, Vice-President Kerry McGee, Ted Jendzejec, Raymond Spear

Town Manager Thomas Hoover  
Town Solicitor Frederick Tobin

Review of Emergency Evacuation Plan

Police Department

Chief Volpe presented the budget needs and requests of the police department, including animal control, emergency management and crossing guards. He focused on the operating budget in the areas of personnel and police vehicles.

With 54 officers on the payroll (down from 60) and three officers scheduled to retire, Chief Volpe requests hiring three officers. There are positions which remain unfilled due to attrition. The shortage also includes four officers on military duty, one out with a long term illness and one out on administrative suspension, leaving 48 officers to cover the town. This impacts the overtime budget, as we are required to call someone in to cover shortages.

There are services that have already been discontinued, such as the community police officer, an officer in the traffic division and the school resource officer.

Patrol vehicles are showing their age, averaging over 95,000 miles with maintenance bills reflecting the wear and tear of cars running up to 18 hours a day and averaging over 40,000 miles a year. Chief Volpe requests replacing three cars at about \$30,000 each.

Capital

The detective cars are in disrepair, are 10-12 years old with significant problems such as transmission, engine, rear suspension, etc. It's not worth it to repair them. Would like to request \$30,000 to begin the replacement process of these vehicles.

Facility

There is a need for a new gutter system on the building due to water damage on the walls due to the poor condition of the gutters; I am requesting \$9,500 for that repair.

Radios

The current system is 800 megahertz with an analog backup system. The FCC is requiring us to cease use of the analog system after January 2013 and we will be in violation if we don't comply. In order to be in compliance, we need to replace three receivers and are requesting \$80,000 to replace those components.

In closing, I would ask you to accept the budget as it stands. We are looking to maintain what we have today, replace a few vehicles and some equipment. Any further cuts in manpower would cut services to our town.

Councilman Spear asked how a 10% cut would impact the department. Chief Volpe stated there would be a serious impact, the only place to cut that amount of money would be in manpower. He added that there is not much leeway in the operating budget. Would also probably look to the radio system, as there is another budget cycle before the FCC would find us in violation, but he does feel strongly the radio system needs to be addressed. If the process could at least get started, the FCC would take notice of that.

Councilman McGee asked how new the newest patrol vehicle is; Chief Volpe responded there are two 2011 Crown Victorias.

Councilman Jendzejec remarked that basically the FCC requirement is an unfunded mandate and Chief Volpe agreed.

President Cote asked if there had been an increase in police calls. Chief Volpe replied yes, definitely in larceny calls, which he attributes to the state of the economy.

Councilman Spear asked if the cut would be a reduction in services or the level of service? Chief Volpe replied both, pointing out that detective investigations sometimes take weeks or months to finish up and you wouldn't want to get to the point where you have to pick and choose.

#### Public Works

Superintendent of Public Works Dennis Smith said that DPW is in a serious, deplorable condition since the abandonment of the Capital Improvement Program a few years ago. Some vehicles may not even get on the road next year. Our garbage trucks do 450 – 650 stops a day and the recycle trucks do 550-750.

In the operating budget, there is a 2% decrease over last year's budget, mostly in materials and other operating expenses. There are no changes in the engineering or building inspection departments. (A number of items in disrepair were shown on a slide show presentation).

Mr. Smith said that 66% of the large truck fleet is over 10 years old; there has been no capital money for two years. We have a 1988 loader and a 1987 backhoe with no brakes (he noted that the backhoe doesn't go on the road). Our 1988 grader is in pretty good shape and added that DPW takes care of 197 miles of road.

President Cote commented that he has looked into privatizing the sanitation department and found there would be no savings and in fact would cost us more.

Mr. Smith said that after the drivers are done with their sanitation routes, they go back out and collect yard waste. We collected 627 tons of yard waste last November.

Mr. Spear asked if it was necessary for the Town Council to cut, what is the potential impact? Mr. Smith responded he would look to services such as street sweeping, catch basin cleaning, road striping and tree removal in the town rights of way. He may be able to come up with about a \$323,000 reduction, but a 10% cut would be over \$500,000. You would be looking at layoffs.

Mr. Cote asked how many bodies constitute a \$207,000 reduction; Manager Hoover thinks 6-8 employees.

Councilman Jendzejec asked about cost savings if we went to bi-weekly trash pickup. Mr. Smith believes there would be no cost savings on bi-weekly pickup, but suggested the Council might want to look at a "pay as you throw" program. It is a program that would increase recycling and reduce disposal costs. The program would pay for itself.

It's a program where people would have to purchase their own garbage bags. The money collected paying for the bags comes back to the town and recycling is still free. Another suggestion would be to look at charging fees at the transfer station.

President Cote asked for a presentation on the "pay as you throw" program.

#### Parks and Recreation

Mr. Guy Lefebvre, Director of Parks and Recreation, explained that his proposed budget is basically level funded to last year, with the same staff, no new initiatives, basically offering the same activities. There have been a few adjustments, such as reduction of one week in the summer camp program.

A 10% reduction, roughly \$105,000, would affect programs, services, beach services, vacation camps, the teen center, 37 special events during the year, bus transportation, materials and supplies. In addition, Parks and Rec. hasn't had a capital budget in two years. A 10% reduction would have to be a combination of operating and capital expenses.

Discussion took place with regard to a "pay as you play" program, an increase in fees, increase in league fees to include lighting costs as presently they only cover about 1/3 of the lighting.

President Cote asked what thoughts are with regard to combining the Department of Public Works and Parks and Recreation departments. Mr. Lefebvre responded that they already do assist each other with snow plowing, shared work and manpower, use of the chipper, mower, and tractor. They share the backhoe, loader, tractor, sand bags, compost and mulch. The public is better served by a full time agency with a professional director, as it has always been in its own entity. A merger would be a disservice.

Human Resources

Director Pat Shurtleff advised that Human Services employs nine full time employees and three part time. This year she has had numerous for case management. The food bank serves 271 families. For the past two years, their funding has been reduced.

A 10% reduction would impact services and staff. We serve 55 meals on wheels a day and 80-100 lunches at the Senior Center. The cut would affect the social services staff. There has been an increase in services needed for adolescents and children. We have four social workers actively working, with one on medical leave.

We are requesting \$160,000 in a capital budget for Flat River Annex. Also, MacArthur Blvd. building is in deplorable condition with water damage to the walls and stair well.

In conclusion, an announcement was made that public hearings on municipal and school budgets will be held on April 28 and May 3.

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Town Clerk