



**TOWN OF NORWELL**  
Norwell Town Offices, Room 112  
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Norwell, Massachusetts 02061  
(781) 659-8000

## **Norwell Advisory Board Meeting Minutes February 13, 2023**

The Advisory Board was called to order by Chair Jesse McSweeney at 7:30 PM. Also present were Town Administrator Darleen Sullivan, Town Accountant Christine McCarthy, and Board Members Mark Cleveland, Bob Perniola, Brian D'Souza, Elizabeth Hibbard, Peter Leppanen, and John LaCara. Unable to attend were Ed Maguire and Dane Hutchison.

### **AGENDA**

*Motion by Ms. Hibbard to approve the agenda as submitted. Seconded by Mr. Cleveland and unanimously voted.*

### **ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS**

#### **Minutes**

None

#### **Reserve Fund Transfer Requests**

None

### **FY 2024 BUDGET OVERVIEW**

#### **Police Department**

Chief Edward Lee indicated his proposed budget included contractually negotiated salary increases which will help with retention, and 9 months of funding for the Lieutenant position he has been seeking to add; this will be from the promotion of one Sergeant and will not increase headcount. \$10,000 is requested to hire a search committee for the Lieutenant in keeping with Civil Service rules. He is also seeking an additional \$25,000 to upgrade the Department's weapons and ammunition, as the current guns are 7 years old and require increasing maintenance; he would like to trade these in for new weapons with laser sight technology to improve shot accuracy.

Mr. Cleveland observed that seven years didn't seem old for a gun, but Chief Lee noted they get a lot of use in training, and it was better for the Town to trade them in while they were still in good condition. He wants the officers to have the best equipment and latest technology possible as, even here, there are situations where they have to rely on their weapons.

Chair McSweeney asked the average mileage per year for patrol cars. Chief Lee estimated it to be 15-20K per year of hard driving. Administrative cars tend to last longer. They are looking to purchase hybrids this year, which would significantly reduce fuel use. Ms. Sullivan noted that the Department is looking to replace three vehicles this year (two cruisers and one admin) in keeping with usual practice.

Ms. Hibbard noted that the separation costs seemed to be increasing year over year, and asked if there was a way forecast them. Chief Lee indicated that retiring officers were encouraged to give a year's notice but some situations, such as settlements, were difficult to forecast.

Mr. LaCara asked why the crossing guard budget has fluctuated. Chief Lee noted this was a hard position to fill due to the hours and physical demands, but they wanted the funds so they can fill the position as soon as possible. Ms. Sullivan added that the funds would be turned back if the position is not filled.

Ms. Sullivan indicated that the two "Uniform Allowance" lines was an accounting fix. The Department has to outfit first-time Officers, then they receive an annual allowance.

Chair McSweeney asked why Police had its own cell phone line; Ms. Sullivan indicated the Department had a separate cell phone contract from other Town Departments; Chair McSweeney recommended that the Department explore possible synergies by consolidating cell phone contracts.

Mr. Perniola asked whether the location of a new town hall would matter to the police. Mr. Lee indicated no preference but did not that 83 Longwater was down the street from the Police and Fire building, and access to additional conference rooms there would be useful.

### **Fire Department**

Chief David Kean indicated that the majority of increases in his proposed budget were due to contractually negotiated salary increases. He is also proposing to increase staff by an additional two firefighters, one in April and one in October, in line with a multiyear plan, initiated last year, to ultimately add one firefighter to each of the four shifts by the end of FY 24. This in turn will help fill coverage gaps, and reduce reliance on forced overtime, which has been an ongoing issue at present staffing levels. Chief Kean noted they were receiving close to two times the calls this year, for a wider variety of incidents than in the past.

Ms. Hibbard asked about a decrease in the Chief and Deputy salary lines; this reflects the "true contractual salary," with holiday and longevity pay broken out into separate lines.

All present discussed the vehicle roster, which includes two fully operational ambulances, four Class A pumpers (three in service plus one in reserve); the oldest, from 1997, will be replaced in the Fall. The Department generally orders a new truck every fourth year.

Capital requests will include funding to paint the building, which has not been done since its opening in 1999, and replacement of the self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) compressor. The compressor in use is no longer being manufactured, and replacement parts are hard to find. The seals are wearing out, which creates a risk of oils getting into the air tank.

The Board discussed replacing the compressor now in order to avoid a catastrophic failure. There is a 12-14 week lag between ordering and delivery, and Ms. Sullivan would need to find the \$80K which would be due upon delivery; it may be eligible for ARPA funding. The Department could fill tanks at neighboring departments in the interim. Chief Kean will obtain more information about the compressor's condition and the matter will be further discussed at the February 16 meeting.

### **Ambulance**

The Fire Department's proposed budget includes increases in the contractor services, medical supplies, and ambulance technical services lines. Chief Kean attributed the increase in Supplies to inflation, Contractor Services to additional mandatory educational requirements, and Ambulance Technical Services to additional equipment and inspection requirements.

Chief Kean has suggested that the Town increase ambulance rates across the board, and establish a schedule of regular increases, to bring them in line with other towns and ensure the Town receives maximum insurance reimbursement.

Chair McSweeney asked about issues with radio communications whereby firefighters had to switch frequencies to communicate in the south part of town; this issue has been resolved.

### **Emergency Management**

A level-funded budget is proposed; the majority of these funds pay for reverse 911 notifications and utilization of a local meteorologist for Highways and Fire.

### **South Shore Regional Emergency Communications Center (SSRECC)**

The regional dispatch assessment from SSRECC is expected to be lower this year, but the budget has not yet been finalized. Chief Kean noted that the Towns in the system are assessed according in part according to call volumes, and currently Norwell's call volume is third out of the four towns served. Chair McSweeney recommends that Board members visit the Center, which is located in Hingham.

### **Animal Control**

The Town shares an Animal Control Officer with Cohasset, and pays about 25% of the ACO's salary. This salary is set to increase this year; Ms. Sullivan will verify Norwell's share of the increase. The Hingham ACO covers vacations.

Chief Lee and Ms. Sullivan are happy with the existing arrangement, and Chief Lee noted that the ACO is qualified as a "Natural Resource Officer," which allows him to handle a wider range of calls.

### **Select Board / Town Administration**

The discussion was moved to Thursday; there are increases in the IT and Legal lines.

### **MISCELLANEOUS**

Superintendent Matt Keegan has asked for questions in advance so he can prepare for his meeting with the Board. Chair McSweeney advised there was a need for a second liaison to the School Department.

Ms. Sullivan spoke with Votek Superintendent Tom Hickey; they are looking to add Marshfield to the District, which would require Town Meeting approval.

### **FUTURE MEETINGS**

2/16, 2/28, 3/2 3/7, 3/9, 3/14, 3/16, 3/21, 3/23, 7 PM

**ADJOURNMENT**

*There being no further business, a motion was made by Ms. Hibbard to adjourn at 9:10 PM.  
Seconded by Mr. Cleveland and unanimously voted.*

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Jesse McSweeney, Chair