

**MINUTES
SPECIAL JOINT MEETING
CITY COUNCIL & WPC AUTHORITY AND THE BOARD OF PUBLIC SAFETY
MONDAY, MARCH 26, 2012 – 6:30 P.M.
CITY HALL AUDITORIUM**

Mayor Ryan Bingham opened the Special Joint Meeting of the City Council & WPC Authority and the Board of Public Safety at 6:30 p.m. in the City Hall Auditorium.

Present: Mayor Ryan Bingham, Councilwoman Elinor Carbone, Councilman Gregg Cogswell, Councilman Paul Samele, Jr., Councilwoman Marie Soliani, Councilman Drake Waldron, Councilman Gerald Zordan, Commissioner Angelo LaMonica, Commissioner Douglas Benedetto, Commissioner Darlene Battle, Commissioner Christopher Cook, Commissioner James Potter, Comptroller Alice Proulx, Fire Chief John Field, Police Chief Michael Maniago

Absent: Commissioner Richard Zaharek

Also Present: Board of Finance Members Bill Lamoin, Wendy Traub and Laurene Pesce.

Mayor Bingham said that as per process, this meeting was an opportunity for the Board of Safety to make final adjustments and approve budgets in recommendation to the City Council. He stated that he had asked the City Council to be prepared to make tentative budget approvals this evening. This would eliminate the need for the April 9, 2012 meeting. He spoke briefly about the process.

First budget to be discussed was Dispatch in the amount of \$492,308.00—a \$13,500.00 increase; 2.82%.

Action by BOS

A motion was made for final approval of the Dispatch budget by Commissioner Potter; seconded by Commissioner Benedetto. Motion carried.

Action by Council

A motion was made to tentatively approve the Dispatch budget by Councilman Cogswell; seconded by Councilwoman Carbone. Motion carried.

The Emergency Management budget was discussed. Mayor Bingham stated that this was a no increase budget.

Action by BOS

A motion was made for final approval of the Emergency Management budget by Commissioner Potter; seconded by Commissioner Battle. Motion carried.

Action by Council

A motion was made to tentatively approve the Emergency Management budget by Councilwoman Carbone; seconded by Councilman Samele. Motion carried.

The next budget discussed was Fire. Mayor Bingham clarified that currently the total budget was \$5,001,562.00; a 2.6% increase. He said that amount reflected keeping two vacancies in the Regular Wage line representing a \$104,000.00 cut and the appropriate increase in Extra Help to keep minimum manpower. Other line items were mentioned with associated increases and decreases.

Chief Field stated that there were additional reductions, as follows:

Extra Help reduced by \$26,091.95
Training reduced by \$1,000.00
Specialized Training reduced by \$3,000.00
Equipment Replacement reduced by \$5,000.00
Capital Reserve reduced by \$20,000.00
New Equipment reduced by \$7,000.00
Totaling \$62,091.95 in reductions.

Action by BOS

A motion was made for final approval of the Fire Department budget by Commissioner Benedetto; seconded by Commissioner Potter.

Mayor Bingham asked for the final number. Ms. Proulx stated that it was \$4,939,470.00.

Motion passed as stated above.

Action by Council

A motion to tentatively approve the Fire Department budget was made by Councilman Waldron; seconded by Councilman Zordan.

Councilwoman Carbone asked about the salary line item; she wanted to be sure that what was stated was that the line item did include two vacancies. She wondered how long those positions had been vacant.

Chief Field said that they had been vacant for one year. Councilwoman Carbone asked if the department was utilizing overtime and existing staff. Chief Field said yes. She asked if the overtime costs were reflected in the budget; Chief Field said yes.

Councilwoman Carbone wondered if this was an area that should be cut; she wondered if the Board of Safety could share some insight. She asked how the services would be affected if the vacancies were not filled.

Chief Field said that anytime there was a reduction in staffing, services could be affected. He said that currently they were dealing with the staffing shortage through overtime. He said there was minimum staffing requirement of 11.

There was a discussion about the vacancies and the time line associated with them. Councilwoman Carbone wondered if an additional position could be eliminated. Mayor Bingham explained that this topic had been discussed at the last Board of Safety budget meeting. He said that cuts had been made outside of Wages, hence the reduction of \$62,091.95 because it was important to keep staff levels as is.

Councilwoman Carbone said she would defer to the Board of Safety, if they felt comfortable with the budget. They had more expertise in this area.

Commissioner Potter said that in the past, the Fire budget had been cut to bare bones. He said that Chief Field had done a very good job of keeping things to a minimum and has saved taxpayer dollars with the additional reductions as above.

Commissioner Cook said that safety was an issue; it was important that firefighters not be placed in unsafe positions. Discussion took place about staffing and ramifications of vacant positions. Chief Field pointed out that the longer the department has to work with fewer staff, the more strain it puts on the rest of the personnel.

A brief discussion took place about the Fuel line item. Calls for Service was discussed. Chief Field said that last year they had increased. Chief Field stated it was intended to leave the two positions vacant for this year but try to fill them next year.

Action by Council

Motion carried as stated above.

The next budget discussed was the regular Police budget. Mayor Bingham said that there had been recommendations by the Board of Safety to cut \$55,300.00 from the budget. The budget now stands at \$8,028,013.00.

Chief Maniago stated that the Regular Wage line item was increased by \$106,941.00.

Commissioner Potter said that the Board of Public Safety was recommending the following reductions:
Three officers under Wages
Overtime by \$37,000.00

Per Copy Costs by \$200.00
Publications, Dues and Fees by \$1,000.00
Accreditations and Standards by \$250.00
Education and School Classes by \$5,000.00
Officers Equipment by \$300.00
Supplies by \$1,364.00
General Expenses by \$2,250.00
Special Squads and Equipment by \$13,500.00
Bicycle Patrol by \$250.00
Accident Investigation Team by \$2,700.00
Commissioner Potter said that the line item, Education Incentive Program, was also going to be reduced but the Mayor's Office was going to do some investigation prior to making the decision.

Commissioner Potter said that the PAL program was going to be zeroed out in the Police budget and transferred to Boards and Agencies. Mayor Bingham gave some details on the breakdown of this change.

Chief Maniago stated that the reduction in staffing was through attrition, not layoffs. He said that with the three reductions, that leaves 82 sworn officers in the department.

A discussion took place about police staffing and future retirements. New recruits currently in training were mentioned. Chief Maniago said that currently they were down 9 officers due to various reasons including sick leave.

Ms. Proulx stated that with the reductions as mentioned, the current budget figure was \$7,919,240.00. Discussion took place on shifts and personnel.

Councilman Zordan stated that he was concerned about the personnel cuts; he said that three positions were too many to cut. Councilman Samele agreed and was also concerned.

Commissioner Benedetto asked if one position were added back would there be another place to cut to make up the difference. Chief Maniago said that the budget was at bare bones; he said more cuts would affect the operations of the specialized units and the department in general. The affects of more cuts were discussed.

Commissioner Battle thought that losing three officers was a little dangerous. More staffing discussion took place; the detective division was discussed. A six month position was discussed.

Mayor Bingham said based on the six month position, the Wage line item reduction would be \$125,000.00 versus \$150,000.00. This would represent a 2.5 reduction of positions. Further discussion on staffing took place.

Commissioner Benedetto asked if the Chief could find an additional \$25,000.00 to cut if the six month position were added. Chief Maniago said that perhaps if he went through all three budgets he may, but truly he was down to bare bones. He said all the budgets had been gutted last year.

Chief Maniago said that he understood the need to be fiscally responsible but a certain level of service had come to be expected; he was concerned about more cuts. Discussion took place on patrol staffing. The early warning system was discussed.

Commissioner Cook stated that one of the reasons for the not filling the three positions was because the Board was trying to offset the cost of the new part-time Animal Control Officer and the additional hours for the clerks. Discussion took place on these positions and the increases to the Canine budget for building repairs.

Discussion took place as to where more reductions could be made in the budget to accommodate a full time clerk in the Traffic office. Chief Maniago stated that he would be glad to go back through the budget but he was concerned with service to the City.

Mayor Bingham asked if the amount the Board was willing to approve was \$7,919,240.00 which reflects the loss of three positions. He suggested that the Board generalize a cut of an additional \$25,000.00, reflecting a 2.5 position decrease and allow the Chief to make the reductions within the three budgets under his control.

Action by BOS

A motion was made for final approval of the Police budget in the amount of \$7,919,240.00, reflecting a reduction of three positions in the Regular Wage line item, by Commissioner Potter; seconded by Commissioner Benedetto.

Commissioner Cook said he was reluctant to lose the three positions; Commissioner Battle agreed.

The affects of loss of staffing was discussed.

A vote on the motion was taken: Commissioners Potter, Benedetto and LaMonica were in favor. Commissioners Battle and Cook were opposed. Motion carried.

Action by Council

A motion to tentatively approve the Police budget was made by Councilwoman Carbone, seconded by Councilman Waldron.

Councilman Samele asked about Calls for Service. Chief Maniago spoke to that issue.

Councilman Zordan said he was opposed to the reduction of three officers; he would prefer to see a 6 month position and to make a reduction elsewhere in the budget. Mayor Bingham asked if this was the general feeling of the Council.

Councilman Samele said that he would have been interested to see what the budget would look like if the additional cuts were made, leaving the addition of the six month position.

Mayor Bingham suggested that the Council tentatively approve the budget as is and charge Chief Maniago and the Board of Safety to take another look at the budget with an eye for a \$25,000.00 reduction. They could then make a determination after that information was discussed.

Continuing action by Council

Councilmen Zordan and Samele were opposed. Councilmen Carbone, Cogswell, Soliani and Waldron were in favor. Motion carried.

The next budget discussed was Animal Control. Mayor Bingham stated that the budget was currently at \$123,631.00, a 21% increase. Mayor Bingham said that Chief Maniago was going to request a \$500.00 increase in the Fuel line item. Chief Maniago spoke to that.

Action by BOS

A motion for final approval of the Animal Control budget in the amount of \$124,131.00 was made by Commissioner Potter; seconded by Commissioner Benedetto. Motion carried.

Action by Council

A motion to tentatively approve the Animal Control budget in the amount of \$124,131.00 was made by Councilman Zordan; seconded by Councilman Waldron.

Councilwoman Carbone asked about Education, School and Classes and why it had been increased. Chief Maniago explained that the increase was for training because the current Animal Control Officer was still fairly new and because a new part-time person was being hired.

Motion carried, as above.

The next budget to discuss was Traffic. Commissioner Benedetto asked if the full time clerk was being added under Wages. Chief Maniago said an approximate cost to add a grade six clerk was \$41,500.00.00

Action by BOS

A motion was made by Commissioner Benedetto to add a full time position in the Traffic Office, bringing the budgeted amount to \$292,649.00; seconded by Commissioner Potter.

Commissioner Potter explained that members of the Board felt that the Traffic Office had suffered and collections were not where they should be.

Mayor Bingham said that he had scheduled a meeting to discuss this and may have a different scenario that may be as effective but less expensive. He said there may be another option to consider.

Motion carried, as above.

Action by Council

A motion was made to tentatively approve the Traffic budget by Councilman Zordan; seconded by Councilman Cogswell. Motion carried.

The next budget to discuss was the Board of Public Safety, Miscellaneous. This budget includes funding for the volunteer fire departments. Mayor Bingham stated that the current amount in that budget was \$1,852,810.00 which represented a 2.4% increase.

Action by BOS

A motion for final approval of the Board of Public Safety Miscellaneous budget was made by Commissioner Potter; seconded by Commissioner LaMonica. Motion carried.

Action by Council

A motion to tentatively approve the Board of Public Safety Miscellaneous budget was made by Councilwoman Carbone; seconded by Councilman Samele. Motion carried.

A motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Benedetto; seconded by Councilwoman Carbone. Motion carried.

ATTEST: Joseph L. Quartiero, CMC
City Clerk

Beth Murphy
Recording Secretary