

**MINUTES
BOARD OF PUBLIC SAFETY
March 22, 2011**

A SPECIAL MEETING of the Board of Public Safety was held on Tuesday, March 8, 2011, in the City Hall Auditorium.

Those in attendance included Mayor Ryan J. Bingham, members of the Board of Public Safety Angelo LaMonica, Douglas Benedetto, James Potter, and Darlene Battle, along with Police Chief Michael Maniago, Deputy Police Chief Christopher Smedick, Fire Chief John Field, Deputy Fire Chief Gary Brunoli, Emergency Management Director Rick Dalla Valle. Commissioners Richard Zaharek and Christopher Cook were absent.

Mayor Bingham called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

DISPATCH BUDGET

Mayor Bingham said this Budget will go from \$220,623 to zero.

TENTATIVE APPROVAL

On a motion by Commissioner Benedetto, seconded by Commissioner Potter, the Board voted unanimously to tentatively approve the Dispatch Budget.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT BUDGET

Mayor Bingham said Equipment Maintenance Chargebacks and Vehicle Replacement accounts across the board are being put into an identified separate fund, and transferred back to the departments after the budget gets passed.

The total proposed budget for Emergency Management is \$28,946.

Commissioner Potter asked what is planned for the Emergency Management Office costs. Mayor Bingham said that will stay with the Fire Department's Budget.

TENTATIVE APPROVAL

Commissioner Potter made a motion to tentatively approve the Emergency Management Budget and Commissioner Benedetto seconded. The Board unanimously approved.

FIRE BUDGET

Mayor Bingham listed the changes including an increase of \$28,846 in Extra Help, and reductions comprised of \$157,758 from Regular Wages, \$5000 from Lump Sum, \$137,248 from Vehicle Replacement, \$20,000 from Capital Reserve, \$1000 from Education and School, \$4784 from Specialized Training, \$5275 from Equipment Maintenance Chargeback, \$1400 from General Expense, \$5500 from Physical Exam Expense, \$6000 from Promotions Tests Stress Psychological, \$5000 from New Equipment for a total new Budget of \$4,901,982, a 3.75% reduction.

Chief Field explained the Regular Wages reduction created by the proposition of not filling the three current vacancies. He said this will create an increase in overtime costs. Commissioner Potter said one of his concerns is being an enabler to those building up their pensions by increased overtime. He said pensions could last 35 years into retirement and he doesn't know if this is a good idea.

Mayor Bingham proposed having an actuary calculate what the cost benefit ratio would be in doing this, to determine the long-term implications.

Chief Field noted that there are 11 potential retirements in addition to the three current vacancies. Commissioner Benedetto questioned what effect the three vacancies will have on staffing with summer vacations coming up, along with overtime, sick leave, etc. Chief Field replied it is very hard to predict, and they currently have six employees out on long term disability. He noted there is a contractual minimum staffing requirement of 11 per shift.

Commissioner Potter proposed the call back contract language be reconsidered to help with overtime costs. He said he hates to lose the positions and doesn't want to see the Fire Department get to the point where there were so many people out with injury or vacation time that the rest of crew is worked too much. He doesn't think any taxpayer would appreciate pensions being built up this way, and would rather see an agreement be reached with the Volunteer Departments. Chief Field said the more his personnel work, the more sick time and injury leave go up.

Commissioner Benedetto said he agrees with Commissioner Potter and suggested at least two of the three vacant positions be kept in the budget.

Commissioner Battle said she is concerned about the Fire Department being understaffed.

Chief Field said his biggest concern is that the contract provision that limits the number of retirees will end June 8, 2012 and the actual contract ends June 30, 2012. There are three weeks during which there could be a mass exodus, he said. He noted that

contractual language is based on having 14 per shift, and said he's not happy about reducing staffing levels. He is keeping the safety of his personnel and the citizens in mind, but has been given a directive to come in with the tightest budget possible.

Commissioner Potter said reducing staff will have an affect on long-range strategic planning such as East Side protection. Mayor Bingham said the strategic plan won't happen this year and this is a budget for tough economic times. He agreed that safety is of utmost concern and noted that the Chief would not have offered up these vacancies if he didn't think he could actually run his Department this way.

Commissioner Potter said he's not comfortable cutting these positions, or with being an enabler for potential retirees to really build up their pension, as this will affect our budget for the next thirty years. Mayor Bingham said this is a theory that may or may not be true but is worth looking into.

Commissioner Benedetto said his concern is 'burnout' when employees work extra hours or do double shifts. He said eliminating these positions will take its toll with a lot of sick time.

Chief Field promised the Board they do not have to worry about the safety of the personnel. He further explained changes to the Capital Reserve line item. The reason for that increase, he said, is borrowing funds for the construction project, for items such as matching grant funds. A five-year payback plan was developed.

Chief Field said there's very little room to accommodate further cuts, he's tried to maintain a lean operational budget. Mayor Bingham noted that the Commissioners are elected to do a certain job. Commissioner Potter agreed that their job is to see that their departments have what they need to operate efficiently and effectively.

TENTATIVE APPROVAL

On a motion by Commissioner Potter, seconded by Commissioner Benedetto, the Board voted unanimously to tentatively approve the Fire Budget with two personnel and associated costs added back in.

PUBLIC SAFETY MISC. BUDGET

Mayor Bingham said the changes in this Budget include zeroing out the Equipment Maintenance Chargeback and Vehicle Replacement line items.

Commissioner Potter pointed out that the Volunteer Fire Departments are going to meet with the Budget Subcommittee.

Chief Maccalious said they are no longer getting a \$600 reimbursement from the State for Firefighter 1. The State is dramatically cutting funding for fire schools. Chief Field agreed that this is a substantial burden placed back onto the locals from the State level.

Commissioner Benedetto questioned the hydrant rental. Chief Field said the City of Torrington will pay this fee just to have the opportunity to use the hydrants during emergencies. He said they pay extra to use any of the color-coded, metered hydrants for training purposes and the million dollar hydrant rental fee is just for the opportunity to use them during emergencies. Commissioner Benedetto asked if the Water Company maintains those hydrants. Chief Field said they paint them and perform flow checks but City staff, volunteers, and homeowners shovel them out during the winter months. Commissioner Benedetto suggested the Water Company should do the shoveling for a million dollars. Commissioner Potter suggested the Water Company also provide flags. Chief Field said a few of the Volunteer Departments took it upon themselves to purchase and install flags. He said with recent snow accumulations it was hard to find a few of the hydrants, which are getting hit by plow trucks. Commissioner Benedetto asked if the City should look into having all the hydrants metered and only paying for the water used. Mayor Bingham said there isn't a contract, and he thinks the charges are comparable to other water companies. Chief Field said the Water Company pays a tax on linear footage of their lines, and are paying a considerable amount of money back to the City in taxes. Commissioner Benedetto said this is a lot of money to spend if we don't use the water.

TENTATIVE APPROVAL

On a motion by Commissioner Potter, seconded by Commissioner Battle, the Board voted unanimously to tentatively approve the Public Safety Misc. budget in the amount of \$1,836,938.

POLICE BUDGET

Mayor Bingham said the Vehicle Replacement and Equipment Maintenance Chargeback line items were zeroed out. Chief Maniago listed the following line item reductions: \$1260.00 in Service Agreements, \$300.00 in Building Maintenance, and \$250.00 in General Expense.

Commissioner Potter asked if the Custodial Service goes out to bid. Chief Maniago said it does, but Jackie Carroll wins every year.

Comptroller Proulx calculated the Police Department budget, with all reductions, as \$8,018,125.

Commissioner Benedetto asked about the \$22.00 cut to the P.A.L. Budget. Chief Maniago said he did that to make an even number.

TENTATIVE APPROVAL

On a motion by Commissioner Benedetto, seconded by Commissioner LaMonica, the Board voted unanimously to tentatively approve the Police Department Budget of \$8,018,125.

CANINE BUDGET

Chief Maniago said there was a reduction of \$500.00 each from both the Building Maintenance and Uniform line items.

SPECIAL EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAM COST

In response to a question asked at a previous meeting, Chief Maniago noted that the cost from scratch for a new SERT member coming in is \$8000 for a rifle, ballistic vest, and uniforms.

TENTATIVE APPROVAL

On a motion by Commissioner Benedetto, seconded by Commissioner Battle, the Board voted unanimously to tentatively approve the Canine Budget of \$105,731.

TRAFFIC BUDGET

Chief Maniago said Officer Shopey had no further recommendations. Mayor Bingham noted a reduction in the Vehicle Replacement line item which was zeroed out. There were no Equipment Maintenance Chargebacks in this budget. Commissioner Potter questioned Traffic Department Overtime for picking up cones and barricades. Chief Maniago said it's contractual. Mayor Bingham said this item could be discussed in current negotiations, but is not in the top three. Commissioner Potter said paying five hours wages to wait until the end of an event to pick up cones is ridiculous.

TENTATIVE APPROVAL

On a motion by Commissioner Benedetto, seconded by Commissioner Battle, the Board voted unanimously to tentatively approve the Traffic Budget of \$254,573.

Mayor Bingham said the next meeting will be Wednesday, March 30th, and will be a Special Joint Meeting with City Council. He will ask the Board to fully approve the budget at that time and hand it over to City Council for their review process.

ADJOURNMENT

On a motion by Commissioner Benedetto, seconded by Commissioner Potter, the Board voted unanimously to adjourn at 7:32 p.m.

ATTEST: JOSEPH L. QUARTIERO, CMC
CITY CLERK

Respectfully Submitted,

Carol L. Anderson, CCTC
Assistant City Clerk