

TOWN OF EPSOM
BUDGET COMMITTEE
DECEMBER 1, 2022

Attendees: Marylou Keane, Chairman; Joni Kitson, Vice Chairman; Gary Kitson, Water District Representative; Meadow Wysocki, Selectmen's Representative; Mary Frambach; Joyce Heck; Linda Hodgdon; Penny Graham

Not in Attendance: Michael Muise, School Board Representative; Len Gilman

Other Attendees: Police Chief Wayne Preve; Lt. Brian Michaels; Fore Chief Stewart Yeaton; Ted Virgin, Emergency Management Director; Pat Hickey, Welfare Officer; Jay Hickey; Virginia Drew; Cheryl Gilpatrick; Jerrica Vanslyvong

Marylou opened the meeting at 7:00 PM.

Various Departments presented their proposed 2023 budgets to the Committee.

POLICE DEPARTMENT

Lt. Michaels noted that they were asked to keep increases at a minimum. Lt. Michaels noted that the largest increase was for dispatch which increased by \$10,000.00. Chief Preve noted that the department was told if they went "live" the cost would be less. Instead, the cost has increased. Chief Preve noted the Town would have had to go "live" at some point in the future. The number of calls and what is occurring was discussed.

Floyd asked the number of towns that are involved suggesting that they get together to discuss with the sheriff.

Lt. Michaels noted they just learned that the copier needed to be replaced and he discussed the additional costs for a new copier and the contract.

Lt. Michaels noted the increase in the gas line. He discussed the amount of the increase and how it was calculated.

The cost of a new police vehicle has increased by \$7,000.00 from last year.

The electricity and heat lines were also increased.

Gary discussed that he had spoken with UNITIL and the costs would increase until August 2023 and then the rates would decrease for the remainder of the year.

Joni motioned to increase Line 4211430 (Equipment Repairs and Maintenance) by \$600.00; Linda seconded the motion. The motion passed.

Increasing the electricity line was discussed with it being determined to wait until they hear from all departments.

Lt. Michaels discussed accidents they had to attend today. There were several in various areas of Town.

Lt. Michaels congratulated Chief Preve on his retirement as of January 1, 2023. Chief Preve thanked every one he has worked with the in the Town throughout the years. He congratulated Lt. Michaels on being appointed the new chief.

TOWN CLERK/TAX COLLECTOR

Laura noted she did not have many increases as many lines have decreased due to fewer elections. She noted they had purchased new printers this year for her office.

WELFARE

Ms. Hickey noted she has spent less money than planned this year. She noted clients do not realize that the funds have to be repaid to the Town.

She noted that she attempts to keep in touch with people to see how they are doing after she has assisted them short term. Penny asked the number of people who do not repay the funds. Ms. Hickey did not know.

Linda asked about the increased telephone costs. Meadow noted they had to purchase a new cell phone for the department as the old one was no longer being supported by the company.

FIRE DEPARTMENT

Chief Yeaton discussed budget issues.

Chief Yeaton noted that he would like an increase for his salary more than the 2.7% in the budget He discussed what was paid by other towns to the Chiefs, although some of them are full time and he is just part time. He discussed the call volume in Epsom vs. other towns.

Floyd asked if Chief Yeaton worked set hours. Chief Yeaton noted he does his paperwork in the morning. He also spends more time with the employees' reviewing calls. He does attend calls. He noted the Nursing Home has 27 patients or staff with COVID.

Chief Yeaton noted he has 4 firefighters and 1 paramedic currently. They do 3 to 4 calls a day. He noted the hours worked by the paramedic and the overtime hours in his budget.

Floyd asked the number of volunteers in the department; Chief Yeaton noted about 10 active volunteers.

Chief Yeaton noted he has tried to hold the budget lines. He noted lines that have increased. The Diesel Line has been overspent for 2022.

Chief Yeaton noted the new ambulance has blown an engine that he does not expect to have replaced until February. He discussed the issues he is having with the dealership not being able to obtain the engine needed for replacement. The repairs are under warranty. He discussed that they do not plan to purchase another Ford vehicle. He discussed he would be putting in an insurance claim for equipment in the disabled ambulance that are no longer usable. They had removed most items before the ambulance was taken to the service garage. They have discussed having the ambulance returned to the station until it is repaired so it is not setting outside at the dealership. The towing costs to and from are being discussed with Ford and the dealership.

Joni asked the cost to have the ambulance towed back to the station. Chief Yeaton indicated approximately \$800.00.

Chief Yeaton discussed issues with the older ambulance they are using.

Chief Yeaton noted the costs for uniforms has increased.

He noted they have not done any special details so that line could be reduced.

Chief Yeaton noted that dispatch has increased 8.9%. The town is still with the Capital Area.

Chief Yeaton believes the electric budget will be okay. He noted the heat costs should be acceptable.

For building repairs, the lights in the hall will be replaced, the new lights were purchased with a grant. All the garage doors have been replaced. Chief Yeaton noted that they are completing one project at a time.

Chief Yeaton noted that there will be a Warrant Article to hire another Full Time Firefighter/Paramedic.

Floyd discussed issues Chief Yeaton has with staffing. He discussed the approved number of staff. He noted that the positions should be filled as the Town passed the positions. He noted the positions should be filled as they were requested, i.e., a firefighter/paramedic rather than just a firefighter or a paramedic. He feels that at the

time of an emergency residents want what is required for the emergency. Floyd noted if the true need is medical asking if the position should be just for a paramedic.

Chief Yeaton passed a report on the charges and funds collected. The amount collected is to the end of August. They are around an 89% collection rate. Comstar does the collections and charges 5%. He discussed residents that are not charged for calls as they do not have insurance and are on a limited income.

Chief Yeaton noted that he asked other towns and Epsom is about 2 to 5% above other towns for collections rates. He noted that Veterans have a 100% collection rate.

Chief Yeaton noted in the report it does not show what is used for cardiac arrest. He indicated they work on a patient for 20 minutes at the location and if they do not get a rhythm, they do not transport the person.

Floyd discussed using some of the ambulance funds for employee raises rather than saving to purchase new vehicles. He noted it would be used for Fire Department personnel only. Chief Yeaton was not in favor of this.

Chief Yeaton discussed the purchase of an ambulance and he is unable to obtain a firm price for the vehicle. Chief Yeaton noted he had to move the Capital Improvement Plan up one year for the purchase of an ambulance.

Linda asked about the \$16,000.00 expense for the ambulance fund. It was explained that this is the cost of the collections.

Floyd asked the oldest piece of apparatus in the department. Chief Yeaton noted the tanker. Chief Yeaton noted he may do a restoration rather than replacing the truck.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Mr. Virgin discussed the radio/phone system in the CIP. Marylou asked the cost, Mr. Virgin noted from \$2,000 to \$50,000.00. He did not have the costs of a system for Epsom. Meadow asked if there might be grant funds, Mr. Virgin does not know at this time. He is looking at grants for the Fire Department and Emergency Management. He discussed grants that he is looking to apply for.

Linda asked if there are any resources he could use. Mr. Virgin noted that Home Land Security has changed personnel, but not all know what is allowed for grants, etc.

Mr. Virgin discussed the grant for a generator at the Fire Station. He noted the repairs completed on the building can count toward the match.

There were no live trainings with COVID, but he hopes to attend some soon. The equipment line will be used to replace tires on the trailer and also repair other equipment, i.e., chain saws.

Marylou discussed reviewing the minutes next Tuesday.

Meadow discussed the \$2.00/hour increases using the ARPA funds is included in the 2023 budget and the 2022 actual budget.

The Police and Fire Chiefs did not receive the \$2.00/hour increase, but wanted the funds to go toward increases for their employees. Linda discussed that the Fire Chief is asking for more than the 2.7% increase.

It was discussed the Chiefs wanted the funds to be used for increases for the employees. Penny confirmed that the ARPA funds are only available until the end of 2023.

Linda noted that she is confused with the federal funds that are coming into the Town. Meadow asked if Linda would like a list of Federal funds coming into the Town. Joni asked if the ARPA funds include paying for FICA, retirement, etc. Jerrica noted they could be used for anything associated with wages, but she would be discussing with the auditors.

Marylou reiterated that the \$2.00/hour is in the 2022 budget beginning October 1. The \$1.00/hour would begin January 2023. There was a discussion on the wages Lt. Michaels would be receiving once he begins his new position. His current base wage is \$79,166.00. Floyd noted he could do special details to make up some of the overtime he is losing.

Gary discussed the increases in the Fire Department wages as shown in the budget. Meadow noted there was a vacancy that was not paid the entire year.

It was asked what the base salary increase for the Fire Department employees including the \$2.00/hour, Jerrica said it was about \$9,100.00.

Linda noted there are outstanding issues on electric, Fire Chief salary, what revisions were from the budget received 2 weeks ago. It was noted the only increase was the inclusion of the \$2.00/hour.

Gary asked if the 2022 budget would be overrun due to the additional wages or would the funds be found in the budget. Meadow noted the Board of Selectmen did not look at the bottom line as the funds were to be paid out of ARPA funds. Gary noted that the Selectmen changed the wages before the end of the year and he has an issue with this.

Linda stated the voters elected the Selectmen to run the Town. She noted we expect them to do something about the issues to keep the emergency personnel. The issues were discussed with Joni noting that it will come to people not being able to pay their taxes if the increases are too large.

Floyd asked if there were negotiations regarding the Police Chief's salary. Meadow

noted that he understood that was the amount in the budget.

Gary stated that he received an e-mail from Peter Warburton inviting Mike Muise and he to meet next week to discuss the SAU budget. Gary stated that he is declining and suggesting it be discussed at the Budget Committee meeting. It was discussed to have Mr. Warburton attend the next meeting on Tuesday.

Marylou asked Jerrica to do the year-to-date revenue and 5-year comparison for the December 20 meeting

The Town is planning to have the deliberative session on February 4, The School Board has been invited to have their session the same day

Meadow noted that 85% of the budget has been spent for the year with it being 91% of the year.

Meadow motioned to adjourn; Linda seconded the motion. The motion passed.
Marylou adjourned the meeting at 9:46 P.M.

Respectfully,

Betsy Bosiak
Recording Secretary