

Minutes of the Special Select Board Meeting, April 5, 2021

Hilary Weeks, Rebecca Coletta, and Patrick Williamson were present. Also, in attendance: Paula King, David Kramer, Robert Baker, Justin Litchfield, Matt Miazga, Lea Marie Villafana, Ed Morann, and Matt Ruby. The meeting, held via conference call in accordance with Governor Baker's temporary modifications to the Open Meeting Law, was called to order at 7:00 p.m.

FY'22 Police Salary Budget

Finance Committee Chair David Kramer expressed his concern about a public meeting. Hilary referenced the Open Meeting Law with Select Board members present, seeing no need for Executive Session. The Finance Committee has not yet formally voted on the FY'22 Police Budget.

The proposed increase in the current hourly rate of \$16.78 to an average of \$22.00 per hour was noted.

Representing the Plainfield Police Ad Hoc Working Group, Rebecca said the group had come to a consensus and would support a budget up to \$97,852 at 80 hours, approving a full-time, salaried Chief's pay request of \$25.65/hour which would bring him to parity with the Highway Department. He would then allocate the remaining time and money within the department as he sees fit.

Chief Litchfield spoke to the three budget scenarios he submitted for FY'22. His preference being Budget #1 with hourly rates of \$25.65 for 40 hours chief; \$23.01, 40 hours for sergeant; \$19.56, 4 hours for administrative assistant; \$19.56, 22 hours for officers for a total of \$127,657.92.

There is disagreement concerning the number of hours necessary to run the department. David Kramer proposed 80 hour per week with 40 hours per week for the chief, one half-time sergeant, and 20 hours for officers granting the chief flexibility for scheduling. Might other agencies, volunteers, etc. be able to assist with administrative duties? Revisiting the issue in 4-6 months was suggested as was approving the FY'22 police expense budget. Rebecca would prefer monitoring in 3-4 months.

Chief Litchfield is working with Former Chief Joe Sabourin logging live data for calls over two-week time periods at 92 hours per week. The first two-week period logged 320 hours. David Kramer asked about the number of officers needed to respond to calls at the current 4-hour minimum. Depending upon the type of call 2

officers respond (3 on domestics for safety and 1 for an alarm); if the call takes less time officers work the remainder of the 4 hours on other matters or respond to another call if necessary. Time spent on calls varies. Justin stated the 4-hour minimum could be changed.

David Kramer asked what number of hours would work, the answer being 40 hours for the chief, 40 hours for the sergeant, 4 hours for administrative work, and 22 hours for officers. There is a concern that officers will find other jobs after July 1st when POST requirements are initiated.

Bob Baker asked about Ashfield. They have an 8-4 shift for the chief with state police during the night and are looking for another full-time officer. Worthington is seeking two full-time officers. Bob said the Ad Hoc Group's questioned have not been answered.

Hilary, while understanding the concerns of both sides, expressed the need for compromise on a budget that will pass at Town Meeting and retain officers. She agrees a better hourly rate is needed.

Patrick noted 24-hour coverage is not affordable, adding there is no relationship between Plainfield and other towns. Hilary, in agreement with Patrick, suggested town coverage supplemented by state police and eliminating the administrative assistant and shaving officer hours on weekends.

David Kramer thinks a budget supported by the Select Board, Finance Committee, and the Plainfield Police Ad Hoc Working Group has a good chance of passing at town meeting. Patrick asked if the current budget sustains 92 hours, the answer being yes. David Kramer noted hourly rate of \$16.78 to \$25.65 is a 30%+ increase. All agreed the increase is justified.

Hilary stated the Finance Committee is charged with recommending a budget figure to the Town. The Finance Committee will meet Tuesday to decide on an 80-hour or 92-hour budget recommendation and would like universal support. While acknowledging appreciation for the Ad Hoc Group, Patrick stated the weight rests on the Select Board.

Hilary moved that the Select Board support a 90-hour work week for the police department to include a full-time salaried police chief, a full-time sergeant, and 10 hours of officer time with the proposed increased hourly rates. The motion, seconded by Patrick, was defeated: Hilary, yes; Rebecca, no; Patrick, no.

Hilary moved that the Select Board support an 85-hour work week for the police department with a full-time salaried police chief, a full-time sergeant at 40 hours per week, and 5 hours for the chief to schedule officers as he sees fit for a total budget of \$106,298. The motion was seconded by Patrick.

Additional discussion centered around a full-time chief with managerial discretion to schedule officers. An amendment by Patrick to recommend an 85-hour work week with a full-time salaried chief, full-time sergeant at 40 hours per week, and 5

hours for officers to be scheduled at the chief's discretion. The motion, seconded by Hilary, was approved: Hilary, yes; Rebecca, no; Patrick, yes.

A motion to adjourn was entertained at 6:16 p.m. Hilary, yes; Rebecca, yes; Patrick, yes.

Respectfully submitted,

Paula J. King
Administrative Secretary