

Town of Merrimac
Finance Committee Meeting
FEBRUARY 11, 2019

- I. Call to Order
 - 1. Roll Call
- II. Selectmen

Selectmen

Present: Jennifer Penney, Executive Assistant, Ralph Spencer, Selectmen, Carol Traynor, Selectmen

Salary- Increase is year two of the three year contract.

Expense- Increase is just for legal advertising. Miscellaneous expenses have been moved around, but needs to stay that amount for continuing education. Increase for the software is Minute Traq's yearly increase, which is the Agenda & Minutes software each department is encouraged to use.

- III. Police, Animal Control, Parking Clerk

Police

Present: Police Chief, Eric Shears

Salaries- With the exception of Gina most increases were in the 1.5% per union, 2% non-union. Gina is on a step raise, the largest issue is reserve officer coverage. Section 3 of the handout shows reserve officer coverage, has good coverage on day and evening shift and the midnight officer works alone. Sargent received 1.5% plus 1% added to Sargent stipend, Holcroft & Vance. There are 13 Reserve officers, two are nearly inactive. They are used about 47% of the time- Page 7 of the handout explains in detail the cost of using the Reserve Officers. Reserve officer increase of \$51,000 With the money currently budgeted, 3,141 hours can be covered. Priority would be to funding an additional overnight, in addition to funding the reserve officers for coverage. Page 8 of the handout has the comparison to surrounding communities. Page 4 of the handout has details for calls. Calls are up, arrests are also on the uptick. As a Police Department in general drunk driving arrest were down 50%, but marijuana arrests are down. The shift times have changed to reflect the busiest hours. The amount of officers needed are based on similar towns, as well as population and the crime rate. Additional hours for admin would bring to permanent part time, with the ability to accrue hours. Requested for 6 hours, but 2 hours will get to where they need to be.

Expenses- \$3,000 increase is for PR to manage the website and press releases. Increase of \$500 to the TriTech agreement which is the computer software, increases to Comcast and cell modems. Building Maintenance for \$6,325 is showing under police, but is split between Police, Fire and DPW for the building. OICE and Fitness stipends are both new in the contracts.

Grants- The Police Department received \$25, 291+ \$11,346 in a training grant, \$15,612.94 In dispatch training grant. The dispatch grant was used directly for salaries, \$10,687.42 + \$7,354.71. To increase eligibility for grants we are looking into the ability to accept mobile 911 calls, as long as the calls from 495 are still directed to the State Police dispatch.

Capital Planning- New police station. Project has been designed, bids are out and all Town departments are working on approvals. There is also a vehicle for animal control.

Animal Control & Parking Clerk

Regular Salary Increases.

IV. Council on Aging

Present: Laura Mailman, COA Director, Barbara Farquar Social /Outreach Worker, Colleen Ranshaw, Friends of the Council On Aging Board, Colleen Florist, Human Services and Outreach.

Salaries- Budget increase of 20%, The person who had been doing outreach retired, reorganized that position to meet the needs that were had for Human Services outreach. Selectmen approved the new position, those hours were divided up between three people. There are so many needs it was unable to be filled by one person. Began a Memory Cafe, a once a month program that focuses on their strengths- more details on other actives in the COA Newsletter. Asking for more five hours plus a pay increase for the Social Worker which is a priority, and an additional 10.5 hours for the custodian. Also 15 additional hours for Outreach/Human Services, 12 additional hours for the Senior Aide, and 4 hours for the substitute aide.

Expenses- Budget increase of 23%, overall building maintenance focusing on the carpets and floors. New computers for additional staff, this includes the tracking system for all visitors to the Senior Center that the Friends of the Council on Aging. Finance Committee would like to see a more detailed report showing the outreach and the corresponding cost/funds for those programs. There are no reimbursement from Health Care services as our programs do not qualify for health insurance benefits, due to having no licensed staff.

V. Fire, Emergency Management

Present: Larry Fisher, Fire Chief & Emergency Management Director

Ambulance- The Ambulance Service is primarily staffed by on-call, there are issues with that nationwide not just in Merrimac. The handout is a Comprehensive Study done with our ambulance and surrounding Towns. The plan is to meet with the Selectmen to increase the fees and rate structure to ensure the cost is covered by the amount of calls. Need to meet with the current billing company as well to ensure everything that is being done is happening. The purchase of a new ambulance is out to bid right now, the ambulance staff were very involved in the entire purchasing process, going with a team approach. Page 6 of the handout has graphs that show the collections between FY15-FY18. The erratic changes in the cost structure to the ambulance was due to the costs associated with it. Calls and services are a 60/40 split between the Fire Department directly and the ambulance. Upon meeting with the billing company it was very clear that our rates are significantly lower than surrounding Towns. The second step to the process would be to have a full time per diem employee on staff, which due to the significant cost increase we are looking to increase revenue and call volume first.

Expenses- Note 5, pump expenses of \$20,000, at pump testing this year we failed twice. During the repairs the evaluation of the pumps revealed about \$20,000 worth of repairs. This can be pulled out for a special article.

Note 6, support, software upgrades and website, along with records & data management of \$19,800. This is primarily based on OSHA requirements that data needs to be met. Station Smarts is \$6,000, this is the software most of Middlesex and Essex County uses. All the information we presently have will be able to be brought over for no cost (since 2001). In addition there is cost for Policy and Procedures of an annual cost of approximately \$3,600, and a training product that will help the on-call people with a cost of \$80/per member annual fee online training (approximately \$4,000).

Ambulance Budget Note 4, additional \$5,000 for medical supplies. Drugs and materials need to be replaced on a specific basis, and supplies as a whole are increases.

Salaries- The increase in training is based on OSHA/DLS requirements. The \$21,284 increase is to compensate and correct work done to an hourly rate but staying at per call. Also, to pay everyone for the training everyone needs to attend. Also an increase of 4 hours for Shelley, this would allow the Fire Department to populate the software on the back end, in addition to various other data tasks.

Capital Planning- A pump truck, as previously mentioned the trucks are 20+ years old. There are available grants for truck replacement, and all options are being explored.

Grants- Received a Safer grant for approximate \$6,100, used that primarily for the schools. Have identified other grants that we are working towards.

Meeting End: 9:52PM. Motion First, Marcia. Second, Mike.