

CITY OF BERLIN
New Hampshire

Minutes of Council School Budget Session of 3/27/2019
Council Conference Room
6:30 pm

Members:

Mayor Grenier
Councilor Theberge
Councilor Berthiaume
Councilor Remillard
Councilor Morgan-Allain
Councilor Higbee
Councilor Gentili

Police Commissioners:

Gerry Nault
Marc Tremblay
Pierre Morin

City Staff:

John Lacasse, Fire Chief
Peter Morency, Police Chief
Dan Buteau, Assistant Police Chief
Lisa Arguin, PD Administrative Assistant
Jenn Cloutier, Police Department Dispatch Supervisor
Brandon Bisson, Firefighter
Jason Vien, Firefighter
James Wheeler, City Manager
Patricia Chase, Finance Director

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

Police Department Budget

Mayor Grenier invited Chief Morency to present the Fiscal Year 20 Police Department budget.

Chief Morency distributed a Berlin Police Department year end activity report. He noted that between calendar years 2017 and 2018 there has been a drop in total service calls of 7.11 percent. He continued to highlight some of the statistical information to include:

1. Total arrests up 20.36%
2. Thefts down 15.33%
3. Burglaries down 54%
4. Sexual assaults down 32.69%
5. Assaults down 22.81%
6. Suspected overdoses down 29%

Chief Morency went on to explain that OHRV complaints are down 27% and attributes some of the reduction to recent amendments to the City's ordinances. Accidents within an intersection are up by 42% which may be due to a reduction in extra patrols. The extra patrols were funded with grants which have been greatly reduced.

Mayor Grenier inquired if the use of Narcan has contributed to the lower number of suspected overdoses. Chief Morency confirmed that it is a factor but it is difficult to determine to what extent. Various agencies and healthcare facilities are now distributing Narcan which limits the ability to accurately track the number of doses dispensed to the public.

Chief Morency attributed the reduction in drug related events to a more focused law enforcement response to such situations. He explained that Coos County was third per capita and currently is tenth and emergency room admissions went from third to eighth. Chief Morency also shared that Coos County ranked last for those seeking treatment and currently is first per capita. Mayor Grenier asked if collaboration between various Coos County law enforcement agencies has contributed to the reduction with Chief Morency responding that it has helped. Mayor Grenier asked if the additional beds available in the Bethlehem facility have helped those seeking treatment. Chief Morency agreed that additional beds and services such as safe stations have helped.

Chief Morency discussed a new program to replace DARE in the schools. Through this new program the hope is to reach those students closer to high school age. Councilor Remillard asked if the crimes are drug or alcohol related. Chief Morency confirmed that upwards of 90% involve both alcohol and/or drugs.

Mayor Grenier explained that a letter sent to the NH State Senate Transportation Committee should be amended. The letter was regarding compromise language for HB592. Clare Styles had brought to Mayor Grenier's attention that the city ordinance states that a youth from ages 12 to 16 must be accompanied by a licensed driver of the age of 25 not 21 as stated in the letter. Chief Morency stated that the majority of the problems came from immaturity and that the majority of accidents are in the park and not on the streets. The three Commissioners in attendance agreed that a new letter should be sent.

Councilor Remillard asked for more information on the stops in the park.

Councilor Berthiaume asked if non-emergency assists data (provided to Berlin EMS) was available with Ms. Cloutier responding that she could provide that information.

Chief Morency then reviewed a summary of the FY20 budget. The operating budget request includes a 0.7% increase and the benefit request includes a 4.1% increase. The total requested increase stands at \$55,790.

Mayor Grenier asked about the opening and operating of the firing range and if that would have an impact on the Police Department budget. Chief Morency felt that by collaborating with other agencies that utilize the range there would not be any additional expense.

Councilor Berthiaume asked if the crossing guard assigned to Brown School would be assigned to the Hillside block next year. Chief Morency explained that the guard will move and that the Police Department will monitor and adjust personnel. There was further discussion regarding crossing guards and the moving of solar powered lights located at Brown School.

Chief Morency reviewed the Special Public Safety budget highlighting that Outside Overtime is based on statistical data. He also pointed out that the expense for Milan coverage is offset on the revenue side of

the budget. Councilor Berthiaume asked if the activity report distributed earlier included Milan calls with Chief Morency responding that it does.

Chief Morency reviewed the Police Department request for capital equipment which included:

1. Ballistic Vests \$12,500
2. Radar Units \$11,000
3. Police Cruisers \$78,000 (two vehicles)
4. Leather Gear \$4,500
5. Radio/Consoles \$19,050
6. Replacement Windows \$8,400
7. Dispatch Desks \$20,000
8. Boiler \$6,600
9. Building Maintenance \$5,000
10. Body Worn Cameras \$22,000

Chief Morency explained that in the FY19 budget there was \$10,000 appropriated for a new boiler. During the year some of the funding was used for repairs to the existing boiler. Also, the tanks and lines are in need of replacement. Chief Morency moved the request for a new interview room of \$15,000 to funding for window replacement at \$8,400 and boiler replacement at \$6,600.

Chief Morency explained that body worn cameras are expensive but vital to accurate documentation as they are designed to have high capacity storage. Councilor Theberge asked if there are any grants that might be available. Chief Morency replied that there are not. Councilor Remillard asked if all of the officers would be covered. Chief Morency replied that they would be and that the expected life is five years.

Mayor Grenier asked that the capital requests be reviewed to determine if some of the requests could be delayed.

Councilor Berthiaume asked if the Milan contract has increased. Chief Morency replied that it had increased by 2%.

Mayor Grenier thanked Chief Morency for attending the meeting.

Fire Department

Mayor Grenier invited Chief John Lacasse to present the Berlin Fire Department's FY20 budget.

Chief Lacasse reported that during 2018 the FD had 967 calls for service which was a 14% increase from 2017. The department also completed 185 fire and safety inspections and has been taking part in fire prevention programs within the community. The Fire department staff has logged 1,370 hours of training which is 37% higher than 2017.

Chief Lacasse explained that the FY20 budget of \$2,234,531 is 2.4% higher than the FY19 budget. The most significant reason for the increase is the request to replace older rescue equipment and gear. Some of the equipment in need of replacement is thirty years old. Chief Lacasse would like to initiate a schedule to replace turnout gear that is approximately ten years old. Chief Lacasse explained that he's still waiting to hear if a grant he applied for will cover the cost of the gear. Mayor Grenier asked if he had any available application numbers which the Chief said he would provide.

Chief Lacasse also requested an increase for training. A discussion followed regarding the City's ISO rating which sets the rate for homeowners and commercial insurance rates. Currently the City is rated at four which the Chief explained was very good.

Mayor Grenier inquired about the staffing levels with the Chief responding that there are nineteen on the floor plus himself for a total of twenty. All are medically trained except for two. The department currently has one paramedic and one advanced EMT.

Councilor Remillard asked if they respond to all of the ambulance calls with Chief Lacasse replying that they go only when called upon. Councilor Berthiaume requested that the Chief provide her with the number of EMS calls, broken down between emergency and non-emergency, the department has responded to.

Chief Lacasse went on to discuss his Capital Improvement requests which includes turnout gear and portable radios. The current radios are thirteen years old. Also, the fire department roof is thirty years old and in need of replacement. The self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) are in need of replacement but the tanks do not need to be replaced. Some of the packs are twenty five years old with the newer ones being fifteen years old and would be used as backups. Chief Lacasse felt that a replacement schedule such as purchasing four a year would be helpful.

A discussion regarding radio replacement followed. Mayor Grenier asked if Mr. Wheeler would look into a possible lease/purchase agreement.

Mayor Grenier thanked Chief Lacasse for presenting his budget.

Code Enforcement Budget

Mr. Wheeler briefly discussed the Code Enforcement Budget which falls under the Fire Department. He noted a slight increase. The Code Enforcer line item includes one full time and one part time position.

The budget work session scheduled for April 8 will be postponed and Matrix will be presenting the EMS study.

A motion to adjourn was made by Councilor Higbee and seconded by Councilor Theberge
Adjourned at 8:05p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Patricia A. Chase, Finance Director.