

CITY OF BERLIN
New Hampshire

Minutes of Council Ambulance, Fire Department and Police Department
3/29/2017
Council Conference Room
6:30 pm

Members:

Mayor Grenier
Councilor Theberge
Councilor Higbee
Councilor Nelson
Councilor Gentili
Councilor Remillard
Councilor Morgan-Allain
Councilor Rozek
Councilor Otis

City Staff:

James Wheeler, City Manager
Elaine Riendeau, City Clerk
Randall Trull, Fire Chief
Thaddeus Soltys, Assistant Fire Chief
Peter Morency, Police Chief
Daniel Buteau, Deputy Police Chief
Jonathan Leveille, Firefighter
Greg Auger, Firefighter
Derek Patry, Firefighter
Lisa Arguin, PD Administrative Assistant
Kerry Theriault, Lieutenant
Jenn Cloutier, Dispatch Supervisor
Jerry Nault, Police Department Commissioner
Marc Tremblay, Police Department Commissioner
Patricia Chase, Finance Director

At 6:32 p.m. Mayor Grenier brought the meeting to order.

Mayor Grenier invited Mr. Christopher Dube to speak on behalf of Berlin Emergency Medical Services. Mr. Dube explained that 444 calls were responded to this year and he's optimistic that the fiscal year will end in the positive. He also shared that there is a possibility that an ambulance will have to be replaced. Mr. Dube also discussed their participation in the Berlin Fire Departments Feasibility Study and are actively involved in training firefighters working toward their Paramedic licensure. Mr. Dube also shared that the agency is carrying a tremendous amount of bad debt.

Councilor Rozek inquired about the life of an ambulance and Mr. Dube explained that it varies but could be up to ten years. Councilor Rozek asked for a list of the age and current mileage on the ambulances currently in use.

Mayor Grenier inquired about the potential for a rebate to the City. Mr. Dube shared that it is still too early to make that determination but if the current level of calls continues and the purchase of a new ambulance is avoided then perhaps a return to the City will occur.

Mayor Grenier asked if the Berlin EMS is on a fiscal year or a calendar year with Mr. Dube confirming that it is on a calendar year.

With no further questions Mayor Grenier thanked Mr. Dube for attending.

Mayor Grenier then invited Chief Randall Trull to discuss his department's FY18 budget requests.

Chief Trull then reviewed some of the services provided to the City which include: Fire Suppression, Hazardous Materials Response, Urban Search and Rescue, ATV/UTV Rescue, Water Rescue, Community Education, Disaster Preparedness and Recovery, Fire Prevention and Code Compliance, Staff Training/Call Member Training and Grant Writing and Management. The Fire Department is actively investigating the possibility of implementing Emergency Medical Services.

Chief Trull went on to explain that current Fire Department Staff are participating in Vision Meetings as a means to develop potential services to the community and generate additional revenue sources. Those participating in the meetings are also evaluating those areas that might be improved. Chief Trull is also attempting to revive the Fire Department Task Force.

Next, Chief Trull went on to explain that the Insurance Service Office completed a survey which determined the City's insurance rating number. He then explained that the City's rating went from a 5 rating to a 4 rating which positions us in a more favorable status. The rating are on a 1 – 10 scale with the lowest rating representing the highest standard.

During the FY16 budget year the Berlin Fire Department responded to 499 incidents with 73 overlapping. The average response time is 3.38 minutes.

Chief Trull proceeded to review each line item in his budget. He explained that he is requesting an increase in the current Clerk Typist position from a part time 20 hour position to a full time 35 hour position. He viewed the current job responsibilities and discussed the need for additional hours to help in the management of awards and to aid in the research and potential application of future grants.

Chief Trull then discussed Leave Time Coverage and that the overtime is calculated on an average for 18 employees. He then explained that the Outside Detail line item represents those expenses that will be covered by a third party payer and recognized on the revenue side of the budget. Chief Trull explained that the City is experiencing a savings through the utilization of Health Insurance buyouts. There are now three firefighters who are receiving the buyouts and the overall savings to the City is approximately \$61,000.00. Mayor Grenier asked if any of those participating in the Insurance buyouts are insured through the City via their spouse. Chief Trull reported that none of them were on City health insurance.

The Training line item includes a \$9,500.00 increase which is attributed to the maintenance of EMS Certifications within the department. The Berlin Fire Department has 10 certified EMS professionals which includes 4 Emergency Medical Responders, 4 Basic Emergency Medical Technicians and 2 Advanced Emergency Medical Technicians. The increase also includes the cost of sending 2 Officers to the Primex Supervisor Academy.

Chief Trull proceeded to review expense accounts. The Workers Compensation line item reflects a 10% increase however the City should see a savings in the FY19 budget due to a sharp decline in claims during

the last two years. The Chief explained that the decline is partly due to the additional staffing provided through the Safer Grant.

Chief Trull is hopeful that the City could save \$10,000.00 by using the Mutual Aid Pact's Fit Testing Machine.

The Fire Department uses 255 Main Street for storage but a part of the building is dangerously compromised and the Chief hopes to have discussions with Team Rubicon. If feasible for both parties the hope is that Team Rubicon would raise and remove part of the building.

Discussion followed around clarification of the ISO surveys and graphs reviewed earlier. Chief Trull explained that the surveys and corresponding results are from a 1994 survey and the one that followed in 2016.

Councilor Rozek asked how many structure fires occurred during the year and the Chief reported that there were seven. Councilor Rozek also asked if annual physicals are required and the Chief explained that they are not but is hopeful that consistent and improved screenings would contribute to an overall healthier department.

Councilor Rozek inquired about the condition of the City Ladder Truck. Chief Trull explained that the City's 1995 Ariel Ladder Truck is in need of body work and also the repair of the electrical component that allows the ladder to swivel at 360 degrees. Councilor Rozek asked about the status of the grant for a ladder truck replacement and the Chief reported that they are still awaiting word.

There was discussion around repairing the 2006 Chevy Tahoe. The Chief recommends repairing the Tahoe vs. using a retired Police Department vehicle.

Councilor Higbee requested further clarification of the ISO rating system which Chief Trull explained. City Manager James Wheeler noted that a high ISO rating is better for businesses within the City.

Councilor Remillard inquired about the number of Forest Fires the Fire Department responded to last year. Chief Trull reported that there were three; one in Berlin, one in Milan and one in Gorham.

Councilor Remillard then asked about the number of vacant buildings in the City and Chief Trull reported that there are sixty.

Councilor Nelson inquired about the reduction in the Fire Inspections Revenue account. Chief Trull explained that more buildings are compliant thus there are fewer follow ups.

Councilor Theberge asked about the protocol when responding to a mutual aid event. Chief Trull explained that help is called in once the trucks hit the City line.

Mayor Grenier asked how many fire suppression personnel members are on staff with the Chief responding that there are twenty. Mayor Grenier then shared that the goal is to lower staffing to eighteen once the Safer Grant has expired. Mayor Grenier inquired as to where the revenue side of the Safer Grant is being requested. Finance Director, Patricia Chase, explained that the Safer Grant Revenue and Expenses are processed through the Grant Fund (Fund 30) and therefore not budgeted within the general fund. Further discussion followed around Fire Department personnel and the Safer Grant. Mayor Grenier then told Finance Director, Patricia Chase, that he expects revenue to be reported correctly in the future.

Councilor Gentilli asked if the improved ISO rating, lowered overtime hours and lowered reported injuries are directly related to the increased staffing due to the Safer Grant. Chief Trull affirmed that they are all likely results due to the additional personnel on hand.

Councilor Theberge asked if the secretary has had any grant training. The Chief explained that she has completed a webinar and has been actively involved in managing the current open grants.

There was further discussion around potential grants that might be available for the procurement of equipment.

Mayor Grenier thanked Chief Trull for attending and then invited Police Chief Peter Morency to present the Police Department budget.

Chief Morency discussed the 2% increase in salaries per the signed union contract and the switch to a lesser health insurance. The Salaries for Dispatchers/Clerks increased by 2.5% due to the agreed contract increase and a step increase. Chief Morency also pointed out that there was an 11.2% increase in the Holiday Pay line item attributed to an additional holiday negotiated into the most recent union contract.

Chief Morency went on to discuss the Radio Repairs expense request which increased by \$17,800.00. This increase would allow the Police Department to enter into a Guarantee Response Service Agreement. The response time would be within four hours which would be a significant improvement compared to the current arrangement.

The proposed operating budget includes a total 2.8% increase of \$59,990.00.

Chief Morency continued to review the benefits portion of the budget which requests a 4.0% increase of \$123,580.00. There was discussion around the 14.2% increase to the Group II Retirement expense.

Councilor Rozek asked how many Lieutenants the department has with Chief Morency replying that there are four Lieutenants and one in charge of Detectives for a total of five. The Chief went on to explain that there are three Police Sergeants, five Patrol II Officers, one Patrol III Officer and two Detectives. There is also a (JO) Juvenile Officer position that is vacant. Councilor Remillard inquired to the number of Corporals on the force with Chief Morency saying there are three.

Councilor Rozek asked what the impact a layoff of two officers would have on the department. Chief Morency explained that the extraordinary amount and time consuming paperwork associated with each officer's interactions take a great deal of an officer's time. A reduction in officers would result in a reduction of services.

Councilor Rozek asked what the average cost of hiring a new officer amounts to. Chief Morency explained that a cost greater than \$80,000.00 is average and that twelve officers have been hired who were previously employed by other communities. This hiring practice has benefited the City in terms of recruiting trained officers.

Councilor Rozek asked how much time is involved in training an officer with Chief Morency responding that it takes nearly a year to become a certified officer.

Councilor Morgan-Allain asked for further clarification on the service agreement requested earlier. Chief Morency explained that it's an annual agreement. Dispatch Supervisor Jen Cloutier said the agreement would cover all equipment such as all radio equipment and consoles. Councilor Gentilli voiced that in his

opinion the maintenance and operation of the equipment is critical not just for Berlin but for all of Coos County.

Councilor Remillard asked who applies for grants with the chief responding that both he and Officer Buteau research and initiate the process of applying for grants. Officer Buteau shared that in FY18 the Berlin Police Department expects to receive \$82,000 in grants and that in FY17 the City received approximately \$70,000. Chief Morency is hopeful that further funding for the opioid epidemic will become available. Chief Morency shared a few statistics relative to the administration of Narcan in the state.

Mayor Grenier complimented the Berlin Police Department by saying they are professionals and he is proud of the job they perform.

Motion to adjourn was made by Councilor Morgan-Allain and seconded by Councilor Higbee.

Meeting adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Patricia A Chase