

Stoneham Finance & Advisory Board Meeting  
Wednesday, December 2, 2020 - 7:00 pm  
All Members Attending Remotely

Attendees:

Tim Waitkevitch, Chair  
Cory Mashburn, Vice Chair

Julieanne Bovat	Youlia Bowerman
Jeremy Doyle	Jen Gray
Ed Hurley	Mike Memmolo
Wendy Smith	

*Absent:* Andrew Harmon, Dave Tamaro

Guests:

Dave Castellarin, Town Accountant  
Eric Duffy, Budget Analyst  
Matthew Grafton, Fire Chief  
James McIntyre, Police Chief

Agenda:

1. FY22 Budget Development
  - a. Discussion with Police Department
  - b. Discussion with Fire Department
2. Adjournment

Minutes:

The Finance & Advisory Board Chair called the meeting to order at 7:00pm. Mr. Waitkevitch opened the meeting with Agenda Item #1. He introduced Chief McIntyre who provided an overview of the state of the Police Department. He explained that the department was not as affected by COVID as other Town Departments. There was a lull in calls, but volumes have increased to about normal levels.

He walked through some examples of changes to protocol aimed at maintaining social distancing and disinfection. Mr. Waitkevitch then opened the conversation to questions from members of the Board. Ms. Smith asked whether any of the supplies used for cleaning or any Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) were reimbursable under the CARES Act. Chief McIntyre confirmed that they were tracking COVID-related expenses.

Mr. Hurley asked whether the Police Department has had to delay any normal activities due to COVID. Chief McIntyre listed training as a key activity delayed due to the pandemic. Both routine and interdepartmental (with the Fire Department) training has been difficult. Ms. Gray asked whether there were any significant budget requests that were cut due to the pandemic that the Department would like to add back in subsequent years. Chief McIntyre noted the request for an additional promotion to Lieutenant. He noted that this request has been outstanding since 2006. He then went on to explain how a three Lieutenant structure would ease command and control stresses on the current Department.

Mr. Waitkevitch reinforced Ms. Gray's question to ask about additional budget-related challenges in FY22. Chief McIntyre stressed personnel and the challenges surrounding filling open positions. He noted that Stoneham's staff is low compared to surrounding towns. There was then a general discussion about details about staffing including the nature of open positions and the prospect of retirements.

Mr. Waitkevitch then asked whether the Department had any important Capital requests for FY22. Chief McIntyre explained that the request (as always) is vehicles. He then thanked the Board for its time and the Board thanked the Chief for his participation.

The Board Chair then introduced Fire Chief Grafton and allowed him to discuss the past year for the Fire Department. Chief Grafton related a chaotic Spring with the onset of the pandemic. The Fire Department struggled to obtain the PPE that the staff needed. He then thanked the community for its generous donations in this regard; the Department now has all the PPE supplies it needs going forward.

Ms. Smith asked whether the Department was taking full advantage of reimbursable expenses. Chief Grafton indicated that they were and indicated that FEMA has some strict regulations surrounding reimbursement. Mr. Hurley asked about renovations at the fire station and Chief Grafton walked through the current status of the bathroom renovations.

Ms. Smith asked about staffing within the Department. Chief Grafton explained that he has a similar issue of command personnel as the Police Department. He has had a standing request since 2004 for a Deputy Chief to help a desired restructure of the Fire Department command. There is also a current request to promote four firefighters to the rank of Lieutenant.

Mr. Waitkevitch asked about delayed initiatives due to COVID. Chief Grafton similarly (to Chief McIntyre) that training has been a difficult issue during the pandemic.

Ms. Smith asked about the status of the outstanding grant for replacement radios. Chief Grafton indicated that the requirements of the grants had changed and Stoneham, though qualified initially, was disqualified. The Fire Department will be trying again to obtain grant money for radios. The Chief then related other Capital requests. The major request is for another Fire Engine. He hopes to get the Department on a replacement cycle of every 6 years.

Mr. Waitkevitch asked, in light of the current Fire Station, where the new Engine would be kept. Chief Grafton indicated that it would be housed for now at the Public Works Department.

Ms. Smith then asked for an update on the Feasibility Study commissioned for a new Fire Station. Chief Grafton indicated that the Study continues and that the issues (response time, space for fire equipment) remain problems for the Department.

Ms. Gray asked whether the Department has considered allocating funds each year towards a 6 year engine replacement. Chief Grafton responded positively to the idea. He noted that ladder trucks cost \$1.3M. Mr. Castellarin noted that a yearly allocation is impossible under State law (no carry over of budget items from year to year). There can be plans established with debt and potentially Free Cash.

For FY22, Chief Grafton is hoping for enough overtime in the budget to cover the Department's needs. Mr. Waitkevitch asked whether additional staffing has helped ease overtime concerns. The Chief indicated that the staff and the overtime costs do not directly correlate. The additional firefighters are to ensure full crews. The overtime is needed to ensure proper coverage under unexpected circumstances. Ms. Gray asked what a good overtime number would be for the Fiscal Year. The Chief indicated about \$350K to \$400K. Mr. Castellarin then added that last year's Fire Department overtime was \$219K, but indicated that he is waiting to see what the latest numbers are. He mentioned January as the time when that would be available.

The Board then thanked Chief Grafton for his time and participation. The Board Chair then asked for a motion for adjournment. Mr. Mashburn then introduced a motion to adjourn. Mr. Memmolo seconded; all in favor.