



TOWN OF BERKLEY FINANCE COMMITTEE

Meeting minutes of March 28, 2022

**In Attendance: Joe Freitas, Michele Hamilton,
Matt Chabot and Tabitha McChronon**

Meeting called to order by Chairman, Joe Freitas at 6:04 pm.

Chairman Joe Freitas requested a review of the minutes from the meeting of March 21 and 22.

After review, a motion was made by Tabitha McChronon and seconded by Matt Chabot, verbal roll call done and minutes were approved unanimously.

The purpose of this meeting is to begin the Fiscal Year 2023 budget process.

On the agenda for this evening is the Police Department; Communications Department; Public Safety Building and Veterans; Animal Control; and Council on Aging.

Person with whom works with the Berkley Veterans, Ray, also works with Dighton Veterans. Ray's inhouse schedule for Berkley is Tuesday. He is also working with the Council on Aging and is reachable via the phone or email.

Massachusetts has a safety net program for Veteran's that are facing financial difficulties and the state is willing to assist. Chapter 115, Benefits/Safety Net Program can provide our Veterans with the daily living expenses; medical cost; rent assistance; support of dependents; and help in preventing homelessness.

Ray, in conjunction with the Council on Aging, will be available on April 16, 2022 to go over Chapter 115 and other benefits for our Veterans.

The actual budget for the Veterans came in as level funded at \$40,000.

The Animal Control/Dog Officer is pretty much level funded from the previous years. The only change was in Salaries/Stipend for the new position of Dog Officer who was hired towards the end of last year and assist the Department head by covering every other weekend and in emergencies. The additional cost is \$7,800.00 annually. Total Budget for Animal Control/Dog Officer is \$21,294

Matt Chabot 04/11/22
Tabitha McChronon 4-11-22
Michele Hamilton 4-11-22

The Council on Aging is currently without a director and the change in the cost is adding \$780.00 under contract terms. All other lines affiliated with the Council on Aging budget came in level funded. The fiscal year budget came in at \$35,970. An increase of \$780.00.

Chief Scott Labonte introduced the budgets for the Police Department, Public Safety Building and the Dispatching department.

Starting with the Police Department. The Finance Committee major concern was the salaries as they are the largest portion of the budget. The budget increase came in at the contractual rate of roughly 2%.

The committee had several questions regarding personnel and their rolls within the department. First, the number of police officers were on staff. There is currently 8 out of the allocated 9 positions with the possibility of a 9th coming on board. Chief recommends that we consider looking into increasing the policing staff by a couple more based on the growth of the community.

The committee also wanted a better understanding of other salaries listed, holiday pay, part time pay, salaries added-personal day and sick leave bonus. Basically, all of the listed line items are part of the contractual terms. By having this broken out instead of one lump sum, you actually see where the funds are going.

The only question the committee requested further information on, was the sick leave bonus. The department does not offer sick leave and if you do not call in for being sick, just use your personal days, the officer is then entitled to an additional bonus for not calling in sick.

The state will no longer allow reserve officers to be unutilized on a part time basis. A new program, "960 Program". This program allows retirees from the police department to work up to 1200 hours without it affecting their retirement funds. Chief Labonte explained that he currently utilizes a retiree to cover traffic detail when need.

There is a new state mandate training program that the officers have to attend. It is regarding response and mass gathering. This caused a bump in the training fees required. For the most part, the remaining line items were level funded or with a minor increase.

Currently we have 3 part time officers that are in our Dispatch Department, 1 full officer. If the officers working within the Dispatched Department attend MPTC Bridge Academy, then they will be certified full-time officer.

There was a brief discussion regarding investigating regionalizing Dispatching Departments within the communities around our area. Chief Labonte indicated that the main reason for not doing this is the response time and it could be a major difference in the outcome of the incident.

The Public Safety Building budget is roughly level funded from previous year. Not too many changes. However, the building itself is in need of some major repairs. Currently the heating system is two home style systems tied together. The temperature is inconsistent throughout the building and the boilers in the basement need to be check periodically otherwise it may take a while for the building to heat. Each room has its own thermostat which can cause inconsistency with the air quality as well as distribution of heat.

Chairman, Joe Freitas called for a motion to adjourn.

A motion was made and seconded and the committee unanimously voted to adjourn.

 April 11, 2022