

**SPECIAL MEETING OF THE TOWN COUNCIL AND  
BUDGET & FINANCE SUBCOMMITTEE  
APRIL 12, 2010**

The Budget and Finance Subcommittee of the Wethersfield Town Council held a Budget Hearing on Monday, April 12, 2010 at 7:30 p.m. in the Library Community Room, 515 Silas Deane Highway, Wethersfield, CT.

Present: Councilors Drake, Hurley, Kotkin, Manousos, McAlister, Montinieri, Roberts, Deputy Mayor Console, and Chairperson Hemmann

Also present: Jeff Bridges, Town Manager; Lisa Hancock, Finance Director; RaeAnn Palmer, Assistant Town Manager, Chief, Police Chief; Ellen Walsh, Administrative Analyst for the Police; Mike Turner, Director of Public Works; Anthony Dignoti, Fire Marshal; Charles Flynn, Fire Chief; and Dolores Sassano, Town Clerk

Councilor Manousos thanked everyone for coming to the meeting. He stated that he wanted everyone to review where they see their department now and where they see their department in the next fiscal year and then open it up for questions.

Jeff Bridges, Town Manager, stated that requests made versus some of the recommended cuts have been put into the budget.

Councilor Hurley asked if any of the departments felt there were going to be any major issues in the next year or after. It will help the Town Council to be more aware of where it needs to have funding.

**POLICE DEPARTMENT**

James Cetran, Chief of Police, reported that in the year 2010, 16 year olds are now treated as juveniles. In 2012, 17 years old will also be considered juveniles. Sixteen and seventeen year olds use three times the resources of the police department with regards to arrests, investigations, complaints and follow ups. At this time, the police department has one juvenile detective that is specially trained because the laws are different for juveniles.

Councilor Hurley asked if one additional person was needed.

Chief Cetran responded that one additional person would not be enough but would help. He reported that the caseloads will triple with the sixteen and seventeen year olds being included with the juveniles. He reported that he had the numbers broken down from the current year. Investigations with the sixteen and seventeen year olds are a lot more extensive than they are for fifteen year olds.

Councilor Manousos asked if the sixteen and seventeen year olds were investigated before.

Chief Cetran replied that sixteen and seventeen year olds were considered adults before. The police are not allowed to take a juvenile's statement without a parent present and statements made will not be admissible.

Deputy Mayor Console asked if there were stats available.

Chief Cetran reported that in 2009, there were 139 incidents including arrests with sixteen and seventeen year olds. In 2009 there were 89 incidents involving fifteen year olds and younger. In 2008, there were 176 incidents involving sixteen and seventeen year olds. In 2009, there were 105 incidents involving fifteen year olds and younger. There would have been a 153% increase in 2009 if the police department had to treat sixteen and seventeen year olds as juveniles and a 168% increase in 2008 for the workload. Going forward there is going to be significant increase in the juvenile area.

Councilor Hurley asked if these changes would take some of the workload off the other police officers.

Chief Cetran responded that it would take some of the workload off but it's not really taken away. A juvenile has to be babysat. They cannot be put into a cell block. In some cases, the juvenile will need to be brought to the Detention Center in Hartford and there may be a delay in the processing of the juvenile. It is very labor intensive and very time consuming when the department is dealing with a juvenile. Chief stated that the duties are spread out through the department but as far as the special part of the investigations, the juveniles are handled differently and there is a lot more to deal with when sixteen and seventeen year olds are added.

Deputy Mayor Console asked what the cost would be.

Chief Cetran replied that it would be \$80,000 for an entry level person that includes salary and benefits. Chief stated that they would hire someone from within with more experience.

Councilor Manousos asked if there were any additional issues for the upcoming year.

Chief Cetran stated the law on juvenile is the biggest issue.

Councilor Manousos questioned the pension numbers.

Chief Cetran stated that previously the pension was lumped in with the insurance and now it is separated out into another line item. The insurance numbers go down and pension numbers stand alone.

Councilor Manousos asked if the total increase being looked at was 2 ½ percent off of last year.

Chief Cetran stated that there are additions. Human resources will need to be added.

Jeff Bridges stated that one of the additions to this budget is that when a new officer is hired and there is another officer eligible for retirement but has not declared, there is an extensive recruitment process and testing process. In the past, the cost of the tests were just eaten somewhere in the line items but now the testing is budgeted rather than trying to find the money in someone else's budget. Also, overtime was reduced by \$50,000 and approximately \$35,000 in equipment which the Chief had requested in next year's budget but will be bought with cash this year.

Councilor McAlister asked if the reduction in overtime is a gamble.

Chief Cetran stated that the department is now at full staffing. There is more than one person eligible for retirement, but no one has stated that they are going to retire. A vacancy or a homicide can cost the department a lot of overtime.

Councilor Hurley inquired about the equipment cost.

Chief Cetran responded that it will be paid this year.

Councilor Hurley inquired about sick leave payments which seemed to have jumped by 65%, from \$21,000 to \$35,000.

Ellen Walsh responded that there are more officers eligible for sick leave payments.

Councilor Manousos inquired about the computer upgrades and asked if that reduction was part of the equipment that is being paid for out of this year's budget.

Chief Cetran stated that it is not.

Councilor Manousos asked if there was a replacement program that the department has.

Chief Cetran responded that the department had, but it was cut last year. Because the software that is being used is upgraded on a regular basis, the department needs to keep the hardware current so a program was developed to replace the hardware. There is a police officer who is adept at computers and he has built the computers for the department.

Councilor Hurley asked how the Council knows that the Town is getting the most out of the grant money that is out there and also asked if there is a person that goes out to find the grants.

Ellen Walsh responded that she and Lt. Scales do it together. Ellen Walsh stated that she applies for anything that the department is eligible for and that fits their program.

Chief Cetran also stated that grants are not coming through like they used to.

RaeAnn Palmer stated that the Town had also applied for a grant for police officers but it did not have the economic conditions that would have supported the funding.

Councilor Manousos asked about the dispatch system in which 98½ percent of the calls are answered by personnel in less than 10 seconds and asked whether it can be done in less time.

Chief Cetran explained that is the OSET number, in other words, that is their standard in which it has to be answered in 10 seconds, 98% is good.

Councilor Manousos asked if it is a State requirement that it had to be answered within 10 seconds.

Chief Cetran responded that you need to in order to get the OSET money, 911. He stated that he had recently attended a 911 Commission meeting. There is legislation before the Legislature right now, SP312, which is going to mandate that communities with population with less than 40,000 have to combine with two other communities to form a dispatch center and qualify for the 911 state funding for hardware and software. The police department has \$3.5 million invested in radios and \$250,000 invested in the RMS system and CAD.

Councilor Hurley asked Chief for his opinion with combining with Rocky Hill and Newington.

Chief Cetran responded that Wethersfield, Rocky Hill and Newington are in the same position in terms of having upgraded their systems and at least two of the towns would need to switch because the department would need the same radio system, the same CAB the same RMS because these systems are not compatible. Chief Cetran also explained that the life expectancy of a radio system is about 10 years.

Councilor Kotkin stated that last year a 10% rate cut was put in effect for this year and asked why the electricity account is still the same.

RaeAnn Palmer explained that last year's budget reflected that cut.

Councilor Kotkin stated that with the natural gas, CCROG keeps rebidding and keeps coming in lower. Natural gas has gone down 40% over the last two years but does not see a decrease on the line item.

Lisa Hancock stated that all the departments were provided the CCROG rates to use with their budgets.

RaeAnn Palmer stated that she will have Heather Vargas re-run the numbers again on the electricity and natural gas.

Councilor Montinieri asked when the new law concerning juveniles goes into effect.

Chief Cetran responded that sixteen year olds went into effect January 1, 2010 and seventeen year olds will go into effect January 1, 2012.

Councilor Montinieri asked whether the Town had four months of history in this fiscal year for that change and has there been training with specific officers or a shift in responsibilities with police officers and asked how was it being addressed.

Chief Cetran responded that the department has one juvenile police detective who is trained but it will become overwhelming once the seventeen years olds are added as juveniles. The department is going to need additional personnel and that he is asking for one additional person to handle those cases because they are specific, sensitive and are not easy to do.

Councilor Montinieri asked if there were any additional managerial alternative if funding is not provided.

Chief Cetran stated that there are none available.

Councilor Montinieri asked about the overtime cut and where will the money come from it goes over the projected budget.

Chief Cetran responded that if the department needs more overtime funding because of short staffing and personal services, it should be able to make up some of that money but that does not account for special situations such as homicides or something that takes up a lot of overtime. This does not mean the department is short staffed, it means it has more work to do.

Councilor Roberts asked with an additional person for the juvenile matter, what would the authorized strength be.

Chief Cetran answered that it would be 48.

Councilor Roberts inquired about the effectiveness of Big Brother equipment on the cruisers.

Chief Cetran responded that it has been very effective.

Councilor Hurley inquired about the cost of the system.

Chief Cetran responded that the cost is \$12,000.

Councilor McAlister commented on the matrix provided on the overtime pay for the holiday pull over check point.

Councilor Drake questioned, why bother with the radio after Chief is saying that many people have it.

RaeAnn Palmer responded that the Town needs to keep the radios operating. At some point there may be a statewide move to the state police.

### TOWN WIDE RADIO SYSTEM

The Town has two programs; system management and tower management. The money would provide for continued use of a town-wide radio system. It is primarily for first responders – EMS, fire, police, Town government and Board of Education. It also provides for inner regional frequencies that allow the Town to talk to other agencies both police and fire in Hartford County. There is a frequency dedicated for serious incidents – Safe Police Hotline and this money would support that along with Regional Police Frequency (RPFS) and Intercity Fire Frequency. It is a public safety system so there is redundancy built into it.

The other program is the tower management and operations. The Town has three towers as part of the town-wide radio system. Two are in Wethersfield – one at the police headquarters and one at Company 3 and the third radio site is in Newington behind the Bowl-A-Rama on the Newington/Wethersfield line. The two towers in Wethersfield provide significant revenue for the Town which almost pays for the Town Radio System. The Town pays rent for the tower on the Wethersfield/Newington Line

RaeAnn Palmer stated that the budget is the service contract with Motorola on the radio system.

Councilor Drake asked why the Town was still paying Motorola.

RaeAnn Palmer responded that the Town has to hire Motorola service to maintain the tower.

Councilor Manousos asked if the cost will go down once it is rebanded.

RaeAnn Palmer responded that she is unsure if the price goes down as she has tried to estimate that into the budget because she does not know when it will be completed.

Councilor Drake commented that it is very expensive.

Councilor Manousos responded that this is the expense side of it. The revenue almost entirely offsets it.

Deputy Mayor Console asked when the system was purchased and who recommended it.

Councilor Manousos responded that the system was purchased in 1998, 1999 and the Town used a consultant.

Councilor Hurley inquired about the blackout area and asked whether there is a way around it to call the police officers that are there.

Chief stated that the Town does have back up forms of communications. The town has in-car computers and officers have Nextel, two-way direct connect.

Councilor McAlister inquired about the cost of putting up a new tower.

Jeff Bridges responded that it depends on the height and wire.

#### FIRE SUPPRESSION

Charles Flynn, Fire Chief, reported that Fire Suppression was broken down into three companies as the easiest way for cost value for what it costs for each of the companies. The high end is the administration because of the certifications of all the apparatus equipment, SCBA, Standards for OSHA, and for supplies, gear and uniforms. He stated that the department tries to stay up on the NFK requirement for gear that was changed last year to a ten year recycle. He has three new firefighters that need gear, which is custom made and requested thirty sets of gear, and the Town Manager came back with ten sets of gear.

Councilor Drake asked what the price difference was for thirty sets versus ten sets.

Jeff Bridges responded that the cost was \$75,000 for thirty sets and \$25,000 for ten sets.

Councilor Drake asked if in CNEF there is a new thermal camrta to replace the one that is not repairable and other than that it is a status quo budget for the Fire Department.

Chief Flynn responded that yes, it was.

Councilor Drake asked about the PPE inspection.

Chief Flynn responded that it is Personal Protective Equipment. All the gear that is required for the firefighters is supposed to be inspected every year to make sure it meets the qualifications. When the gear is sent to the manufacturer for inspection, there is a six to eight week turnaround so when ten sets of gear are sent to the manufacturer, there are now ten firefighters without their gear for that period of time.

Councilor Drake inquired whether the State mandates the NFPA.

Chief Flynn responded that the NFPA makes recommendations which are governed by firefighters, manufacturers, OSHA and insurance agents.

Councilor McAlister inquired about the custom made uniforms and what if there is turnover. He asked if it is a waste of money.

Chief Flynn responded that what is meant by custom made, is it is made for someone to grow into. If someone leaves, we keep the uniforms. We need to keep a stock of at least 10%.

Deputy Mayor Console inquired about support services, company care of quarters, and \$9,500 for quarter.

Chief Flynn responded that is to cover the cost of incidentals around the fire house, annual dinners, parties. Charles Flynn explained that it has been a benefit of the fire department for the past twenty-five years. It's also treated as a payback for maintaining the firehouses because there is no janitorial care.

Deputy Mayor Console asked if there was an accounting of the expenditures.

Jeff Bridges stated that Deputy Mayor Console could review the fire house's individual checkbooks.

Councilor McAlister inquired whether the fire houses can be rented out to generate additional income.

Chief Flynn responded that the problem would be that someone would be needed for janitorial services or have someone from the fire department there to make sure the fire apparatus' are not blocked. Also, none of the fire houses are ADA compliant.

Councilor Hurley inquired what Charles Flynn felt the biggest issue would be for the following year, 2011.

Chief Flynn reported that at this time, the buildings are secured by a regular key. Also, Truck 22 at Station 2 which is a 1981 truck, has a life expectancy of 25 years so that will need to be replaced. Also, Engine 31 is three years out, so it will need to be looked at down the road.

Councilor Hurley inquired whether there were guidelines as to how many vehicles need to be at each station.

Chief Flynn responded that the department is ISO Class 3, which gives the homeowners and/or business owners a better insurance rate. There are 10 classes of ratings in the United States – 1 being the greatest, 10 being the worst.

Councilor McAlister asked if a stipend would be needed to keep volunteers coming in.

Chief Flynn responded that 60% of the calls come in between 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. and people are working two or three jobs. Also, the administration demands are increasing, both on the state and local levels.

### EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Jeff Bridges stated that the \$3,000 in the CNEF funds for different equipment for the response trailer, is the only dollar amount in the budget.

Mike Turner responded that what was being proposed was a barricade trailer, a tag along trailer that would be set up and stocked with temporary stop signs, barricades that often time during emergencies they are scrambling around looking for these items. With this trailer everything would be in one location. Mike Turner stated that the previous Emergency Management Director was paid a \$4,000 stipend but Mike Turner is not looking for the stipend as he is already working for the town. He is looking to use the \$4,000 instead of as his salary in the hopes of an in kind match to the state to purchase supplies and equipment through the Emergency Management Program. Basically it would be a 50/50 grant so we need to put up a match so we would allocate \$4,000 of his salary towards that.

Jeff Bridges stated that Mike Turner does have a town issued vehicle with radios and response items.

Councilor Hurley asked why it would be Mike Turner and not the Police Chief, Fire Chief or Fire Marshal.

Jeff Bridges stated that the Police Chief, Fire Chief and Fire Marshal have specific responsibilities during an emergency running their own crews. The Emergency Management Director is someone from outside of those agencies.

Mike Turner stated that typically he would be the one staffing at the Emergency Operating Center rather than out at a particular incident.

Councilor Hurley asked what the cost would be for a vehicle and radio.

Jeff Bridges responded that Mike Turner is on call 24 hours a day and responds when necessary with the town issued vehicle.

## FIRE MARSHAL

Anthony Dignoti reported that the Fire Marshal is a one person operation with three programs. The customer service program is a catch-all. In this economy with people wanting to start new businesses they use the Fire Marshal as the all question person. They ask whether it is feasible to start a new business, so it is a lot of customer service including code concerns. With fire code compliance, he is out on the street enforcing the Connecticut Fire Safety Code. The adoption of the new Connecticut Fire Prevention Code will enable him to give citations. At this time, if there is a code violation he needs to use an abatement process which entails sending a registered letter and they have 30 days to correct the violation. If the Fire Prevention Code goes into effect in October he will have a citation book. The State has identified ten violations known as the "10 Deadly Sins." If someone commits one of those sins, he will have the right to issue a citation, and 90% of that funding will come back to the Town, 10% goes to the State for administrative fees. He may be able to generate some revenue for the Town. If there are violations, the system will be tighter and people will be held responsible for the violations. Fire Investigations is done under State Statute and he is responsible for investigating every fire and explosion in Wethersfield. Fire Prevention is being out on the streets teaching the public the do's and don'ts to keep them safe. He spends a lot of time in the schools and at Town events. There is also the Outreach Program for Seniors. He does the fire reporting for the fire department, a report needs to be filled out and sent to the State.

Councilor Drake asked why there was a big increase in pension.

Jeff Bridges reported that the pension fund took a beating. Pension costs are up 32% from the current year, health insurance is up 8.4%.

Councilor Hurley asked what questions people ask him.

Anthony Dignoti said that he explains fire code perspectives, what would need to be done and if they do want something done then they would need to submit plans to the Fire Marshal and the Building Inspector.

Councilor Roberts asked who is the Assistant Fire Marshal.

Anthony Dignoti responded that it is Jeff Morrissette.

Councilor Kotkin noted that the Council is not seeing wage increases of 5% or 6% and asked if it was the furlough days that make the wage numbers go up.

Jeff Bridges stated that the furlough days cost the Town \$60,000 (not including police) to put back in.

Councilor Kotkin asked about a vehicle for the Fire Marshal.

Jeff Bridges responded that the Town is buying it through CNEF and it is part of the lease package that was put together.

**ADJOURNMENT**

At 9:05 p.m., Councilor Hurley moved "**TO ADJOURN THE MEETING**" seconded by Councilor Kotkin. All Councilors present, including the Chairperson voted AYE. The motion passed 9-0-0.

Dolores G. Sassano  
Town Clerk

*Approve by vote of Council  
May 3, 2010*