

**MINUTES OF THE JOINT CHESHIRE TOWN COUNCIL AND BUDGET COMMITTEE  
MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY, MARCH 28, 2018, AT 6:30 P.M. IN TOWN HALL,  
ROOM 207-209, 84 SOUTH MAIN STREET, CHESHIRE CT 06410.**

Present

Budget Committee Chairman Timothy Slocum, and Jeffrey Falk.

Vice-Chairman Paul A. Bowman; Patti Flynn-Harris, Thomas Ruocco, Peter Talbot, David Veleber.

Absent: Robert J. Oris Jr. and Sylvia Nichols.

Staff: Michael A. Milone, Town Manager; James Jaskot, Finance Director; Arnett Talbot, Assistant Town Manager; Keith Darin, Building Inspector; Neil Dryfe, Police Chief; Brian Pichnarcik, Deputy Police Chief; Jack Casner, Fire Chief; Don Youngquist, Deputy Fire Chief; Dan Ford, Assistant Chief; Rick Tracchi, Assistant Chief; John Andrews, Fire Marshal.

**1. ROLL CALL**

The clerk called the roll and a quorum was determined to be present.

**2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

The group Pledged Allegiance to the Flag.

**3. PROPOSED FY 2018-2019 OPERTING BUDGET**

**PUBLIC SAFETY: *Police Department, Animal Control, Prison Advisory Committee, Civil Preparedness, Public Safety Commission; Fire Department, Inspection Department.***

**Cheshire Fire Department, Pages 66/103, handout 2-12. Chief Jack Casner, Don Youngquist, Deputy Fire Chief; Dan Ford, Assistant Chief; Rick Tracchi, Assistant Chief; John Andrews, Fire Marshal.**

Town Manager Milone reviewed the CFD budget.

Page 103 – non-salary account increase, +\$10,000, is driven by equipment and vehicle needs; fire trucks require regular maintenance; \$7,500 increase is for pension contribution.

Salary account - \$7,000 increase with \$5.50 per call (+50 cents per call); there has been no increase in this line item since January 2013. Mr. Milone stated the volunteer firefighters are deserving of the increases requested in the budget. He commented on the 24% decrease in residents in the 20-40 age group and how this affects the CFD volunteer membership. \$3,000 is in the budget for the Blight Enforcement Officer, and if this was not in the CFD budget, the increase would be about \$10,000.

Building Department and Fire Department work cooperatively; there is an incredible increase in demand for inspections; some inspections are complex due to complications in the code.

The CFD duty emphasis is on response to fires. The core of the fire response team during the daytime hours is Chief Casner, Chief Youngquist, Fire Marshal Andrews, Assistant Chiefs Ford, Koslowski, and Tracchi. They work 35 to 40 hours a week on regular duties; due to their needed respond to fire calls, regular duties do not get time needed; and CFD has a need for additional volunteer firefighters.

Line 5107 Salary Adjustment \$14,749 – Mr. Milone explained that the contract was settled in May 2017 with the Town Hall union, and there is an estimated two years of salary adjustments in this budget for all the union people.

Deputy Fire Marshals were budgeted at \$81,910; they are now at \$87,838 under the new contract; Administrative Assistant salary was also affected with the settlement. Total salary adjustments - +\$13,329.

Chief Casner reviewed the CFD budget with the Council, talked about the staffing levels, and request to have positions restored in Dispatch so there is proper service for public safety.

The Council was told by Mr. Milone that he asked departments to look at areas where additional money could be cut. He thought the part time Fire Inspector position could be cut, but it has become an issue and the \$20,000 is critical for this position to be filled.

CFD has 5.14 staff members since 2014. With town expansion and expansion of roles within the department, there are more operating requirements and mandates from the State which must be met. 50% of staff time is spent in the field; inspections decreased; and the core of volunteers is no longer there for fire responses.

Handout, Page 5 - Part-time Fire Inspector – Fire Marshal Andrews explained the need for this part-time position at a total cost of \$20,500. It will provide additional staff to meet compliance for fire and life safety inspections for residential/commercial properties in Cheshire. Having this person in the field is a benefit for public safety; there will be catch-up with inspections which must continue and are ongoing; public education, students visiting the CFD building, presentations and drills in schools and daycare facilities, assisting elderly citizens with fire and detection alarms, are all activities which can be undertaken/continued with an additional fire inspector. It was emphasized by Fire Marshal Andrews that any more cuts will result in services not taking place.

Pages 6 and 7 – Fire Marshal Andrews reviewed the required yearly statutorily inspection categories: Group A – every year; Group B – every two years; Group C – every three years; Group D – every four years; follow-up inspections are usually required, and sometimes multiple inspections and plan reviews. He cited one project

...the new trampoline park on West Johnson Avenue, the required inspections, and 45.5 inspection man hours for this one building renovation.

Pages 8 and 9 – Fire Marshal Andrews commented on the other non-fire marshal duties performed in his office, percentage of time spent per employee on these duties (plan reviews, site visits, inspections) cited on page 8. On a regular day basis, full-time staff has interruptions with 1000 fire calls a year, at least three (3) calls per day and other emergency responses.

Page 5 – Mr. Milone did not want to reduce the appropriation for the part-time Fire Inspector position, \$20,500; and said the CFD could use more than the \$20,500.

Page 2 – User Fees for building plan reviews and inspections – Fire Marshal Andrews explained that user fees could be charged for plan reviews, fire inspections, fire alarms and other services with an estimated annual revenue of \$14,000. He reported that surrounding towns charge fees for these types of services at \$25 to \$30 per inspection. There could be a fee for inspection renewals and return for inspection of initial violations. CFD performs 250 to 300 plan reviews each year, and 362 to 382 inspections each year. At the present time, these inspections are free of charge to property owners.

Mr. Milone said there can be more discussion about establishing a user fee, and noted it is common for towns to charge a fee due to the time and work involved for inspections and plan reviews. There is no schedule of fees set, and the Council is being asked to consider a fee structure for approval.

Mr. Bowman commented on these fees being an increase in taxes, and every town department going through the thought process of why more is needed. The state regulations and mandates are unfunded. If the town has a Deputy Fire Marshal spending half his time on reporting, Mr. Bowman said another staff person should be found to do this work, with the Fire Marshal doing his field work, and then signing off on the reports.

Stating his agreement, Chief Casner explained there is one secretary for five full-time employees, and she also does CFD work such as tallying calls and prepares reports.

Regarding the fees, Mr. Bowman said they are already exorbitant. He talked about building a house, taking it through the Cheshire process; taking the same house through the same process in other towns; all with different fees for the same service, and Cheshire would be the highest. Mr. Bowman asked about recovering some of the costs for CFD...an accident on I-84 with town personnel, and billing the insurance company for town services provided.

This can be explored, but Chief Casner is unsure if all insurance companies would reimburse for town services.

Mr. Bowman commented on reimbursement for services to utility companies for damages due to an accident on Route 10...and the State paying for all these things. He expressed the town's appreciation for the Elim Park gifts to CPD and CFD, and asked about the possibility of going back to Elim Park, requesting more assistance, as the facility uses lots of town services.

In the memo to the Council, Chief Casner outlined where 100% of the gift account funding the operating budget, which reduced the CFD operating budget. He estimated Elim Park getting CFD services about 20 times a year, while other facilities are 50 times a year.

With regard to pay for call per service, Mr. Milone noted the high cost to CFD to roll out a truck, and a possible charge to people for fire call response, and what would be collected. Due to being badly squeezed by the State, he said the town is trying to grow the grand list, and keep taxes as low as possible. The town is looking at user fees to recover costs for unique services usually absorbed by the general fund. Mr. Milone talked about whether taxpayers should subsidize services for a limited number of people receiving these services.

The issue of the 50 cents per fire call was raised by Mr. Bowman who said it is insulting to offer this to firefighters. He thinks this issue should be looked at and giving more thought to increasing volunteer numbers. He suggested offering town employees a stipend for training in response to fire calls.

Until we have that answer, Mr. Milone felt it was a disservice to volunteer firefighters without this modest increase, and he would have liked a larger increase. There have been months of staff discussions trying to come up with a more realistic, affordable way to attract firefighters and deal with this problem...more than in the December 2014 report. He is okay with the option of employees leaving and responding to a fire call, and variations of pay grade based on the volume of activity. A consideration was having someone in the firehouse, and the importance of getting the truck to the fire site. The information is not ready for Council, but will come before the Council when the report is completed. Staff was looking at a more gradual, sophisticated, responsive pay for call system, not creating a full time paid department, but maintaining a volunteer fire department with a responsible and aggressive payment for what the firefighters do.

According to Chief Casner, this is not just a Cheshire problem...it is Connecticut and a nationwide problem. CFD's pay per call rate is one of the lowest in the State.

Mr. Bowman asked about the ISO rating, and if the town is in jeopardy of a downgrade. If this happens the insurance costs for each business and home goes up.

In response, Assistant Chief Ford said that based on equipment, Cheshire is not in danger ISO wise. The equipment has 100% to do with the ISO rating. With CFD's

equipment/age of the equipment, kicking the can down the road by not replacing equipment on the plan, we are teetering on a rating decrease in the future. At this point we are not in jeopardy.

Cheshire is assigned classification #4 out of 9, and Chief Youngquist said 4 is a good number. The biggest driver is water for the difference between these numbers. A business or home in the 9# will not get a break, or get an increase in the insurance. Some insurance companies require a report on the distance of water to a property.

Chief Casner noted different things affect the number, i.e. dispatch staffing has an effect on the ISO rating.

On the surface, Mr. Milone said the pay per call looks low. He talked about the combination of benefits for firefighters, such as the good pension plan, tax abatement program for qualified firefighters, and life insurance. The question is how to bring everything together, make an attractive opportunity for firefighters, and this should be revisited and modified. It is the totality of the package.

Chief Casner explained the tax abatement is applied per firefighter's decision...i.e. reduction on property or a motor vehicle assessment, which comes off the tax bill. There are performance requirements for the abatement, such as five (5) years service and points for service, with a maximum of \$1,000 abatement.

Mr. Milone said the eligibility requirements could be lowered, i.e. five (5) years to three (3) service and performance.

Chief Ford disagreed with this, stating the vetting period is right for firefighters, and rewarding those who serve is the right thing. Lowering the requirement is not the right thing, and it all comes back to pay for call. There are CFD committees which save the town on costs of fire truck purchases, ladder trucks, pumpers etc. He said the firefighters are grateful for the increase in the pay per call. Administrative officers, with take home vehicles, get \$3.50 per fire call response.

Mr. Slocum asked for a listing of other town's pay for call rate for the Council.

Regarding the abatement, Mr. Milone is not suggesting compromising the quality of firefighters, but a young person waiting five years for an abatement, may not encourage joining CFD. Pay per call should have a staggered or gradual amount based on time of the response call.

Ms. Flynn-Harris asked about the impact to free up more manpower hours with additional administrative staff to handle reports and office work. She requested the Council receive this information for review.

Mr. Slocum asked about the possibility of identification of specific charges dedicated to CFD in the tax bill.

Chief Casner said there are towns with fire districts, and people receive an additional tax bill for fire service, and pay the bill at the firehouse.

Towns with three fire districts have three chiefs, three fire marshals, and Mr. Milone said some are badly underfunded, have duplication of effort, and is not a model for Cheshire. Per capita costs are built into the town department budgets, but it is not taken out and charged per household, i.e. for fire service. For CFD it is \$31.63, and Finance is \$58.80 per capita. The Council can decide if it should be more per household for CFD, i.e. \$37, and dedicate this amount to the CFD.

Page 3 – Pumping Water from Basements/Homes.

Chief Casner informed the Council that CFD provides this service. Doing this service 30 times a year could have total revenue of \$5,856 annually. It is uncertain if charging for this service is a good message; it could be negative public relations for the revenue generated; and have a negative public response. Chief Casner does not support implementation of this charge.

For this service, Mr. Bowman talked about a one-time pumping service free, and with multiple pumping for the same property, there could be a fee involved.

There is a model in place for fire alarm fines, and Mr. Milone said it is three for free alarms and then there is a charge. The “fee” issue will be revisited with the Council.

Chief Youngquist noted that people sometimes give a donation to CFD, and this service is good public relations for the department.

The information on the CFD gift account is clarified and defined in the budget information before the Council.

Regarding extra clerical staff to handle office work and reports, Mr. Milone said this was not put forward in the budget.

**Building Department, Pages 109 and 56; Handout, Page 1. Keith Darin, Building Inspector.**

Mr. Milone explained the reclassification of Electrical Inspector to the position of Assistant Building Official (ABO) was in the department budget. The ABO position salary would be \$61,770.80, an increase of \$8,772.40.

The Building Department activity/volume of work has significantly increased due to lots of building or prospective building going on in town. Many people with interest take up staff time before property acquisition or expansion, and there is on-line permitting. Due to code complexity there is more time required for permits and inspections.

Mr. Darin reported on the new software component being used as of February 1<sup>st</sup>, with 250 permit requests since that date. There were permits for 11 new homes; staff met with representatives for the new 50,000 sq.ft. medical building on Route 10; meetings have been held with individuals on the redevelopment of a large parcel in the Industrial Park; five demolitions are pending, some on Route 10; another large medical facility replacement is being contemplated; plans are underway for a multi-acre greenhouse facility.

Assistant Building Official (ABO) position – Mr. Darin explained that the department has an Electrical Inspector and Assistant Building Official and they work as a team going out during the day. If the inspector is on vacation or out of the office, Mr. Darin goes out and covers for electrical inspections, so there is no one to do his job. When Mr. Darin is on vacation, his job falls behind, and he works many holidays or snow days to catch up with his work. With the Electrical Inspector having dual certification as a Building Official there can be two teams out on the road for inspection work. This allows Mr. Darin to work in the office more often covering issuance of permits and close out documents.

The town is working on grand list growth and economic development incentive, and Mr. Milone cited the importance of good service to developers with permitting and time lines, as they want a fast track.

Mr. Bowman asked about department revenue...if it was neutral or positive/negative.

The revenue is usually positive and Mr. Darin said these last few months have been robust with growth of projects coming to fruition. He cited page 56 showing \$470,000 of fees associated with the department, and these numbers vary year to year. The new medical building construction time frame is 14 months, and the plans are in for the core of the building.

Fire Marshal Andrews talked about working closely and cooperatively with Mr. Darin, doing inspections together, and overlapping of duties. He commented on good public service/customer service, people wanting to build, and expecting good service and time lines for the process. Mr. Andrews said the position reclassification and part-time staff will help provide better customer service.

With the reclassification, Mr. Slocum pointed out the department is using the same person with an increase in wages.

Mr. Darin wants to use the existing person to his full potential as a certified and licensed electrician and a building official.

**Cheshire Police Department, Pages 8/78, Handout page 13. Chief Neil Dryfe and Deputy Chief Brian Pichnarcik.**

Mr. Milone reviewed the CPD budget, which increases by \$222,903, 4.06%. He recommends fully funding the 48<sup>th</sup> and 49<sup>th</sup> police officer positions, which represents \$112,358 of the \$234,647 salary increase. Without this increase the budget would have increased by \$122,000 or 2.47%. Mr. Milone supported the overtime account increase of +\$25,000; it gives CPD budgeted overtime of \$400,000 for next year; in FY 2016 overtime was \$449,000; FY 2017 overtime expenditure was \$445,000. With the \$25,000 it is still \$50,000 less than in recent years. These numbers are pre-contract awards; for two years salaries were constant; factoring in the 2.4% increase it would be \$480,000 in overtime to meet the levels of the past two years. The number is lower due to contractual changes made to premium time and premium holidays.

There is \$30,000 committed from the gift account to pay for equipment lines; one line has been reduced by \$10,000; another has been zeroed out for gift account payment.

There are concerns and problems regarding Dispatchers, and the need for this manpower; concerns about full staffing levels to deal with school security issues; and Mr. Milone pulled out funding the Dispatcher and two extra police officers.

The decision package supports police officer positions #48 and #49. There is also a decision package showing importance of dispatchers which are not funded in the proposed budget. Mr. Milone talked about the critical nature and impact of the dispatcher issue which involves police officers doing dispatcher work. He stated the dispatch unit is not at a comfortable level for town staff and the CPD.

Handout Page 15 – Sworn Police Officer Positions; Funded in the proposed budget.

Chief Dryfe referred to the chart on page 15 which shows the police officer shortages in CPD.

Police Officer #46 - was sworn in this week; he is a sworn, certified police officer coming from another town to Cheshire; he will have one month CPD training, and then go out on patrol. The new officer is a Cheshire resident and very involved in the community.

Chief Dryfe has sent an appointment letter to another person; he will start the Police Academy on April 6<sup>th</sup> for 22 weeks, have 12 weeks field training with CPD; and be out on patrol in January 2019.

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Position #47 is, technically, still frozen, but funded in the budget. Position #48 was created by a March 2016 retirement; position #49 has not been filled or funded for many years.

The next Police Academy for new police officers will begin on July 6<sup>th</sup>.



Chief Dryfe talked about the BOE meetings and public information sessions on school safety and security, and the public's strong support for a School Resource Officer (SRO). Most communities have a local SRO or State Trooper as an SRO. An SRO is 99% of the time a sworn police officer. The position is different from an armed school security which must be a retired police or military officer. The plan is for Dodd Middle School to have an SRO at the start of the new school year.

Mr. Slocum asked about position #48 as an SRO and the impact on the department.

The issue of opioid problems in Cheshire and the State was raised by Chief Dryfe. He explained that, in the past, Cheshire has had an officer as member of the Statewide Narcotics Task Force, providing invaluable resources and information to the CPD. The town does not have the experience and resources to bring in-depth narcotics investigations into the CPD. One Cheshire Police Officer spent about 4 years on this task force assignment, and gained experience and brought resources to the CPD. If Police Officer position #48 is unfrozen and should be the SRO, it leaves Chief Dryfe with less flexibility to assign someone to the Narcotics Task Force. This assignment is detached duty; the officer is assigned to a regional task force; and supervised by State Police personnel. Chief Dryfe reported that Cheshire does not have street corner drug sales of use. In 2017 the town had nine (9) opioid related deaths; there is an ongoing opioid problem; and it is a great concern.

For clarity, Mr. Slocum said the 48<sup>th</sup> police officer would enable someone from CPD to be assigned to the Statewide Narcotics Task Force, which is a goal of Chief Dryfe.

The task force is always looking for officers and Chief Dryfe said a Cheshire officer would be accepted.

Ms. Flynn-Harris asked about it being a full-time position on the task force. If the officer worked on cases in Cheshire...unless it was with the task force, it was on an overtime basis.

Chief Dryfe explained that it is a narcotics task force...and any drug arrest in town was referred to the officer on the task force for follow-up. He brought his partner, a State Police Officer, into the cases for follow-up.

In looking between police officer #49 and a dispatcher, with officer #48 on the task force, Mr. Talbot asked if the dispatch person is hired, could there be some time when a police officer is covering the dispatch desk. He also asked about hiring the dispatcher instead of position #49, saving \$23,000, and still have officer #48 for SRO at Dodd Middle School.

Chief Dryfe commented on there being lots of information attached to position #49. He is not prepared to ask for this funding at the start of the new fiscal year. He must look at the dispatcher union, and open up negotiations with the union. The Chief talked

about a past complaint involving a fire dispatch issue; action was taken to investigate the matter; the union filed a grievance stating they were police emergency dispatchers; and it was not the role of the dispatcher to dispatch the fire department. There is past job history lending support to their argument. The town had a hearing, mediation with the State Labor Board, and resolved the underlying issue without the labor board ruling on that part of the issue. Cheshire's Labor Attorney Dugas said, if the town expects dispatchers to handle fire calls in the proper manner, it would represent changes in the working conditions and negotiations would be needed.

This subject has been broached (informally) by Chief Dryfe with the dispatcher union. The union wants increased staffing, two dispatchers working, with one person dedicated to fire incidents. CPD dispatchers always took initial 911 calls; if there is a fire they are responsible for dispatching the fire department. It used to work with the first responding fire personnel going to CFD headquarters or fire stations, set up and act as the fire incident dispatcher. CFD no longer has this flexibility due to staffing issues.

It was pointed out by Mr. Milone that the term "dispatcher" is a misnomer, as we think they just dispatch. There are complications and time spent on an emergency call, which he realized when listening to an emergency call.

Chief Dryfe said a "911 call" comes in for a fire, which is a major incident, and first priority is to dispatch the fire department, and police officers to the scene, EMS on stand-by. Very often, there is only one person working in the dispatch center. Other calls come in through the routine line, ringing in the dispatch center, and there are concerns about multiple 911 calls coming in. Chief Dryfe expressed his concerns about multiple 911 calls coming in; there is a computerized process in place; after four rings the call rolls over to Wolcott for pick-up; this requires Wolcott contacting Cheshire with the information they received; there can be incoming calls from alarm companies, medical alert calls...and there is no guarantee this line will be answered in the midst of all that is going on. The line just rings without rolling over to another responder, and an emergency could be missed.

The Council discussed the concept of a "regional dispatch center" with Wallingford, North Haven, Branford and Cheshire. Chief Dryfe explained the issue was governance and how to work out the operations of the dispatch center.

Regarding Cheshire 911 calls, Ms. Flynn-Harris said they have not been too high, and asked if there is now an increase or is it the complexity.

The complexity has always been there and Chief Dryfe said CFD may not be able to put someone at a dispatch position, when they always relied on CPD dispatch.

Fire Chief Casner stated CFD listens to the tapes, does not have a dispatcher, and CFD fully supports hiring another dispatcher.

Page 19 – Dispatcher Staffing Comparisons – this chart came from CCM showing comparisons of similar towns to Cheshire on population, sworn officers, and full-time and part-time dispatchers. Westport CT fire department has its own dispatch center, 24/7 coverage.

Cheshire has three (3) dispatchers; one is off duty and two are covering seven shifts for a week. There would have to be negotiations with the dispatchers union on handling fire calls. The contract could be reopened; the job description talks about CPD responses, and nothing about CFD responses.

Chief Pichnarcik stated 911 is the only line statutorily having to be answered by the dispatcher. Once they dispatch the fire call, anything beyond that point with CFD is a change in working conditions.

Page 17 – Chief Dryfe stated the decision package information defines the cost to hire a first year dispatcher, total \$62,695.00. However, the Chief is not ready to move forward on this at this time.

Mr. Bowman stated that dispatchers should be responsible for answering all 911 calls. He also said the community must know that the town is covered from a public safety perspective.

It was reaffirmed by Chief Dryfe that the dispatch center is covered 24/7 with someone sitting in the center to respond to calls. He never foresees a time this would not happen. For immediate Council consideration, Chief Dryfe stated that based on hearing from the community at the recent meetings, there will be police presence in the schools.

Mr. Slocum asked if the Chief has instituted a design in the day to day staffing levels which incorporates a police officer stopping at the schools.

The Council was informed by Chief Dryfe about the Connecticut Police Chiefs Association slogan...“Every School Every Day”. Chief Dryfe has met with DOE staff; every day there will be a police officer stopping at every school; and this will be formalized and start in the next school year. The 49<sup>th</sup> officer would address school safety and the Narcotics Task Force officer.

For a point of information, Mr. Milone stated that the Police Chief and Fire Chief are both E-5 positions; Building Official is an E-3 position; and all department heads are classified “E” position (exempt /without overtime).

Thursday, March 29, 2018, 6:30 p.m. Solid Waste Committee meeting; 7:00 p.m. Special Town Council & Budget Committee meeting.

**PLANNING: *Planning Department; Planning and Zoning Commission; Zoning Board of Appeals, Economic Development, Beautification***

***Committee, Public Building Commission, Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Commission, Environment Commission, Historic District Commission, Energy Commission.***

Mr. Milone stated the Planning Department budget(s) are status quo budgets.

**4. ADJOURNMENT**

MOTION by Mr. Talbot; seconded by Mr. Slocum.

MOVED to adjourn the special meeting at 8:40 p.m.

VOTE           The motion passed unanimously by those present.

Attest:

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Marilyn W. Milton, Clerk