

**CITY OF BRIDGEPORT
BUDGET AND APPROPRIATIONS
COMMITTEE
SPECIAL MEETING
APRIL 21, 2021**

ATTENDANCE: Scott Burns, Co-chair; Ernest Newton Co-chair; Jorge Cruz, Jeanette Herron, Matthew McCarthy, Mary McBride-Lee

OTHERS: Council Member(s): M. E. Brantley, M. Brown, M. Lyons, M. Pereira, R. Roman-Christy, D. Taylor-Moye & M. Valle; N. Nkwo, OPM Director; K. Flatto, Finance Director; T. Gaudett, Mayor's Office; S. Appleby, EOC Director; Fire Chief R. Thode, Deputy Chief J. Buck, Deputy Fire Chief L. Edwards; Acting Police Chief R. Garcia, Police Lt. M. Cotto; Constance Vickers, Director, Legislative Affairs; Steven Auerbach, Tim O'Connor, RPS; Barbara, Jamilla S., Julian Shafer, Niels Heilmann (he/him), Android, 203-880-5666, 203-275-6420, 203-581-5100, 203-209-1058

This meeting was conducted by Zoom/Teleconference.

CALL TO ORDER

Co-chair Newton called the meeting to order at 6:08 p.m. Co-chair Burns stated that Council Member Vizzo-Paniccia was not present due to family obligations.

**** COUNCIL MEMBER BURNS MOVED TO ENTER A DOCUMENT TITLED OFFICE OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PRESENTATION INTO THE RECORD AS EXHIBIT 04-21-21-1.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER NEWTON SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER BURNS MOVED TO ENTER A DOCUMENT TITLED OFFICE OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATIONAL CHART INTO THE RECORD AS EXHIBIT 04-21-21-2.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER NEWTON SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER BURNS MOVED TO ENTER A DOCUMENT TITLED BRIDGEPORT POLICE DEPARTMENT BUDGET PRESENTATION INTO THE RECORD AS EXHIBIT 04-21-21-3.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER NEWTON SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER BURNS MOVED TO ENTER A DOCUMENT TITLED BRIDGEPORT FIRE DEPARTMENT CURRENT FY GOAL STATUS INTO THE RECORD AS EXHIBIT #04-21-21-4.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER NEWTON SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Council Member Newton said that the Police, Fire and Emergency Management staff is present.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Mr. Appleby thanked everyone for their time and said that he appreciated their support. Each year it seems like there are more and more calls for service. The 9-1-1 Dispatch Center has been sending Police and Fire to meet the needs during COVID.

The budget only has a few items that they are looking to increase to enhance things for both the Department and the community. There have been cost increases. There are some vacancies, 6 vacancies and there has been notification that one additional operator and one supervisor will be leaving in the coming weeks. The Department is currently working with Civil Service.

Mr. Appleby said that five years ago, when the call center moved to the EOC, Bridgeport had one of the lowest answer responses within 10 seconds or less. Now the TCOs are at 97% response time. The average is usually around 95% or 96% call response time.

Mr. Appleby then reviewed the remaining metrics with the Committee. The staff works on applying for FEMA and Homeland Security grants. They have been successful with the training grants, training reimbursement, personnel and camera equipment.

One goal is to implement the medical call services, which will make the Call Center a full service center. They are working with leadership on this.

They are looking at redesigning the EOC and achieve accreditation. They are also interested in creating an app in various languages.

There have been some struggles during COVID but they have been able to redirect the Center for savings. The operational budget has been kept in check.

Council Member McCarthy asked about the overtime increase and whether it was due to the vacancies. Mr. Appleby said that there are NFPA (National Fire Protection Association) and State standards regarding how the EOC should be staffed. He also spoke about the ISOs (Insurance Standards). Now that it is warmer outside, the call volume will increase. Most call centers in cities the size of Bridgeport have more staff.

Council Member Lyons asked how many positions were budgeted. There are 38 TCOs, 7 Supervisors and 1 Public Safety Training Manager along with some administrative positions. Currently there are 49 individuals on staff.

Council Member Lyons asked if they were sending texts when a robbery occurs. Mr. Appleby said that they automated it and will add her to the notification. He explained that while they may get a report that there were shots fired, the first responders report back that it was a car backfiring rather than a gun shot.

Council Member McBride-Lee asked if the Department was in the process of filling the vacant positions. Mr. Appleby said that the TCO exam was scheduled for the coming weeks. There is another exam being created for another position.

Council Member McBride-Lee said that it was important for the residents to be aware that the TCOs will be answering the phone in 10 seconds. They are doing a wonderful job.

Council Member Burns asked Mr. Appleby about the statistics. He asked if they have the personnel to analyze the data that they collect. Mr. Appleby said that they collaborate with the Police and Fire and discussing how they were doing on Priorities 1, 2 and 3. Now if there is a call that Fire Chief Thode or Police Chief Garcia feel needs to be examined, they pull the call to identify problems. The data is helpful in planning and for strategies.

Council Member Cruz thanked Mr. Appleby for the all the work that has been done during the pandemic. He was very appreciative about the masks that they were able to deliver to the senior centers.

Council Member Cruz asked how long the positions were vacant. Mr. Appleby said that they had started the year with five vacant TCOs and two supervisors. They will have seven vacant positions and three supervisor positions vacant. There were 16 candidates on the list, and the list was reduced to 2 candidates due to failures in either physicals or psychological exams. The Supervisors need a new examination and Civil Service is working on this.

Council Member Cruz asked if they included the Connecticut Works job site when they advertise the vacant positions. Mr. Appleby said that he did not know. Council Member Cruz said that they should not depend on Civil Service operating in a narrow way.

Council Member Valle said that Council Members are notified when there are accidents or shootings, but before they had been receiving texts from the EOC about other things happening in the Districts. She mentioned that there have been two shootings in her District and she got the information quicker from her Ring rather than the City.

Council Member Valle said that there were 6 positions open. She mentioned how AMR had recently held a major publicity event to recruit new employees. She suggested that the EOC do this.

Mr. Appleby said that they had just spoken with Ms. White and another staff member about issues that could enhance the recruitment campaigns. He said that he would like to speak privately with Council Member Valle about the notification issue.

Council Member Pereira said that Council Member Valle had been recognized before her and Council Member Valle was not a member of the Committee.

Council Member Pereira said that she had many questions about how the vacant positions were to be referred to Public Safety Committee. Council Member Burns said that the Public Safety Committee would be holding a public hearing.

Council Member Pereira said that there was a 7.7% budget increase and she said that she did not understand how they [inaudible].

Mr. Nkwo said that there was no database administration position in the 2021 budget.

Council Member Pereira asked what was being done about the significant vacancies.

Mr. Nkwo said that the TCO positions, along with the Police vacancies. The previous Civil Service Director had let a number of tests lapse. Mr. Amado had been working very aggressively to update the testing process.

Mr. Flatto said that they had approved a vacancy offset and it is listed in another portion of the budget. he also commended Mr. Appleby for all the work they have done to secure the FEMA grants.

Council Member Newton said that if the Council Members had additional questions that they should contact the co-chairs by email.

POLICE DEPARTMENT

Acting Chief Garcia greeted everyone and said that the Police Department has been able to accomplish during the year. She said that they were able to implement and stabilize the time keeping software and also implement the staff component. She directed everyone's attention to the list of goals and the list of those that were met in the report.

They do have openings in the detective's bureau and they want to be cognizant that they do not exceed their budget. There are 15 officers that are currently in the Academy and there are 27 officers who will be retiring. There are also 15 officers that may be transferring to other locations.

They have worked on their recruitment efforts and are aware that the major cities are also recruiting as well.

Acting Chief Garcia then reviewed the information contained in her report.

Acting Chief Garcia spoke about the vehicles that now have high mileage because they had to reassign the vehicles with only one officer per car. This requires the vehicles to be used 24/7 rather than rotating the vehicles through the shifts. The list of various vehicles, all of which have over 100,000 miles.

Starting in 2022, the CT Police Reform Act requires all officers including administrative staff have body cams. She reviewed the details with the Committee Members along with the cost of equipment for new hires.

Mr. Nkwo said that most of the requests from the Police Department were recommended in the Mayor's Recommended Budget (pg. 174) including the body cams, the dash cams, new officer equipment, opioid testing and 10 police vehicles, which comes to almost \$1 million dollars.

Mr. Flatto said that the principle on the Plan A benefits would be in next budget.

Due to COVID, Bridgeport has to rent a private shooting range for the officers to qualify.

Council Member Newton asked why they were using an out of town range rather than Bridgeport. Lt. Cotto said that they had looked at the Bridgeport range and it did not meet the requirements for the rifles and long range training.

Mr. Nkwo indicated where the line item was for the cameras connected to the Fusion Center. he said that it was important to have uniform cameras and the EOC will be determining the type of camera to be used.

The State now requires the officers to be tested for opioids.

Council Member Burns said that he would like everyone to be aware that there was a Public Safety Task Force and they have determined that a Human Services Unit should be established. He added that there was a recommendation in Chief Ramsey's report about a staffing study.

Council Member Newton said that the parking enforcement attendants had been moved to the Police Department. He said that there was an officer assigned to be with the Parking Enforcement attendant. Acting Chief Garcia said that the officer was assigned to the Department and accompanies the attendant for transparency.

Mr. Nkwo said that approximately 2/3rds of the payments were done digitally. The actual coin collection process is sealed in such a way that no one has access to the coins.

Council Member Newton said that he would like the officer to be used in another spot since there were no problems in Public Facilities.

Acting Chief Garcia explained that the officers are also enforcing traffic violations such as booting the vehicles, writing tickets or running checks.

Council Member Newton asked what the Parking Enforcement Supervisor was doing now. Acting Chief Garcia said that the civilian was handling more administrative tasks. Mr. Flatto said that the individual was handling violation payments that come in.

Council Member McCarthy said that they had lost 25 minutes for asking questions during the report.

Council Member McCarthy said that he wanted to know what happened with approximately \$6 million for the vacant positions. He asked how much the City receives from the COPS grant and why it isn't used for the budget, he said that there was a communication department with eight sergeants in it. Those officers could be on patrol. Another officer was in Financial Services.

Mr. Nkwo said that the City will be hiring 16 new officers. There is a team of administrators, including Acting Chief Garcia and Mr. Nkwo who are aggressively pushing for testing.

Mr. Nkwo said they were building some attrition into next year. The COPS grant will expire this month. The City signed an agreement that indicated they must maintain the officers for at least 1 year following the expiration of the grant.

Mr. Flatto asked Council Member McCarthy how he arrived at the \$6 million figure. Council Member McCarthy gave him a brief overview. Mr. Flatto said that while there are some vacancies, those positions have to be back filled and this creates overtime.

Acting Chief Garcia said that there were no officers in Financial Services. Mr. Nkwo explained that the Chief assigns the officers to where she needs to. They can be paid from Financial Services, but the officers may be on patrol.

Council Member McCarthy said that the Fire Department is broken out to show where the firefighters are actually located.

Council Member Cruz said that he appreciated Acting Chief Garcia getting all the guns off the street and working with the addiction services.

Council Member Cruz said that there were 74 officers who were either retiring or transferring to other departments. He asked what equipment the officers were mandated to return.

Acting Chief Garcia said that they must return everything that the City issued to them when they originally issued them. The equipment is exposed to wear and tear.

Council Member Herron asked about recruit retention. She asked if they were thinking of extending their required stay beyond two years.

Acting Chief Garcia said that they were discussing the possibility of extending it to five years. She said that she would like to have all the recruits sign a contract for five years.

Council Member Herron said that they purchase the vehicles but some vehicles are driven like they are race cars. She asked if they have addressed this issue.

Acting Chief Garcia said that the last big purchase was in 2017 and there have been some vehicles involved in accidents. They are trying to hold the officers accountable.

Council Member Pereira said that the Police Department was the largest Department and the Council had passed a resolution involving Community relations and annual training in de-escalation.

Acting Chief Garcia said that she had forwarded a budget about that and they have an officer that is teaching de-escalation.

Council Member Pereira asked who had received the training budget. Acting Chief Garcia said that it was sent to Council President Nieves.

Council Member Pereira asked where the training budget line was.

Mr. Nkwo said that it was listed on page 175 and titled Other Services. Lt. Cotto said that the line item was for out of department training. Most of the training they do they try to schedule it while the officers are on duty. That prevents it from being charged to overtime.

Lt. Cotto said that they had done a cost projection for the training classes Council Member Pereira had recommended and it would cost \$200,000.

Council Member Pereira said that training for professionalizing was never a waste of money.

Council Member Pereira asked why there was no salary increases for the future union settlements.

Mr. Nkwo said that they cannot disclose what they expect to pay the officers in the future. They do reserve funding for future salary negotiations.

Council Member Pereira replied that this was not acceptable.

Mr. Flatto said that there was a portion that includes benefits and it should be discussed in Executive Session.

Council Member Newton said that the City must protect itself and this should not be discussed any further.

Council Member Burns said that the Budget Book does not reflect real life. He encouraged everyone to review the organizational chart.

Council Member Brantley said that Council Member Pereira had asked about implicit bias training, de-escalation training and other types of professional development.

Acting Chief Garcia said that what was sent over what the cost would be if they had the training was required for all officer to have annually. They have certified instructors come to the department for de-escalation and implicit bias training. There are a number of categories that are also covered by the POST training. There are also Professional Development courses available for officers. The officers simply submit a request to attend a class. The union will not pay for these courses.

Council Member Brantley asked if the de-escalation training was mandatory. Acting Chief Garcia said that it was not required annually, but the POST courses are listed on their website.

Council Member McCarthy asked if the annually training was required for the officers, the department would have to hire an instructor to keep the cost contained.

Council Member Lyons asked for clarification about Acting Chief Garcia's comment about making the officers accountable.

Acting Chief Garcia said that she would be looking to have the officers who abuse the vehicles being held accountable, not about vehicular accidents that occur during shifts.

Council Member Lyons asked where the money for court settlements is allocated. Mr. Nkwo said that the funding is from the City Attorney's Office.

FIRE DEPARTMENT

Chief Thode said that due to COVID, they had to restrict firefighters to only work in their own fire house. In normal times, they can have a firefighter from Black Rock cover a spot in the North End.

The Department had very few fire fighters seriously ill. The revenue will be down due to the fact that the Fire Marshal's Office was not doing inspections.

Council Member Burns asked if there would be an uptick in the revenue. Chief Thode said that they would be doing the lapsed permits along with the ones that were due in 2021.

Council Member Cruz asked about programs for fire fighters to decrease domestic abuse. Chief Thode said that it has not been a chronic problem in the Fire Service. They pay close attention to the mental health of the fire fighters.

Council Member Cruz said that he was disappointed that the issue had not been addressed or remedied. He said that the Department has not taken an aggressive stance regarding domestic abuse. They should be investigating it more specifically. While the fire fighters go through stress, it is important to follow through. They should have some training regarding domestic abuse.

Council Member McCarthy said that the budget was very easy to follow. He asked about the 13 unassigned Lieutenants and how many civilians were working in the Department.

Chief Thode said that there were 2 were working in administration at headquarters and 2 civilians as mechanics.

Chief Thode explained that the battalion chiefs were not assigned to the houses and there is a safety officer assigned to each house as well.

Council Member Newton said that he hoped that they would be able to bring more women on. They need to open it up for everyone. Other cities don't seem to have any problems with having women on the fire department. There are some women on the candidate's list.

Council Member Pereira said they were the second largest portion of the budget and asked if they were on a TA.

Chief Thode said that the contract had expired on January 1st.

Council Member Pereira said that they were going to approve this budget without the negotiated increases and benefits being calculated. She said that she had never seen this where there was no lowest forecast. She asked when they expected it to be completed.

Chief Thode said that he expected it to be settled in the summer.

Mr. Nkwo said that he had answered the same question for the Police Department. The City has never failed to make the salary increases whole, but the answer remains the same.

Council Member Pereira said that this section of the Budget Book and there were no totals listed.

Mr. Nkwo said that he could run a grand total list for the Council Members.

Council Member Pereira said that every other department has been totaled except for Police and Fire.

Council Member Burns asked about page 198, contracted salary line and whether they anticipated the same O/T numbers decreasing.

Chief Thode said that if every fire fighter was on duty for a year, the overtime would still come in at \$4.1 or \$4.2 million because of funeral leave, jury duty and a variety of other similar situations.

Council Member Burns asked about training, which Deputy Chief Buck reviewed with him.

Council Member Pereira asked what the \$90,000 line item was. Mr. Nkwo said that it was a Motorola lease.

Council Member Pereira said that it was not correct that they Committee would have to go into Executive Session to discuss the funding for potential salary increases.

ADJOURNMENT

**** COUNCIL MEMBER NEWTON MOVED TO ADJOURN.**

**** COUNCIL MEMBER CRUZ SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 8:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Telesco Secretarial Services