

MINUTES  
TOWN OF ALEXANDRIA  
BUDGET COMMITTEE  
OCTOBER 26, 2021

PRESENT: Doug Benton, Ian MacInnis, Don Paiva, Fred Platts, Kerry Rockwell, Cindy Williams; Selectman Representative George Tuthill Absent: Mike Provost  
Attending remotely: Ed Skroback

The meeting was called to order at 6:05 by Don Paiva.

Don read the meeting minutes from 10/12/21. Doug made a motion to approve the minutes as read, 2<sup>nd</sup> by Ian, so voted.

Chief Dave Suckling appeared to present his proposed 2022 budget. Total budget request is \$289,515. Up 10,515 over last year's budget amount. Chief Suckling introduced newly appointed officer, John LeBlanc. Cindy asked, with the addition of a 2<sup>nd</sup> officer, do we now have coverage nights and weekends. The chief explained that due to the current housing situation, Officer LeBlanc is not living in the area and works shifts with the cruiser being parked at the Bristol PD as he does not feel it is safe to leave it at the Alexandria municipal building.

The chief explained the chief's pay is up by the cost of living and the officers has been increased to \$25/hr. The Adm. Assist. Pay is proposed to increase from \$14/hr to \$17 with her working 20 hrs/week. Doug asked what the Adm Assist. responsibilities include. The chief explained that she has no benefits and does the majority of the paperwork which keeps the officers on the road

Chief explained that he has met with both Danbury and Alexandria Selectmen to discuss combining the two departments. It would be a savings of about \$80,000 to Alexandria but added cost to Danbury. He reported both towns are open to the idea. The Chief explained that a meeting is scheduled with the towns of Temple and Greenville. They have done the framework. Danbury and Alexandria being in two different counties presents a problem for prosecution. The proposal would include having one Chief, a 2<sup>nd</sup> full-time officer and two part-time officers. The Chief explained one concern is the part-time certification process may be going away. Doug asked what courts the pd uses. The Chief explained that misdemeanors are handled out of Plymouth while the felonies

(80%) are handled out of Woodsville. Both Don and Fred supported this union as it would provide more coverage with savings to the town. The Chief explained that Danbury would like more coverage.

Cindy asked about the health insurance plans. The cost per family plan is estimated to be \$30,000 with that being 90% of the total cost for each plan. The employee pays 10%. This plan has a \$500 deductible. Jen explained that the Selectmen have reviewed different plans and one that has a \$5,000 deductible does not provide much of a savings to the town. She further explained that the plan covers 7 employees and the town is pooled with other towns. Jen was asked what the actual budget figures were for the prior years (the reports provided only show actual expenditures) and she explained that all the figures are available on line.

The Chief explained that both the Administrative Assistant and Dog Officer currently work for both Alexandria and Danbury.

The Chief explained the proposed way the Dept would be overseen. Don asked if this union is possible for 2022. The Chief feels that a warrant article could be put together for this year.

Chief George Clayman presented the fire department budget. The original amount proposed was \$76,659.84 which included replacement windows for the building. This amount was removed bringing amount to \$68,159.84 as it was decided to have the window replacement as a separate warrant article.

Kerry asked what grants we have received. There was a grant last year for \$6500 for "EMS Warm Zone". There have been grants applied for this year, but none received to date.

Doug asked about the status of the windows. He asked if some caulking and maintenance could be done instead of full replacement of the windows. It doesn't appear any of the windows are broken.

Chief Clayman explained that members came to him with this request for the voters.

Doug also asked about lights being left on at the station. Chief Clayman explained that they are left on for safety when members respond to an emergency. It was suggested that the department might look into motion lights which would provide a savings.

Cindy asked what the reserve fund has for a balance. Chief Clayman wasn't sure of balance. It has been depleted this year. The dept. will be asking for more this year.

The question was asked what the duties of the secretary are. Heidi Downing who serves as Secretary was present and explained her duties. She reported that annually there are about 250-260 calls. She organizes and submits all reports to the State and keeps the dept. in compliance. She processes bills and submits to the chief for payment. The Chief explained that all fire fighters and EMS are volunteers and the secretary takes the burden from the responders for the filing of all the paperwork. Chief Clayman and other member handle all oil burner inspections and propane tank inspections and the secretary keeps all the paperwork organized. She also updates the department's facebook page which keeps residents updated. There is also a Code Red Service available that residents can sign up for.

Fred asked how long the current fire station will be adequate. Based on there not being a need for living quarters, requirements are minimal. The Chief guessed 5-10 years and does not feel he can project beyond that as the town continues to grow.

Fred also asked what can be done to improve response time to make people come as minutes count. The Chief explained that supporting the budget helps. There is a substantial increase request for training. Having funds available for people to train and not have to pay out of pocket should help with having more people properly trained. Heidi explained currently the dept has 25 members with 13 trained at Level 1. There is a dept. training officer with driving certification is done in house.

The chief explained that the Forestry amount remains the same. Nothing has been paid out this year, however, the funds need to be available in the event they are needed. Fred explained that the State pays 50% for any forest fire. Emergency management budget no discussion.

#### OLD BUSINESS -School District Funding

Don and Doug met with the Selectmen last week and Doug provided them with a very large packet of information he has gathered with regards to the school district funding and information from when the agreement was created in 1963. Selectman, George Tuthill has reviewed in detail. The Selectmen will meet with Town Attorney, Christ Boldt to review the necessary process with the hope that something can be presented at the next town meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:26.

Respectfully submitted,

Cindy Williams (in absence of Mike Provost) 3

