

**Needham Finance Committee  
Minutes of Meeting of December 17, 2008**

The meeting of the Finance Committee was called to order by the Chair, David Escalante, at 7:00 pm in the Selectmen's Meeting Room at Town Hall.

Present from the	David Escalante, Chair	Richard Reilly
Finance Committee:	Lisa Zappala, Vice Chair	Steven Rosenstock
	Scott Brightman	Michael Taggart
	Richard Creem	Richard Zimbone

There were no public comments.

**Fire Department Operating Budget and Capital Requests Review:** Present for the budget review were Ms. Debbie Bonnano and Fire Chief Paul Buckley. Ms. Bonnano stated that the salary for position 34 in the Position Register Detail (PRD) is an additional \$2,368 because the position is a level 6 position rather than a level 5 position. There was a discussion clarifying that the Finance Committee had not funded items that had been requested for the FY 2009 budget relating to the Charles River Landing project. There was a discussion regarding the current projections for the cost of gasoline and diesel fuel. The projections used by the Fire Department were those provided by the Finance Director: \$5.07 per gallon for diesel fuel and \$4.17 per gallon for gasoline. Mr. Zimbone stated that current projections should be closer to \$3.10 for gasoline and \$3.95 for diesel fuel. The fuel budget was calculated on a per gallon basis by the Fire Department. Mr. Rosenstock stated that conservatism in constructing budgets is desirable. However, funds from the fuel line item in the Expenses and Purchase of Services (E & PoS) can be spent on any line in the E & PoS. On the other hand, if there is a shortfall in the fuel line item, the deficit can be made up from the Reserve Fund. The majority of the Fire Department's fuel use is diesel fuel. The budget amount is based on the previous year's usage. There was a discussion of the deficit in the salary overtime line item. Chief Buckley stated that overtime covers vacations, personal days and a contractual amount. Chief Buckley stated that the Fire Staffing Study concluded that the Town should operate shifts of 16, with minimum staffing of 12. Currently the Fire Department staffs 2 shifts with 15 staff and 2 shifts with 16 staff, with some shifts having as few as 11 staff. Chief Buckley clarified that the overtime issue would still exist regardless of staffing, because of contractual requirements. Chief Buckley also stated that the overtime provision is a standard contract provision. There was a discussion of the cost of the Reverse 911 system and the use of Reverse 911 by the School Department. Chief Buckley stated that the School Department can use the Reverse 911 for emergencies. There was a discussion of the inclusion of mattress and bureau replacement in the Fire Department's operating capital.

The only capital item that the Fire Department is requesting is the Shift Commander Vehicle for \$35,000. The fire inspection vehicle request was moved to FY 2011. The Fire Department will wait to see whether hybrid vehicles are economical before deciding whether it should select a hybrid vehicle.

There was a discussion of the fire boxes. Chief Buckley stated that, with wireless boxes, the boxes would no longer be on telephone poles. The current system cannot be

abandoned yet. Approximately 40% of the fire alarm system cost is maintenance of the boxes. There is no solid cost-benefit data for abandoning the boxes.

There was a discussion of the uncollectible ambulance fees and the effect of the uncollectible fees on revenue. Mr. Davison stated that revenue estimates are based on actual collections, not receivables. Mr. Buckley stated that ambulance revenues are up because of an increase in call volume. There has not been an increase in fees.

The ideal number of paramedics in the Fire Department is 20, according to the Fire Staffing Study. Chief Buckley plans to reach that number through employee turnover.

There is currently one open position in the Fire Department.

**Police Department Operating Budget and Capital Requests Review:** Present for the budget review were Police Chief Leary, Lieutenant Schlittler, Lieutenant Kraemer, and Lieutenant Baker. Chief Leary stated that, in creating his budget, he was mindful of the Town's finances while balancing the increasing demands on his department, which he expects as a result of the economic downturn. The budget for FY 2010 includes all contractual increases as well as 6 additional crossing guards from the High Rock override. Chief Leary's prepared statement to the Finance Committee is attached to the minutes.

There was a discussion of the increase in salaries. Chief Leary stated that over 40% of the staff has less than 5 years of service with the Police Department, which results in higher salary increases. The Police Department expected an increase of approximately 4.5 % for a few years because of the youth of the work force.

There was a discussion of the reclassification of a number of items in the E & PoS lines. The fuel assumption for the Police Department is the same as the fuel assumptions for the Fire Department.

The Police Department currently has 3 unfilled positions. There was a discussion of crossing guards and the filling of crossing guard positions as well as the use of crossing guards for other traffic enforcement.

Moving violations and citations are up by one-third, largely as a result of a motorcycle being added for traffic enforcement.

There was a discussion of the booking equipment. Digital imaging is in place. Live scan fingerprinting is very helpful to police departments in identifying persons in custody. The Police Department is expecting to integrate their booking system and implement parts that do not yet exist in Needham as part of the records management system implementation.

There was a discussion regarding surveillance cameras for traffic and law enforcement. Chief Leary stated that there are not enough areas in his opinion where traffic violations are at a level where surveillance cameras would make sense. He is waiting to see the experience of other cities and towns with the cameras. Vandalism is down and he does not see a need for them to prevent vandalism.

There was a discussion of the Police Department vehicle replacement cycle. In addition to the 4 sector cars, which are due to be replaced on the replacement cycle, the Police Department is requesting a lieutenants' car. The lieutenants' car would be replaced in FY 2012 under the current replacement cycle. Chief Leary stated that the Police Department is looking for a more fuel efficient vehicle. The lieutenants' car gets 8-10 miles to the gallon. A replacement car, which would be a new Taurus, would get approximately 19 miles to the gallon. The lieutenants only engage in administrative driving. Sector cars are all Crown Victorias. There was a discussion of whether there are alternatives to the Crown Victorias.

Lieutenant Kraemer explained the differences among the 3 options for sector cars and why Needham continues with the Crown Victoria, focusing primarily on the large battery capacity and seating space afforded by the Crown Victorias, thereby addressing critical communication and prisoner transportation requirements.

The Police Department has postponed its capital requests by one fiscal year for the Radio and Bay Station Console. The Department is still looking for cash capital funding for the portable radios in FY 2011 and will look for alternative funding sources as well.

There was a discussion of the facilities needs of the Police Department. There is mold in the ventilation outlets and in the carpets as a result of the leaky roof. The roof is scheduled for partial replacement this spring. The Police Department needs conference space. There was a discussion of viable alternatives for an addition to the Public Safety building. The Police Department facility needs are not currently in the Capital Improvement Plan.

### **Park and Recreation Department Operating Budget and Capital Requests Review:**

Present for the budget review were Park and Recreation Commissioners Bill Dermody and Paul Robey and Park and Recreation Director Patty Carey. The Park and Recreation Department budget request is 1.7% more than the FY 2009 budget. Park and Recreation facilities and activities are operated out of the General Fund Operating Budget as well as revolving funds.

There was a discussion of the nighttime usage at Memorial Park and DeFazio and the reimbursement for the costs of the lights for High School events. There was a discussion of energy conservation and achieving higher energy efficiency at the Rosemary pool complex. There was a discussion that items had been shifted from the Department of Public Works to the Park and Recreation Department budget to reflect that Park and Recreation is responsible for those expenses, especially relating to the maintenance of the Rosemary Pool complex. There was a discussion of the collection of fees in revolving funds from various youth sports organizations for the maintenance of fields. Ms. Carey explained that all monies collected for field maintenance are spent for field maintenance. There was a discussion that gate fees from High School sports events are collected by the School Department. The Park and Recreation Department receives no funds from the School Department. Mr. Taggart stated that the High School Athletic Director had stated at a recent School Committee meeting that increased expenses of nighttime athletic events at Memorial Park (i.e. police detail, cost of the lights) had been covered by the increased gate receipts. There was a discussion of the cleaning contract for cleaning of Park and Recreation restrooms. The restrooms at Memorial Park will be cleaned by the same cleaning agency that cleans the High School. Litter continues to be a problem at Park and Recreation facilities.

Most of the Park and Recreation capital requests are being deferred. There was a discussion of the need for a new playground structure at Greene's Field and of the need for a plan to renovate the building at the Cricket Field. The Rosemary Pool complex still needs to be renovated. Ms. Carey stated that the pool structure itself is in good shape and that the pump, which caused problems in recent years, was rebuilt.

There was a discussion whether the fields at Newman should be included in the Newman school repairs. Ms. Carey stated that the fields are not on the plans for the school repairs. She stated that the Newman fields should be the next fields to be renovated. Part of the renovation could be eligible for Community Preservation Act funding. She does not have any estimate of the cost of renovating the Newman fields. They are similar in size to the DeFazio South renovation, which is costing the Needham Sports Club, a private organization,

\$700,000 to renovate. Ms. Carey also stated that the playground at Newman needs to be replaced. The cost will be approximately \$200,000.

**Acceptance of Minutes of Prior Meetings:** There was a discussion of the format of the minutes of the Finance Committee meeting of December 10, 2008. Any changes Finance Committee members have to the minutes of the meeting of December 10, 2008 will be provided to the executive secretary.

**Finance Committee Updates:** The Permanent Public Building Committee is using unexpended funds from the feasibility study for the Newman HVAC repairs to study construction phasing more in depth. There was a discussion of the timing of the Newman repairs.

Mr. Creem moved to adjourn the meeting at approximately 9:45 pm, seconded by Mr. Zimbone. The meeting was adjourned by unanimous vote: 8-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Louise Miller  
Executive Secretary