

Article 14 Questions & Answers

6/8/2020

**Article 14, specifically in regards to the police staffing increase:
What is the specific role and need for the two new officer positions? It mentions "complex situations/specialized services"- what does that mean?**

The work performed by the Needham police has become more complex. In the past several years policing has changed from a reactive numbers driven profession to a community based response that uses collaborative resources to address issues that impact criminal behavior. The officer in FY 2019 was assigned to a community service/outreach position. I think historically we have done a good job at handling the call for service but have lacked the ability to follow up or address the underlying issues due to manpower limitations. The idea behind this position would be to serve the needs of the citizens while reducing the overall workload on patrol services. This officer would be responsible for working with mental health situations, domestic violence, substance related issues and the elderly. At a minimum, mental health calls are a 2-unit response and the time dedicated to speaking with everyone on scene, the intervention taken, reports being completed, and follow-ups can be extremely lengthy and complicated.

Example of fraud/theft call. The rise in fraud and Cyber-Crime activity puts pressure on the Department's ability to respond effectively as it could, due to the complexity and resources these crimes demand. The main goal of the department in handling these types of cases is, if possible, to recover any currency or property that was stolen. The Department's response to a citizen's fraud or Cyber-Crime report, in most cases, will involve three different sections of our department- patrol, detectives and our officers assigned to the Metro-LEC Cyber-Crime division.

The request for two additional officers in FY21 would be to assign them to patrol. The number of officers assigned to each shift are at near minimum staffing levels. Since we consistently run at that level, when a shift is vacant due to an officer being out injured, vacation time, sick time, and training, it must be filled with overtime. This is an expensive alternative and results in limited a limited number of officers that are available to fill these voids.

The new officers would be placed in the patrol rotation in order to balance the patrol staff. Currently, we operate with four sector cars and a UC car on the day and evening shifts. The newer officers would allow us to increase our minimum complement that would ensure a second UC car of those shifts. The additional shifts would cover sectors 3 and 4, the lower end of Needham, which includes the Needham Crossing. Not only would this give us more coverage in the designated areas of patrol, but it would provide a measure of bench strength that would allow us to cover patrol staffing vacancies due to illness, vacation, and training without paying overtime and/or ordering patrol officers into the vacant shifts.

6/7/2020

Townwide Line Item 4, Elec Light & Gas, is a small increase from FY2020. The reason for the increase is stated in the Finance Committee's letter. However, the precipitous drop in usage of town buildings should provide significant savings in this line item. Is the DPW (former Department of Public Facilities) doing to ensure that idle buildings are consuming much less energy than occupied buildings did?

Response:

The estimate is based on the FY2021 assumptions, at this point it is anticipated that all the buildings will be used. There are many variables which impact the budget: usage, temperature, and price, as well as additional buildings. There are four buildings which were not or were only partially funded during FY2020: the Williams School, the Memorial Park Field House, the Jack Cogswell Facility, and the Mitchell School modular classrooms. FY2021 also includes a new Fire Headquarters, and although the building is a more energy efficient, it is a larger facility and has more systems drawing power. The budget for the Fire Headquarters is only for a portion of the fiscal year. The Town is mindful of energy conservation and takes steps to ensure that unnecessary lighting is turned off. The Town does this notwithstanding COVID-19. This has been demonstrated and reflected by the budget turnback in prior years.

6/6/2020

I'm trying to better understand the school budget request. First a general comment - at town meetings in the past, I've appreciated the school committee's presentation, but I did not find a recorded video from them this year. If that exists, please point me to it! If not, please know that it is missed.

I've tried to better understand the details by reading the warrant, reading the May 1 letter from NPS, and watching Dan G's video. In the process, I found the school department salary and staffing schedule on page 57 of the warrant has old data, through 2017.

So my question - is Dan Gutekanst's salary increasing by 115k? Can I have an explanation for the increase listed on page 7 of the May 1 letter from NPS?

Response:

Video is posted on website under Article 14, link:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=815p7jZnWck>

Department Salary & Staffing Schedule has been updated with erroneously omitted data on the website at: <https://www.needhamma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/21485>

Most of the increase (\$93,735) is due to an internal reorganization, in which the staff reporting to the Director of Planning, Communication and Community Education were relocated from the Student Support Services budget to the Superintendent's Office. The staff members include four part-time staff individuals totaling 1.01 FTE.

Additionally, the School Committee approved a \$9,000 budget for the District's annual Performance Report, including funds for postage, printing and design. Although this report has been published for many years, the lack of a permanent funding source has presented fiscal challenges that must be overcome each year. This request provides an ongoing source of funds for that publication.