



Public Safety & Transportation Committee Report

City of Newton In City Council

Wednesday, November 6, 2024

Present: Councilors Grossman (Chair), Downs, Lucas, Wright, Block and Bixby

Absent: Councilors Greenberg and Lipof

City Staff: Chief Greg Gentile and Assistant Chief Michael Bianchi, Newton Fire Department; and Chief Operating Officer Jonathan Yeo

Others Present: NewTV

All agendas and reports, both past and present, can be found at the following link:
<https://www.newtonma.gov/government/city-clerk/city-council/council-standing-committees/public-safety-transportation-committee>

For more information regarding this meeting, a video recording can be found at the following link:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dZcuXAZgPYY&list=PLqJiDbsvfNjVWX8R9k0Ox5M_0URb-iS39&t=6s

Referred to Public Safety & Transportation and Finance Committees

#408-24

Authorization to appropriate and expend \$1,000,000 to purchase PFAS-free Firefighter Gear

HER HONOR THE MAYOR requesting authorization to appropriate and expend one million dollars (\$1,000,000) from June 30, 2024 Certified Free Cash to purchase one set of PFAS-free firefighter gear for each Firefighter of the Newton Fire Department.

Action: **Public Safety & Transportation Approved 5-0, Councilor Block recused**

Note: Chief Gentile joined the Committee.

Chief Gentile stated that this request is to purchase PFAS-free bunker gear for each member of the department. Approximately 8 years ago, we made changes with our gear trying to reduce our risk to PFAS. At the time, there was no PFAS-free gear available. This past August, a bill was passed making it mandatory for all gear to be PFAS-free beginning in 2027.

Questions and answers:

What is the process for identifying the right choice for PFAS-free bunker gear? Chief Gentile answered that there are many factors. It's a balancing act between protection, weight, flexibility and allowing an individual to breathe. Bunker gear is supposed to protect us from heat and allow body heat to escape. We also discuss cost and availability. All gear is National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) certified.

What will \$1,000,000 purchase? Chief Gentile answered just under 200 sets of bunker gear.

How did you arrive at \$1,000,000? What is the cost of the gear? Chief Gentile answered that we took the cost of our current gear, and spoke with a manufacturer trying to come to the best estimate possible. Some of the gear that we're looking at is not available yet; we will wait to see as many iterations as possible. \$1,000,000 is the best estimate we could make. We have positioned ourselves to be at the top of the line to purchase this gear when it becomes available. There will be many communities looking to purchase PFAS-free bunker gear.

Approximately 200 sets of gear totals \$5,000 each set. Is \$5,000 correct? Chief Gentile answered that approximately 8 years ago, bunker gear cost \$3,800. The cost has increased since 2020. Several years ago, we began a program to replace bunker gear. NFPA standard mandates 10 years. We able to replace a number of sets every year within the budget.

What happens to the bunker gear if a firefighter retires? Is it reused or sold? Chief Gentile answered that most times it is reused. Bunker gear can only increase or decrease sizes by a certain percentage. They are custom fit. If not, the gear becomes a backup set.

If the gear doesn't fit, is there money in the budget to purchase new gear? Chief Gentile answered yes.

Does the gear include jacket, pants, boots and helmet? Chief Gentile answered pants and jacket only.

Does the department include gear in the yearly budget? Chief Gentile answered yes. We don't intend to return to Council for another large purchase. We believe the operating budget will handle replacements going forward.

Councilor Lucas made a motion to approve. Committee members agreed 5-0, Councilor Block recused.

#414-24 **Referred to Public Safety & Transportation and Finance Committees**
Authorization to appropriate and expend \$75,000 for Fire Shift Commander's Vehicle Replacement

HER HONOR THE MAYOR requesting authorization to appropriate and expend seventy-five thousand dollars (\$75,000) from June 30, 2024 Certified Free Cash for the purchase of a new Shift Commander Vehicle (C-2) in the Fire Department.

Action: **Public Safety & Transportation Approved 5-0, Councilor Block recused.**

Note: Chief Gentile joined the Committee.

Chief Gentile stated that this request is to purchase a new Deputy Chief shift commander SUV. The current vehicle is a 2019 Ford Expedition with over 60,000 miles responding to over 3,000 calls per year. The current vehicle will become a backup vehicle. The chain of vehicle moves ends with the retirement of a 2009 Ford Taurus that has over 100,000 miles.

Questions and answers:

What type of vehicle will be purchased? Chief Gentile answered a larger SUV to hold equipment. An appropriate size vehicle would be a Ford Expedition or a Chevy Tahoe.

What will happen to the Ford Taurus? Chief Gentile answered that he would have to check with the mechanic on the condition. If it's worthy, it would go to surplus or auction.

Councilor Downs made a motion to approve. Committee members agreed 5-0, Councilor Block recused.

Referred to Public Safety & Transportation and Finance Committees

#415-24 Authorization to appropriate and expend \$1,800,000 for Fire Ladder Truck 3 Replacement

HER HONOR THE MAYOR requesting authorization to appropriate and expend one-million eight-hundred thousand dollars (\$1,800,000) from June 30, 2024 Certified Free Cash for the purpose of funding the purchase of a new Fire Ladder Truck 3 for the Newton Fire Department.

Action: **Public Safety & Transportation Approved 5-0, Councilor Block recused**

Note: Assistant Chief Bianchi and Mr. Yeo joined the Committee.

Assistant Chief Bianchi stated that this request is to purchase a new ladder truck replacing Ladder 3. Ladder 3 will become a spare. We worked with the manufacturer designing a new ladder truck which is one foot smaller than previously purchased, keeping in mind narrow streets and maneuverability. The ladder size will remain 103' long and the cabinet space will remain the same size. Delivery time is approximately 2½ to 3 years.

Questions and answers:

What is the reason to approve this appropriation tonight, when it will take such a long time to get the truck? Assistant Chief Bianchi answered to begin the process with the manufacturer of designing and tweaking to receive a proposal.

Can we assume this money will be held in reserves until the truck is purchased? Assistant Chief Bianchi answered yes. Mr. Yeo added that to order the truck, there needs to be funding allocated.

In the meantime, will the money collect interest? Mr. Yeo answered yes.

Can we assume you're putting in the order now so that it will be ready in 2½ to 3 years when you expect Ladder 3 to become a backup? Assistant Chief Bianchi answered yes.

Because the process is long, will you begin the purchase of the next truck earlier? Assistant Chief Bianchi answered that they will get a jump start on designing the next truck earlier. Mr. Yeo added that we try to schedule vehicles needing replacement in the CIP. The waiting period has become longer. We work closely with the department to schedule funding and look at possible funding sources.

Where will this new ladder truck be housed? Assistant Chief Bianchi answered Station 1, on Church Street in Newton Corner.

Councilor Wright made a motion to approve. Committee members agreed 5-0, Councilor Block recused.

The Committee adjourned at 7:24 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Becky Grossman, Chair