



Public Safety & Transportation Committee Report

City of Newton

In City Council

FIRE DEPARTMENT

BUDGET REPORT

Thursday, May 28, 2020

Present: Councilor Auchincloss (Chair), Markiewicz, Downs, Lipof, Malakie, Grossman and Ciccone

Absent: Councilor Bowman

Also Present: Councilor Baker, Humphrey, Albright and Norton

City Staff: Chief David MacDonald and Lt. George McMains, Newton Police Department; Chief Gino Lucchetti and Acting Assistant Chief Gregory Gentile, Newton Fire Department; Jonathan Yeo, Chief Operating Officer and Maureen Lemieux, Chief Financial Officer

Referred to Finance and Appropriate Committees

#8-20(2) Submittal of the FY 2021 Municipal/School Operating Budget

HER HONOR THE MAYOR submitting in accordance with Section 5-1 of the City of Newton Charter the FY21 Municipal/School Operating Budget, passage of which shall be concurrent with the FY21-FY25 Capital Improvement Program (#8-20).

EFFECTIVE DATE OF SUBMISSION 05/11/20; LAST DATE TO PASS THE BUDGET 06/25/2020

Referred to Finance and Appropriate Committees

#8-20 Submittal of the FY 2021 to FY 2025 Capital Improvement Plan (#8-20)

HER HONOR THE MAYOR submitting the Fiscal Years 2021 to 2025 Capital Improvement Plan pursuant to section 5-3 of the Newton City Charter.

Referred to Finance and Appropriate Committees

#8-20(3) Submittal of the FY 2021 – FY 2025 Supplemental Capital Improvement Plan

HER HONOR THE MAYOR submitting the FY 2021 – FY 2025 Supplemental Capital Improvement Plan.

Action: Public Safety & Transportation Approved 7-0, STRAW VOTE

Note: Chief Lucchetti, Acting Assistant Chief Gregory Gentile and Maureen Lemieux, Chief Financial Officer joined the Committee for discussion on these items and discussed their FY21 Budget Summary and opening remarks.

FIRE DEPARTMENT PERSONNEL & STAFFING:

The Fire Department personnel is broken into the following six sub-divisions:

1. Emergency Management
2. Fire Suppression
3. Fire Prevention
4. Emergency Medical Services
5. Technical Rescue
6. Communications Division

The Fire Department employs 199 full time employees and one part time employee.

Chief Lucchetti stated that the operating budget has allowed the department to sustain their 199 full time employees, maintain training, updating the fleet and firefighters gear. Today, the department has eight vacancies due to retirements. It is mandatory for a firefighter to retire at the age of 65. Unfortunately, the firefighter academy is closed. It is hopeful the academy will reopen in January 2021. If the academy opens before then, Chief Lucchetti has members ready to attend in order to have manpower at a comfortable level for the department.

Chief Lucchetti stated that the pandemic has made it difficult for the department over the past few months on preventing cross contamination and exposure to firefighters. The department continues to respond with integrity. The pandemic has also affected the department's budget due to spending more funding on resources.

Acting Assistant Chief Gentile stated that the pandemic has caused the department to be proactive with policies being put into place. In order to keep firefighters safe, they are limited to what station they work out of limiting exposure. By maintaining the same firefighters together brings limited exposure not affecting the other stations. Daily self-checks are conducted on employees to ensure they are healthy. The department has been stringent on decontamination and cleaning procedures. There have been zero positive cases of Covid-19 in the department. Early on in the pandemic, the department used protective equipment and implemented proactive policies in order to keep the number of positive cases to zero.

Chief Lucchetti stated that Stations 1 and 2 have been undergoing updates. The department is concentrating on separating hot and cold zones. Different zones allow safety and health for firefighters. Some updates include filling holes in the station poles, making the living area

separate, using fans to remove carcinogens, using clothes extractors and maintaining a second set of firefighter gear.

Chief Lucchetti stated that the Wires Division is a critical section of the department. They have been working to keep the five towers up and running on a daily basis. The circuit system is quite old, they have been replacing three to four circuits per year. He then stated that the permit software is user friendly.

Acting Assistant Chief Gentile stated that firefighters are trained in three areas. The most important training is focused on EMS training. The pandemic has made firefighters train to protect themselves and others. The department continues to train on heavy rescue and fire suppression.

Acting Assistant Chief Gentile stated that a bunker gear replacement program has been in place for approximately five years. One set of bunker gear is good for ten years or less. Firefighters rotate their bunker gear with a second set. One set is always clean and ready to use.

FIRE DEPARTMENT FY20 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- The department maintained its Class 1 Fire rating through extensive training and updated software.
- All members participated in the active shooter and hazardous event response training.
- The department continues to replace bunker gear that are approaching their shelf life and add another set of gear.
- The department installed two fire alarm systems with back-up generators. This brings the total of five upgrades to continue improving radio capability.
- The department continues to replace cables to upgrade alarm circuits.
- The Wires Division and Fire Prevention Bureau have commissioned twenty new digitized master boxes in conjunction with the fire code.
- The department completed their radio replacements to ensure safety and survivability of department members.
- The department purchased fire extinguishers to educate and train residents and employees.
- The department trained three recruits at the Massachusetts Fire Academy to a firefighter level 1 and level 2 certifications. These firefighters are now in the Suppression Force.

FIRE DEPARTMENT FY21 GOALS

Outcome 1 – Continue improvements and upgrades to fire alarm infrastructure. Continue upgrades to fire alarm infrastructure including main cable replacements. Ongoing repair and maintenance to fire alarm boxes. Maintaining the underground splicing which will provide long term sustainability of critical systems. Preparing backup dispatch to self-sustain with a new

server in case of catastrophe in the main dispatch center. Continue to upgrade radio communications with a simulcast system for radio messaging.

Outcome 2 – Training. The Training Division will continue to deliver advanced training to department personnel. The department will continue technical rescue training on new techniques in extrication, search and rescue and man versus machine. Emergency Medical services training continues to be a top priority. The Training Division will continue their “back to basics” program. This training focuses on member skills in search, rescue, fire suppression, rapid intervention team and aspects of building construction.

Outcome 3 – Cross-training of fire prevention personnel. The department will improve internal processes by having all fire prevention personnel cross trained in all duties required in the Fire Prevention Division. The Fire Prevention Division is working with other departments with a private vendor to create a software program that will be more user friendly to realtors, contractors and homeowners for renovation or new construction projects. The software will streamline the process to a digital format to assist in the efficiency of the permitting process.

Outcome 4 – Station and equipment upgrades. Replace Engine 2, expected delivery September 2020. Continue to upgrade Stations 1 and 2 for the health and safety of firefighters.

FIRE DEPARTMENT BUDGET

The following are significant line item changes to expenses in the budget:

Fire/Rescue - \$1,080,434.00. increase.
Fire Prevention - \$26,060.00. increase.
Fire Alarm Services - \$48,834.00. increase.
Fire Vehicle Maintenance - \$26,107.00. decrease.
Fire Communications - \$23,931.00. increase.
Fire Training - \$14,696.00. increase.
Emergency Operations Center - \$34,000.00. increase.

SUPPLEMENTAL CIP

There are no CIP projects for FY21.

GRANTS, GIFTS AND REVOLVING FUNDS

The following have been requested for FY21; Chief Lucchetti has requested the following.

1. Sale of Surplus Fire Equipment Revolving \$100,000.00.

2. Federal Assistance to Firefighters Grant \$500,000.00.
3. Federal Homeland Security Emergency Operations Center Grant \$25,000.00.
4. State Regional HAZMAT Response Grant Program \$50,000.00.

QUESTIONS, COMMENTS and ANSWERS:

- Congratulations on maintaining your Class 1 fire rating. It is not easy to maintain requirements, training and updating gear. Happy to hear that the firefighters are protected from carcinogens and decontaminations. Firefighters health and safety are the number one priority.
- Congratulations on updating Stations 1 and 2.
- Are Stations 1 and 2 the last stations to be rebuilt? Chief Lucchetti answered that six stations have either been rebuilt or rehabilitated. Stations 1 and 2 were built in 1961-1962. Stations 1 and 2 will now be safe for the firefighters.
- Why does the department have a large turnover rate? Chief Lucchetti answered that the firefighters are the last from the Vietnam era. The cause of the large turnover rate is due to the number of retirements. Once a firefighter reaches 80% of their pension, they put in for their retirement. Once retired, firefighters move onto safer environments. It is mandatory for a firefighter to retire at the age of 65.
- Why has the hazardous duty stipend increased over 50% from \$245,000.00 to \$374,000.00? Chief Lucchetti stated that the firefighters settled their contract. Ms. Lemieux stated that the increase is due to active shooter/hostile event response (ASHER) training. The training prepares personnel to respond and mitigate life-threatening injuries in a hostile related environment. Firefighters are not expecting ASHER training when they become firefighters. Firefighters have agreed to ASHER training therefore, they receive an increase in their stipend.
- Please explain why there is an increase in pay of 6.8%. Ms. Lemieux stated that the contracts have been settled through the year 2023. Seventy-six percent of firefighters do not automatically receive step increases, only cost of living adjustments (COLA). The budget reflects 76% of staff who did not receive an increase in 2019 or 2020. Last year, the City spent 2.7 million. This year, 2 million will be spent because the firefighter contracts have been settled.
- Please explain why response times are notably different from 2018 to 2019. Acting Assistant Chief Gentile answered that run times are very important. Run times are part of maintaining Class 1 fire rating. Response times vary by the amount of City traffic. The department works to determine which station shall respond to an incident reducing travel time.

- The Fire Department maintenance budget has decreased. Does the department have adequate supplies to operate? Chief Lucchetti answered that the department is fortunate to have updated equipment. He is comfortable with the current equipment. Vehicles have a five-year bumper to bumper warranty. Any found issues is usually covered under warranty. The department has two knowledgeable in-house mechanics which saves the department repair money and he feels comfortable with the mechanics budget. Ms. Lemieux stated that the maintenance budget also includes the Chief vehicles.
- Are firefighters being tested for Covid-19? Acting Assistant Chief Gentile answered yes, approximately thirty firefighters have been tested because they were either exposed at times or had symptoms. There have been zero positive tests.

Committee members commended Chief Lucchetti for his continued excellence. They then thanked the Fire Department for their excellent continued work.

A motion was made to move approve on a straw vote to accept the Fire Department Budget, CIP and grants, totaling \$25,484,630,00 which is a 4.97% increase over FY20 budget. Committee members agreed 7-0.

At approximately 8:45 p.m., the Committee adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Jacob D. Auchincloss, Chair