



Public Safety & Transportation Committee Report

City of Newton In City Council

Wednesday, November 9, 2022

Present: Councilors Downs (Chair), Malakie, Oliver, Lucas, Grossman, Markiewicz, Lipof and Bowman

City Staff: Chief Greg Gentile and Assistant Chief Michael Bianchi, Newton Fire Department and Joseph Mulvey, Chief Information Officer Information Technology Department

Referred to Public Safety & Transportation and Finance Committees

#483-22

Request to transfer \$800,000 from the June 30, 2022 Certified Free Cash

HER HONOR THE MAYOR requesting authorization to transfer the sum of eight-hundred thousand dollars (\$800,000) from June 30, 2022 Certified Free Cash to fund the replacement of Fire Engine 7.

Action: Public Safety & Transportation Approved 8-0

Note: Chief Gentile and Assistant Chief Bianchi joined the Committee.

Chief Gentile: requesting 800,000 for the purchase of a new engine to replace our 15-year-old Engine 7. Assistant Chief Bianchi has been spearheading this project.

Assistant Chief Bianchi: when they started looking to replace this truck, thought it was a best to make a commitment to finding a smaller version, more maneuverable, better turning radius to allow safe travels around the city. We found it was possible to take several inches off the wheelbase and one foot off the overall length of the truck without losing any necessary equipment.

The plan is to make the old Engine 7 a spare apparatus. NFD will eliminate one of the spare engines which is 23 years old, the end of life per national Fire Protection Association (NFPA).

Questions, answers and comments:

Happy to hear that you took size into consideration. Also appreciate that we won't be expanding stations to accommodate a larger truck.

The request is for \$800,000 but the proposal is for \$760,804.00, why is there an approximate \$40,000 difference? Chief Gentile answered that the approximate \$40,000 is to stock the truck including new hoses, nozzles and ground ladders. Some old equipment from Engine 7 will be transferred. Once the money is approved, we'll be able to work with the vendor, Bulldog Fire Apparatus, Inc. to get an exact price.

The pilot of the speed cushions on Grant Avenue was geared towards the fire truck wheel base being able to pass without slowing down. Is that still the case? Assistant Chief Bianchi answered only several inches will change, making it very close to the current trucks.

Will the 23-year-old truck be sold and if so, where does the money go? Chief Gentile answered that the department has not sold spare trucks in the past and did not know whether they were saleable.

What is the process for purchasing new equipment? Is Bulldog your usual vendor? Are you required to receive different bids? Chief Gentile answered that this year, we put a committee together and did a wider search than NFD has in the past. We wanted to reduce the truck size; it became clear that some of the available engines were bigger than what we needed. We went back to the vendor we used for Engine 1. We investigated two other manufacturers, asked other cities and towns what they were doing and what they liked and didn't like. This is the first time Assistant Chief Bianchi and I are purchasing an apparatus. This vendor jumped at the opportunity to help us. Bulldog's suspension in the front allows the truck to have a much tighter turning radius than any other manufacturer. The department is not required to receive different bids.

What is the next oldest truck? Chief Gentile answered the next oldest truck is nearly 15 years old. NFPA states that departments should start trying to replace trucks every 10 to 15 years. Traditionally, we have tried to begin the process at 13 years so that we are receiving the truck at 15 years. Ladder 3, almost 15 years old is on the Capital Improvement Plan for replacement.

Without further discussion, Councilor Lipof made a motion to approve this transfer. Committee members agreed 8-0.

Referred to Public Safety & Transportation and Finance Committees

#495-22

Request to transfer \$55,000 from Financial Services Full Time Salaries

HER HONOR THE MAYOR requesting authorization to transfer the sum of fifty-five thousand dollars (\$55,000) from Acct #0111049-511001 Financial Services Full Time Salaries to a Department 111-Non-Lapsing Police Technology Upgrade Account.

Action:

Public Safety & Transportation Approved 8-0

Note:

Mr. Mulvey joined the Committee.

Mr. Mulvey stated that an Information Technology person left the Police Department in April, since that time, the City IT Department has been working with police staff and a consulting company to unravel 20 years of software, website and technology equipment that is now nearly unusable.

It cost approximately \$180,000 to replace every desktop computer except for the dispatch ones, which were replaced on a more regular basis. The technology upgrade includes phone systems, 90 computers in three buildings, switches, wiring closets, cameras and wireless access points and software licensing with Microsoft Office 365. The City's IT Department has done extensive inventory with the hardware and software.

Many of the desktop computers were running older software, like Office 2010 and older. Some people only ran a single application. Typically, it was a Microsoft Access Program Delphi, whose specialty is public safety and police departments. As we began replacing out older computers this month, we are buying 20 subscription licenses at a time. Mr. Mulvey stated that he does believe Newton is being frugal. We are not cutting corners, but we are trying not to pay for subscriptions that won't be used.

The police project will increase approximately \$20,000 per year. For the budget in 2024 he will be requesting an increase. This year, the funding is not in the City's IT budget.

The city encountered a problem on Dudley Road affecting the fiber and many buildings. The fiber stayed up but the area was down to one valid path. The repair cost approximately \$14,000 by the company who installed the fiber in 2013 to 2014. New fiber will be guaranteed for 25 years. This problem was more of an act of God than a defect in fiber optic cable.

Questions, answers and comments:

What sort of safeguards are now built in to make sure that something like the NPD's IT division being an island without interconnectivity with the rest of Newton's IT won't happen again?

Mr. Mulvey answered that during his tenure, IT's presence was never requested unless it was specific things like accessing Munis. We often met with police to discuss technology; we made recommendations which weren't addressed. We work well with the current department. Moving forward, it is a team effort, everything needs to be documented and there needs to be a whole workflow of support columns. There should never be only one person capable of doing a particular task. Documentation and training are critical.

As far as the cut cable--the City has the rights to about a foot of pole space on every pole in the City. Our city fiber is two loops, a North Loop and a South Loop. There's a bisector that cuts through the middle that's kind of equivalent to the path of the Mass Pike or Washington Street. Off each of those two loops we have spokes that go to every City school, radio tower and public safety building. There are approximately 62 locations with City fiber. The fiber itself has a very thick jacket and typically, it's going to have a strand of steel either inside or attached to the outside, depending on how many strands in a particular area. The jacket is hard plastic.

In your opinion, do we have any other IT islands in the city that we should be looking for or thinking about? Mr. Mulvey answered I don't think so. We have great relationships with the Fire Department, Library, School Department with no complaints. We meet on a regular basis; we reach out as needed when problems or challenges arise.

The request is for \$55,000 but the proposal is for \$51,288, why is there an approximate \$3,900 difference? Mr. Mulvey answered that the fiber repairs require police details. We had two different locations where they did work. Typically, it's one or two officers minimum of four hours which is approximately \$1375 to \$1,500 for the work. I rounded up to \$55,000 just to make it even to have a buffer.

What happens to the excess money? Does it go back to Free Cash? Mr. Mulvey answered perhaps the Police Department. IT Department is very different than other departments other than salary. When money goes into one of our budgets, we're not buying equipment for ourselves, we are buying equipment for every other department in the city. I promise you that every penny of this is frugally and well spent.

It is still difficult to find crash data on the NPD site. When will the police website be updated? Mr. Mulvey answered that when the police website was shut down, we took over hosting and put it with the rest of the departments. The problem was there were many reports, including pedestrian, bike, and vehicle accidents where information was pulled from the QED system, the heart and soul of public safety. Any call that comes into dispatch, the information is recorded and is synched to state databases. We are working with QED and LexisNexis who write internal accident software that allows the police to create dashboards. We have discussions with QED about accessing accident reports and bringing them online. There are many moving parts from the Criminal Justice Information System at the State.

Comment: The old website was not perfect but there was important crash data that is necessary for other functions in the city including where safety interventions are necessary. Our volunteers work hard to try to map these out and to determine if there are necessary changes that may be missing.

Without further discussion, Councilor Lipof made a motion to approve this transfer. Committee members agreed 8-0.

The Committee adjourned at 8:19 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Andreae Downs, Chair