

CITY OF NORWALK
PUBLIC SAFETY AND GENERAL GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE OF THE COMMON
COUNCIL
JANUARY 27, 2022

Attendance: Jenn McMurrer, Chair; Dominique Johnson; Thomas Keegan; Diana Revolus; Heidi Alterman; Nicol Ayers; Greg Burnett; Barbara Smyth; Nora Niedzielski-Eichner; Josh Goldstein (arrived at 7:15PM)

Staff: Michele DeLuca, Deputy Director Emergency Management; Gino Gatto; Fire Chief; Thomas Kulhawik, Police Chief; Susan Zecca, Deputy Police Chief, Dr. Alexandra Estrella, Superintendent of Schools; Ryan Harold, Board of Education; Sandra Faioes, Board of Education

I. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Ms. McMurrer called the meeting to order at 7:01PM

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

**** MR. KEEGAN MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES AS SUBMITTED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED WITH TWO ABSTENTIONS- MS. MCMURRER AND MS. AYERS**

III. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Ms. Lauricella stated that on occasion she has observed this committee and is pleased it is now called the Public Safety and General Government Committee, and that it has the potential of allowing more oversight or at least discussion on the government approach, and she looks forward to sharing her observations and wishes the committee luck.

Ms. Lauricella said that item 1 on the agenda states that any grant program that does not require a matching fund will not come to the committee for questions or discussion and will go directly to the Mayor's office and while she is happy when the city does get grants, when looking at the city's charter it states there needs to be a check and balance on any monies that we accept even in the form of a grant and asked how the Common Council will know which grants have been accepted, and how they will weigh in on a grant that may or may not be going in the right direction.

Ms. Lauricella spoke on item 2 on the agenda and said that at least for the last ten years on occasion during the budget discussion she has requested to begin to cycle in renewable energy vehicles into our fleet operations where possible, and there was a very slow shift for hybrid vehicles and requested this item be tabled until the committee has more of a chance to look at the benefits of electric vehicles. She said there are other police and many other departments around the country that have switched to Electric

vehicles and asked that the committee consult the EV Club of Connecticut because they have terrific data and information that will help the police department and this committee assist our city in having to save money and have reliable vehicles.

III. NEW BUSINESS

POLICE DEPARTMENT

1. AUTHORIZE THE MAYOR, HARRY W. RILLING, TO EXECUTE ANY AND ALL AGREEMENTS AND OTHER DOCUMENTS NECESSARY TO APPLY FOR, ACCEPT AND/OR RECEIVE FEDERAL OR STATE GRANT FUNDS FOR ANY GRANT PROGRAM WHICH WILL BE UTILIZED BY THE NORWALK POLICE DEPARTMENT FOR PUBLIC, HEALTH AND SAFETY PURPOSES ANNUALLY UNTIL HEREAFTER REVOKED BY THE COMMON COUNCIL, TO THE EXTENT THAT THE PROGRAM DOES NOT REQUIRE A MUNICIPAL FUNDING MATCH.

Mr. Goldstein asked for a broader an explanation of the item. Deputy Chief Zecca said they have some issues with certain grants that have no cost share because the time frames are very short and are having issues with the timing of having them approved by the Common Council and signed by the mayor and being able to apply on time. She said any grants that have a cost share would still come through the committee as they normally do. Mr. Goldstein asked how often this happens in a fiscal year. Deputy Chief Zecca said three to six at the most. Mr. Keegan said at the Common Council meeting it will be announced on which grants were applied for so the information will still be known to the public. Chief Kulhawik added that a process can be created to forward the information to the Common Council when the grant is applied for. Ms. Alterman asked if the Common Council has ever denied a grant that was applied for. Chief Kulhawik said “no” Ms. Alterman said her only hesitation would be if there is any history of a grant that were perceived as not equitable. Mr. Burnett asked if this approach would change across the board for all grants for the City of Norwalk. Deputy Chief Zecca said with this authorization the intent is just for the Police Department to ensure they can get the funding they are looking for based on time constraints.

**** MR. KEEGAN MOVED TO TABLE THE ITEM SO THE ITEM CAN BE DISCUSSED FURTHER WITH THE LAW DEPARTMENT TO INCLUDE OTHER COMMITTEES AND DEPARTMENTS WITHIN THE CITY.**

**** MS. ALTERMAN SECONDED THE MOTION.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED WITH ONE (1) OPPOSED – MR GOLDSTEIN AND ONE (1) ABSTENTION- MS. MCMURRER**

2. AUTHORIZE THE PURCHASING AGENT, SHARON CONNORS, TO EXECUTE THE PURCHASE ORDER ON BEHALF OF THE POLICE DEPARTMENT TO MHQ INC. UNDER THE STATE CONTRACT, CT 12PSX0194, FOR THE PURCHASE OF TEN (10) 2022 FORD UTILITY INTERCEPTOR HYBRID POLICE VEHICLES FOR THE AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$367,976.00. ACCOUNT# 0922 3010-5777-C0665

Chief Kulhawik said this is a standard vehicle purchase each year and there is a schedule of vehicle purchasing to replace the fleet which is a 24/7 fleet, and this is to replace 10 of the front-line patrol vehicles which then get recycled back as spares and extra vehicles or get painted and used as unmarked vehicles for other divisions. He said several years ago he requested his staff to look at purchasing hybrid vehicles and they did some research and found that there were very few agencies that were using them and there was very little literature on the value of them as well as the repair records so we waited, and two years ago looked into it again and found that other agencies have starting using them with no issues so we decided now would be a good time based on the input from the community. He said as far as a full electric fleet that numerous charging stations would need to be installed at the Police Department and would need a capital expenditure to do that.

Mr. Goldstein asked what the overall cost savings will be with the hybrid vehicles as opposed to gas. Chief Kulhawik said this will be a test to see what the cost savings will be and the cost between a hybrid vehicle and a gas vehicle was low. Ms. Alterman asked if anyone is working on obtaining grants for electric vehicles. Chief Kulhawik said he will need to ask the city's grants coordinator. Ms. Ayers asked if there will be any change in the way the maintenance will need to be done on the hybrid cars. Deputy Chief Zecca said that the fleet maintenance at DPW does the maintenance on the vehicles, and they have said they will still be able to do the routine maintenance, and the larger jobs would need to go to the dealer, but they already send the larger work to the dealer because of the extended warranties and there is only one mechanic that is assigned to work on the police vehicles. Ms. Niedzielski-Eichner said she did some research from a fiscal standpoint as well as an environmental standpoint and purchasing electric vehicles should be investigated, and there may be value to hold off for a year on purchasing the hybrid vehicles and come up with a plan to include a conversion to electric vehicles. Deputy Chief Zecca said she has not reached the purchase of electric vehicles, but she would be concerned to hold off on purchasing the ten hybrid cars because that would further deteriorate the fleet if no vehicles were purchased for a year. Ms. Johnson suggested requesting one or two electric vehicles as part of the next years capital budget request to test them for usefulness. Chief Kulhawik said there are not enough spare vehicles to use while the electric ones can be charged because all the front-line vehicles run 27/7 but they can investigate going forward that for the unmarked vehicles depending on the use of the vehicle and the ability to charge it. Ms. Johnson asked what the life span is on the hybrid vehicles. Chief Kulhawik said provided there is no major damage or functional issues they will be kept for as long as they run and currently have vehicles that are 15 years old, and the cars get cycled down until they no longer run. Mr. Goldstein said the hybrid vehicles are a positive step and committed to working with the police department on the data collection to see what the cost savings are on the hybrid vehicles as well as what the capital investment will be in terms of charging stations for an electric fleet.

**** MR. REVOLUS MOVED TO APPROVE THE ITEM.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

3. AUTHORIZE THE MAYOR, HARRY W. RILLING, TO EXECUTE AN AGREEMENT WITH FLEET AUTO SUPPLY, UNDER RFP PROJECT NUMBER 4123 FOR THE UP-FIT OF

**POLICE VEHICLES EACH YEAR FOR AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$200,000 PER YEAR
FOR AN INITIAL TERM OF 3 YEARS WITH 2 OPTIONAL 1 YEAR RENEWALS.
ACCOUNT# 0922 3010 5777 CO665**

**** MR. GOLDSTEIN MOVED TO APPROVE THE ITEM.
** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

PERSONNEL AND LABOR RELATIONS

1. APPROVE OF THE ELIMINATION OF THE ORDINANCE BONUS POOL

Mr. Burney said a few years we changed the salary structure for the 20 or so ordinance employees so it resembles some of the union pay scales and up until now have had a bonus schedule for these employees but knew there would come a day when the financial justification for the bonus for the ordinance employees would dissipate and are now at that point. He said the salary schedules that are on the documents are sufficient to allow us to have competitive salaries with the market, and to keep the ordinance employees competitive with or above their subordinates in the unionized work force for the city. He said as discussed last year with various city officials and some Common Council members he is recommending taking the bonus pool that should have been distributed on July 1, 2022 and 27.22 distribute half in cash and roll the other half into their rate of pay and eliminate the bonus pool moving forward. Mr. Goldstein asked if the amounts have been allocated. Mr. Burney said “no” those determinations are made by the mayor at his discretion based upon his assessment on the performance of the subject employee through the course of the prior fiscal year in consultation with his chiefs and performance evaluations that are filled out. Mr. Goldstein asked if that process has occurred. Mr. Burney said “no” and that historically doesn’t happen until the Common Council approves the funds being distributed and then the mayor will determine how they are distributed. Ms. Johnson asked the pay equity. Mr. Burney said it will fall on the Personnel Director in consultation with the chief of staff and the mayor as to the salaries that will be offered and make sure they are in line with equity, experience, skill etc. to determine salaries. Ms. Smyth said of few years ago the salaries were adjusted for the ordinance workers to create more equity for those workers compared to the union workers as well as those workers in surrounding towns and was a “band aid” to boost the pay for the ordinance workers, and the Personnel Committee as well as the Common Council members have long had concerns regarding accountability and transparency and it seems best to end it and roll the bonus into their salaries.

**** MR. GOLDSTEIN MOVED TO APPROVE THE MOTION.
** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

IV. OLD BUSINESS

DISCUSSION ITEMS

- School Safety- the superintendent and her team have been invited to give us an update on this and Deputy Chief Zecca will also present

Dr. Estrella said the BOE has been having ongoing conversations around improving our safety and security processes across the district and have recently incorporated a safety and security task force that will help shape some of the conversation around behavior intervention and support and particularly looking at the disproportionate number of black and brown children that have engaged in suspensions and look at what is leading those pattern and trends. She said the task force will be looking at a number of elements and improving what used to be called “The code of conduct” and passing it to the policy committee to further engage and hopefully move forward to the full board. We are also looking at an emergency response system and making sure there are adequate processes to support schools as well as adequate evacuation processes. The other component that we have been looking at is occurrence reporting and how it is happening throughout the organization at large because the current systems that are in place need improvement, and we will determine where additional resources and support are needed and are also looking at what elements of support are needed around safety and security. She said that they have also conducted audits in terms of the current equipment that is used to monitor and observe our buildings and found some areas we would like to further improve and have had discussions on how the systems can be enhanced to provide more visibility in areas where needed. In closing she said they have been looking at a number of processes throughout the organization and through the safety task force will continue to engage in further conversation that will allow them to refine and better define the protocols that are trying to be established.

Ms. Faioes discussed the commitment to school safety and said that the prior position that Mr. Harold currently holds used to be a ten-month position and Dr. Estrella right away had staff find the funding to make it a year-round position, and also looked through the department to identify other funding areas to be able to enhance the programs that they did have in place while planning to enhance safety for the students and shared some of the programs.

Mr. Harold said that the NPD has been very supportive and that there is a standing meeting once a month where all concerns and communication improvements are discussed and thanked them for all of their support. He discussed some of the things that have been done which includes centralized all of the reporting processes, created a discipline dashboard that is updated daily and identifies trends, tool to monitor and scan all of the student’s internet activity and created a protocol around this to track the alerts. He said that building response teams were put in place and that will make a big difference in emergency response as well as preparedness, and schools have been asked to appoint a school safety and site coordinator that will focus strictly on emergency preparation and will attend monthly meetings and will receive professional development. The security guards have been increased and will be deploying emergency “go bags” which include radios and master keys for first responders.

Mr. Keegan asked if the schools have a police radio. Mr. Harold said “no” not currently. Dr. Estrella said they have been in conversation with the chiefs regarding having access to a channel that allows the NPD to have access but that is still in conversation.

Mr. Keegan asked about the SRO program and asked how many trained SRO’s there are. Ms. Faioes said there are currently three. Mr. Keegan asked what the full complement would be. Deputy Chief Zecca said at one point there were nine but now because of staffing there are three and they rotate between the schools. Chief Kulhawik said the goal is to get back to the full complement or more but don’t have the manpower at this time to do that. Mr. Keegan said in

speaking to his constituents the SRO's are valuable in working with the students and DARE program etc. and they would like to see us return to the robust SRO program and that should be made a priority. Chief Kulhawik said that has always been his priority but due to staffing issues he has had to make some difficult decisions, but once the staffing is back to where it should be the goal is to get back to the full complement or more of SRO's. Ms. Faioes said they have come up with some creative ways to still have the children participate in the DARE program and keep that program alive at all the elementary schools.

Ms. Revulus spoke in support of the SRO's and it is a great way for the police to interact with the kids at the bus stops. She also spoke about the disciplinary tracker and one of the issues that was brought up was the suspension and expulsion disproportionately and asked how much of that is being resolved before the disciplinary tracker was used and how much of the efficiency study will cover security. Dr. Estrella said they have been engaging in professional learning for staff and central office personnel regarding disparities and disproportion, and also training the principals in tracking behavioral patterns and the tracker is necessary because it allows them to monitor how these interventions and professional learning opportunities are reflected and manifesting themselves in practice, and are creating these dashboards to look at the data and how it is shifting from the supports that are being implemented in the system at large, but is not part of the efficiency study.

Ms. Ayers spoke in support of keeping students in the building as much as possible but sometimes there may be an issue that is of extreme importance where a child must be taken out of school for the safety of staff and other students and asked if children are now not being expelled even if the incident warrants concern. Dr. Estrella said that expulsions are continuing to happen, but the question is why they are happening and what support and interventions are being provided to students and have a great opportunity partnering with Mr. Daniels and rethinking on how expulsion is being looked at and some of the patterns that have been happening historically throughout the nation and in our city.

Ms. Ayers asked about safety if any regarding traffic around the schools particularly during pick up and drop off times. Dr. Estrella said the principals have been phenomenal about bringing out additional personnel and NPD has also been phenomenal by deploying officers during pick up and drop off time. Ms. Ayers said there are fantastic engineers in the TMP Department that have been very insightful in traffic patterns around schools and suggested reaching out to them.

Ms. Johnson asked if there will be a scope to include mental health. Dr. Estrella said within the committee they are talking about elements of that work, but not at the level as described but will rely on the school guidance team to look at what work needs to be done to improve and have formed a committee that will focus on that component, and have also added an additional school counselor at each of the high schools and are looking at creative ways to bring in additional support for the students and staff. Mr. Keegan asked if we are familiar with Public Act-11-232 concerning bullying. Dr. Estrella said "yes" and the policy is guided by that. Ms. Faioes added that they just recently communicated to all the school principals a revisit of that act and gave them a specific protocol for investigations and how it is that they are supposed to be conducting investigations as well as the communications that go out and bullying prevention will be part of the discussion for the task force.

Mr. Goldstein asked when the operational items will be completed that were discussed will be completed. Dr. Estrella said a lot of what Mr. Harold had articulated are already in progress and

the goal is by the end of the school year will be in place or ready to launch by the 2022/23 academic school.

- Hybrid vs. gas police vehicles- Deputy Chief Zecca will be on hand to answer any questions regarding the vehicles they would like to purchase for the coming year.

This was discussed under 3 of the agenda.

- Roundtable: Capital and Operating Budget overview- Each department to provide a short summary of budgetary requests they made to the city? Are there any specific concerns/issues (ie known shortfalls) what the status of those requests are (if they have been approved by the CFO or taken off of the budget)?

Chief Kulhawik said the capital budget request includes the purchase of 10 patrol cars, 3 unmarked cars and the crime scheme/crash reconstruction device to replace the current unit that produces a 3D image for court. He said almost all the operating budget request consists of personnel costs and there are very little discretionary funds. He said the operating budget request for this year is pretty much flat compared to last year aside from contractual issues and there is very little increase elsewhere in the budget.

Ms. Johnson asked what the need is for a social worker that was requested in the budget. Chief Kulhawik said a plan was put together by an outside agency to come in and provide a fulltime social worker for the department at a cost of \$110,000 and had presented that to the city and it was looked at favorably, but it was requested that it be looked into further and developed a committee to look at different options. He said they initially wanted to copy what Stamford had put in place last year, but it is on hold because Mr. Daniels is looking into if that should be used or if another system should be put in place. Ms. McMurrer said she had discussed this with the mayor, and he will be scheduling a meeting to discuss this further and she is trying to have it escalated.

Chief Gatto reported and said most of the capital requests are for vehicles and the front-line apparatus responds to over 12,000 calls per year and last year had requested to replace a 2007 fire engine but was not approved, so this year to keep on schedule he will be requesting two fire engines for a total \$1,350,000. He said there is also a request for six projects that include refurbishing the ladder truck at a cost of \$117,000 which will extend the life of the truck for 10 years, as well two explorers and one pickup truck for \$75,000. He said last year they applied for a fire boat through the port security grant and are looking to replace the current fire boat which was a refurbished police boat, and the grant was for \$240,000 with the cost share from the city of \$60,000. He said there are also capital budget requests for the building repairs/upgrades.

Mr. Keegan asked what the status is of the repairs at the Broad River Station. Chief Gatto said the project has been ongoing for over two years but had to go out to bid for another contractor and are now waiting for the numbers for an emergency repair. Ms. Revulus asked what work has been done at the Meadow Street station and how much of the budget request is for that location. Chief Gatto said the kitchen and bunkroom were just remodeled, last year requested \$145,000 for a new

roof but was only granted \$100,000 but will be requesting \$55,000 this year to do the roof project, the entire building has been painted on the outside this year as well as all new landscaping, and the building was dedicated to past Chief Sanford Anderson. He also said that is one of the stations where they would like to build a female locker room.

Chief Gatto reported on the operating budget request and said it consists mostly of personnel costs and the only changes in the request will be for contractual obligations, and the fire hydrant rental increase as well as the rent increase for the East Norwalk Fire Station. He said the total budget request is \$ 21,865,509.00. Mr. Burnett asked if it was ever looked at if it would be cost effective to purchase or have a cap put on the fire hydrant rental fee. Chief Gatto said “no” but they take care of all of the maintenance and don’t charge for water usage during a fire as well as install new hydrants for new developments.

Ms. Ayers congratulated Ms. McMurrer on her first meeting and said she did a good job.

ADJOURNMENT

****MS. REVOLUS MOVED TO ADJOURN.
** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 9:35PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Dilene Byrd