

CITY OF NORWALK
PUBLIC SAFETY AND GENERAL GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE OF THE COMMON
COUNCIL
APRIL 28, 2022

Attendance: Jenn Mc Murrer, Chair; Dominique Johnson; Thomas Keegan; Diana Revolus; Heidi Alterman (arrived at 7:02PM)

Staff: Michele DeLuca, Deputy Director Emergency Management; Gino Gatto, Fire Chief; Edward McCabe, Asst. Fire Chief; Thomas Kulhawik, Police Chief; Susan Zecca, Deputy Police Chief, James Walsh, Deputy Police Chief

Others: Tanner Thompson, Chair, Bike/Walk Commission

I. WELCOME AND ROLL CALL

Ms. Mc Murrer called the meeting to order at 7:00PM.

II. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES- 3/24/22

**** MS. REVOLUS MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES AS SUBMITTED.**
**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

III. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There were no public comments this evening.

IV. NEW BUSINESS

Police Department

Ms. Mc Murrer said Saturday, April 30th is prescription drug take back day and the Norwalk Police Department also has a receptacle for them all year around.

Fire Department

There was no new business discussed this evening.

IV. OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business discussed this evening.

VI. DISCUSSION ITEMS

Evergreen Efficiency Study- Public Safety Discussion (Chapter 6)

Ms. Deluca presented a slideshow of the process and challenges of the report that included the following:

- **Not all of the information that was provided in the report was updated and the corrections provided were not updated in the final draft.**

Chief Kulhawik explained that the police department had various interviews with the consultant and after receiving the draft report had a long discussion with city staff as well as the consultants regarding items in the report that were not accurate and pointed them out and expected they would be corrected in the final draft, and some were but many were not so the report did not give a total overview to anyone who is reading the report. Assistant Chief Mc Cabe said the Fire Department had a similar experience when reading through the final report and said a lot of the recommendations that were made for the Fire Department were items they were in the process of upgrading. He also said the numbers that the study had used were primarily from 2020/2021 which were Covid years and 9%- 10% of the overtime in those years was Covid related and felt that a lot of the numbers that are in the report were skewed for those reasons.

- **The report did not note the significant surplus in the payroll account due to openings which is transferred to fund overtime increases, thereby keeping the overall budget flat, and calling for a 15% reduction per year is not realistic especially given the above and COVID noted later.**

Chief Kulhawik said just as Asst. Chief Mc Cabe said the overtime numbers that were reported were skewed because of COVID and the Police Department faced similar situations as the Fire Department with having overtime to fill vacancies that were related to COVID. He went on to say that they also had pointed out that some of the overtime is due to vacancies not being filled but the report did not point out the surplus in the payroll account, so the overall budget is remaining flat even though the overtime budget has increased. He said for example in this current year the budget for overtime will go over, but the budget for the payroll account will be far under budget and he expects that to happen again this year and the report failed to show that so calling for a 15% reduction in the overtime budget for the next five years has no real basis.

- **CAD/RMS in use is a preferred vendor of the State of Connecticut. All changes required by state regulations are automatically made by the vendor generally at no cost to use.**

Chief Kulhawik said the sub-contractor spent a lot of time talking about the CAD/RMS system which is the dispatching and records management system. He said they currently use Nexgen and

have for many years, and over the years many state agencies have gone to this system and currently the vast majority as well as the state police use this system and as a result of that any legislative changes or mandated changes are automatically done by them at little to no cost, so to change to an outside system would not only be costly at upwards of \$1 million dollars there would be additional costs for the required updates. He said it was also noted in the report that the CAD/RMS is not doing everything it could be and they agree but the issue is necessary training and they are trying to deal with that. He also said that the Fire Department software integrates with Nexgen so the dispatchers are able to use it begin the reporting.

- **Current staffing is not adequate to absorb the new positions noted in the report, Collective Bargaining Agreement with the Police Union would need to be renegotiated to allow for work currently done by officers to be civilianized. The Report does not address this.**

Chief Kulhawik said there were a lot of recommendations for new positions within the police department that included civilianizing some of the positions, but the report did not point out that would have to be collectively bargained with the police union and the complexity of making some of these changes were not reflected in the report. The report simply noted that new strategies need to be developed to recruit provides no guidance as we have looked at a variety of options with no significant improvement.

- **The report simply noted that new strategies need to be developed to recruit provides no guidance as we have looked at a variety of options with no significant improvement.**
- **Outside vendors are used for many parts of the selections process and therefore timelines cannot be reduced.**

Chief Kulhawik said he had pointed out that the timeline to fill vacancies at the police department is a lengthy process and are at the mercy of outside vendors. He also said he asked the consultant for ideas to come up with new strategies to recruit as was pointed out in the report in which none were received.

- **Police do not pay for school security as noted in the report nor is COVID related security paid by the police budget.**

Chief Kulhawik said the report noted that the school security and overtime related to COVID should not be paid by the police budget and had explained to them that the police budget does not pay for these things which was also not changed in the final draft. He said they also pointed out that the way school crossings are being done should be changed and agreed and have tried to get that changed but have had no luck in getting the school administrators to look into that but are working with the current school administration to come up with a way to cover the school crossings.

- **Collective Bargaining agreement with the fire union require minimum staffing numbers for stations/apparatus.**

Chief Kulhawik said the Fire Department is limited with the collective bargaining agreement that they have to have a certain number of firefighters and unless that is changed in the agreement it is

not something that management can change. Asst Chief McCabe added that outside overtime is such a miniscule part of the overtime budget.

Chief Kulhawik and Asst. Chief McCabe presented and provided an overview of the current projects as follows:

- **Police have requested additional staffing for civilianize specific positions but due to budgetary constraints that has not been possible.**

Chief Kulhawik said they agree and a few of the recommendations that were in the final report came from either him or his staff, but budget constraints over the years has made them not to allow an increase in staffing and have had to cut civilian staff leaving less staff and the report did not reflect that.

- **Requests have been made to outsource school crossing guards and/or move to Norwalk Public Schools. Requests for pay increase to attract guards has not been approved. Few are interested in the position.**

- **Implementation of Dash Cams was state mandated and not a decision made by the department**

Chief Kulhawik said a comment was made in the report about the dash cam project and how it was not properly vetted and he had noted to them that was not a decision the police department had made and was a state mandate, and they had to be installed by a certain date and asked them to include that in the report and that was not noted in the report.

- **Fire has an existing apparatus maintenance/replacement plan however, if a scheduled replacement vehicle isn't funded when requested then the requests multiply.**

Asst. Chief McCabe said they do have a standing replacement plan but they are expensive items and a piece of fire apparatus ranges from \$700,000 to \$ 1 million dollars and if a piece of apparatus is scheduled to be purchased and gets cut from the capital budget the need does not go away, but gets pushed to the following year but currently have had good success in explaining the need and were able to keep two fire engines in next year's capital budget.

- **Fire has had part time inspectors in the past and had already planned on hiring two new part time inspectors prior to this study.**

Asst. Chief McCabe said in order to get the number of inspections done that they need to do there are a certain number of full-time inspectors within the department but have in the past implemented part time inspectors to help get the inspections done especially on the residential units and are now in the process of hiring two more part-time inspectors.

- **Fire is in the process of switching to a new records management system.**

Asst. Chief McCabe said they are in the process of switching to a new records management system as part of the IT upgrade.

Chief Kulhawik and Asst. Chief McCabe reported on the impact of COVID on Assumptions Data as follows:

- **Report did not address that overtime noted for 2020-21 did not account for the significant increase required to cover backfills due to COVID, for example in the early days of COVID involved responders had to quarantine or self-isolate 10-14 days (PD &FD)**

Chief Kulhawik said the report did not reflect the overtime for COVID as previously discussed.

- **Police do not pay for school security as noted in the report nor is COVID related security paid by the police budget.**

Chief Kulhawik said the school security was also not corrected in the final report.

Chief Kulhawik and Asst. Chief McCabe reported on the opportunities that were not addressed as follows:

- **Shared Public Safety Grant Person**

Chief Kulhawik said a recommendation that he and his staff had given was for a dedicated grants person, the city has a part-time grants person but would behoove the city to have a dedicated grants person for public safety to get extra funding for the police and fire department.

- **Cost sharing Saving/opportunities between PD and FD Marine Units**

Chief Kulhawik said they are looking into a new marine base that would house both fire and police and there is currently an ongoing study for the location and has been included in the capital budget for the last few years which was not reflected in the report.

- **Cost sharing Saving/opportunities between administration (possibly recruitment, onboarding etc.**
- **Prior studies/discussions regarding an additional fire station**

Asst. Chief McCabe said there have been several studies over the last decade regarding an additional fire station and one of the most underserved districts given the size and the call volume is the Westport Avenue fire station and are proposing in the future to take a company from headquarters and move a ladder truck to that station to spread out the resource's that are available which was discussed with the consultant but never made it into the final report.

Ms. DeLuca said because of the consultant's background and experience the report more focused on the technology component of fire and police and it would have been great if some areas of the report were discussed further and have had those recommendations included in the study.

Ms. Alterman asked if the most current version of Nexgen is being used. Chief Kulhawik said Nexgen updates the system regularly. Deputy Chief Zecca said they will be meeting with them in the next couple of weeks to evaluate the system and where they can improve on how it is used.

Ms. Johnson said it was recommended in the report to use crime investigation check list and asked if that is a best practice. Chief Kulhawik said he is not aware that it is a best practice and there are some situations where a checklist is used as a guide, but in general for an average investigation a checklist is not used. He said there was a comment in the report that stated that detectives should not be reinterviewing people that patrol had already done and found that to be confusing because it is a normal practice for a detective to interview people to gather more in-depth information.

Ms. Johnson said in looking at the data in the report it appears that the police department is at or above average and based on what we know regarding staffing that seems to contradict that. Chief Kulhawik said that is another point he had made with the consultant and there is a statistic that the FBI publishes across the county but the issue with that statistic is flawed in the sense that it does not take into account what a community expects of their police department and the work that the police department is doing and there was no caveat in the report that pointed that out.

Ms. Revolus asked about centralizing dispatch that was recommended in the report. Chief Kulhawik said that the dispatch center is currently combined and takes all 911 calls and is housed in the police department and is part of the structure, but the report reflected that another level of governance was needed where police, fire and EMS had representatives and he is unclear as to what that would do because all these organizations have day to day input and oversight of the dispatch center even though it is run by a police lieutenant and in his opinion by adding another layer would just complicate issues. Asst. Chief McCabe agreed and said they have such good communication with the police department when it comes to dispatching that he does not see there is an issue that needs to be addressed. Chief Kulhawik said the relationship is not just in dispatch it is a relationship that goes in everything they do and work together to develop plans and have developed a very good system for public safety.

Ms. Johnson said when she found out the data was grouped in the report particularly regarding overtime pre and during COVID it frustrated her because she wanted a comparison. She went on to ask other than the SRO's discussion in the study she does not see a lot of discussion regarding community policing and asked if staff thought there is anything in the report that can be helpful in moving the community policing forward in a positive direction. Chief Kulhawik said he does not recall the consultant interviewing anyone from community policing or even taking to him about it and had a very specific focus on the information he was looking for and felt there could have been a more in depth look into various units within the police department.

Ms. Mc Murrer asked Chief Kulhawik to elaborate on the possible civilian positions and an approximate cost so that it can be discussed in the future. Chief Kulhawik said the grants position, the crime analyst position, and an information management position.

Ms. Mc Murrer asked Chief Kulhawik what they have been enduring regarding recruitment. Chief Kulhawik said they do the traditional methods and attend job fairs at various colleges, use social media as well as advertising but are looking into other options such as having a marketing firm do an advertising campaign. Ms. Revolus asked how they are focusing on ways to entice Norwalk residents to apply. Chief Kulhawik said one way is with the public safety cadets and they just hired one person that had gone through the program, and have also tried working with local churches, the NAACP and worked with a group to form a youth advisory committee within the high schools. Asst. Chief McCabe said they also have a similar approach at the fire department for recruitment to encourage Norwalk residents. Chief Kulhawik said that extra points are also given to Norwalk residents on the entry level test. Ms. Deluca

that a lot of the visits that the fire trucks and police cars were able to do were put on hold due to COVID but will now be starting up again and will also be holding the annual open house that had been put on hold due to COVID.

ADJOURNMENT

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

The meeting adjourned at 8:35PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Dilene Byrd