

**BUDGET COMMITTEE  
TOWN OF PEMBROKE, NH  
December 2, 2021 at 6:30 PM**

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Mark LePage, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm.

**I. Attendance:**

Budget Committee Present:

Clint Hanson, Dave Doherty, Andy Camidge, Joe DeVuono, Sue Whitbeck, Mike Connor, Karen Yeaton, Brian Seaworth, Mark LePage, Gerry Fleury, Paul Hanson

Staff: Jillian McNeil Recording Secretary, David Jodoin

**II. Approval of Minutes: November 18, 2021:**

Dave Doherty moved to approve the minutes as amended of November 18, 2021. Gerry Fleury seconded the motion. Motion passed 10-0. Paul Hanson abstained.

**III. 2022 Ambulance Budget Presentation**

Chris Gamache, EMS Director for Tri-Town Ambulance, reviewed the 2022 Ambulance budget. This budget is set by the Tri-Town Board and is unable to be changed. Tri-Town Ambulance was established under an intermunicipal agreement between Allenstown and Pembroke. Each Town is responsible for a percentage of the cost to operate. The percentage is determined by the number of incidents per Town in the current calendar year plus the two previous calendar years. That percentage is then multiplied by the budget to calculate each Town's fiscal responsibility. For 2022, Allenstown's fiscal responsibility increased by \$9,000 while Pembroke's decreased by \$23,000. The year 2020 showed a dip in transports by 80, however, they are seeing those numbers start to come up. Contributing to lower transport numbers are COVID fears. Another issue is that of hospitals being full. Often, patients are not getting beds and have to wait in the ER waiting room and hallways until they can be seen. Ambulance staff may have to wait with them.

Chris shared that in preparation for the large new residential Allenstown facility opening and taking into account the substantial growth of both Towns, there have been discussions about the possibility of needing to add staff and another truck in 2023. They do not plan to add any staff in 2022. There will be an order for a replacement ambulance in 2022 which will require a down payment with an expectation of delivery in 2023. The plan is to take the money from an account that already has funds set aside for this purchase.

Chris shared the overall budget shows a 1.55% increase from 2021 to 2022. There were increases for New Hampshire Retirement, COLAs for employees, merit

increases, and all four employees have made the change to a family health insurance plan. The overtime budget lines will also show an increase.

Gerry Fleury asked why the dental insurance costs are up by 25%. David Jodoin explained all four employees are now on a family plan health and now have kids eligible for dental care. Dental insurance does not kick in until the age of 2.

Brian Seaworth asked if we are still providing more mutual aid than we receive. Chris answered that we are the only service that staffs only one truck, however, it is relatively even right now between providing and receiving. 92% of the time we are covering our own calls. If that ratio drops into the 80s, they will want to discuss getting another ambulance.

Mark LePage asked if people are waiting in the waiting room at the hospital, do they wait with them. Chris answered sometimes they do. They will frequently hold people in the ambulance until they can be admitted. It has caused them to lose several calls to mutual aid.

#### **IV. 2022 Police Budget Presentation**

Police Chief Dwayne Gilman and Lt. Gary Gaskell reviewed the 2022 Police Budget. Chief Gilman stated the Department currently has 12 employees; 10 officers, 2 administrators, and 2 open positions. The Board of Selectmen have approved 2 part-time positions to fill a full-time spot and the hope is to add another full-time person in 2022. In the budget, there are uncontrollable items. One is in the area of prosecution. Prosecutions are handled by the Merrimack County Attorney's Office. A new County Attorney was elected last year. They didn't make any immediate drastic changes or increases. This year, there are some increases in items such as dues. Of the Towns that use Merrimack County dispatch, Pembroke is number one for activity. This means we pay a little more than others. Conviction rates are down because many cases are moving forward to diversion programs and drug courts. It is taking a lot of work to get people to trial which is keeping costs down but is frustrating Law Enforcement across the State. If this situation remains, they may look into hiring an Attorney next year.

Chief Gilman stated the training lines have a 57.14% increase. The Police Academy shut down and went remote in 2020. They were not offering outside training during that time. The Officers are not under trained but they could use some catch up training. For employee retention, the most important things that can be offered are a competitive pay and continued training. The other reason training has been lacking is due to staffing. They are down 3 people meaning they cannot accommodate the time for the Officers to be out attending training.

Chief Gilman stated the investigations budget line is up 40.17%. This year an additional Officer was moved from patrol to investigations so there are now two Investigators. Pembroke Officers handle everything from Town Ordinances to major

felonies and these crimes have been increased in difficulty by technology. The Department needs to have the technology to download and store the data they receive.

Radio maintenance lines are increased in 2022. The portable and mobile radios are getting up in age and need parts. They will need to do a complete radio purchase in the near future.

Currently in their patrol cars, they have an IMC software. There is money sitting in the computer/Software Maintenance line for changing to software providing live data access. The live software is hosted by Merrimack County and will allow them to be able to search a database that all the Departments within Merrimack County can put data into. Money has been set aside the past couple years to do it. Chief Gilman has been waiting for more Departments to use the program before jumping in. Those Departments have reported that it is difficult to get up and running. Chief Gilman wants to give it a little more time before deciding whether or not to install it.

Lt Gaskell reviewed stats in Town comparing 2020 to 2021.

Mark LePage asked if it is safe to assume biggest concern for the Department right now is staffing. Chief Gilman answered that it is not the biggest concern but it is the immediate concern because of employee burn out. If they receive an application, the expedited process is a minimum of 3 months before they are ready to go. If they are untrained, it is an additional 6 months. If they could get some retired Officers to come in to fill the part-time positions, those Officers would need 1 month. Right now, the Department is very reactive. They would like to get ahead of some of the problems and one way to do that would be to have a positive presence in the elementary schools. The current School Resource Officer (SRO) is heavily attached to Pembroke Academy with the amount of assistance they need right now. Ideally, the SRO could spend more time with the younger generations so the Department could change to being more proactive. Furthering the issue of being reactive rather than proactive is the current drug task force for our area has dwindled to 1 person. Drugs are a big issue.

David Jodoin explained in the capital outlay there are funds for a new cruiser purchase in 2022 for \$52,700. Each year, the Department alternates between one cruiser one year and 2 the next but they have strayed from that pattern in recent years. Chief Gilman stated right now all cars are covered by a 5-year 100,000-mile powertrain warranty.

Paul Hanson asked if they have heard of The Mirror Project through the State of New Hampshire. It is an educational tool geared towards 7<sup>th</sup> grade students that teaches proper interaction between youth and the Police Department. Chief Gilman has not heard of it but welcomes any information.

Paul Hanson asked for their recruiting methods. Chief Gilman explained they have reached out to the Concord Monitor and Union Leader to advertise in the paper and on their employment websites. They are advertising on police training websites and Pembroke's website. They are looking at hiring someone who would look for quality applicants. The service is paid for by the applicants. Ideally applicants would be coming from smaller towns who are looking to move up or people from up north looking to move closer to the cities. Paul asked if he would be able to donate digital billboard space for advertising. Chief Gilman answered that it would need to be run by the Board of Selectman but he would be open to it.

Joe DeVuono asked why there is a climb in SRO assists from 348-522. Lt. Gaskell explained that in 2020 when schools were remote and he was not in the schools making the 348 number artificially low.

Joe DeVuono asked if there something preventing the Department from raising the pay rate. Chief Gilman stated the Select Board just gave them a bump in pay but there is no feasible way for this Town to pay the same as Concord or Manchester. The goal is to maintain the salary to be on par with the surrounding smaller departments. After the last two pay bumps, the Town is right about there.

Dave Doherty asked if the increase in rate of incidents is temporary or is this something that will continue to increase. Chief Gilman answered that will likely continue to increase. The increase in the budget is largely attributed to the fact that most crimes involve cell phones or technology and all that information needs to be held somewhere until trial. Once it goes to trial, then they need technology to display it to the jury. The two Investigators are very good with technology and learning different ways to utilize it to solve crimes.

Gerry Fleury asked for an update on the taser purchase. Chief Gilman stated the purchase order is going out on December 4<sup>th</sup>. The reason it was put off was to get the maximum life out of the ones they currently have. The ones coming in January will have a 5-year warranty. Gerry asked if they are all set with Bullet proof vest replacements and firearms. Chief Gilman answered they replaced firearms last year and vests are replaced every 5 years and slowly they are on a good pattern for uniform replacement pieces. Gerry asked if the frustrations with bail reform has weighed on the staff. Chief Gilman explained that it has and overall violence has increased quite a bit. For instance, domestic calls are often a violent situation and the Officers will go through the whole process from initial contact, to arrest, to getting the family protection orders for spouses and kids, and then the abuser is often released after a matter of hours and back in the home. The State has also dropped the need for a concealed carry permit which leads to uncertainty and safety concerns. It is a tough situation to recruit.

## **V. School Update**

Andy Camidge explained the Three Rivers field trip lines were asked to be raised significantly to accommodate transportation costs. The request was from \$4,000 to \$11,000. The Board decided to split the difference \$6,500. Members of the School Board typically donate half of their stipend every year and this year they are discussing donating it to the 8<sup>th</sup> grade trip. Enrollment numbers for the entire school district are up 30 students' and the projection for next year is more than that. Mark LePage stated the projections provided by Andy in email this afternoon show an increase of 52 students at Pembroke Academy for next year and asked of what the make-up of those students is. Clint Hanson noted that some of those students would be coming from the closing of PACE Academy. Currently, the bottom-line budget increase is 4.299%.

## **VI. Other Business**

Clint Hanson also informed the Committee that PACE Academy has an executed purchase and sales agreement for \$1,250,000. After all debts are settled, \$125-150,000 in net revenue would go to the school district on the condition that there is 2/3 majority vote on the dissolution of PACE at the annual school district meeting.

## **VII. Adjourn**

Andy Camidge made a motion to adjourn at 8:01 PM. David Doherty seconded the motion and it was approved unanimously.

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Mark LePage, Chairman