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Date: January 21, 2021

To: Town Administrator MacLean

From: Chief Scott

Re: FY22 Budget

The Pepperell Police Department, when “fully staffed”, consists of 18 full-time sworn officers that provide protection and service to the town’s residents and visitors. Due to budget constraints, we are currently operating with only 16 sworn officers and a reduced administrative staff.

Both police unions were in contract negotiations while budgets were being finalized last year. Adjustments were not made to the budget after the unions signed contracts. Consequently, the FY22 budget increase includes two years of contractual raises and other increases, totaling approximately \$101,506. (The increase in overtime is a combination of the union wage increase, added holiday costs and master plan implementation.)

I would again this year emphasize the need for additional funding for two officers and a senior clerk. The return of these previously funded positions would bring the department back up to its historical “full-staff” level and previous level of service to the town.

In years past, while requesting the return of these two officers, I have mentioned at least three reasons why they are needed: 1.) returning an officer to our schools to educate our children on the effects of drug use, violence and other topics, 2.) bringing back the fourth officer on evening shift, which would allow for the return of dedicated foot patrols, traffic assignments and bicycle patrols on what is our most active shift and 3.) promoting an additional sergeant to fill two patrol supervisor shifts per week as well as the creation of a detective sergeant position.

The need to return to our previous staffing level goes beyond the above described job functions. Not only has the town grown since we were last at full staff over a decade ago, but currently the town is still considering allowing the opening of two recreational marijuana shops as well as its first public barroom in recent memory when the pandemic subsides. The police department, however, is operating with less staff than years ago when Pepperell was a dry town and marijuana was illegal.

In addition, the need for more officers to accomplish our current function is now due to changes in our operations. Different factors have recently caused us to handle certain calls differently. The Pepperell Police Department is leading the development of a regional Crisis Intervention Training, which trains officers to take more time on calls involving people in crisis in order to achieve better outcomes. Also, the passage of police reform legislation in Massachusetts requires “de-escalation tactics” to be utilized to stabilize situations. These tactics include but are not limited to “verbal persuasion”, “slowing down an incident”, and “waiting a person out”. Although not new tactics, they will now be utilized more often and for longer periods of time to comply with the legislation.

Consequently, officers have and will be spending more time on scene at several types of calls. With two or three officers on patrol during most shifts, having officers tied up for significant lengths of time hampers our ability to handle more than one call at a time.

Cost of two additional officers: approximately \$128,000-\$142,000.

Cost is about \$64,000-\$72,500 each depending on experience, education and shift.

The senior clerk position has been unfilled for several years. The changes in public records and firearms laws have added more work to the administrative assistant position since then. Also, there are many duties and responsibilities that only the administrative assistant performs. Therefore, I am again requesting the return of the part-time senior clerk position for 16 hours per week to lessen some of the workload of the administrative assistant position and also provide some redundancy in case of the loss of the current administrative assistant.

Cost of part-time Senior Clerk: \$17,014

Total requested FY22 labor increase: \$260,624

Due to this significant increase in labor, the remainder of the budget request (“Supplies and Services”) remains level-funded.

CAPITAL PROGRAMS REQUESTS:

- **Body Cameras** (\$30,000)
We have been researching the deployment of body-worn cameras for our department. Many department members feel that the current state of policing calls for video evidence to protect officers from false claims. According to multiple reports, body cameras also increase transparency, promote civility, enhance officer accountability, provide evidence for investigative and prosecutorial purposes, help to identify training needs and provide faster resolutions to citizen complaints.
- **PSC Renovation/Replacement** (\$15,000,000)
Items such as leaky windows and lack of fresh air intake were identified as causes of our mold problem but were not funded to remedy. Additionally, items such as the fan coil units and carpeting that were done during the 2014 mold remediation with a five year lifespan are starting to fail. A new or completely renovated building is the best solution.
- **Indoor Air Quality Fix** (\$500,000)
Experts determined during the 2014 mold remediation process that there is no fresh air intake in the PSC, thus potentially leading to serious air quality issues. The town decided not to fix this issue during the mold remediation due to funding.
- **Replace Roof** (\$400,000)
The police station roof was repaired and not replaced as requested in our FY19 budget narrative. Unfortunately the repair only remedied one leak and leaks remain. This request is for the “long-term repairs” that were recommended in the Gale Associates report submitted to the town after their January 2019 inspection.
- **Replace PSC Windows** (\$100,000)
The windows at the PSC are in a severe state of deterioration.
- **Resurface PSC Parking Lot** (\$80,000)
The PSC parking lot is sinking in spots and patched in others. It needs to be leveled and replaced before someone gets injured or property damage results.
- **Replace PSC Interior Handicap Lift** (\$45,000)
It was discovered that the PSC motorized ramp does not meet current standards and should be replaced in order to comply with handicapped accessibility.
- **Heat/Air Conditioning Units** (\$15,000)
The Auxiliary Police office does not have air conditioning and the current Modine style heater leaks and is unreliable. Both locker rooms also do not have air conditioning and the current heating system is not adequate. We utilize space heaters in the locker rooms in the winter. We’d like to add Mitsubishi Mini Split units in these rooms.

BUDGET NARRATIVE SUMMARY:

In conclusion, the police department continues to be in need of additional funding. We are still seeking to return to our former staffing level of 18 full-time sworn officers and one and a half administrative staff.

Due to the current state of policing, besides the needed additional staffing, body cameras are being requested for the multiple benefits stated earlier. All other equipment requests are being delayed to stress the importance of these cameras.

In addition, funding continues to be needed to remedy causes of mold growth that were not addressed in the 2014 police station mold remediation. Capital items such as fixing the air quality and replacing leaky windows need to be addressed to prevent further mold growth, and mold has already returned to the building. Funding a new public safety complex is being discussed by the building committee however no formal request for funding has been made.

Thank you for taking the time to consider these proposals. I look forward to discussing the police budget and capital programs requests with you in the near future.