

PBAB Minutes October 20, 2022

Present: Amara Dunn (AD) (Chair), Andrew Spink (AS) (Secretary) (via Zoom), David Strickland (DS) (alternate) Stefanie Newcomb (SN) (City Comptroller)

Absent: Michelle Neary, John Lynch, Jonathan Mills, Frank Gaglianese (City Council liaison)

We cannot vote on the minutes because we lack a quorum. The only official members present are AD and AS.

Update from SN about 2023 budget that was passed by City Council last night with only one no vote.

The city clerk got a 4% raise and a police officer was added, but only funded for half the year. This police officer is not a part-time position, but rather it's in anticipation of this vacancy lasting until June because it's not feasible that all 5 vacant positions will be filled by June. In January a selection can be made to send to academy in February. Another exam is in March with results in April, which would allow for academy in May, which is why we picked the June date. Going forward they will be funded for a full year.

There is one vehicle purchase, \$86,000 is the vehicle plus upfitting. The upfitting is radio and lights, etc. The cost of upfitting depends on type of vehicle. This is for another patrol vehicle. We might likely will not receive the vehicle until October 2023 due to supply chain issues. We need to approve the vehicle in 2023.

There is nothing else significant as far as budget for police. We included funding for general maintenance. There are minor issues with HVAC unit, and paint, etc. We're still in communication with HWS and Five Star Bank regarding donations for office furniture. We need places where members of the public can sit. The furniture is still in the building that Five Star owns, but Five Star says it's not theirs and has been donated to HWS. We hope to get items to supplement that.

The 2024 budget is ideally being planned as early as April 2023. We're going to be changing the formatting of the budget. Ideally the budget planning process for department heads will begin at the end of May or beginning of June, with July the latest for budget request. We'll finalize the request by the end of July. What I envision from PBAB going forward is for the first six months of 2023 we should have conversations. The PBAB can assist with research and we're also trying to get input from the police department and members of the community. We should share questions as we preparing the budget.

The Chief of Police is retiring in June. There are two other retirements that are pending, with intent to retire at the end of June. This will create significant holes in the upper command of police department. It will be an interesting year for the police department. We're open to ideas, and compared to other areas we're competitive with lateral transfers. We would need to get lateral transfers to get experience. There's not enough experience in the GPD to fill the gaps in command that will result from retirements. Lateral transfers require input from county, so it's not so simple as just hiring them. If it's not a one-to-one movement, then it has to get escalated to the state. The state is not quick when it comes to approving these. It's possible we may need to require new people to do testing such as agility testing. We are working to try to come up with ideas. Recruitment is a big topic of conversation now. The DCJS study has been released to us and police chief. We have a plan to roll it out to public. We're not sure if there will be a special council meeting. However, it's not a drastic report, and I don't anticipate it causing any additional tasks. Hopefully it will be shared in the next month or so.

Questions:

AD: We're curious about whether it's possible to purchase new but not most current model year vehicles.

SN: "Fleet management" is the term used for this. Lt. Potter is very good at this. There is kind of a sweet spot of when to trade in an old vehicle to get funds for a new one. Replacement vehicles haven't been in the budget so we're past that sweet spot and we're not getting a lot for the vehicles. We send them to auction and get the money and put into new vehicle. We're not seeing a large return on the vehicles we put up at auction. When we're looking at purchasing a new-to-us vehicle, it doesn't need to be a 2023 vehicle. We have purchased used vehicles before. There are certain types of vehicles they try to purchase. We just had to purchase a new tire machine. We tend to go for newer model, so we wouldn't want to take anything older than a 2020. The type of vehicle we're trying to replace gives us some flexibility. We're trying to find used vehicles but not a lot out there. One of our vehicles was totaled in an accident in Canandaigua where the vehicle was parked and was struck, but we used insurance money. We were able to save the upfitting and transfer it over, so it only cost us \$500. The supply that's out there for vehicles isn't great. The plan to purchase a new vehicle is to have it for 7 years. From a cost measure, everyone likes to say a used car is cheaper, but there is significant wear and tear. We're exploring grants for hybrid vehicles. For regular vehicles, they can be used in two shifts in a row, and there just needs refueling between shifts, but hybrid vehicles need charging between shifts. Hybrids probably won't meet current needs of GDP, but we're looking into things. The electric vehicles are interesting, but we need to see if it will meet the needs, such as if the car has to be used as a command station and needs to be charged.

AD: Who is in charge of hiring Chief and other officers?

SN: The City Council has 3 employees that report directly to them, City Clerk, City Manager, and City Attorney. The City Manager oversees all the departments and decides who gets hired. Amy (city manager) wants to have an external team and an internal team. Maybe a member of the PBAB could be part of the external interview process. Hiring the next police chief is complicated, because there's testing involved. Everyone eligible must take the test and once we receive results there's a list based on scoring. We're allowed to pick only from the high scorers, and if someone scores low, we must go through higher scorers before getting to lower ones. Some people take the test just to take it but aren't serious about being chief. The test is county-wide and some people may opt out of the City of Geneva. Once we get the list it's a standard interview process. It's not a quick process. The test for the Chief isn't being offered until March or April, which puts us on a tight turnaround. There probably won't be a new chief ready to go by the time the Chief retires, so there will probably be an interim chief.

DS: Are officers happy from a financial side of things?

SN: No they're not. We're on the low end of pay scale for surrounding areas. In the county and surrounding larger cities we are on low end. Some of that is due to county having larger pool to draw from, and we're not a large city compared to surrounding areas. When we're being compared, it's to Fairport, Greece, etc. It's a point of conversation. Because of staff levels, there's mandatory overtime that's happening. Our officers are burned out, and that's some of the reasoning for giving funding to two vacant positions. One other thing that's playing into conversations is health insurance. Across the entire country health insurance is increasing. We think unions will start at 4% raise because that's what

the city clerk got. Health insurance is expensive. We do pay a portion of it. We're exploring options within the city. We're having broader conversations with insurance providers. We're looking at maybe a different provider. We have conversations in November and December. We're very competitive on lateral transfers. Our recruitment is biggest issue because a single individual coming in having to pay this level of health insurance is a significant hit financially. Some of what is making us less competitive is surrounding areas using Covid money to directly pay officers and other staff. It's sort of a Covid bonus "Thanks for staying," though it's gray area as to what funds can be used for. Geneva didn't do that, which makes us not as competitive now, but that is only a short-term injection. Once we return to normal that problem will fall by the wayside. Our vacancy issues are being expressed across the profession. For example, Phoenix, AZ has a huge recruitment issue. We're trying to increase recruitment efforts. If you're outside of municipal government, you don't understand the process, such as taking test and going to academy. You're not a fully instated police officer until 18 months after the process (though you're still getting paid during that time). If people drop out of academy, we don't recoup any of that money, so there is a reason for testing, such as psychological, agility, etc. We pay for all that testing to be done before we even accept that candidate. Increasing communications about when tests will be offered is important. We're trying to get more people on list to do testing.

AS: Are there things other than salary and insurance costs that are affecting recruitment negatively?

SN: One of the biggest issues we're hearing from recruits is City Council and environment that is being created from that divide. If people do a google search for GDP the first 7 hits are council members being a little upset about police or making certain comments toward the police department. That is not a positive light, and not making people want to be officers. They're already taking a risk being a police officer, so they feel that having to justify being a police officer on top of that, is something that many recruits aren't willing to undertake. We're trying to curtail that by having council submit questions ahead of time and read questions, so it removed the focus on who was asking the question and left it as neutral and general. Council members are realizing that what they're saying is having an effect. Pay and health insurance affect things, but also the general climate of Geneva.

AD: We're interested in researching topics to assist.

SN: Researching other cities who are having similar issues (such as Ithaca) could be good action items for research. There being more ears out there is a good idea. We're looking for new ideas and a new approach.

AD: Michelle said she couldn't come, but wants to learn more about the budget process.

SN: I'm not sure if we'll do a full community budget workshop, but I would like to tell this group what kinds of things we need to follow. For example, adding \$50,000 to budget results in a significant increase in rate of taxes, but when you describe it as \$49 per household over a year, is easier to swallow when put in those terms. I'd like this group to help explore the question of getting one vehicle versus two. There is a reserve of funds, but this is a rainy day fund and not something we should be using all the time. I would like to put together a workshop for this group, maybe March or April. I want this board to be ears to learn about what other states and departments are doing. Then we'd do budget presentation in March or April, then start looking at budget recommendations.

DS: We could look at why certain line items what they are.

SN: It could be useful to see how other police departments pay for certain line items (such as with grants).

AS: Of the 13 recommendations that PBAB made in August, are there certain that are most interesting to you as for areas for us to research?

SN: Supplier contracts are one area where the PBAB can be really helpful making recommendations or suggestions, or posing questions. For example, this contract is costing us this much money, but maybe it can be done cheaper somewhere else. My top area is exploring other contract options and what are new ideas. Some contracts have been put into place as a reactive response to an immediate need, and there was not necessarily manpower or time to do in-depth research about it. If we are more forward thinking we can potentially look at other ideas. Perhaps look at other vendors. For example, we have a contract with Verizon for our tracking needs, which was an immediate need, but that system doesn't communicate with any other systems we used, so to do a report we need to pull information from three different systems. In my opinion, that's one area where we can be beneficial. Some things are pretty standard, such as salary, offices supplies, etc. but there are other areas where we can do research for cost and efficiency savings.

AD: Just before Amy was hired as City Manager, we had wanted to know the costs to the city regarding complaints against police (such as lawsuits) and we understand we can't know details of a case, but we're interesting in information in five year chunks. We think this would be sufficiently anonymous. We didn't ask for this during budget process, but now we're interesting in this for the total cost of policing, and we're also not sure who pays for that.

SN: I can pull this info so that it's general enough that I can share it. I couldn't tell you the actual cost, but I could tell you broader numbers. It's a two-fold answer. There's insurance we pay for out of the city budget that covers city as a whole as liability insurance (city staff plus police, plus fire, etc). All these play into the cost of the policy. Those aren't based on specific police department, but rather state averages and national averages. So if you have a police department, you pay a certain amount. There was a 15% increase in premiums across the country. Once something goes to litigation, some of that goes to blanket retainer with outside counsel. We're covered for a certain number of billable hours up to a certain amount. If we need to go to outside counsel, that goes to litigation costs, but there is a maximum amount the city is liable for, and the rest covered by insurance. So if there was a case against GDP that went to litigation, the cost would be outside counsel and \$10,000 max out of pocket.

DS: What is the annual percentage of the budget each year that goes to those costs? What has the trend been, upward or downward?

AD: What motivated the board asking this question is transparency and also the costs of training versus not training.

SN: So you're asking, does the failure to do training cause us to have to spend more?

AD: And once we hit the max of \$10,000 does the final number not matter?

SN: For example, people say the foundry was \$155 million, but it doesn't actually cost that to the city. But this backs up the need for training and development.

AS: So is the \$10,000 the cap that will always be paid, or can the city be on the hook for more? Such as the foundry which is millions of dollars, or hypothetically a multi million dollar settlement against the police department, would what result in a higher payout by the city than \$10,000?

SN: It depends on the claim and severity. So if there was a claim against anyone in city, and it was found that it wasn't intentional, but city was still wrong, there's a maximum amount that can be incurred. However, if the conduct was intentional, that results in a different kind of payout. There would be a range to answer depending on this. For example, the lowest payout could be \$10,000 whereas coverage could be negated for intentional conduct.

AS: So say if a police department is poorly run and gets sued a lot, will this result in higher premiums?

SN: Premiums are a multi factor thing. Five-year past does go into that, and if you're higher risk, you will have to pay higher risk. For example, a police department has to pay a certain amount, then takes into account the size of city and PD, then takes into account 5-year lookback historical data. Each of those plays into your premium cost. This was brought up in regard to worker's comp. Someone asked if we had less officers would that result in cost savings? The answer is no because there is a range, i.e. if you have 1 to 75 officers, the premium is one thing, so getting rid of 3 police officers will not reduce premium. The Ontario County Victim Advocate could offer services at no cost to city.

AD: You mentioned that the chief's test isn't until March. So does this mean we have until March to recruit people?

SN: Yes, and that's part of the conversation I'm having with Amy. We're looking for ideas and people. We are getting the word out now to see if lieutenants or others would be interested in taking the test and moving to Geneva. We're hoping to push to find qualified candidates from now until March. Currently there are not necessarily any internal candidates, but one or two that are on the fence. We don't have definite interest from internal candidates now.

AD: I feel like with what the city has been through the last 3 years, I feel like a fresh perspective could be good.

SN: That's the sentiment across the board. I asked if people would be open to an external candidate, and they are open to it. They're not jumping for joy with that, but it was refreshing to hear they're open to it. I would hope there would be internal support. Amy and I are both not from Geneva which brings a different perspective. It's good to ask why we do things rather than say we've always done it. I'm hopeful, but the time between now and when the test is offered is very crucial. I have noticed an internal shift and external shift in communications, and people are more willing to have communications and city and staff members are more open to communications. I was nervous to ask certain questions, but I've received honest feedback. The majority of it has been in the positive direction.

AD: The November meeting is 11/17. I'll send an email to the group to ask about the December meeting.

Adjourned.