

Police Budget Advisory Board Meeting Minutes for Thursday August 17, 2023

Present: Jeremy Busch (Alternate), Amaris Elliot-Engel, Robert Maclean, James McCorkle, Andrew Spink (Chair)

Absent: Geoffrey Geiger, Michele Neary; Stephanie Newcomb (ex-officio), Frank Gaglianese (Council Liaison), Chief Matthew Colton (ex-officio)

Meeting Called to order at 6:05

No Zoom access

Move to approve minutes as amended, Andrew Spink, seconded by Amaris Elliot-Engel, approved.

I

Discussion of the 2024 Geneva Police Department (GPD) budget narrative reflecting the City of Geneva's across the board proposal/request for 12% reduction.

Points of Discussion:

- Why two new cars? If they need two cars, and they remove them both from the budget, then what is the alternate plan?
- Unclear why it is an all-or-nothing case for the two cars? We recognize that this suggestion, to remove two cars off the budget, is a serious cost-cutting offer, but it seems to contradict the claim of the need for new vehicles given the type of driving (city) as well as the reliance on vehicles for patrols.
- Overall, there is still a need for a better justification of budget items; how they fit into the overall, long- term spending plan.

Questions to ask Chief Colton:

1. Why not one vehicle (to replace the more problematic car)
2. What is the typical mileage for a police car—what is reasonable mileage?
3. What is the effect of not having the size of the fleet that we have now? Would fewer cars result in more foot patrols? Readiness?
4. What is the ratio of size of department to size of the vehicle fleet?
5. What is utility of changing to a 9mm caliber?
6. Need to recognize that the difficulty of recruitment is not a Geneva-centric—but systemic, national. Given the competition and small pool (again emphasizing this is a national problem), how might we operate with fewer officers short term or longer term?

II

Andrew Spink summarized his conversation with incoming Chief Colton:

- Chief Colton recognizes the competition; GPD used to pay much more competitively, now more comparable to other communities.
- What would it cost to hire competitively—that is above the local competing police departments
- Chief Colton's desire for the GPD to reach 34, actually currently 24 (two in academy, two on leave)

- Some discussion of mental health—what would the schedule and number of counselors be, if such a program were created? Sharing staff with Ontario County or Hobart and William Smith?
- Chief Colton did not consider the GPD having an inordinate number of property checks to conduct.
- Concerns about the elderly less frequent than mental health issues

Discussion points:

- What does Chief Colton see as the role of the PBAB? What is the role of the PBAB in making the needs of the budget more transparent to the public?
- What type of scheduling for patrols? Can the City foot the bill for a full complement of staff?
- Again the need for better data for budget projections and understanding overall needs.
- The need to acknowledge that counseling is a much wider concern—including trauma counseling, victim counseling, etc. Such a position could be a situation navigator or a real-time responder.
- Noted that Chief Colton views that citizen personnel should not respond to unfolding issues or respond to an incident, particularly domestic abuse.
- Consider other programs such as Rochester's Family Crisis Support Services and others as possible models.
- Is putting mental health counselors under the control of the police the best practice—especially as some communities would view the police in negative light.
- We should note that the bulk of the budget is personnel (which at the time of this meeting, the PBAB has no information on, GPD currently in union negotiations); but if the police are over-worked due in part to social work elements, would they redeploy the funds toward social workers to lessen their work-loads?
- How to make the GPD budget more intelligible to the community at large, as in offering an infographic? Should greater transparency/explanation of the GPD budget/spending be the PBAB's goal?
- Need to offer more coverage of the PBAB's discussions and understanding of the GPD budget—coverage in the *Finger Lakes Times*?
- Would ride-alongs with officers be useful for PBAB members?

III

Other Points:

Timing for budget comments, a degree of urgency, with the City Council's budget decisions due by the end of October.

Centennial for Aeneas MacDonald only officer of GPD to die in the line of duty (1924)—an opportunity for the GPD to community-build. Has the City considered/included planning for this?

Next Meeting: Sept 21, 2023 at 6:00 PM, City Hall Conference Room.

Adjourned at 7:19

Respectfully submitted by James McCorkle