

The Honorable Council of the Town of Morehead City held a Special Budget Session on Tuesday, April 25, 2017, in the Municipal Chambers located at 202 South 8th Street, Morehead City, North Carolina. Those in attendance were:

COUNCIL PRESENT: Mayor Gerald A. Jones, Jr.; Councilmen George W. Ballou, William F. Taylor, Demus L. Thompson; and Councilwoman Diane C. Warrender.
Councilman Harvey N. Walker, Jr. was absent.

STAFF PRESENT: City Manager David S. Whitlow; Planning and Inspections Director Linda Staab; Finance Director Jewel Lasater; Police Chief Bernette Morris; Fire Chief Jamie Fulk; Deputy Fire Chief Jack Manley; Assistant Fire Chief/Fire Inspector Dykeman Bailey; Fire Captain Chris Judy; IT Manager Jonathan Snyder; Chief Building Inspector Robert Davis; Building Inspector John Varner; Planning and Inspections Administrative Assistant Annie Bunnell; City Clerk Jeanne M. Giblin; and City Clerk Trainee Cathy Campbell

Mayor Jones called the Special Budget meeting of the Morehead City Town Council to order at 5:34 p.m., on Tuesday, April 25, 2017 in the Municipal Building Council Chambers with a quorum present.

City Manager David Whitlow shared that this meeting would be focused on the Fire/EMS Department, Police Department, and the Planning and Inspections Department, and conducted in a format suited to provide a better understanding of departmental staffing and operations. The remaining departments will be discussed at the May 2, 2017 Special Budget Session.

Fire/Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Department:

Fire Chief Jamie Fulk appeared before the Town Council to present, by way of PowerPoint presentation, information showing population and structural growth from 2002 to the present, and its effect on Fire/EMS Department operations.

The data showed that the population in 2000 was 7,691 and in 2016 was 9,258; an increase of 20.4 %. As the population grew, the structures to house citizens also grew and evolved. The structures today are commonly multiple story wood structures that are closely stacked together. All of these changes create new firefighting challenges.

Staffing data showed that in 2002 the Fire Department had two (2) stations manned by six (6) personnel per shift answering 1650 calls for service, while in 2016 there are three (3) stations with fourteen (14) personnel per shift answering 4412 calls for service. Of these 4412 calls, 1706 (38.67%) were overlapping, meaning that the Department was responding to at least two (2) calls at the same time. Often they responded to five (5) or six (6) calls at the same time with every truck running.

Chief Fulk pointed out that in earlier years the Department could count on volunteers to provided additional help when needed; however, volunteerism has diminished as citizens have found new opportunities for social interaction. Today, the Department relies on mutual aid from Atlantic Beach, Beaufort and Newport Fire Departments, which respond only if they are not already committed. If all three respond, it provides a maximum of twelve (12) additional responders.

On a typical shift, Station #1 will have 2 ambulance personnel, 1 fireman, and 1 truck driver; Station #2 will have 2 firemen and 1 driver; and Station #3 will have 2 ambulance personnel, 2 firemen, 1 driver. Per an International City Managers Association study, 5 personnel engine companies were 100% effective; 4 personnel engine companies were 65% effective; and 3 personnel engine companies were 38% effective. The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1720 recommendation calls for four (4) personnel for engine companies and five (5) personnel for ladder companies. Part-timers are utilized to fill in the gaps. However, part-time personnel create staffing challenges of their own in that they cannot work over 1,000 hours per year and the department has limited part-time funds. Often part-timers must be sent home to maintain compliance creating staffing gaps.

Chief Fulk then outlined the routine duties of his administrative staff highlighting increased demands as a result of new drug management and reporting regulations. He stated that his focus is on education rather than enforcement, which requires a constant review of the fire codes and educating citizens regarding code changes. He shared that much of the Fire Marshall and Assistant Fire Marshal's time is spent visiting businesses to do inspections, re-inspections, reviewing building plans, and providing education. Large facilities such as the hospital may require both to be on site at the same time.

Chief Fulk reminded the Council that he is not requesting additional personnel at this time, but encouraged the Council to consider steps that will lead to staffing goal achievement in the future. The goal was presented as:

Three Engines staffed with (3) firefighters per day.	Total of (9) Firefighters
Three Ambulances staffed with (2) EMS personnel per day.	Total of (6) EMS personnel
One Firefighter/EMT per shift for backfill for staff on leave.	<u>Total of (1)</u>
	Total of (16) per shift

Three (3) current firemen are provided through an existing SAFER grant until 10/2018 and three (3) more are being sought through a new SAFER grant application submitted this year as approved by the Council in February. If the Council decided to hold staffing levels with the addition of these six (6) personnel, the Department will be staffed at two (2) firefighters per shift rather than three (3). Should the Council accept the new SAFER grant if awarded, and approve to keep all these employees on staff once the grants expire, it would increase the salary budget by approximately \$65,000 per employee.

Chief Fulk presented pictures of actual rescue and fire calls to emphasize the importance of a fully staffed crew. For each picture, he gave an explanation of each responder's responsibilities.

Councilman Ballou questioned how the staffing position could be so negative in light of the progress made and the improved Insurance Service Office (ISO) ratings. Chief Fulk responded saying that the progress made is unbelievable and has resulted in staff retention. The Department is doing well, but does not yet meet standards. Chief Fulk stated that he is providing this report to ensure that Council is not misguided by progress misconception. Improvements in ratings are the result of improvements made in training, reporting, and administrative processes, as well as improved response times, often through the use of mutual aid.

Councilman Taylor questioned how Morehead's staffing position compares with Beaufort's. Chief Fulk stated that Beaufort has four (4) full-time personnel on duty daily as does Atlantic Beach. However, Beaufort does not provide EMS.

Councilman Taylor pointed out that Morehead City contracted to provide Fire/EMS services for Wildwood and Crab Point/Mitchell Village fire districts, and asked how the City might advocate for an increase in fire tax in light of improvements made. Chief Fulk stated that too much emphasis is being placed on the ratings which do not account for EMS. City Manager David Whitlow explained that the City could seek additional funding from Carteret County as part of the contract re-negotiations in two and a half years.

Councilman Taylor noted that the staff list does not include part-time employees; however, the part-time salary line item increased by 22%, and he questioned how many part-time personnel does the Fire Department have. Chief Fulk reported that he has a pool of ten (10) or eleven (11). He added that some of these individuals work ten (10) hours per year while others work up to the maximum of a thousand (1,000) hours. Councilman Taylor then questioned if the Department could decrease full-time staff and utilize more part-time employees as a cost savings. City Manager Whitlow explained that this cannot be done due to "intentional overtime." Fire/EMS employees work 2,912 per year, which means that a portion of their hours are designed overtime. Fire/EMS personnel work more than the standard forty (40) hours per week in order to staff the department 24/7 creating the need for "intentional overtime." Altering the shifts would ultimately require more personnel. Actual overtime is dedicated to full-time, permanent employees.

Police Department:

Police Chief Bernette Morris appeared before the Town Council announcing that her department was in great shape and fully staffed. The Police Department is staffed with forty (40)

officers and five (5) civilians. They run five (5) squads per twelve (12) hour shift with seven (7) officers per squad. In addition, one (1) captain, two (2) lieutenants and four (4) sergeants are on duty with each squad, so there are five (5) to eight (8) cars on the road per shift.

Councilman Taylor asked how many staff members serve on the Special Response Team (SRT). Chief Morris stated she has six (6) or seven (7) regular staff members assigned to Carteret County's SRT.

Councilman Taylor questioned the status of the police vehicle fleet and expectations for future replacement. Chief Morris stated that the vehicles requested within the proposed budget; three (3) police cars, one (1) Animal Control van, and one (1) crime scene investigations truck, will replace those no longer reliable. Continuing to replace three (3) vehicles per year should keep the Department current. The budgeted amount does include equipment necessary for each vehicle. Councilman Ballou said that he would like to see consistency in the size/style of police cars.

In response to Councilman Taylor's question about the voice recorder budgeted at \$18,000, Chief Morris advised this was an upgrade to current equipment that records all incoming and outgoing calls.

Councilman Taylor shared that he noticed Atlantic Beach Police Department and Morehead City Police Department handled the payment of contracted police officers differently for a road race he was coordinating and questioned why one would have the organization pay the officers directly while the other required the funds to pass through the Department. City Manager David Whitlow stated that municipalities have the option of how to handle these situations, and Morehead City has chosen the cheaper method. The Town allows staff to work off duty as individual contractors and since these officers are working as independent contractors, the City does not carry any liability for this service. Mayor Jones and several council members questioned this believing that if officers are in uniform, they should be considered on-duty and be covered by the City. Mr. Whitlow agreed to re-investigate and report back to the Council.

Planning and Inspections Department:

Linda Staab provided an exercise with staff to demonstrate a typical day in the Planning Department with the goal of emphasizing the need for an additional administrative position. Although Annie Bunnell does an excellent job of juggling daily demands, many key administrative tasks are delayed in order to satisfy external customer demand.

Responding to Councilman Taylor's question, City Manager David Whitlow stated that the salary for the inspector position is \$42,000.00 and the salary range for the administrative assistant position is \$26,000.00 to \$38,800.00.

Next Councilman Taylor asked if additional hardware or servers would be required for the Planning software included in the budget. Ms. Staab stated that she is still in the investigative stage, but she does not anticipate either would be needed as this is an upgrade to, or replacement of current software that is not compatible with today's processes. She noted that the software is not included in the proposed FY 2017-2018 budget, but was mentioned to make Council aware of potential upcoming expenditures. Ms. Staab also anticipates the need to budget for a new vehicle in the next budget cycle.

In response to Councilman Taylor's question, City Manager Whitlow stated that the Wireless Facility Master Plan is included under contracted services in the amount of \$40,000.

Councilman Taylor questioned if the \$5,000 entered for Advertising might go down if the General Assembly approves advertising legal notices on municipal websites. Ms. Staab said it is possible; however, she expects there will be an overlap period to ensure notification and for educating citizens of the new procedure.

Councilwoman Warrender questioned the 103% increase in Gas/Oil/Tires line item. Ms. Staab explained this was precautionary as the vehicles are aging and she is unsure of what to expect.

In closing, Ms. Staab thanked the Council for all the improvement in City Hall and expressed her pleasure with the new appearance. She also reported that the "Start Up In A Day" program is proving to be very beneficial, and she thanked everyone for their cooperation and participation. Mayor Jones shared that he often hears compliments from citizens who view the City

as more user friendly than in the past. Councilwoman Warrender mentioned that both Zaxby's and Moore's Barbeque reported that they were very pleased with the Planning Department's processes.

Board Comments:

Councilwoman Warrender questioned the audit line item under the Fire Department. Finance Director Jewel Lasater explained that it is the Fire Departments allocated portion of the McGladry annual audit expense. The audit expense is shared across all departments for whose records are included in the audit.

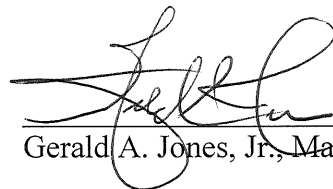
Next, Councilwoman Warrender questioned the \$69,500.00 budgeted under the Fire Department for insurance. Fire Chief Fulk reported that this is insurance that covers property, vehicles, and equipment as well as liability and malpractice insurance.

Councilman Taylor noted that the proposed budget states that the City is lucky that group insurance increased by only 7% rather than the anticipated 25%; however, group insurance for the Police Department increased by 6.5% and the Fire/EMS Department increased by 11.01%. City Manager Whitlow explained that it varies by department based on insurance elections and length of current year's term of service. Some employees may be covered by a spouse's and elect not to use the City's, and some employees may have only been employed and covered for a portion of the budget year. Fire/EMS's increase reflects the three new employees that came onboard mid-year and will be covered for a full twelve (12) months in the upcoming year. Planning and Inspections includes the potential new administrative position. The overall increase is 7% but that does not mean that the out of pocket expenses will equal the 7%.

There being no further business, the meeting was recessed until the next Special Budget meeting scheduled for 5:30 p.m. on Tuesday, May 2, 2017 in the Municipal Building Council Chambers.

Attest: 
Cathy Campbell, City Clerk Trainee




Gerald A. Jones, Jr., Mayor