

APPROVED MINUTES of the Budget
Workshop of the City Council of the City of Rye held
in City Hall on November 17, 2008 at 7:00 P.M.

PRESENT:

STEVEN OTIS, Mayor
ANDREW C. BALL
MACK CUNNINGHAM
PAULA J. GAMACHE
CATHERINE F. PARKER
GEORGE S. PRATT
JOSEPH A. SACK
Councilmembers

ABSENT: None

The Council convened at 7:08 p.m. Mayor Otis made a motion, seconded by Councilman Cunningham and unanimously carried to adjourn into Executive Session to discuss labor relations. Mayor Otis made a motion, seconded by Councilman Ball and unanimously carried to close the Executive Session at 7:42 p.m. No decisions were made. The Council reconvened at 7:45 p.m.

1. Pledge of Allegiance

Mayor Otis called the meeting to order and invited the Council to join in the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Roll Call

Mayor Otis asked the City Clerk to call the roll; a quorum was present to conduct official city business.

3. Continuation of Budget Workshops on Proposed 2009 Budget

Mayor Otis began the evening by saying that prior to a discussion of public safety departments, he would ask for Council comment on a Budget Analysis document provided to the Council by City Comptroller Michael Genito, who was unable to attend the workshop. Questions would be referred back to the Finance Department for an answer. Comments included:

- The Council must look forward in budgeting for the next couple of years and it may be difficult to maintain the rate of salary growth. What is the cost of a “fully-loaded” employee and what will the costs for staffing be over the next couple of years?

- The Council requested clarification from the Finance Department of areas where there were significant increases in expenditures projected for 2009 over 2008, especially any increase over the level of inflation.
- The projected number for tax certiorari payments seems conservative due to the large number of filings this year. What cases are expected to come to settlement in 2009?
- Electricity is projected to go up significantly. Can the rate paid to New York Power be locked in?
- Have projected prices that are influenced by the price of oil been changed to reflect the price of oil now, as opposed to the summer when they were prepared?
- The public needs an explanation for the growth in worker's compensation costs – over 200% since 2007.
- Why is there an increase in sewer repair and maintenance? Is it linked to capital improvements for the pump stations? (More problems have been found since the City purchased a sewer camera.)

Fire Department

City Manager Shew introduced Fire Chiefs Hogben, Cotter and Scarfone. He said the Fire Department has continued its theme of volunteerism and has brought in ten new volunteers and by working with the Building Department, has succeeded in lowering the City's ISO rating, which helps keep residents' insurance rate down. Chief Hogben said the Department is composed of 5 companies, with 17 career firefighters and 100+ volunteers, of which 25-50 are active. He said that all vehicles have been brought up to standard and both buildings are operational. Training for the Department is up, with volunteer training mirroring that of paid staff. In this year's budget request, the Department has only asked for equipment that it believes is essential in order to bring old equipment up to NFPA standards. The Chief said that recruitment of volunteers is good but they need good equipment in order to retain them. He added that in 2009, the Department would be celebrating the 100th anniversary of the Locust Avenue Firehouse by bringing back the inspection parade. He said the Department was willing to work with what the City could give them but asked them to watch cuts in public safety even in bad economic times.

Police Department

City Manager Shew introduced Police Commissioner William Connors who made a presentation to the Council that focused on questions the Council had raised relative to overtime. Commissioner Connors introduced members of his staff who were in attendance, including Gail Klepps, Lt. Joseph Verille, Lt. Robert Falk, Sgt. Nick Groglio and Officers Franco Campagnone, Mike Kenny, Julio Rossi and John Wood. The Commissioner said that in preparing the Police Department budget they must try to reach a balance of preparing for the possibilities while budgeting for the probabilities. He said they try to use overtime only when necessary in order to save it for a "rainy day" and that overtime as a percentage of the Department's budget has ranged from 5 to 6% from 2001 to 2008. All members of the Department, except the Commissioner, are eligible for overtime. Overtime is automatically authorized when there are fewer than three officers available for a tour, if a supervisor is not available, or if there is an emergency. In all

other cases it must be approved by a Lieutenant and the Commissioner and all overtime payment submissions must be reviewed by the Lieutenant and the Commissioner. In his presentation, Commissioner Connors said the staffing mission of the Department includes ensuring adequate patrol coverage, staffing the desk 24/7, ensuring adequate supervision, providing coverage for special events, and responding to emergencies. He then explained how the Department is staffed in order to provide coverage for the different shifts. There are three lieutenants, seven sergeants, three detectives and 26 officers and added that since 2001, the Department has never been fully staffed. The Department's staff is just adequate to accomplish its mission. He said that there are some areas where the City is reimbursed for police overtime such as prisoner transport, defensive driving classes, grants (DWI, child safety seat) or coverage of events like the triathlon. Some of the areas where overtime has been used in 2008 include: to cover sick time and vacation time, special events, football games, July 4th, burglary details, school year opening, investigations and training. The Commissioner said that an anticipated impact of the economic downturn is a greater demand for police services because financial hardship can drive some people to commit crimes, with more people out of work there are more complaints about quality of life issues and increased tension can lead to disputes. Commissioner Connors said that in preparing the operating budget, the area that the Department controls, which includes such programs as D.A.R.E. and the Marine Unit, they have consistently budgeted conservatively and requested only what they need to accomplish their mission. He concluded by saying that these are challenging times and the members of the Department will adjust to the constraints imposed on them.

The Council thanked Commissioner Connors for his presentation, saying that it was helpful to understand what the actual staffing levels are. They offered questions and comments in the following areas:

- Why is the Marine Patrol not covered as a line in the budget? (The Marine Officer is a full-time police officer that is transferred to marine duty during the season.)
- What position is being eliminated? (A position that is currently vacant. When a detective was promoted to sergeant, the position was not filled.)
- What is the crossing guard situation? (Seven out of eight spots have been filled; only the slot at Resurrection is open.)
- How many officers live in Rye? (It has been decreasing over the years. There are currently 14 members of the Department living in Rye.)
- Could the Department institute an "on call" system for officers, similar to that used for hospital staffing, to cut down on overtime costs? (It might not be legally defensible.)
- The community will be demanding a higher level of enforcement, especially around schools. How will this be dealt with in the budget? (This might have to be done with a reduced service level because there are some collective bargaining issues.)
- The Department must make it clear to the Council what is the core coverage it wants and what is the base cost for this coverage.

4. Adjournment

Mayor Otis made a motion, seconded by Councilman Cunningham and unanimously carried, to adjourn into Executive Session to continue the discussion of labor relations at 10:03 p.m. Mayor Otis made a motion, seconded by Councilwoman Parker to adjourn the Executive Session at 10:15 p.m. No decisions were made. The Council reconvened at 10:16 p.m.

There being no further business to discuss, Mayor Otis made a motion, seconded by Councilman Ball and unanimously carried, to adjourn the meeting at 10:17 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Dawn F. Nodarse
City Clerk