



Public Safety & Transportation Committee Report

City of Newton **In City Council**

Thursday, May 28, 2020

Present: Councilor Auchincloss (Chair), Markiewicz, Downs, Lipof, Malakie, Grossman and Ciccone

Absent: Councilor Bowman

Also Present: Councilor Baker, Humphrey, Albright and Norton

City Staff: Chief David MacDonald and Lt. George McMains, Newton Police Department; Chief Gino Lucchetti and Acting Assistant Chief Gregory Gentile, Newton Fire Department; Jonathan Yeo, Chief Operating Officer and Maureen Lemieux, Chief Financial Officer

Referred to Public Safety & Transportation and Finance Committees

#256-20 Transfer \$100,000 for new Police Cruisers

HER HONOR THE MAYOR requesting authorization to repurpose and transfer the sum of one hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000) from Comptroller's Reserve Acct #01C20107-585010 originally set aside for a Police Incident Command Vehicle to new Police Cruisers.

Action: **Public Safety & Transportation Approved 7-0**

Note: Chief MacDonald and Maureen Lemieux, Chief Financial Officer joined the Committee for discussion on this item.

Chief MacDonald stated that when the budget was reviewed and revised the purchase order for the Command Vehicle was cancelled. It was determined that the \$100,000.00 would be used to purchase new police cruisers. A frontline cruiser cost approximately \$50,000.00. A frontline cruiser and an operable gun are the most important tools to a police officer.

In March 2020, the City intended to request \$350,000 for all frontline police cruiser replacements, an amount in line with the previous year. Due to the pandemic, the City made the difficult decision of reducing this annual request to purchase police cruisers by \$150,000.00 to \$200,000.00. The funding was originally for an incident command vehicle. The City anticipates spending \$300,000.00 on cruisers in FY21.

Committee members questions, comments and answers.

Questions:

- Is it possible for the department to wait on purchasing the Command Vehicle or is it necessary at this

time? Chief MacDonald answered that not having the Command Vehicle is a setback for the department, but the department will operate without one. A Command Vehicle remains on the departments wish list.

- Would a budget *RESOLUTION* be of some assistance in requesting a Command Vehicle?
- Will the new cruisers be equipped with push bars? Chief MacDonald answered that he does not know what is included in the '2020 vehicle package'.
- What are push bars used for? Chief MacDonald answered that push bars allow an officer to remove debris or vehicles in order to reopen a travel lane while waiting for a tow truck. The push bars are also used to assist with the public address radio system speakers and light mounting.
- Will funding be available next year to purchase a Command Vehicle? Ms. Lemieux answered that she did not know this information and said possibly not and cannot make any promises.
- What is the departments fleet size, how many years is a vehicle dependable for and are vehicles replaced on a schedule? Ms. Lemieux answered that the City budgets for vehicles. The cost is approximately \$350,000.00 for seven vehicles. This year, the City could not fund the \$350,000.00. \$300,000.00 allows the department to purchase six out of the seven vehicles.

Comments:

- It is necessary for the City and Police Department to stay on their fleet replacement plan program as it took years to create. Public safety is necessary.

Ms. Lemieux stated that this year, it was a difficult process when creating department budgets. No full-time employees or Police Department employees were eliminated. The Police Department has 149 sworn officers. She then stated that she had a conversation with Chief MacDonald about cancelling the purchase of the Command Vehicle. The City is fortunate this vehicle was not in the process of being built or delivered. Therefore, Chief MacDonald was able to cancel the purchase. As Chief MacDonald stated a frontline cruiser and an operable gun are the most important tools to a police officer. The City and the Police Department work very hard at maintaining their fleet.

Without further discussion, Councilor Markiewicz made a motion to approve this request. Committee members agreed 7-0.

At approximately 8:45 p.m., the Committee adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Jacob D. Auchincloss, Chair



RUTHANNE FULLER
MAYOR

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Office of the Mayor

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May 4, 2020

Honorable City Council
Newton City Hall
1000 Commonwealth Avenue
Newton Centre, MA 02459

Councilors:

I respectfully submit a docket item to your Honorable Council requesting authorization to repurpose and transfer the sum of \$100,000 from Acct # 01C20107-585010 originally set aside for a Police Incident Command Vehicle.

The Coronavirus Pandemic has dramatically changed our world. The financial impact to the City's FY2021 Revenues due to the COVID-19 economic shutdown will be significant. Consequently, plans must be deferred and initiatives postponed. Realistically, it may take us a few years to recover financially from the devastating effects of closing our economy.

Two months ago, we intended to request \$350,000 for police cruiser replacements, an amount in line with the previous year. We have made the difficult decision of reducing this annual request to purchase police cruisers by \$150,000 to \$200,000. The Chief of Police believes that the City would be better served by repurposing the \$100,000 for the Police Incident Command Vehicle for a higher priority, the new cruisers.

With this change, we will be spending \$300,000 on police cruisers in FY21.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,

Ruthanne Fuller
Mayor

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