

Town of Dartmouth
400 Slocum Road, Room 304
Dartmouth, MA 02747

FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING DISCUSSION NOTES
MARCH 9, 2023

Finance Committee Members present:

Robert Gauvin, Chair
Janine Simmons, Vice Chair
Teresa Hamm
Elizabeth Huidekoper

The Finance Committee met at 6:30pm, Mr. Gauvin presiding. Mr. Gary Carreiro, Director of Budget & Finance/Treasurer was present to provide information and answer questions. However, as there was no quorum, no official business could take place.

1. FY24 Budget Hearing: Dartmouth Police Department

Chief Brian P. Levesque presented an FY2024 operating budget proposal totaling \$9,204,248, a 0.2% increase over the prior year. The breakdown is \$8,448,513 in personnel costs and \$755,735 in other costs. CBA step increases are not included in the total because they are still in negotiations. The contract expired last July. This year's budget is a 52.2-week year, while the FY2024 budget will be a 52-week year, which will save some money. Two new positions are being proposed: a Police Lieutenant position and an Assistant Communications Division Supervisor to act as a working backup to the Supervisor. However, these are promotions and reorganizations, not completely new positions. The department expects one retirement.

The proposed capital costs are \$319,440 for four police cruisers; replacement of outdated radio equipment that experienced a lightning strike; and an automatic door opener for the main entrance. The 5-year capital plan forecast is \$2,136,894.06 which will include for FY2025 (or ARPA funding) a CAD/RMS software replacement. Annual maintenance costs for this system will inevitably increase. Chief Levesque stated that they prefer to continue with the vendor that they are already using for a new CAD/RMS system. Mr. Carreiro stated that ARPA-funded projects must be processed by 2024.

Mr. Gauvin asked about large 6 to 10 year capital projects. Chief Levesque responded that they already have their new building and there are no other large projects on the horizon.

Chief Levesque presented a graph showing the 10-year average of Calls for Service. Property checks can skew the data. He also reported 5-year data for Reports and Additional Activity including traffic calls and gun licenses. Crime data is based on the FBI National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS). There are Group A serious offenses (Crimes Against Person,

Property, and Society) and Group B less serious offenses (Disorderly Conduct, OUI, Liquor Law Violations, Trespass, and all other offenses.)

In Group A-Crimes Against Person, there has been a 24% increase in 2022 from the average of the prior 5 years. The increase is attributed to domestic known-relationship calls, behavioral health facility incidents, and School Department incidents. The Police Department has a grant-funded Domestic Violence Advocate that works out of the station three days per week to assist victims of domestic violence.

In Group A-Crimes Against Property, crimes in 2022 were down by 14% from the average of the prior 5 years. Most of these incidents are related to shoplifting. The Police rely heavily on storeowners to handle the incidents.

In Group A-Crimes Against Society, crimes in 2022 were down by 13% from the average of the prior 5 years.

In Group B, all crimes in 2022 were down by 18% from the average of the prior 5 years.

In summary, all categories of crimes were lower in 2022 than the average of the prior 5 years with the exception of Crimes Against Person.

Presenting data from 2020 through 2022, Chief Levesque showed that only one-third of arrests during that period were Dartmouth residents. Another third were New Bedford residents, with Fall River residents at 11%, and the remainder from various other residences. Dartmouth's location between two cities, shopping facilities including the Dartmouth Mall, and the ongoing mental health crisis are large factors in crimes committed. Chief Levesque stated that most arrests do not lead to jail time or convictions. Many are repeat offenders. The Police are looking into a license plate reader system which could help identify fleeing vehicles. This may show up in future budgets. The system can be set up to look for stolen vehicles, and can be used for partial information or license number identification. He stated there is a lot of value to this type of system. Several towns around Dartmouth already have these systems in place. The cost is per camera per year; he may try a few cameras to begin with and do further research.

He compared 2022 crime rate data in Bristol County. The highest rates per 1,000 population were, in order, New Bedford, Fall River, Seekonk, Attleboro, and Dartmouth. Each police district may have its own reporting policies which can skew the data. Another report which studied compensation using 2002 data showed comparable towns. These towns were chosen for population, financial, and demographic profiles. In this report, Crimes Against Person, Property, and Society were compared. Dartmouth's data was very high compared with these towns which include Braintree, Stoughton, Randolph, and Norwood among others. Taking the same data but using per 1,000 population, Dartmouth remained the highest, followed by Stoughton, Randolph, Walpole, and Braintree. Chief Levesque stated that Dartmouth's Police Department is smaller than some and is very busy.