

**Board of Apportionment & Taxation
City of Ansonia**

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Elizabeth Lynch
TOWN AND CITY CLERK
ANSONIA, CONNECTICUT

The Board of Apportionment & Taxation of the City of Ansonia held a budget workshop on Wednesday, February 18, 2015 at 6:00 p.m. in the Aldermanic Chambers of Ansonia City Hall. The purpose of the meeting was to hold a public session for comments on the tentative budget and work on departments, Fire, ARMS and Police.

Members Present

Ms. Blackwell (Arrived 6:30 p.m.)

Mr. Cassetti

Mr. Delibero

Mr. Izzo

Mr. Smerznak

Mr. Veillette (Left 6:30 p.m.)

Mr. King

The meeting was called to order by Chairman King. The Board rose for the Pledge of Allegiance. The record shows 6 members present, there is a quorum.

The meeting was opened to the public anyone wishing to address the Board regarding the Tentative Budget for Fiscal Year 2015-2016 may do so at this time. No one wished to address the Board the Public Session was closed at 6:05 p.m.

Mr. Veillette made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Delibero seconded the motion. The motion was approved. (6 yes) The meeting was adjourned at 6:08 p.m.

Mr. Veillette left the meeting at this time. Ms. Blackwell arrived.

Fire Department 401

Chief Trembley informed the Board that he compiled with the Mayor's request to reduce the budget by 2%. The Fire Department Budget consists of 80% of fixed costs but Chief Trembley although new on the job believes a better job can be done with reallocating of funds. Some line items have been addressed but he will continue to improve in this area down the road.

The Board and Chief spoke at length regarding the Protective Clothing needed to be replaced every 10 years at a cost of \$3,000 per member. The typical procedure is to provide the seasoned members with the newer gear and the newer members will received the older but still within the conformity gear.

Chief Trembley advised that Board that at any given opportunity he share with the public how fortunate Ansonia is to have a completely volunteer Fire Department, this is worth millions and the taxpayers of Ansonia need to know that.

The Fire Watch Duty a new line item is to be used for private events where the Fire Marshal see fit that it falls under state statue and the Department needs to have someone in attendance. This is a reimbursable expense where the holder of the event needs to pay the City of the service. The true reason for this line item allows the Fire Department to pay the member rather than the member needing to wait 3-4 months for payment. (ie the Board of Education)

The Chief has submitted a 5 year plan Capital Budget to the Finance Office and is working on a truck replacement plan out to the year 2046. The Scott Air Packs 58 in total all purchased at the same time are due to expire their useful life in 2019. The Board and the Chief both believe seeking out grants for the City is the way to go, the value to replace the entire inventory of air packs is \$504,000.

Another area of concern was the Fire Alarm Maintenance Salaries and Supt. Salary. This is for the Game Well System used for some of the business in Town as well as some of the Elderly Housing Facilities. Mr. Izzo was not convinced this was money well spent and should the City consider abandoning it. Although the call boxes may on be used the wiring would need to be maintained for an emergency system the City needs to have in place should the need ever arise.

The last are the Board touched on was the increase in Office Supplies which is for the request for a new copier.

ARMS 801

Chief Heon, his staff, commissioner and the EMMS billing agency was present to address any questions.

The Board began with the Revenue side of the ARMS budget the only City Department which provides a revenue stream. The new billing/collection agency EMMS only gets paid on what is collected at a reduced rate of 6.5%. EMMS was quick to advise BOAT that ARMS does a great job of providing billable claims, Ansonia however has a high Medicare/Medicaid population

which in turn results in lower collections. The gap between gross charges and the net collectible fee is going. The collection rate at the end of the fiscal year was between 86-88% with a total collected last year of \$678,000 and \$166,000 still outstanding. The State dictates the rate schedule the City can charge, and Ansonia only bills for transported clients. Mr. Heon stated he is very proud of the Departments track record the norm is 1 ½ from pick up to delivery to hospital to recording the transaction for billing. ARMS has reduced what it was paying to the billing agency while increasing what they collect.

On the expense side of the budget ARMS has consolidated much of their budget to streamline the process. The only increase to the Budget is for non-union wages. The 2013-2014 budget is the same as the 2014-2015 budget today.

The only request that Chief Heon makes to the Board is the request to consider an Ambulance be put in the Capital Plan sooner rather than later. The current ambulance is a 1998 with over 500,000 running miles. This vehicle is driven hard to over 3,000 per year. The estimated cost for the Ambulance and equipment is \$235,000.

Police Department 301

Chief Hale advised the Board that the Union Contract has been settled and the overall increase to the budget is \$220,000. This is due to the reduction in MERF liability from 16.01% to 14.98%.

The steps in the contract have been renegotiated from 5 years to over 10 years and the medical benefit savings is greater. The Crossing Guards have been moved to the Board of Education Budget however they still answer to the Police Department.

Under the new contract an enhanced drug testing policy has been instituted therefore the need for additional funding. Under the new contact there is a tier system in place for the sick time. The police vehicles are back in the budget for the first time in years at a cost of \$85,000.

Overtime has always been an issue this year it is budgeted at \$335,000. The Police currently have two pension plans with the first the Police Pension Fund being phased out over time. The Chief did bring to the Board's attention the eleven police officers that can consider retiring for July 2016. It was noted that it take a year to hire an officer and get them on the roll

from academy trained. It may be in the best interest of the City to consider adding two additional officers in anticipation of upcoming retirees. The current head count for officers is 45.

Emergency Operation Center EOC-220

Chief Hale advised the Board that although this Department is small at a total of \$29,390 there was a cut of \$500 for the contracted services which covers the agreement for the radio system. This needs to be reinstated back to \$18,500.

With no other business to come before the Board Mr. Smerznak made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Delibero seconded the motion. The motion was approved. (6 yes)

The meeting was adjourned at 8:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Donna Duclos
Donna Duclos (4/1)

Secretary Board of Apportionment & Taxation