Public Safety Advisory Committee

11.28.17

Chief Toby Martin, Sergeant Craig Worster, John Reinhardt, Marie Reinhardt, Steve Christianson, Jody Elwell, Sue Powers, Colleen Gilliam

Discussion of proposed budget cuts. Cuts to police and EMS. Six summons at the high school thus far this school year, which is six more than last year.

Police department shortage down one full time officer. Difficulty in recruiting due to the climate in town, potential applicants are not likely to want to seek employment if they do not feel that the position is long term.

Discussion of how the school program will affect public safety. Review of the discussion of the school board meeting where Chief Lange spoke about public safety concerns. The school guidance counselor has circulated a petition to eliminate the SRO position stating that the services of the SRO would be better provided by a school social worker. The SRO position is in place to be proactive and prevent kids who are heading down the wrong path from getting into trouble.

Differences between police and sheriff. Unlikely to result in a budget savings because sheriff will need to hire three more officers to cover the estimated 6700 calls for service per year in Wiscasset. Sherriff Brackett has shared this information with the town leaders in the past.

Chief Martin shared EMS technical protocols on how to manage scenes. Shared changes to the process.

Proposed cuts to EMS are not realistic. Only one EMS provider who lives locally. The only way to reduce the budget by $66k is to reduce providers on duty. Newer ambulance will be here around February or March of 2018.

The town presently has 21 fire department members only 12 active and only a few who are medically trained.

Can EMS rates/subsidies to other towns be increased? Select board is concerned that increasing the rate will result in loss of business. Is there room to increase the rates but still remain less than the competition?

What are the long term cost to the community in terms of property values with no services? How do you promote a town with no services? Average age in Lincoln county is 58 and average age in Wiscasset is 63. EMS services are a necessity to the town to meet the needs of the population.

Discussion of how to best get the message out to voters and towns people about public safety, police, EMS and fire. Few people seem to understand the pervasive nature of some of the crime ie: elder abuse, drug addiction. Sergeant Worster suggested a storyboard to walk through a situation from start to finish. The idea would be to demonstrate how many hours go into each call from first point of contact to the final paperwork. There is more to police work than making arrests.

$109,000 of the $430,000 proposed cuts are from public safety. 25% of the cut is only coming from public safety. These are essential services.

Is a public forum an option? A forum may help to provide a platform to educate voters. If you do not use public safety services, you may not understand what they do until you are faced with an emergency.

Chief Martin updated the group on the exhaust system. Exhaust system for fire and EMS moving forward. Two bids both systems work well. Hopefully in within the next 2-3 months. Set back on Ambulance for 5 weeks. Delivery for Wiscasset ambulance will be February or March.

What can committee members do to help?

1. Go to meeting Thursday (budget committee and select board joint meeting) and advocate for services.
2. Advocate for a capital improvement plan. To help budgets sustain themselves.

This year’s EMS budget was cut by $28K due to purchase of personal protective equipment, which was required by OSHA. The cost was $38K remaining cost was carried over to this year’s budget due to not having a capital improvement plan. Overtures now have to go to a town vote.

The infrastructure in town is crumbling. There needs to be plan for cruisers, ambulances, fire trucks in the next 10 years to maintain current equipment and replace aging equipment. The public safety building needs routine maintenance and a plan for future needs of the public safety programs.

Jody offered to contact the Wiscasset Newspaper to ask them to run a story about our public safety departments and concerns for our community.

Other business:

Continued efforts to reach Fire Chief TJ Merry. To date he has not responded. Colleen and Brad met with the Chamber of Commerce on November 16th to discuss public safety and what the business community would like to see. They seem to be supportive of public safety. They would like to see increased police presence in down town area especially in summer. They are interested in water front. Business are concerned about relations between EMS and Fire departments. Suggestion to invite someone from MDOT to talk to our committee about safety concerns with the MDOT project.

Colleen met with Partners in Education on November 16th this is our local parent teacher group. The conversation focused on public safety. It was scheduled prior to the school board meeting but because the meeting took place after the school board meeting the topic focused mainly on the new behavior program and the potential for more support to the school from public safety. Partner members were asked to be thinking about how they would like to see the school collaborate with public safety ie: fire drills, prevention education, presence in the schools etc. Parents are supportive of the SRO position and it seems that the petition is more of a statement than a large scale movement.

No meeting December 26, 2016. Next meeting January 23, 2018. Happy Holidays, be safe!