

Approved 6/25/02

Village of Downers Grove Finance & Administration Committee Meeting Village Hall – Ante Room June 4, 2002

Commissioner Zabloudil called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

Present: Commissioner McConnell, Commissioner Zabloudil, Mayor Krajewski, Dave Van Vooren, Marty Lyons, Trisha Steele, Mike Baker, Chief Ruscetti, Bob Tutko, Jim Jackson, Chief Porter, Kurt Bluder

Absent: None

Commissioner Zabloudil said the minutes for the May 21, 2002 meeting, which were e-mailed to those who attended the meeting, have been revised slightly to incorporate Ms. McConnell's corrections. The minutes were approved as corrected.

Overtime Budgets: Commissioner Zabloudil said he feels that one reason for discussing overtime budgets is to gain a better understanding of the various components that make up the budget.

Chief Ruscetti presented the Fire Department Overtime Report (attachment 1). He said staffing plus training plus operational factors equals services and overtime is necessary in order to provide the desired level of services with our current staffing levels. He explained that a maximum of 24 and a minimum of 19 firefighters are required to be on duty each day to maintain the Village standards and adequately cover the community: three firefighters on each of the three engines, two on each of three ambulances, two on the tower truck, two on the rescue squad and a battalion chief or lieutenant, who acts out of class, to supervise the shift.

Ms. McConnell asked if the minimum staff requirements are based on safety and coverage or on the number budgeted. Chief Ruscetti said it is based on what has been budgeted. She asked if the minimum based on the budget also equals the minimum based on safety and coverage. Chief Ruscetti said this is the minimum number of firefighters necessary to maintain the standards developed by the Village of Downers Grove.

Mr. Lyons said that during budget discussions, Chief Ruscetti said he would like to have more men on certain equipment, but he is able to maintain standards with the current minimum.

Chief Ruscetti added that there are several variable factors that effect staffing, i.e. sick time, workman's comp., and operational factors. He said the occurrence of sick time and workman's comp. is often unpredictable; however, operational factors (training, EMS, hold over on a shift, public education programs conducted by the Fire Department, etc.) are more easily anticipated.

Commissioner Zabloudil asked Mr. Lyons where the holdovers appear on the budget summary, which he distributed earlier. Mr. Lyons said they are listed under Miscellaneous. Chief Ruscetti acknowledged that they do not have a good track system for holdover amounts.

Mr. Van Vooren asked if holdover pay for men, who remain at a fire scene through a shift change is listed under Miscellaneous or attributed to the fire scene. Chief Ruscetti said it varies, however, it is usually included in Miscellaneous. He added that in the future they are going to try to show a more detailed break down of Miscellaneous accounts. He said they also plan to get a more detailed accurate accounting in the overtime/fire sick time categories.

Commissioner Zabloudil told Chief Ruscetti to make any accounting changes, which would be beneficial to his department; but not to create more work in anticipation of future inquiries. Chief Ruscetti admitted that they are feeling a little intimidated and are trying to be prepared for any questions that may be asked. However, they also hope that better tracking will increase efficiency.

Ms. Steele told Chief Ruscetti that there are some software upgrades that might be helpful. Chief Ruscetti said they would like their accounting to be more exact; although there will probably always be a Miscellaneous Account. He added that they would like more text in the Miscellaneous Account so they can track it a little better.

Chief Ruscetti briefly discussed staffing. He said four slots are kept open per day for vacations and floating holidays in accordance with the union contract, equaling 1,460 days per year. After reviewing the actual employees' vacation time based on length of service, etc. he estimated that there are approximately 949 possible vacation days. He said the estimated time off for holidays is 511 days. Because the possible number of vacation days plus holiday time equals 1,460 days, no over time would be needed if everything goes according to plan. Mr. Van Vooren noted that no more than four employees could be off for a holiday or vacation day on any given day. Chief Ruscetti replied yes.

Commissioner McConnell and Mr. Van Vooren asked if the contract contains a penalty for taking sick time on a holiday, or on the day before or after a holiday. Chief Ruscetti replied no. However, he added that management can ask for medical verification of sick time at any time. Commissioner Zabloudil suggested that use of sick time before, after or during a holiday should be addressed during the next contract negotiations.

Continuing his discussion of staffing, Chief Ruscetti said according to federal law, the Village must provide two slots off for the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) work reduction days, which equals 730 days per year. He noted that the cost to the Village to cover the 730 days is \$25,550. Chief Ruscetti said that amount is based on the time and half that must be paid to other firefighters to cover the open slots. In addition Battalion Chiefs may be off 58 days per year, including vacations and holidays at cost of approximately \$44,000. Chief Ruscetti said that currently the Battalion Chiefs do not receive FLSA work reduction days. He said he thought someone should check to be sure that practice was not in violation of Federal Law.

Chief Ruscetti said workers comp. has been a continuous problem in the department. He said the average sick time and workers comp. expenses for the last three years is approximately \$181,000; however he added that this figure is based on a less than adequate tracking system. He said one firefighter who has been on limited duty for the entire year has caused \$102,480 in over time. In addition four other staff members have been off due to medical leave.

Mr. Van Vooren asked the number of full time firefighters. Chief Ruscetti replied 73.

Ms. McConnell asked Chief Ruscetti if the department usually had four firefighters off per day. Chief Ruscetti said there could be four people off on vacation, plus two off for Kelly Days, plus, those who are on disability, possibly resulting in 10 people off on one day. Ms. McConnell asked if there are typically four people off per day, or if there are usually more. Chief Ruscetti said usually there are more than four off at one time; however, it varies. Ms. McConnell and Mr. Van Vooren asked Chief Ruscetti if he has to call someone back everyday. He replied yes. He added that when personnel are attending training sessions, someone must fill their slot at time and a half.

In response to questions concerning why lieutenants have been responding to fires with their battalion chiefs, Chief Ruscetti explained that it is part of a new Command Team program, which is being used throughout the United States, based on firefighter safety, effectiveness, and development of future incident commanders. Chief Ruscetti said he has felt for years that there has been a weakness with the incident command system. He said he must assign a support officer to each command team and with the current minimum staffing levels everyone is committed to the fire. Thus, he said he used senior lieutenants who will probably be promoted one day, giving them the opportunity to get some experience running a fire.

When asked why the lieutenants were responding to activated fire alarms, Chief Ruscetti said they only responded to activated alarms during the one-month test period to see how the program would work. Although the program was rumored to have cost \$8,000, in reality Chief Ruscetti said it cost \$936 for the test period. He anticipated that \$936 would probably be the annual cost of the program because when the program goes into effect lieutenants would only respond to real fires not to all activated fire alarms. He added that during the test period two actual fires were successfully fought. Chief

Ruscetti said that the command post is very important during a fire in tracking and protecting firefighters and making sure every job gets done.

Commissioner Zabloudil asked how the department will know the difference between a false alarm and a real fire and know when to send a support officer. Chief Ruscetti said the first engine on the scene gives a primary report. If they report smoke showing, or if the VOC or the Police Department reports smoke, then a support officer will be sent.

Mr. Van Vooren asked if the one-month test cost \$936 why wouldn't the annual cost be twelve times \$936. Chief Ruscetti explained that during the test period, the support officer responded to all activated alarms: however when the actual program is put in place they will respond only to real fires, not to false alarms. Chief Ruscetti said he anticipates that the support officers would be needed for approximately one fire or large accident per month. Mr. Van Vooren asked if the support officer would be more likely to respond during daytime, evening or early morning hours? Chief Ruscetti said that most likely they would respond between 5:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m. He said when a chief is working or there is a safety officer available, they can take the roll of support officer. Mr. Van Vooren summarized that during regular working hours a battalion chief in training, any of the deputies, or the chief may act as the support officer. Chief Ruscetti replied yes. He said the command team is a team of four: battalion chief, senior advisor, support officer, and safety officer.

Commissioner Zabloudil asked if there was a four-man command team responding during the test period. Chief Ruscetti replied yes. However, he added that three of the four members of the team were salaried employees and the only overtime involved was for the support officer.

Mr. Lyons said that over the last three years the total overtime costs have been going up and matching personnel costs. He said this is the cost of the contract. He advised the Committee to keep in mind the cost of a new officer, including benefits. He said an overtime budget of less than 10% of the total human resource costs is still less costly than hiring an additional officer.

Commissioner Zabloudil said the current overtime, which is 6.4% of the total payroll expense, seems normal. He added that the overall budget came in under plan for the year and said he does not see a problem. He said he felt the department was providing the necessary services to the community and managing the budget. He thanked Chief Ruscetti for an effective comprehensive presentation, which will be helpful in budget discussions. Commissioner Zabloudil said he noted that the Chief often begins the day knowing that he is going to be short of personnel and he and his staff make the decisions necessary to compensate for the shortfall. He added that the Council will have to decide if they want to continue that strategy in the future.

Commissioner Zabloudil asked if Chief Ruscetti could present examples of other communities that use a command team.

Chief Ruscetti asked the Committee if they and the Council could let the department know what they envision for the future. He distributed a list of budget related questions for the Finance Committee (attachment 2). Mr. Van Vooren said the Committee will review the questions and respond. Commissioner McConnell and Commissioner Zabloudil said they would like to meet again with Chief Ruscetti and his staff to discuss the questions before they formulate their responses.

Chief Ruscetti said over the weekend some Downers Grove Fire Department personnel participated with the Chicago Fire Department and mutual aid box alarm system people in disaster preparedness. He said they received \$50,000 in equipment, which they brought back to Downers Grove. The Department now has the capability to monitor for most biological and all chemical warfare, irritants and radioactivity. In Village Manager Ginex's absence, Mr. Van Vooren asked Chief Ruscetti to update the entire Village Council at tonight's meeting concerning the new equipment.

Commissioner Zabloudil asked Chief Porter to make his presentation. Chief Porter distributed the Downers Grove Police Department Overtime Report, outlining issues faced by the department this year concerning manpower, scheduling, shift minimums as dictated by the current contract, a summary of responsibilities of the COP and traffic units and a breakout of internal overtime tracking. Also included is an overtime projection report prepared by Deputy Chief Kurt Bluder in November 2001. He also distributed a staffing plan for the year 2000 prepared by former Chief Rick Ginex, which the Department has tried to follow. However, losing 8 officers in the last nine months has made it difficult.

Chief Porter, referring to Mr. Lyon's Police Overtime Analysis (attachment 2), noted that the Department exceeded their total overtime budget last year by \$200,275. However, he added that they have a lot of vacant salaries, including personnel that have left and those on disability, amounting to \$350,074 which was returned at the end of the year. Thus, although they were over budget for total overtime last year, they had a significant amount left over in salaries. Chief Porter said although personnel shortages frequently cause an increase in overtime expenses, there is also a saving in salaries.

Commissioner Zabloudil asked if Chief Porter's report contained minimum staffing levels. He replied yes. He added that minimum staffing levels are dictated by the union contract.

Chief Porter said the department has deviated somewhat from former Chief Ginex's Staffing Plan 2000. He said that at one point the plan called for having a station officer in the front lobby; however, he asked Deputy Chief Byrne to conduct an audit to see if such a placement would be cost effective. When they found it was not, they negotiated with the union to lower the afternoon staffing level by one. Although Former Chief Ginex's plan called for four man traffic unit once the department is up to full staff, they have been operating with a two man traffic unit. Chief Porter said when they are at full staff he intends to reassign an officer to the patrol division. This will likely reduce the

original number of officers assigned to the traffic unit per the staffing plan to three maximum.

Referring to the Police Overtime Analysis (attachment #3), Commissioner Zabloudil asked for further explanation of \$526,538 shown in the "General" category. He asked how much is related to keeping shift levels up to minimum. Chief Porter said they do not have a breakdown of that category; however the majority of that amount is used to maintain minimum shift levels. Mr. Lyons added that approximately \$300,000 was used for hire-backs, and holdovers. Chief Porter noted that with minimum shift levels, if one officer calls in sick, another officer has to be held over.

Mayor Krajewski noted that the traffic unit is designated as a specialty group and under the Police contract personnel from these groups cannot be reassigned. He asked if the Dumeg officer could be used as a hire-back to fill in for individuals on sick leave rather than assigning him to the traffic unit. Mayor Krajewski suggested that instead of adding a third officer to this specialty unit, they keep the Dumeg officer as a regular officer and have him fill in, either as a hire-back or for an officer on sick leave. On days when the department is fully staffed, this officer could be designated to help with traffic enforcement. Mayor Krajewski said it might have been better if the traffic unit had not been designated a specialty unit. If the officers in the unit had been kept as regular patrol officers, they could be assigned where they are needed most. Mayor Krajewski noted that recently ten officers have been hired and assigned to specialty units, and as such they cannot be used to cover other areas when the department falls below minimum staffing levels. Instead the department has to hire back.

Chief Porter said he believed that minimum staff levels would have to be raised if the traffic unit was not designated a specialty unit.

Mr. Van Vooren asked for clarification on staffing levels and requests for time off. He asked with a minimum staffing requirement of eight, if you have nine officers, would it be true that any one of the group of nine could request a day off and the request could not be denied because the department is above minimum. Deputy Chief Bluder replied yes. Mr. Van Vooren said if there are ten people in that group and the minimum is eight, then two people could request a day off. Deputy Chief Bluder agreed. Mr. Van Vooren asked if Deputy Chief Bluder frequently has to deny requests for time off because the department is at minimum staffing. Deputy Chief Bluder replied yes. He added that the officers know not to request time off when the department is at minimum. Mr. Van Vooren said he felt that if staffing were increased it would encourage more officers to request time off, given the accumulated leave time.

Mayor Krajewski said he felt that putting fewer officers in specialty groups would allow greater flexibility in staffing.

Ms. McConnell noted that there is a certain amount of time off that can not be denied so long as the department maintains minimum staffing levels. She asked if some officers are not getting all the paid time-off to which they are entitled. Chief Porter and Deputy

Chief Bluder replied yes. They said a lot of the unused time-off is then paid out at the end of the year. Deputy Chief Bluder added that comp. time is a problem because an officer can accrue up to 200 hours. He explained that each officer is allowed to take as much comp. time as they are allowed vacation time based on seniority. Thus senior officers are allowed ten weeks off per year: four weeks vacation time, 4 weeks comp. time, and two weeks of holidays.

Mr. Lyons said the overtime pay out, which is normally \$15,000 - \$20,000, was over \$65,000 for the January 11th pay period because it included the end-of-year comp. time pay out for comp. time above the time that officers could actually use. Deputy Chief Bluder agreed.

Mayor Krajewski said he still did not understand how putting an officer into a specialty group saves the department any money.

Chief Porter said the matter of enforcement and services must also be considered. He said traffic complaints are the number one complaint that the department receives. He said he does not know of any police department of comparable size that has a traffic unit that is part of the patrol division. Police departments usually have a separate unit that concentrates on areas with a high number of accidents. He added that the traffic unit is also responsible for monitoring the ProScan program. Chief Porter added that when former Chief Ginex originally presented the staffing program to the Village Council it contained a recommendation to create a sergeant's position to oversee the traffic/cop program.

Mayor Krajewski said he felt that it would save the department overtime if officers could be assigned where needed rather than assigned to a specialty unit.

Deputy Chief Bluder agreed. However, he said the department has a lot more flexibility and control over the officers in specialty units. When officers are assigned to the road they are governed by seniority and the department may not get to choose the people it wants. Also the department can adjust the hours for officers in specialty units.

Mayor Krajewski asked how traffic was covered before specialty units were created. Chief Porter said it was an overtime detail and the department had to hire back to address citizen complaints and monitor traffic around schools, etc.

Ms. Steele asked if the department could negotiate some of this inflexibility. Deputy Chief Bluder said they could try; however, the union would probably want something in return, i.e. financial rewards.

Mayor Krajewski asked if the department has seen a reduction in overtime since they are no longer hiring back for traffic enforcement. Chief Porter said it is difficult to tell with the short staffing and the number of officers that left the department last year. He said he felt the department would have to be brought up to full staff before they could do a

proper assessment. Mr. Van Vooren noted that the five new officers are not fully trained and independent as yet. Chief Porter agreed.

Mayor Krajewski asked if the payroll has been lower because of the shortage of officers. Mr. Van Vooren and others present replied yes. Chief Porter and Mr. Van Vooren said that although overtime was up, salaries were down, resulting in a net savings of \$350,000.

Mr. Van Vooren agreed with Chief Porter that it would be hard to judge how effective any detail or change in specialty assignment would be until the department was at full staff. Currently there are five officers in training and three vacant positions.

Mr. Lyons said that in a department this size, he feels that there may always be close to eight positions vacant. He projected that every year the Police Department would lose 3.5 people due to retirement and/or other reasons and if there were a few officers on sick leave, the department would have 5 or more positions vacant.

As stated in the department overtime report, Chief Deputy Bluder said the patrol division needs 39 officers to operate efficiently under its current contractually agreed upon schedule. However, May 29, 2002 there were only 34 officers available for solo patrol, two of whom were on light duty due to injuries and one who was absent due to family leave. Thus, there were 31 officers available for a schedule that requires 39. He recalled that last November three officers were on family medical leave at the same time.

Ms. McConnell said some changes were made to try and address that situation as well as they could within the law.

Chief Porter said the department has taken the following steps to control overtime: specialty unit assignments were delayed due to personnel shortages, the detective unit was short one person for six months, the tack unit operated with one person instead of two, they held off putting an officer in C.O.P., and the traffic unit has been operating with two officers instead of four as it was originally designed. Chief Porter said that there have been countless rollovers and they are always reminding people about the overtime situation.

Mayor Krajewski said it sounds as though the department will not have an accurate estimate of overtime costs until six to eight months after the department is fully staffed. Chief Porter said it would probably take about a year. He said he would like some direction from the Council on the use of specialty units, prior to preparation for the next budget year. He added that he can dissolve a specialty unit at any time. Mayor Krajewski said he feels that he would like to wait until the department has had adequate opportunity to operate at full staff before making any decisions.

Ms. McConnell noted overtime costs will never completely disappear, she said she feels that it is a matter of seeing how the overtime costs impact the services provided.

Deputy Chief Bluder said Chief Porter is considering keeping the traffic unit at two officers instead of four to keep two extra officers available in case of injuries, etc.

Ms. McConnell asked how the department lost eight officers this year. Chief Porter said two officers were on disability, one officer was let go for non-performance in training, one officer left during training, and four officers resigned.

Mr. Lyons said he sent an e-mail to Committee members concerning payments for Burke Engineering. Regarding the State Budget update, Mr. Lyons said the Village may still lose the photo finishing funds.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:28 p.m.