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TO: MICHAEL YUNITS, TOWN MANAGER
FROM: BRIAN M. CLARK, CHIEF OF POLICE
DATE: APRIL 3, 2024
SUBJECT: BUDGET CUT IMPACT

The fiscal 2025 budget reductions will impact the police department greater than overtime alone.

There is great concern that not only will supplemental requests not be authorized during the next fall town meeting, there is concern that reserve funding will not be authorized. This is also the first year in department memory where at least one cruiser has not been recommended for a capital expenditure.

There are currently over \$8,000 of recommended repairs to the station cell block and sprinkler system that have not been authorized as well as the failing range ventilation system which is well past end of life that needs to be replaced and is causing leaks in the range. Pushing these items off will create greater issues in the future.

The Police Department has strived to maintain four officers on the road during peak times such as the day and evening shifts over the past several years. This has been accomplished approximately 50% of the day and evening shifts. However, the minimum staffing on the road still remains at three officers. It is not safe for the public or officers to reduce that amount to two (2) officers on the road. Reductions in overtime and re-assignment of staff may cause delays in service.

The good news in the next fiscal year is that the Police Department will benefit from two new officers graduating from the academy in the next few months that will add available staffing to the shifts. Although the two new officers may slightly reduce some overtime need, history suggests that every year there are unforeseen staffing issues that cause a reduction of staff to a shift and create the overtime need. I project that we will still have two officers for the long term on FMLA or extended sick leave battling illness well into the fiscal year.

To make up a \$108,000 overtime cut there may be several areas that would need to be addressed. They are outlined below:

1. **Re-Assignment of Staff:** Administrative, investigative, and School Resource Officer staff may be reassigned to patrol duties.
 - This would reduce further or eliminate the availability of part time elementary school resource officer
 - There will also be reduced hours for the full time School Resource Officers in the school. Further reductions would create undue burden on the School Resource Officer program
 - Back log in Firearms licensing processing
 - Back log of Evidence processing and case disposition
 - Back log of Court case discovery requirements and tracking
 - Decrease in the availability of personnel for active on-going investigations
 - Decrease in available on call coverage for the Detective Division
 - This may create longer response times and delay in service as officers have dual responsibilities of patrol and administrative functions
2. **Loss of Officer Positions:** Any retirements or separations will not be backfilled, leading to a reduction in the number of officers. This will create less flexibility to handle unforeseen staffing issues and a higher demand on overtime to provide quality service.
3. **Reduced Community Event Support:** There may be a decrease in the ability to accommodate community event requests for the Norton Police Honor Guard or Community Resource Dog, among others.
4. **Limited Training Opportunities:** The ability to accommodate specialized training and professional development requests will be dramatically reduced. In a time of sweeping legislation of police reform this is not an area that should be reduced.
5. **Public Safety and Officer Safety / Station Closure:** It is irrational and not safe to have less than three officers on the road, therefore it may be necessary to close the station during specific dates such as weekends, when necessary, which will impact residents' ability to seek face-to-face advice, report incidents, and request records.
6. **Capital and building expense Reductions:** The reduction in capital expenses for new cruisers and necessary building repairs such as to the cell block area and sprinkler system, range ventilation system will create greater costs and issues later.

7. **Officer Wellness:** The majority of the impact will be felt by the dedicated, hardworking department staff, potentially leading to officer burnout, increased sick leave use, and a lack of growth and advancement opportunities. In a time of national recruiting and retention issues in the police field, this may greatly impact the department.

Pc: File