

Town of Smithfield RI -- Budget and Financial Review Board
Analysis of Minutes, 2022 – 2024

CY 2022 Minutes

Date/Type	Text Highlight
4/27/22, Minutes	• Chief Seltzer distributed a sheet outlining the statistics on the number of fire incidents and emergency medical runs to the five area hotels since 2016 and stated that the list is mostly comprised of emergency medical calls.
4/27/22, Minutes	• Danielle Carey questioned the budgeted amount of \$300,000 in overtime when it was \$800,000 previously. Chief Seltzer replied that the Department spent \$865,000 in 2021 because of COVID and employees running the test sites and vaccine clinics. • Ken Sousa requested developing a break even analysis for overtime and Chief Seltzer replied he agrees but needs to decide on a format for the data. Chief Seltzer noted that the Department may need another part-time, per diem or full time employee.
10/12/22, Minutes	• Kate Zimmerman stated that she noticed the Fire Department had \$300,000 budgeted for overtime and was \$565,000 over what was budgeted. Ms. Zimmerman stated that she and Joe Tudino worked with the Fire Chief to develop an analysis and determined that the Department could take on 1-2 floaters per shift to make overtime more predictable. Ken Sousa stated he would like to know when the floaters came into the Department and how that affected the budget going forward. • Danielle Carey provided an overview of the monthly financials stating that revenues and property taxes are on target as compared to last year. Ms. Carey stated that expenditures are in excess of last year due to Fire Department overtime and the Board of Canvassers.
11/9/22, Minutes	• Danielle Carey provided an overview of the monthly financials stating that total revenues, property taxes, and total expenditures are on par with this time last year. Ms. Carey stated that the exceptions are excesses in the Fire Department budget and the Board of Canvassers.
12/14/22, Minutes	• Joe Tudino stated that he conducted analysis on the Fire Department and stated that the base salary of a firefighter is \$52,087 and including benefits is \$89,596. • Mr. Tudino stated that the cost of adding 8 floaters to the Department at \$416,696 would still result in a savings of \$225,704 based on an overtime cost of \$642,400. • Chief Seltzer stated that the average is 42 hours per week without overtime and that vacation and sick time need to be put into consideration for the floater. • Kate Zimmerman stated that overtime is generated from vacation and/or sick time but if someone is injured then the floaters can fill in.

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	• Samantha Kerwin suggested looking at last year's budget and Joe Tudino replied that he looked at last year's overtime cost. • Kate Zimmerman stated that we will never do away with overtime entirely but if it can be more predictable it would be beneficial and attempting to alleviate some other stressors is the goal. • Ken Sousa suggested taking the overtime average of the last 4 years and Chief Seltzer noted that COVID was an anomaly but the data of vacation, sick and overtime are line items in the budget. • Joe Tudino stated it is comparable to prepaying 16,000 hours and Kate Zimmerman noted that it comes down to determining how many hours do we want to prepay. • Chief Seltzer stated the Fire Department has 71 members including the Chief, one secretary, 4 dispatchers, 6 headquarter staff and 60 employees on apparatus. Chief Seltzer added that he thinks there is a need for a fifth dispatcher because there are a lot of changes in the technology, and they need trained people and not use firefighters because their overtime pay is higher. • Samantha Kerwin questioned whether there is a risk of losing firefighters who are used to their overtime pay and Chief Seltzer replied there will always be some overtime available but too much can be dangerous for the employees.

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1/11/23, Minutes	- Samantha Kerwin questioned the correct amount of annual pay for a firefighter and Joe Tudino replied that the base salary is \$52,000 plus benefits of \$37,000 for a total of \$89,000. Ken Sousa suggested doing an analysis on each rank. Randy Rossi suggested taking the data from last year which has every firefighter with every amount of overtime. - Samantha Kerwin questioned whether there are limits to the number of hours that firefighters can work and Randy Rossi replied he will check with the Chief on what is included in the terms of the contract. ➤ <u>Did the Fire Department send this information to the Town Manager or BFRB?</u>
2/8/23, Minutes	Danielle Carey distributed a summary sheet and reviewed the monthly financial report for the period ending January 31, 2023 versus January 31, 2022. Ms. Carey stated notables are that revenues are a little higher than last year and Fire Department overtime is a little less than last year.
3/29/23, Minutes	- Mr. Rossi stated that budget increases are largely due to road repaving, a RI Resource Recovery rate increase, Fire Department overtime and other contractual increases, and the addition of a special election. ➤ <u>No details were included in the minutes. Also, no report was distributed relating to the trend of Fire Department overtime analysis.</u> - Fire Department: FY 2023 budget was \$9,918,404 and Town Manager's Recommended FY 2024 budget is \$10,673,941; an increase of 7.62%.
4/26/23, Minutes	- Fire Chief Robert that he received notice of a SAFER grant award after the Town Manager's budget was submitted and distributed a revised budget to reflect the addition of 12 new employees. - Chief Seltzer reviewed the impact of the 12 new hires through the SAFER grant stating that \$951,299.56 will be reimbursed from the grant resulting in \$342,720 in overtime savings as a result of the 12 new hires. Chief Seltzer stated that he has conservatively reduced the overtime budget to \$250,000 since this is the first year of doing this and any injury or illness could impact the overtime budget.

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	• Chief Seltzer stated that there is a line item of \$150,000 in comp time payoff which was costing the Department money. Randy Rossi noted that this is a two-prong approach to addressing overtime through the SAFER grant and the elimination of comp time. • Samantha Kerwin questioned the total overtime budget and whether there is still enough being budgeted and Chief Seltzer replied that if the Board is not comfortable with that amount, they can increase it. • Peter Lawrence questioned what happens after the grant expires in three years and Randy Rossi replied that the floaters can fill any retirements taking place in the Department over the three years. • Samantha Kerwin questioned the idea of floaters being shared with other towns and Randy Rossi replied that would be easier now that the firefighters are being trained at the same place and is something to investigate. Chief Seltzer added that the Fire Chief's Association will be meeting to investigate hiring options and educating potential employees on what fire service is about. • Joe Tudino made a motion, seconded by Peter Lawrence, to increase the salary and benefits line item by \$951,299.56 and adding the SAFER grant income amount of \$951,299.56 to the revenue side of the Fire Department budget. The vote on the motion was all in favor and the motion carried. • Joe Tudino made a motion, seconded by Peter Lawrence, to decrease the overtime budget to \$250,000 in the Fire Department Budget. The vote on the motion was all in favor and the motion carried.

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2/21/24, Minutes	• Caitlyn Choiniere distributed a copy of the monthly financial report and reviewed the financials with the Board. Ms. Choiniere noted that the Fire Department overtime is over budget by \$600,000. Ken Sousa stated that the Department has been unable to hire but the SAFER grant has been extended. Mr. Sousa requested a trajectory of where this is going. ➤ <u>As of February 2025, there is no knowledge of any data and/or reports have been received from the Fire Department.</u>
4/3/24, Minutes	• Chief Seltzer added that the SAFER grant hires was only recently filled and he will not have good numbers on overtime until the next budget. • Samantha Kerwin questioned whether the “salary and wages” line item includes all anticipated SAFER employees and Chief Seltzer replied it is. Ken Sousa stated that he would like to see more detail on sick time, workers compensation, and overtime hours worked to see what can be done to reduce health insurance claims. ➤ <u>As of February 2025, no information has been received on this data.</u>
7/10/24, Minutes	• Caitlyn Choiniere distributed the June financial report but stated that it is not really a good representation of the end of the year because there are still receivables. Samantha Kerwin stated her concern with being \$1.3 million over budget in Fire Department overtime. ➤ <u>No information or updates on the effect of the new hires and paid by the SAFER grant have affected the trajectory of the overtime budget.</u>
9/16/24, Minutes	• Samantha Kerwin stated that the Commission will be revisiting overtime in the Fire Department with the Fire Chief in January to get numbers for the last quarter of the year since this is the first time that all of the floater positions are filled to see how it effects overtime.