

Aiken City Council MinutesWORK SESSION

April 8, 2014

Present: Mayor Pro Tem Homoki, Councilmembers Dewar, Ebner, Merry, and Price.

Absent: Mayor Cavanaugh and Councilmember Diggs

Others Present: Richard Pearce, Stuart Bedenbaugh, Kim Abney, Charles Barranco, Captains David Turno, Ron Shelley, Brian Brazier, Marty Sawyer, and Mary Ann Burges, Sara Ridout, Tom Dean, Sheriff Mike Hunt, Glenn Parker, Phil Berley, and Maayan Schechter and Michael Ulmer of the Aiken Standard.

BUDGETPublic Safety Department

Mayor Pro Tem Homoki called the workshop to order at 4 p.m. and stated the purpose of the meeting was to discuss the proposed budget for the Public Safety Department.

Mr. Pearce stated this was the second workshop on the proposed budget for 2014-15. He pointed out that Council had requested that staff review the four big departments of the city, including Public Services, Public Safety, Engineering and Utilities, and Parks, Recreation and Tourism.

Mr. Pearce stated Chief Barranco has a power point presentation on several of the programs Public Safety has worked on over the past year and plan to undertake in the coming year. One of the big things is the Safe Communities Initiative and a reduction in the murder rate in Aiken by 86% from 7 murders to 1 murder in a year's time. We have seen a lot of benefit from that program.

Chief Barranco reviewed the work and programs of the Public Safety Department through a power point presentation. He said he wanted to share with Council the importance of how they went about their budget process. He said they and Council are concerned about the issue of salaries. He pointed out the major projects are funded from other sources, not the General Fund. He said the operating budget is very mindful of the dollar. He said he would talk about the budget process, the capital projects, Public Safety and its cost savings as a whole, and the benefits of Public Safety, the initiatives over the past year and the ones continued over this year and an overview of the department.

Chief Barranco pointed out the need for the Burn Building upgrade. Funding for the project is under CPST III and design of the building is scheduled for the 2014-15 budget. He pointed out the pictures showing the spalling on the floor, support structure itself in the fire room as well as the fire resistive panels need to be upgraded. Captain Brazier commented that staff is currently doing some research on pricing for the replacement, and it will be included in the review process as we go forward with the plans.

Chief Barranco distributed a listing of all the vehicles in the Public Safety Department. He pointed out the vehicles which are scheduled to be replaced in the 2014-15 budget year, which include: 4 patrol vehicles, Truck No. 3 Service Truck, 2 vehicles in Investigations, 3 vehicles in Community Services, 1 in Youth Services, and 2 in Support Services.

Mr. Pearce pointed out that Chief Barranco had followed the lead of Tim Coakley on the Do Not Resuscitate vehicles. He said we are using those vehicles, but we are not going to spend major money to maintain or repair them.

Chief Barranco pointed out a lot of the Do Not Resuscitate vehicles are in the Administration Division. Those vehicles are typically used for school cars back and

forth. They are not out there patrolling the city. They are used more for administrative function.

Councilman Homoki asked, regarding maintenance, if the Public Safety Department had its own maintenance facility or if they rely on the warranty you get when you buy a car.

Captain Shelley stated when the department buys a new vehicle it is covered under the three year, 36 bumper to bumper warranty. For regular maintenance the department has worked out a reduced hourly rate with Wayne's Automotive, who does most of the maintenance on the vehicles. For small items such as brakes William Tyler of Public Services helps the department and saves the department a lot of money.

Councilman Ebner stated he had met with Captain Shelley for about an hour earlier. He pointed out that what Chief Barranco is presenting matches what he presented at Horizons. He said as our budgets get tighter and tighter and things change, we should not get too far behind on the number of replacement vehicles. He said Do Not Resuscitate means something different to people. He felt it is important to keep an eye on the maintenance items. He just cautioned about that. He pointed out nobody wants to get rid of the old vehicles.

Chief Barranco stated he had put all the fleet management under one person to be able to keep up with the vehicles and maintenance being done on the vehicles. Vehicles are assigned to different divisions, but Captain Shelley monitors and maintains all the vehicles in the department. He felt keeping the one set of eyes helps with that.

Councilman Ebner pointed out it is time to get rid of a vehicle even if it just has 50,000 miles on it if it is costing \$3,000 or \$4,000 a year for maintenance. In five years you have spent two-thirds of the cost of a new vehicle. Councilman Ebner clarified that in the Fire Bureau Truck 3 is just one vehicle, and not three trucks. He pointed out funds are being requested in the 2014-15 budget for replacement of that vehicle.

Councilman Dewar stated he had attended an Advance Public Safety Workshop sponsored by the Municipal Association. He pointed out Aiken is one of the few municipalities that charges our officers for take-home vehicles. He said that is something that he would like to take a look at. He said he was not sure he sees a reason for it. The instructors for the class were the Police Chief from Newberry and Police Chief from Lexington. He pointed out the Chief from Newberry was okay with the take-home vehicles as long as the officers stay within the county. Councilman Dewar stated we have some of our people who take the vehicles to the Fire Station, he assumed so they don't have to pay. He said he would like to relook at the policy. He pointed out if you have a police vehicle parked anywhere you have some deterrent. He said he did not know the policy for the Aiken County Sheriff for take home vehicles. He pointed out there is one Sheriff's vehicle in his neighborhood for a reserve officer.

Mr. Pearce pointed out what we are doing is under the IRS rules for commuting miles, and this is deducted from the pay check. The officers use the vehicle to go to and from work. He said that is something we can look at again. He said he did not have a number at this time as to what the income is. He pointed out the proposed budget is very, very tight. He said making changes will mean we have to reduce services somewhere else. Councilman Dewar commented that we get benefits from having the police vehicles in the neighborhoods. He said there could be rules in places such as having to be in uniform when driving the vehicle. That would make sure they are either on duty or on the way to work. Mr. Pearce stated if we do that we have to be wary of the Fair Labor Standards Act, as that may constitute work time that somebody may be entitled to be paid for. Mr. Pearce stated staff will look at the total package and can review that with Council.

Chief Barranco pointed out one thing that was done this past year was the take home car has been for officers who lived inside the city limits. Now it is allowed within the fire district.

Mr. Pearce pointed out the reason for starting the take-home car policy was for the benefit pointed out of visibility in the neighborhoods. Councilman Dewar stated perhaps between now and time for the budget review staff could get an idea of what that is costing us. He felt it is worthwhile to take a look at the policy.

Councilman Homoki stated if we are going to look at financial-wise, he wondered if we could translate the benefit of having a car in your neighborhood as the two may cancel out. Councilman Dewar stated that would be hard because you can't determine a crime that somebody didn't commit because a vehicle is in the neighborhood. He pointed out he had had calls in the past couple of years from people complaining because somebody took something out of their cars. He pointed out people don't lock their front doors or lock their vehicles. He said, however, there is a benefit by having police vehicles parked in the neighborhood.

Chief Barranco pointed out one of the areas of concern in the budget planning is protective equipment. He said they have identified sets of protective equipment, specifically in the Fire side, that need to be updated. He said there are 35 sets throughout the department that need to be updated. He said the equipment is either 10 years or almost 10 years in service. He also pointed out that some of the Self Contained Breathing Apparatus needs to be upgraded to standardize the equipment. The cost for upgrading protective equipment is about \$98,000.

Chief Barranco pointed out the thermal imaging cameras which allow them to see heat through walls, and they are also used in apprehension of criminal suspects. He said the goal is to get one of the thermal imaging cameras on each front run truck, which would be a total of 5. Currently the department has 3 of the units. The cost for a unit is \$12,500.

Mr. Pearce pointed out that before spending the money staff does a great job of first checking the surplus property in the 1033 program. At this point the department has obtained close to \$1 million worth of equipment for very little cost.

Chief Barranco pointed out the Dispatch Console needs to be replaced. He said Sheriff Hunt had just upgraded the County Dispatch Center. The current dispatch consoles are over 10 years old and it is difficult to find parts to repair them. We are working for funding through the County E911 to replace the four consoles that we have in the current dispatch center. He pointed out that replacement depends some on money available through the County budget. The estimated cost is \$202,000.

Chief Barranco stated the city has a Traffic Maintenance agreement with the SCDOT to maintain the traffic signals within the city. The annual amount in the budget is \$15,000. The maintenance costs are reimbursable through SCDOT. The maintenance agreement includes all the traffic signals inside the city. It was pointed out that the synchronization of signals includes the signals along Whiskey Road and not the downtown signals.

Chief Barranco stated regarding building improvements the department wanted to look at renovations of the sign shop at a cost of \$10,000, which is a continuation over several years. Several buildings have 20 year old HVAC systems and money is requested to replace the units. Another building project is the sealing and repainting of Substations 2, 3, and 4 at a cost of \$40,000.

Chief Barranco stated in looking at the budget, they looked at trends. He showed a chart noting the budget expenditures for fiscal years 2008 – 2014 with the dollar amount decreasing. He noted that staff is mindful of costs and understands that economic times are tight. He said they try to be as fiscal responsible as possible.

Councilman Ebner pointed out he had noticed a number of places in the budget sheets with comments about a 10% cut in budgets. He said they all need to be mindful that we are beginning to see the amounts go down. He said either we had too much money in one pocket and not enough in the other or it is really going down. He felt as we look at the whole budget, the increase in revenue has not been that great over the last 5 years and inflation marches on. He said his concern is that we be sure we don't cut our services.

He said if we cut 10% you can only take so much out of operating costs. Councilman Dewar stated if you come down 10% on anything, you are probably cutting services. Councilman Ebner stated he felt that not only Councilmembers, but everybody in the city needs to be aware that those numbers mean a service cut and a cut in people almost all the time.

Mr. Pearce stated we have had frozen positions in the past and this has worked well. The positions in Public Safety have been unfrozen. He said staff is looking at the idea or concept where the Driver/Operators would work 12 hour shifts, just as the Patrol Officers work a 12 hour shift. He said that would realize a savings for the city. He said with the prior conversations we have had with an interest in looking at Public Safety starting salaries, and salaries of officers in general, we have to create a pool of money in order to effect that policy if that is what Council decides. He said that is why in the budget process, we were trying to make sure we have the best priorities identified by the departments to see what funds would be available for a salary adjustment, merit bonus, or whatever it might be.

Councilman Dewar stated if someone had done a cost analysis for 12 hour shifts for the Driver/Operators he would like to see it. Mr. Pearce stated that could be provided to all of Council.

Councilman Ebner stated we have increased our overall public image and public services, both in the County as well as in the City. He felt that creates a trend. He asked is it more important to keep working with Public Safety or do we pick up garbage every other week. He said when we get to looking at what we are not doing in Public Safety, we need to look at the other budgets, whether we pick on Recreation, Public Services, or Engineering and Utilities. He said if you start cutting back on Public Safety we might not see it, but the criminals see it.

Mr. Pearce stated that is why we have pressed for the Safe Communities Initiative, and the results have been immediately measurable and long lasting.

Chief Barranco stated that goes into the Public Safety concept. He said he believes there is an extreme value in Public Safety. He said if there were two separate departments, there would be an exorbitant increase in costs. A very rough example is we estimate we would need 40 firemen if the departments were split. That would cost \$1.2 million, and that does not include protective equipment, supervision, retirement, benefits, etc. He said he believes Public Safety is a great value to the citizens of Aiken. He said we saw that in the recent Winter Storm PAX. He pointed out the efficiency that Public Safety was able to use in responding to fire calls and lines down with patrol vehicles because they are certified firemen as well. He said they were able to multi-use some of the brush trucks because they knew there would be some areas of town that would be difficult to get to. Also, Public Safety worked with other city departments to be able to effect the rescues. He said Public Safety works well in Aiken, not only for police and fire, but also the medical first responder calls.

Chief Barranco stated the benefits of Public Safety are that it allows Public Safety Officers to be knowledgeable about several disciplines. Public Safety Officers can address multiple issues on the same scene, such as traffic collisions with injuries and gas leaks, rather than waiting on other resources. Public Safety saves the city valuable resources while maintaining the high standards of an ISO Class 2 Department and a CALEA Accredited Agency of Excellence.

Chief Barranco stated we invest a lot in the officers up front. The return to the citizens is where we see that benefit. We are leaders both in fire and police, and we have maintained a Class 2 ISO rating. The department is up for reaccreditation this year. Last time we were reaccredited an Agency of Excellence. We are leaders in the fire community with our right alarm, right location, right action, safe communities, working with the Sheriff's Department. He said we continue those initiatives to be on the leading edge.

Chief Barranco stated a most recent initiative was the Bikes and Books program at North Aiken Elementary School. He said there were 8 boys that participated in this program, and the impact on those kids was amazing.

Councilman Dewar asked if we see long term benefits from these programs. He asked if the kids that we pick up on the streets have been involved in any of the programs sponsored by Public Safety. He asked if it was worthwhile.

Chief Barranco responded they believe it is worthwhile as Public Safety has a relationship with the young kids. He said when Public Safety is gathering information the kids are not afraid to come forward to tell what is going on. He pointed out the Neighborhood Diamonds program in the past and PAL. He said there is a relationship that we continue to see the benefit. He pointed out there are a limited number of kids that do fall to the wrong side of the law. However, the majority of the youth are not afraid to talk to Public Safety when they feel something is wrong.

Chief Barranco reviewed some of the initiatives, including Aiken Safe Communities Initiative, Chat with the Chief, Public Safety Citizen Academy, Cultivating Community, Coffee with a Cop, Smoke Alarm Blitz Program, and Kill the Flashover. He pointed out the Smoke Alarm Blitz conducted in Kennedy Kolony recently. He said they were applying for a grant for the Smoke Alarm program in Governor Aiken Park and Crosland Park.

Chief Barranco stated recruitment and retention of employees had been a focus of Council. He said one thing they had done was after an officer completes their law enforcement training they invite the families to Public Safety for the swearing in and a review of what is going on for support and networking. He said the department has increased the use of Social Media and outreach. He said there had been some slight changes in policy that allow for greater mobility and changes in career tracks. He pointed out the Community Services Division is on a three year rotation. The officers assigned to that division can gain that knowledge and take that back to patrol.

Chief Barranco stated the Public Safety Department has 89 sworn officers, 28 civilian employees, 18 Driver/Operators, and 9 Fire Cadets.

Councilman Ebner asked how many patrol officers are on each shift. Chief Barranco stated we currently have 12 assigned to each shift. We still have some people in training, but we have no less than 8 people on the road on each shift.

Councilman Dewar asked how many have yet to complete their total training. Chief Barranco responded the Department had just hired four employees so they are just starting their process. He pointed out we had taken some out of training and put them on the road for patrol because we are waiting on an academy date. Eleven are currently still in training. He stated some have been released to the police side because we are waiting on their fire academy date. Some are still acting on a full time role on either the law enforcement or fire side until we are able to get their academy dates. Councilman Dewar asked if any of the employees go to the Fire Division first. Chief Barranco stated they would prefer that to happen. He pointed out, however, it is taking so long to get Fire Academy dates. He said when he was hired he went to the Fire Academy first. Then they were introduced to the Public Safety concept. Once they got out of the Police Academy they went on the road as a full PSO.

Chief Barranco then reviewed each division of the Public Safety Department, starting with the Administration Division 2110. Chief Barranco pointed out this year the department is up for reaccreditation. He said they have applied for the Gold Standard for reaccreditation. He said the ISO should be in town in November.

Councilman Dewar asked the cost for reaccreditation. Chief Barranco stated he did not know a total cost, but there is an annual cost of about \$4,500. Councilman Dewar asked if there is an accreditation from the state and why we would recommend federal accreditation over state accreditation. Chief Barranco responded the federal accreditation

is a lot more comprehensive. Typically the state signs off on your accreditation if you are nationally accredited. Councilman Dewar asked if the benefit of paying the extra money for the federal accreditation would outweigh the cost of state accreditation. He asked the difference in reputation. Chief Barranco stated the state accreditation is a very nominal fee. The benefit of the national accreditation is the national pool to see what is going on around the nation, not just South Carolina, such as standards that are tried and true. He said as in talking about preventing crime, it is hard to put a dollar figure on it. He said also for the lawsuits that don't come, they are hard to put a dollar figure on as well. He said he was not discounting the state accreditation, but they believe the standard of the national accreditation outweighs that.

Councilman Dewar asked if Chief Barranco had a sense of how the state accreditation is working around the state. He said he understood Aiken is one of the few with national accreditation in the state. Chief Barranco stated we are one of a few of the Public Safety Departments with national accreditation. Councilman Dewar asked if the others are satisfied with the state process. He pointed out there are not many that go to the national as Aiken does. Chief Barranco pointed out that the progressive law enforcement agencies, whether they are public safety or just law enforcement are accredited at some level. Councilman Dewar stated he is in support of accreditation, but if the state accreditation is practically as good as the national accreditation, he would do the state accreditation. Chief Barranco pointed out that Public Safety had set that standard and had been accredited since 1997. He felt it had benefited Public Safety a great deal. Councilman Dewar stated he had gotten the idea from something that the cost for reaccreditation was close to \$10,000 for the national accreditation. He said that was why he raised the question.

Councilman Homoki stated Chief Barranco had mentioned replacement of fire protection equipment. He asked if bullet proof vests only last about 5 years. Chief Barranco stated they have to be replaced every 5 years whether they are kept in the truck of a car or worn every day. He pointed out that every year the city replaces a portion of the vests. He said they apply for grants through the Municipal Association and through federal grants to get reimbursed for a portion of the cost of the equipment.

Chief Barranco pointed out there is \$39,000 in the Administration Division for the mobile computers. He said there is an unfunded federal requirement that requires dual authentication for the mobile computers because NCIC is on the computers. He said the thought initially was for a password and a key to the car, which is something you have and something you know. He said the key to the car is not working anymore and federal regulations will require a key fob that a number changes every so often as a password. In the future they will have the key fob with a number that changes often and a password for the dual authentication.

Councilman Dewar stated he had a question regarding getting the lead out of the firing range. He asked if we would get revenue from the lead. Chief Barranco stated currently we are working with the Savannah River Rifle and Pistol Club, and they are working with the brass right now. It will be something we get back when we reclaim the lead. Councilman Dewar asked how the Savannah River Rifle and Pistol Club interface with this. Chief Barranco stated the city has a contract with them and they reclaim the brass now. He said a special company would have to come in to do the lead. He said there is a value to lead.

Councilman Ebner stated he wanted to talk about capital projects. He said Chief Barranco had talked about the training ground work. He pointed out that CPST II has no more Public Safety money as that has been completed. In CPST III there is the training grounds for \$250,000 which is Item 6. He said by the first part of 2015 we will begin to have positive cash flow for CPST III. He asked if the intent would be to start on the list again after the advancements are paid. He said about half way down the list is the Fire Headquarters. He asked if the ISO requirements would be getting close to needing a fire station. Chief Barranco stated we would not want to move the headquarters station. He said the funds are for renovation of the Headquarters on Laurens Street. Mr. Pearce stated there is a separate item for Station 6. He said we are looking at Citizens Park as

the location for Fire Station 6. He said we would prefer to do Station 6 first so we could move some equipment to the station and then renovate the Headquarters Station.

Councilman Ebner pointed out the request for 2014-15 is for the Training Ground improvements. Mr. Pearce stated it is actually the burn building study to come up with a design. He said that goes with what Council had expressed that once the CPST money is available we have a design and plan ready so we could go to bid for the project. He said we want to go ahead with the plan for \$50,000 so the next calendar year we could go to bid for the project.

Councilman Dewar stated that assumes that we have paid the loans for advance projects. Councilman Ebner stated at the rate the money is coming in, we would pay everything off by the first quarter of 2015 and then be on the positive side.

It was pointed out that there is an issue as to how much money we may get under the CPST III program, and that will be discussed at the April 14, 2014, meeting.

Chief Barranco then reviewed the Patrol-Fire Division 2120. He said staff had proposed a reclassification for three of the Cadet positions to two Driver/Operator positions. He said it would not be an addition in personnel, but one less person. Mr. Pearce stated he was going to have to make an adjustment in line item 24-00 Tuition Reimbursement. He said the request was for \$12,000 and he had cut it to \$4,500. He pointed out there are eight people who need two years of training under the Tuition Reimbursement so the amount will have to be increased. He stated Council had been very supportive of the training in the past. He said this money is for those going to college to get their degree. Councilman Dewar asked if there would be additional training for the new Driver/Operator positions. Chief Barranco responded there is some initial training for the Driver/Operators but that is done in-house.

Councilman Dewar asked about line item Termination Vacation Pay. Mr. Pearce stated that would be money paid for accumulated vacation leave when someone retires or leaves the city.

Councilman Dewar asked about line item 10-09 Paid Special Overtime. Mr. Pearce stated that is a paid special for officers who work special events such as the Lobster Race and other events. Chief Barranco pointed out the event sponsors are charged for the officer's work so there is revenue to offset that expense.

Councilwoman Price asked about the Tuition Reimbursement. She pointed out the city pays a portion of the tuition for four years. She asked what happens when they get their degree and leave the city. Chief Barranco stated there is a Promissory Note that is signed by the employee for each year they receive tuition. He stated the employee must stay with the city two years after completing the schooling. If they leave before that time, they have to reimburse the city for a prorated share of the cost.

Councilman Merry arrived at the meeting.

Councilman Dewar stated he noticed item 10-04 Shift Differential. He asked if that was for night shift only. Chief Barranco stated we used to have three shifts, but now only have two shifts. If an officer is on midnights we pay a shift differential. The shift differential is just for the PSOs on the evening shift which is midnights. The shift is 6 to 6. Councilman Dewar stated the officer comes on at 6 p.m. He asked if they would get the differential for the 12 hours or just midnight to 6 a.m. Mr. Pearce pointed out the shift differential is for the shift which is from 6 p.m. to 6 a.m. It was pointed out the differential is 32 cents per hour for the 12 hour shift. The schedule is to work 2 off 2, work 3 off 3. They rotate from days to nights every two weeks. Councilman Dewar asked if the shift differential is common practice in the state. Chief Barranco stated the shift schedule is the same as the Sheriff's Department. Councilwoman Price stated she did not think that the shift differential was uniform throughout the state, as she knows some departments do not pay a shift differential. Chief Barranco stated not all departments pay the shift differential.

Councilman Dewar stated the reason he brought this up is that he had made an issue, as had other Councilmembers, regarding the pay for officers. He pointed out there are other items also including a longevity bonus, physical fitness bonus. He said you can't just look at a piece of paper and say this is what they have, as you have to factor all these items in. He said he was going to email the City Manager asking for a list of actual pay for the last year for the public safety sworn personnel. He said there are a lot of little nuances to the pay of public safety.

Mr. Pearce stated that is right. He said we were looking at the starting salaries when we were told about North Augusta's starting pay being at a higher level versus Aiken. He pointed out we have officers who start at a certain level. They get a 5% increase when they finish the academies. He said we are changing that and giving 2 ½% when they finish the Fire Academy and 2 ½% when they finish the Police Academy. Then when they finish their 6 months probationary period they get a 5% increase. He said it is a cumulative adding. He said that is what we are looking at city-wide with the cost of living. He said we are trying to figure out by the time we submit the budget ordinance as far as potential revenue. He said there is a potential reimbursement from FEMA for one time money that might help as far as considering some type of bonus payment or merit bonus payment. He said we will have more information after we bill for the first 72 hours and the first 30 days of work by May.

Councilwoman Price stated she felt they would be surprised if we put the package together, listing all the benefits the city pays the Public Safety Officers and see what it actually amounts to in a dollar value for all the things. She wondered if all these things are pointed out when we make an offer to a new employee. She said each of the items mentioned have a dollar value, such as tuition reimbursement, training, physical fitness, etc. She said it would be interesting to see the total cost.

Mr. Pearce stated we have a bunch of benefits, and they are to encourage productivity, the desire to learn, the desire to stay in good physical condition, etc.

Councilman Dewar asked today when an officer finishes the Police Academy what kind of increase do they get. Mr. Pearce responded when they finish the Police Academy and the Fire Academy they receive a 5% increase. Chief Barranco stated currently we are giving a 5% increase after completion of both academies. Starting July 1 we are starting a 2 ½% increase after completion of each academy.

Councilman Dewar pointed out that for PSOs overtime is paid for hours over 86 hours and for Fire the recommendation includes 4 hours of overtime worked in each 28 day period. He asked if that was the Kelly Day. Chief Barranco stated this is a built in 4 hours every 28 days in the Fire Division. He said they work 216 hours every 28 day period, and we pay them straight time for 212 hours. We have to pay overtime for 4 hours. He said the Kelly Day was an additional day every three months which we don't do anymore.

Councilwoman Price stated she felt it was important for the City of Aiken Public Safety and the Sheriff's Department to be in constant communication to try to avoid officers leaving either department and going to the other because of something we have or vice versa.

Councilman Dewar stated he felt it was important that we know what they are receiving, including all the bells and whistles, the uniforms, the longevity bonus, physical fitness, etc. He said it is important that we make this known to the officers. He said sometimes if they don't see it, there might be things they don't value, but when they are pointed out maybe they would be less reluctant to leave Aiken and go to North Augusta. He said for a young kid making \$40,000 a 5% increase can be a lot of money.

Mr. Pearce stated that is something we will do as part of the budget process. He said once we have a clearer understanding of what revenue we will be working with from the



reimbursement from FEMA and the discussion on the other budgets, we will be able to put together a comprehensive list for this budget year.

Chief Barranco reviewed Investigations 2130.

Councilman Ebner pointed out item 5 of the Performance Goals regarding having all detectives attend required law enforcement and fire training. He asked if they were being trained to be backup fireman. Chief Barranco responded the Investigator personnel are certified PSO's for police and fire. They are part of the system, and this is a requirement to ensure that is maintained.

Chief Barranco pointed out a capital item in Investigations was an evidence drying cabinet. He said the cabinet would help with contaminated items.

Councilman Dewar asked if Investigations had what they need to get the job done. Chief Barranco stated they felt so. He pointed out they have some unfilled positions that they want to fill as the new officers come out of training so they can move officers around. This year the solve rate with Safe Communities went up to 29% which is up from 25%. He felt they were making progress.

For the two unfilled positions, Captain Sawyer stated both positions are general investigator jobs. One will be assigned to general investigation and one to narcotics.

Councilwoman Price asked if we had a designated employee working on identify theft. Captain Sawyer responded that Margaret Moore works on identify theft. He pointed out that the number of cases has gone up tremendously. He said she carries the biggest case load of an investigator. When another officer is back from leave, he will be helping Ms. Moore with identify theft.

Sheriff Hunt stated the Sheriff's Department has one investigator on identify theft. He said the cases are up astronomically. He said the number has increased so much that they are having to assign other investigators to some of the cases.

Chief Barranco reviewed Community Services 2142. He said there are some vacancies in personnel in Community Services, like Investigations. He pointed out a lot of officers in Community Services were transferred to Patrol after several officers left. He said there are still some vacancies in Community Services. He pointed out employees are assigned to the downtown area, Smith-Hazel, Governor Aiken Park, and Crosland Park.

Councilman Dewar asked about the two Environmental Control Officers. Mr. Pearce pointed out they were animal control officers. Mr. Pearce stated Councilman Ebner had a question regarding the fee for the SPCA. He stated the city has a contract with the SPCA to take care of the animals picked up within the city limits. The budgeted amount this year is \$45,000 and it has been increased to \$55,000 for 2014-15 year.

Councilman Ebner stated the fee is a bargain. He said if the city ran its own animal shelter, we would be talking about hundreds of thousands of dollars to maintain what the SPCA does. He felt that was a bargain. He felt the \$1 million that the city paid towards the SPCA building was a bargain. Mr. Pearce stated the agreement has worked well for the city. He pointed out that we have proposed to increase the spay/neuter money from \$2,500 to \$4,275.

Councilman Dewar asked if there were an increase in Community Services. Chief Barranco stated there was a decrease from 2 1/2 years ago. He said they had had 24 positions in the division, but it is now at 17 positions. He said some people were reassigned to Patrol permanently. He said the canine officers were in Community Services, and they have been assigned to Patrol. Mr. Pearce stated the proposed budget is down about \$45,000 as proposed now.

Councilman Dewar stated when he reads about the bloodhounds they never seem to catch anyone. He asked if it was an effective law enforcement tool and if it was worthwhile.

Chief Barranco pointed out that Sheriff Mike Hunt started the tracking team at Public Safety a long time ago. He pointed out that he had spent 10 years in the program himself. He said he believes the bloodhounds are a very effective tool. It is a cooperative effort with North Augusta, the Sheriff's Department, and Aiken Public Safety. He said he had been around the nation looking at different tracking teams. He said one of the finest tracking teams he had seen was here. He said being in a city environment does make it more difficult to track people sometimes. He felt they are very effective and are a good tool. They are not the solution to everything. He said there had been times when they had called the tracking team because they did not have anything to start on. The tracking team was able to find a foot track for the officers to gain that piece of evidence and take it to the Investigators for them to do the rest of the job. He said he felt they were very effective.

Councilman Dewar asked who in the Department manages the program. Chief Barranco stated the Sheriff's Office has had the canine facility for about 5 or 6 years. The city takes care of the vet bills. It is a joint effort, but the Sheriff manages the program.

Councilman Homoki asked if someone is cited for letting their dog run; the dog is impounded; and they are bailed out, etc., is it handled like a traffic ticket. He pointed out income from traffic tickets goes to the state, with the city getting a small share. He asked if the state gets the fine for animal control. Chief Barranco stated we ask the Judge to have the person reimburse the city for the cost to house the animal if they are found liable.

Councilman Dewar asked if the city was in the midst of a speed enforcement program. He said almost every time he comes down Whiskey Road from South Park on down, there seems to be a lot of enforcement in that area. Chief Barranco responded there is nothing special going on.

Councilwoman Price stated she knows we have budget concerns, and we are cutting back. She pointed out the discussion regarding animals and what we have invested in animal protection and placing them in a nice facility. She was reflecting about human beings in terms of an investment. She said we have a program that we are working on, and the jury is still out in terms of where we will end up. She said everything has proven that it is successful in terms of getting the criminals off the street. She said she was troubled by what do we do as a preventative measure for young kids. She pointed out the law enforcement can see this trouble coming with absenteeism in schools and the dropouts. She asked how do we get to them early enough that we won't see them on the front page of the newspaper. She said that is a dialog with churches and community, but the city has to invest to have people dedicated to that. When we know that a child has been suspended from school, how do we collaborate with the School District and the churches to get to that child. She said we don't want them to be a statistic. She asked how do we do that.

Captain Burgess stated the city has the Parent Project Program in place. She said they try to address those issues. Classes are held every Tuesday in Aiken, and every Wednesday there is a class in New Ellenton. She said it addresses those issues. She said they work with the parents, as it starts at home. She said it is a difficult task. She pointed out it is difficult to get people to come to the program. She said the city has funded this program for seven years. She said they have tried to work with the schools to get it so if a child is expelled that the parents have to go through the program in order for the child to go back to school. She said the School District did not approve that. She said there is a program in place to address these issues, but we cannot force the parents to go to the classes. She reviewed the GEM program which is Guide, Encourage, Mentor. It is a program we have at Aiken High, and hope to have it expand to other schools. The program targets the female population. It is for girls who need that extra push that they are not getting from home to enter college and enter gainfully into the work place. She said they doubled the number of sessions this year. The goal is as the title suggests—Guide, Encourage,

Mentor. She said a group of professional ladies started the group. This year they are offering four \$1,000 scholarships. If the girls complete this program, at the end of the year they are awarded \$1,000 towards their college education. They are taught about resume writing, how to dress, and how to speak—a lot of things that our young ladies are really lacking in. She said we are seeing their increased involvement in the gangs. She said we are trying to show them basic social skills that many are lacking.

Councilwoman Price stated one of the keys is to keep them busy so that they are so tired and don't have time for these outside destructive type behaviors. She said no one can do it alone, but it will take the collaboration of a number of people working together. She felt if we can start just a small program with a handful of kids from the school that we know are kids that may be headed in the wrong direction, she felt we would have a model program that we can begin to see some improvement.

Chief Barranco pointed out that Bikes and Books is a good program for some kids at North Aiken who are struggling with reading. He stated that is the initiative, and it has bloomed into something that we did not expect. He pointed out that having Public Safety Officers with children does impact a great deal of the community of youth. He said we can't do something for everybody, but it does impact the youth.

Councilwoman Price pointed out that when kids get to a certain age they want a little bit of money. They will go to whatever measures necessary to get some money. She pointed out her little bit of money came from ironing for neighbors and people in her church. She pointed out kids don't think that way anymore. She said we have to help them to legally earn a little bit of money, keep their character, and the things it takes for positive development.

Mr. Pearce stated there is another program that the Chamber of Commerce has started. They have started the Youth Entrepreneurial Academy. This is a business plan. The kids get excited about a concept and idea they have. It is a 36 week program. It will start in the fall, and involves local entrepreneurs, local business owners, and CEOs. It is for youth in the age of 12 to 18. They can partner or work solo. They come up with an idea and take it to a business plan and a business model to actually earn money.

Councilwoman Price said the key is that she wants to see the kids that we know that are destined for trouble, to be targeted in terms of trying to turn them around.

Councilman Dewar stated the books program is critical in that. He said he had been reading so much lately that they have to be able to read by the time they get out of third grade. If they can't read, we will see them in trouble.

Councilman Merry stated one of the best things you can do is have a vibrant and growing economy to provide jobs and opportunities. Where there is greater poverty, there is greater crime. If you give these people jobs and money in their pocket there is possibly less incentive to commit crime. There will always be some instances, where that will not work. He said right now the unemployment rate among young people, particularly minority young people in Aiken County and all across the country, is exceedingly high. The kids are not working; particularly minority kids don't have jobs. If they had better opportunities for jobs, and there were more opportunities, then he felt there would be a reduction in crime.

Councilman Dewar pointed out that Senator Scott starts his stump speech with a statement that the best poverty program is a job.

Chief Barranco stated that Safe Communities has a branch called Safe Youth. It is a focus on mentoring. It is something we can work on. He said we are on the ground level with Safe Communities, and it will grow from here.

Councilwoman Price stated she sees the Sheriff's Department and the Public Safety Department working together, as this is a joint effort as those committing crimes run out of the city into the county and vice versa. She said this needs to be a joint effort working

together on youth issues in collaboration with the School District. She said we see the wheels turning, but not making many gains in turning some of these kids around.

Councilman Merry stated he noticed we are proposing to replace some vehicles and some camera equipment. He asked if the funds would come from Depreciation Funds. Mr. Pearce stated the funds would come from Depreciation Funds.

Chief Barranco reviewed the Youth Services 2144. He said there were no major capital items in this division with just one vehicle to be replaced. He said we plan to continue the Parent Project. Mr. Pearce noted there is an increase in the salary level because we talked with the School District, and they are interested in another School Resource Officer. They would pay for that position in Youth Services. He also pointed out that for Purchase of Uniforms he had reduced the amount to \$1,750 from \$3,000. He said he plans to raise that back to \$3,000 to cover the cost of the new uniforms for the new School Resource Officer.

Chief Barranco stated the School Resource Officer would be assigned to Pinecrest. Currently the Sheriff's Office and Public Safety share that as a paid special now. The School District feels there is a value of having a consistent officer at the school. This is something they are proposing to do. He said the officer would not be a brand new officer. There would be a selection process to use a Youth Services officer as a School Resource Officer.

Chief Barranco reviewed the Support Services 2150 for traffic and maintenance. He said we want to continue renovations at the Sign Shop. There are some vehicles to be replaced and we maintain the traffic control equipment under the contract with SCDOT.

Mr. Pearce pointed out there is a Civil Defense budget 2160, but no real expenditures from this division.

Mr. Pearce stated the last division is the Victim Services Fund 022-2130. He said that is funded through assessment on the fines that people pay in court. There is one full time Victim's Advocate. There is a donation to the Cumbee Center and the Child Advocacy Center of \$20,000 each. In the past that donation has been \$10,000 each. He said the request had been made that the amount be increased to \$20,000 each. He said one of the special holding accounts is for the Victim's fund. If we don't spend the money, the state asks us to return the money. He said expenditures for this fund come out of fine money. He said that is why the fund is a separate fund.

Councilman Ebner asked if there is another place in the budget where we also fund four or five social organizations. Mr. Pearce responded this is where we fund the Child Advocacy and the Cumbee Center. Mr. Pearce stated other funds from the General Fund are given to the Aiken County Library, the Aiken Downtown Development Association, and the Lower Savannah Council of Governments for the Best Friend bus.

Mr. Pearce stated that is the Public Safety proposed budget as it stands now. He pointed out no decision had been made on salaries pending confirmation of our final revenue figures at the end of April. He said when staff comes to Council with the proposed budget ordinance in May we will have the salaries as part of the budget.

Councilman Dewar asked if everyone had had a chance to look at the wage and salary study that the Archer Group did.

Mr. Pearce stated their findings were that there is a big range in the pay. They also said we are not paying our Public Safety Director enough. He said we are looking at the study. He said that is something we will have to deal with long term. The range in salary is due in large part to the fact that we have had people who have worked for us for a very long time.

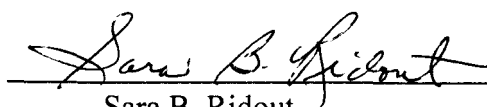
Councilman Dewar stated he was hoping we would get more specific information on other cities for comparison. He said as he reads the report, he thinks the survey average

would come from all the cities. He pointed out that the report shows that we are under paying some positions and on the other hand we have several that are making more than the average.

Mr. Pearce stated that is a reflection of the longevity of the people who have worked with us for many years.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 5:20 P.M.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Sara B. Ridout", written over a horizontal line.

Sara B. Ridout  
City Clerk