

Item 23-1265: 2024 Police Department Budget

Safety and Licensing Committee

Wed, Oct 25, 2023 5:30PM

Alderman Chris Croatt (District 14) 12:16

Okay, we can move on to 23-1265, which is the police department budget for 2024. Chief Olson is not here, but Assistant Chief Freeman is. So, he picked a good meeting to attend. It's okay. We probably won't have a lot of questions because we have a process to send our questions in to Chief Olson, for response, and—but is there anything that you would like to highlight as assistant chief in the budget or any major program changes you'd like to talk about or any challenges you're facing?

Assistant Chief Todd Freeman (Police) 12:54

Yes.

Alderman Chris Croatt (District 14) 12:54

Number seven. Okay, it should go on. There you go.

Assistant Chief Todd Freeman (Police) 12:57

Yeah. Thank you. Um, I think the increased costs for Axon certainly is an eye raiser. Of all the things in my 29 years in policing, two things in this year's budget, Axon and Flock, are a complete game changer for law enforcement and for public safety. Axon, not only incorporates body worn cameras and tasers that have been around for several years, but they're moving into training topics like virtual reality simulation.

Assistant Chief Todd Freeman (Police) 13:28

And probably most important in addition to the body cameras, is the digital evidence storage. That has just been tremendous and just a complete time saver in efficiency not only for PD staff but for info technology staff and the attorney's office—anyone that has anything to do with anything our staff is doing. The efficiencies realized by Axon's digital evidence storage system are certainly worth the investment. So, I think that that's all I have for now knowing that you have been in touch with the chief and that we'll be here Saturday to answer any more specific questions.

Alderman Chris Croatt (District 14) 14:05

Okay. Alderman Siebers, go ahead.

Alderman William Siebers (District 1) 14:07

Thank you, Chair. Just to give you a heads up, I'm going to ask this question. The city has grown over the years and keeps growing. But one area where the city in my opinion hasn't grown is in our police staffing. And I'd like to know from somebody, be it the police chief, or be it the mayor, what is the plan in terms of bringing our staffing up to an area or a level that is at least decent? You know. So, I'm really concerned in regards to our staffing problems as I see them as I see it as a problem.

Assistant Chief Todd Freeman (Police) 14:55

Yeah. I appreciate the inherent support in your question Alderman Seibers. I think the chief and the mayor would probably be the best to highlight the plan moving ahead, because there was some preliminary readiness to include that this year, which, with the challenges we're all aware of, had to be edited. So, I think chief and the mayor would be your best audience. Yeah, but I appreciate it.

Alderman Chris Croatt (District 14) 15:19

Thank you Alderman Siebers. Have you posed that question to Chief Olson and Mayor Woodford, prior to tonight's public meeting?

Alderman William Siebers (District 1) 15:26

I have done it. I have done—

Alderman Chris Croatt (District 14) 15:31

Just so they're prepared for Saturday?

Alderman William Siebers (District 1) 15:32

Well, I just told the Assistant.

Alderman Chris Croatt (District 14) 15:34

I know, and I'm sure he's gonna share with the chief.

Alderman William Siebers (District 1) 15:37

And I did have a—in my quarterly meeting with the mayor I did mention it to him.

Alderman Chris Croatt (District 14) 15:41

I just didn't want them to be blindsided

Alderman William Siebers (District 1) 15:43

And I've said it over and over and over again until, you know—you know, I feel nobody listens. Someday somebody will listen, when something bad happens.

Alderman Chris Croatt (District 14) 15:53

I think it's an important question. I just didn't want them to be blindsided with a question they were unprepared to answer.

Alderman William Siebers (District 1) 15:58

Somebody needs to be blindsided maybe. Sorry.

Alderman Chris Croatt (District 14) 16:01

Okay. I can feel the passion from right over here. All right, Alderman van Zeeland? Did you have a—?

Alderman Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 16:06

Yeah, I just wanted to point out to everyone, the Axon contract was really alarming to see almost 50% it looked like about up by half. And I did a little research, and if you look, we're not the only municipality going through this. It seems like there's a lack of competition. And my concern is that this is going to keep going this direction. I don't know if there's anything we can do to intervene in the meantime, but I wanted to point that out that it looks like police departments all over the place are getting drawn into these large contracts, multi years to try to save money. And then when the new contract comes, it jumps considerably, so just something to keep on our radar.

Alderman Chris Croatt (District 14) 16:46

Good point.

Aldersperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 16:47

Thank you.

Aldersperson Chris Croatt (District 14) 16:48

Aldersperson. Wolf.

Aldersperson Nate Wolff (District 12) 16:49

Thank you, Chair. So, I also have a staffing question for you. I also need to send out the email. So, one of our positions we had co—our two-year program with the county and the county ended that or intends to end that program. Are we keeping that position through some other process or are we planning to cut that position?

Assistant Chief Todd Freeman (Police) 17:15

Yes, Outagamie County's fully supported it in their proposed budget for 24 and beyond?

Aldersperson Nate Wolff (District 12) 17:19

Okay.

Assistant Chief Todd Freeman (Police) 17:20

It's no longer a pilot program, but an actual expense for Human Services.

Aldersperson Nate Wolff (District 12) 17:23

Perfect. Thank you.

Aldersperson Chris Croatt (District 14) 17:25

Okay. Anything else for Assistant Chief Freeman before Saturday's meeting? Okay, hearing none.