

# Acton Police Department

## InterDepartmental Memo

**From:** Frank J. Widmayer, Chief of Police

**Date:** January 8, 2004

**To:** Don Johnson, Town Manager

**Subj:** Response to Selectman Ashton on budget

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*All dept heads - Manager's Message - p. 3: In order to put the \$23.4 million "Needs" budget into perspective, could you define the guidelines provided to staff in determining what "Needs" really means. For example, last year, you presented an estimate for the FY05 budget of \$22.1 million and now we are at \$23.4 million for FY05 - an increase of \$1.3 million. What explains the difference? Does this reflect any improvement in services, increases in demand, or inflation, or simply reflect the status quo, etc.?*

I prepared the police budget based on the understanding that there would be no funding available for extra equipment and no increase other than employee step increases and contractual obligations. In one contractual budget line we do not even fund the amount that is required, resulting in a loss of available staff hours. It can be made to work but in the end we provide less hours of service for the customers.

Significant cuts were made after the budget was submitted. The 50% loss of clerical staff is a major problem and will result in delays in processing a continually increasing amount of paperwork. As a result I expect a considerable impact on services to customers who come into the station at all hours for information. Assigning those duties to a police officer is inefficient, costly and takes away from officer availability in a department that is usually 3 to 5 officers short of authorized strength. This funding was not on the capital list because I had thought it was secure in the budget.

The 50% cut in the cruiser budget will result in further deterioration of the cruiser fleet. The current cruiser rotation plan is not sufficient to meet our needs and many high mileage cruisers are in use. Some of them have been failing lately. The unmarked cruiser lease program would have addressed some of these issues and stayed within the current budget but this was not recommended. I had placed this item on the capital list only because I considered it a new item.

Public safety dispatchers are discussed in the next question below. The remaining items on the capital list are there as part of the five year capital plan. Some of them have been there for multiple years and at some point will either need to be acted on or we will begin losing functionality.

*Don, Frank & Bob - Police - I note that the one recommended capital request for dispatchers is the last priority (#15) on the Chief's capital list. Indeed all of the non-personnel items could be funded for*