

**RANDOLPH POLICE DEPARTMENT AND REVISED FY24 POLICE DISTRICT
BUDGET – FREQUENTLY-ASKED-QUESTIONS (FAQS)**

NOTE: This is an updated version of the FAQs. The prior two versions are available on the Town’s website as well; some of the questions appear in all three versions, though they may be modified between versions.

#1

Q: Following the Town Meeting results in March, what happens next with regards to a Police District budget for FY24?

A: The next step is a “special meeting” to vote on a revised FY24 (July 1, 2023 through June 30, 2024) Police District budget. The vote will be conducted by Australian ballot.

The special meeting is likely to be Tuesday, May 16th. The Board is scheduled to warn the special meeting at its April 13th meeting; at that time the public information meeting held prior to the vote will also be scheduled.

#2

Q: What is the revised Police District budget?

A: The revised FY24 Police District budget is \$524,102, a reduction of \$247,285 from the budget voters did not pass at Town Meeting.

A copy of the revised budget, along with a cover memo detailing reductions and other changes, can be found on the Town’s website (www.randolphvt.org). The table shows the difference between the revised Police District budget and the one proposed at Town Meeting.

	<u>FY24 Town Meeting</u>	<u>FY24 Revised (v.02)</u>	<u>(Reduction)</u>
<i>Police Administrative</i>	\$ 630,987	\$ 425,852	\$ (205,135)
<i>Police Operating</i>	\$ 135,400	\$ 98,250	\$ (37,150)
<i>Other Police Expenses</i>	\$ 5,000	\$ -	\$ (5,000)
<i>TOTAL</i>	\$ 771,387	\$ 524,102	\$ (247,285)

The FY24 budget is reduced, primarily, through a reduction in the proposed number of officers. The budget presented to voters in March called for four, full-time certified officers; the revised proposal has three certified officers (one of which is grant-funded, in part) and 1,100 hours of part-time officer capacity.

#3

Q: How will the revised budget affect property taxes?

A: Property taxes in the Police District are estimated to *decrease* slightly. The table shows the projected annual and monthly impact for properties valued between \$200,000 and \$400,000.

<i>Property Value</i>	<i>Property Owner Impact (Estimated) [2]</i>		
	<u>\$200,000</u>	<u>\$300,000</u>	<u>\$400,000</u>
<i>Annual Change</i>	\$ (6.63)	\$ (9.94)	\$ (13.25)
<i>Monthly Change</i>	\$ (0.55)	\$ (0.83)	\$ (1.10)

The table that follows shows the sources of funding and the resulting amount to be raised by property taxes.

TOTAL REVISED POLICE DISTRICT FY24 BUDGET	\$	524,102
PROJECTED NON-TAX REVENUE	\$	99,808
GENERAL FUND PAYMENT FOR SERVICE	\$	100,000
TO BE RAISED BY TAXES, POLICE DISTRICT	\$	324,294

#4

Q: Are there law enforcement services provided by the Town of Randolph now?

A: In a limited fashion, yes. Chief Scott Cloutre has been serving as Randolph's sole certified police officer since the local department went "live" again during the week of March 20th. The Town has hired a "special" (or part-time) officer to begin in early April when dispatch services through Barre City are activated.

#5

Q: Has the Town hired any other employees?

A: As mentioned before, the Town hired an administrative assistant for the Police Department in February.

The Town also hired former Orange County Sheriff Bill Bohnyak to serve in what has been, effectively, a limited consultant's role. Tasks have included assistance with the reinstatement of the Town's ORI (required for access to various records databases), the acquisition and installation of a repeater needed to re-establish dispatch service, and other similar start-up tasks.

#6

Q: If a budget for FY24 has not been passed, how is the Town hiring and staffing a Randolph Police Department now?

A: Voters approved a Police District budget for FY23, which extends through June 30th. Staff hired and providing law enforcement services now are being paid from the amount that would have otherwise funded the sheriff's contract.

#7

Q: If a budget for FY24 has not been passed, how has the Town purchased vehicles and other equipment?

A: The Selectboard authorized the use of \$200,000 in Federal ARPA funds for start-up costs, such as vehicle purchases, equipment (body and vehicle cameras, a fingerprint machine, radios, safety equipment, mobile data terminals, and so on), and office fit-up. Any unused funds will be returned to the general pool of ARPA funds.

The Town still has more than \$1.1 million dollars in ARPA funds to allocate to projects or for other uses.

#8

Q: Why is the Town proposing to re-establish a municipal police department?

A: The sheriff cancelled his department's contract with the Town with less than 30 days of notice due to his inability to provide sufficient staffing. During a phone call in February, the sheriff stated he had five deputies (with four required to staff the county courthouse); in November 2022 there were 28 employees at the Orange County Sheriff's Department (OCSD).

The Town spoke with law enforcement agencies at the municipal, county, and state levels in the month or two preceding the sheriff's decision to terminate about potential contract options in an attempt to prepare for a possible cancellation. Unfortunately, none were willing or able to provide the same level of service. The remaining option was a re-start of a municipal police department.

This was also covered in previous versions of the FAQs.

#9

Q: What is proposed as a municipal police department – is it the same as the Randolph Police Department from before?

A: No. The revised budget is a much more limited level of service than provided by either the former Randolph Police Department or contract with OCSD.

The proposed FY24 budget includes three certified full-time police officers (including the chief), an administrative assistant, and funding for approximately 1,100 hours of part-time or "special" officers who have Level II or Level III certifications.

For comparison's sake, the last version of a municipal police department featured six full-time and two permanent part-time employees.

The estimated window of coverage, with all positions filled, is between 80 and 100 hours per week. The contract with OCSD, by comparison, was based upon a 120-hour per week model.

#10

Q: Why is a Police Department so expensive, as compared to the contract?

A: The Town is carrying all costs, compared to paying an inclusive hourly rate.

#11

Q: Are there one-time funds proposed for the operating budget this time as well?

A: No. The only non-recurring revenue is a three-year, \$125,000 Federal COPS grant being sought to cover the costs associated with the third officer.

#12

Q: Who votes on – and pays for – the revised Police District budget?

A: Registered voters inside the Police District will vote; those owning property inside the Police District would be responsible for paying.

#13

Q: What is next for the discussion about responsibility for costs – in other words, what are the next steps with the townwide Police Department conversation?

A: The Town Attorney is reviewing the Articles of Merger from 1984, state law, case law, and other resources, to provide an opinion about the process for amending or dissolving Police District boundaries. The Town Attorney is a qualified, experienced, and neutral arbiter.

The Selectboard is also establishing a committee, similar to the one formed in 2018 when the shift to a contract with OCSD was made, tasked with exploring the matter in more detail. The end goal of that effort is a recommendation to the Board prior to the next Town Meeting (2024). An initial scope of work for the committee should be available for the Board's April 13th meeting.

#14

Q: If the Town re-starts its Police Department, won't this also mean a building will be needed?

A: The plan is to use the existing law enforcement space on Salisbury Street, with modest upgrades and adjustments. There is no other building plan at this time.

#15

Q: What about a regional policing model?

A: There is still interest in discussing a regional police entity, which would provide law enforcement services to multiple towns. A regional entity will take time and effort to shape, let alone implement. There is no current analog in Vermont, wherein multiple municipalities operate a shared law enforcement agency.