

The Police Services Committee has been meeting for months now to meet the charge assigned to them. We have evaluated a lot of data, met with organizations that would be partners in the services, entities that have demand for the services and other police agencies to better understand the demands for services and how to meet them. This process has brought forward a lot of information about not only service needs that are law enforcement focused but also services through crisis/social workers that would allow for immediate services to many of the individuals that are interacting with our police department.

A few items to note that are immediate items to be focused on from the work done to date:

1. The existing staffing level of the police department afforded by the current budget is causing employees to work long hours which is putting them at risk for burn out, stress and increases the potential for an event to happen that puts them and those they are working with at risk. They cannot continue to provide the services expected within the current district without additional officers.
2. The call volume for services at the schools requires a lot of hours from our limited number of officers. Working with the school district to bring on a school resource officer should be a priority. Adding this officer to the schools will allow the immediate services needed at their facilities and not pull the current officers away from the other demands on the district. Currently there are calls almost daily for services at the schools.
3. There are cases that would benefit from immediate access to a crisis/social worker. Clara Martin Center has funding available to them through the State to fund a similar position with the Vermont State Police in Royalton. While the majority of the work they would perform is not focused on law enforcement, the experience of agencies we spoke with that had access to this type of employee saw improved operations at some calls and a reduction in repeat calls to individuals that benefitted from these services during and after the call. Work should continue with Clara Martin Center to reach agreement on the use of an individual in this type of position to support individuals involved in cases involving RPD.
4. Hiring law enforcement staff is a challenge. This is not a profession people are lined up for like they were ten years ago. It can take months to find a candidate and, in some cases, you need to invest in putting them through the state academy to get certified. This can add a year to when they are fully functioning in the department with the ability to do all activities/actions. Any expansion of the existing district should be done in steps that will allow the time needed to get staff.
5. If the Town moves forward with a vote to expand the district it should be with the understanding that when that vote is successful Randolph becomes the primary law enforcement entity from that date forward. Currently Vermont State Police are primary outside of the district which means they have the operational and financial responsibility for response. This will shift to the town once the vote is successful.

The Police Services Committee would like to continue their work to get a long-term recommendation together for the Selectboard. Knowing budget development for 2025 is underway here is a recommendation for what to advance with this budget.

1. Propose a 2025 budget that allows for two extra officers in the existing district. The draft budget presented to the committee was \$824,000 but further refinement has lowered this amount. This is only the expense side and will be reduced by grant funds, services performed for a fee, etc. This budget amount also does not include the capital needed for equipment and vehicles. We know there are two vehicles that need replacing next year, potentially need an additional vehicle for the two additional officers, and then equipment for each officer. Capital may need to be financed with payments made annually to make it affordable.¹
2. Put a vote out to those residents in the expanded district boundaries to determine if they want to join the police district. Current expanded boundaries are along Route 66 up to the intersection of East Bethel Road, Windover Road and Route 12 back to the Elementary School entrance, South of Gifford Medical Center to the Bethel Town line along Route 12 and south on Beanville Road to the intersection of Route 12. The Police Services Committee will finalize the boundaries for this district expansion.²
3. If the vote passes to expand the district the recommendation is to hold a special vote by the new members of the expanded police district (current district plus those areas voting to join) to approve a budget adjustment for the drafted budget of \$1,024,000 which includes 4 additional officers above the current department staffing. Again, this does not include the capital costs which would include replacing 2 vehicles as needed in the existing fleet and adding two vehicles to the fleet. There is also a need for the equipment for the additional officers.³
4. Support an embedded social/crisis worker in the police department by continuing to work with Clara Martin Center to access an employee that is the right fit for the department. The budget includes a stipend of \$10,000 to help offset some of the training and special equipment needs.⁴
5. Continue with the \$100,000 in the general fund to fund services needed that are not in the current or expanded district. Evaluate if this funding level is correct by looking at the cost of services as compared to the budget amount in the current budget.⁵

Going forward the committee agrees that it is not affordable for every town in Vermont to have their own police force. As VSP continues to struggle to get employees that allow them to provide services and Orange County Sheriff struggles to provide service Randolph should join surrounding towns that are interested in exploring developing a regional service. There are many

¹ The numbers come from the versions originally created for and reviewed by the Committee, and are available on the Town's website ([please click here](#) for the presentation from the public forum held in November 2023; budget and staffing slides begin on page 14).

² Update: The date of a vote on expanded boundaries has not yet been determined. At one point in the Committee's discussion, the hope was to place a proposal for voters to consider in March 2024. The 2024-2025 election cycle has multiple opportunities built in – August primaries, November general election, and Town Meeting 2025. The Board could also choose to warn a special meeting for a vote. The draft map is available on the Town's website ([please click here](#), and see page 18).

³ See footnote #1.

⁴ Line 734, page 16 of the current version of the proposed FY25 police budget.

⁵ Line 147, page 5 (as a General Fund expense) and line 700/page 15 (as a Police Fund revenue) of the current version of the proposed FY25 budgets.

models across the country that could assist this effort. Outreach to the Department of Public Safety should be made to determine their willingness to join this effort (staffing and funding).

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