

**LOWELL TOWN COUNCIL
WORK SESSION
2015 BUDGET & SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICER
AUGUST 6, 2014**

A work session of the Lowell Town Council was called to order on Wednesday, August 7, 2014 at 6:00 P.M. by President Edgar Corns. Members present were Craig Earley, Donald Parker, Phillip Kuiper and Edgar Corns. Robert Philpot was not in attendance. Also present were Town Attorney David Westland, Public Works Director Greg Shook, Building Administrator Tom Trulley, Police Chief Erik Matson, Sharon Patterson and John Piper of the Police Commission, two members of the press, and two interested citizens.

President Corns opened the work session and stated the reason for the meeting was to discuss the School Resource Officer position. He stated he would like Police Chief Erik Matson to start by giving his opinion on the position. Chief Matson stated we were approached by former Assistant Superintendent Klefisch who explained that the school had applied for a grant to pay for a part-time School Resource Officer. The grant would pay for the twenty hours a week that the officer would work, which would total around \$25,000. He stated they felt that it was a good way to help supplement the department and handle the issues in the schools. The school has been very flexible about this saying that if the officer needs to leave on another call, they can, and that the twenty hours can be made up in a number of ways. Chief Matson stated that he was for the officer in the sense that the Police Department will be reimbursed for the time that is normally spent in the schools. He stated he is hopeful the grant will continue to grow so that we can get a full-time officer in there at some point. Councilman Earley asked if this has been discussed with the Police Commission. Chief Matson stated he has brought it up to the Commission in the past, but was under the impression that it was a Council decision. President Corns asked what types of calls they respond to at the schools. Chief Matson stated fights, drugs, liquor, cigarettes, thefts, everything that we would get called to houses for. President Corns asked what the school's disciplinary position was at the middle and high school. Chief Matson stated he was not sure and that he does not get in to their discipline. If the department gets called for a criminal matter, they proceed criminally. President Corns stated, "I am coming back to the position that there is a guy out there that draws in \$110,000 per year to be principal, but what is he doing? The school is out of control, the middle school is way out of control, and has no leadership what-so-ever. I want to know what their disciplinary policy is." Councilman Earley stated Chief Matson cannot answer that question, and should not be required to. Councilman Kuiper stated that may be a school board matter and that the question was out of bounds.

Councilman Parker stated the agreement that was spoken about at the last meeting is concerning because we would be providing services outside of our corporate limits and jurisdiction. Chief Matson stated he was told when he began that there was an agreement. He stated he had expressed that to the school superintendent and she had found minutes from a Council meeting where the Council had voted 5-0 for the Lowell Police Department to handle calls at the schools. This is not binding, but it is where our belief came from. He stated if it was the Council's wishes for the department to not take calls at the middle school, or if you believe we are doing something wrong, then let us know. Councilman Parker stated he understood that we back departments up, but to handle the calls for service, that is someone else's jurisdiction. Attorney Westland stated the minutes from a July 26th, 2010 meeting stated that Police Chief John Shelhart asked the Council to

approve police protection for the new middle school even though it was outside of corporate limits. That motion did pass by the Council. He stated this is really all that is shown on paper. Attorney Westland stated, "I would have some concerns, liability wise, if you regularly patrolled outside of the Town limits." Attorney Westland stated there should be something more formal than what was just presented in the minutes. He stated it would be County jurisdiction, so they would have to sign off on it as well. Councilman Parker stated he believed they were not able to relinquish their authority. Attorney Westland stated he has not dug that far in to it, but there should be an agreement between the three parties. Discussion followed regarding the possibility of only having the SRO at the schools that are within the corporate limits.

Councilman Kuiper stated he believed it would not be a good idea to leave out the middle school due to their critical age. Councilman Parker stated we would then need the County to sign off on an agreement, but you know the Sheriff will not give up his authority there. Councilman Earley asked if the issues that Attorney Westland believes could arise could be explained. He also stated that he had a hard time believing that the Sheriff would not support the idea. Attorney Westland stated there is a difference between temporary mutual aid opposed to a regular schedule. He stated, "If the Sheriff will agree, then we can draft something establishing that the officer will be there and if something happens the call would go to County and Lowell, which it seems it already does." Councilman Kuiper stated he had a long discussion with the County Sheriff who said that he was in full support of the program. Discussion followed regarding possible scenarios for litigation.

Chief Matson explained why he brought up the idea for the school resource officer. He stated that he knew the \$25,000 would not pay someone's salary, but that it was a way to get extra money that would go towards hiring a new officer. Chief Matson explained that he was trying to do whatever he could to help find extra money for the department, but if that money is not needed, then he would not pursue the position. He then went in to detail as to why he believed this would be a good opportunity. Councilman Kuiper stated he supported Chief Matson and that he knows the situation of being short-handed better than anyone in the room. We are always looking for money and this is something that we could take advantage of to help with that, and to help out the community. Councilman Earley stated that Chief Matson did not overstep his boundaries and that he supports the program 100%. Councilman Parker stated that he also supported Chief Matson and thought he was doing a good job, but that he believed we should be doing some things different. He went on to explain his position on getting involved with HITDA, or the Lake County Task Force, and the need for funding in order to better train the officers. Councilman Parker closed by stating he believed there were other things that should be looked at as priority, but the School Resource Officer is not one of them. Discussion followed about Attorney Westland contacting Lake County Sheriff Attorney John Bushemi.

Councilman Parker stated he would recommend that the attorney draw up an agreement between the three bodies, even though he did not agree with putting an officer in the school, he would go along with Chief Matson's recommendation. If there is not a signed agreement, we could still proceed with the schools that are within the Town limits. President Corns stated he would support it in the future., and again stated he wanted someone from the school corporation to come and tell us what their disciplinary ideas are for the high school. Councilman Parker stated he thought that someone from the school would have been here. Chief Matson stated they did know about the

meeting tonight. Attorney Westland stated in Section 10 of the agreement it does state that the SRO is not a school official. They still need to go through the proper procedures and have probable cause in order to do something. Discussion followed and the Council agreed they would like to act on this by the second meeting in August.

Sharon Patterson, Vice-President of the Police Commission, stated she is in total support of the SRO. She stated her youngest son, who recently graduated, had told her of the numerous fights that would break out in school. If there were an officer there, we would have less fights, thefts, and drug issues.

She stated she liked the idea of a HITDA officer, but she likes the idea of someone actually being there better. Councilman Parker stated you would see the revenue from a HITDA officer, as most departments average \$75,000 - \$150,000 in the first year. Ms. Patterson stated she would also like to see a body with that. Councilman Parker stated you would see a body because we would get to add another officer. Ms. Patterson stated we could look at that in the future. President Corns stated the officer would not be full-time. Ms. Patterson stated she understood that, but it would be a start because most of our problems come from our schools. President Corns stated he did not believe the leadership in the schools is that good, and they need to answer to us as to what their disciplinary actions are. Councilman Kuiper asked if President Corns had talked to anyone at the school because there are a lot of accusations being thrown out there. That would be the fair thing before a public meeting instead of making accusations about people that are running the schools. Discussion followed regarding the previous programs such as DARE, that were used in the schools and the details of the approved grant for this school year and next.

Clerk-Treasurer Walters stated regarding the 2015 budget, we have added a new police officer under the LOIT Public Safety Fund and in the CEDIT Fund, we have budgeted a line item for a debt payment to use in purchasing property for a new street garage, the rail study that we have pledged for with Congressman Pete Visclosky, and economic development. Councilman Parker asked about the \$193,000 for the E-911 project. Clerk-Treasurer Walters stated that is the levy that will be cut from the General Fund. Councilman Earley asked how the firefighter's salary was going to be figured with the recent windfall of \$80,000 plus to the townships from the County. President Corns stated Clerk-Treasurer Walters, Vice-President Parker, Fire Chief Clint Gorbail, and himself had a discussion and decided that the Fire Chief would approach the townships. Clerk-Treasurer Walters stated she believed the discussion was that the Fire Chief would approach the townships regarding the portion of public safety that they could possibly get added to their agreement with the townships. If the Volunteer Fire Department gets some of the public safety money from the township, then our agreement with the Volunteer Fire Department would be that much lower, but at this point it is being budgeted at the normal amount. Discussion followed as to where the firefighter's salary would come from and how it would be presented in the budget.

Clerk-Treasurer Walters stated that Financial Advisor Greg Guerrettaz could still be present at the next meeting if the Council wanted him to come. Councilman Parker stated he did not need to speak with Mr. Guerrettaz, but did still have some questions about a full-time or part-time Town Manager and how we can squeeze that in. He stated he had a breakfast meeting with the Town Planner for Thursday and then he would like to speak to Mrs. Walters. Clerk-Treasurer Walters stated that is a discussion that needs to happen soon because the budget needs to be to the County by September 1st. Councilman Parker stated he would speak with her tomorrow. Clerk-Treasurer Walters stated

all five of you have to decide. Councilman Earley stated a part-time or full-time Town Manager is not any one person's decision to make. Councilman Parker stated he thought after he has discussion with people, it could be brought up to the Council and we could vote on it. Clerk-Treasurer Walters stated if they have a discussion at Monday night's meeting, that is fine. She stated originally a budget session was going to be held on Monday at 6:00 P.M., and asked if the Council still wanted to have it. The Council agreed that they did not need to have that meeting anymore. President Corns stated since an article ran in the Hammond Times, there have been two people that have asked to put in an application for a Town Manager

With no further questions or comments, President Corns adjourned the meeting at 6:55 P.M.

Edgar Corns, President

Attest:

Judith Walters
Clerk-Treasurer