

**CITY OF WOBURN
WOBURN CITY COUNCIL
ORDINANCES CHARTER & RULES COMMITTEE
COMMITTEE ROOM
WOBURN CITY HALL
MONDAY, JULY 29, 2024 – 6:13 P.M.**

Voting members present: Chair Joseph Demers, Councilor Robert Toro, Councilor Robert Ferullo, Councilor Lou DiMambro. Absent: Councilor Mercer-Bruen

Non-voting members present: President Jeffrey Dillon, Councilor Charles Viola, Councilor Darlene Mercer-Bruen and Councilor Joanne Campbell. Absent: Councilor William Pappardo.

Also present: Mayor Michael Concannon, City Auditor Charles Doherty, Police Chief Robert Rufo and Deputy Police Chief Brian McManus

* * * * *

Reading and approval of previous meeting minutes: Motion made by Councilor Ferullo and seconded by Councilor Toro to waive the reading of and approve the minutes of the meeting of June 12, 2024; approved, 4-0.

* * * * *

Order to amend Title 2, Article XVIII of the Woburn Municipal Code to increase hourly rate for reserve police officers from \$24.04 to \$32.14: Mayor Concannon said this is the right thing to do and the right time to do it. He said the city is sending eight recruits to the police academy on August 19. He said he appreciates the council accepting the order as a late filing at its July 16 meeting. He said this is something other communities have done. He said the proposed increase can be absorbed in this year's budget. Chief Rufo said an appellate court on June 27, 2023, heard a case involving separate rates of pay for people going to the police academy. He said if officers were to be paid at the current rate, they would earn about \$50,000. He said the regular pay rate for a police officer in Woburn is \$67,034. He said increasing the hourly wage for reserve officers would result in an increase to the equivalent of \$67,000, which matches the starting base pay for a patrol officer. He said failure to increase the rate can incur treble damages. Mayor Concannon said the timing is such the city can start off on the right track with the new group of recruits. Councilor Toro said this is a no-brainer, as long as the city can absorb the raises in the FY '25 budget. He said he is 100 percent on board with this. Councilor Ferullo asked if the recruits will be appointed before they go to the academy. Chief Rufo answered affirmatively. Councilor DiMambro said he assumes the pay increase will help the department keep recruits. Chief Rufo said the department lost two recruits at the \$50,000 figure. Councilor DiMambro asked if the recruits will receive benefits. Chief Rufo answered affirmatively. Motion made by Councilor Toro and seconded by Councilor DiMambro to suspend the council's rules to allow any member of the council not on the committee to address the order; approved, 4-0. President Dillon said this is the right thing to do. He said Woburn's police force is second to none. He said this is a must. He said when his son was going through the police academy in Malden he had to help out his son financially because he was not earning

enough to support himself. He said he is 100 percent supports approval of the order. Councilor Viola asked if the recruits pay their own way to the academy. Chief Rufo said the city pays a \$4,500 academy fee. Mayor Concannon said there are communities that make the recruits pay their own way to the academy. Councilor Campbell said she is absolutely on board with this. She said she is not sure how anyone could go to the police academy on \$50,000. She said \$67,000 is absolutely reasonable. She asked how long the term at the police academy is. Chief Rufo said the police academy term is 26 weeks. Councilor Demers thanked Chief Rufo, Deputy Chief McManus and the police department for everything they do. He asked Chief Rufo if he can explain the changes to the requirements for reserves. Chief Rufo said the police department used to augment its staff with 18 reserves. He said reserves can no longer work on the street until they finish the full-time academy. He said the term “reserve police officer” does not exist anymore. He said reserves have to complete the 26-week training course. Councilor Demers said the city wants its police officers at their best. He said if they have to go to the academy and work weekends away from their family, they will not be at their best. Motion made by Councilor DiMambro and seconded by Councilor Toro that the order “ought to pass;” approved, 4-0.

* * * * *

Order to amend Title 2, Article I of the Woburn Municipal Code to prohibit public meetings on election days, Saturdays, Sundays or legal holidays: Councilor Demers said he has spoken to the City Clerk about this matter. He said it involves updating the Woburn Municipal Code to prevent public meetings on legal holidays, weekends and election days, to ensure there is not a strain on the City Clerk’s office, especially on election days. Councilor Ferullo asked if those situations ever come into play. Councilor Demers said this order will codify something that already exists. He said it will reduce exposure to Open Meeting Law violations and overtime issues. He said he personally agrees with the City Clerk wanting something in writing. Councilor DiMambro asked if a board could meet in an emergency situation. Councilor Demers said there are clauses for exemptions. He said he is sure there is going to be wiggle room. Motion made by Councilor Ferullo and seconded by Councilor Toro that the order “ought to pass;” approved, 4-0.

* * * * *

MOTION made by Councilor Ferullo and seconded by Councilor DiMambro to adjourn; in favor, 4-0. Chair Demers adjourned the meeting at 6:27 p.m.

A TRUE RECORD ATTEST

Gordon Vincent
Clerk of Committees

