

TOWN OF PLYMOUTH  
11 Lincoln Street  
Plymouth, MA 02360  
(508) 747-1620

OFFICE OF TOWN MANAGER  
MEMORANDUM

To: Board of Selectmen  
Advisory and Finance Committee  
Lynne Barrett, Director of Finance  
Annikka Bernabe, Selectmen's Office

From: Melissa G. Arrighi, Town Manager

Date: August 21, 2015

Re: Fall Town Meeting, Article 4B



ARTICLE 4: To see if the Town will vote to raise and appropriate, transfer from available funds or borrow a sum of money for the construction and/or repair and/or purchase and/or lease and/or replacement of departmental buildings and/or equipment and/or capital facilities and/or for feasibility studies and other types of studies for the various departments of the Town substantially as follows:

B. Police Study of Department  
or take any other action relative thereto.

The Town of Plymouth recognizes that policing in Plymouth has changed over the years as the Town has grown, social media has exploded, the increased media involvement in police activities, the constant scrutiny and numerous lawsuits filed against the officers, and the statistics on types of crimes have evolved. The Police Chief has made operational adjustments, provided specialty training, hired the Street Crimes Unit, and expanded the Department's focus to manage these changes. However, we also understand that there are a number of departmental variables that can strongly influence our Plymouth Police Officers' attitudes, and consequently, their incident responses, and their coping capacity, both pre and post incident. The Police Chief and I have talked about this extensively as we think about the future and the best approaches to sustaining the Department's success in an ever changing public safety environment.

One of the recent recurring issues centers around the Injured on Duty claims by Plymouth Public Safety Officers. Increasing IOD claims, particularly in the area of psychological claims directly related to his/her work as a Plymouth Police Officer, are alarming. The processing of these psychological claims put a significant strain on the relationship between employee and manager

and the Union as the claims can be difficult to substantiate and are typically more complicated in nature than a physical injury sustained on the job. In addition, the claim itself often has a negative effect on the Officer's personal life, his/her job performance and attitude, and on the internal culture of the Department. Finally, increases in IOD claims and the potential for a resulting Disability Retirement, can also have a long-term fiscal impact on the pension system at large as these pensions are typically 72% of the employee's salary and are not taxable, regardless of their age or years of service to the Town.

The Town currently has a 111F budget of \$ 200,000 with an average of 12 public safety officials in this full pay but unable-to-work status. The Town also has a 100B budget of \$270,000 with an average of 60 public safety officials on that status. In the simplest terms, both 111F and 100B line items are funds raised from taxpayers that pay the medical bills for the work related injury these employees/retirees. For example, if it was a back injury, any doctor's appointment or procedure or surgery related to that injury, the costs are paid directly from these line items. These are in addition to the regular health insurance line item of approximately \$28M. In the past, these costs have predominantly (but not exclusively) been associated with a **physical** injury sustained in the line of duty. However, that is changing as recent claims have pointed directly to a mental health issue related to the work the officer does for the Town of Plymouth. We need to understand why this is happening and how we can reduce these statistics both for the safety and wellbeing of our Officers and for the short and long-term financial impacts to the taxpayer and employee.

Research has shown that the culture found in police departments has a direct effect on the behavior and health of the officers. It is time that the Town did a full study of the Plymouth Police Department focusing on the key aspects that can influence Plymouth Police Officers' health and well-being, and correspondingly their attitudes towards their job, their colleagues, and the public at large they are charged with serving:

- Stress Factors/Management
- Manpower/Staffing including O/T and Time Off
- Internal Culture/Attitudes among colleagues
- Physical Training and Well Being
- Psychological Education and Well Being

The Town wants to further identify and understand how these factors can be understood and improved upon to provide for the best and most effective means to maintain the physical and psychological well-being of our Plymouth Police Officers. The Town has a number of goals for this study:

1. Identify the specific Plymouth Police Department internal culture between fellow officers and provide recommendations on how that culture can be fostered to positively impact the legitimacy, effectiveness, conduct, and overall health of Plymouth Police Officers and their service to the public.
2. Identify and understand how other factors specific to the Plymouth Police Department, such as stress management and psychological and physical health evaluation and promotion can be productively managed. Make recommendations to help improve the well-being of the police officers with the goal of reducing the number of IOD claims related to these factors.
3. Identify and outline how staffing levels, overall manpower distribution, and vacation/sick time usage specific to the Plymouth Police Department can impact the well-being of the

Officers. Make recommendations on staffing plans that can promote a healthy work-life balance and reduce the number of IOD claims.

Based on the Massachusetts Municipal Personnel Association, the cost for such a study will average \$40,000 with a funding source of certified free cash.

Thank you for your consideration.