

Revenue and Finance Commissioners Report

Police Staffing, Budget and Factors Influencing Potential Shared Services Agreement

1. Budget

In early 2025 the budget was established for the Police Department that consisted of 9 full-time personnel. The staffing mix was the Chief, Sergeant and 7 Patrol Officers. The total budget appropriation for police services was \$1,065,287.81. This differs slightly from the User-Friendly Budget numbers since the appropriation only includes billed pension and the User-Friendly budget includes cost that will be billed later due to how the pension system operates. The staffing costs were based on the actual salaries of our personnel, including step increases on anniversary dates during the year.

	Source	West Wildwood UFB 2025	West Wildwood Municipal Budget 2025
Public Safety Budget	UFB-3	\$ 970,602.31	
Base Salary	UFB-7	\$ 508,250.00	\$ 508,250.00
OT	UFB-7	\$ 76,750.00	\$ 76,750.00
Pension	UFB-7, Municipal Budget	\$ 188,052.50	\$ 82,238.00
Healthcare	UFB-7	\$ 155,608.68	\$ 155,608.68
Emp Tax	UFB-7	\$ 41,941.13	\$ 41,941.13
Other Expense	Municipal budget	\$ 154,100.00	\$ 154,100.00
Dispatch Shared Service	Municipal budget	\$ 46,400.00	\$ 46,400.00
Total Police Cost		\$ 1,171,102.31	\$ 1,065,287.81

2. Leadership

Cape May County Prosecutor's Office – In mid-January, the Prosecutor's Office installed a monitor, Detective Mark Weeks, to oversee operations at the Department. This was triggered by the Chief going on leave pending retirement. A couple of weeks later the Prosecutor's office assumed operational control of the department with Detective Mark Weeks as the Officer in Charge.

3. Staffing

Patrol Staffing levels – At the beginning of the year the patrol staffing included four PTC (NJ State Police Training Commission) licensed patrol officers, one class II officer and two officer trainees. The two officer trainees were scheduled for the academy with the graduation date in

time to support operations at the start of the summer. The class II officer was planned to enter the academy this fall. That gave an expectation of six licensed patrol officers available this summer and support from one class II. Unfortunately, we lost our most senior licensed patrol officer at the end of February and about 5 weeks later we lost both of our officer trainees that were in the academy. Then in mid-May we lost our class II officer.

This severe level of attrition has caused the Department to need support now from a nearby town to augment the staffing until a staffing solution has been determined. We are in discussions with local partners to contract this support.

4. NJ Police Chiefs Association Study

The Commissioners recognized the significant change in the department with the Chief retiring and the need for additional administrative support officers, so a study was commissioned with an external organization to assess the current state of the department and recommend what we need to do to best support the Public Safety of the community. A redacted version of the study was posted on the Borough Website on May 30th. It is not my intent to discuss the details of the study but rather to discuss the potential cost of returning to full capability for **Option 1 - Full-Time Borough of West Wildwood Police Department**. Also, the current understanding of cost for **Option 4 - Contracting for Police Services** will be discussed.

Note that this is a theoretical “what if?” discussion and the shared service described may not be available. Also, the tax rate increase is not allowed by the State of New Jersey without approval through a referendum.

5. Option 1: Restore The Full-Time Borough of West Wildwood Police Department

The immediate shortage of staffing would need to be accomplished initially as a shared agency services model similar to Option 3 of the study. This is similar to what the Borough did in 2022 to cover a prior critical staffing shortfall. At this time, it is expected we would need shared services coverage for a single shift for a duration of up to 1 year to allow for hiring, initial field training, 5 months of police academy and subsequent field training of personnel to get to a level where the Borough could fully staff all shifts. We likely would need to hire at least 6 personnel to replace the current shortfall of 4 plus allow for any additional attrition. These personnel would need to start in the academy this fall. An additional 4 to 6 would need to be hired in 2026 for the academy winter cycle to continue to build the staffing strength. It is projected that the first 6 could be hired in 2025 within the constraints of the current budget. However, the funding for the 2025 shared staffing support would be needed as a 2025 emergency appropriation request to NJ DCA. If approved, that funding, estimated at **\$200,000**, would then become part of the

2026 budget appropriations. The second 4 to 6 personnel for the winter academy cycle would also add an additional **\$250,000** to the 2026 appropriation.

Continued shared services staffing support would be needed for the first 6 months of 2026, estimated at **\$200,000**. It's possible that the licensed staffing levels would be sufficient by July 2026 to discontinue shared staffing support.

In addition to hiring and training new PTC-licensed patrol officers we would need to hire an additional administrative officer to support operations. The goal is to have two administrative officers similar to what we had before the chief went on leave. A total of **\$225,000** for salary, pension, taxes and benefits would be an additional appropriation expected in 2026.

At least one additional vehicle and officer personal equipment to support operations would also add another **\$70,000** (10 new personnel) to the 2026 appropriations.

The total to achieve all of these efforts is \$975,000 (42.4 cents increase) in 2026.

In 2027 the appropriation would be reduced by about \$550,000 (\$425,000 above 2025 appropriation) due to not requiring any shared services and the retirement of the Chief.

The 2027 and beyond net increase over the current 2025 billing amount would be approximately 18.5 cents.

The average home assessment in West Wildwood is \$263,266. The average homeowners would see an increase of \$1,116 in 2026 and in 2027 they would see \$487 above the 2025 rate .

Fifty-Eight homeowners are between 2 and 4 times the average and would see between \$2232 and \$4,465 increase in 2026 and in 2027 they would see between \$974 and \$1948 above the 2025 rate .

Tax Rate impact (Cents on rate)	2026	2027	
	42.4	18.5	
Assessed Value	2026 Increase	2027 Increase	Two year cost increase
\$ 263,266.00	\$ 1,116	\$ 487	\$ 1,603
\$ 526,532.00	\$ 2,232	\$ 974	\$ 3,207
\$ 1,053,064.00	\$ 4,465	\$ 1,948	\$ 6,413

6. Option 4: Contracting for Police Services

Establishing a formal contract for long-term shared services would be a logical extension to the Option 3 Shared service model that we need to start now due to staffing shortfalls.

It is expected that partnering with a nearby town would be the most cost-effective approach in that we wouldn't be paying to rebuild the services at the same time as we are getting support from another town.

The expected cost to use this approach would be equivalent to the current budget with the exception of some transition costs. Also, there is an opportunity for a DCA Transition Assistance grant to offset that cost if the shared service agreement is greater than 5 years. We would like to target a 10-year agreement.

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, the future of the West Wildwood Police Department is a very difficult, personal and emotional decision. I'm not trying to convince you that we should or shouldn't have our own Police Department. My goal tonight is for you to be fully informed on the cost implications of your decision to support a particular option. Feel free to ask questions on any of this information during the public comment period.