

the test, and Shirk said he was proud to offer him the position. See photo on right.

**Trustees demand police salary increases**

On Saturday, Nov. 18, the trustees and

staff met at a budget workshop where apparently some of the trustees made a surprise request that the 17 sworn police officer salaries be raised from the current \$46,000 per year step in grade (SIG) to somewhere between \$48,000

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**Above:** Monument Police Department (MPD) Detective Joseph Lundy, center, was promoted to sergeant by Police Chief Jake Shirk on Nov. 20. Shirk praised Lundy's wisdom, knowledge, professionalism, and insight and appreciated his hard work and dedication to MPD. *Photo by Lisa Hatfield.*

and \$56,000.

Because of this suggestion, at the Nov. 20 regular meeting, Town Treasurer Pamela Smith provided a reworked draft budget to the trustees that attempted to incorporate the range of suggested options for higher salaries and their associated benefits, retirement and tax implications, and other technical complications but would still be a balanced budget as required by state statute. Note: This new draft document could not be included in the public board packet due to the very short turnaround time. She did provide updated copies of the new draft to the trustees.

"Because of the complexity of this, we should have started this way back, way back in May or June. We are trying to push this that the board requested so it can take effect Jan. 1, but it was just introduced on Saturday," Smith said.

For example, she said if the SIG is raised to \$52,000 per year, it would require finding \$130,000 more in the 2018 budget to cover the difference. This would require either financing some budget items or making cuts. "You are investing in the Police Department, and you are also committing future boards and funds because these amounts are only going to grow," she told them. She and Lowe presented a list of suggested projects that the trustees could cut from the 2018 budget, including the wi-fi project for downtown, the pocket park on Washington, the dock extension at that lake, the bathrooms at the lake, and the electronic ticketing system.

Smith emphasized the need to make a decision soon, if the trustees wanted to make the change for 2018, because of county and state requirements for posting notices about budget meetings and turning in final budgets. If the town misses its deadlines, the county could withhold property tax revenue and the state could withhold sales tax revenue.

Trustee Greg Coopman asked Shirk if raising the salary to \$52,000 would make Monument more competitive in the marketplace. Shirk said it would help, and \$50,000 would help too. Note: One officer position has been unfilled for over a year, and one candidate who had applied recently just withdrew his application.

Trustee Jeff Bornstein said, "I was a little grumpy on Saturday, and for that I still apologize." His concern was that if MPD did not have enough officers, the safety of the other officers and the community would be at risk. "It's time. We have the money.... It's nice to make decisions on what to spend and what

not to especially when you don't live here (as some town staff members live outside the town limits). And it's the board's decision."

Town Attorney Alicia Corley said, "My concern is that the board does not normally set salaries." Bornstein raised his voice. "If we lose officers, and an accident happens, and three or four thousand people sue the town, when CIRSA drops us, who is going to take ownership and get canned?... It is not for the town staff to direct the board. The board is supposed to direct the staff."

Lowe disagreed with Bornstein, saying he has not heard of a board that sets individual salaries for particular job titles in a town.

The board consensus was to direct Smith to incorporate \$52,000 and related costs as the new sworn officer salary in a new draft of the 2018 budget, and the trustees would bring their own ideas for what to cut to balance the budget instead of just using the suggestions from Smith and Lowe. Smith recommended that since timing was so tight at the end of the year, instead of scheduling just a budget workshop, they could have a special meeting where they could vote too.

Coopman said he had not heard anyone say they were not in favor of an MPD pay increase, but that it needed to be done responsibly and thoroughly. He suggested a resolution, along with the budget itself, to record that the trustees specifically approved the pay increase.

The special budget meeting, open to the public, was set for Saturday, Dec. 2 at 9 a.m. so that on Dec. 4 the final budget could be approved.

**Facilities and compensation committees discussed**

Lowe recommended that, "as an alternative to the way we have had to tackle it this year," and "as a calmer way of getting trustees into the budget discussions earlier in the process," the trustees should be involved, along with staff, in the research and decision-making much sooner in the budget process. He suggested that two trustees join a new compensation research committee, and two different trustees join a facilities research committee. "Then the other board members would have to trust those two to do the heavy lifting and would give a recommendation to the board."

The trustees agreed that this would be a good idea to start in early 2018.

**Town manager's report**

Lowe's written report summarized changes to the format of the 2018 budget, but this was not discussed by the