

FINANCE, BUDGET AND PERSONNEL COMMITTEE MINUTES OF MAY 17, 2005

Meeting called to order by Chairman Bennington at 5:30 p.m., in the Common Council Chambers, City Hall Plaza.

PRESENT: Jerry Bennington, Sr., Marty Anderson, Edward Beaudry, Jr., Alanna Feddick and John Spiros

ABSENT: None

ALSO PRESENT: City Administrator Brehm, Alderperson Krueger (arrived at 5:41 p.m.) and City Personnel (Keith Strey, Lara Baehr, Intern April Schmidt, Brenda Hanson, Joe Stroik, and Lori A. Panzer)

FBP05-051 Motion by Feddick, second by Spiros to approve payroll in the amount of \$1,064,784.75 and the bills in the amount of \$487,016.74 as recommended by the Finance Director. All Ayes

Motion carried

FBP05-052 Motion by Anderson, second by Feddick to accept and place on file the April 2005 Treasury Report. All Ayes

Motion carried

FBP05-053 Motion by Beaudry, second by Feddick to accept and place on file the Report of Personnel Actions of May 17, 2005. All Ayes

Motion carried

Police Chief Stroik stated that the Police Department is presently short two dispatchers out of eight. There are numerous dynamics coming into play, one of which is the proposal to go to a joint dispatch and possibly down in Wood County based on last Friday's printed report. There is concern on the part of the Dispatchers. He anticipates that we will lose two more by the end of summer. One Dispatcher has discussed possibly going for the Ordinance Control Officer, which will be vacant in July. Another Dispatcher has some prospects knowing that their job as they know it today will no longer exist 6, 8, or 10 months from now. Additionally, it is going to be extremely difficult to find Dispatchers, train them and put them on staff for 4 to 6 months. Besides it is going to take us 2-3 months to even advertise the position.

We have just completed our selection process for their Patrol Officers. We have an active eligible list. Background checks have been done. We have two candidates which I would like to be considered to hire as Patrol Officers knowing that we are going to have vacancies in the very near future in the patrol staff as well. Hire them and put them into the Dispatch Center temporarily. We would train them as Dispatchers and we then would swap with other seasoned officers and get them trained on the road as well. Total dispatch training as well as FTO training for patrol would consist of about 4-5 months of just training alone.

We do have indication that one officer is going to retire this fall. Another officer has already told us they are retiring next March, so we are going to have those two openings. Likely, we will have 3-4 more. We are going to have massive turn over and it is starting. We will lose approximately 15 more of our sworn staff of 38 before this is all said and done and that's all through retirements. I'm trying to plan ahead. I need to get staff on board. The immediate critical concern is that we need to perform the emergency 911 function prior to going to a joint dispatch. However, we also need to fill our patrol ranks just to continue the level of safety we have been providing. It is very comparable to other jurisdictions. He pointed out that although the other jurisdictions have similar

staffing, they are in county seats with county sheriff's departments. They are adjacent to other jurisdictions. Wausau has Weston, Schofield, Rothschild, now Kronenwetter and the Sheriff's Department as well as State Patrol. Wisconsin Rapids has Nekoosa, Port Edwards, Grand Rapids Police Department, Wisconsin Rapids, and the Sheriffs Department. Marshfield has Marshfield. That is it! We have to be able to take care of every incident for at least the first hour before we get any decent support, so we need the help right now.

Feddick questioned if Stroik had already looked at hiring two patrol officers

Stroik responded that he made an offer to two patrol officers last Friday to fill the two vacant patrol positions. He said that he has also had staff do background checks on two additional officers knowing that there would be vacancies, and those two additional perspective patrol officers are the ones that he would propose to fill these dispatch slots.

Bennington questioned how we could justify the \$10,065 difference in salary.

Stroik responded that they have in the past many times put Patrol Officers and even Investigators as needed to fill in Dispatch shift openings. Our Dispatchers fully recognize that we don't have a lot of options. If we advertise this week for a Dispatcher position we may have someone on board in 2-3 months. We have the people right now ready to go. We have already done all the selection.

Bennington questioned how much of their time is actually going to be spent dispatching and how much is actually going to be spent on patrol.

Stroik responded during CTO, which is dispatcher training all of their time will be in dispatch. Minimally two months. At that point, we may pull them out and replace them with a seasoned officer so that we can get those new officers trained on patrol. We need to do this before they come up on probation or get off of probation in twelve months. We need to get them trained and tested out on the street to make sure that they are the type of individual we want. Yes, the salary is significantly different, but I don't see it as an issue with the Dispatchers. It may be a little bur in their side, but they understand.

Feddick questioned if these perspective officers would then be on probation for a longer period of time than other people might be.

Stroik responded that contractually, we can only keep them on probation for twelve months.

Feddick asked if all officers are trained in dispatching.

Stroik responded no. It is so technical that it is virtually impossible. It's ever changing. Just the telephone system alone for answering services is highly technical. The data entry when calls come in is technical. It would be impossible to keep everyone up to speed, so we do keep three to four officers who are able to sit in Dispatch alone.

Spiros said so basically, these two perspective officers that you are looking at don't have any issue with dispatching. Sitting behind a desk and dispatching rather than being on the road.

Stroik responded that if they want a job, they are going to accept it. It is so competitive out there for patrol officers right now. They are looking for work.

FBP05-054 Motion by Beaudry, second by Anderson to accept the recommendation to replace the Dispatchers with individuals from the Police Eligibility List.

Feddick stated that she is concerned with the shared dispatch that is coming up and the use of these officers. I think that that is important to be in front of change, but are you absolutely sure that these are not going to be excessive officers? They are going to get integrated in. We are going to be able to use them and it won't be too premature.

Alderman Krueger arrived at 5:41 p.m.

Stroik stated that if it is premature, it would be a month or so premature. Keep in mind that our very busy months are summer. There is a lot of activity going on where these officers are needed. The last thing that we want to do is shorten our staff so much and especially in Dispatch with high stress shorten the staff or lower the staff and not only pay overtime, but burn our current staff out. Yes, they will be integrated. Absolutely, these openings are coming. If in fact it is premature, it is not by much. With this vote, we will be increasing our allocated sworn staff temporarily. Then we would take it back down to where it should be. We have an allocated sworn staff of 38. Temporarily this would move it to 40. It would take the place of the dispatchers, so our total number would not increase but sworn staff temporarily would.

Beaudry stated that he is comfortable with this because the one month or so premature may seem like it is one month but when that point in time comes, they will already be trained and ready to go. If we wait until that period of time and then have to hire the officers to bring it back to the 38 at that point in time we still have a 3-4 month period or longer in training the officers on the road in our department. So we are getting a jump on that. It's actually going to be more cost efficient for us to do it this way.

Feddick asked if the budget would be affected. Are we going to see additional budget allocations? Are we going to be expending additional sums of money because of these additional officers that are coming in?

Stroik said that his sincere hope is that it does not for 2005. We have never gone over budget in any of our budgets ever in the 14 or so years that I've been working with the budget. I will work hard to make sure that we do come within budget for law enforcement. If we in fact need monies because of the patrol officer hiring versus dispatch hiring, I may come back to you late in the year if it is getting very close and ask for a budget transfer from the dispatch budget to patrol, but I absolutely do not envision going over the totality of the 5 budgets that we deal with.

Vote on motion **FBP05-054**; All Ayes

Motion carried

Motion by Feddick, second by Spiros to adjourn at 5:47 p.m.

Motion carried

Lori A. Panzer
Deputy City Clerk