

**EMPLOYEE RELATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING**

Tuesday, April 24, 2007

Council Chambers

PRESENT: Alds. Maher, Meaux, Purins, Stepaniak – 4

EXCUSED: Ald. Krill

ALSO PRESENT: J. Archambo, City Admin.; B. Aldana, Asst. City Atty./Personnel Admin.;  
W. Wehrley, City Engineer; Police Capt. D. Weiss

Ald. Purins as chair called the meeting to order at 6:46 p.m.

**Temporary, part-time fire cadet**

The committee reviewed a request by Fire Chief Redman to implement a Fire Cadet program by establishing one or more part-time, temporary positions with the goal of creating a more diverse group of potential future fire department employees. Chief Redman related that he has discussed the proposal for this program over several years with the Police and Fire Commission. His concern was that the current fire department workforce does not reflect the diversity of the Milwaukee area. He thought one reason for this was that various ethnic or racial groups are under-represented in the fire science programs of area technical schools. They would like to retain pre-hire educational criteria and encourage a more diverse population to seek a career in fire service. The salary range would be approximately \$10 per hour for about 15 to 20 hours per week. The terms would approximate the college semesters. The main criteria for entering the program would be to enroll in a technical school fire science program and to complete as a minimum the Firefighter-1 and EMT certification. Applicants would be evaluated for other hiring qualifications such as physical ability and background checks. MATC and WCTC have excellent firefighter programs. The current proposal would be for 1 position working for the balance of 2007 and at least through the spring of 2008. This would be a trial program. The long-term goal would be to have up to 3 Fire Cadet positions that are for a term of two semesters of their enrolled technical school. If the fire department does not get enough applications, they would not seek to continue past spring 2008. If they get enough fire cadets enrolled they would look into funding for the ongoing program.

Ald. Meaux asked if the police department has the same type of program. Ms. Aldana said the police department has a similar program that recruits applicants from the technical colleges. Capt. Weiss said their program is the Community Service Officer program. The program has been very positive. One of the main functions of the Community Service Officer program is to recruit minority officers.

Chief Redman said the fire cadets in the program would have to complete the technical school program and meet all the certifications and testing requirements of employees in the fire department. If successful, he would like to talk with the Police and Fire Commission about merging the fire cadets into the workforce. The fire cadets would be civilian employees and they would not be eligible for any benefits except Social Security. The city would not cover the cost of the cadet's tuition; however, their employment would help pay for tuition and travel to and from the school. He added that this position does not fall under the city's education policy. He felt strongly that the Fire Cadet program would provide an opportunity for minority participants to choose firefighting as a career. He noted that the city has no

obligation to hire the cadets, but he hopes that in the long run the program would contribute to diversifying the workforce.

Hank Wendt, President, Wauwatosa Professional Firefighters Association, Union Local 1923, stressed that Local 1923 fully supports a diverse workforce. Their issue of concern is creating a new part time, paid position of fire cadet or intern. He noted that the fire department already has an intern program. Their concern is using already budgeted dollars from retirements and early retirements. Those vacancies are going to increase. He related that about one year ago labor and management began to discuss how to provide services to the community without raising the cost to the city. They are doing a good job of enhancing the EMT program and they have 5 firefighters in the program now. They would like to keep Med 220 and Med 230 staffed 24 hour per day. If there is money available, it should be used to fund the current program. To shut down one of the EMT units for lack of funding would be detrimental to the city. He stressed that funding should be provided to maintain the current level of service and to get the fire department up to an unprecedented level of service in the city. The city should fund existing programs in the fire department and not use the money for new programs. They have developed many programs that work to bring the diversity needed in the department. If the city feels this program is a good idea the union will respond by including this program in the collective bargaining.

Chief Redman stressed that the money identified would not be used for any other purpose and would not be shifted to any other staffing or general costs. The funding identified was only the pay differential for this year between a retiring fire captain at the top step to hiring a new captain at a lower step. For the 2007 budget he would include a change of purpose to transfer salary from that earlier retirement. Assuming 18 weeks of employment with 20 hours per week at \$10 per hour, the salary cost would be \$3,600 with the fringe benefit cost of approximately \$400 for total cost of \$4,000. The wage differential due to an early retirement in the year generates \$4,523 in salary savings with additional savings in fringe benefits. He noted that the 2008 cost would be similar to 2007. If this concept is approved he would include the additional funds with the 2008 budget request since potential salary savings are not currently identified. He stressed that this would be a test program to see what the level of interest would be. He had hopes that it would be successful with a good mix of candidates.

Ald. Maher asked about how this issue was affecting the fire department administration and union representatives. Chief Redman said there was never any intent to take duties outlined in the firefighters contract from members of Local 1923. He would like the candidates to be able work side by side with the firefighters, but they can also find appropriate duties for the cadets if the union opposes this. He noted that the Police and Fire Commission has routinely expressed concern about adding funding to the police and fire department budgets for training minority candidates.

Terry Wolfe, President, Police and Fire Commission, 7839 W. North Avenue, said that the Police and Fire Commission has supported this idea for years noting that it has become increasingly difficult to get minority applicants for these positions. They think the Fire Cadet program is a good way to encourage more diversity.

Ald. Stepaniak noted that he was part of an ad hoc committee on this issue. It was the consensus of the committee that it made sense to initiate some special programming to reach greater diversity in the fire department. This type of program has been under consideration for a couple of years. They would hope that the union would not be opposed to the goal of diversity either strategically or operationally.

Moved by Ald. Stepaniak, seconded by Ald. Meaux to recommend approval to implement the Fire Cadet program --

Ms. Aldana addressed the union concerns stressing that ultimately the hiring of the cadets cannot favor minority candidates over non-minority candidates. The program would have to be a focused recruitment in high schools and technical colleges. Chief Redman added that they changed the job qualifications for physical agility from pass fail to grade levels and that has helped. The difficulty seems to be that the certification training is sometimes an eliminating factor for some of the candidates.

Ald. Maher suggested that the issue be held for resolution between the union and management especially if the union representatives who are going to be providing most of the training have a problem with the proposed program. Mr. Went stressed that the union's concern is creating this program with very tight dollars. The union is in favor of diversity, but in order to reach that goal, they don't want city dollars taken away from programs that are exceptionally beneficial to the citizens. There are ample opportunities to reach out to surrounding areas around Wauwatosa.

Ald. Purins asked how the \$4,000 in personnel savings would enhance the EMS service. He would also like to see a comparison between the proposed Fire Cadet program and the police departments program. He also wanted to know the demographic for the WCTC and MATC fire science programs.

Chief Redman noted that an intern is not paid; a cadet would be a paid employee. Both would be enrolled in the technical school program. With regard to high school students, they are involved in a job experience program in which they shadow the firefighters. He noted that MATC has a formal program of firefighter internship.

Moved by Ald. Maher, seconded by Ald. Meaux to hold this item for two weeks for further information and for further discussion between the firefighters union and management --

Ald. Stepaniak expressed concern that there is an impression that opposition to a principle is being portrayed as a budgetary problem. He felt that \$4,000 would not seriously affect the fire department budget.

Vote on the motion was Ayes: 3, Noes: 1 (Stepaniak)

### **Reclassification of Storm Water Specialist position**

Ms. Aldana said this request to reclassify the Storm Water Specialist position goes to the position and not the employee. The process for addressing a change in duties in a certain position was set forth by the Carlson Dettman study and incorporated in the ordinance. This position was originally intended to manage the storm water utility. It had no design component. The position has become a design engineer position with 40% of the position involved in design and 60% involved in storm water management. After analysis, this position was right in grade level 12 or the level of the other civil engineers. She mentioned that they did some comparables. This has been under discussion for a long time. The person involved has been doing these new duties. The other engineering positions are now at grade level 14. The proposed step increase has been modified to go to grade 12, step 10. The fiscal impact is approximately \$5,000 from May 1<sup>st</sup> to the end of the year including benefits. Mr. Kappel has indicated that there is a vacancy in the public works department that provides a savings of well over \$5,000.

Moved by Ald. Stepaniak, seconded by Ald. Meaux to recommend approval of the reclassification of the Storm Water Specialist position from Grade 9 to Grade 12 and to rename the position to Storm Water Engineer --

Mr. Wehrley noted that this position has a varied work load and reviews the storm water management plan reports. They are also assisting the Water Utility engineer with utilities prior to paving and working with the Department of Justice (DOJ) mandated manhole repairs. This person in this position also meets with residents about drainage problems and repairs. The position is trending more to utility design rather than general storm water utility. He believes there is a better quality of design in-house and the work is done more quickly. Several years ago they used some consultant design fees and in the end exceeded the salary of this position. There are no peaks and valleys to this work because the projects involve the city's aging system and the investigation of pollutants.

Vote on the motion was Ayes: 4

### **Review of Carlson Dettman proposal for compensation review**

Mr. Archambo reported to the committee that the Carlson Dettman compensation update would cost approximately \$13,000. Carlson Dettman will first retest previously sampled positions against the market and second evaluate overall compensation for various employee groups according to the United States Chamber of Commerce.

Moved by Ald. Maher, seconded by Ald. Stepaniak to recommend approval of the Carlson Dettman compensation update contract at a cost of approximately \$13,000 – 4

### **Review and comparison of cost factors between health plans**

Ms. Aldana reported that they have been reviewing many factors in an attempt to better control the city's health insurance costs. One of the primary issues is whether it continues to make sense for the city to have two plans that are funded differently. There are two issues to consider: 1) whether to have all members of the city's health plan under one financial umbrella; and 2) if yes, should the plans be all fully-insured or self-insured. She noted that the self-insured plan fluctuates highly while the fully-insured policy has a premium that remains stable. She said another consideration is the question of whether the city is funding the plans in the most prudent way. She explained that the city has historically offered the two plans with the exception of the police and fire departments which only offer the self-insured plan.

Ms. Aldana gave the committee some demographic information noting that in the self-funded plan 58% of members are over 50 and in the fully-insured plan 44% of members are over 50. The self-insured plan has a higher risk factor than the overall group. The fully-insured plan has a lower risk factor. This sets up a situation called adverse selection which means that the wrong people are in the wrong health plan. Ideally higher risk members should be in lower risk plans. She explained that when a higher risk group is in the wrong plan it creates a situation in which the self-insured plan is subsidizing the fully insured plan. Employee costs per month are higher on the self-insured plan and prescriptions are higher than the fully-insured plan. The cost per employee for the self-funded plan is twice as much as the fully insured plan. If both plans are self-funded the issue of adverse selection is not eliminated, but reduced. The impact on the city would be virtually eliminated; however the cost to employees could be affected by adverse selection. Over time the two plans have become very similar. The total current cost for both plans is approximately \$9 million. Using a formula to create melded rates, the total cost for self-funding both plans would be approximately \$8 million which gives the city a savings of approximately \$1 million.

Ms. Aldana requested authorization to send out a Request for Proposals (RFP) to achieve the goal of self-funding both plans with one administrator to eliminate the impact of adverse selection on the city's health plans.

Mr. Archambo said they are proposing a financial mechanism not a specific set of benefits. It is not 100% certain that this will work, but that is the purpose of sending out an RFP.

It was the consensus of the committee to review this item again at the next meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 8:05 p.m.

Carla A. Ledesma, City Clerk  
City of Wauwatosa

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