

## **PERSONNEL COMMITTEE**

5:00 p.m., Monday, February 11, 2019

The regular meeting of the Personnel Committee was held at 5:00 p.m., Monday, February 11, 2019 in the City Hall Conference Room, 1207 Palm Boulevard, Isle of Palms, South Carolina. Attending the meeting were Councilmembers Ferencz, Moye and Rice, Interim Administrator Fragoso and Clerk Copeland; a quorum of the Committee was present to conduct business.

1. Interim Administrator Fragoso called the meeting to order and acknowledged that the press and public were duly notified of the meeting in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act.

### **2. Election of Chair and Vice Chair**

Councilmember Moye nominated Councilmember Ferencz as Chair; Councilmember Ferencz declined the nomination based on a lack of support from the Committee over the previous year.

Councilmember Ferencz nominated Councilmember Rice as Chair; she also declined citing her chairmanship of the Public Works Committee.

Councilmember Moye became Chair with the full support of the Committee members.

Councilmember Rice nominated Councilmember Ferencz for Vice Chair, and Chair Moye seconded. Councilmember Ferencz was elected Vice Chair on a vote of two to one (2 to 1) with Councilmember Ferencz casting the dissenting vote.

### **3. Approval of Previous Month's Minutes**

**MOTION: Councilmember Rice moved to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of January 7, 2019 as submitted; Councilmember Ferencz seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

### **4. Citizens' Comments**

Jim Raih, 3904 Cameron Boulevard, commented on how well Director Pitts manages the temporary labor in the Public Works Department. As he had in the Public Works Committee meeting, Mr. Raih suggested that the Department would be well served by hiring an entry-level person who has an interest in growth and training him to eventually become a CDL driver. He expressed his sadness in Interim Chief Usry's pending retirement, but said that he always supported people who put family first. On Item E under New Business, Mr. Raih asked why it was important to hire a Director of Human Resources and why do so now. He agreed that the City needed a Human Resources person, but he did not think now was the time. As the City continues its search for a new City Administrator, Mr. Raih thought the right candidate should have an M.B.A. with a property management background. He also thought that the delay in filling the Animal Control Officer position was not the right thing to do; in his opinion, this was an important position that should be filled as soon as possible

### **5. Old Business**

**A. Update on *ad hoc* committees for standing committees**

Interim Administrator Fragoso stated that she did not have an update because she has had to put the *ad hoc* committees on hold because more pressing issues were filling her working hours.

**B. Update on the hiring process for the City Administrator, Chief of Police and Assistant Public Works Director**

Councilmember Ferencz stated that in her most recent conversation with Jim Mercer of The Mercer Group, he had told her that he has received hundreds of resumes for the openings, but would “fast-track” those he has received for Chief of Police.

Human Resources Officer DeGroot said that she had talked with Mr. Mercer after last month’s meeting when he said the background checks would take a week to ten (10) days and that he would start on them immediately.

When Councilmember Ferencz asked if Mr. Mercer could complete the checks by the end of February, Interim Administrator Fragoso indicated that the deadline for submitting resumes was February 8<sup>th</sup>. With concerns over Interim Chief Usry’s imminent retirement, the need to “fast-track” the Chief of Police was more urgent and that Jim Mercer should do background checks on the top five to ten (5 – 10).

Councilmember Ferencz said that Jim Mercer stressed the need for confidentiality for the candidates.

Chair Moyer said that he would like the Committee to interview two to five (2 – 5) candidates, and Councilmember Rice said that she would like to interview Chief of Police candidates in March and City Administrator candidates in April.

**C. Discussion of proposed 2.5% merit-based salary adjustment pool for FY20 budget**

The Interim Administrator stated that the departmental operating budgets include a pool of two and a half percent (2.5%) for wage increases that will be managed by the department managers. The distribution of the pool by the department manager will be a merit-based program, and the COLA would disappear.

Chair Moyer said that he wanted to see more penetration into the wage ranges and for the wage increase favor of the lower earning employees.

Councilmember Rice said that she did not want the higher paid employees to feel they were being punished or less appreciated for what they do. She cautioned that the message to employees should be carefully worded to present the right tone. When Chair Moyer commented that the City was losing employees who were on the lower end of the wage ranges, Councilmember Rice noted that the City was losing employees on the high end as well.

The Interim Administrator reported that she and the Treasurer were currently reviewing the wage ranges as well as the ranges from other local governments.

Chair Moyer told the Interim Administrator that many tech companies have wage data for comparisons if she believed she needed the information. As the Chair, he stated that he was reluctant to set a specific percentage; if he assigned a portion to a COLA, employees would expect

it to be paid in their first paycheck of 2020, but the staff recommendation for FY20 is a merit-based policy.

The Interim Administrator thought that the proposal was a good alternative to the current policy. Following up on the discussions related to the mid-point in the wage ranges, she asked at what point in the range would an employee no longer be eligible for the full merit and/or COLA percentage. She believed that the department managers knew their employees the best and they could use the additional funds for lower paid employees to incentivize them.

When Councilmember Ferencz noted again that she has seen the livable wage for Charleston quoted as fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000) in several web sites, Chair Moyer stated that the City has some jobs with competitive wages less than fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000). He also noted that he thought the department managers should not have the final word on distribution of the department's wage adjustment pool.

Interim Chief Usry stated that she has already completed the merit pool distributions and that, with overtime, a new hire could earn more than an existing employee.

Director Page pointed out that some employees were below the mid-point because their work did not warrant a good evaluation therefore limited wage increase, and she was reluctant to give an evaluation wage increase to an employee based on his position in the wage range for his position and not his work performance.

Chair Moyer opined that department managers should want all of their employees to be at the mid-point of their pay range if not top performers in the department. He stated that it was hard to know if two point five percent (2.5%) was sufficient without more specifics on how it would be distributed. In addition, he would like to see the wages and salary ranges on the City's website as many other communities do. In conclusion, he asked to get feedback from department managers on a policy for working toward more consistency in evaluations.

## **6. New Business**

### **A. Discussion of boards and commissions criteria and selection process**

Interim Administrator Fragoso stated that the work was not yet complete, and the Chair reminded her that the information was needed soon. He wanted the Committee to have the time to discuss the recommendations and make decisions without being pressured by the hiring process to which it was committed; he also thought that it should be kept rather simple in the beginning.

### **B. Consideration of comprehensive Strategic Planning process for 2019**

The Interim Administrator suggested that developing a strategic plan for the City could be a project that would put an *ad hoc* committee to good use; she thought the City might well have some residents who were familiar with strategic planning who would be interested in serving their community. She thought having a strategic plan in place as work begins on the FY21 budget would be helpful.

Councilmember Ferencz recommended that Chair Moyer contact the City of Rock Hill because they have had a strategic plan in place for years.

**C. Discussion of Police, Fire and Public Works Departments compensation analysis and consideration of proposed changes to current Police Department wages**

Human Resources Officer DeGroot reported that she had gathered some comparables from the surrounding area for the Committee to review; they show that the average starting wage for a patrol officer in the area is approximately forty-two thousand three hundred dollars (\$42,300). At the Isle of Palms, the starting wage is approximately thirty-nine thousand three hundred dollars (\$39,300) – a difference of three thousand dollars (\$3,000) annually. The communities identified have similar working conditions and benefits, but some offer additional compensation for having an associate or bachelor's degree and others offer an increase or a flat amount upon graduation from the Police Academy.

Staff's recommendations included the following;

- Keep current patrol officer wage range for Non-certified Officers;
- Add a new pay range for Certified Officers starting at \$42,000, a 7% increase;
- Increase pay range for sworn police positions below Captain to match patrol officer increase of 7% to maintain parity between positions;
- Adjust current employees to new minimum if not already there;
- Adjust employees with less than 10 years of service by 1% for patrol officers or 0.5% for all sworn positions below captain per year of service to avoid salary compression;
- Proceed with a more complete analysis of all Police Department positions as soon as possible; and
- Adjust Livability Officer, Victims Advocate and Detectives to the same wage as the Patrol Officers

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To make these wage adjustments will cost the City twenty-five thousand six hundred fifty-five dollars (\$25,655) in FY19. The funds to cover these increases will come from the one hundred twenty-eight thousand two hundred dollars (\$128,200) in savings resulting from the recent terminations.

The findings from other local municipalities on their Fire and Police Departments and CDL drivers illustrate that the disparity in the Police Department was the most critical.

When asked how these new wages would compare to other City departments, Chair Moye said that he was aware that all of the departments' wages need to be looked at, but now the time was to address an urgent situation in the Police Department.

Councilmember Rice stated that one (1) local agency was offering a one thousand dollar (\$1,000) recruiting bonus.

**D. Discussion of FY20 operating budget for Mayor and Council, General Government and the Building Department**

In the FY20 Mayor and Council budget, the expense for Meetings and Seminars has been increased by three thousand dollars (\$3,000) to cover the cost of security at Council meetings.

As discussed already, the wages for General Government and the Building Department have been increased by two point five percent (2.5%) and health insurance costs have been increased

by eight percent (8%). In total, the FY20 General Government operating budget has been reduced by two percent (2%).

Included in the Capital Projects Fund for General Government are the Building Maintenance Contingency funds equal to one-half (½) of one percent (1%) of the building's insured value and the first year of timeclock software and rental, as well as other items.

The amount budgeted for storm preparation and cleanup in the Disaster Recovery Fund has been doubled to ten thousand dollars (\$10,000); Interim Administrator Fragoso remarked that the storms have become a regular event and, assuming the damages to the beach are from a named storm, FEMA would reimburse seventy-five percent (75%) of the costs.

The Building Department has requested a computer program used by Charleston County referred to as STR; this program will search the web for short-term rental properties. The listing can be compared to the City's records and, when it identifies one (1) that is not in the City's database, the code enforcement officer can confirm and bill the property owner against the rental income.

**E. Consideration of establishing a Director of Human Resources position and potential budget impact**

Councilmember Ferencz said that this was a request that the Mayor has been asking her to make for a period of months; she noted the need for elevating this position and that it would be a promotion from within the current ranks. She noted that this would not mean an additional member of staff and expressed interest in how the change in salary might impact the budget.

Councilmember Rice indicated that she had no appetite to make such a move at this time and that the Committee should focus on what is already "on its plate;" she stated that the addition of a position usually came as a recommendation from the City Administrator. In addition, she asked if Human Resources was to be a one (1) person department and pointed out that Ms. DeGroot has only been with the City for less than twenty-four (24) months.

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Interim Administrator Fragoso noted that this would be a new position for the City and a job description which has not been written or approved. She stated that the request for a new position typically comes as a result of an organizational assessment and restructuring that has not taken place.

Councilmember Ferencz reiterated that this was a request coming from Mayor Carroll; he believes that as a Director, the Human Resources Officer would have a "seat at the table" and be involved in policy making.

The Interim Administrator commented that the Human Resources Officer has been deeply involved in policy making and making recommendation related to human resources issues.

According to Councilmember Ferencz, the Mayor thought that, as a Director, the Human Resources Officer would "automatically be a part of the managerial table."

Chair Moye suggested a discussion on this issue would be more appropriate at a meeting between Interim Administrator Fragoso, Mayor Carroll and himself.

**6. Miscellaneous Business**

**Next Meeting Date: 8:30 a.m., Tuesday, March 5, 2019 in the Conference Room**

**7. Executive Session – not needed**

**8. Adjournment**

**MOTION: Councilmember Rice moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:40 p.m.;  
Chair Moye seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Respectfully submitted:

Marie Copeland  
City Clerk