

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

9:00 a.m., Thursday, September 5, 2013

The regular meeting of the Personnel Committee was held at 9:00 a.m. on Thursday, September 5, 2013 in the City Hall Conference Room, 1207 Palm Boulevard, Isle of Palms, South Carolina. Attending the meeting were Councilmember Stone, Chair Thomas, Administrator Tucker and City Clerk Copeland; a quorum was present to conduct business. The absence of Councilmember Bettelli was excused.

1. Chair Thomas called the meeting to order and acknowledged that the press and public had been duly notified of the meeting in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act.

2. Approval of Previous Meeting's Minutes

MOTION: Councilmember Stone moved to approve the minutes of the special meeting of July 22 and the regular meeting of August 1, 2013 as submitted; Chair Thomas seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

3. Citizens' Comments – None

4. Old Business

MOTION: Chair Thomas moved to re-order the *Agenda* to discuss staffing in the Fire Department; Councilmember Stone seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

B. Update on Staffing in the Fire Department

Battalion Chief Smith accompanied Chief Graham to the meeting. Chief Graham stated that she has requested information relative to pay and benefits from seven (7) other local fire departments and has received information from four (4); she hopes to receive more information before making a formal request to the Committee. From the information received thus far, the Chief reported that most departments are doing step or merit increases plus a cost of living adjustment; in addition, some departments are giving incentives for receiving Emergency Medical Technician training. She assured the Committee that she will have a full report for the October meeting.

Administrator Tucker noted that the problem is keeping firefighters once they are trained; at present Isle of Palms is being used as a training ground for firefighters who then springboard to larger departments with more opportunities. This practice costs the City by constantly being in a training mode; it costs in risk perception because the person who is the backup for an experienced staff member only has a few months' training. In addition, the higher ranking officers must perpetually train people and receive training to maintain their own positions.

Although the ideas behind the merit-based system were good, the system does not take into account is that unless the pool is as great as eight to ten percent (8%-10%) to make those awards, then the City cannot keep up with the expense increases that are impacting people's salaries. For example, when the employee's portion of the health insurance goes up and the employee's social security tax increases as well, that increase can total a two to three percent (2%-3%) in expense, while that employee only receives a three percent (3%) wage increase,

the net increase is negligible. When employees get excellent evaluations, it does not help them with what salaries are available elsewhere.

Councilmember Stone acknowledged that he is not a proponent of giving someone a pay increase because they have held a job for a certain length of time, but, at the same time, it is necessary at this level to keep good people and to be competitive.

Administrator Tucker stated that she did not think the Committee needed to wait to make a decision relative to the addition of one (1) firefighter per shift for Station 2 until the decision was reached on wages; one (1) decision is not predicated on the other despite the fact that the position was not budgeted.

Councilmember Stone stated that “with the numbers that we are realizing in our community . . . the potential for calls, the risk has increased for (Fire Department personnel) to the point that we should very seriously consider hiring, if not act to hire this (third person per shift).”

Councilmember Stone asked whether the increased staffing would impact the City’s ISO rating; Chief Graham stated that she did not think it would improve the rating, but would protect it. Councilmember Stone stated that he sees the ISO rating as a substantial discount to homeowners on their insurance. Battalion Chief Smith added that there is a deficiency in experience on fire calls; with the existing configuration at Station 2, the most experienced person on scene, the Captain, might be stuck at the hydrant; the Administrator noted that the Captain is also the Incident Commander at a scene.

MOTION: Councilmember Stone moved to recommend to the Public Safety Committee that one firefighter per shift be hired for Station 2; Chair Thomas seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Councilmember Stone reiterated that the City has an increased risk due to the population shift in the community; there are more people in the area than ever before both as residents and the increased number of second homes, which are not primary residences or vacation rentals.

Administrator Tucker added that the mutual aid and automatic aid, where it exists, are good, but the surrounding communities are growing at an alarming rate; therefore, they are not available every time that the City may need them. From the presentation made to the Keenagers group, the Keenagers expressed an interest in the City fire personnel, at some point in the future, having trained paramedics on each shift due to the increased demand for the EMS units in the surrounding areas. Currently the Isle of Palms is reliant upon Mount Pleasant or Charleston County for that level of care.

The number one concern voiced at the Keenagers meeting was what will happen when they make the call to 911 dispatch center.

A. Discussion of 2014 Appointments to Boards and Commissions

Administrator Tucker stated that there are five (5) seats expiring on the ATAX Committee, two (2) seats expiring on the Board of Zoning Appeals, two (2) seats expiring on the Code Board of Appeals and three (3) seats expiring on the Planning Commission. Mary Alice Kruesi has indicated that she does not want to be re-appointed to the ATAX Committee, and Scott Davidson states that he prefers not to be re-appointed to the Board of Zoning Appeals. Sandy Ferencz of the ATAX Committee and Patrick Harrington of the Planning Commission will be joining City Council in January 2014. Others in expiring seats have voiced a desire to be re-appointed.

MOTION: Councilmember Stone moved to re-appoint all expiring seats with a desire to continue serving; Chair Thomas seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Of the five (5) new candidates, the Committee members thought they did not need to interview Carol Rice since they agree that they know her well. The Committee set Monday, September 9th between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and noon for interviews with the remaining four (4).

5. New Business

Guidance on Employees Bidding on Surplus Property

Administrator Tucker explained that the City's procurement code is silent on the issue of whether or not employees are allowed to bid on surplus equipment the City is selling. What has happened in the past when an employee has bid, staff has to evaluate the ethics of such a bid; therefore, the Administrator believes that the procurement code should indicate one way or the other relative to employee bidding. If this Committee is all right with employees bidding, the Administrator will task the City Attorney with drafting language that makes that clear in the code; if the Committee is uncomfortable with it, the City Attorney would be tasked to draft language for the procurement code stating employees are excluded from bidding.

The Administrator explained her list of pros and cons as follows:

- Often only employees bid;
- The good thing is that if employees ultimately know that a piece of property is going to go out a surplus and they are eligible to bid, they are going to be motivated to take good care the City's property;
- The negative point is that there might be community perception that those employees have some inside knowledge about the property and believe that employees have an unfair advantage.

Yes, there have been occasions when employees have acquired property in the past, and the Administrator has done all in her power to make the bidding equitable and impartial.

Both Chair Thomas and Councilmember Stone thought that employees should be allowed to bid on City property. Councilmember Stone stated that he enjoys going to auctions, and always in the fine print is language that some items may be of a nature or condition that employees may be bidding.

MOTION: Councilmember Stone moved to allow employees of the City to bid on surplus equipment; Chair Thomas seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

6. Miscellaneous Business

Next Meeting Date: 9:00 a.m., Thursday, October 3, 2013 in the Conference Room.

7. Executive Session – not needed

8. Adjourn

MOTION: Councilmember Stone moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:50 a.m.; Chair Thomas seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Respectfully submitted:

Marie Copeland