



**COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
of the
NEENAH COMMON COUNCIL
Tuesday, October 29, 2024 at 6:00 p.m.
Neenah City Hall - Council Chambers
211 Walnut Street**

AGENDA

- I. Call to Order & Roll Call.
- II. Committee recommends the City of Neenah and City of Menasha Common Councils approve the offer to the intended candidate for the position of Assistant Chief/Fire Marshal a salary above the midpoint at a starting rate of \$89,739.
- III. Committee recommends the City of Neenah and City of Menasha Common Councils provide an add rate to the assistant chief positions equivalent to a 3% differential between the highest paid assistant chief and the shift commander.
- IV. The Common Council will meet pursuant to Wis. Stat. ss. 19.85(1)(g) in closed session as committee of the whole to confer with legal counsel who will render advice concerning strategies to be adopted by the Council with respect to litigation in which it is likely to become involved, namely: concerning the City's transportation assessment replacement fee.
- V. Adjournment.

In accordance with the requirements of Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the City of Neenah will not discriminate against qualified individuals with disabilities on the basis of disability in its services, programs, or activities. If you need assistance, or reasonable accommodation in participating in this meeting or event due to a disability as defined under the ADA, please call the Clerk's Office (920) 886-6100 or **e-mail clerk@neenahwi.gov** at least 48 hours prior to the scheduled meeting or event to request an accommodation **at 886-6100 at least 24 hours in advance of the meeting.**

NMFR Joint Finance & Personnel Committee Meeting Minutes
October 15, 2024 – 4:00 p.m.
City of Neenah Hauser Room

Draft

Present: Pollnow, Grade, Grade, Boyette and Sevenich

Excused: Ald. Marshall

Also Present: Chief Teesch, Director Fairchild, Director Rasmussen and MA Ellis

Public: Scott Becker, 1061 Green Acres Lane, Neenah

Ald. Boyette called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

Public Forum: Mr. Becker encouraged more transparency on the fire station remodel project. He felt memos regarding the costs lack detail and transparency. Chief Teesch invited Mr. Becker to meet with him and he can go over anything he has questions on.

Minutes: The committee reviewed the meeting minutes from July 23, 2024 and August 27, 2024. **MSC Borchardt/Pollnow to approve the July 23, 2024, meeting minutes and place on file, all voting aye.**

MSC Pollnow/Borchardt to approve the August 27, 2024, meeting minutes and place on file, all voting aye.

Salary Offer for Vacant Assistant Chief/Fire Marshal Position: Director Fairchild reviewed the City of Neenah policy take any offers above mid-point to Finance for approval. She explained that all candidates who were interviewed did meet the qualifications to start at above mid-point. She reviewed the pay scale in Grade 13 and explained the differences in salaries between the annual hours noted. This position falls under the 1,950 hours. The question was asked if the salary range was advertised with the position. Director Fairchild confirmed this. She requested support to put the new candidate into step 18 of Grade 13. **MSC Sevenich/Pollnow recommends the City of Neenah and City of Menasha Common Councils approve the offer to the intended candidate for the position of Assistant Chief/Fire Marshal above the midpoint at a starting rate of \$89,739 annually, all voting aye.**

Consideration of 3% add rate using the highest paid Assistant Chief in comparison to the Shift Commander pay as of January 1 and applied unilaterally to the alternate Assistant Chief:

Director Fairchild reviewed her memo regarding the request to approve a 3% add rate for the two Assistant Chief positions. A handout was reviewed that shows the comparisons of base salaries between the Shift Commander, Deputy Chief and two Assistant Chief positions. It further shows the additional pays the union positions receive that the chief positions do not such as clothing allowance, first responder pay, longevity, college credit and holiday pay. Union dues was removed from the information to show the actual total compensation of this union position compared to the non-union positions. She explained her multiplier formula and how the differential pay is computed it. She further explained this formula is like what is used at the police department for their non-union staff. Fire has one position (Deputy Chief) that has this for their salary as it was negotiated by the employee when offered the job. Director Fairchild said for consistency this would make both union departments equal on how we handle non-union pay versus union pay and to make sure there is not compression issues. She further noted this additional pay is additional pay that is not subjected to WRS earnings and additional fringe benefits.

This additional pay is reviewed annually for the Deputy Chief's position and would be for the Assistant Chief's position. How this works is the base salary is looked at for the non-union positions after the approved annual increase. It's compared to the union position base salary after their negotiated/approved increase. The additional pay percentage is the difference between to make sure they are at that percentage higher than the union position. If one year the non-union position receives a higher raise than the union position the base pay for the non-union

position is higher and the additional pay is lower. However, if the union raise is higher than the non-union position then the additional pay would be higher for that year. This is why this additional pay is looked at annually.

A lengthy discussion was held regarding the pay. Why there would be a different percentage for the Deputy Chief position versus the Assistant Chief positions. The total difference is just under \$14,000 for the 2025 budget. Director Rasmussen noted this additional cost would be absorbed in the 2025 budget by Chief Teesch. Chief Teesch reviewed his two options for absorbing this within his 2025 budget. It was noted that he needs to do this because his budget has already been reviewed by both Mayors and cuts have been made. Ald. Borchardt has no problem finding money in Fire's budget on how to cover expenditures. His is concerned about the ripple that would happen without a process in place moving forward and how this may compound every year moving forward.

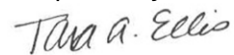
Ald. Sevenich asked why this additional rate needs to be done. He also doesn't feel Chief Teesch should have to find money within his budget to afford this. A discussion was held on why this additional rate was developed.

A discussion was held on what happens if this is not passed. Director Fairchild said she will go back to the candidate and they would decide if they want the job or not. She has no other options to counteroffer with. Chief Teesch noted the other candidates who applied all asked for a starting salary that is closer to the top of the pay scale. Director Fairchild noted that means if the internal candidate turns us down she will be back at a future meeting to have the same conversation in pay with the external candidate(s).

Ald Sevenich said he supported this as it's an internal candidate we are offering the job to. Ald. Pollnow said he would not support this. The employee has done their due diligence with negotiating. The Council has not done their due diligence to say no to the internal candidates and look at external candidates for positions. If we must change our rates and steps, we should have that conversation on this versus a bandaide approach. Ald. Boyette said we have had this issue for a very long time, and no one has every fixed it in over 20 years. She doesn't support this request. **MSC Sevenich/Grade recommends the City of Neenah and City of Menasha Common Councils provide an add rate to the assistant chief positions equivalent to a 3% differential between the highest paid assistant chief and the shift commander, Ald. Sevenich, Borchardt and Grade voting aye and Ald. Pollnow and Boyette voting nay.**

MSC Borchardt/Grade to adjourn at 5:20 p.m., all voting aye.

Respectfully submitted,



Tara Ellis

Management Assistant



Memorandum

To: Neenah Committee of the Whole
From: Travis Teesch, Fire Chief
Date: October 24, 2024
Subject: Wage Compression – Assistant Fire Chief Positions

BACKGROUND:

The Neenah-Menasha Fire Rescue (NMFR) has been experiencing a wage compression issue that affects the pay relationships between line firefighters and their supervisors—particularly the Assistant Chiefs and the Deputy Chief.

Similar compression issues have been identified within the Neenah Police Department (NPD) at the rank of Assistant Chief and Captain. This situation disrupts the expected pay differential between ranks, which can impact morale, retention, and operational efficiency, as well as succession planning and advancement opportunities within NMFR.

This issue has become particularly pressing during the negotiation process for the vacant Assistant Chief/Fire Marshal position. **The position was advertised with a salary range of \$69,673 to \$99,606 annually to attract top-tier candidates.** After interviewing qualified applicants, salary discussions have centered around a competitive offer that aligns with the top candidate's qualifications while staying within the posted range. The recommended starting salary of \$89,739, which is above the midpoint, falls well within the advertised range and reflects the candidate's advanced education, specialized skills, and significant experience. The additional 3% add rate is proposed to bring parity between how similar wage compression issues are handled with the city and still falls within the posted salary range.

ISSUE:

While the wage compression issue has been resolved for the Deputy Chief of NMFR by applying a formula-based pay adjustment, the same approach has not yet been applied to the rank of Assistant Chief. Currently, Assistant Chiefs, who hold significant supervisory and operational responsibilities, are earning salaries that are less than suburbanites they supervise.

The salary negotiations for the Assistant Chief/Fire Marshal position are being conducted within the range posted in the job advertisement, and the proposed starting salary is based on the candidate's qualifications. However, there is a need to also address the broader wage compression issues affecting the Assistant Chiefs overall. This memo seeks approval

for two motions that will help ensure equitable compensation for these key supervisory roles within NMFR.

Motion 1: Approval of Salary Offer for the Assistant Chief/Fire Marshal Position Above Midpoint

The City of Neenah's policy requires that salary offers above the midpoint of the pay scale must be approved by the Finance Committee. The Assistant Chief/Fire Marshal position, which falls under Grade 13 with 1950 hours, has a starting salary recommendation at Step 18, amounting to \$89,739 annually.

Rationale for Support:

- The candidate for this position has qualifications and experience that exceed the minimum requirements. Their advanced education, specialized skills, and years of relevant service justify offering a salary above the midpoint of the pay scale.
- The position was advertised with a salary range of **\$69,673 to \$99,606** annually, for the purpose of attracting top talent which necessitates a competitive offer that reflects the complexity and responsibility of the role.
- Approving the salary at Step 18 ensures that the chosen candidate is compensated in-line with their expertise, positioning NMFR to secure a highly capable individual for this critical supervisory role.

The Joint Finance and Personnel Committee unanimously recommended approval of this motion to both the Neenah and Menasha Common Councils, ensuring that the selected candidate can be hired at a salary that acknowledges their qualifications and experience.

Motion 2: Consideration of a 3% Add Rate for NMFR Assistant Chiefs

Currently, there is a significant pay compression issue between NMFR's Assistant Chiefs and Shift Commanders, where unionized Shift Commanders receive additional compensation not afforded to the non-union Assistant Chiefs (e.g., clothing allowance, longevity, holiday pay). To address this disparity, a 3% add rate is proposed to be applied annually to maintain a differential between the highest paid Shift Commander and the Assistant Chiefs, similar to what is used in the police department and for the Deputy Fire Chief position.

Rationale for Support:

- The proposal brings parity between how unionized and non-union positions are compensated within the fire and police departments, thereby reducing wage compression and maintaining internal equity.

- This add rate adjustment is already applied successfully to the Deputy Chief's position within NMFR and the Police department. Extending the same policy to the Assistant Chiefs, within the fire department, will standardize compensation practices across supervisory roles, in similar departments, ensuring consistency.
- The 3% differential will be recalculated annually to reflect any changes in union-negotiated increases, ensuring the pay gap does not widen or narrow disproportionately.
- Not implementing this adjustment could exacerbate morale and retention issues, and destroy succession planning, as employees will be less likely to move into management positions. In addition, supervisors may begin to feel undervalued in comparison to their subordinates.

While concerns were raised about the budgetary implications, Chief Teesch has identified options to absorb the estimated \$24,764 additional cost (see breakdown below) within the existing 2025 budget. This ensures the solution is financially viable without further burdening the budget.

Option One:

Delay the start of the 2025 recruit academy to take advantage of the difference in pay between retiring personnel and new hires.

Option Two:

Postpone the implementation of O 365 software for line staff and look at funding that item in next years budget or thought grants or other funding sources. In addition to taking advantage of newly available funds from the State of Wisconsin for EMS providers.

The Joint Finance and Personnel Committee voted 3-2 in favor of recommending this adjustment, with the majority supporting it as a necessary step to maintain fairness in pay scales and to avoid future compression issues.

PROPOSED SOLUTION:

To rectify this issue, I recommend that the same formula currently used for the Deputy Chief in NMFR, and the Assistant Chief and Captains in NPD be applied to the NMFR Assistant Chiefs. This formula ensures that administrative supervisors with Neenah-Menasha Fire Rescue earn a pay differential of at least 3-5% above their highest-paid subordinates, aligning with standard best practices for addressing salary compression.

- Apply the 5% pay increase formula currently used for the NMFR Deputy Chief to the Assistant Chief positions at a rate of 3%.
- Ensure that this adjustment is revisited annually, with adjustments based on the highest-paid subordinate's salary as of January 1st each year.

- Continue with the job description review and Comp & Class study, as previously recommended, for Neenah-Menasha Fire Rescue.

CONCLUSION:

Addressing pay compression is critical to maintaining equity, morale, and operational effectiveness. Applying a consistent and fair pay differential formula across the supervisory ranks within NMFR, as has been done in NPD and for the Deputy Chief of the Fire Department, will ensure that supervisory staff are compensated appropriately for their responsibilities. Both motions are important steps toward ensuring competitive and equitable compensation for key supervisory roles within NMFR. I urge the Neenah Council to approve these motions to address the current pay disparities and support the long-term stability of the department.

Additional Cost Breakdown

		Assitiant Chief – Training	Assitiant Chief – Fire Marshal	
Wage	New	\$103,671	\$98,075	
	Budget (2025)	\$99,140	\$83,300	
	Difference	\$4,531	\$14,775	
Fringe	Medicare	\$66	\$214	1.45%
	WRS	\$873	\$2,846	19.26%
	Work Comp	\$150	\$489	3.31%
	Vac/Sick	\$193	\$628	4.25%
		\$1,281	\$4,177	
	Total	\$5,812	\$18,952	\$24,764



Wage Compression – Assistant Fire Chief Positions

NEENAH COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE, PRESENTED BY
CHIEF TRAVIS TEESCH, OCTOBER 30, 2024

Background

NMFR is experiencing wage compression impacting Assistant Chiefs and the Deputy Chief.

This issue affects pay differentials between ranks, with potential negative impacts on morale, retention, and career advancement.

Background

NMFR administrative employees are placed on the wage scale at **37.5 hours per/week**

They work more than **40 hours per/week**

Grade 13				
Step	Rate	1040 Hours	1950 Hours	2080 Hours
1	\$ 35.73	\$ 37,159.20	\$ 69,673.50	\$ 74,318.40
2	\$ 36.27	\$ 37,720.80	\$ 70,726.50	\$ 75,441.60
3	\$ 36.81	\$ 38,282.40	\$ 71,779.50	\$ 76,564.80
4	\$ 37.36	\$ 38,854.40	\$ 72,852.00	\$ 77,708.80
5	\$ 37.92	\$ 39,436.80	\$ 73,944.00	\$ 78,873.60
6	\$ 38.49	\$ 40,029.60	\$ 75,055.50	\$ 80,059.20
7	\$ 39.07	\$ 40,632.80	\$ 76,186.50	\$ 81,265.60
8	\$ 39.66	\$ 41,246.40	\$ 77,337.00	\$ 82,492.80
9	\$ 40.25	\$ 41,860.00	\$ 78,487.50	\$ 83,720.00
10	\$ 40.85	\$ 42,484.00	\$ 79,657.50	\$ 84,968.00
11	\$ 41.47	\$ 43,128.80	\$ 80,866.50	\$ 86,257.60
12	\$ 42.09	\$ 43,773.60	\$ 82,075.50	\$ 87,547.20
13	\$ 42.72	\$ 44,428.80	\$ 83,304.00	\$ 88,857.60
14	\$ 43.36	\$ 45,094.40	\$ 84,552.00	\$ 90,188.80
15	\$ 44.01	\$ 45,770.40	\$ 85,819.50	\$ 91,540.80
16	\$ 44.67	\$ 46,456.80	\$ 87,106.50	\$ 92,913.60
17	\$ 45.34	\$ 47,153.60	\$ 88,413.00	\$ 94,307.20
18	\$ 46.02	\$ 47,860.80	\$ 89,739.00	\$ 95,721.60
19	\$ 46.71	\$ 48,578.40	\$ 91,084.50	\$ 97,156.80
20	\$ 47.41	\$ 49,306.40	\$ 92,449.50	\$ 98,612.80
21	\$ 48.12	\$ 50,044.80	\$ 93,834.00	\$ 100,089.60
22	\$ 48.85	\$ 50,804.00	\$ 95,257.50	\$ 101,608.00
23	\$ 49.58	\$ 51,563.20	\$ 96,681.00	\$ 103,126.40
24	\$ 50.32	\$ 52,332.80	\$ 98,124.00	\$ 104,665.60
25	\$ 51.08	\$ 53,123.20	\$ 99,606.00	\$ 106,246.40

Grade 13	
Department	Position
Fire	Assistant Chief of Prevention/Inspection
Fire	Assistant Chief of Training/Emergency Mgmt
Comm Dev	Chief Building Inspector
Public Works	Civil Engineer III
Info Systems	Network Administrator
Parks & Rec	Superintendent of Recreation
Public Works	Traffic Engineer
Parks & Rec	Superintendent of Parks
Water	WD Distribution Manager
Water	WD Treatment Manager

Job Description
Education
Experience
Longevity

Background Cont....

Similar compression issues have been observed in the Neenah Police Department (NPD).

The issue is now pressing due to ongoing negotiations for the Assistant Chief/Fire Marshal position.

Posted Salary Range & Negotiations

The Assistant Chief/Fire Marshal position was advertised with a **salary range of \$69,673 to \$99,606** annually.



Negotiations are ongoing with the top candidate.



Recommended starting salary: **(WITHIN THE POSTED RANGE).**



City policy requires Finance Committee approval for salary offers exceeding the midpoint of the range.

Issue

Wage compression remains unresolved for Assistant Chiefs, although it has been addressed for the Deputy Chief.

Assistant Chiefs earn less than employees they supervise.

Current negotiations over the vacant position bring attention to the issue of wage compression within NMFR.

Motion 1 – Salary Offer for Assistant Chief/Fire Marshal

**Unanimously
Approved at the
Committee
Level**

Approve a salary offer at **GRADE 13 STEP 19**
\$89,739 (37.5 HR/Week) Rate
for the Assistant Chief/Fire Marshal position.

The candidate's education and experience support offering a salary above the midpoint.

This offer is competitive and aligns with the advertised salary range (**\$69,673 - \$99,606**).

A competitive offer is necessary to attract and retain top talent for this crucial role.

Motion 2 - 3% Add Rate for Assistant Chiefs



Approve the application of a 3% add rate for Assistant Chief positions, recalculated annually.



This is consistent with practices used for the Deputy Chief and Neenah PD.



It ensures the pay differential between Assistant Chiefs and subordinate employees is maintained.



Annual recalculations will help sustain pay equity.

Conclusion

Addressing wage compression is essential for maintaining pay equity and preserving morale within NMFR.

Approval of both motions will ensure fair compensation for NMFR's supervisory roles and support long-term organizational stability.

Your support is crucial for maintaining competitive pay within NMFR, ensuring we continue to attract and retain skilled leaders.