

Committee of the Whole Minutes
Wednesday, October 29, 2024 at 6:00 p.m.
Council Chambers
City Hall, 211 Walnut Street

Purpose: Neenah-Menasha Fire Rescue Assistant Chief/Fire Marshal hiring and wage compression for non-union workers. The City's transportation assessment replacement fee (TARF)

Present: Mayor Lang, Aldermen Boyette, Erickson (arrived at 6:06 pm), Hillstrom, Lendrum, Weber, Pollnow, Ellis, and Council President Borchardt. Alderman Steiner was excused.

Also Present: City Attorney Rashid, Director of Human Resources Fairchild, Fire Chief Teesch, Community Development Director Haese, Public Works Director Kaiser, Finance Director Rasmussen, and Clerk Nagel.

Council President Borchardt called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

- 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.

Motion by Ellis/Pollnow to approve 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. No vote on this motion.

Fire Chief Teesch made a presentation regarding the rationale behind these two requests. A copy of the presentation was in the Committee of the Whole packet.

Discussion ensued regarding the offer to the internal candidate above the mid-point wage scale and explaining this action to other city employees. The current wage policy adds value to the position pay for education, skills, and certifications brought along with the employee. There is an algorithm in place to justify steps in the pay scale. Wage compression needs to be corrected without effecting employee morale.

POINT OF ORDER: Motion by Boyette/Lendrum to remove this issue from the table.

It is understood that entry wages reflect current market conditions, but employees who have been with the city for a number of years cannot be neglected. The city has to maintain an even keel otherwise we will lose experienced, loyal employees to other entities. It comes down to communication and timeliness.

There was discussion on wage compression, the validity of it happening in the city, particularly with the fire department. The city has a step wage plan currently in place with two union wage plans that are eventually going to intersect. The issue is that administrative fire staff, who are still sworn, are making less than those employees they supervise. Compensation time is not factored into the wage compression.

There was discussion on financing. At the time of budget discussion, the wage increase was not brought up because interviews were still taking place. There is about \$24,000 that is not included in the 2025 budget that would have to be and then each year going forward,

the wage would compound. Chief Teesch advised there were some items that could be delayed as there is potential of receiving grant monies to cover those expensed while moving the funding from those projects to cover the Assistant Chief/Fire Marshal wage. There was discussion on moving administrative positions from 1,950 hours to the 2,080 hours in the step plan which would give a higher wage, however, the expectation would be for staff to work those hours.

Motion by Ellis/Weber to recommend Council approve the Committee recommendation for 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 \$89,739.00, all voting aye.

- 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.

Motion by Ellis/Erickson to bring this item off the table. 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. Motion carries in a voice vote, 6-2 with Pollnow and Boyette dissenting.

Some members felt that approving this builds a structural imbalance in the wage structure and sets a bad precedent. Some members believe there needs to be more information and discussion on this item prior to going to council.

Some members understand that this not the ideal way for wage increases to happen, but in listening to staff, there are current mechanisms in place for a wage scale to correct this.

- 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.

Motion by Ellis/Boyette for the Committee of the Whole to convene into closed session 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, all voting aye.

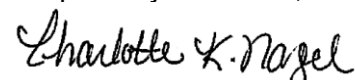
At 6:38 PM, the Committee of the Whole entered closed session.

The meeting adjourned in closed session.

V. **Adjournment**

By unanimous consent the meeting was adjourned at 7:02 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Charlotte K. Nagel, WCMC

