



Watertown City Council
Work Session

Mayor Michael Walters
Kay Thul
Adam Pawelk
Fred McGuire
Dan Schuette

7/25/2023 - Minutes

1. Call To Order And Roll Call

Mayor Walters called the Watertown City Council work session to order at 5:30 p.m. on July 25, 2023, in the council chambers of City Hall.

Council Members Present: Michael Walters, Adam Pawelk, Fred McGuire, and Kay Thul.

Council Members Absent: Dan Schuette.

Staff Present: City Administrator Jake Foster, Administrative Services Director Margaret Reisdorf, and Fire Chief Tom Hanson.

Others Present: None.

2. New Business

2.1. 2I - Fire Chief Work Plan

Foster introduced this item to the City Council. He informed that as part of the hiring of a new full-time Fire Chief, that the City Council wanted the Fire Chief to develop a Fire Department work plan for himself and the fire department.

Hanson provided a review of the draft "Watertown Fire Chief Workplan"

Hanson reviewed different sections of the workplan in depth including core items related to managing daily department operations which include:

- Addressing Maintenance Needs
- Administrative Compliance
- Long Term Financial Planning
- Response and Service Deployment
- Recruitment and Retention

Fire Marshal Duties
Emergency Management

Addressing Maintenance Needs:

Hanson stated that this would include overall station maintenance, apparatus maintenance, and ongoing equipment testing. He explained that this would be integral to long-term financial and budget planning every year. He said that the process also involves preventative maintenance, ensuring that equipment is "road ready" and is in compliance with standards, and overall monitorization of equipment.

Administrative Compliance:

Hanson informed that this includes making sure that the organization stays in compliance with all record requirements and that all personnel are trained accordingly on an ongoing basis.

Finance:

Hanson explained that his role as the fire chief includes the effective management of fiscal activities which includes responsible planning, development, and incorporation of various funding mechanisms. He added that fiscal responsibility occurs with sound budget management and planning, grant applications and a solid capital improvement plan.

Response and Deployment:

Hanson reviewed the three basic components of fire department emergency response performance including: availability, capability, and operational effectiveness. He reviewed the fire department's Standard Operating Guidelines and the importance of maintaining and developing those guidelines.

Hanson discussed "Auto Aid" and how the Watertown Fire Department utilizes auto aid from the City of Delano and City of Mayer Fire Departments in the event of a structure fire.

Hanson reviewed different staffing models including the Paid On Call, Duty Crew, and Full Time models and how the model will continue to be reviewed on an ongoing basis to meet the needs of the community and to attract/retain new personnel.

Recruitment and Retention – New Initiative

Hanson discussed recruitment and retention and how these topics are critical to the fire service. He reviewed how important it is to attract and maintain members. He explained that the fire department personnel are the most expensive expense, and that the department wants to continue to attract, train and retain these personnel for many years.

Hanson reviewed the initial costs of hiring a new firefighter. He reviewed the PERA SVF Fund pension benefit. He stated that over the past few years, the city has done gradual increases in wages and continued to review wages and make sure wages are competitive. He also discussed the need for work/life balance on the department and how that is currently being managed through the Station Crew model.

Walters stressed the importance of competitive wages and the continuous review and increase in wages. He agreed that this is a topic to continue to monitor and discuss.

Hanson discussed the importance of mental and physical health solutions and support.

Develop Fire Marshal Division – New Initiative

Hanson informed that the Fire Department is looking into a new initiative related to a "Fire Marshal

Division” that would focus on supporting functions related to including prevention, inspection, arson investigation, education, and review and interpretation of applicable codes, statutes, rules, and plans that are an integral part of the department’s overall operations.

He explained that the Fire Marshal Division would manage public education requests, evaluate the need for commercial inspections, pre-plan reviews, plan reviews, and code enforcement as well.

Emergency Management

Hanson discussed Emergency Management and how the Fire Department’s emergency management standards are intended to help organizations prepare for “all-hazard” emergencies. He explained that the concept of emergency preparedness is defined as “a continuous cycle of planning, organizing, training, equipping, exercising, evaluating, and taking corrective action in effort to ensure effective coordination during incident response”.

McGuire stated that he was impressed with the presentation of the work plan and that it is very thorough.

Thul agreed.

Pawelk informed that it was great information and a good road map. He supported being proactive and following through with the plan. He said plans such as these should continue to be monitored and updated to be relevant. He specifically highlighted the importance of more public education, conversations and collaboration with the community and outside organizations.

Walters agreed that the plan looks great. He stated that he is looking forward to more community engagement with the full-time position. He said that he always supports expanding the pursuit of grants and grant partnerships. Walters stressed the importance of personnel recognition. He also supported expansion of staff training. He informed that he believed things were heading in the right direction.

2.II. 2II - 2024 Budget Work Session 1

Foster provided a quick review of several budget draft items.

He informed that at the July 11, 2023 City Council workshop meeting, the City Council and staff kicked-off the 2024 budget planning process. He said that at that meeting, several priorities were discussed and high-level direction was provided by the City Council.

Foster received several budget items that may experience significant changes from the 2023 budget. He stated that the current preliminary budget includes a preliminary increase of 10% for employee benefits, a COLA (based on other local community comparisons) of 3%, increases in property/liability insurance coverage, policing contract cost increases, fire department wage increases, increased IT Services, and other minor increases.

Foster stated that there has been discussion on hiring a new employee within the public services division titles “mechanic/public services operator”.

Foster reviewed significant revenue changes including Local Government Aid increases, a one-time State Public Safety Aid allocation, and a position that is currently unfilled within the administration department.

3. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 6:26 pm.

309 Lewis Avenue South; P.O. Box 279, Watertown, MN 55388

Michael Walters,

Mayor

ATTEST: _____

Jake Foster, City Administrator