

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

2:00 p.m., Wednesday, April 5, 2017

The regular meeting of the Personnel Committee was held at 2:00 p.m., Wednesday, April 5, 2017 in the Conference Room of City Hall, 1207 Palm Boulevard, Isle of Palms, South Carolina. Attending the meeting were Councilmembers Bettelli and Ferencz, Chair Harrington, Administrator Tucker, Assistant Administrator Fragoso and City Clerk Copeland; a quorum was present to conduct business.

1. Chair Harrington 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. Approval of Previous Meeting's Minutes

MOTION: Councilmember Bettelli moved to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of February 3, 2017 as submitted; Councilmember Ferencz seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

3. Citizens' Comments

Administrator Tucker introduced Wynette DeGroot to the Committee and announced that she is the City's Payroll and Human Resources Officer. Mrs. DeGroot was warmly welcomed into the City family.

4. Old Business – None

5. New Business

A. Correction/addition to job description for Fire Captain

Battalion Chief Smith explained that IFSA was the International Fire Safety Association and NFPA was the National Fire Protection Association. A copy of the revised job description is attached to the historical record of the meeting.

MOTION: Councilmember Bettelli moved to approve the revised job description for Fire Captain; Councilmember Ferencz seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

B. Update on legal review of Employee Handbook

Administrator Tucker reported that the City's labor attorney with the firm of Gignilliat, Savitz and Bettis is in the process of updating the personnel manual to include the new government regulations instituted in the past five (5) years. As part of the City's safety audit, it is required to update the personnel manual every five (5) years; they want to insure that the City is proactive to avoid liabilities and workers compensation injuries.

The labor attorney will provide a list of recommendations and changes to the handbook that will be presented to the Personnel Committee and finally to City Council; the City has not been told when it will receive their work product.

C. Discussion of FY18 Merit Pool and COLA

As presented in the proposed FY18 budget, the merit pool was set at two percent (2%) and the COLA was presented at two percent (2%); Treasurer Suggs contacted some of the surrounding communities and produced a comparative schedule for the Committee to show what surrounding local governments are planning for their employees. The schedule shows that local governments have various way of rewarding their employees.

Administrator Tucker recalled that several years ago, the City got out of sync with other local governments with regard to wages for the Fire Department, and the City lost several firefighters to surrounding communities for higher wages.

Looking at the schedule, the Administrator stated that she believes a four percent (4%) combined total for merits and COLA was in-line with other communities, particularly considering the anticipated half percent (0.5%) increase in employee retirement contributions effective July 1, 2017.

Councilmember Ferencz stated that, in her research, the current CPI is between two point seven and three percent (2.7% - 3%); she opined that, if the cost of living is going up that much for all employees, then that is the percentage increase all employees should see through the COLA. She would agree to a combined of four percent (4%) if the COLA was in-line with the CPI and the merit pool consisted of the difference of one or one point three percent (1% - 1.3%)

Public Works Director Pitts stated that a higher COLA reduces the incentive for employees to constantly do the best job they can.

Councilmember Bettelli said that he thought the distribution as originally presented – two percent for merit and the same for COLA – was fair.

Councilmember Ferencz noted that the fixed costs of the City continue to rise, leaving Council few opportunities to make reductions.

Councilmember Bettelli agreed that costs are rising, but he also reminded the Committee members that the greatest asset the City has are its employees.

Councilmember Ferencz also pointed out that the combined four percent (4%) increase was already more than Council had approved in recent years; the pool used to be three percent (3%).

Battalion Chief Smith stated that he agreed with Councilmember Ferencz regarding the CPI, but he added that he also agreed with Director Pitts. For his crew, the merit is a tool to increase productivity. He commented that, when the attrition rate reached thirty-three percent (33%), the Fire Department had some major catch-up to do; he said that he would refer to see the City keep up with the Charleston County area and not have to spend major dollars for another wage study.

Chair Harrington agreed that employee retention was important, and one (1) way to have that is to show employees that they are appreciated.

Since there appears to be a problem with a one percent (1%) merit pool, Administrator Tucker suggested that it would be preferable to keep the COLA lower in order to have a sufficient pool of funds to incentivize employees with the merit increases.

Director Pitts stated that most of the men in the Public Works Department have been with the City for ten or more years (10+ yrs.) and are near the top of their pay range, so he has a strategy on how he computes the merit increases for them. He repeated that he believes that the merit should be greater than one or one point three percent (1% - 1.3%).

Chair Harrington suggested having the higher COLA and leaving the merit pool to two percent (2%).

MOTION: Councilmember Bettelli moved to recommend to Ways and Means for the FY18 budget to include a 2.7% COLA and a 2% merit pool; Chair Harrington seconded, and the motion PASSED on a vote of 2 to 1 with Councilmember Ferencz casting the dissenting vote.

D. Consideration of change to Department Managers' job descriptions

Chair Ferencz stated that, in every City job description, a statement appears that says something to the effect that the employee will do any other task assigned by his/her manager, and, based on the Hill report, she thought that the job descriptions for department managers should be revised to add the maintenance and upkeep of their facility to their responsibilities.

Administrator Tucker stated that a change to the job descriptions would not necessarily improve maintenance because, in her opinion, for the department managers to do more than they are doing already would be impossible. This is the reason Hill Construction was hired, i.e. to locate problems and to prioritize them based on importance, and staff has done as many of those items as it could with existing manpower and skills. The report will also be a budgeting tool for the coming years since the issues are catalogued by the urgency for repair.

Chair Harrington noted that the City has been reactive rather than proactive because the City has no one whose sole responsibility is the maintenance of its assets, whether he/she does the work or hires a contractor. In a similar vein, he repeated his concern over the need for a succession plan for key personnel when they leave the City.

Councilmember Ferencz asked, with the Hill report in-hand, whose responsibility it will be to recognize problems when they first occur and to make sure they are corrected at the time and not allowed to get worse; no job descriptions for the City include it currently. She also stated that the task should not fall on Administrator Tucker.

The Administrator stated that currently the City does not have anyone to "bird dog" issues when they occur, and that her primary responsibility was for the proper administration of the City's budget.

Councilmember Bettelli stated that it was unrealistic to think that one (1) person could do everything that has been discussed thus far.

Councilmember Ferencz concurred; she said that the City would need a new department, more personnel and the proper equipment. She opined that the City needs to be putting money aside now for the one point six million dollars (\$1,600,000) in repairs needed in the coming five (5) years.

Recreation Director Page stated that her department does not have a maintenance person and that she has learned to look for all of the skills a person might have during the interview process. The person whose primary responsibility is housekeeping at the Rec also has maintenance capabilities; therefore, he is the person who calls the plumber or electrician when needed and who is responsible for follow through and preventative maintenance scheduling.

The Administrator stated that the Committee sees the issue clearly, but the way to resolve it is not as visible; she repeated that she believes that all department managers do everything in their capacity for the City.

Chair Bettelli indicated that he would bring this subject up at the Ways and Means Committee for discussion by the full Council.

6. Miscellaneous Business

Nest meeting date: 2:00 p.m., Wednesday, May 3rd, in the Conference Room.

7. Executive Session – not necessary

8. Adjournment

MOTION: Councilmember Bettelli moved to adjourn the meeting at 3:05 p.m.; Councilmember Ferencz seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Respectfully submitted:

Marie Copeland
City Clerk