

Item 24-0057: Directors Report
Safety and Licensing Committee
Wed, Feb 14, 2024

Alderson Alex Schultz (District 9) 08:55

Okay, we'll move on to the next information item which is 24-0057 Directors Report. City Clerk? Director one, you're on.

Clerk Kami Lynch 09:08

Thank you. Just a quick reminder that the spring primary election is next Tuesday and it only involves aldermanic district four and just the Winnebago County portion of aldermanic District 11. For the aldermanic district for results, they will be on the city clerk election's page of the website at the end of the night. And then once those results are certified, the candidates receiving the two highest votes will be on the April ballot.

Alderson Alex Schultz (District 9) 09:38

Okay. Any questions? Okay.

Alderson Alex Schultz (District 9) 09:41

[Indecipherable] number two, Chief Olson staffing study. Gosh, dangit.

Police Chief Polly Olson 09:48

Thank you. Well, I think Alder Siebers just opened the door for me to talk about this next item a bit.

Alderson Alex Schultz (District 9) 09:56

Well done.

Police Chief Polly Olson 09:56

So, thank you. So, as the committee is well aware, and, again, this isn't a new thing. I think Director Ratchman pointed out at the HRIT committee that since he's been here, which was in 2004, I've been here since 2001, and we've never had a study such as this conducted for the police department where we take a look at resources, what we have existing for resources and staffing, and combining that with the need for future resources as we continue to have our city grow and change. And so, I had a discussion with the mayor and with Director Ratchman and with the finance director back in December to discuss the possibility of having some type of a staffing study done, so that we could get some solid numbers and begin some planning for future staffing needs in the police department.

Police Chief Polly Olson 10:56

Quite frankly, I don't have the level of expertise that's required that I think having a scientific study that's defensible, if in fact, it results in the numbers that might require some significant funding down the road, that we have some, again, some scientific basis in an experienced consultant from the outside conducting an unbiased study of where we stand with our resources.

Police Chief Polly Olson 11:26

At this point, HR has taken the lead on this project, and they've been making some calls in doing some research, looking for different potential consultants that could do this work for us. They are conducting zoom calls to do some initial screenings, and we intend to do some sort of RFP in the next few months. So, at this point, it's really

just an FYI because it's likely that we're probably going to need some money in the future to move forward with this project.

Aldersperson Alex Schultz (District 9) 12:00

Do you have a sense of the cost of the study might be? A range?

Police Chief Polly Olson 12:05

I think the range that was provided to me from HR could be anywhere up to about \$60,000.

Aldersperson Alex Schultz (District 9) 12:13

Thank you. Committee got some questions? Alder Van Zeeland.

Aldersperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 12:17

Thank you, Chair. So, will the study also look at ways to recruit police officers? I know that we always—we're sort of always almost fully staffed, and I guess I'm wondering if they tell us we need more staff, are we going to look at opportunities on how we can get more recruits in the door.

Police Chief Polly Olson 12:39

I'm not sure that that's going to be a part of it. I just got back actually from a chief—the Wisconsin Chiefs Association conference last week, and had an opportunity to connect with several other chiefs across the state, and from a staffing perspective and recruiting, we're really sitting at the top. I don't know that that's necessarily a big concern of mine. I am aware, like, for example, Grand Chute PD is staffed at what they were prior to their referendum going through in adding additional five officers, which they have not yet been able to fill. We're down one right now, and we're in an active process with some—actually some really solid candidates in there that make me think we'll probably have a list when we're finished with that process. For example, down in the southern part of the state, Fitchburg, I believe, is down about 11 officers, and they only are fully staffed at between 50 and 60. So it's a big percentage of their department right now.

Police Chief Polly Olson 13:41

I think it's a great question. I just don't think it's something where if we're looking at spending money, that that would be something where I think we would put our money towards. I think the bigger thing for us is really just looking at how our resources are being deployed in the types of officers we might need, whether it's adding to patrol or adding to specialized units, and just really how best to maximize the needs, to meet the needs, of this community in the way that this community expects, which is far different than any other community in the state. So that would be what I would be more interested in learning.

Aldersperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 14:23

Okay great. Thank you.

Aldersperson Alex Schultz (District 9) 14:26

Anybody else on committee? I guess I got a couple of questions, just as I'm thinking about this. You know, this is a staffing study, does, would it—do you have a sense that it'll also look at equipment or needs of APD as you're looking at also the staff, you've got also look at how you're, you know, giving them the means to do their job in the community is also gonna look at the equipment on hand? Is that something that will be part of the study?

Police Chief Polly Olson 14:49

That would be part of it, I would believe, or at least from our perspective, once we would get some solid numbers back, we'd have to take a look at the number of squad cars. Those types of things obviously would also be required if we were to add officers, and that would add to the cost of the total project.

Aldersperson Alex Schultz (District 9) 15:09

And I guess that would lead me to another question, as I'm thinking about it. Does the study look just as the at the static situation we have in this community or would it also address, like, potential scenarios where you might have a severe weather event or a public disturbance or, you know, something more significant where a lot of staff is required, and does it also look at—will it also sort of present scenarios? Mass shootings, that sort of thing, just to see how we would have the staff to respond to those critical events?

Police Chief Polly Olson 15:42

That's a great question. I know, generally speaking, in my experience, when we take a look at staffing, we really just measure what staff is required for day to day needs to be met, that it's very difficult to anticipate certainly some of those, you know, either mass casualty or disaster types of situations. And that's—generally you rely on mutual aid to take care of those situations if and when they were to happen.

Aldersperson Alex Schultz (District 9) 16:10

Okay, appreciate that. Anything else? Okay, one more. Alder van Zeeland?

Aldersperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 16:15

Thank you, Chair. I'm just curious also, if something like this might talk about, you know, this many officers or this type of technology, you know, if there's a—you know, I know that they use drones, for instance, where before we used to use bodies. I think when he's talking about using resources, that's what I'm thinking about also is, how many bodies do we need, and how many pieces of technology or types of technology are available that can maximize what we already have?

Police Chief Polly Olson 16:48

I think that's a great question, and I'm not sure what the answer to that is. But I know as we continue to explore what's available out there for consultants, that's something to certainly consider as far as whether or not they provide information like that to us.

Aldersperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 17:06

Great. Thank you.

Aldersperson Alex Schultz (District 9) 17:09

Anything else from committee? Okay, thank you. for that.

Aldersperson Alex Schultz (District 9) 17:13

We'll move on to number three. Chief Hansen. Director three. You're on.

Fire Chief Jeremy Hansen 17:19

Thank you, Chair. Just two quick updates. First, on grants. So, this committee reviewed and gave us permission to apply for two grants. One for video laryngoscopes. We submitted that grant the second week in July—or excuse me, second week in January—and we should be hearing about within the next 60 days on that. And then we did put in our AFG grant for cardiac monitors. That was submitted about a week and a half ago. And we should be hearing on that grant somewhere between June and September.

Fire Chief Jeremy Hansen 17:58

The next item was the fall hiring process. So historically, the fire department has hired on an annual basis, and for the last 12 years, we've had a partnership with Fox Valley Technical College to do a regional hiring process with about 14 other fire departments. Last year, we're informed by FVTC, that they're no longer gonna offer that service, and they pushed everybody to what's called the National Testing Network. And that company is a national company, and they run somewhere around 80 to 90,000 candidates through processes in a given year. So, we gave it a shot. You know, we met with the representatives from the NTN, and it sounded great. We didn't get the number of candidates that we normally have in the past—oh actually half of the candidates we got in the past. So right around 100-110 down to mid-40s. So that that wasn't very promising. We did have quality candidates, and we'll be off—or we've offered two of them jobs, and they'll be starting in May.

Fire Chief Jeremy Hansen 19:05

But we also decided that because of the way our retirements are coming up here this year, that we should look at a fall process to hire again in the end of September so that we don't have open positions for very long. So, we have taken on the challenge of running a hiring process completely in house. So, we'll do all the advertising, collecting applications, sorting those. We've made arrangements to do a written exam through a company called Biddle, which the city already has a subscription to so it's no additional cost to the city, and we made an arrangement with Fox Valley Tech to utilize their candidate physical ability testing equipment for the physical fitness equipment—or physical fitness exam. So, we'll be doing that and then the normal process with interviews with line staff, chief officers, and the police and fire commission. And hopefully, we will have a recruit class of somewhere between two or three for the—beginning of last week in September.

Fire Chief Jeremy Hansen 20:13

So, we're anticipating three retirements, maybe—two for sure. One is kind of on the fence. And, funny, just today, one that was going to retire in June and backed out and said, he's not going to retire till January, so. And then we had another one that also backed out retiring, and he's not going to leave until January to. So next January, we'll be probably looking at five to seven retirements in early next year. So, if this internal process works well, we're going to stick with that, and we're going to pretty much start one another one this summer, early fall to hire for next spring.

Aldersperson Alex Schultz (District 9) 20:57

Alder Siebers.

Aldersperson William Siebers (District 1) 20:59

What's the mean age of our personnel of our fire department?

Fire Chief Jeremy Hansen 21:05

Were actually around 35.

Aldersperson William Siebers (District 1) 21:07

35?

Fire Chief Jeremy Hansen 21:08

Yeah.

Aldersperson William Siebers (District 1) 21:08

And retirement age normally?

Fire Chief Jeremy Hansen 21:12

53

Alderson William Siebers (District 1) 21:14

53. Okay.

Alderson Alex Schultz (District 9) 21:17

A couple of questions, I guess. Number one, if the process prior to this national thing that you entered into last year, which wasn't very fruitful for you, was that more of a regional net that was cast when it was with the Tech or was it more—even more local than that?

Fire Chief Jeremy Hansen 21:36

Yes, it was a regional hiring process. So, there were 14 fire departments, mostly in, call it, Northeast Wisconsin. We had them as far away as Lacrosse as well, that were part of that. And the net was cast individual—by individual departments. So, each department advertised as they saw fit. So, Fox Valley Tech was more the landing spot of everybody that was interested in hiring.

Fire Chief Jeremy Hansen 22:06

And what was nice about that process is the application period opened usually the first week in May and closed the first week in June every single year. And so, students just knew that. It was you almost didn't have to advertise, and everybody would apply because that was word of mouth over the last, you know, 12 years. So, this will be a little more challenging, I guess. Because, other than the word of mouth we have with students in the area, I mean, we're going to be doing some target advertising to colleges that offer fire programs and paramedic programs, with the hopes of getting the people that that we want versus, you know, putting them in newspapers or magazine articles and things like that.

Alderson Alex Schultz (District 9) 22:51

So, you're anticipating having about the same reach in the—within the state essentially, or maybe a little bit wider than that when you go through this internal process?

Fire Chief Jeremy Hansen 23:00

Correct.

Alderson Alex Schultz (District 9) 23:00

Okay. Any questions from committee?