

Item 24-0672: Directors Report

Safety and Licensing Committee

Wed, May 22, 2024 5:30PM

Alderspersion Chris Croatt (District 14) 11:30

Okay, we'll take down to the directors report. City Clerk is listed, but there are no—there is nothing listed under it. Do you have anything?

Clerk Kami Lynch 11:40

No.

Alderspersion Chris Croatt (District 14) 11:40

Okay. All right. We'll move to fire chief overtime update. Chief Hansen, which microphone do you have? Nine? Okay.

Fire Chief Jeremy Hansen 11:49

Thank you, chair. Per the request from meeting two weeks ago, I am prepared to talk a little bit about our overtime budgets for the fire department. Just like to start off by saying in 2023 we spent about 1.1 million in overtime. That's up from 2022 by about 35%. And if you go back to 2021, it's over about a 65% increase from that year.

Fire Chief Jeremy Hansen 12:20

Looking at 2024, we are on pace to hit about that \$1.1- \$1.2- million in overtime costs. There are several reasons for our overtime, and I just want to kind of hit the high-level version of it. Number one, over the last call it two years we've had a couple employees, two to be specific, that had long term medical issues unrelated to anything—you know, it's not worker's comp, I should put it that way. In both cases, both individuals eventually resigned after about a year of being off and then had to seek other employment based off of their medical condition.

Fire Chief Jeremy Hansen 13:01

We have a young department so some of our members of our department are becoming fathers and they use the FMLA as the federal law allows them to do. In the last year, we had sent four individuals to paramedic school. That caused quite a bit of overtime because of those four individuals being at school.

Fire Chief Jeremy Hansen 13:29

Most recently (and we've talked through it with this committee) in 2023 we changed our regional hiring process. Fox Valley Technical College had ran regional hiring process for about 14 fire departments. Last year, they chose not to do that and pushed this to a different vendor called the National Testing network. We were less than pleased with the results we received from that. Typically, we had about 100 candidates through Fox Valley Tech, and through the National Testing we received I think 24. So, a significant decrease, and that lowered our quality of candidates and lowered our pool, and we weren't able to fill all of our openings with the recent hiring that we did, and our recruit academy of one started last Monday.

Fire Chief Jeremy Hansen 14:23

So, when we talk about overtime, you know you have to look at are we fully staffed? And right now, we are we are not; we are five down from our TO. So that puts us at minimum staffing every single day, and anytime somebody is not at work for vacation or sick, etc. that causes overtime.

Fire Chief Jeremy Hansen 14:44

But when we look at our overtime budget, there are a few things that offset some of those costs that aren't reflected in that \$1.1 million number. For example, we have specialized agreements with Wisconsin Emergency Management specifically for structural collapse. So, all of that training that is done at Volk Field is reimbursed. So, in 2023, it was, it was only \$35,000. This year already, we've received \$25,000 in reimbursement, and we anticipate that it's going to be somewhere around \$60 to \$80,000 in reimburse training, but when they are gone to training that typically causes over—excuse me—overtime. We received our paramedic grant, to send our individuals to paramedic school. That grant was worth \$192,000. So that money will be put towards that overtime cost associated with the program.

Fire Chief Jeremy Hansen 15:42

And then we are currently running a hiring process with help of our HR department. We did this internally, and we received it was 72 candidates. So almost four times more than using that other third-party vendor. We—I sorted through them and pushed roughly 50 of them forward to the next process or the next step in the process, and our goal is to hire five candidates. And their start date would be September 23. I believe that's a Monday. So that will give us additional bodies that will reduce our overtime by the end of the year because the Recruit Academy is six weeks long.

Fire Chief Jeremy Hansen 16:28

So, if you look at our major causes for overtime, in 2023 and 2024, the top four are paramedic school backfill, vacation, sick, and Wisconsin Task Force. And after if you get lower than that we're talking percentages of overtime in like three to 4% or lower. So those are the four major buckets that we—that cause our overtime.

Alderson Chris Croatt (District 14) 16:55

Okay, thank you. I just want to make sure I wrote this down, right. 35% in 20—over '22. 65% over '21? Is that right? 100% total?

Fire Chief Jeremy Hansen 17:10

Yeah, I'm just doing the math in my head. So—

Alderson Chris Croatt (District 14) 17:13

Rough. Rough numbers.

Fire Chief Jeremy Hansen 17:14

Yeah, it's about 35% between '23 and '22. And then between '23 and '21—

Alderson Chris Croatt (District 14) 17:22

Oh.

Fire Chief Jeremy Hansen 17:22

—it's actually 100%. A little over 100% in overtime.

Alderson Chris Croatt (District 14) 17:28

Okay, huge increases. Okay, questions for Chief Hansen? Anybody? Alder Siebers?

Alderson William Siebers (District 1) 17:34

I don't have any questions.

Alderson Chris Croatt (District 14) 17:36

Comments?

Alderson William Siebers (District 1) 17:36

Well maybe I do. You know, I was aware of the overtime and it blew me away. I mean, that's a lot of money, a lot of money. And, you know, I wanted to the chief—both chiefs to share that information with us. I have some ideas that I wait later on to share, but you know, some ideas that maybe we could cut down on that over time expense. Especially considering the discussion we had in Finance Committee on Monday, in terms of trying to find ways to cut expenses and set priorities so we can do better in regards to our other projects. So, I do thank the chiefs. I'm gonna take the one chief ahead of time for the information. I appreciate that.

Alderson Chris Croatt (District 14) 18:41

Okay. Thank you. Chief Hansen, you mentioned five down right now—five unfilled positions is that about? Is that more than normal? Or what is? How often are you fully staffed I guess is the question.

Fire Chief Jeremy Hansen 18:57

Up until 2023, I'd say we're always fully staffed. Most of our retirements happen in the first few months of the year, you know, call it January and February. In 2022 and 2023, we started to see a lot of our retirees push their date until middle of the year. So that complicates hiring. Number one, we don't know if they're leaving until too late in the process, and then, number two, we typically hire in April or May. And the hiring process for the fire department, right or wrong, takes about nine months. So, from the time you apply to the time you're on, it's a long process because of the multiple steps. So, when we have individuals that retire, say, end of first quarter, second quarter of the year, that puts us behind the eight ball where we aren't able to hire for maybe another six to eight months for that position.

Fire Chief Jeremy Hansen 19:57

So again, going back to our hiring process, we've modified that and, you know, stepped away from Fox Valley Tech and from the National Testing Network as our primary source. And we're doing it in house, and we're finding that we can condense that process to about four months. So, we're hoping with this fall start date that we can prove to ourselves that we can do it in a condensed fashion. And so, our goal is to hire five this fall; that'll make us flush. And then we're anticipating five retirements next year so we're hoping to start a process for next spring hire, summer around end of July, early August, to hire in next May. And if we get a candidate pool, like what I've just witnessed, I think we will be flush again come this time next year.

Alderson Chris Croatt (District 14) 20:50

Okay. All right. Any other comments or questions for Chief Hansen on overtime? All right. Seeing no hands, thank you.

Alderson Chris Croatt (District 14) 20:59

We'll move to the Appleton Police Department. Chief Olson, do you? District 10? There you go.

Police Chief Polly Olson 21:06

Thank you, Chair. I don't have the same level of specific dollar amounts that Chief Hansen was able to provide. And that's due to how the contract with officers is written in that they can take some of their overtime earned in comp time, some of it can be paid out, and so it's very difficult partway through a year to actually get a calculation.

Police Chief Polly Olson 21:36

What I am able, though to provide are some comparisons from this time last year. And compared to last year, our overtime is actually hours are down a slight bit. And I think that's mostly due to the early part of last year we had a particularly labor intensive homicide that cost us a lot in overtime. If you recall, the individual, Yia Lor, was actually injured in a chase in Sheboygan and hospitalized down at Froedtert in Milwaukee, and we were we were required to provide to officers around the clock down in Milwaukee to provide security down there. And that ended up really being quite costly in our overtime budget.

Police Chief Polly Olson 22:29

Now, that being said, we haven't had any major incidences this year that have taken a lot of overtime, knock on wood. We usually do get one or two a year, so anticipating that that's going to change. The other thing is that we are very, very likely to have a political visit this year before November, which, again, will be very taxing on our overtime budget.

Police Chief Polly Olson 22:58

And lastly, we're just getting into specially event season, and that is usually where again, we start to see a lot of impact on our overtime budget. So, you know, looking at it as being mid-May, I think it's a little early to really get a good handle on where we're going to be at the end of the year.

Police Chief Polly Olson 23:14

The other issue is that our officers can carry their comp banks over into the following year, and then cash them out in—er it's how it's calculated. So sometimes those dollar amounts are not really accurate, specific to the year. So again, it's another complication that can really lead to some not as accurate number until we, I guess, get a little bit more into the year.

Police Chief Polly Olson 23:44

So that being said though, some of the impacts that we have—like right now per our contract our unified tactics training is all done on overtime for the officers. So, they, by contract, get 16 hours of unified tactics training that they come in for on their day off and get paid overtime for. And again, that's because it's required training by the state that—and because it's the right kind of training they should be having—that we just quite frankly can't accomplish while on duty with our current staffing situation. So, it's just one of those things that it benefits us to have them come in on their over—on overtime, on their day off so that we can get this training done.

Police Chief Polly Olson 24:24

Similar to the fire department, we have a very young department, and we do have a lot of officers that whose wives are having children right now and babies and a lot of them. So, we're really seeing we're really seeing the impacts of that driving our overtime costs from a staffing perspective. All good stuff, but again, that's just what you see when you have a young department.

Police Chief Polly Olson 24:47

We've got an officer that's been on light duty and was actually off duty for several months due to a really significant ankle injury that happened while trying to take a drunk driver into custody. Earlier this year, the

Wed, May 22, 2024

officer that was involved in that officer involved death at the Maritime bar was off of work for about six weeks. So again, that was driving some of our overtime trying to meet those man—minimum staffing requirements.

Police Chief Polly Olson 25:18

I think those are probably the big ones. Like I said, there's just not a real great way to provide any specific dollar amounts. I can say, as far as numbers are concern to date, our overtime total for 2024, we have 3306 hours of overtime. Last year at this time, we were at 3720. That does not include any grant over time; that gets reimbursed through a traffic grant dollars. That is in a separate bucket. So, this is just specific to minimum staffing.

Police Chief Polly Olson 25:53

And as far as our staffing is concerned, I know I've kept the committee up to date as far as our staffing is concerned. We have four open positions right now. We just had if you probably follow our social media, we were able to hire a couple of people in the last few weeks very quickly that graduated from Recruit Academy. And then two individuals we actually had sponsored and put through academy that just graduated. So, we're gonna have—we have four in orientation right now that we'll be getting into FTO here within the next week. Just completed a hiring process through PFC. I have three candidates that are going to background. So, I'm hopeful that we'll get one or two out of that. And then we're going to be closing a process for laterals at the end of this month, where I'm hoping to get a couple candidates from as well.

Aldersperson Chris Croatt (District 14) 26:47

Okay, thank you very much. Alder Siebers?

Aldersperson William Siebers (District 1) 26:50

What was the total overtime hours for 2023?

Police Chief Polly Olson 26:56

I don't have the total. I just have to date. I didn't get the total, but I can get back to you on that.

Aldersperson William Siebers (District 1) 27:01

Okay. And I know this is difficult to answer. Can you give me or give the committee some idea of what it's going to cost us to have a political person campaigning in the City of Appleton?

Police Chief Polly Olson 27:20

Well, for one, I've been told—I've been here, obviously, when we've had those in the past, however, I've not been responsible for a budget in when we've had those in the past. And I know that at times, the city has hoped for some level of reimbursement from the government, but it never comes to fruition. So, if you take in total, you know, the number of hours spent, you know, planning, and then, of course, you know, usually you have to force overtime to either order people in or hold people over in order to accomplish that. We do get some mutual aid assistance, usually from the State Patrol and or other municipalities if needed.

Police Chief Polly Olson 28:00

I can try and find out from Sue Ann basically some of the history in terms of what prior political visits have cost us. And I can certainly provide that to you.

Aldersperson William Siebers (District 1) 28:13

Any idea?

Police Chief Polly Olson 28:14

I really don't. Again, I've participated in them, and it's usually an all hands on deck kind of exercise where it's usually, you know, and some of those people that will be on duty, right? So, depending on the time of day that the political visit might happen. But invariably, there's going to be a large number of officers required on overtime in order to staff that properly.

Alderman William Siebers (District 1) 28:39

Is that the same for the fire department? Are you called on to do extra things? If the President of the United States were to come to campaign, would you be called on?

Alderman William Siebers (District 1) 28:51

Okay.

Alderman Chris Croatt (District 14) 28:54

Okay, so that was one of my questions. But—so unlike the election that we know for sure is going to happen, we don't know for sure that a candidate might come and require extra security services. Is there any planning, or, like, do we plan for that from a budget standpoint at all? Or is it just we deal with it when it happens? It hits the budget hard. Okay, because I feel like it's significant impact. You know, so.

Police Chief Polly Olson 29:25

Yeah, I mean, quite frankly, it just isn't possible to budget for something like that. You know, we could have several. We could have, you know, multiple visits from the same candidate. It's just hard to say. We had note—been notified in April that Trump was going to visit, and then at the last minute, those plans changed and he ended up going to Green Bay, if you recall.

Alderman Chris Croatt (District 14) 29:48

Yeah.

Police Chief Polly Olson 29:49

So, you know, it's really difficult to assess that. The same with having major other major incidences or SWAT activations, call outs. I mean, I think for the most part, we consistently have a little bit of wiggle room in our budget to accommodate for those because we know invariably they happen. But if you have a year that's particularly involved with those types of calls for service, there's really no way to budget for that.

Alderman Chris Croatt (District 14) 30:17

Yeah, I think I think when we get to that point, I'd like to understand the figures, and I think it would be good for our citizens to know what it cost us. Because whether or not we send a bill to try to recover that I—it's my been my understanding that those never get paid, or we never get anything back. I don't even know if we send anything after these happen, but—

Police Chief Polly Olson 30:40

I can ask that question as well. I—it's my understanding in the past we have tried to get some sort of reimbursement but just haven't been successful in doing that, but now that I am aware of specifically the information the committee is looking for, I can certainly find that out and get back to you with that.

Alderman Chris Croatt (District 14) 30:58

Okay, or report it out through this committee and finance because it is a financial impact. So, okay, questions?
Alder Schultz.

Alderson Alex Schultz (District 9) 31:05

Thank you, Chair. Just a couple of questions for my own benefit, the 3600 hours in overtime. Is that all in a single bucket of like time and a half compensation, or are there other buckets, double time or is it all strictly time and a half and overtime compensation?

Police Chief Polly Olson 31:20

None of our officers, unless there's the occasional holiday where they would get called in, they don't ever get paid double time for any overtime that they work. So, it would be all time and a half.

Alderson Alex Schultz (District 9) 31:35

Does the same holds true for the fire department?

Fire Chief Jeremy Hansen 31:38

Correct.

Alderson Alex Schultz (District 9) 31:39

Okay. And then I guess the other question is, you know, thinking about hourly versus salary, how often do review positions? I mean it's probably not any opportunity to shift things around, but we're doing what we can to bring people in on salary versus hourly to kind of offset this with these overtime charges? There's not any wiggle room to—

Police Chief Polly Olson 31:58

Yeah. So, I can speak from PD's perspective. The only officers that we have on salary time are supervisors. So, when you're looking at minimum staffing to cover patrol shifts, contractually our supervisors don't cover that work. But that being said, if you look at one of the things we do to try to mitigate overtime, is if we have a patrol vacancy, especially during the hours of say between 7am and 7pm, we at times will pull an SRO or we'll pull an investigator out of the unit and have them put a uniform on and work a patrol shift. We usually do that as a first solution to overtime if we have to. Obviously, that's disruptive to their day, and the school district does reimburse us 50% on our SROs so we try not to pull the SROs out of the schools. But we do that with all of our inside officers. They are all asked to keep a uniform at the police department for that reason.

Alderson Alex Schultz (District 9) 33:06

I assume the same holds true for fire?

Fire Chief Jeremy Hansen 33:08

District nine. We have minimum staffing on our apparatus. You know, we'll go down to three individuals on a on an engine and four on a ladder. The—actually the only way that we can curtail some overtime based off of our contract that we have with our local, is when a battalion chief is either sick or on vacation then one of the other chief officers can fill in that role in lieu of paying overtime during the day. So, any of our day staff, our 40 hour work chief officers. But otherwise, the only the only way we can curtail over time is to make sure we have enough people to fill the seats.

Alderson Chris Croatt (District 14) 33:59

Thank you both. Okay. Any other questions or comments? Seeing none, Alder Wolff, anything?

Alderson Nate Wolff (District 12) 34:07

I was gonna ask a question but it kind of got answered.

Aldersperson Chris Croatt (District 14) 34:10
Okay. All right.