

Item 24-1303: Request to Approve Hiring of the Matrix Consulting Group to Complete an Organizational and Workload Study for the Appleton Police Department

Human Resources Information Technology Committee

Wed, Oct 23, 2024 6:30PM

Aldersperson Vaya Jones (District 10) 01:37

We do not have any public hearings or appearances. So, we will move on to our action items. Action Item, our first one 24-1303, request to approve hiring of the Matrix Consulting Group to complete an organizational and workload study for the Appleton Police Department.

Aldersperson Chris Croatt (District 14) 01:53

Move to approve.

Aldersperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 01:54

Second.

Aldersperson Vaya Jones (District 10) 01:54

We have a move and a second. Director Ratchman, did you want to start or did you...?

Police Chief Polly Olson 02:08

Thank you, Chair. As—and I'm sure you're all well aware, we've been talking for the last few years already about—at budget time, generally—about the staffing situation we have at the police department and how we're allocating our resources. And over the last year, I've worked with, you know, Mayor Woodford and with Director Ratchman on, you know, coming up with some objective plan for where we need to move, looking into the future, with the staffing that we have at the Appleton Police Department, and address the question objectively as to whether or not our staffing is adequate and how we're using our resources. And a study like this, we're hoping will accomplish that.

Police Chief Polly Olson 02:55

So, over the last year, we've been working to develop, you know, what kinds of questions that we have that we need answers and—or answers to and researching potential companies out there that, you know, can accomplish this study for us. Director Ratchman and his team—and he'll talk a little bit more about that process—did a lot of spent a lot of time interviewing before we actually got to the RFP process, which is where I was more engaged in. There was some additional staff from my police department that were also involved in evaluating the potential companies that we had to look at in front of us and ultimately landed on the Matrix as being, we think, the most qualified to meet the needs of what we're looking for through the study process.

Police Chief Polly Olson 03:48

The process itself, after speaking with them, I think will engage my employees. I think it will, like I mentioned, hopefully provide us with a path forward as we look to how our city grows and changes and how we can best utilize the staffing we have and answer the question as to whether or not you know we need to look at adding resources.

Aldersperson Vaya Jones (District 10) 04:17

Director Ratchman.

Director Jay Ratchman (HR) 04:19

Thank you, Chair. I think it's important for the record, even though I know you all heard this in the last meeting just to give a little history as to what that research looked like. I've been with the city for 20 years, and we have not done a staffing study like this. And there's a lot of consultants that do, and there's a lot of consultants that probably think they do. So, vetting that through and really doing in depth interviews was important.

Director Jay Ratchman (HR) 04:44

We reached out to a lot of different networks that we have access to. So, all of our HR colleagues throughout the state of Wisconsin, we sent out notices asking if they've been ever engaged in this sort of process. We reached out on several occasions to the Police Chief Association in Wisconsin. **[Unclear]**—we're part of the Civic network, and they also reached out. We reached out to the WPPA, which is the—basically represents our police union, and asked, given that they work with a lot of police agencies, if they know of organizations that do this. We reached out to our attorney outside council that works with a variety of police departments. So just want to let you know, like, we cast a lot a wide net to find out, like, who's out there.

Director Jay Ratchman (HR) 05:30

Then what we did is, once we identified organizations that we felt like would be able to do this type of work, we engaged in interviews, and we did everything through teams just to find out who they were, to describe who we were and what we're looking to do, before we even started an RFP process. And then we narrowed it down from that point, once we got into the RFP process, we, as the chief, mentioned we had a team that involved our police department as well as human resources. And I will tell you, across the board, it came across as Matrix is the most qualified company to do the staffing study for us.

Director Jay Ratchman (HR) 06:08

As I shared in the last meeting, we found all different types of approaches to doing these studies. We found one agency that does a formula based. They look at your population, they look at how many employees you should have in your agency based on that. That does not work for the Appleton Police Department. This study that we're looking at will take all information into consideration, interviewing of staff, looking at table of organization structure, including civilian staff, and how they play because they play an important role in staffing of your police department. Number of employees on patrol, number of employees who are supervisors, vision of the department, crime statistics, where the those crimes are happening in the city. They'll look at schedules, everything.

Director Jay Ratchman (HR) 06:58

So, this is about a five-month project before completion. The timing, I would say, is really good, because if we do get approval, we could start coming up in December, and possibly have some data that would assist for future budgets, at least for moving into the 2026, budget.

Director Jay Ratchman (HR) 07:17

I would say, as I've said to everyone in my office, as well as our police department go into it open minded, and I say that because I did speak with one police chief who said "I wasn't told what I wanted to be told." In other words, that the staffing study came back very objective and shared information that was different than what maybe they thought. So other than that, I just want to give that history. I think it's important for everyone to understand all the, all the work that's been done.

Aldersperson Vaya Jones (District 10) 07:43

And I see, I see in there, you said, "could start by December, five months." Is that a normal timeline? Is that—does that have any variance in there?

Director Jay Ratchman (HR) 07:53

It does. It does. So, it—really, it's a three to five. So, I'm putting the five out there is probably worst-case scenario. Okay, I think some of it depends on how accessible staff will be at our police department to do interviews, collecting data, etc., but three to five months is pretty standard.

Aldersperson Vaya Jones (District 10) 08:11

Aldersperson Van Zeeland.

Aldersperson Katie Van Zeeland (District 5) 08:12

Thank you, Chair. I just wanted to add that in reading the information in front of us, I was really impressed with the comprehensive law enforcement experience at all levels. And then, to reiterate what Director Ratchman just said, I liked that they specifically say it's a staffing study, but we can also look at areas that improve quality and integrity. So, it's not just about, you know, the number of bodies, but about really using our resources to the best ability. Thank you.

Aldersperson Vaya Jones (District 10) 08:47

Aldersperson Van—you're Van Zeeland. You're going to be Hartzheim, right?

Aldersperson Sheri Hartzheim (District 13) 08:51

For day—for today. Yeah, today. Thank you, Chair. My concern in all of this going in was that there's this myth (perhaps myth. We don't know yet, because the study may tell us) that the APD is understaffed, that per capita, we don't have enough folks to patrol this city and keep the city safe. And it's my understanding, from knowing what I know about the APD, that we aren't understaffed because we do a great job. Your department, chief, does a great job. But what I am hoping for in this particular item in this study is that we don't go into this with any predetermined conclusions, that we don't say, "Gosh, I hope they tell us this, that, or the other thing," that we are completely open minded, as you mentioned, Director Ratchman, about accepting what they tell us in terms of, we didn't—oh, we didn't think about that, those sorts of things. So, if we go into this open minded and they go into this, playing on the things that Alderman van Zeeland stated, we can really do a great job for the city and the police department in this this study. I appreciate that, and I'm looking forward to that. I don't love that ARPA funds are going towards it, but I also do like that ARPA funds are going to it, because it's not then costing the taxpayer that those extra, those extra dollars. Thank you.

Aldersperson Patrick Hayden (District 7) 10:23

Thank you, Chair. I was wondering, it talks about future planning. How far out into the future do these plans project? I'm guessing it's not as in depth as what they kind of estimate as what they're going to tell us about current staffing and current patrols and things like that. But how far out do they project and if this is successful, would you see us doing this again in 10-15 years, or something like that, and set up a regular cadence if this is successful?

Director Jay Ratchman (HR) 10:52

I could have the chief comment on that.

Police Chief Polly Olson 10:54

I think that's a great question. I think a lot of it really just depends on what sorts of information we can reasonably share with them in terms of, you know, the highway reconstruction on 41 for example. What's going to be—how is the Thrivent property going to be used? What kind of growth are we going to see on the north side of the city? What kind of growth are we going to see through the downtown area, upwards growth in terms

of the types of businesses we either bring in, more residential, how that can impact our safety and security through the city, all of those things—and traffic. So, when you're looking at highway traffic right now, we know the congestion and all the problems are happening on Highway 41 that may get somewhat resolved with the widening. We hope certainly that things are more safe with the widening, but it's hard to say.

Police Chief Polly Olson 11:48

So, I would imagine you noted the extensive experience that these folks have that are part of the Matrix that they can ask those questions and interview not just members of my department, but community members as well as other city staff, and maybe that is Community and Economic Development, and start taking a look at where is the city going, and hopefully develop some plans.

Police Chief Polly Olson 12:16

And to just proactively answer maybe another question that you have, for me it's not just about staffing, but it's also about equipment, technology. Just coming back from the International chiefs of police conference where I spent the last five days, and seeing all of the emerging technology that is out there, I think is really going to be eye opening in terms of maybe what may be suggested by this company for how we start using some of our money.

Aldersperson Vaya Jones (District 10) 12:47

Other questions or comments? Go ahead, Mayor. I don't think anything. No, yeah, he's good.

[He was appearing via video call.]

Mayor Jake Woodford 12:59

Not so easy to see the hand up.

Aldersperson Vaya Jones (District 10) 13:04

Or I just—no, go ahead.

Mayor Jake Woodford 13:08

Thank you. Thank you, Chair. You know I just, I don't want to miss an opportunity to praise our team. First of all, Chief Olson has been an exceptional leader through this process already. And to the question earlier about open mindedness, I've experienced nothing but open mindedness from Chief Olson going into this work. I—she is thoughtful about leading her department. She's thoughtful about the human capacity of the department to do the work. She is open. She's been open throughout the process to considering, really the full range of questions and also has expressed openness to the philosophical questions that may come as we get in deeper into this process with Matrix, as we learn more about our department, as we get feedback on different models. And I also know that Chief Olson is a is really a keeper of the culture of policing in this community that that makes us proud of our department, and so I think the committee can rest assured that we have a leader in our police department who is going to run a process with integrity that's going to include not only her staff, her team, but also engage across departments in the city, with the council, and with the community through the process with the utmost integrity. So, I feel completely confident in in the Chief's leadership in this capacity and the committee can be assured of that.

Mayor Jake Woodford 14:58

I also want to take an opportunity to recognize director Ratchman's work on this process and project. As he mentioned earlier, this is not something we have done before as an organization, and going through the process and saying, "Okay, this—we know we want to do this, but, but how do we get there? How do we get it done?"

Director Ratchman's just been integral in in creating a process, thinking through what kind of support we're going to need to conduct it, and working collaboratively with the chief to put this together.

Mayor Jake Woodford 15:33

And finally, just to note that the kind of partnership that I have already seen between our human resources department and our police department should also give us a great deal of confidence going into this process. It has been deeply collaborative and mutually supportive, and just as you can hear, I'm really proud of I'm really proud of our team already, and we're just getting started in this work, but it's been an enormous amount of work up to this point. So, I just want to assure the committee that that we have we have leadership in place in this organization that is prepared to take on work with this magnitude and complexity, and very much look forward to getting into the process and learning more and starting to chart a course for the future for our organization. So, I appreciate the opportunity to share Thank you, chair.

Aldersperson Vaya Jones (District 10) 16:27

Had I known it was such praise, I wouldn't have ignored his high five. So, are we ready to go ahead and vote? All those in favor, signify by saying aye. Aye. Any opposed or abstentions? That passes five, zero.