

**CITY OF WIXOM  
49045 PONTIAC TRAIL  
SPECIAL CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES  
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 2023**

Mayor Beagle called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

**Present:**

**Mayor:** P. Beagle  
**Deputy Mayor:** T. Rzeznik  
**Councilmembers:** P. Behrmann  
K. Gottschall  
T. Gronlund-Fox  
P. Sharpe  
R. Smiley

**AGENDA CHANGES:** (None)

**CALL TO THE PUBLIC:**

There were no comments by the public.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

- 1.) **Discussion of Fiscal Action Plan for FY 2023-2024**
  - a. **Fire Department Budget Update**

Mayor Beagle thanked everyone for being present. He chose to begin with this Department because he felt this might take a little more time than some of the other Departments since we now have additional staffing and 24-hour coverage, which brings some challenges to us.

Mr. Brown reviewed the items that were included in their packets, including a spreadsheet that summarized the different costs that we were experiencing. We are very pleased to have the additional staff but the additional staff comes with additional expenses. He wanted to make sure that we covered these financial aspects. Chief Geistler will discuss these numbers, as well as the general operations of the Fire Department.

First, Mr. Benson credited Finance Director Stamper and Chief Geistler for working together on this budget. We can talk through what the variances look like compared to previous years' budgets and how this will impact next year's budget.

Deputy Mayor Rzeznik commented that in looking at the 2022/2023 estimated actual, it looked like the majority of the overruns will be the hiring and retention bonuses, the additional psych exams and background checks. If we take those out, we would probably be pretty close to where we had budgeted. Ms. Stamper said we also had the addition of two full-time staff members who were added at the end of November. There was a partial year for them and that was why there was a big jump in the full-time account next year. Those two full-time people will then be covering a full fiscal year. We also had the vacancy of the Fire Chief until the promotion of Chief Geistler. That freed up a little bit of money this current year. There were psych exams and consultant fees that went along with the hiring of the new personnel. We carried some of those fees into next year because Chief Geistler's goal was to hire a total of 15 on the part-time side. There will be some more retention bonuses, psych evaluations and physicals that would go along with hiring of those individuals. It was anticipated that once all of this was complete, the line items would stabilize.

Councilmember Gronlund-Fox understood the new hire cost that would be associated with that and the hiring bonuses. The actual right now for overtime was quite a bit more than what was budgeted. Chief Geistler explained that the majority of the overtime was used up

prior to the hiring of the new individuals. There were four or five guys who were maxing out over the 106 hours, working approximately 70 to 75 hours per week. That should start tapering off. He indicated that they had already used up the entire overtime line prior to the hiring of the auxiliary firefighters. Councilmember Gronlund-Fox clarified that he was looking for a full-time clerical staff person and the additional part-time firefighters. Chief Geistler said that was correct. Councilmember Gronlund-Fox asked what the clerical person would be working on. Chief Geistler stated that currently there is a part-time firefighter that is helping to fill that role. Not only did the Records Manager leave, but the Records Clerk also left. He said he does not have any clerical staff there at all. The new position would help to fill those responsibilities from the records side, the business license side, and also assist him with payroll and purchase orders. Right now, those responsibilities fall on the Police Secretary. Councilmember Gronlund-Fox clarified that we lost two part-time positions. Chief Geistler said that the Records Manager was split between Police and Fire and the Fire Clerk was a part-time position. Councilmember Gronlund-Fox asked if the plan was to fill those positions in addition to this position. Mr. Brown explained that the prior arrangement had the Records Manager covering the Fire Department as well. The long-term plan was that once we started to add in staffing in the Fire Department, those responsibilities would be handled in the Fire Department. The Records Manager is now only in the Police Department. The Police Secretary was handling administrative support there. When we had a part-time person at the Fire Department, he wasn't able to do some of the job responsibilities, like purchase orders and payroll. With this becoming a full-time union position, they will be able to do all of that. We are shifting from two part-time clerical positions to one full-time clerical position. There is an elevated cost because of the benefits that are involved. That will allow us to perform all of those services that we haven't been able to do in the Fire Department. Councilmember Gronlund-Fox said that as far as full-time equivalent, it will be one additional to the headcount of full-time minus two part-time positions.

Mayor Beagle asked who handled the billing when we transport to the hospital. Chief Geistler replied that the EMS Coordinator handled that.

Councilmember Gottschall recalled that we had a proposal related specifically for a grant for the Fire Department to help cover the cost of additional staff or firefighters for a few years. He wondered if that was something that was still out there. Mr. Brown didn't think we would be able to do it retroactively. Chief Geistler stated that was the SAFER Grant. Every year the parameters change and it was not retroactive. Councilmember Gottschall confirmed that it was just to keep who we have now from the time of application. Chief Geistler said it was more along the lines of retention bonuses or hiring of new full time. Mr. Brown said we can look into that. In the past, it was something that we were reluctant to do because of the short-term nature of the funding and we weren't committed to adding staffing. Mr. Brown wondered if we would be able to apply for this grant in the future when more openings come up. Chief Geistler said it would not qualify because it was not new staff. Next year, the parameters can change again.

Mayor Beagle saw that there was money budgeted for uniforms. He asked if we would have to acquire more air bottles and items like that. Chief Geistler said that based on the grant that they got at the beginning of the 2022 year, we are good on all of our SCBA packs.

Councilmember Sharpe confirmed with Chief Geistler that he has been doing two jobs for the last year, the Fire Chief and the Fire Marshal/Captain. He asked what was not getting done that we need to continue the Fire Marshal/Captain role after he assumed the position of Chief. All indications were that we have probably gotten more done in the Fire Department in the last year with him doing both jobs than perhaps we did several years beforehand. Chief Geistler said that historically with those positions, everything was based around administrative functions. We were never hiring full-time firefighters at the

Department. Currently, the Fire Marshal/Captain role is being handled by the Fire Inspector to some extent. He is helping with all the inspections. In the past, he would do most of the inspections and plan review and he would do annual inspections for the business license program. He noted that there were approximately 1,100 businesses in the City. As Fire Marshal/Captain, his job would be plan reviews and inspections of all of those projects. Now, he has absorbed the majority of the inspections and Chief Geistler was still doing plan review. Councilmember Sharpe said he was still doing more than just the Fire Chief job and Chief Geistler confirmed that was correct. Councilmember Sharpe said that inside of a 40-hour workweek, maybe we were not getting the highest quality inspections. He wondered if we were skimping anywhere. Chief Geistler said that they were not skimping but maybe they weren't as thorough as they have been able to be in the past. Councilmember Sharpe thought the Chief was standing by the need for a Fire Marshal/Captain position that would relieve the Training Coordinator from significant amount of overtime. Chief Geistler commented that everyone was doing overtime. Those positions are not only those responsibilities from a 9 – 5 aspect, 40 hours a week. Those gentlemen also work overnight shifts and paid on-call hours. Councilmember Sharpe said that the Department works very hard to fill the actual firefighter and coverage roles. He hoped we weren't just backfilling a bunch of administrative positions just because they have always been there. Chief Geistler said that was not his plan.

Mayor Beagle asked if there were any pieces of equipment that we should be looking for in the future, like trucks. He knew he had a pickup truck that was very old that was used for grass fires. Chief Geistler responded that was one of the capital changes. He would like to add a new F-350 to the fleet. Other than increasing some equipment items, like turnout gear because of the increased staffing, his goal was to add \$5,000 to that line. In the Capital Plan, there was \$18,000 this year and \$18,000 next year. He would like to move all of that to next year and make one bulk purchase with the additional \$5,000 because of the cost increase. Mayor Beagle confirmed that all of our other trucks were in good shape for a while and Chief Geistler replied yes.

Chief Geistler stated that he does have the installation of a female shower in the bathroom. Facilities at the Fire Department need to be improved. They currently do not offer that at all and we do have a female firefighter. Mayor Beagle said this was something that was essential that we do. Chief Geistler said that was correct.

Mayor Beagle asked the Chief if there was anything else he wanted to add. Chief Geistler indicated he thought we were at a good pace of moving forward and he continued to hope to hire as many people as he could.

Councilmember Behrmann agreed with the movement of money in his Capital expenses. He remembered talking about the mezzanine in the storage building. It was presented at the time that it was extremely important for that to happen. He asked why that was not important any more. Chief Geistler replied this was his budget. It wasn't a goal of his. He was there at that point in time fighting for someone else's budget. Councilmember Behrmann asked if we had enough space to store what we have. Chief Geistler said that they have downsized in a lot of areas and they cleaned up some storage. There is now extra room.

Councilmember Smiley said in regard to the women's shower, we are moving off of the storage facility to take care of that. He assumed we would still need a storage facility at some point. Chief Geistler said that the storage facility was there; the request last year was to add a mezzanine inside the storage facility. This was not something he wanted. Councilmember Smiley noticed that calls have increased nine years straight. He felt all of this was great. We needed this.

Councilmember Gronlund-Fox confirmed that we were going to continue the relationship with the private ambulance company. Chief Geistler replied at this time, yes.

Deputy Mayor Rzeznik commented that we have this special millage up to 3.5 mills. These are the types of services that the residents want to see, police and fire protection. He hoped that going into the budget season we can sharpen our pencils in other areas so we don't have to raise that at all and take a good hard look at things.

Mr. Benson didn't want to put Chief Geistler on the spot, but he wanted to talk about the full time Records Clerk and how that relates to the Fire Marshal position and business licensing. He thought that would be a program we would focus on this year. These positions are critical to the operation of that function. Chief Geistler said that this was definitely a program that we have focused on over the years. Obviously with the reduced staffing, it has become a little more difficult to manage. We are still doing the annual inspections which is a key factor in the business license program. There is also a revenue component to the City.

Mr. Brown asked Chief Geistler for an update on the additional number of firefighters to be hired. Chief Geistler said that currently, we have hired nine firefighters. There is one more that is going through the hiring process right now. There are another two or three who have picked up applications in the last two weeks. The one going through the process will be our tenth firefighter and he would be looking for five more, for a total of 15 part-time combination of paid on-call and auxiliary. Mayor Beagle asked if the nine currently hired, were working out well. Chief Geistler replied yes, everybody was working out well. We have five auxiliary who were working shifts, three more that are at the Fire Academy, and there is one who just started last week as an auxiliary. Mayor Beagle asked when the Fire Academy was over. Chief Geistler replied that the Firefighter One and Two School would conclude at the end of July. Mayor Beagle hoped he would bring the ten to a future meeting to meet the Council. Chief Geistler said that if it was their wish, he would do that.

Mr. Brown clarified that there was one in the pipeline that will bring him to ten, plus there are three at the Academy, which would bring him to 13. Chief Geistler explained that the three at the Academy are part of the current nine.

Councilmember Gronlund-Fox asked where we send the firefighters for CPAT. Chief Geistler said that was not a requirement. Some have come to Wixom with it but we do not require it. If they have previously been working at another department, we do not require it. The majority of other departments all require it. Councilmember Gronlund-Fox confirmed that we don't have any recent hires right now who have not completed the CPAT at some time. Chief Geistler replied that at some point in time they have completed it but the CPAT is only good for one year so technically they have all expired. CPAT is Candidate Physical Ability Test (written and agility).

Mayor Beagle asked when the departments would be submitting their budget proposals. Ms. Stamper said that they set a date for the end of next week. Mayor Beagle commented that for the record, we are planning on doing a Goal Setting and Budget Session on March 7<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Brown explained that there were a couple of reasons for this meeting that included the timing for meeting our budget timeframes. That meeting will be a little more extensive with goals and budget talks and there would be no way to get that done in a 45-minute period. That was why we chose an off-week.

Councilmembers Smiley and Gronlund-Fox said they were not available on March 7<sup>th</sup>. Discussion was held regarding rescheduling this meeting. It was determined this meeting would begin at 6:00 p.m. and Mr. Brown would get back to everyone with another date.

Mr. Benson stated that he has been compiling all of the goals from City Council as well as staff members. The process will be very similar to last year. We are also looking at indicating what was discussed last year and how that was reflected. He was still putting that together. We do plan on distributing that information to the Council for review the week prior to the meeting.

Councilmember Gronlund-Fox asked if information would still be sent out a week prior (or later this week) if the meeting would still be held on March 7<sup>th</sup> and the City Manager replied yes.

**CALL TO THE PUBLIC:**

There were no comments at this time.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

The meeting was adjourned at 6:33 p.m.

Catherine Buck  
City Clerk

Approved 3-14-2023
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