

## **MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF FINANCE COMMITTEE OF THE CITY OF SUNSET HILLS, MISSOURI HELD ON MONDAY APRIL 26, 2021**

Meeting convened at 5:33 p.m.

Place of meeting: Via Zoom.

The Finance Committee of the City of Sunset Hills, Missouri met in open session. Chairman / Alderman Mark Colombo, Member Jeff Camilleri, Member Mike Fitzgerald, Alderman Joe Stewart, Finance Director, Susanna Messmer, City Administrator Brittany Gillett, Chief Stephen Dodge and Mayor Patricia Fribis were personally in attendance. Absent: Member Mike Sawicki

### **Approval of Minutes**

Alderman Stewart made a motion to approve the minutes from the March 2, 2021 Finance Committee meeting. Member Camilleri seconded the motion and it was unanimously passed.

### **Police Department Pay Structure**

Ms. Gillett explained the Chief had been struggling to recruit and retain quality officers due to the current City pay scale. Exit interviews conducted confirmed the reason to be pay related. Ms. Gillett stated that Chief Dodge found an area salary survey recently completed which indicated we are somewhat under par and that we are hopeful for getting the pay range towards the middle of the salaries provided in the survey.

Ms. Gillett stated Chief Dodge had found a way to offset some of the costs by entering into an agreement with the City of Crestwood for dispatching services. Revenue from this service to Crestwood would be \$135,000 annually with no need for additional positions to cover the service. She further explained the City of Crestwood would share in costs 50/50 for upgrading our system, maintenance, and monthly Rejis service fees.

Chief Dodge stated he was trying to secure a competitive pay matrix by ordinance in order to provide the officers with a sense of stability with their salary step increases. He stated the support for the officers from the residents and the elected officials went a long way, but that we also need to be competitive with salaries. Retaining and recruiting officers is challenging due to other departments with higher salaries and better benefits, these are the departments we are losing our officers to.

Alderman Colombo asked if the steps were approved, would there be an annual review with a request for a salary increase each year. Chief Dodge stated he was proposing an analysis of the pay matrix every three years to make adjustments if necessary, in order to cover the cost-of-living increases and the current market. He further explained that officer salaries are going up due to the low supply of officers, the position being less attractive, and the high demand for them. He stated the past five to six years had been challenging for those reasons.

Alderman Colombo asked if the City approved the step raise, would the officers also be eligible for the cost-of-living raises. Ms. Gillett stated officers on the step plan would not be eligible for additional compensation outside of their pay matrix. Step increases were being proposed for the patrolman and Sergeants. The cost-of-living raises would only apply to non-commissioned officers, Lieutenants and higher paid employees in the Police Department.

Alderman Colombo asked for clarification on the step raises and potential cost of living raises. Ms. Gillett explained those on the step matrix would follow the step increases only and would be reviewed every three years. If there were changes that needed to be made it would be during that review process.

Alderman Stewart asked for clarification on the salary amounts and step increase possibilities. Chief Dodge stated the steps are specifically followed so no problems are caused. There are no skipping steps, or holding at a step for more than a year.

Member Fitzgerald joined the meeting. He stated he was concerned we were only looking at one component of the compensation base. He explained that benefits and pensions were also components and would like additional information on total compensation.

Ms. Gillett stated the City was on the Missouri Lagers L-7 plan at the 1.5% rate, with no employee contribution. She stated having a different pension plan for the Police Department vs. the other employees is a little tricky and a conversation worth having. Ms. Gillett stated she would not say we are above average on the Lagers plan compared to other cities.

Member Fitzgerald stated he would like to look at the pension and medical benefits as well.

Ms. Messmer explained all employees had the same medical benefits regardless of their position.

Member Fitzgerald asked if we had recently compared what the City pays vs. what the employees pay relative to other local departments. Ms. Messmer stated she did not have any comparison like that available.

Ms. Gillett stated she would reach out to the Area City Manager Association to obtain additional information.

Alderman Colombo stated Chief Dodge needed them to move on this in order to fill vacancies.

Chief Dodge commented that he imagined the five (5) officers who left over the past year felt the salary and benefits were worthwhile enough for them to leave, and that was the struggle they were having.

Alderman Colombo asked when this needed to be completed. Ms. Gillett stated they were looking for direction from the Finance committee. Chief Dodge would take it with the committee's advice to the Police Advisory Board and then ideally it would be read for a first reading at the May Board of Aldermen meeting, then read for a second reading at the June Board meeting. Ms. Gillett stated that would give the finance department approximately three weeks to implement the changes.

Member Fitzgerald made a motion to approve the step matrix for presentation to the Board of Aldermen. Member Camilleri seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.

Chief Dodge thanked the Finance Committee for their support.

### **Other Matters**

Ms. Messmer stated the auditors had started their fieldwork this week and had asked if the Finance Committee would like to meet earlier in the process this year to discuss any concerns they may have. Member Fitzgerald asked about the timeline for the review and stated he would like to meet with them. Ms. Messmer stated she did not have a set time yet but to please let her know if you are interested and when you are available. Alderman Colombo stated he would like to be counted as a yes.

Ms. Messmer stated the January minutes still needed to be approved.

Member Camilleri made a motion to approve the minutes from the January 25, 2021 meeting. Member Fitzgerald seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.

Mayor Fribis thanked Alderman Colombo for being the Chairman of the Finance Committee and his years of service. Alderman Colombo thanked everyone in attendance.

**Adjournment**

Member Fitzgerald made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Alderman Stewart seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. Meeting adjourned at 6:08 p.m.

Deputy City Clerk- Lori Stone