

APPROVED

**CITY OF WAUSAU JOINT HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE
and WAUSAU WATER WORK COMMISSION
MINUTES OF OPEN SESSION**

DATE/TIME: January 8, at 4:45 p.m.
LOCATION: City Hall (407 Grant Street) – Council Chambers
HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: Becky McElhaney (C), Gary Gisselman,
Dawn Herbst, Tom Killian, Michael Martens
WAUSAU WATER WORKS COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT: Katie Rosenberg (President), Dawn
Herbst, Jim Force, Joe Gehin, John Robinson
MEMBERS ABSENT:
Also Present: J. Henderson, E. Lindman

The joint meeting of the Human Resources Committee and Wausau Water Works Commission was called to order by McElhaney and Rosenberg.

Discussion and Possible Action to Determine if Utilities Employees Should Have a Different Pay Rate and Scale Than Other City of Wausau Unrepresented Employees.

Rosenberg explained that topics of utilities employee retention, rates, and jobs at Water Commission meetings has come to a place where decisions of the Water Commission may be treating utilities employees differently and are happening without the Council being able to weigh in on the decisions. Rosenberg would like this discussion to result in doing what is best for the employees, the City, and the rate payers.

Lindman said that the discussion at the Commission meeting was not to have a different pay scale than other City employees. He provided an overview of the staffing assessment done by Baker Tilly and approved by the Commission that included a look at pay rates. Lindman said the goal was to pay the utilities employees at the rates he felt were appropriate and not behind market.

Killian asked Lindman if another water rate case was entertained or anticipated to occur? Lindman said no, that the Commission never considered this and it was always to work within the budget of the utility. Killian asked if that included the proposed reclassifications. Lindman said yes. Lindman said that Ehlers has the numbers but they haven't provided anything yet; they look at potential staff but also potential projects and grants and what the revenue will cover. Killian referred back to the September 11th HR Committee where Lindman and Groat were asked if the \$450,000 for the proposed reclassifications was included in the last round of rate increases, and both Groat and Lindman indicated it was not. Killian then asked if the cost for reclassifications would be related to rates, and Groat said yes. Killian asked if the cost was not going to come out of rate revenue, where would it come from? Lindman said it would come from rate revenue that's coming in right now and clarified that the \$450,000 was not only for the reclassifications but also for additional staff. Killian asked if it was correct that the \$450,000 was not included in the last rate increase but that somehow utilities has \$450,000 in wiggle room for this? Lindman referred back to Ehlers that puts together their operational budget but doesn't provide detail, so he doesn't know what they've taken into account and what the utility budget will be able to manage. Killian said it sounds like there are a lot of unknowns, and asked

if they could agree that the \$450,000 was not included in the last rate increase? Lindman said he didn't know how Ehlers does the overall calculations on what he sends them, but that projected personnel would not be considered. Killian asked if Lindman's opinion from September 11th had changed; Lindman said no it hasn't changed.

Robinson said there were several issues before them – attracting and retaining talent at the utility, pay, and positions. Robinson asked if HR has looked at the Gallagher study and/or Baker Tilly study and come up with estimates for reclassification costs, and then what would it take to implement the Baker Tilly recommendation to add positions. Henderson spoke to the difference between the Gallagher compensation study and the Baker Tilly assessment, and said that he contacted a few of the cities used for the Baker Tilly assessment and found that the Wausau was in line with their pay for like positions. Henderson also spoke about retention at the utility, the false narrative of employee's leaving because of pay, and the perception by the Commission that the utility employees are underpaid.

Gehin asked what the agenda item was for the meeting, to which Rosenberg read the language of the agenda item. Gehin said they haven't discussed this and he would be opposed to it. Gehin said that DPW would need to be included in such a proposal. Gehin asked if the unions were getting more than a 3% increase. Henderson said that Public Works [personnel costs] come from the general fund whereas Utilities comes from an enterprise fund, in which case they would be talking about raising taxes instead of water rates. Henderson said Act 10 was in 2011 and some people cannot let that go, and the city will not treat non-union employees as if they are union employees. Gehin said that he's still not convinced that the employees are at market rate for pay and has been trying to gather data to support this.

Robinson said that whether the employees are paid by the general fund or enterprise fund, the money still comes out of the same people's pockets. Robinson would like to see the Gallagher report findings since the Commission has not seen it, but ultimately they are trying to determine how to attract and retain employees and be competitive with pay. Robinson asked how they can get to a place where they determine where they are with respect to current conditions, what the cost is to get there, and how to pay for it? He agreed with Gehin that the utility employees should not have a different pay rate and scale and that Public Works employees should be treated the same. Henderson asked what market they would like to use for comparison and explained that national surveys cannot be used to determine pay for Wausau.

Gisselman asked if it was time for a full wage study according to the city's plan to do a full wage study every five years. Gisselman said he would be in support of doing a wage study to ensure equality for all employees. Henderson said that full compensation studies should be done every 8-10 years due to the cost and labor involved in the process. Henderson said the city spent \$24K for the recent wage study, \$40K for the Baker Tilly study, and then to pay \$100K for a full wage study is a lot to ask of the taxpayers, which will likely produce similar results. Henderson said that HR asked all departments for any updates to their job descriptions so that these updates could be provided to Gallagher for review, and Lindman declined to include his department's job descriptions for the study. Lindman said that he was given two weeks to review 40 job descriptions and that was unrealistic; Henderson said he could have had his superintendents and supervisors help.

Rosenberg said instead of focusing on the past they could look forward. Rosenberg said from the discussion so far, she's heard that there is a knowledge gap between the Commission and Council and

HR Committee, and asked if there is an opportunity where they can come together, possibly a task force, to look at the reports to analyze and make recommendations on the employee pay scales. Killian said no. Killian said you can't understand the present and try to predict the future if you don't analyze the past. He wanted to address some inconsistencies from his questions to the Public Works Director posed earlier in the meeting and reviewed the answers to his questions about the reclassification costs during the September 11th meeting versus the answers received at this meeting. Killian said that rate increases are not an option.

Herbst provided her opinion on the City's pay and said she does not think it is competitive, the jobs are not grouped properly, and the jobs in the utility are compressed into a couple of pay grades.

Gisselman again suggested doing another full wage study. McElhaney said that every time the City does a study, they are immediately told that it is inaccurate [by staff] and that she does not want to spend taxpayer money on a study if there is not buy in. McElhaney asked Henderson if the last study was just a compensation study; Henderson said it was a market study. McElhaney asked Henderson how long a full study would take; he said it would take 6-10 months if everything went smoothly. Gisselman said that something needs to be initiated at some point in time. Gisselman said that he would like consideration of a full wage study put on a future agenda.

Force said that he does not have adequate information related to budget impact or area wages to make any decisions at the meeting. Force said that utility employees and city employees should be treated equally. Lastly, Force said that he agreed with Killian that rate increases cannot be an option.

Rosenberg said her understanding is that there is a desire by the commission to understand the reports already in their possession and understand the budget and what is included, and expressed her desire to have a work group that could analyze and make recommendations on this. Rosenberg asked if the commission was comfortable with HR Committee taking the lead or if they desired to work together. Force said that whatever is decided should be done quickly.

McElhaney said that the utility employees received a 3% increase just like other city employees, so she is not sure what they are discussing; are they looking at the reclassification that came up in September? Killian agreed with Force that they do not have sufficient facts and data to make a determination and would like to start with HR getting the facts for fiscal impact and where money would be coming from. Martens agreed. Rosenberg asked if everyone was okay with this item being initially handled by the HR Committee and then utility. Martens agreed with this plan.

Robinson made a motion to request the Human Resources Committee to evaluate this issue and develop recommendations, and once recommendations are developed, have a joint meeting to discuss implementation. Second by Force. Force said that he would like this to be done quickly. All ayes. Motion passed 4-0.

Motion by Robinson to adjourn the Wausau Water Works Commission. Second by Gehin. All ayes. The utility commission adjourned.

Approval of the November 13, 2023 Minutes

Motion by Gisselman to approve the November 13, 2023 minutes. Second by Herbst. All ayes. Motion passed 5-0.

Human Resources Report for December 2023.

Martens asked if the number of worker's compensation claims seems high for the year. Henderson said that most claims are going to be by Police and Fire due to the nature of their work, and it's not a number he would be alarmed about.

Discussion and Possible Action Approving Notice of Election to Self-Insure Worker's Compensation Program with CVMIC.

Henderson explained that this not a new election, but is something that needs to be approved annually by the committee.

Motion by Gisselman to approve notice of election to self-insure worker's compensation program with CVMIC. Second by Herbst.

Martens said this is why he asked about the number of worker's compensation claims, as the City is self-insured, and is pleased that Police and Fire have a physical therapist to help and are looking to roll out something like it to Public Works. Henderson said that they can also do better at safety committee meetings by doing route cause analysis, looking at near misses, and having a more proactive approach.

All ayes. Motion passed 5-0.

Discussion and Possible Action Reclassifying DPW Administrative Assistant I to Administrative Assistant II.

Henderson explained that this position was overlooked in 2023 when he reclassified the other Administrative Assistant I positions to Administrative Assistant II due to the duties being so similar.

Motion by Herbst to reclassify the DPW Administrative Assistant I to Administrative Assistant II. Second by Killian. All ayes. Motion passed 5-0.

Discussion and Possible Action Amending Employee Handbook Section 5.17 to Include Standby Pay for Fleet Technician Position.

Henderson said that the department has been providing the Fleet Technician position standby pay for the last few months and this would add the position to the handbook.

Motion by Gisselman to approve amending the Employee Handbook Section 5.17 to include standby pay for the Fleet Technician position. Second by Herbst. All ayes. Motion passed 5-0.

Discussion and Possible Action Approving Request for Addition of One Administrative Assistant II Position (1 FTE) to be Shared Between the Police and Fire Departments.

Henderson said that the Police Department continues to receive a large number of public records requests and the Fire Department only has one administrative person who is also responsible for the department's software/technology and could use a backup administrative person, so a shared administrative assistant would benefit both.

Killian asked Barnes if the committee could get an update in the future with data related to the change in time to complete open records requests with additional staff. Barnes said that he plans to provide

Council with department updates annually. Barnes said that the department currently has 72 open records requests, with the oldest being from early September, however, over the last few years, records requests have increased about 25% each year, so the request for this position may help but not solve the workload issue, but either way he plans to report his findings.

Motion by Herbst to approve the request for addition of one Administrative Assistant II position (1 FTE) to be shared between the Police and Fire Departments. Second by Killian. All ayes. Motion passed 5-0.

Discussion and Possible Action Approving Request for Addition of One Administrative Assistant II Position (0.55 FTE) in Community Development Department.

Henderson said that he supports the request for this position to free up the Director and other positions from some of the administrative work required in the department, and to have someone in the office while the other staff is out.

Motion by Killian to approve the request for addition of one Administrative Assistant II position (0.55 FTE) in the Community Development Department. Second by Martens. Killian asked if this would result in someone being in the office when people come up to the office. Brodek said that this will help but because it's a 0.55 FTE, they will not be there the entire time that the office is open. All ayes. Motion passed 5-0.

Adjournment.

Motion by Herbst to adjourn. Second by Killian. Meeting was adjourned.

Rebecca McElhaney
Human Resources Committee, Chair

Video available: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SE3WIAMTtNo>