

Approved

**CITY OF WAUSAU HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE  
MINUTES OF OPEN SESSION**

DATE/TIME: June 10, 2024, at 4:45 p.m.  
LOCATION: City Hall (407 Grant Street) – Council Chambers  
MEMBERS PRESENT: Becky McElhaney (C), Terry Kilian (VC), Gary Gisselman, Michael Martens, Vicki Tierney  
MEMBERS ABSENT:  
Also Present: Kaitlyn Bernarde, Captain Nathan Cihlar, Tegan Troutner

The meeting of the Human Resources Committee was called to order by McElhaney.

**Approval of the April 8, 2024 and May 13, 2024 Minutes.**

Motion by Gisselman to approve the April 8<sup>th</sup> and May 13<sup>th</sup> minutes. Second by Martens. All ayes. Motion passed 5-0.

**Human Resources Report for May 2024.**

No questions were posed regarding the report.

**Presentation on the Current Animal Control Program and 2025 Proposed Model.**

Assistant City Attorney Tegan Troutner provided a brief history of the Animal Control Program and the contract with Everest Metro. Everest Metro did not renew their contract, so the program is 18% short of funding and will run out of money in October of this year. The Finance Committee requested the City to conduct a re-evaluation of the program. The findings by Kaitlyn Bernarde, City Clerk, and Captain Nathan Cihlar were that the current model of one person working Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. does not provide the coverage necessary to meet the goals of the program. Troutner said that the main goals of the program are to increase pet licensing and decrease the time officers handled calls related to animals. Neither of these goals have been met, and it was discovered that most calls for animal control happen during the evenings and weekends. A new model was put together that would be budget neutral with the new funding level and use multiple part-time employees that can provide more flexibility with coverage, to include evenings and weekends. Troutner explained that she got involved when the department asked if they could be allowed to change the program, and that the answer is yes. A program is allowed to be re-evaluated if there is a budget deficit, goals are not being met, and a new proposal is budget neutral. Troutner said they are bringing this forward now because if the change is approved, the full-time position would be eliminated and replaced with part-time positions.

Cihlar explained that the department became aware of the Everest Metro contract ending at the beginning of 2024. Staff meetings were held in January to gather information, discuss the situation and understand what the department is looking to get out of the program. Time was spent gathering data related to the current program, reaching out to other law enforcement

agencies to see what their programs looked like, and drafting a new program. The new proposed program was brought to Public Health & Safety in May. Cihlar continued by sharing data related to revenue from citations from before and after the Human Officer position was created, concluding that the expected increase in revenue did not occur.

Bernarde talked about the pet licensing program and the cycle of notices and enforcement. Bernarde shared that the assessment of the licensing program found a backlog of license inspections, annual delay in warning and enforcement, delayed response in communication with pet owners, and the number of pet licenses did not substantially grow with the implementation of the program. Cihlar shared information about animal complaints, stray animals, and animals bite calls showing that patrol officers and Community Service Officers respond to more complaints than the Human Officer position. Cihlar concluded that the small gains in revenue fail to cover the position cost; the Everest Metro contract has ceased; the program is not attaining the growth in license compliance relative to the City's population; and one position working during weekdays is not conducive to achieving the original goals of the program. Upon reaching out to other agencies, it was discovered that many have a team of non-sworn staff that handle ordinance enforcement, licensing, and calls for service. The department would be able to cover more hours with part-time staff and adjust coverage seasonally if needed. Cihlar said they would want the pay to be comparable to what the Parking Control Specialist position makes and send them to the Humane Officer certification course. Additionally, these positions could handle other calls for ordinance violations that CSO's currently respond to. The department would like to send four officers to the Humane Officer certification course in September that can then mentor and develop CSO's for the program.

Kilian asked if there was a dollar amount for how much the program would cost annually. Cihlar said that the idea is to use the existing budget amount and schedule accordingly. Using part-time staff, Cihlar said they should have about 60 hours a week of coverage for the \$75,000 budget. Killian asked if the change would put a burden on existing staff. Cihlar said that the staff is excited about this change and would see the benefit from having officers certified as Humane Officers to help with calls and training to be more efficient in their job. Kilian asked if the department planned to do regular reporting to measure if the change is a better option. Cihlar said that they would like to use reporting whenever possible and share it across the organization.

Tierney asked how the scheduling would look with more people, if there would be multiple people working at once. Cihlar said it would depend on how the staff is scheduled if there would be any overlap, but it would be expected that one person would always be available, but the focus would be to get coverage for evenings and weekends. Tierney asked how the department expects to get more licensing with this model. Bernarde said that proactive enforcement and getting the word out, as well as working with veterinarian offices to obtain data can be helpful.

McElhaney shared how the position was created after an animal abuse case, and it was thought then that the program would expand to other communities and grow, but that didn't happen. McElhaney said people were willing to pay higher licensing rates to have a robust animal control program that would prevent abuse of animals in the community. The program never became robust, and McElhaney receives calls from neighbors who are upset that they cannot get a hold of anyone for animal issues in the evenings and weekends. McElhaney said that the Police Department went back to the drawing board to see how they could make the program more robust while not increasing the budget.

Martens asked if the CSO II would be required to get the Humane Officer certification. Cihlar said yes, it would be expected that they get the certification. Martens asked if the Police Officers would attend the certification to be able to act as a Humane Officer. Cihlar said that Police Officers already have authority to do everything needed. Martens asked about the backlog of inspections and if staff needed to be certified to carry out those inspections; Cihlar said that any staff can do the inspections and do not need special certification.

Kilian asked if the Police Department would be reporting statistics monthly or how they will handle the administrative part of the program. Bernarde said that they are willing to provide information for whatever the committee or council would like to see, as often as they would like. Tierney said she thought that regular reporting would be very helpful to see if the changes make the difference they are hoping to see. McElhaney said that if the HR Committee would like to see regular updates for specific data, it could be put in the HR Report.

Gisselman asked about scheduling. Cihlar said that a plan could be put into place for coverage to include evenings and weekends. Gisselman asked if more responsibilities would be added to sworn staff with the new model. Cihlar said that sworn staff is already doing these items but would be further trained to be even more able to handle the calls. Gisselman asked if Police & Fire Commission weighed in on this. McElhaney said that because it's not a sworn position, she didn't think they handled it. Troutner said that they are going to the same committees that created the position to update model, minus Finance Committee since it is budget neutral. Gisselman asked if Public Health & Safety passed the restructuring; Troutner said yes. Further discussion indicated that Public Health & Safety passed the restructuring proposal as presented and moved it forward to be voted on by HR Committee and Council for approval.

McElhaney allowed public comment from citizens. Three citizens and employee Ashlee Bishop spoke against eliminating the Human Officer position and the proposed new model.

#### **Discussion and Possible Action to Restructure the City of Wausau Animal Control Program.**

McElhaney said that she would like to see a program that is more robust with better response time, better hours, and more of a team approach. Kilian said that it appears that the position needs someone with knowledge and experience with animals and that if the hours of coverage are an issue, that the position could provide input on what hours assistance is needed.

McElhaney asked if Kilian was proposing keeping the position, funding the deficit by the lost contract, and funding additional positions to help. Kilian wondered if the current incumbent

has been asked about adjusting the wage to make less. Tierney agreed with Kilian that someone with experience and expertise in handling animals is needed for the position, and asked if it would be possible to not add positions, but to utilize current CSO's to help with calls. Cihlar said that the current CSO's are mainly summer help, not used all year, and that the job description for CSO II would have an elevated pay scale due to the additional training and responsibilities. Tierney said she imagined that there are more calls during the summer when everyone is outside, so why not use CSO's now to see if it helps and go from there? Cihlar said that they already do this. Tierney asked what the difference would be with the new model and if they would keep the CSO's on year-round. Cihlar said that with the new job description and pay scale they may get a wider variety of candidates or have current CSO's that would be interested. Tierney asked if the department ever looked at volunteer positions for this. McElhaney and Cihlar said that they would not consider this due to liability issues.

McElhaney asked if the new CSO job description is for year-round permanent part-time positions. Cihlar said yes.

Gisselman said that he would not be able to make a decision at this time and made a motion to table the item until next month, as he would like additional information brought forward for consideration. Motion to table until next month seconded by Kilian. Gisselman would like the HR Director to research the education and experience level appropriate for this position, including certifications and continuing education needed in order to perform at the needed level. Gisselman would like to know what additional training is available beyond the 40-hour Human Officer certification and what experience and qualifications the current incumbent came into the position with to gauge the qualifications they would minimally require for others. McElhaney confirmed that Gisselman would like to know the education level of the person who came into the position, if it was the 40 hours or anything more, and what continuing education is part of position. Gisselman said that budgets have grown over the years and believes that the community would want the City to provide the best possible service for animal control and that the Council would be in agreement.

Martens asked about modifying the proposed CSO II job description to include the 40-hour Human Officer certification as a requirement.

All ayes. Motion to table until the July Human Resources Committee meeting passed 5-0.

Martens asked that the CSO II job description for next month to include attainment of the 40-hour Human Officer certification within a year of employment as a requirement.

Kilian asked if it would be possible to find out if any grants are available. McElhaney said she did not know but that the issue with grants is that they are not permanent funding.

Tierney asked if the HR Director could find out what the initial requirements were when the City recruited for the Human Officer position.

**Adjournment.**

Motion to adjourn by Martens. Second by Tierney. The meeting adjourned.

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Rebecca McElhaney  
Human Resources Committee, Chair

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