

**THE MINUTES OF THE  
RETREAT OF THE HIBBING CITY COUNCIL  
May 18, 2010**

**TIME AND PLACE:** A retreat of the Hibbing City Council was held on Tuesday, May 18, 2010 at 6:00 p.m. in the Range Regional Airport Conference Room.

**ATTENDANCE:** Present at roll call Mayor Rick Wolff, Clerk Patrick L. Garrity, Councilor Tim Harkonen, Councilor Frank Bigelow, Councilor Patty Shafer, Councilor Jack Lund, and Councilor Darby Sater. Also present were Finance Director Sherri A. Renskers, Fire Chief Tony Pogorels, Chief of Police Duane Gielen, City Administrator Brian Redshaw, and Administrative Council Assistant Sharon Ross

**CALL TO ORDER:** Mayor Wolff called the retreat to order at 6:02 p.m.

**HIBBING FIREFIGHTERS UNION PRESENTATION:** Presentation was given by the Firefighters Union President Matt Ashmore. Also present for comment was IAFF Board Member Jim Sallis.

Some items reviewed included state mandated license procedures for firefighters and paramedics, staffing qualifications, minimum staffing concerns, and response times for calls.

Chief Pogorels reported that the new paging system is paging out both paid and paid on-call staff at the same time. It is proving a good response to the scene from the paid on-call staff. Discussion was also held on the civil service required response time for personnel to have the ability of a 20-minute response time. The amount of paid on-call staff is currently at 15 and the Chief stated that we need to keep the eligibility list current and has several people interested that are both firefighter and EMT trained. Mr. Ashmore commented that the paid on-call staff are not EMS qualified.

Discussion also held on the high level of the amount sick days and staff injuries at the department. Mr. Ashmore stated that the sick days were due to on-the-job injuries as caused by the department being short staffed. Question was raised why there are so many accidents when safety training is held at the fire hall and these injuries are not due to a responding call. Mr. Ashmore asked to clarify that the sick time is not being abused by the department and the overtime is not being driven up due to sick time.

Mr. Ashmore reviewed the following firefighter's union's ideas for saving overtime through contractual concessions:

- Reduce call backs to 1 and 2 hour with ½ hr extensions \$45,000
- Reinstate crews to 8 with 6 minimum and call back to 5 \$175,920.58  
(*savings with a 3 person swing*)
- Reinstate comp time \$2,400  
(*can't take comp time if having to replace with overtime*)
- In house training with career staff \$7,000
- Move 2 dayshift positions to on-shift
- Move 1 dayshift position to on-shift

Regarding the In-house Training with Career Staff Notation, Chief Pogorels commented that we receive money from the state to provide training. Mr. Ashmore stated we could have saved \$7,000 by doing in-house training and he spoke of the Meet and confer clause in their contract. Chief Pogorels requested that Mr. Ashmore provide a list of the in-house training and a list of the instructors that Mr. Ashmore was referring to.

Mr. Ashmore also reviewed the following items from the union proposal:

- Three 8-person crews, 2 dayshift including Chief, 6 minimum and call back to 5  
*Requires replacement of retired firefighters from 2008 and 0909*
- Salaries \$1,332,640.27
- Overtime \$ 105,920.58 for a 38% decrease
- Revenue Loss would be zero
- Ambulance revenue \$1,288,009.64
- Total with 25 personnel (*not including Chief*)
- Council's Goal for Hibbing Fire Department's overtime \$172,202.00

Clerk Garrity noted the importance of safety, affordability, and operations. Clerk Garrity also stated Medicare losses are going to be great. Mr. Redshaw said that the ambulance budget projections for 2010 show a revenue loss of \$353,000 and expenses of \$44,000 over budget. Mr. Ashmore said the budget shows a revenue loss of \$80,000 in the first quarter that was due to 29 runs in back to back calls that were found because of the staffing being cut back to a call back of four. Chief Pogorels and Councilor Shafer asked Mr. Ashmore to provide this information to them.

Mr. Ashmore asked the Council for direction on where the department is heading and stated that they can reduce the overtime, maintain their services, and are willing to give up these concessions as staffing is their top priority. Councilor Sater asked if the concessions were based on the union's request to hire more staff. Mr. Ashmore said that was correct.

Clerk Garrity commented on the fact that the union is telling the community that they are at risk with 4 man crews, when in reality there are 7 man shifts and he is disturbed by the false statements that the public and the department is unsafe because of the staffing. The Clerk said the paid on-call staff are available, they do respond very quickly, and we have the proper coverage. He also said that the Council had no idea that the department's illness rate was going to quadruple. Clerk Garrity also stated that he had met last fall with Mr. Ashmore regarding the department's budget and felt that the discussion on the finances was understood. We are trying to have a safe community and also have it safe for the staff. Clerk Garrity also responded on the suggestion of added staff as the slowest time period is during 12 midnight and 5 a.m. and wasn't clear why they would want an extra person on that shift.

Mr. Ashmore pointed out that the Fire Union is the only union that has presented cost saving ideas to the Council and is serious about their staffing and would like to work with the Council. He would like to try their proposal for a year and then if it doesn't work they are willing to try something else.

Mayor Wolff closed this discussion at 7:18 p.m.

**RETREAT DISCUSSION STATUS REVIEW:** Mr. Redshaw gave a report on the status of the following items that were discussed at the April 20<sup>th</sup> Council Retreat:

1. Update on Discussions with Hibbing Public Utilities: Clerk Garrity and Mr. Redshaw met with Jason Fisher on April 27<sup>th</sup> where they discussed the possibility of steam credits for the City and sales tax exemption for the Library. Mrs. Renskers is in the process of filing for a refund for the Library. Mayor Wolff asked for continued discussions with the PUC for any additional incentives for the City.

2. 2009 Budget Efficiencies: Mrs. Renskers is unsure at this point and will not know the outcome until after the audit is complete. Clerk Garrity noted that he will meet with Mr. Redshaw and Mrs. Renskers to recalculate the spreadsheets.
3. Seasonal and Casual Employees: Mr. Redshaw stated that he had given authorization to Mike Haben to employ four people for summer help. He also reported that the Parks and Recreation Department is still showing a savings of \$29,500.
4. Distribution of Insurance Fund Proceeds: Mrs. Renskers put together a spreadsheet that includes participants of plan in 2006 and the \$160,000 still stands the same at this point. However, she noted that these are not the final numbers and once the audit time is over, someone in the Finance Department should be able to review this for accuracy and to verify the numbers. Once reviewed it has to be distributed to all participants of the plan, and approved by AFSME as the bargaining union with most participant representation of the plan where they have 30 days to review. After that, then the distribution can be made. Any disputes can go to the insurance committee. Mrs. Renskers will need to contact Mr. Sellman for his interpretation of what constitutes the plan. Mayor Wolff suggested that Mrs. Renskers distribute this to the participants and the union for their review as quickly as possible. The insurance committee is scheduled to meet in July.
5. Overtime Reduction by 15%: Mr. Redshaw stated that he went to the department heads and asked if they could cut more but were unable to. Mr. Redshaw cut numbers in the budget and asked Mrs. Renskers to implement the changes into the budget.
6. City Hall Telephone Service Menu Options: Mr. Redshaw asked the department heads for a list of reasons that people call their department and that list is lengthy. A small change has been made to the menu to choose either dialing by name or department. Mr. Redshaw also ordered a direct line for the Council Office and that number will be 362-5990. Mayor Wolff requested an option to direct people to our website for certain services and also to say thank you for calling the city of Hibbing.
7. Ordinance for Lawn Applications: This item will no longer need to be reviewed further as Councilor Shafer reported the lawn services are governed by the state of Minnesota who ensures the compliance.
8. Inventory of Blue Bags: The city still has an inventory of 8 gallon bags and 15 gallon bags. Lengthy discussion was held on the plan for the blue bags. Mr. Redshaw and Mrs. Renskers will meet to discuss.

**DISCUSSION OF POLICE DEPARTMENT HIRING:** Prior authorization from Council was to hire two to three patrol officers. The department has been at 26 staff since the beginning of the year and they are budgeted for 30 staff. Job descriptions have been revamped. Calls for services are up over 14,000. Overtime is up but the department is working with four less people. Clerk Garrity noted the cuts in Legal Government Aid and yet the need for the department to function in a safe manner.

Question was raised over the job posting for the Administrative Assistant and the starting wage. The pay is based on required licenses and certifications and also the supervising responsibilities. The wages are set in the union contracts. Suggestion made to not have any hires until contracts are reviewed and any revisions made to the contracts regarding wages through negotiations

**SUMMER YOUTH PROGRAMS:** Mr. Redshaw reported that Theresa Tourville had researched the possibility of student programs as we used to have for summer student employees but there is nothing available for governmental applications. Mayor Wolff asked Mr. Redshaw to check with the work programs for senior citizens. Clerk Garrity pointed out the need for at least 3 hours a day to clean City Hall and to help out at the Memorial Building and is sure that there are programs out there that are available. Councilor Shafer mentioned to Mr. Redshaw that the Workforce Center has monies available for summer help that could be applied for. Mr. Redshaw will contact the Workforce Center.

**CITY SUBSIDIES:** Mayor Wolff stated that if we allow one organization to have free utilization of our fields then everyone would be able to make the same request. The city needs to also be able to cover the cost of wages of staff needed for field maintenance and that would justify the fee charged. The city may also need to review fees for building usage for city wide concession stands. Discussion also held on building permits and they should only be waived for Habitat for Humanity.

**10% GAMBLING CONTRIBUTION:** Councilor Sater stated that the annual reporting dates do not match as the city reporting is based on a calendar year and the state is based on a fiscal year. Councilor Sater would also like to request that the auditors look at 2005 and 2006 based on the cities calculation of the 10% gambling fund. Mr. Redshaw stated that the Gambling Commission is reviewing these calculations and should know the results within 30 days.

**EDUCATION ON GARBAGE CANS:** Councilor Bigelow stated the new canisters are being delivered along with information materials with directions of garbage pickup.

**GRANT WRITING:** This item was removed without further discussion as each department is caring for their own grant writing.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

There being no further discussion, the retreat was adjourned at 8:47 p.m.

CITY OF HIBBING

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Richard M. Wolff, Mayor

ATTEST: \_\_\_\_\_  
Patrick L. Garrity, Clerk - Treasurer