

The FINANCE COMMITTEE held a MEETING on Monday, February 10th, 2025 beginning at 6:32 P.M.

Committee Members Present:

CD: Chair Callahan, Mitchell, Schneider, Oswald
Finance: Chair Tollett, Schneider, Cerra, Siwierka, Davis
Others: Armstrong, Stewart
Excused Absence: Lipian

Administration and Department Heads Present:

Mayor Brubaker, Law Dir Deery, Safety Service Dir Pyanowski, Finance Dir Pileski, Asst. Finance Dir Farrell, Judge Bennett, Clerk Rothgery, CD Mgr. Almobayyed, WWPC Supt. Stewart, WWPC Asst. Supt Derricotte, Public Works Supt Conner, HR Dir Yousefi, Parks Dir Reardon

1. The matter of the approval of the December 9th, 2024 and January 27th, 2025 Finance Meeting Minutes, as circulated.

Motion made by Mr. Schneider and seconded by Mr. Cerra to approve said minutes.

MOTION CARRIES

2. The matter of delinquent and final EPU charges to be certified to the Lorain County Auditor's Office.

Referred By: Public Works Supervisor Conner

Supt Conner said this list of accounts were approved by the Resolution Board. The total amount of these accounts is \$21,393.58.

Mrs. Siwierka asked for background on the sanitation only account at 1614 Prospect? Dir Conner said that is a complex across from Eastern Heights school where there is a beauty shop and cake place. It's a business account.

Dir Pyanowski said there are about 40 small businesses that currently receive sanitation only from the City. They have been looked into those accounts in the past and those accounts seem to be in line with the amount.

Mrs. Siwierka asked for an update on those accounts since we'll be looking at the Sanitation charges and weather commercial businesses should be charged differently. She had a call today from a small business that asked if we do any commercial sanitation accounts, they've been shopping around and looking at what they would have to pay to Republic or Kimble. We need to establish the why and why not.

Dir Pyanowski said these accounts have already been in existence when this administration came on board. They are revising sanitation rules and they will incorporate these ideas.

Mrs. Siwierka asked about repeat offenders.

Dir Pyanowski said that a delinquency fee would be appropriate in these cases. He said they are in the process of changing the credit card provider, the contract has been finalized and IT is changing that system over. They are also revising the rules and they will add a section related to late fees and a section for fees for use of credit cards.

Mrs. Siwierka asked what is the percentage of customers that pay by credit card? Supt Conner said that is around 50% for payments made on the web, phone, at the kiosk or at the window.

Motion made by Mr. Schneider, second by Mr. Cerra authorizing a resolution for delinquent utility accounts to be certified to the Lorain County Auditor's Office.
MOTION CARRIES COMMITTEE REPORT WRITTEN

3. The matter of applying for a National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) Grant.

Referred By: Parks & Rec Dir Reardon

Dir Reardon said this was brought to her attention by McCaulley & Company. A good fit for this grant would be for the Cleveland Pops Concert that is held every year on Labor Day Weekend. It's one to one matching grant, the deadline is Feb 26th so she is asking for this to pass thru emergency. This would be for the 2026 Pops Concert event. It will be a \$23,000 grant application and the City's portion would be \$11,500 which would cover the entire event.

Mrs. Siwierka suggested to Dir Reardon to check with the Ohio Arts Council for more grants and programs. Three local artists just rec'd \$5000 each for their art projects thru the Ohio Arts Council. Something to look into.

Motion made by Mr. Cerra and second by Mr. Schneider authorizing an ordinance to apply for the 'said' grant, emergency clause due to deadline.
MOTION CARRIES COMMITTEE REPORT WRITTEN

4. The matter of pay rate increases for (a) Muni Court Employees, as discussed by Judge Bennett and (b) Non-Bargaining Chapter 165 Employees as discussed by Finance Chair Tollett.

Referred By: Council-at-Large/Finance Chair Tollett

Chair Tollett said that Muni Court employees operate under a separate pay structure then the other non-bargaining employees.

Committee members received a copy of the salary structure showing different pay rates and changes that have gone through so far this year.

Clerk Eric Rothgery, 145 Canterbury Rd., Elyria. He wanted to first say that this would not be a pay increase for himself, Judge Bennet or Judge White. It's for the court employees who are looking for the same cost of living increase as the other City employees. Currently the court is bringing in more money with court costs and it is continuing to increase.

He currently has 17 employees and when he took office 19 years ago, there were 25 employees and with technology they are making it work with less employees.

Judge Bennett said the court employees are unique in that they have certain services provided by the City through the Ohio Revised Code, but they are supervised by the Court Clerk and Judges. In the offices of Judge Bennett and Judge White there is a total of 18 employees; which includes 2-full time magistrates. They have done things to alleviate requests from the general fund. They have something called special funds. One of the things a host city has to supply to the courts is security. They set up a fund at the courts for security, so they pay the security bailiffs out of a special fund. Judge White has managed to find grants to cover the probation officers, which is a mandated employee that the host city has to provide and to come out of that special fund. The court building is being paid by special funds and court costs. They are simply asking that their employees be treated like the other employees. They are dedicated and hardworking employees.

The police dept reactivated the traffic unit last year and that has brought more money into the courts. They are one of the largest muni courts in the State of Ohio. They receive grants from a program called 'Elyria Drives' and that is for anyone in the community to help them get a driver's license.

Chair Tollett said he circulated the details on how EPD traffic control effected the courts and that there were 11,000 citations from May to the end of last year. Also, for reference, Muni Court represents not just Elyria, but also N Ridgeville, Grafton, LaGrange, Carlisle, Columbia, Eaton, Elyria Township.

Mrs. Mitchell asked that out of all the communities Muni court hears, is Elyria the only one that pays the wages?

Judge Bennett said no.

Clerk Rothgery added that a lot of the wages come from host city. Some are paid from the specialty funds. They collect court costs from the other cities for cases they send to muni court.

Dir Pileski said we bill Grafton, LaGrange, N Ridgeville every year and it's limited to what the courts send them. They do a calculation of what it costs to run thru muni court, but they're limited in Ohio Revised Code as to what they send back from what they receive.

Clerk Rothgery said there has been a push from Columbus to get rid of Mayor's courts. That would benefit the City by bringing in more money, especially from N Ridgeville. Mayor's court is where a city can set up their own traffic court and charge fines, but it's limited. There are only 2 states that still have mayor's court; Ohio and Louisiana.

Mr. Stewart said he struggles with this because the way we've done this with chapter 165 and muni courts to continually give what AFSCME gets, with the 6%, 5% and 4% over 3 years, though the courts are not a bargaining unit. He was hoping they could look at the salary schedule to see where the courts are with other departments.

Judge Bennett said that they are a different branch of government.

Mr. Stewart said it was decided in 2021 that they would look at it in one year to see where the city is at financially and the following two years to reenact those following two pay increases over and through. He's struggling with giving 6, 5, 4.

Dir Pileski said the cost for the muni court employees at 6% would be \$143,000, the second year at 5% would be \$126,000 and the third year at 4% would be \$107,000.

Mrs. Siwierka said she agrees with her college, it's difficult to do this increase without a salary structure or study. She did a study for Avon Lake which was good information and it showed where they were in the market. Could we do the 6% and put the 5% and 4% on hold? What's the average longevity for the court employees?

Clerk Rothgery said average would be about 10% longevity.

Mrs. Siwierka said that in addition to a 6% pay increase, these employees are getting an additional 10% (or however many years), because they still get longevity, because they were not part of the salary study. There are some employees that have had their pay increase in 2024 and she wondered how that came about. If we are giving a blanket amount of money, some employees just received an increase as late as Dec. 2024.

There was discussion between Clerk Rothgery and Mrs. Siwierka regarding some employees who had additional duties and a change in pay but Clerk Rothgery was not speaking into the microphone and his part of the discussion was not able to be heard.

Clerk Rothgery said at the end of the discussion into the microphone, that he shouldn't have to justify every employee's pay. Those that have moved in the steps have moved because they've taken on additional responsibilities. He reminded the committee that they have gone from 25 or 25 employees to 17.

Mrs. Davis said she thought this was for discussion only.

Dir Deery said if someone wishes to put forth a motion, then they can vote.

Mr. Stewart said to Judge Bennett, Judge White and Clerk Rothgery, they all appreciate all the hard work they do. Are we just focusing on Muni Court at this time?

Chair Tollett said they will go into discussion on Ch 168 after this discussion. He was specific in his referral. He wanted it separate because they operate independently of one another. And they will be separate committee reports.

Motion made by Mr. Tollett and second by Mr. Cerra authorizing the 'said' pay rate increase of 6% for the year 2025, for the Muni Court employees, effective upon passage of legislation, and remaining years to be held in abeyance.

MOTION CARRIES COMMITTEE REPORT WRITTEN

Roll Call Vote taken: Davis: NAY, Siwierka: NAY, Schneider: NAY, Cerra: AYE, Tollett: AYE

Dir Deery said this matter will proceed to Council as a minority report.

Judge Bennett asked why his employees are not being treated fairly?

Mrs. Siwierka said from her perspective, she thinks they are being fair by giving the first jump and these employees are still getting longevity which could be up to 10 to 15 percent more and it sounded like Mr. Rothgery was willing to have conversation about looking at a salary scale which would keep employees from having to come back to council, they would have 8 to 10 salary steps that would automatically move them up. This is not meant to slight any of the hard-working employees at the courts, they deserve respect for what they do. At this point in time, we are committing to a 6% increase to them.

Amended Motion:

Motion made by Mrs. Siwierka and second by Mrs. Davis to amend the previous committee report to give the muni court employees a 6% increase and then to revisit the additional increases at a later date and to make this effective in keeping with the next full pay period so it can be appropriately adopted.

**MOTION CARRIES COMMITTEE REPORT WRITTEN
All AYES**

Chair Tollett said the next part, which is part B is the non-bargaining Chapter 165.

HR Dir Yousefi said employees can get a step increase which is 3 percent, which happens on their anniversary and that is the move from one step to the next step within a salary structure, it could be anytime during the course of the year. When there is an overall increase, like a cost of living increase at the beginning of the year, that is not really considered as a new rate, because everyone goes up the same percentage.

Director Farrell said if there is a 3% increase that everyone gets, everyone of the 13 steps on the salary structure would go up that 3%. The difference between the steps 0 thru 6 is 3% and the difference 6 to 7 is 2.5%.

Mrs. Siwierka said the salary study that took place in 2019 created a road map for anyone that was hired in a managerial role. It could see earnings from year one to year 15. Every other year they would go up one step and then skipped and then every other year. At one time we only had 3 steps and it was impossible to backfill a number of credentialed personal. What everyone on the committee has in front of them is where these employees are, what their pay rate is, what the next step is, what is their annual amount, what would their new rate be and what is that percentage. Some are at the top step. This salary scale removed longevity. There are about 14 employees that need to be looked at and discussed in more detail, before a 6 percent increase. In her experience, we should look at these dedicated employees, that they have some kind of review on performance. Some will go up a step and get the 3 percent that's already built in. This could be discussed in executive session and have employee names because we have multiple employees that have the same title, but different pay and different years of service.

Chair Tollett asked if they could ask HR and SSD to prepare answers requested? This would be tabled this evening and anyone on the committee can submit their request on any specific employee and then they could go into executive session.

HR Dir said she has requested in the budget to do a review of the Ch 165 salary study so they can take a look to see if they've gone off track on any position. She has an identifier on her file so she can look at which employees and positions are be looked at.

Dir Pyanowski suggested everyone explain what they are asking and he and the HR Dir can work together to get those questions answered. He said he counted 11 managers that have topped out at step 12 and they no longer move up., unless they go to the next level and to a lower step at that level.

HR Dir said the union contracts do have an A, B and C rate, so they do progress as well as longevity.

Motion made by Mrs. Siwierka and second by Mrs. Davis to table this until time to get additional input and questions answered and for strategic planning to look at this and then to go to executive session.

**MOTION CARRIES COMMITTEE REPORT WRITTEN
All AYES**

5. The matter of Amendments to the 2025 Temporary Appropriations.

Referred By: Finance Directors Pileski and Farrell [*Standing Referral*]

Dir Pileski said there was one change this evening, in the general fund legal administration department, bumping up operating & maintenance by \$30,000 for some outside legal service bills that are due, this is requested by the Law Director.

Motion made by Mr. Schneider and second by Mr. Cerra authorizing an ordinance to amend the 2025 Temporary Appropriations, per attached.

MOTION CARRIES COMMITTEE REPORT WRITTEN

Chair Tollett asked for a motion to adjourn Finance:

FINANCE

Motion made by Mr. Cerra and second by Mrs. Davis to adjourn this Finance meeting at 7:45 P.M.

MOTION CARRIES

Respectfully Submitted by,
Colleen Rosado, Clerk Secretary/Administrative Assistant