

Personnel Committee Meeting -August 09, 2021

The Personnel Committee of the City of Aledo met in Open Session in the Council Chambers of the City Hall building on August 09, 2021. Committee Chair DIXON called the meeting to order at 6:31 P.M. The roll was called, whereupon the following committee members answered present:

Aldermen MICHAEL CHAUSSE, DENNIS DIXON, ZACH FRICK, and LINDA SARABASA. Mayor CHRISTOPHER HAGLOCH.

Also present were BARRY COOPER, Alderman, JAY DOHERTY, Alderman, JIM HOLMES, Alderman, CHRIS SULLIVAN, City Administrator / Chief of Police, and JAROD DALE, City Clerk

The media was represented by Jim Taylor, WRMJ.

Minutes: No Minutes to approve.

Old Business: No Report.

New Business:

Discussion hiring a Full-time Water / Wastewater Worker in the Public Works Department:

CJ Aldinger was hired as a seasonal employee in the Water Division this summer. CJ had previously interviewed for the Water/Wastewater worker. Staff, at that time, chose not to hire anyone for that position due to lack of experience in the related fields of water or wastewater operations, or requirements to obtain operator licenses after they would be hired.

With Ion Environmental being our water and wastewater operators, the Department has put emphasis on distribution and distribution maintenance. This has led to a shift in our thinking on a worker for the division. Rather than hiring a worker that would later require operator certifications, we just need physical labor. Superintendent Frieden has done a tremendous job of organizing, researching, learning, and planning items to be included in the GIP Budget and these items will require manpower to get completed. CJ has done very well with this and works well with the Superintendent. We both feel he would be a quality employee and be a good addition to the Department of Public Works.

Consensus by the Personnel Committee to move the hiring of CJ Aldinger as a Water / Water Worker be moved to the City Council for final approval.

Discussion hiring a Full-time Gas Worker in the Public Works Department:

ADMINISTRATOR/CHIEF Sullivan reported Gavin King, Gas Worker submitted his resignation in June, 2021 and a second man is also need in the gas division. CHIEF noted City Staff will need to advertise and solicit applicants for this particular position.

Discussion related to the position of Cemetery Sexton in the Public Works Department:

MAYOR Hagloch reported Ed Dellitt has preliminary plans to retire by the end of 2022. It was noted Ellie Lower was hired as a seasonal employee in the Cemetery Division starting in the summer of 2018. She had been a seasonal employee for the past four years. She is a 2021 graduate of Western Illinois University with a degree in business management.

This past summer, she has taken on more responsibilities with performing funerals, running day to day operations, and providing insight and ideas on how the Cemetery operations could be operated more efficiently. She has been willing to take on those responsibilities and works well with the Sexton.

She has expressed some interest in being a Cemetery Sexton, and I think hiring her on as a full-time employee would be a good addition to the Public Works Department and give staff and her some more time to see if that is a real possibility.

Discussion was held to re-activate the position of Utility Worker and to update the current job description and approve Ellie Lower as a Utility Worker in the Public Works Department in the interim.

Discussion hiring Full-time Aledo Police Officers in the Aledo Police Department:

The Police Department has had a serious rate of turnover in both the recent past and historically. It has been a continuous problem for the Department. There is a long list of officers who have spent less than two years with the Department and many with less than a year of service to the City.

This has always been a burden on Department and the City financially. It costs approximately \$7,000.00 for the academy tuition alone. There are additional costs for uniforms, equipment, and for other necessary training classes. The officer's salary should also figure into the amount we consider wasted when an officer leaves the Department. We pay them a full salary, with benefits, while in the academy for fourteen (14) weeks, plus the weeks of preparation before the academy and the field training months afterwards.

The City has an investment in the officer of between \$30,000.00 and \$40,000.00 before they work a single shift on their own as a trained officer. During the entire time the officer is being trained, the other officers work shorthanded and cover open shifts on overtime. In the case of Lt. Seefeld, Sgt. Baker, and myself, it means just covering shifts for the same pay as we are salaried employees.

There are numerous reasons officers have left the Department. They include higher salaries available in other Departments, the fact that Aledo is a small town with few opportunities for promotion, and there is a relatively low crime rate which means a slower pace of work.

In the past, we have been able to just continuously hire and train officers. Unfortunately, other factors have begun to make that almost impossible. With the anti-police sentiment across the nation, and the media turning extremely negative to police officers, we have had fewer and fewer people willing to even accept the positions in the first place. One of the officers who recently left the Department actually left law enforcement completely. He stated, "I didn't sign up to be the bad guy." He told me he did want to be a in a profession where everyone would resent him.

The last time we advertised for officers we got absolutely zero applicants. In the previous advertised period for applications we had two (2) people fill out applications. One came in for an interview and declined to test for the job. The 2nd declined to even interview.

Most of our recent hires have been people who we actively solicited to accept positions with the Department. Our newest officer is already retired and we actively solicited him for over a year. We got him to leave a Department he was employed by, and accept a job with the Aledo Police Department.

There are several possible strategies that could help reduce the attrition and offset the lack of interest in entering policing today:

1. I believe we need to actively search for and recruit veteran officers who are about to retire and are looking for either another full-time job in law enforcement or are willing to work a couple days/shifts a week to supplement their pensions. While these officers will not put in 30 years of service, there is almost no cost to train them and they are likely to stay with the Department for a much longer time period than the officers we have been hiring and sending to the academy.
2. Hampton, Illinois, has number of dedicated officers who work part-time for the Village. Some are full-time officers with other Departments and some work only

part-time and have other regular full-time jobs. Some are retired from other departments. Hampton is able to recruit people who will take their part-time jobs and stay with the Department long term because they have a relatively high pay scale for part-time employees. They can pay a high rate for part-time officers as part-time employees receive no other benefits.

3. Aledo could offer a higher starting pay rate to officers who have already been trained, are currently certified, and in good standing with their current Department. The rate we pay officers who have been employed by Aledo for several years is considerably higher than what we pay officers who are new hires. Allowing a lateral hire pay rate could make coming to this department much more attractive. Few officers want to change Departments and take a substantial pay cut to do so.
4. I believe all incoming officers who have to attend academy training, and in whom we will have a large investment of time and money, should have to sign a contract requiring the repayment of those training costs if they leave the Department within two (2) years of graduating from the academy. The Department had such a contract in the past. The City could not enforce contracts outside the scope of the union bargaining agreements once the officers were affiliated with a union. That is no longer the case, as they voluntarily withdrew from their union recently.

ALO. Cooper inquired if a new candidate could sign a no-compete clause. ADMINISTRATOR/CHIEF Sullivan reported he is in current discussion with City Attorney Walton related to that item and the validity of doing that possibly.

The Personnel Committee also discussed increasing full-time workers wages. It was noted and has been evaluated the difference between current wages for Aledo Police Officers compared to Mercer County Sheriff Department employees. Employees at MCSD receive a squad vehicle that can be taken home after every shift and they can answer any calls from home if needed.

CHIEF reported with the CARES Act that dollars could be issued to those employees who were required to work through the COVID 19 Pandemic, those who could not work from home, and had to work additional hours or emergency response employees. This could be provided in a bonus.

The Personnel Committee recommended increasing the part-time officer pay-rate and to also create an agreement with all future new employees.

Discussion related to the position of Utility Billing Clerk in the Administrative Department:

CITY CLERK Dale reported Rose Bodeen has submitted her formal notice for retirement. Plans will be for Bodeen to retire in June, 2022. City Staff are looking to solicit applications for her replacement and would like to hire the new employee by January, 2022. Plans would be for her replacement to train for six (6) months with Rose before her retirement.

City Staff to move forward and issue a job announcement for the position of Utility Billing Clerk.

ADJOURNMENT: There being no further business, motion was made by ALDERMAN CHAUSSE and seconded by ALDERMAN FRICK that the meeting be adjourned. Unanimous voice vote followed in agreement. Meeting was adjourned at 7:20 P.M.

Jarod Dale, City Clerk