

Nowthen City Council
November 9, 2023
Work Session Meeting Minutes

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Pilon called the meeting to order at 6:13 pm.

Present: Mayor Pilon, Council Members Fladebo, Rainville.

Excused Absence: Council Member Breyen (home ill)

Unexcused Absence: Council Member Alders

Also Present: Administrator Lehner, Finance Consultant Lori Yager, Project Manager Genevieve Hirschboeck, and Deputy Clerk Johnson.

Mayor Pilon stated that 3 council members had a call from the same resident asking if this work session would be recorded. Discussion ensued regarding it is not required to record all meetings on video, only in meeting minutes. Administrator Lehner stated it is common not to record work sessions so council members can come in casual clothing, discuss things such as both pros and cons of items on the agenda. If a resident would like to attend, all work sessions are in an open forum, and they are welcome to attend. The items on the agenda will be brought up at the "business meeting" (regular council meeting) and voted on at that time. It was mentioned that the MN Open Meeting law requirements are met as the meeting is open to the public and the meeting minutes would be posted online after the meeting.

MAYOR PILON CALLED A VOTE ON WHETHER THIS SESSION WOULD BE RECORDED. 1 AYE, (Mayor Pilon) 2 NAYS (Council Members Rainville and Fladebo). MOTION FAILED.

Mayor Pilon stated he would like to move Item 3, "Personnel Policy Update Presentation" to Item 2 and move Item 2 "Discussion to finalize 2024 Budget" to Item 3, to allow Project Manager Genevieve Hirschboeck to leave after discussion.

MOTION BY COUNCIL MEMBER RAINVILLE, SECONDED BY FLADEBO TO ACCEPT THE AGENDA AS AMENDED. 3 AYES. MOTION CARRIED.

2. PERSONNEL POLICY UPDATE PRESENTATION

Project Manager Hirschboeck explained that the personnel policy has many changes to be updated. This is Phase 1 of a couple of Phases. These forthcoming updates are to bring the policy into compliance with new legislation and League of Minnesota Cities' recommendations.

Please see attached proposed updates.

The largest recommended change is the probationary period. Additional verbiage should be added that while no PTO can be used during the probationary period, ESST may be used. Genevieve to add to the policy draft. It is recommended that there be informal performance meetings with the employee and supervisor providing both the employee and supervisor with the opportunity to address what is going well and what needs improvement. PTO would be accrued

but not used during the probationary period and if an employee leaves employment with the city before 6 months, no payout for vacation would be issued.

At this point, it was decided to start at the beginning with proposed updates.

1. Definitions – self explanatory
2. Direct Deposit – it wasn't a written policy; however, all employees do have direct deposit.
3. Improper Deduction and Overpayment – The city of Nowthen did not have a written policy about this.

ACTION ITEM: Does the LMC have a recommended time frame for reimbursement to be made?

4. Holidays – Added Juneteeth – June 19th. As required by State Legislation. It was noted that the city is not required to pay for mandated Holidays; however, they do choose to.

ACTION ITEM: Council Member Rainville is requesting a number of hours / days out of the office.

5. PTO – Discussion ensued how this affected the current employees and new employees in regard to ESST mandated by legislation. New information is coming out from legislation and the way Genevieve understands it, the city of Nowthen PTO policy covers the requirements of ESST, but the council needs to determine a way to display the balances on the pay stubs each payroll.

ACTION ITEM: 5h. – this still needs a decision – how will PTO be addressed for new employees? Council Members please research and bring back your proposal to the next work session for personnel policy updates.

6. Extended Medical Benefit – Would continue for existing employees.

ACTION ITEM: Council needs to decide if this will be a benefit for new employees going forward.

7. FMLA – the city is not required to use FMLA as the city has less than 50 employees. However, if the term FMLA is used in the city policy, then those are the standards that are expected to be met. Council Member Rainville pointed out that the LMC appears to have conflicting information on whether a city must follow FMLA if they have less than 50 employees.

ACTION ITEM: Council to determine what are Nowthen's Medical Leave Benefits? Genevieve to confirm FMLA rules with LMC.

8. Funeral Leave – The recommendation by the LMC is to remove this benefit from the personnel policy. Administrator Lehner would like more information on what the surrounding cities are doing and revisit this issue if PTO needs to be split into Vacation and Sick Time.

ACTION ITEM: Genevieve to investigate what surrounding cities are offering for funeral time.

9. School Conference Leave – new legislation – this change is mandated. Additional changes were mandated by the state for cities with more than 20 employees.

ACTION ITEM: Genevieve to research if paid on-call firefighters count towards this count.

10. Nursing Mothers – new legislation, this change is mandated.
11. Smoking Verbiage – changed to meet the MN clean indoor air act. Discussion whether to allow smoking in city vehicles. Administrator Lehner explained if there are more than two (2) people in the vehicle, no – this is part of the clean indoor air act. If it is only one person in the vehicle, yes, allow the employee to smoke. It is unsafe for an employee to pull over while snow plowing or hauling gravel to have a “smoke break.”
12. Safety Shoes – a change to have the employee discuss new purchases with the administrator to determine if new shoes are needed.
13. Reprimands – LMC recommending very specific requirements.

ACTION ITEM: Genevieve to prepare a form meeting these requirements for any oral or written reprimand.

14. Veteran’s Preference – added recommendation from LMC.
15. Grievance Policy – LMC recommends very specific requirements.
16. City Credit Card – Developing a limit each employee can spend and determining a monthly credit limit. The city did hit its limit last month due to several larger purchases and an employee was denied at a counter while trying to make a purchase. Deputy Clerk Johnson was able to make a phone payment so credit would be available for the rest of the month. It was discussed to increase the total limit from \$7,500 to \$10,000. Discussion on whether a separate monthly limit is required should be established for each department: Public Works Department, Administration Department, Fire Department and Administrative Staff.

ACTION ITEM – City council to determine these amounts. Please bring your recommendation to the next work session.

Other discussion items:

Terms were changed City Clerk/Treasurer to Administrator

Council would like it in the policy that Holiday Pay or Vacation/Sick (PTO) is 8 hours. If at some point the city goes back to 10 hours a day, if it is a Holiday/Vacation/Sick day, 8 hours is paid by city, and PTO covers the other 2.

The mayor suggested since it was getting late, let’s move on to the budget and set another work session date with the full council possibly available and act on the action items, bring back their recommendations, and finish up this part of the policy. All Council members present agreed. Genevieve agreed and reminded the council that this is Phase 1 of multiple Phases of updates.

3. DISCUSSION TO FINALIZE THE 2024 BUDGET

Finance Consultant Yager addressed the mayor and the council stating this is the fourth meeting for the 2024 budget discussions. The levy has been set with the county and changes discussed at the last meeting have been made.

A question of whether the new legislation was considered when developing the budget. The answer Ms. Yager gave was “yes” due to the ESST legislation. With the new sick and safe time legislation, the city will be paying “leave” 1 hour per 30 hours worked for part-time employees. It is in the budget; it is time away from work. However, due to new legislation regarding early voting, was not. Discussion to add Overtime to the election wages since the hours have been extended with Saturday and Sunday to be included in those hours. Note: 3 Saturdays and 1 Sunday (only the General Election states the Sunday before the election). Plus, the long day of election has never been coded to elections, just administration.

ACTION ITEM: Ms. Yager to add election overtime to the budget.

With one resignation and one retirement at the Fire Department, Administrator Lehner is anticipating needing to continue the relationship with St. Francis Fire Department and lean on the Chief more than was anticipated; therefore, the contract amount of \$20,000 transitioning leadership to the NFD is going to be more. He is still negotiating with the St. Francis Administrator but is hoping to get the contract around \$35,000.

ACTION ITEM: Ms. Yager to change Fire Department Contract to \$40,000.

Everything else in the budget looks good. Ms. Yager to make the recommended changes to the budget and make a final resolution for the December 12, 2023 city council meeting.

4. FULL-TIME PUBLIC WORKS POSITION

Issac Schulz has been working for the Public Works Department all summer as a seasonal employee. He has made an impact on the department with his knowledge and skill. He is also an NFD firefighter. Administrator Lehner is recommending offering Isaac the open full-time Public Works position, which is included in the 2024 budget. This would give the department a succession plan to move forward after Joe’s retirement someday. The department has been understaffed for some time and Isaac will be a great asset to the city. The offer would be \$25 an hour plus benefits for the Public Works Department position to start. There are some reporting details to be worked out regarding the city PERA and the NDF Pension; however, there isn’t a concern Deputy Clerk Johnson and Ms. Yager will get a process in place to record retirement hours. Isaac has agreed to get his CDL so he will be able to drive the large city trucks. This will be voted on at the next city council meeting, November 14, 2023.

5. FIRE DEPARTMENT UPDATE

Assistant Fire Chief Schrag has resigned from his position with the NFD.

Steve "Beaver" Lundeen has resigned from his position with the NFD.

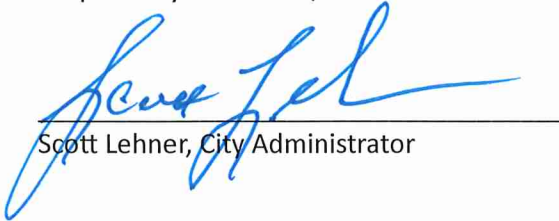
Captain Mike Suchy will be retiring from his position with the NFD in April of 2024.

The NFD will continue to train the 4 recruits and continue to recruit additional firefighters as they become available.

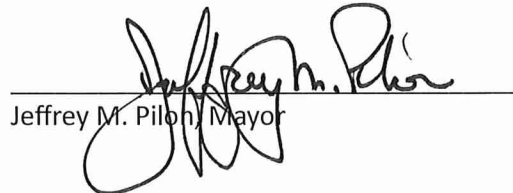
MOTION BY COUNCIL MEMBER RAINVILLE, SECONDED BY FLADEBO TO ADJOURN.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:37 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,



Scott Lehner, City Administrator



Jeffrey M. Pilon, Mayor