



MINUTES
Committee of the Whole
Monday, October 16, 2023 @ 5:30 p.m.
Tony Benavides Lansing City Council Chambers

CALL TO ORDER

Council President Wood called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

PRESENT

Council Member Carol Wood
Council Member Jeremy Garza
Councilmember Adam Hussain
Councilmember Peter Spadafore
Councilmember Patricia Spitzley
Councilmember Brian T. Jackson
Councilmember Jeffrey Brown
Councilmember Ryan Kost

OTHERS PRESENT

Sherrie Boak, Council Office Manager
Jim Smiertka, City Attorney
Lisa Hagen-Lawrence, City Attorney
Emily Linden, Internal Auditor
Mark Lawrence, Mayor's Office
Elizabeth O'Leary, HR Director
Dominic Cochran, City TV
Kim Coleman, HRCS Director
Loretta Stanaway
Michael Lynn
Erika Lynn

Minutes

MOTION BY COUNCIL MEMBER GARZA TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FROM SEPTEMBER 18, 2023. MOTION CARRIED 8-0.

Public Comment

Ms. Stanaway spoke on the cost of warming and cooling centers agenda item, noting there was an RFP request in the paper for a warming center at LETTS.

Mr. Lynn asked Council to on the warming and cooling centers, asked them to not take action on the HRCS ordinance. He then asked them to speak to the HR Director on funding for the fire department and fire department hiring. He concluded by informing the Council he plans to file an ethics complaint in the future.

Ms. Lynn voiced support for warming and cooling centers, and asked Council not to consider any amendments on the HRCS ordinances. She also spoke briefly on an ethics complaint they will be filing, hoping Council would pursue seeking outside counsel.

Presentations

City of Lansing Human Resource Department

Council President Wood briefly spoke on previous meetings where department directors or representative have been present. Council has questions that they need to have answered, questions from the public, constituents, or employees. She asked the Committee to allow Ms. O'Leary to answer any question, but also make sure they ask the questions they have been asked to ask from their public and constituents.

Ms. O'Leary spoke briefly on the HR Department and the hiring practices of the City. The overview of the process begins with the department, then a kick off meeting. This meeting addresses job description and if there are significant changes, then per union contracts, some descriptions go to the union. Ms. O'Leary spoke briefly on the next steps with the assessments of applicants, background checks, and onboarding. Each position might be different based on the position. Regarding a timeline, they are assessing the process to address the efficiencies in the department. Dependent on the position this could be 3-6 months. Regarding if the HRCS DEI Manager is on the hiring process, and Ms. O'Leary confirmed they are not, but they are reviewing the processes. In HR there is a vacancy in the health and wellness tech, the retirement position, two hiring specialist positions have been filled. Regarding if OCA is included in hiring, and Ms. O'Leary stated they have been made aware of an issue with the HRCS investigator position and will address this in the future.

Council Member Garza asked if they are assessing moving the process along faster. Ms. O'Leary stated they have looked at and doing some phases at the same time. They are working in the best practices and hiring practices for the City. Council Member Garza asked if they have reviewed other municipalities to see if competitive with wages. Ms. O'Leary stated that with last contracts with 3% has helped, there are 19 recruits recently and 12 going through. There is a push on background to make things expeditious. Council Member Garza asked about reclassification, and if that gets done before HR. Ms. O'Leary stated the hiring specialist do reclassifications also, which entails a desk audit, notes are sent back to the incumbent, and then sent to the outside counsel Segal. She expanded on what the hiring specialists do.

Council Member Kost asked if they have reached out to the State on their hiring practices. Ms. O'Leary introduced Kyla Moore, Deputy HR Director, and stated she has the experiences.

Council Member Hussain asked if it 3-6 months from the start when hearing from the director to the filling. The average time is 3-6 weeks, and asked if there are two different windows. Ms. O'Leary confirmed it is the whole process. Council Member Hussain asked what average time from posting to hire. Ms. O'Leary stated depends on the position. Council Member Hussain asked if there is a way to look at that. He then asked how many employees in HR, and was told 15 FTE, and some temporary employees for hiring. He asked for what best practice is, and if HR has routinely requested in their budget for more staff. Ms. O'Leary stated she will always ask for more staff. Currently there are 3 FTE hiring specialists, one manager and one starting Monday. There is a capacity issue to hiring, and defensible, and they continue to look at processes to see what efficiencies they can make.

Council Member Kost asked how many positions vacant in the City. Ms. O'Leary stated 162, there are 25 firefighters Monday, 12 slated for January going through vetting. Council Member Kost asked out of the 162 how many vacant. Council President Wood noted that on the website there is not a huge list of vacant positions, and asked if there is a way to show all vacant not just the ones filling. Ms. O'Leary stated if there are vacant positions listed that are not posted, it would be confusing.

Council Member Brown referred to the process noted, and asked if there is a process for prioritizing key positions. Ms. O'Leary explained that directors send a priority list, and if high priority that will take precedence over others depending on the list. Council Member Brown asked how long the commission investigator and DEI was vacant. Ms. O'Leary stated August on DEI in 2023, would check, and the investigator was July 2023. Council Member Brown asked about internal hiring and external hiring for streamlining process vetting. Ms. O'Leary stated internal not doing the extended vetting. Council Member Brown asked about hiring specialist role. Ms. O'Leary stated each specialist hires for multiple departments, and she outlined what department each specialist does.

Council Member Spitzley asked if there is a capacity issue, and do they need more people. Ms. O'Leary confirmed. Council Member Spitzley noted that at one point there was DEI Manager and asked that the DEI Manager is involved in the hiring and vetting. She was encouraged by an earlier comment by Ms. O'Leary that there is a diverse panel in hiring. She asked about HR staffing on the employee complaints. Ms. O'Leary stated that is another area of HR and needs to be looked at for additional support. Council Member Spitzley that employees need to be able to come to HR for their issues and support.

Council Member Jackson acknowledged the challenges in the hiring.

Council Member Brown stepped away at 6:09 p.m.

Council Member Jackson continued the discussion on any recommendations for City Council to make the process better in filling the positions quickly. Ms. O'Leary assured the Committee that they are assessing each process.

Council Member Brown returned to the meeting at 6:10 p.m.

Regarding implementation, with LPD they are doing some steps consistently at the same time to shorten processes.

Council Member Hussain acknowledged the work HR does, but regards to the process piece, and what the anticipated date of having that study done on their assessment. Ms. O'Leary stated in 6 months, because key is talking to the team, and she wanted their input and valued and taken into consideration before any decisions are made. Council Member Hussain then spoke on lateral moves. Ms. O'Leary stated it depends on the priority of the department.

Council Member Jackson stepped away from the meeting at 6:13 p.m.

Council Member Hussain provided an example of filling positions and asked she was ever asked to keep a position vacant. Ms. O'Leary stated she cannot confirm that was stated to her, but they will tell her what they have prioritized.

Council Member Brown asked if there is a benchmark at full capacity, and it appears an assessments will come in the future.

Council Member Kost noted there are 24 posted on the website, and asked if there is something that can be improved in posting positions. Ms. O'Leary stated they are looking at the efficiencies.

Council Member Jackson returned to the meeting at 6:17 p.m.

Council Member Kost asked how many candidates are missed, because they have taken another job during the process. Ms. O'Leary stated they would see if they can capture that information.

Council Member Spadafore noted the vacancy factor report last submitted, and asked if there is a review of the list of vacancies, and does HR look at those and determine if those will never be filled. Ms. O'Leary stated they have not considered that, but busy making sure they are looking at that. Council Member Spadafore stated it would be helpful for Council to know for funding if those positions will ever be filled.

Council Member Hussain encouraged them to be careful, that if vacant for years, some people are concerned with lack of services.

Council President Wood asked Ms. O'Leary about the process of posting, if she has worked with department directors and retirement to see the potential of retiring within a year, to move forward with "pre-work" in having those positions filled. Ms. O'Leary stated succession planning is huge on their list. Council President Wood asked about contracts and if there is a provision on how long those can be vacant, and Ms. O'Leary confirmed and they are working with the UAW on efficiencies. Council President Wood noted some contracts have issues with "contract" positions, instead of hiring FTE.

Council Member Garza asked about postings, in relation to red tag properties and building safety and code positions, and why those are not on there. Ms. O'Leary stated she would provide an answer in writing on why that.

Council President Wood noted that an LFD station was taken offline for 4 hours, because no staffing. Ms. O'Leary reiterated there are a number starting Monday. Regarding the station unstaffed, there were positions out taking testing that day. Committee encouraged the third party that sets the testing up work on scheduling in the future. Ms. O'Leary stated that would be best to be asked of the Fire Chief.

Council Member Kost asked for the number of contractual workers doing union jobs that are vacant. Ms. O'Leary confirmed she could get that information to Council.

Ovation Center Update

Mr. Cochran informed the Committee that there is a name change of MSUFCU Ovation Center with their investment for naming rights. Currently they are focused on a version of the project and will continue to fundraise to enhance the project.

Council Member Spitzley stepped away from the meeting at 6:30 p.m.

Mr. Cochran noted they are in the process of filling gap in funding for enhanced services. In the meantime they are doing site work, soil testing, and will put out an RFP for brand identity.

Council Member Spitzley returned to the meeting at 6:31 p.m.

The overall timeline, Mr. Cochran stated, was to open in fall 2025.

Council President Wood stated the project was \$20 million and asked what it is now. Mr. Cochran confirmed they still have the \$20 million project, but does not have the mezzanine level, and this is a gateway to downtown Lansing, so expanding will have more of a presences. The new amount they are looking at is \$26-\$27 million, and they will not be coming to City Council for more money. The entire block is a Brownfield plan and leveraging that would be great. There are no additional requests for the City, and the bond was for \$20 million and the only amount on the books would be the amount that would be paid by PEG fees, as long as everything is successful.

Council President Wood then noted a memo from Mr. Cochran on a sole source they were moving forward. She then asked when that sole source would be brought to Council, and a contract was

already signed in June. Mr. Cochran stated a memo was sent to the Mayor. Council President Wood stated there is a process. Mr. Smiertka stated it was sent to Council and the Clerk, and later told it needed to be in LF. Council President Wood noted the contract was signed in June, and the memo came to Council in August.

Council President Wood stated the ordinance is specific that the sole source comes before the contract is signed.

Council Member Spitzley asked where the City is financially. Mr. Cochran stated they are fully funded; 100%, which is \$18.5 million and continuing to fund raise. Council Member Spitzley asked about the earlier Brownfield statement asked if they anticipate for a TIF as a result of the block being a Brownfield. Mr. Cochran stated he does not have the answer but anticipates a brownfield.

Council Member Spadafore, asked OCA, if this is City owned and tax exempt then there is no Brownfield eligibility. Council President Wood stated he is correct.

Council Member Hussain asked if they are contemplating capturing taxes.

Council Member Spadafore stepped away from the meeting 6:43 p.m.

Mr. Cochran stated he was anticipating capturing taxes from the neighboring properties. Council President Wood stated that he cannot anticipate capturing taxes on properties the City does not own.

Council Member Hussain asked if we have raised \$1 million and where that came from. Mr. Cochran first clarified that the total financing they have already is \$18.5 million, and their additional funding raising has brought close to \$2 million, and they will continue to fundraise. Council Member Hussain asked about upkeep and maintenance and Mr. Cochran stated that the pro-form does take into upkeep as an allowance.

Council Member Spadafore returned to the meeting at 6:46 p.m.

Council President Wood requested that Mr. Cochran have the sole source on the October 30, 2023 Council meeting agenda for referral and it needs to follow the ordinance.

DISCUSSION/ACTION

RESOLUTION – Reappointment; Deshon Leek; 3rd Ward Member; LBWL

MOTION BY COUNCIL MEMBER GARZA TO APPROVE THE RESOLUTION FOR THE REAPPOINTMENT OF DESHON LEEK TO THE 3RD WARD MEMBER POSITION ON THE LBWL COMMISSION.

Council Member Jackson stated that the BWL Commissioners should have the specialized training to implement the goals they have set forth.

Council Member Brown spoke in support of the reappointment.

MOTION CARRIED 7-1.

DISCUSSION – Requested Reports in the Budget Policies from the Adopted FY 2023/2024 Budget Resolution; Cost of Warming and Cooling Centers; Stump Grinding; Community Mental Health Social Worker Housing Outreach Specialist

Consensus from the Committee to move this discussion to the October 30, 2023 meetings.

RESOLUTION – City Council Meeting Schedule for 2024

Consensus from the Committee to move this discussion to the October 30, 2023 meetings.

DISCUSSION/ORDINANCE - Amendment to Chapter 240, Section 240.02, 240.03, 240.04; Clarify role of Human Relations and Community Services (HRCS) Advisory Board

Consensus from the Committee to move this discussion to the October 30, 2023 meetings.

DISCUSSION/ORDINANCE -Amendment to Chapter 273, Section 273.01 and 273.04; Clarify Role of Human Relations and Community Services (HRCS) Advisory Board

Consensus from the Committee to move this discussion to the October 30, 2023 meetings.

OTHER

No other topics at this time.

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 6:52 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted by,

Sherrie Boak, Recording Secretary, Lansing City Council

Approved by the Committee October 30, 2023