

**Memorandum of the Meeting  
Regular Study Session/Meeting  
Twenty-Eighth Town Council of Highland  
Monday, September 19, 2016**

The regular study session of the Twenty-Eighth Town Council of the Town of Highland was convened at the regular place, the Highland Municipal, 3333 Ridge Road, Highland, Indiana, in the plenary meeting chambers on **Monday, September 19, 2016** at the time of 7:07 o'clock p.m.

**Silent Roll Call:** Councilors Mark Herak, Dan Vassar, Steve Wagner, Konnie Kuiper and Bernie Zemen were present. The Clerk-Treasurer Michael W. Griffin was present to memorialize the proceedings.

*Also present:* Randy Bowman, Assistant Inspector for Electric; Susan Murovic, Advisory Board of Zoning Appeals, were present.

Sergeant Randy Stewart, President of the Donald Sheppard Memorial FOP Lodge 122; Deputy Commander John Banasiak; Corporal Erich Swisher; Patrol Officer 1<sup>st</sup> Rick Hoffman; and Patrol Officer Darren Connelly; and Scott Erlich, Retired Highland Police Officer, were also in attendance.

Later in the meeting, Police Chief Peter Hojnicky and Commander George Georgeff attended to discuss the animal licensing and fee structure.

**General Substance of Matters Discussed**

1. **Presentation and request for certain compensation and benefit matters from Sergeant Randy Stewart, President, Donald Sheppard Memorial F.O.P Lodge 122.** The Town Council received a presentation from Sgt. Stewart regarding the desired six percent (6%) wage increase to be effective at once, and not incrementally, as well as decoupling or separating the wage and salary and compensation concerns of the police department from the rest of the public workforce.

Sgt. Stewart highlighted many of the concepts included in the written request and justifications. Sgt. Stewart emphasized that the FOP was not seeking added officers. Sgt. Stewart also highlighted recent line of duty risks reported in the surrounding area. The written request and justifications *as submitted* are incorporated below, by importing the document's text:

08-15-16

*Highland Fraternal Order of Police Lodge #122 respectfully requests separation between Civilian and Sworn town employees for consideration of a raise of at least 6% to allow for an increase in sworn salary to maintain our level of competitiveness amongst other communities in Lake County. Our justification is as follows:*

- In regards to salaries, Highland used to be within the top 5 departments statewide. Many Officers came here with that in mind. However, we are now more in the middle of the statewide roster when it come to pay. Other law enforcement agencies in Lake County either currently or will with contract raises, pay higher than us in 2017.
- Each year charts are shown to us showing how great of a salary increase we received over recent years. All this shows us is how far we were behind, and how many raises were necessary to *only* get us to the middle of the statewide roster as it pertains to salaries.
- It takes one year to hire/train someone. Unlike any other civilian positions in town.
- We are mandated to receive annual training to maintain law enforcement certification. Our failure to qualify means our jobs. Which other than maintaining a COL, nearly every other civilian position does not require re-certification.

- Our liability is more so than any other job here.
- We are held to a higher standard. Both our actions on/off duty as we live in a fish bowl.
- We are often times held in civil litigation for our actions, even when following Rules & Regulations and State law.
- Our jobs are extremely stressful. The average age of death for a retired police officer in Indiana is 56. Nationally, it is 53.
- We work 24x7 unlike any other department in town. Holidays and weekends included.
- The actions of a police officer is most often scrutinized, and if even the slightest shred of doubt exists regarding the credibility of their actions, we become the "BREAKING NEWS". And whether substantiated or not, much more often than not, we are viewed as a villain, ridiculed, and tried in the open market, judged and convicted by the news host of the hour, before the end of their telecast. A responsibility unlike any others in town have.
- Law Enforcement Officers shot in the line of duty is up 78% with 14 of those Officers being killed in an ambush. We border Hammond, Gary, and East Chicago and only a short drive away from Chicago, whereas they are experiencing their most violent year in recent history, likely to surpass previous records set for homicides and shootings, and of whose felons do not stop their criminal activity at their borders.
  
- We wish to maintain our department's personnel roster, however this will be difficult at best given the climate towards law enforcement and the reluctance of new recruits wishing to enlist. (We just lost our most recent hire as he determined this was not a career worth pursuing due to its complexity and not having the stomach for this line of work). Area departments are often times enacting "emergency hiring" procedures just to keep minimal staffing. Munster did so just this past week.
- We maintain law and order while being very much appreciated by the community.  
We work under our authorized strength, accomplishing our tasks diligently while not asking for additional manpower. And unlike any other police department in the area, most of us live here thus allowing for us to establish even greater roots and vested interest in the community by sending our children to Highland schools, shopping at our mall and grocery stores, purchasing our vehicles here, and attending local worship.
- So as to avoid any confusion we would request that any raises given be implemented in its entirety in January. In the past when a 4% raise was given, 2% was given in January and the other 2% in July. This equates to a 3% raise for that fiscal year!
- So as to avoid any confusion we would also request that any raises given also be reflected upon our Special Patrolman's pay so we don't have to come back at a later to make that request.
- If at all possible, before years end, we would like to know the details of our raises as there are some Officers wishing to enter the DROP retirement program and the lead time for preparation would be considered very appreciative on their behalf.
- We only have a handful of candidates applying for supervisor's positions. We need to create a greater pay disparity between the ranks to allow for an Officer to be financially compensated for the extra supervisory responsibilities they are being entrusted with. This shows junior Officers that their extra efforts and performance now and throughout their career are worth the effort and someday aspire to be a supervisor... be rewarded financially.
- Upon retirement, consideration of paying 30 days healthcare for sworn personnel so as to avoid a gap between insurance coverage.

The Clerk-Treasurer sought and achieved clarification regarding the request for 30 days of health coverage, noting that state law (I.C. 5-10-8-2.2(h)(2)) requires that the retired public safety worker have presumptive coverage as each has up to 60 days under Federal COBRA and 90 days under the law just noted to file a request for coverage. It was further noted that at the end of the eligibility period, the officer would need to pay the premium coverage, if coverage was desired. The FOP representatives clarified that the request was for the municipality to pay for the first month of the retiree's coverage.

Deputy Commander Banasiak advocated for better salaries to support attracting better recruits. He further added an additional justification to the foregoing, noting

the lost time with families as patrol officers cannot always be scheduled off to observe the holidays when they occur. He further stated that during the period of the Independence Day festival, officers cannot schedule vacations.

Councilor Wagner inquired about other needs such as training and equipment – asking further about possible body cameras.

Sgt. Stewart noted that currently most patrol officers were a body microphone and have in-vehicle cameras. He further offered no objection to body cameras. However, it was not included in the current request.

Councilor Vassar and Councilor Kuiper indicated that they favored considering the Police Department compensation request separate from the other parts of the municipal workforce.

Councilor Vassar further inquired regarding the perceived difficulty in obtaining overtime security police assignments for baseball as opposed to other Town sponsored events. The discussion between the Town Council and the FOP representatives involved the manner in which overtime assignments are made in the department and how sometimes certain opportunities have less interest than others.

The presentation and discussion ended with the department of the FOP representatives at 7:46 p.m.

- 2. Discussion regarding possible modifications to the animal licenses regulations in the Highland Municipal Code and exploring possible modification to licensing authority or availability.** Chief Hojnicky and Commander Georgeff presented a request to add a part-time line in the amount of fifteen thousand dollars for 2017 that would fund a part-time animal warden, not engaged in enforcement, but instead enlisted to perform certain caretaking of impounded animals waiting for access to the Humane Society.

During the discussion, it was noted that a similar position was eliminated from the police budget at the request of the Chief noting that volunteers from VIPS were providing the same services under co-production. The Chief acknowledged this and indicated that those volunteers are no longer available or willing to provide this added service.

The chief further noted that there is increased difficulty to access the Humane Society as if a viral issue arises, it cannot receive new animals. Further, it was noted that the volume is increased such that there are increased waits, requiring the longer use of the town's impoundment facilities. The Chief suggested that since it is the department's policy to be a "no-kill" facility, he would like to develop both animal foster and adoption programs. He noted that the proposed new position would be "on-call" in nature and part-time.

The Town Council, Clerk-Treasurer and the Police Chief discussed the ways and means related to supporting these services, involving increases to the daily impoundment and release fees, as well as possible increase to the annual licenses. It was noted that the current fees have been in place without change for over 25 years.

The possibility of adding a three-year license to coincide with three-year rabies vaccinations, was discussed. Making either license issuance to be available at the Parks and Recreation Department with its longer public hours rather than at the Office of the Clerk-Treasurer was also discussed. It was noted that there are internal controls that would need to be observed. It was further noted that the ideal to making licenses more available would be to allow online renewal and applications. The clerk-

treasurer indicated that he would consult with the current software provider about making that possible.

3. **Discussion on Memorandum regarding compensation from the Highland Fire Department. (with correction).** The Town Council discussed the request tendered from the Fire Chief regarding increasing the pay for the departmental secretary from its current \$11.96 per hour to the starting pay of other departmental secretaries, which is \$17.26 per hour.

The Clerk-Treasurer advised that the policy of the town had been overtime to make all same positions, whether full-time or part-time, have the same pay rate. It was noted that for most positions styled as "secretary", the starting pay has been aligned, the current situation notwithstanding. It was further noted that in some departments there are companion clerical positions, holding the title of clerk, that are paid at a different rate. It was suggested that rather than institute a range, that instead the pay rate for the fire department part-time secretary be changed from its current range of \$7.25 to \$12.50 instead to a fixed rate of \$17.26. It was noted that the current fire department secretary's rate is \$11.96 per hour. It was further noted that the current secretary is a firefighter and a retired Rose-Hulman Engineer.

The Town Council discussed the sample of Fire Chief's salaries gathered by the Fire Chief and the discussion of increasing the Fire Chief's salary. The Town Council discussed the distinction in the list of the Fire Chiefs who lead career departments or hybrid departments, rather than paid on call departments like Highland has.

There was no objection to engaging the current human resource consultant, HR Unlimited, to perform a review to provide more data to the Town Council regarding the merits of a change in the Fire Chief's compensation.

4. **Discussion regarding sprinkler installation at the site of the monument sign on north Indianapolis boulevard. The issue is twofold: desirability and affordability. It was not contemplated in any budget of the Town.** The Town Council reviewed the quote for sprinkler installation obtained by the Operations Director at the request of the Town Council earlier in the year. It was noted that the site of the monument sign has enjoyed some rains and the grass looks much better.

The Town Council also noted that there is a possibility that the Town may acquire the property across from the sign, and any irrigation enhancement could be considered at that time.

There being no further business necessary or desired to be discussed by the Town Council, the regular study session of the Town Council of **Monday, September 19, 2016**, was adjourned at 8:30 o'clock p.m.

Michael W. Griffin, IAMC/MMC/CPFA/CPFIM/CMO  
Clerk-Treasurer