

Police & Fire Commission

Thursday, March 15, 2018

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1 The Meeting of the Police & Fire Commission was called to order at 5:35 p.m. on Thursday,
2 March 15, 2018. It was noted that the meeting had been announced and a notice posted at City
3 Hall.

4

5 Roll call was taken with the following members present: Lori Olson, John Every, Mark Dahlke,
6 Tom Kennedy. Tom Brewer arrived with the meeting in progress.

7

8 Also Present: City Administrator Eric Rindfleisch, Mayor Joe Chilsen, Human Resource
9 Director Hope Burchell, Fire Chief Don Dominick, Assistant Police Chief Troy Miller, Ald. Jim
10 Olson

11

Item 2 – Approval of minutes from the previous meeting

12

13
14 Motion by Tom Kennedy, second by John, to approve the minutes from the previous meeting as
15 printed and on file in the City Clerk’s Office.

16

17 On voice vote, motion carried.

18

Item 3 – Public Input (limited to 3 minutes per individual)

19

20 Mark called for anyone wishing to provide public input.

21

Shawn Colgan

22
23 **No address given**

24

25
26 Shawn identified himself as a third-shirt officer with the Onalaska Police Department as well as
27 the Vice President of the Onalaska Professional Police Association. Shawn read into the record
28 the following letter: “Police and Fire Commission members: As veteran officers, we are
29 passionate about serving as police officers in the City of Onalaska. We want to speak on
30 Assistant Chief [Troy] Miller’s behalf. Since the hiring of the previous two police chiefs [Randy
31 Williams, Jeff Trotnic], we have had many difficult years at the Onalaska Police Department.
32 The lack of effective leadership has made many of us at the Onalaska Police Department
33 frustrated, unhappy, and questioning our profession. As you may or may not know, the previous
34 chiefs have been difficult to deal with in the workplace. Assistant Chief Miller has been able to
35 keep things running smoothly and efficiently since taking on the role as Assistant Chief while
36 negotiating roadblocks from above. Assistant Chief Miller has been the calm through the storm
37 in terms of his leadership and management skills. During stormy waters, he has been there. This
38 has occurred during the best of times, and the worst of times. Since the departure of the previous
39 chief, Assistant Chief Miller has taken on extra duties left from the vacancy and handled them
40 well. Assistant Chief Miller would provide stability, which is needed at the Onalaska Police
41 Department. Assistant Chief Miller has shown resounding ability to adapt and direct us through

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42 the transition period, and throughout his tenure. We appreciate wanting to find the best
43 candidate. We have attempted this in the past, and it seems that with a lack of connection to the
44 Police Department, our community, and the officers, we run into issues unforeseen during the
45 hiring process. We do not think we can afford to gamble that the grass is greener, so to speak.
46 Assistant Chief Miller has earned the respect of all the officers in the department through his
47 dedication to our department, our community, and to the officers. Please do not pass on
48 Assistant Chief Miller for the position of [Police] Chief. Assistant Chief Miller has risen through
49 the ranks and knows all the ins and outs of the department. He has been instrumental in
50 managing and leading people throughout his tenure. We would like to recommend that you give
51 Assistant Chief Miller the opportunity, if he desires, to lead our department from the senior
52 management position: Chief of Police. Thank you.” Shawn submitted a copy of the letter to the
53 Police and Fire Commission.

54

55 **Jim Olson, First District Alderperson**

56 **515 16th Avenue North**

57 **Onalaska**

58

59 “I just wanted to say to the committee that I had had a conversation with Troy, and I am very
60 impressed with the fact that he would like to serve if offered the position, and I think he is very
61 capable. I have not actually come up to say anything like this before in the 20 years that I have
62 been here, but I think that if the committee would consider that I think that would be a good
63 choice for our city. Thank you.”

64

65 Mark called for anyone else wishing to provide public input and closed that portion of the
66 meeting.

67

68 **Consideration and possible action on the following items:**

69

70 **Item 4 – Report from Mayor – Discussion regarding upcoming recruitment efforts**

71

72 City Administrator Rindfleisch said the city has “a mountain to climb” in replacing both former
73 Police Chief Jeff Trotnic and current Fire Chief Dominick, who will retire in June. City
74 Administrator Rindfleisch also thanked commission members for the work they will do during
75 the process.

76

77 **Item 5 – Review and Consideration of Onalaska Police and Fire Commission Hiring**
78 **Procedures**

79

80 Hope said she had attempted to put procedures in place as they had not been updated since prior
81 to the time she began her employment with the city. Hope noted the practices that were in place
82 had not been utilized for several years and said, “I think this really outlines the practice we’re

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83 doing right now, and what we would do going forward unless you have some preferences or
84 changes.”

85

86 Hope was asked if she knows how many candidates will be interviewed.

87

88 Hope said she will not know until the positions are posted and advertised, and she sees how
89 many applications the city receives. Hope said the ideal situation would be to screen the
90 candidates who meet the minimum requirements before sending them to the commission for
91 review. Hope said, “That would all be done through our online system, so I would get you set up
92 with a username and password so that all that information can be forwarded and reviewed
93 instead of having to make paper copies. It makes the process a lot easier, especially when you’re
94 not here every day.”

95

96 Motion by Tom Brewer, second by Tom Kennedy, to approve following the Onalaska Police and
97 Fire Commission Hiring Procedures before the commission this evening. Any amendments that
98 need to be made in the process will be brought in front of the Police and Fire Commission and
99 voted on as a whole.

100

101 On voice vote, motion carried.

102

103 **Item 6 – Review and consideration of recruitment for:**

104

105 a. Police Chief

106 b. Fire Chief

107

108 Hope said, “I think we should push the Police Chief position first, and we can discuss a possible
109 timeline. I looked at one that we had had previously, and it looked like the start of the process
110 was in June, with [the city] actually doing interviews in October. It’s going to be a several-
111 month process. Part of that is typically you’re going to be accepting applications for a month or
112 so. If there are specific things that you would like to see [such as] where it is advertised, what
113 I’m noticing is applicants are looking online rather than [municipalities] putting a publication in
114 some of the larger newspapers.” Hope cited the city’s search for a City Administrator and noted
115 the cost to place a smaller advertisement in a large newspaper is \$5,000 to \$10,000. Hope
116 strongly suggested utilizing resources such as the National Fire Association, Professional Police
117 Chiefs Association, and the State of Wisconsin, among others.

118

119 Lori asked Hope if the city has a standard of posting positions for 30 days.

120

121 Hope told Lori the city does not have a standard and said, “I think typically it’s just looking at
122 getting qualified applicants for these larger positions on department heads. Typically we’ve
123 found that if they’re open for less than 30 days we don’t always get the information out there.

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124 And it will depend on if we have a lot of qualified applicants.”

125

126 City Administrator Rindfleisch said he does not believe it would be a sound financial decision to
127 advertise the positions in print. City Administrator Rindfleisch said, “When the ads go out to the
128 associations and the organizations that are focusing on professional management, there are also
129 compiling websites that are out there that will poll those sites and compile them on other
130 websites, so you do get your word out effectively.”

131

132 Hope said she believes the timeline can be developed over time, adding she will take direction
133 from the commission as to how its members want her to proceed. Hope said the committee
134 likely will need to make some decisions this evening regarding the job descriptions, adding, “If
135 we need to take more time on it we should meet prior to the Finance and Personnel Committee
136 meeting in April [April 3] so that we can get that on the agenda for approval by [the April 10
137 Common] Council [meeting]. That way we can start posting and advertising after that.”

138

139 Mayor Chilsen said the city is in “a very unique situation” due to the current vacancy in the
140 Police Chief position and Fire Chief Dominick’s upcoming retirement. Mayor Chilsen said, “I
141 would like the commission to at least talk about what their views would be on a public safety
142 director. I’m not advocating one way or the other, but this is an opportunity that we probably
143 won’t ever get in the near future again. I would think that we should at least talk about it. That
144 person would oversee both [the] Police and Fire [Departments]. [He or she] would be an
145 administrator and not a certified, sworn officer, and not a certified firefighter. They could be
146 from either side of the house, or not from any sides of the house, where they would be in charge
147 of the budget. At that time we would have an Emergency Operations Center and those types of
148 things. I think it would behoove us to at least talk about it, and I would encourage you to do
149 that.”

150

151 Hope said she believes this is the time for the commission to discuss Mayor Chilsen’s suggestion
152 because it does not appear separately anywhere else on tonight’s agenda.

153

154 Tom Brewer asked if anyone is aware of any other communities that utilize a public safety
155 administrator.

156

157 Mayor Chilsen said he had contacted the League of Municipalities and discovered that the
158 Village of Palmyra, the Village of Ashwaubenon, the Village of Brown Deer, and the City of
159 Oconomowoc all employ public safety administrators in the State of Wisconsin.

160

161 Mark asked Mayor Chilsen if he has an organizational chart for each of the aforementioned
162 departments.

163

164 Mayor Chilsen said no, telling Mark none of the municipalities had responded to emails he had

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165 sent.

166

167 Tom Kennedy said he would be interested in seeing a job description and a salary range.

168

169 Tom Brewer said it also would be necessary to examine the job description of who was leading
170 each department. Tom also said costs and duties must be taken into consideration “because it is
171 an increased responsibility for your, if you want to put a label on ‘assistant’ on there. I’m
172 assuming that would require a higher salary as well. My point is, we would have to take a look
173 at not only the top position, but also how it flows all the way down.”

174

175 Lori said he would like to know if there would be assistants who would be handling the day-to-
176 day operations, and if creating a public safety administrator position would combine some
177 administrative functions.

178

179 Mayor Chilsen said it was his understanding that he simply would be introducing the possibility
180 of hiring a public safety administrator and the commission would not be making any decisions
181 this evening.

182

183 City Administrator Rindfleisch noted there is a short discussion regarding a public safety director
184 on page 45 of the commission’s manual and said it would be up to the Police and Fire
185 Commission to approve an individual in that position.

186

187 **Item 7 – Review and consideration of appointing an Acting Police Chief**

188

189 Hope said Assistant Police Chief Miller’s job description states that he is to assume the Police
190 Chief’s job functions in the Police Chief’s absence. Hope said she believes Assistant Police
191 Chief Miller should serve as Acting Police Chief at this time and told commission members the
192 Police and Fire Commission is the body that can make that decision.

193

194 Mayor Chilsen said, “We have to make the actual designation of an acting [chief] from both
195 levels, so we just can’t assume that. You have to vote on it and make that actual designation.”

196

197 Assistant Police Chief Miller told commission members the comments made by Officer Colgan
198 and Ald. Olson during the public input portion of the meeting were “very humbling” and stated
199 he has not sought anyone’s endorsement. Assistant Police Chief Miller said he had had contact
200 with two other alderpersons earlier Thursday and stated the support he has received from the
201 alderpersons, the officers in the Police Department, and the community “has been
202 overwhelming.” Assistant Police Chief Miller said, “I am honored by it. I do feel I can fill the
203 position. I have been here 21 years now; all but 4½ of those have been in a supervisory capacity.
204 I do believe I have the experience. I do have the support of my troops to do what needs to be
205 done for this department and lead it until a decision can be made for the permanent chief. I

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206 would thank you for your consideration for appointing me the Interim [Police Chief], and any
207 future consideration.”

208

209 Motion by Lori, second by John Every, to approve appointing Assistant Police Chief Troy Miller
210 to serve as Acting Police Chief.

211

212 On voice vote, motion carried.

213

214 Mark thanked former Police Chief Trotnic for his years of service to the City of Onalaska.

215

216 **Item 8 – Review and consideration of appointing an Acting Fire Chief after 6/22/18**

217

218 Hope said the Assistant Fire Chief’s job description states he will assume the Fire Chief’s duties
219 in the Fire Chief’s absence.

220

221 Mark noted that Assistant Fire Chief Troy Gudie has previously served as Acting Fire Chief.

222

223 Motion by John, second by Tom Kennedy, to approve appointing Assistant Fire Chief Troy
224 Gudie to serve as Acting Fire Chief after June 22, 2018.

225

226 On voice vote, motion carried.

227

228 Mark thanked Fire Chief Dominick for his years of service to the City of Onalaska.

229

230 **Item 9 – Review and consideration of job descriptions for:**

231

232 a. Police Chief

233 b. Fire Chief

234

235 John asked Hope if she wishes to make any changes to the existing job descriptions.

236

237 Hope said she would like to make the following changes:

238

239 • Under “Training, Experience & Other Requirements” for the Police Chief position, Hope
240 said Item D, which states a valid State of Wisconsin Driver’s License is required, can be
241 rewritten to state that a valid driver’s license is required.

242 • Item E (“Residence in City of Onalaska”) under “Training, Experience & Other
243 Requirements” can be deleted as there no longer is a residency requirement.

244

245 Hope also referred to Item A under “Training, Experience & Other Requirements,” which states
246 that the Police Chief must have a Bachelor’s Degree in Criminal Justice or a closely related field,

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247 or an equivalent combination of experience from an accredited college or university in addition
248 to extensive law enforcement experience in police supervision, administration or a related field.
249 Hope said the Police Chief and/or the Fire Chief may have an Associate Degree if he/she has
250 several years of experience.

251
252 Lori told Hope she had not seen anything in the job description related to grant writing.

253
254 Hope said the Administrative Manager typically handles grant writing.

255
256 Lori said she is under the assumption the Police Chief and Fire Chief job descriptions might have
257 been written or updated at different times, and she asked if it matters.

258
259 Hope said it is up to the commission if its members want consistency in certain types of language
260 in both job descriptions.

261
262 City Administrator Rindfleisch noted that both position descriptions list serving as co-City
263 Emergency Management Director and said he would suggest assigning either the Police Chief or
264 the Fire Chief to serve in that capacity alone.

265
266 Mayor Chilsen said he believes it is important that both the Police Chief and the Fire Chief are
267 present and “in a relatively high level.”

268
269 Motion by Tom Brewer to approve the City of Onalaska Police Chief and Fire Chief job
270 descriptions as presented, with the addendum that in the hiring process if certain descriptions
271 need to be added or deleted the Police and Fire Commission may do so as a whole.

272
273 Hope noted that no changes may be made once the positions have been posted and advertised.

274
275 Tom Brewer corrected himself and stated, “Up until posting time.”

276
277 Motion restated:

278
279 Motion by Tom Brewer, second by John, to approve the City of Onalaska Police Chief and Fire
280 Chief job descriptions as presented, with the addendum that in the hiring process if certain
281 descriptions need to be added or deleted the Police and Fire Commission may do so as a whole
282 up until posting time.

283
284 On voice vote, motion carried.

285
286 **Item 10 – Review and consideration of Police Policy # 1 Rules and Regulations**

287

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288 Hope apologized for not including Police Policy #1 in commission members' packets and
289 suggested they examine it over the next one to two weeks to determine if there are changes they
290 wish to make.

291

292 **Item 11 – Discussion of upcoming meeting date(s)**

293

294 Hope said Mark had suggested that the commission meet again March 20.

295

296 Commission members stated they would be willing to meet again Tuesday, March 20.

297

298 Hope said the commission could meet again March 20, if necessary. Hope then gave
299 commission members the option of meeting April 2, April 3, or April 5.

300

301 Commission members agreed to meet Tuesday, April 3.

302

303 John inquired about the commission taking action on financial compensation for the two acting
304 chiefs.

305

306 Hope told John the commission has no purview over financial compensation and said the
307 Finance and Personnel Committee and the Common Council already had addressed that matter
308 earlier in the month.

309

310 Hope gave commission members the option of meeting April 9 or April 10.

311

312 Commission members agreed to meet Tuesday, April 10.

313

314 **Item 12 – Closed Session:**

315

316 To consider a motion to convene in Closed Session under Section 19.85(1)(c) of the Wisconsin
317 Statutes for the purpose of considering employment, promotion, compensation or performance
318 evaluation data of any public employee over which the governmental body has jurisdiction or
319 exercises responsibility:

320

- 321 • Review of Fire Chief Interview Questions
- 322 • Review of Police Chief Interview Questions

323

324 If any action is required in Open Session, the Commission will reconvene in Open Session to
325 take the necessary action and/or continue on with the printed agenda.

326

327 Motion by John, second by Tom Brewer, to convene in Closed Session.

328

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329 On roll call vote: Lori Olson – aye, Tom Brewer – aye, John Every – aye, Mark Dahlke – aye,
330 Tom Kennedy – aye. In Closed Session.

331

332 Adjourned in Closed Session at 7:17 p.m.

333

334

335 Recorded by:

336

337 Kirk Bey