

Police & Fire Commission

Monday, May 14, 2018

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1 The Meeting of the Police & Fire Commission was called to order at 5:30 p.m. on Monday, May
2 14, 2018. It was noted that the meeting had been announced and a notice posted at City Hall.

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

6
7 Also Present: City Administrator Eric Rindfleisch, Human Resource Director Hope Burchell,
8 Police Chief Troy Miller, Fire Chief Don Dominick

Item 2 – Approval of minutes from the previous meeting

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

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15 On voice vote, motion carried.

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

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18
19 Mark called for anyone wishing to provide public input.

20
21 **Troy Miller, City of Onalaska Chief of Police**
22 **No address given**

23
24 “It has been an interesting couple of weeks for me since taking the reins. There’s still a lot going
25 on, and I’m still waiting to find my groove and be able to do what I really want to be doing.
26 Tonight there are several items on the agenda as we talk about the position for the Assistant
27 Chief of Police. I know when you were hiring and advertising for the Chief of Police position,
28 there was a lot of ... The desire was really to open it up and go outside the department. This
29 commission listened to the department, which we are very appreciative of. I think you have a
30 good candidate with me, and I think I’m going to live up to every expectation you have. I know
31 I am. With that being said, I think as we move forward here, I have heard kind of behind the
32 scenes that there was an interest in looking outside for the Assistant Chief as well, for one reason
33 or another. I do know that when I was promoted to Assistant Chief that was a topic back then as
34 well, and they decided to keep it an internal posting at that time. I have to say I think they made
35 a good choice because it worked out well for me, and I think I lived up to the expectations of the
36 city and the commission at that point. I just wanted to give a little plug here that I do believe
37 strongly in my heart that we have very good, viable candidates within the department that can fill
38 this position. I hope you will take that into consideration when you decide whether or not to post
39 internally or open it up externally. Obviously, my preference would be to keep it internal. It
40 does a lot for our department. Not only is it a morale-builder, but it also gives people the
41 opportunity to advance in the department which they are so dedicated to. It also reduces on the

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42 learning curve. The people who are here know the job. They know how the department
43 operates, and that will just get us up and running more efficiently and sooner. For what it's
44 worth, I do ask the commission to strongly consider keeping it as an internal posting at first. If
45 you are not satisfied with the candidates that come forward, then I would fully support opening it
46 up outside. Thank you."

47
48 Mark called three times for anyone else wishing to provide public input and closed that portion
49 of the meeting.

50

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

52

53 **Item 4 – Review and consideration of Assistant Police Chief job description**

54

55 Hope said noted the Assistant Police Chief job description has been attached to this evening's
56 agenda, noting the position requires a four-year Bachelor's Degree, and also that the job
57 description does not include language stating "or equivalent combination of education,
58 experience and training." Hope said she does not believe any current Police Department
59 members have a four-year degree.

60

61 Hope was informed one individual possesses a four-year degree.

62

63 Hope told commission members they may decide if they so choose to change the job requirement
64 of having a four-year Bachelor's Degree, or to make any other changes they see fit. Hope said
65 she is willing to change the wording in the job description for Assistant Chief of Police to
66 something similar to what was included in the job description for Chief of Police; specifically,
67 "Or equivalent combination of education and experience."

68

69 Motion by Tom Kennedy, second by John, to approve making the education and experience
70 requirements for Assistant Chief of Police the same as for the Chief of Police.

71

72 Mark said he believes it is logical to have the job requirements for Chief of Police and Assistant
73 Chief of Police be identical.

74

75 On voice vote, motion carried.

76

77 Lori inquired about changes made in March by both the Finance and Personnel Committee
78 (March 7) and the Common Council (March 13).

79

80 Hope told Lori she believes the changes were "minor" and pertained to whom officers report.
81 For example, the DARE Officer and Onalaska School District Liaison report to the Professional
82 Standards Sergeant instead of the Police Chief. Hope said the Investigator was to report to the

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83 Professional Standards Sergeant, but this was changed. Also, language within the Assistant
84 Police Chief job description was changed, but it was changed back.

85

86 **Item 5 – Review and consideration of timeline for Assistant Police Chief Position**

87

88 Hope said June 12 is the earliest the Assistant Police Chief position may be posted and
89 advertised, and this is pending Common Council approval of the lone job changed approved by
90 the Police and Fire Commission under Item 4. Hope said the commission must decide if the
91 position is to be posted internally or statewide, and also the length of time the position will be
92 advertised. Hope said she believes it will be sufficient to post the position for two weeks if the
93 commission decides to conduct an internal search. However, Hope also said she believes a
94 longer search – a minimum of three weeks to 30 days – should be conducted if the commission
95 decides to post the position both internally and externally.

96

97 Police Chief Miller said there will “for sure” be two internal candidates for the Assistant Police
98 Chief position. Police Chief Miller added he would support both candidates.

99

100 Mark told Police Chief Miller that while he understands his point of view and appreciates the
101 fact there will be competent internal candidates, “my preference would be that if we had the
102 expanded search, maybe it helps us rank candidates a little bit better, in my mind. If we appoint
103 one of those internal candidates, I think it makes them a much stronger candidate having gone
104 through a more expansive search. That would be my recommendation, but I understand others
105 may feel differently.”

106

107 Tom Kennedy, John, and Lori all stated they agree with Mark.

108

109 Police Chief Miller said, “My only concern is, are we sending a mixed message since, with the
110 internal posting for the position I hold now, we had one candidate. Now here, we have at least
111 two. I just wonder if that’s kind of a mixed message, and [I wonder] how it will be received in
112 the public’s eye as to, why wasn’t that done the first time around with the [Police] Chief’s
113 position? I do totally understand the thought process, and I expressed that when I was applying
114 for the Police Chief position. I do understand the process of trying to pick the stronger
115 candidate. But maybe it’s old-school thinking that if we have qualified candidates here, why
116 don’t we just stick with them and go with the known rather than the unknown. Again, we are a
117 smaller department and there is not a lot of room for advancement. We have lost officers in the
118 past because of that. If we were to start taking away these golden opportunities for people to
119 actually advance in their career in our department for our city, is that potentially going to harm
120 our recruiting, and is that going to cause us to lose more officers? Those would be some of my
121 concerns. Again, when I applied for Assistant Police Chief I think we had three candidates at the
122 time. It’s not always about the quantity. It’s about the quality, in my mind.

123

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124 I know these officers. I know the people who would be applying. We might even have three
125 [applicants]. I just know we're going to have two. They're a known entity, not only for our
126 department, but also in the community. We talked about the job description and wanting it to
127 mirror what the Police Chief's position is. I would like to see the process mirrored for this as
128 well, but I will respect whatever decision you folks might make."

129

130 Hope told commission members they may approve the timeline and that they will decide where
131 to post and advertise the position when they discuss Item 6. Hope said the timeline pertains to
132 when the search commences and how long commission members wish to have specific dates,
133 adding, "I think part of that stems from, are we doing an internal search only, or are we doing an
134 internal and an external search. That will affect the timeline in part because I think at a
135 minimum if you're going to do it internally ... you're looking at towards mid-June to the end of
136 June. Then [we would have] to do interviews knowing that we also have Fire Chief applications
137 going on as well. It really is dependent on [commission members] and what you want to do."

138

139 Mark said even if the commission does not decide this evening whether to conduct an internal or
140 an internal/external search, it is able to approve an expanded timeline so that it provides
141 flexibility. Mark added he would prefer to utilize an expanded timeline.

142

143 Hope said she will leave the dates open, adding she believes commission members will have to
144 start looking ahead at dates during June, July and August due to scheduled vacations.

145

146 City Administrator Rindfleisch asked that a decision regarding whether the position will be
147 posted internally or both internally and externally be made this evening due to Hope's schedule.
148 City Administrator Rindfleisch stated that in general he is an advocate of open postings for all
149 positions as he believes it attracts stronger candidates. City Administrator Rindfleisch also said
150 that while his philosophy of promoting from within is similar to that of Police Chief Miller, "I
151 see no disappointment in people leaving the department because there are greater opportunities.
152 I think our recruitment is stronger when we become known as a place people can come, build
153 their career, and move on to other places. ... My philosophy in management throughout is
154 making sure that I offer the best training I can, and when people leave we can fill [positions]
155 easier because people know we're a good place to train. I don't see any harm in opening it up. I
156 think two to three qualified candidates internally quite naturally will have a leg up on any other
157 competition for the position just having been here. But I always like to hear fresh opinions as to
158 best practices outside the department as well."

159

160 Tom Brewer said he does not believe either approach is wrong.

161

162 John said he believes there should be an extended window so that the position may be posted
163 both internally and externally. John also said he approves of both hiring from within and "the
164 idea of having a brighter, bigger scope."

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166 Motion by John, second by Tom Kennedy, to simultaneously perform an internal and external
167 search for Assistant Chief of Police.
168
169 Hope asked commission members how long they wish to advertise the position.
170
171 Lori suggested posting the position from June 12 to June 30.
172
173 Hope said the applications likely will not be reviewed until after July 4 and asked if the position
174 should be closed on July 2.
175
176 Lori suggested closing applications Monday, July 2.
177
178 Both John and Tom Kennedy said they are comfortable with Lori's suggestion being part of the
179 motion on the floor.
180
181 Motion restated:
182
183 To simultaneously perform an internal and external search for Assistant Chief of Police starting
184 Tuesday, June 12 and ending Monday, July 2.
185
186 On voice vote, motion carried.
187
188 Lori asked if commission members will see applications "in batches," or if they will be
189 examining all of them after the position has been closed.
190
191 Hope said commission members may examine the applications once the position has been
192 closed, or they may examine them at the end of each week. Hope said she only would forward to
193 commission members the applications of candidates who meet the minimum requirements of the
194 job. Hope assured commission members she would forward them the applicants who pass by the
195 end of the deadline date.

196 197 **Item 6 – Review and consideration of posting and advertising for Assistant Police Chief** 198 **Position** 199

200 Hope said she can post the position within the state and recommended that it be posted online as
201 doing so will be more cost-efficient. Hope said that in many instances the city may advertise for
202 free on certain websites as either the city, the Police Chief and/or the Assistant Police Chief
203 belong to certain organizations. Hope also said advertising the position statewide and not on a
204 national level will reduce the search and its duration.
205

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206 Tom Kennedy asked if it is common practice to limit a search for an assistant chief to the state
207 due to Onalaska's size.

208

209 Hope said the city likely could perform a regional search due to its close proximity to Minnesota,
210 Iowa and Illinois.

211

212 Police Chief Miller cautioned Hope about looking into the certifications of out-of-state
213 applicants and making sure they would carry over into Wisconsin.

214

215 Mark asked commission members if they would like to perform a statewide search or a regional
216 search.

217

218 Tom Brewer said he would prefer to conduct a regional search.

219

220 Hope said she believes one of the supplemental questions that should be asked is if an out-of-
221 state candidate's certifications will transfer.

222

223 City Administrator Rindfleisch said he believes either posting the position statewide or
224 regionally will be adequate.

225

226 **Item 7 – Review and consideration of supplemental application materials and application**
227 **requirements for Assistant Police Chief Position**

228

229 Hope said she will change the requirements for the Bachelor's Degree and assured commission
230 members the position will be ready to be posted and advertised once the Common Council
231 approves it June 12.

232

233 **Item 8 – Discussion of upcoming meeting date(s)**

234

235 Mark noted the Police and Fire Commission's next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, May
236 30.

237

238 Hope said the June meeting potentially would involve interviewing candidates for the Fire Chief
239 position.

240

241 Police and Fire Commission members agreed to meet Tuesday, June 19.

242

243 Mark suggested to Hope that the June 19 meeting begin at 5 p.m.

244

245 Hope said a July meeting potentially would involve interviewing candidates for the Assistant
246 Police Chief position.

247

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248 Mark asked if perhaps the timeline for closing applications for the Assistant Police Chief
249 position can be moved up to Monday, June 25 so that the commission may meet either
250 Wednesday, June 27 or Thursday, June 28.

251
252 Police and Fire Commission members agreed to meet at 5 p.m. on Wednesday, June 27.

253
254 Lori noted that finalists for the Fire Chief position will be held at the June 19 Police and Fire
255 Commission meeting and asked if the professional panel will examine the candidates who meet
256 the minimum requirements.

257
258 Hope said the Police and Fire Commission may go through the applicants at its May 30 meeting
259 and told Lori commission members may decide at that time which applicants they want to
260 forward to the professional panel. Hope said commission members may examine the applicants
261 for the Assistant Police Chief job at the June 19 meeting and told Lori commission members will
262 have to rely on City Administrator Rindfleisch, Police Chief Miller and herself to review the
263 applications. The professional panel would review finalists June 26, and the Police and Fire
264 Commission would review them June 27.

265 **Item 9 – Closed Session:**

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

- 272
273 • Review of Assistant Police Chief Interview Questions

274
275 If any action is required in Open Session, the Commission will reconvene in Open Session to
276 take the necessary action and/or continue on with the printed agenda.

277
278 Motion by John, second by Tom Kennedy, to convene in Closed Session.

279
280 On roll call vote: Lori Olson – aye, Tom Brewer – aye, John Every – aye, Mark Dahlke – aye,
281 Tom Kennedy – aye. In Closed Session.

282
283 Meeting adjourned in Closed Session at 6:45 p.m.

284
285 Recorded by:

286
287
288 Kirk Bey