

MINUTES
MEETING POLICE & FIRE COMMISSION
BERLIN, WISCONSIN
BERLIN CITY HALL – 2ND FLOOR COUNCIL CHAMBERS
September 06, 2023 -6:30pm

President Joanne Guden called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm. Present: Commissioners Joanne Guden, Gary Knoke, Denise Krentz, Keith Hess and Dan Johnson. Seated virtually: None. Absent: None. Also present: Police Chief Brian Pulvermacher, Fire Chief Paugels, Emergency Manager Gary Podoll, City Administrator Sara Rutkowski, Police Department Officers Strahan and Knetzger, and Berlin Journal: Paul Wiegel. Public appearance: None.

Under approval of minutes, Guden noted a correction to add Liaison Nigbor. Johnson moved to approve the open P&F Commission minutes of August 02, 2023. Knoke seconded the motion which carried by voice vote.

Under Police Department discussion on wages, Chief Pulvermacher noted there will be three different topics for discussion those being wage adjustment, academy considerations and pre-employment agreement.

The presentation for the wage adjustment will be presented by Investigator Knetzger and Sergeant Strahan. Sgt Strahan spoke about the current wages and the surrounding agencies current and upcoming wages. He also spoke on crime rates and types of calls throughout several years. The power point presentation noted that in 2020 there were three processes done for hiring a potential new officer and of those processes a total of 20 applicants had applied. In 2023 we had completed three processes for hire and only three applicants have applied. It also showed the crime rates of the City of Berlin along with the surrounding area. The graph depicted the City of Berlin to have the highest crime rate and arrests. Krentz asked why we have such a high probability for crime and arrests. Pulvermacher explained that it could be a number of factors. Such as, specific people within our city, low-income housing, high unemployment or even drug related problems. Strahan noted that we have the highest crime rate and the lowest paid officers within our area. Pulvermacher stated that the worry becomes how many officers can we lose going forward. We are currently at about 75% and if we lose anymore officers for any reason, we are putting a lot of work on those who remain. Those officers are likely to get burned out more quickly and may also even leave themselves. Guden asked if there was any type of incentive to help keep the current officers we do have. Sara stated that there is nothing at this time that we are able to do. What the officers are looking for here is to enter into discussions with the City to discuss a midterm agreement and potentially adjust wages. Johnson asked if that discussion would also include lowering the amount of time it takes to top out on wages. Sara stated there is a limit on what we can do during the midterm agreement but it is something that can be looked into. Chief stated he would like to ask the Commission to consider a motion to Common Council to meet and discuss entering a midterm side agreement concerning 2024 Police Officer wages. Hess motioned to put the discussion to Common Council to enter a midterm side agreement concerning 2024 Police Officer wages. Knoke seconded the motion. Guden asked for a roll call vote. Roll call vote: Guden-yes, Hess-yes, Knoke-yes, Johnson-yes, Krentz-yes. Motion carried. Pulvermacher explained the second part would be to consider academy recruits. With a dwindling pool of applicants many departments are sponsoring officers to attend the recruit academy. These employees would need to attend the academy in order to become certifiable. The state does reimburse part of the money that would be used in order to send a person through the

academy but in order to gain any of that money back they do need to be on payroll. Many agencies are paying a training wage which does not have to be the same as the current officer wage. By doing a training wage that person is then eligible for workers comp insurance in the event they happen to sustain an injury during training. If we did not have this insurance available for them the City may be on the hook for the injury. Currently the academy costs about \$6000.00. If a training wage of \$15hr was paid during the duration of the 720hr academy the total cost would be around \$19,000.00. By comparison a certifiable officer at the current starting wage of \$27.48hr would make about \$19,800.00. Therefore, we would have to run short staffed for the duration of the academy but we would be able to absorb the training wage and the academy cost in our current wage line. The arrangement would include the use of an agreement facilitating the City's ability to recover some of the expenses if an employee left BPD within five years. Krentz asked if a sponsored officer would be put on a timeframe so they would have to stay with the City for a specific amount of time and if they left they would owe money back. Chief stated yes, we would put something within the contract that would state they would need to remain employed with the City and if they left, they would then owe money back. Guden stated it will have to be a chance we must take. Chief asked the Commission to consider a motion to the Common Council that would allow wages to be used when necessary to sponsor candidates and pay at a training wage to non-certifiable candidates beginning in 2024. Knoke motioned for this to go in front of Common Council for consideration of allowing wages to sponsor candidates. Johnson second the motion. Guden called for a roll call vote. Roll call vote: Guden-yes, Hess-yes, Knoke-yes, Johnson-yes, Krentz-yes. Motion carried.

Pulvermacher explained the third part to be considered is ending the pre-employment agreement new officers make with the City that withholds money. Since 2006 the City of Berlin has a pre-employment agreement with the new officers that would facilitate the City to withhold \$6000.00 over the first three years. After the three years the officer would then collect that money from the City. I believe the intention was to re-coop some of the training and equipment expense associated with the new hires. I am concerned that we are the only agency, that I am aware of, doing this to new staff. The trouble with this practice is it sets a tone with the new officer that the City does not trust you. It also may establish a mindset of the officer to think "as soon as I get my money, I am leaving". There is limited financial gain for the City and the practice could plant a toxic seed of thought when trying to retain employees. Krentz asked why the City had started this. Chief stated he has no idea. Guden asked if this were to end would the current employees that are having money being withheld have that stopped and they then get their money. Sara stated that would be the goal and it could be done hopefully by the end of this year.

Pulvermacher asked the Commission to consider a motion to the City Council to discontinue the existing practice of requiring the pre-employment agreement with sworn officers. Knoke motioned to have the existing practice discontinued for the pre-employment agreement with sworn officer to City Council. Johnson second the motion. Guden called for a roll call vote. Roll call vote: Guden-yes, Hess-yes, Knoke-yes, Johnson-yes, Krentz-yes. Motion carried.

Under Police and Fire Department 2024 Budget. Pulvermacher explained the budget for 2024. The only items under control of the Chief are really lines 160-401. These line items are that of office supplies, gas, computer agreements, and vehicle services. Pulvermacher explained the budget would increase by \$5,305.00 for 2024. The overall budget would increase \$62,979.10 but most of that is nothing I can control as that has all to do with wages, insurance or retirement funds.

Chief Paugels explained the 2024 Fire department budget. Paugels stated that the budget would go up but most of that cost is out of his control. The overall budget for the Fire Department would only increase \$6,000.00. Podoll explained that with the increase in the budget for next

year the Fire Department is actually going to be sitting very well in terms of equipment. By the end of next year most if not all the equipment needed and used by the department will be new or replaced. Krentz asked about grants and the matches that could happen. Podoll stated that we had more grant matches in the past but they are harder to come by. The department does get grant matching and with that we are able to move money around within the department to fit certain line items to help offset any over amounts. Johnson motioned to recommend both Fire and Police Departments 2024 budgets to Common Council for approval. Krentz second the motion which carried by voice vote.

Knoke moved to approve the fire department expenses as presented. Hess seconded the motion which carried by voice vote.

Under Fire Department replacement of Engine 66, Podoll provided a letter to the Commission in regards to replacing the 1995 Darley Pumper/Tanker. About two years ago an estimate was received for replacement and that price was about \$680,000.00. This price is likely to have gone up. The total cost of the replacement would go to all the towns that the Fire Department services. The City of Berlin would only be responsible for about \$340,000.00. At this time, we are asking to have a spec put together and bid out the fire engine to see what prices are out there. All the towns have approved of the spec. The sooner we get the spec put together the better. We were told that the new air emission requirements that will be in place by 2026 will make the price go up by \$60,000.00. We will be selling the old fire engine and with that money from action it would go to the overall price. After the bids come in, we will need to make a decision to purchase with the Commission and City Council all in agreement. Krentz asked if the City has set aside any money for this new purchase. Sara stated the City has not and will have to find the money. Johnson motioned to go to Common Council to put the spec together and start the bid process for the new fire engine. Hess second the motion which carried by voice vote.

Fire Chief Paugels stated that there were 11 calls last month. It was an average month for calls. The worst call was an accident that happened. The Police Department did a great job until we got there and were able to utilize our equipment to gain entry into the vehicle to get the person out. Maintenance issues, still no word on red power yet but no other issues as of now. Upcoming events, we had the car show last month and that went well. In October we will be having our pig roast and it will also be our 170th year for the Fire Department. Krentz asked if anything will be done for fire prevention week. Paugels stated yes and this year's fire prevention week will be bigger than last years. With all of the schools it will likely be a two-day process to get through everyone.

Hess moved to approve the Police Department expenses as presented. Johnson seconded the motion which carried by voice vote.

Chief Pulvermacher stated that the chart provided to the commission shows last month's calls. The chart shows that there were 126 traffic stops, 1 drug investigations, 8 welfare checks, and 7 property damage crashes. Traffic enforcement was slightly lower this month. The decline may be a result of staff shortages. Traffic crashes were higher than normal. It would be a result of the summer months coming to an end which may prompt people to be traveling more.

Under police activity updates, Chief Pulvermacher explained Officer Bennett has left the department for Green Lake PD. The installment of the new camera equipment for PD and City Hall has been completed. We now have cameras for the evidence rooms and the second floor

near the elevator door. The new squad car continues to wait for a radio but is ready to go otherwise. The old pistols have either been bought back by City employees or traded in. We assisted St. John's school with an active shooter response training for their staff. We also reviewed the emergency evacuation map for Nelson Miller. They have requested a staff presentation for active threats and it is currently being scheduled. One staff member completed instructor development training. Two staff members completed evidence-based interview training. One staff member will attend an advanced undercover course and another staff member will take field training officer course this month. We have also applied for a spot for an officer to attend a child forensic interview training course. This course is in October this year and is very limited.

Under old business: None.

Under new business: None.

Public appearances: None.

Hess moved to convene into closed session pursuant to Wis. Stat §19.85(1)(d) 19.85(c) Considering employment, promotion, compensation or performance evaluation data of any public employee over which the governmental body has jurisdiction or exercises (*Yearly Chief Evaluation*) Krentz seconded the motion. A roll call vote resulted in five (5) ayes, zero (0) nays, and zero (0) absent. Motion carried.

Hess moved to seat Rutkowski. Johnson seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Discussion continued in closed session.

At 8:22 Johnson made the motion to convene into open session, with a second by Hess. Motion carried via voice vote.

Guden adjourned the meeting at 8:22 pm.

*Submitted by Stephanie Skivers
Administrative Assistant*

Next scheduled meeting will be Wednesday, October 04, 2023 at 6:30 pm at the Berlin City Hall