

Personnel Committee Minutes

Honorable Council
City of Newark, Ohio
March 17, 2025

The Personnel Committee met in Council Chambers on March 17, 2025 with these members in attendance:

Spencer Barker -Chair
Bradley Chute- Vice Chair
Mark Labutis
Bill Cost Jr.
Colton Rine

We wish to Report:

1. **Ordinance No. 25-12** AN ORDINANCE AMENDING THE POSITION CLASSIFICATION, PAY RANGE AND DEPARTMENT AUTHORIZATION TABLES OF THE CITY OF NEWARK, DEPARTMENT OF Public Service, SUBDIVISIONS OF Water Treatment Plant and Wastewater Treatment Plant BY RECLASSIFYING THE CLASSIFICATIONS OF Water Plant Electro Mechanical Technician and Wastewater Electro Mechanical Technician, AS Water Electro Mechanical Technician/Operator and Wastewater Electro Mechanical Technician/Operator and SETTING THE COMPENSATION THEREFORE.

Bill Spurgeon, Human Resources Director - Good evening, Mr. Chair, members of the committee. Hoping the day finds you well. The piece before you seeks to accomplish two missions. We have these assets, quite a few syllables, you've mentioned one water plant one in wastewater, but they don't have operational capability. So, Brandon wants to build some depth to the bench. We took a look at this in the collective bargaining agreement. They're titled two different things. The second thing we'd like to do is just align them. Call them the same thing, depth of the bench. This is a net zero sum proposition and there are strength authorization tables insert at the end for your convenience.

Motion to send to full Council by Mr. Labutis, Second by Mr. Rine, Motion passed 5-0

Mr. Barker - We have two other items tonight at my discretion. Back on November 18th, council voted to table Ordinance 24-39 back to Personnel. I'd like someone to make a motion to take it off the table.

Motion by Mr. Labutis to take from the table, Second by Mr. Rine, Motion passed 5-0

Mr. Barker - That is successfully taken off the table. 24-39, I'm going to read it. An ordinance modifying the pay range for position of senior automotive mechanic equipment operator in the city of Newark Department of Service Division of Street Maintenance and amending the

department authorization tables of and setting the compensation therefore. When we originally passed this through, after the fact there were some questions. We decided to table it. Myself, Superintendent Prince, Director Rhodes met with the law director. President Harris was also there. We simply got everyone on the same page as we were trying to bring this employee up in pay. There was some confusion on the license pay. What I would like to do is amend this legislation still using 24-39. We're not going to put an A on it. What this does, and you all have it in your packet, the difference you will see is section 3, I'm going to read section 3. This amendment is in consideration of the position being erroneously excluded from the most recent contract negotiations between AFSCME and the City of Newark, resulting in the current contract. This position is subject to renegotiation during bargaining for the upcoming contract. So, section 3 has been updated. Section 4 has been updated. The amended compensation for the senior automotive mechanic equipment operator shall retroactively go into effect beginning January 1 of 2025. Director Rhodes has agreed that there is funding for that in the budget. Also, section 2 has been updated where it says the class 2 license pay for the AFC certification is particular to just this position within the street maintenance department. So, this is just for this position. Does anybody have any questions on those changes? I'd entertain a motion.

Mr. Marmie – Point of order. I believe, if it's already been tabled from council and sent back to committee, it cannot be amended because it's tabled on council. It will have to go back to council and then get amended. Am I correct?

Mr. Barker - If I can pipe in, I double-checked where I tabled it to and I tabled it back to personnel.

Mr. Marmie - Correct. But still, it's on the floor, still on council, just tabled. So therefore, I mean, the amendment can still be done, it just has to be done, I believe, at council, not at this level. I think it's tabled back here for reconsideration back. I mean, it's a sticky situation because it's on the floor and I just want to make sure we're doing it correctly.

Mr. Barker - Yeah, and I had done some research prior thinking that this was the right path and the law director and I talked about it. So, madam law director, do you want to weigh in here?

Tricia Moore, Law Director - So you tabled it back to committee?

Mr. Barker – Yes.

Director Moore - Does that mean that you tabled it in committee? But you tabled it from council?

Mr. Barker - It was on the second reading when it was supposed to be passed, we still did not come to an agreement and we agreed to table it back to Personnel for further discussion and consideration.

Director Moore - Okay. So, I think you could amend it here and then if it would be cleaner to be reconsidered as amended at council, you could do it that way too.

Mr. Barker - (Inaudible), what would you prefer?

Mr. Marmie - No, I just want to make sure we did it correctly. I respect whatever the law director says.

Mr. Barker - So you're fine if we amend this here and put it on to council? Okay, thank you.

**Motion by Mr. Labutis to amend Ordinance 24-39, Second by Mr. Rine, Motion passed 5-0
Motion to send to full Council by Mr. Labutis, Second by Mr. Rine**

Mr. Marmie – Point of order. It's already passed on. That's why I said it's already... It was passed from the committee already, and if you were going to bring it back to the table, you would have had to make your motion first, then table it, and then pass it as amended. But since you just did the amendment only, it doesn't need a...

Mr. Barker - So we don't need to send it to council?

Director Moore - Take it from the table at council.

Mr. Barker - And this will be reconsidered at council, correct?

Mr. Marmie – Mm-hm.

Mr. Barker - Okay, thank you. One other thing, at the discretion of the Chair as well, Fire Chief Metzger, if you could come to the podium, I'd appreciate it, please. Thank you, Chief. I wanted to ask you, random members of council received an email last week from a member of IAFF, their political action chair, informing those members of staffing changes at the fire department. And I've not seen anything official regarding staffing changes, so I wanted to ask, the email's a little interesting, I would say. So, I wanted to ask you, with the Personnel Committee here, are there staffing changes at the fire department? What is driving that? Are there staffing changes?

Brandon Metzger, Fire Chief – Are you asking me to speak to the email that you received?

Mr. Barker – I'm asking you to speak to what is the current staffing of Newark Fire Department?

Chief Metzger - Our current daily staffing model is situated at 17 per day.

Mr. Barker - And that's my understanding from this email from this firefighter that's a change correct?

Chief Metzger - That is a change, correct.

Mr. Barker - What was the reasoning for the change?

Chief Metzger - There was a multitude of reasons. The primary driving factor in terms of making a small change now versus potentially waiting towards or getting to a point where a more monumental or a more significant, drastic change has to be made later was to simply try and maintain sustainability within the budget. Mr. Chair if I may, you asked me so if you wouldn't mind let me finish. What we're doing in emergency service specifically here at the fire departments is extremely dynamic in nature. At no point in time have we ever been closed-minded in terms of what the current staffing model is today versus where it needs to be tomorrow or even in some cases discussions we're having now three to five years from now. The demand for emergency services continues to escalate. As with everything else in the economy, the costs of everything continues to escalate. The challenge we find ourselves in is what level of service can we provide in accordance with what can we afford? I don't have that answer. If you have that answer and you want to try and help define what our service model is ultimately poised to look like, I'd be more than happy to have those types of conversations and that may be an opportunity for us to kind of solidify what things do need to look like tomorrow, next year and subsequently three and five years from now. We're doing everything we can with what we can. We have the same challenges in the fire department that we have in the other safety sector of the city at the Police Department as well. Escalating calls with what in fairness is limited resources. Our deployment model today is in some cases no better than it was 20 years ago. We're doing the best we can to deliver the best service we can every single time we run out of this out of these stations and there's so much more to the fire department than just emergency calls. Those are some of the things that are difficult to measure, to see on a daily

basis just like every other division or bureau in the city. There's a lot of things that are working behind the scenes that make everything go effective and make everything work that a lot of people just don't get to see and as much as we would like to divert some of those resources to our primary focus of emergency response, it's not that easy and it's in some cases irresponsible. But to speak back to your initial question of has there been a change? There has been and that's currently where we sit today.

Mr. Barker - Thank you. We recognize what you do, what your team does. I think it just kind of shocked a few of us that we didn't have actually any official communication that there was a staffing change made because we're the ones to get the phone calls when people realize that. We're the ones that answer to that and that's fine. That's what our jobs are. We want to help you. The communication just was out of the blue and not from what I would say... It wasn't from the chief, and it was kind of surprising. And that's not your fault that that person sent that.

Chief Metzger - Well it is. If they were expecting communication from the fire chief and I'm the fire chief and you didn't receive that communication from me then, and if that's less than desirable then that's totally fine. That burden falls on me. But to be completely transparent in the circumstance of things, there was a multitude of different areas that our budget was cut to begin this year and that's in accordance with the forecasting and the global picture that we're looking at in terms of the entire enterprise. So the question I would then ask is why is anyone surprised that this happened? Throughout my tenure here in the city this has happened at least four times. This is just business for usual for the fire department. It's not all that positive, but we're not going to get too wrapped up around it. We're going to continue to come to work. We're going to continue to do the best we can with what we have. We're going to continue to lay it on the line every day in this community for the for the citizens that we serve. So, to some degree we're really not all that shocked. We have to do the best with what we're getting and that's what we're trying to do. I've not received one single email. I've not received one single phone call. I've not received one single text message. I've had zero communication on this from anyone.

Tim Hickman, Safety Director – So, in answer to your initial question is there a staffing change and why did it come about? The fire department was budgeted \$600,000 for overtime funds this year. Right now, they're currently on pace to spend over a million dollars. So, I approached the chief and said we need to take a look at this because that's not sustainable. I told him that you need to make some adjustments to try to get that cost under control. I left it up to his discretion how to go about doing that, but I support his decision. What he decided to do was drop staffing from 19 to 17 on specific days. Now we're hoping that we've got 11 paramedics in training that are due to graduate in June and the hope is that they will get staffing back up to where they are, but we can't afford to wait to see that that happens. So, in June when these people graduate if the numbers go back up like we're anticipating, then we'll be good. So that's where this all came from. It started with me and it started with a budget concern.

Mr. Barker – I appreciate that. I just wanted to get some clarification on it since it kind of came out of nowhere.

Jeff Hall, Mayor – Mr. Chairman, if I can just say a couple of things to that too? It's an ever-moving target in the city, and I would just say from administrative, we make decisions every day, every week, and we change things and you know we get you get calls, but to keep you updated on every single thing is probably somewhat complex. I would say you've got to weigh

out the number 1.75 percent income tax, that's lower than most cities of this size, but our bigger thing is what's the makeup of that tax base and you heard me say in this room, our five top employers are nonprofit. So, while they have good employment and we get withholding tax, we do not get net profits tax off those five. You may not find another city like that especially of this size in this state. So, in other words, you take Finley, Ohio a little bit smaller than us but they've got Marathon oil and they've got a cold distribution center. Two big taxpaying entities in there that are for profit to pay that. So, it's the makeup a little bit. Us being close to Columbus sometimes that's good and sometimes that's bad. Not hard to get over there to work or buy something and so some things don't pop here. We're going to stay ahead of the game though, because doing what you always do doesn't result in good things. I also would think, and I'm not speaking for or against development or growth and I want to talk about that, but your considerations aren't just about density and traffic. They're also about revenue in this city. So, when we take a plain piece of ground and put apartments or condos or houses on it, it generates more income. So, you have to kind of do this balancing act. I don't know of any neighborhood in this city that wants more traffic. I've never found one yet. I wouldn't, I mean, you wouldn't. We get that, and I understand that, but you do have to weigh the balance of how we get revenue in this city. In any city. Any city that's growing, if you don't grow you're probably going to die and have layoffs and have all kinds of troubles. If you grow a little bit, you're going to inconvenience people and create more traffic. There's more traffic in Newark today than there was 10 years ago, but also, you know, if we hadn't done a little bit of growth, our revenues would be even more challenged than they are today. So, you know, it's always a balancing act and that's all I'd say to the issue. We talked earlier about growth and rezoning and I'm not here to say for or against it at all. I'm just saying at the end of the day there is a financial revenue side of these rezoning decisions at times. So, I want to kind of give council a little more teeth in that as you think about over the next few weeks before you go to that voting. So, I get it. Growth is the point, but if you stand out near where that rezoning is we've spent a lot of millions out there. That bridge was 18 million. We built another bridge over 16. You know, we were the bigger funder on that with the state, but just so you kind of think about some of those things, but again, I'm not for or against it as I'm saying. I think we talked about that because we work with the chiefs all the time. Our safety departments take an enormous amount of money. Things that used to last for decades expire. Helmets and I mean it is kind of crazy now. Everything's got expiration on it, and we have to replenish and rebuy and do things. There's obviously, I joke a little bit, if you want to watch the old Hawaii Five-0 classic, they just pulled up in an ambulance and a load you up and took you to the hospital. Well, we're far from that and that's better for the people that are laying there with some problem or some issue whether it was a wreck or you know in their home. And when they roll out to the scene, the firefighters, what they do, the MTs and everybody work their fannies off and it takes a lot of money and a lot of equipment to do that. But we have a great community because of that. Our people are represented well. So anyways, if you get those calls, let us know and we'll do it. But as the chief said, he hadn't gotten any.

Doug Marmie, 6th Ward Councilmember - Yeah, I would echo what's been said. I've been talking that we need to always look at the model. What does our model look like? And I've been talking to the chief for over a year about it. Now, I can't do anything about it because I'm on the legislative side. I can't change anything like that. I would like to be a part of it and help and do

whatever I can. But I think there's a lot of different models out there and we can always look at that and see if there's efficiencies. If nothing else, even if it ends up that our current model is the best model, at least we know now. Not only that, we can even look at the model. It's the best for now, but will it be if we grow by, you know, our population increases by a hundred thousand? Well, then what does our model need to be? So, we always have to stay ahead of that. So, I think that that's where the chief is talking about. We do need to look at those things. What are we going to look like in the future? It may cost a little bit more money here to save money later or vice versa, but I just think that's worth looking at and we need to always do that. So, thank you.

The Personnel Committee is adjourned

Spencer Barker - Chair