

MINUTES OF CHARTER REVIEW COMMISSION MEETING

February 8, 2012

Meeting start time 6:00 pm

Present: Chair, Janet Young, Barb Niemiller, Anita Luttrell, Judith Bennett, Richard Bilotto, Donna Swigart, Marc Resnik, Orlando Reyes, Maria Mastromatteo, Nick Dudek.

Absent: Annette Petranic, Robert Hudson

Approval of Minutes from 2/1/2012: Ms. Young asked for the approval of the minutes with corrections as follows: Marc Resnik spells his first name with a “c”, Mr. Reyes was not present at the meeting and needs to be noted as absent; the meeting adjourned at 8:00 PM and not 6:00 PM. Voice Vote: All ayes. Minutes stand as corrected.

Police Chief Tim Adkins:

The Civil Service Commission is in place to give the test and certify a list of applicants. They are curtailing what the chief can do as far as hiring is concerned. The Commission pressures him to hire the very top person on the list and will not turn the entire list over to him at one time and gives it to him piece meal. There are other factors involved in hiring a police officer such as psychological testing and interviews with childhood neighbors or people at their high school to find out what kind of person they are. If he sees a candidate won't work, he can say no.

Provisional Hiring: Chief Adkins thinks he should be able to practice “provisional hiring”. This means that if there is an officer from Mantua is available and wants a job in Ravenna, he should be able to hire that person. That would give them two years to give a Civil Service test. If that test is failed, they are out. If they pass, they are in. The Civil Service Commission doesn't like it. It's just a lot easier being a cop if you have a working knowledge of the area.

Council Special Meeting Notification: When City Council has a special meeting, the police officers are required to hand deliver a letter to each and every council person across town. He would like to have that changed because it takes up too much time for the police officers.

City Engineer, Bob Finney: Nothing to add. The politics and administration have changed over the years; previous administrations were nearsighted, now they are looking beyond four years and up to 50 years. That is the way engineering likes to see things. But, no changes are being requested.

Fire Chief Geoffrey Cleveland:

The Civil Service Commission may be overreaching. They wanted him to sign an affidavit stating he hired out of the top candidates. The state says they can choose from the top ten.

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Provisional Hiring: This tool could be beneficial to the Police Department and the Fire Department.

Revenues for the Fire Department: 75% of their calls are EMS. The revenues are generated by collections and levies. The levy formulation was done in 1980. Staffing levels are that of 1990. Their call volume has increased 74% since 1990. There have been increases in responsibilities but not in staffing. The situation has been in existence longer than it should be. The current charter does not address staffing levels. Chief Cleveland suggested the charter reflect city council would have the ability to raise levies when needed. He gave examples of other communities that have such language in their charters.

Staffing levels: Mr. Resnik asked, other than being busy, what are the citizens of Ravenna lacking.

Chief Cleveland said there is an increase in response times. The fire hydrants need to be maintained and no time to do that; they should have more presence in public services such as installing smoke detectors in homes that need them; most important, emergency services have to be on a professional level. Kent has standard operating procedures for a potential cardiac patient. They take a third person to assist. City of Ravenna sends two, if available. If they need more help, then they call the station. He would like to see staffing levels addressed in the charter making it at least 18 fulltime employees.

If more people are added, there will need to be more protection gear but not any other equipment that he can think of.

Chief Cleveland said that having part-time employees is not the best use of city funds. They should have more fulltime, dedicated employees.

Fire Chief's Position: When he took the job, there was no internal interest in the position. The reason behind that was that the job is not incentivized enough. His pay is less than some of the people under him. The chief is on call 24/7. A study shows there is a 99% satisfaction level in fire service, mostly for the schedule (and helping people). When combining the lower pay and increased responsibilities, the position is sorely underpaid. If the city of Ravenna is not the lowest in Northeast Ohio, it is among the lowest. He would like the to add language in the charter to address the chief's pay based on an average of the fulltime fire chiefs' salaries in

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Portage County. It should be a percentage above the highest paid member of the Ravenna Fire Department.

Probationary periods for new hires, Chief Cleveland suggested, be changed from six months to one year. Most departments are one year probationary periods. He has the ability to extend that probationary period by six months. New hires do not get Civil Service protection during their probationary period.

Asked what issues, if any, were submitted to city council, Chief Cleveland said he can't bring them to council when the safety director does not approve of them. He further stated that council was notified because of the PAFERS study that said all of these things that he is suggesting.

Firefighter, Brad Ryczek:

Mr. Ryczek distributed information and gave a presentation regarding the staffing levels in the fire department. They would like to see the staffing levels put into the charter. After much discussion, it was decided what they would like to see here is 18 staff members, one fulltime chief and one fulltime secretary.

The meeting adjourned at 8:47 PM.