

Cuyahoga Falls City Council
Minutes of the Special Finance and Appropriations Committee Meeting

October 14, 2024

Members: Mary Nichols-Rhodes, Chair
Mike Brillhart, Vice Chair
Meika Penta, Brian Ashton, Joe Siegfert

Ms. Nichols-Rhodes called the meeting to order at 7:52 p.m. All members were present.

The minutes of the September 3, 2024 and September 16, 2024 Finance Committee meetings were approved as written.

Legislation Discussed

Temp. Ord. A-89
Temp. Ord. A-90
Temp. Ord. A-91
Temp. Ord. A-92
Temp. Ord. A-93
Temp. Ord. A-94
Temp. Ord. A-95
Temp. Ord. A-96
Temp. Ord. A-97
Temp. Ord. A-98

Discussion:

Temp. Ord. A-89

An ordinance authorizing the Director of Finance to enter into a contract or contracts, with Wichert Insurance Services, Inc. for the professional services necessary to manage the City's risk management and insurance program and for the purchase of public entity insurance coverages, and declaring an emergency.

Mr. Bryan Hoffman, Finance Director, presented Temporary Ordinance A-89 to Council. The City maintains a comprehensive insurance program that includes property, auto, crime and cyber insurance. The renewal dates are October 22, so that is the reason why they needed to introduce, discuss and pass this ordinance tonight. The City has used Wichert Insurance for many years to manage its insurance program. The City is unique in that it uses the Law Department to work hand in hand with Wichert Insurance to do the front-end claim assistance which provides considerable savings to the City in premium dollars. Wichert Insurance is an insurance carrier, broker and professional service group that does insurance for public sectors in surrounding communities. They have a presence in Columbus and Medina, and they are located in the City of Cuyahoga Falls. They have unique public sector knowledge and work that nearby market. The City rates have gone up at a slower pace. They do a good job of managing claims through the Law Department and haven't a lot of loss claims in a lot of years. This year, the City's renewal is 7.43 percent over last year, and a large portion of that increase is due to property values increasing.

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They have added a number of buildings in the past couple years and a number of vehicles that the City insures. He provided Council the same form provided in years past listing renewal premiums.

Ms. Nichols-Rhodes stated that none of these happens without a lot of research. Even though the City has used Wichert Insurance, which does not give them a pass every time. They still compare insurance brokers, and they are making a good choice on behalf of the City. They appreciate the work that goes into it.

Mr. Hoffman stated that Wichert Insurance is a professional service to the City. When you read the ordinance, they are choosing Wichert Insurance without competitively bidding, but, on the back end, Wichert Insurance looks at all the insurance carriers. They have three main lines, Selective, Travelers and AIG for their insurance carriers for the various types of insurance they have. Not all of their insurance is under one carrier. They do go out to various carriers that participate in the public sector. They look at rates and what the coverages are and what they are looking for as far as documentation.

Mr. Brillhart moved to bring out Temp. Ord. A-89, second by Mr. Seigferth. Motion passed, voice vote (5-0).

Temp. Ord. A-90

An ordinance setting the compensation of the Mayor, Members of Council, Council President, and Clerk of Council commencing January 1, 2026 and January 1, 2028, and declaring an emergency.

Mr. Bryan Hoffman, Finance Director, presented Temporary Ordinance A-90 to Council. Effective January 1, 2026, the annual salary for the office of mayor of the City of Cuyahoga Falls will be the current salary for the office of mayor as of the effective date of this Ordinance, plus eleven percent (11%) of the salary for positions classified as “DSG” as of thirty (30) days prior to the date for the filing of nominating petitions for the primary election for the office of mayor. Said salary will increase by two and one-half percent (2.5%) per year effective the following January 1 for the remainder of the Mayor’s four-year term. Not less than thirty (30) days prior to the date for the filing of nominating petitions for the next primary election for the office of mayor, the annual salary for the office of mayor will be adjusted as per the calculation set forth in this Ordinance, with the new salary effective the following January 1st at the commencement of the Mayor’s term of office, and the two and one-half percent (2.5%) annual increase effective thereafter.

Effective January 1, 2026, the salary for the offices of the eight (8) ward members of Council elected to a two (2) year term and the two (2) at large members of Council elected to a four (4) year term at the November 4, 2025 general election will be fifteen percent (15%) of the salary of the office of mayor as of January 1, 2026 as established per Section 1. The salaries for these offices will increase by two and one-half percent (2.5%) per year effective following January 1 for the remainder of their two (2) and four (4) year terms. In the case of the offices of the eight (8) ward members of Council elected to two (2) year terms in the years the Mayor and the two (2) at large

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members of Council are not on the ballot, their salaries, effective the January 1 after their election, will be the salaries then in effect plus two and one-half percent (2.5%), and will increase another two and one-half percent (2.5%) effective the following January 1 for the remainder of their two (2) year term. The salaries for the offices of the eight (8) ward members of Council elected to a two (2) year term and the two (2) at large members of Council elected to a two (2) year term will be adjusted every four (4) years in accordance with the adjustment of the salary for the office of mayor as set forth in Section 1.

Effective January 1, 2026, the salary for the office of Council President will be sixteen percent (16%) of the salary for the office of mayor. That salary shall increase by two and one-half (2.5%) per year effective the following January 1 for the remainder of the term of office and will be adjusted every four (4) years in accordance with the adjustment of the salary for the office of mayor as set forth in Section 1.

Effective January 1, 2026, the salary of the clerk of Council will be eighty percent (80%) of the salary of a member of Council. The salary of the clerk of Council will increase by two and one-half percent (2.5%) effective the following January 1 and thereafter and shall be adjusted in accordance with the salary adjustments set forth in this Ordinance.

Effective January 1, 2028, the salary for the office of the single at large member of Council elected to a four (4) year term at the November 2, 2027 general election will be fifteen percent (15%) of the salary for the office of mayor then in effect. That salary will increase by two and one-half percent (2.5%) per year for the remainder of the term of office and will be adjusted every four (4) years in accordance with the adjustment of the salary for the office of mayor as set forth in Section 1.

The intent of this Ordinance is that the mayor, members of Council and Council President not receive an increase in salary during their terms of office in which an increase was enacted.

Mr. Hoffman stated that, at the beginning of every new negotiation period, they review all the non-bargaining compensation orders and, this year, found it was necessary to update the compensation ordinances. Pay will be set at the beginning of each term, so that is the change there. They needed to do that with a separate ordinance.

Mr. Balthis stated that, under existing law, as has been the case for many decades, the salary of Mayor was based on union negotiations and it would automatically take effect. This will stop that, but will cause those calculations to be public before the beginning of a term to provide more transparency for the public. Mr. Hoffman stated that that is correct. The old ordinance was passed in 1987 that set the pay that way and they have done it that way. The pay will not take effect for Council and the Mayor as was done in the past. Mr. Balthis thanked the Administration. It make sense that those increases be delayed.

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Ms. Nichols-Rhodes stated that she appreciates them looking into it and exploring better standard practices.

Temp. Ord. A-91

An ordinance authorizing the Mayor to enter into an agreement with the Ohio Patrolman's Benevolent Association, Patrol and Community Service Officers bargaining unit, effective July 1, 2024, and declaring an emergency.

Ohio Revised Code Chapter 4117 authorizes public employees to bargain collectively with public employers regarding wages, hours, terms, and other conditions of employment and to enter into collective bargaining agreements. The Mayor and his representatives and the Ohio Police Benevolent Association have bargained collectively and in good faith and said bargaining has resulted in a tentative agreement on a collective bargaining agreement effective July 1, 2024. On or about August 29, 2024 the membership of Ohio Police Benevolent Association ratified said collective bargaining agreement.

The Mayor will be authorized to enter into a collective bargaining agreement as negotiated with and ratified by Ohio Police Benevolent Association, Patrol and Community Service Officers bargaining unit, effective July 1, 2024.

Ms. Janet Ciotola, Law Director, stated that she had no further comments other than what was discussed in Executive Session.

Temp. Ord. A-92

An ordinance authorizing the Mayor to enter into an agreement with the Ohio Patrolman's Benevolent Association, Sergeants and Lieutenants bargaining unit, effective July 1, 2024, and declaring an emergency.

Ohio Revised Code Chapter 4117 authorizes public employees to bargain collectively with public employers regarding wages, hours, terms and other conditions of employment and to enter into collective bargaining agreements. The Mayor and his representatives and the Ohio Police Benevolent Association have bargained collectively and in good faith and said bargaining has resulted in a tentative agreement on a collective bargaining agreement effective July 1, 2024. On or about October 4, 2024, the membership of Ohio Police Benevolent Association ratified said collective bargaining agreement.

The Mayor will be authorized to enter into a collective bargaining agreement as negotiated with and ratified by the Ohio Police Benevolent Association, Sergeants and Lieutenants bargaining unit, effective July 1, 2024.

Ms. Janet Ciotola, Law Director, stated that she had no further comments other than what was discussed in Executive Session.

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Temp. Ord. A-93

An ordinance authorizing the Mayor to enter into an agreement with the Utility Workers Union of America, Local 399, effective July 1, 2024, and declaring an emergency.

Ohio Revised Code Chapter 4117 authorizes public employees to bargain collectively with public employers regarding wages, hours, terms and other conditions of employment and to enter into collective bargaining agreements. The Mayor and his representatives and the Utility Workers' Union of America, Local 399 (UWUA) have bargained collectively and in good faith and said bargaining has resulted in a collective bargaining agreement covering various classifications of employees effective July 1, 2024. On or about September 11, 2024, the membership of the UWUA ratified said collective bargaining agreement.

The Mayor will be authorized to enter into a collective bargaining agreement as negotiated with and ratified by the Utility Workers Union of America, Local 399 effective July 1, 2024.

Ms. Janet Ciotola, Law Director, stated that she had no further comments other than what was discussed in Executive Session.

Temp. Ord. A-94

An ordinance authorizing the Mayor to enter into an agreement with the International Association of Firefighters, Local 494, effective July 1, 2024, and declaring an emergency.

Ohio Revised Code Chapter 4117 authorizes public employees to bargain collectively with public employers regarding wages, hours, terms and other conditions of employment and to enter into collective bargaining agreements. The Mayor and his representatives and the International Association of Firefighters, Local 494 (IAFF) have bargained collectively and in good faith and said bargaining has resulted in a tentative agreement on a collective bargaining agreement effective July 1, 2024. On or about September 27, 2024, the membership of the IAFF ratified said collective bargaining agreement.

The Mayor will be authorized to enter into a collective bargaining agreement as negotiated with and ratified by the IAFF, effective July 1, 2024.

Ms. Janet Ciotola, Law Director, stated that she had no further comments other than what was discussed in Executive Session.

Temp. Ord. A-95

An ordinance authorizing the Mayor to enter into an agreement with the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), Local 2662, effective July 1, 2024, and declaring an emergency.

Ohio Revised Code Chapter 4117 authorizes public employees to bargain collectively with public employers regarding wages, hours, terms and other conditions of employment and to enter into

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collective bargaining agreements. The Mayor and his representatives and AFSCME Local 2662 have bargained collectively and in good faith and said bargaining has resulted in a tentative agreement on a collective bargaining agreement effective July 1, 2024. On or about October 9, 2024, the membership of AFSCME Local 2662 ratified said collective bargaining agreement.

The Mayor will be authorized to enter into a collective bargaining agreement as negotiated with and ratified by AFSCME Local 2662, effective July 1, 2024.

Ms. Janet Ciotola, Law Director, stated that she had no further comments other than what was discussed in Executive Session.

Temp. Ord. A-96

An ordinance creating the positions of Specialist, Digital Media Geographic Information System Technician and Safety and Training Compliance Manager; amending Exhibit “A” of Ordinance 41-2024; and establishing compensation levels for employees of non-bargaining of the City Cuyahoga Falls effective July 1, 2024, and declaring an emergency.

Mr. Bryan Hoffman, Finance Director, presented Temporary Ordinance A-96 to Council. The unclassified, exempt position of Digital Media Specialist will be created and incorporated into Exhibit A of this ordinance at pay grade N25. The classified, exempt position of Geographic Information System Technician will be created and incorporated into Exhibit A of this ordinance at pay grade N29. The classified, exempt position of Safety and Training Compliance Manager will be created and incorporated into Exhibit A of this ordinance at pay grade N27. Exhibit “A” of ordinance 41-2024 will be amended to incorporate the additional positions set forth in sections 1 through 3 above and to include additional changes as set forth in the attached Exhibit “A.” Compensation levels for non-bargaining employees employed with the City of 32 Cuyahoga Falls on and including the date of passage of this ordinance as listed on Exhibit will be established as set forth in Exhibit B effective July 1, 2024.

Mr. Hoffman stated that during the review of the non-bargaining ordinance, this does three things. It creates the positions that are listed there. Those will also be discussed in the budget process, but they are asking for creation of some positions that are lacking in the city that many other communities have. They also found it necessary to upgrade pay grades in the city as shown in Exhibit A in bold and up the pay scale as shown in Exhibit B. The main thing Exhibit B is doing is compressing that pay scale for non-bargaining unit employees to achieve a 12-year top pay rather than the 20-year top pay that is currently in the pay ordinance. This is the same fashion as other bargaining unit contracts over the past several cycles, so they feel it is necessary to do that on the non-bargaining side as well.

Ms. Nichols-Rhodes asked Mr. Hoffman to explain the Geographic Information System Technician position. Mr. Hoffman stated the County has a lot to do with the Geographical Information System (GIS) and it touches most departments in the city. It is the mapping software that shows where all the water and sewer pipes are located. The Electric Department uses it for

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underground or above-ground electric lines. The Community Development Department uses it for zoning issues and lot line information. There are a number of other things that the City uses it for, but it is something bigger than most people understand. One of the biggest uses is by safety forces for dispatch. This is an extremely useful tool if they are updated correctly. If they can have somebody that is doing that all the time, it would be helpful in the city.

Ms. Nichols-Rhodes asked Mr. Hoffman to explain the Safety Training Compliance Manager position. Mr. Hoffman stated that the Safety Training Compliance Manager is one to put in Human Resources. CDLs are being required through the Department of Transportation. As the regulations have changed, so is the way that they have trained and been able to get employees up to speed on CDLs. The main focus is making sure all of the training throughout the city will be adhered to and compliant. It is difficult to hire employees with CDLs. They send employees out for that training and that cost has grown over the last couple years. They are spending \$100,000 a year for training on CDLs in the city. It would be a much better use of dollars to have that inhouse to train new employees and do other things such as safety training that is required on a yearly basis for other Service Department and Water and Sewer Department employees.

Mr. Balthis stated that he appreciates the focus on safety. That is something that the Mayor talks about a lot. It is important that everyone that comes to work for the City comes home safely, and finding those opportunities to save resources on the CDL training because that schooling can be expensive. It is important and really hard to attract and retain employees with CDLs. On that note, this ordinance also adjusts some compensation for certain employees. At the end of the day, the most important thing the City has to do is provide services to the residents, and what is going to dictate the quality of those services are the quality of the employees. They are fortunate in Cuyahoga Falls to have high-quality employees at all levels. They have seen, with the union contracts and wages, that wages have been rising and it has been causing some compensation issues. It is good that they are addressing this to continue to attract employees. It is critically important that the City remains competitive and a place where people want to work and be compensated fairly to provide service to residents. He applauds the Administration in working to address this. They have suffered, as have many communities, with positions staying open and people not staying a long time. Making these adjustments is forward thinking. It makes sense and reflects the current state of the market. At the end of the day, if they don't prioritize retention and attraction of high-quality employees, they will have a lot of unpleasant and bad situations start to happen.

Temp. Ord. A-97

An ordinance amending Ordinance 79-1987 and repealing Ordinance 122-1993 in connection with job classifications, positions, and compensation of various positions within the City of Cuyahoga Falls, and declaring an emergency.

Mr. Bryan Hoffman, Finance Director, presented Temporary Ordinance A-97 to Council. Section 2 of Ordinance 79-1987 is hereby amended as follows: Positions classified as ~~“ESG” and “MSG”~~ **“DSG” and “C/ESG”** will have their midpoint adjusted annually at such time as a majority of

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the employees covered by bargaining agreements negotiated after January 1, 2024 shall have adopted contracts. Said adjustment of the midpoint will be weighted average of the annual wage adjustments received by said bargaining units negotiated after January 1, 2024 ~~but in no event to exceed the percentage of increase granted to other non bargaining unit personnel.~~ **Positions designated as “DSG” will maintain a pay differential totaling seven percent of the top non-bargaining salary. Positions designated as “C/ESG” will maintain a pay differential totaling five percent of the top non-bargaining salary.** Said midpoint adjustment shall be retroactive to January 1 of each year.

The Finance Director will file with the Clerk of Council the new midpoints 30 days prior to implementation. Ordinance 122-1993 will be repealed. Further, any other ordinances or resolutions or portions of ordinances and resolutions inconsistent herewith will be repealed, but any ordinances and resolutions not inconsistent herewith and which have not previously been repealed will be ratified and confirmed.

Mr. Hoffman stated that with the update to the non-bargaining ordinance, they found it necessary to update the 1987 ordinance that was mentioned earlier. That ordinance deals with the previous position of ESG. They are planning to change that to a position called DSG, Director Salary Grade, as well as C/ESG which is Engineer and those are 5 percent and 7 percent.

Ms. Nichols-Rhodes stated that these are changing things from 1987 and 1983. Mr. Balthis stated that the leadership of these departments is critical and it is important that the City remains competitive in its ability to attract and retain talent.

Temp. Ord. A-98

An ordinance establishing policies and procedures within the municipal corporation of the City of Cuyahoga Falls, and declaring an emergency.

Mr. Bryan Hoffman, Finance Director, presented Temporary Ordinance A-98 to Council. Ordinance 82-1987, Section 3, will be amended as follows: Advancement or Change in pay Ranges or Steps. Employees advancing from range to range will be placed in the ~~range step commensurate in which provides the employee compensation closest to a five percent increase but not more than seven percent in excess of that which~~ **range step commensurate in** which the employee was receiving in the position from which he had advanced unless the Articles of Agreement entered into by the City with certain employee organizations provide otherwise concerning “working assignments.”

Any ordinances and resolutions, or portions of ordinances and resolutions inconsistent herewith will be repealed, but any ordinances and resolutions not inconsistent herewith and which have not previously been repealed will be ratified and confirmed.

Mr. Hoffman stated that in the review of the non-bargaining compensation, there was ordinance that they found to make the change to, and that is an ordinance from 1987 that deals with promotions. In that, they are proposing that they allow promotions to go from the step that

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employees are at currently to a similar step in a different pay range, whereas before they had to make some changes that promotion would not be able to do, and that they would have to go back a step in certain situations. That is also being done as part of the union negotiation process. They are making similar changes to those contracts.

The meeting adjourned at 8:17 p.m.