

Record of Meeting
Fire and Police Commission
Monday, February 27, 2023 – 5:30pm
Room: 120A

Present: Chairman Robert Pickrell, Commissioner John Hedges, Kira Tchang, Human Resources Director/Assistant Village Manager, Shatonya Johnson, Oak Park Police Chief, Ronald Kobyleski, Oak Park Fire Chief

Also Present: Assistant Director of Human Resources, Diana Bobadilla

2. Call to Order: Chairman Robert Pickrell called the meeting to order at 5:36 pm

3. Public Comment: no public comment

4. Staff Liaison Report:

- Director Tchang introduced Fire Chief Ronald Kobyleski and Police Chief Shatonya Johnson to the Board of Fire & Police Commission
- Staffing: Police department is down by 21 FTE which includes 2 Deputy Chiefs, 4 Sergeants, and 15 Patrol Officers, at the moment there are no active lists except for the Sergeants promotional which is in progress.
- Fire department: no vacancies at the Command & Lieutenant rank, 4 Firefighter Paramedics will be recruited, promotional in progress.

Chair Pickrell inquired whether the Police department is having hiring difficulties due to a larger issue or if there is something Oak Park can be doing better. Chief Johnson advised that this is part of a larger, nationwide problem however locally when applicants see the Oak Park police facilities compared to other entities, as well as other entities offer sign in bonuses, allows lateral transfers and year-round hiring, which impacts the number of applicants that apply with the Oak Park Police department. Chief Johnson indicated that her department promotes officer wellness, and have a service dog and continue to look for ways to improve.

Commissioner Hedges inquired how important a new facility is for candidates and their decision to apply or not for the Oak Park Police department, Chief Johnson believes that negative press has been the top reason why applications for Entry Level Police has decreased.

Commissioner Hedges indicated that in the past there were more candidates to choose from, now the concern is the decrease in the number of candidates that apply which may mean we cannot meet the number of sworn officers required. Chair Pickrell indicated that when we had a larger pool of candidates the quality of candidates was higher. Chief Johnson stated that before just taking any candidates she would prefer to be shorthanded. She also indicated that once officers are hired Police staff spend time with new recruits reviewing policies, rules & regulations, history of Oak Park. She indicated that lateral hires will still have a probationary period, backgrounds will be conducted.

- POWER Test: Director Tchang, advised that the Physical Ability Test requirement to test for the Entry Level Police Testing was reviewed by staff, currently applicants are required to have passed the Peace Officer Wellness Evaluation Report (POWER) test upon application, other entities are now requiring at the time of hire.
- Entry Level Police & Fire Testing: Director Tchang indicated that at this time there may be an annual testing period, however the eligibility lists may be exhausted quickly. Talked about increasing the testing to semi-annual or quarterly testing so there can be more frequent testing or many other

communities are now implementing open applications, meaning candidates can apply at any time and take the test, and eventually be hired or not. Director Tchang indicated that we are working with IOSolutions on how other communities handling the open application process.

Chief Kobyleski advised that River Forest & Forest Park has moved to open applications. The Town of Cicero and Berwyn are also shorthanded. Indicated that people stop by the station who seem interested in applying but when they ask the number of calls they take and number of ambulances compared to other Villages they prefer to go elsewhere. Chief indicated that the Village Board of Trustees approved the hiring of three Firefighter Paramedics.

Director Tchang stated that more conversations are taking place with the Village board of Trustees regarding lateral transfers program approved by the Board of Fire & Police Commission last year, which implementation has been on hold as further discussions are taking place like incentives, other ways to encourage people to apply as well as retention of existing staff.

- Application fee for Entry Level Police & Fire: Director Tchang explained that all applicants are required to pay an application fee of \$40.00 that doesn't cover the cost of the program just an off-set. Staff has discussed waving the fee due to the hiring challenges. The Board of Fire & Police Commission agreed to waive the fee with the understanding that further discussion to waive the fee and approval is required from the Village Board of Trustees.

Chief Kobyleski indicated that paramedics make \$18.00/hour and asking for candidates to spend \$40.00 on an application and when candidates are comparing what other towns are charging.

The meeting adjourned at 6:15 p.m.

There was a motion to adjourn by Chairperson Pickrell seconded the motion by Commissioner Hedges. Ayes: All, Nays: None. The meeting adjourned at 6:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Diana Bobadilla, Assistant Director of Human Resources