

**Human Resource Committee Meeting**  
**Friday, August 28, 2020 8:00 a.m.**

**Present:** Chairman Porter, Mayor Koons, Councilmember Nairn, Fiscal Officer Romanowski

Porter called the meeting to order. He addressed the difficulty COVID made for Village employees to use their vacation time. Porter asked the Fiscal Officer about vacation and flex time use, and she explained that regular employees receive comp time, which is one and a half hours of time for each hour of overtime. Department Heads get hour for hour and have one year from the time it is earned to use it. She stated that she and the Police Chief each have about 400 hours of flex time currently. Employees can carry over one week's vacation. Last year, she carried over one and lost one. She also lost over 100 hours of flex time. She believed this was what the Mayor meant when he brought up the issue of employee burn out. Porter suggested legislation to allow employees to carry over more time than the current policy allows. The Fiscal Officer advised the Police are asking to carry over two weeks because of COVID. It might only effect one to two people in the Police Department and one in the Service Department. Her concern was coverage, but the Chief did not think this would be a problem. Porter asked if the problem would be addressed by increasing the amount of carryover vacation time to two weeks. The Fiscal Officer thought it would. Nairn asked if this would be a permanent measure, and Porter said it would be a one-time policy because of COVID.

Porter summarized that the committee would introduce an ordinance to modify the Employee Handbook for the purposes of allowing an employee to carry over two weeks of vacation rather than one from 2020 to 2021 only. Nairn added that it would be terminated December 31, 2021 and vacation time should be taken before this. Porter stated he would ask the Solicitor draft the legislation, and he would recommend waiving readings and adopting it as an emergency. Nairn verified this would apply to any full-time employees of the Village.

Nairn asked when the COVID 19 Federal funding expired. The Fiscal Officer explained that the Village must have money encumbered by October 15<sup>th</sup>. Some money had already been spent for sanitizing equipment, and she would encumber some for payroll in the event an employee must be quarantined or were to get COVID since this time could not be taken from sick time. The money may be kept by the Village until the end of the year for this purpose. The funds that are not encumbered are returned to the County Auditor. What is not spent by the end of the year must be returned to the State. The Fiscal Officer further explained that the funds may also be spent on having employees work remotely in case of quarantine. She explained that she has a laptop but her Administrative Assistant does not. COVID money could be used for this purpose and would ensure that administratively the Village would be prepared in the event of employee quarantine or COVID sickness. Porter asked how much money was involved. The Fiscal Officer stated the Village has \$50,000 and has spent \$6,000 - \$7,000. With the playground opening, more sanitizing materials would be purchased, and the purchase of the computer and software would be another \$1,000 - \$1,500. She asked the other departments for suggestions on uses for the funds.

The Mayor stated that there was a second round whereby any money not spent by the county would be offered again until the end of December. The Fiscal Officer asked to whom the money was offered, and whether it was only to municipalities that expressed a need. The Mayor said he did not know, but he thought it was like a second chance. Porter asked what it meant to encumber the funds, and the Fiscal Officer explained that there would have to be purchase orders assigned.

Porter addressed the agenda item pertaining to employee welfare. The Fiscal Officer explained this related to the Mayor's statement at the previous Council meeting about employee burnout. The Mayor stated that his concern was that if the Village had employees with 400 hours beyond their job, he questioned what the issue was. He questioned if too much was expected of the employees, or was there not enough help to get the work done. The Mayor questioned whether it was a matter of the Village employing people who could not get the job done in 40 hours or possibly a matter of proper staffing numbers. With the Police Department, there were changes coming due to retirements. He asked the Fiscal Officer if she needed more hours for her Administrative Assistant. The Mayor asked if additional help was needed, or was it necessary to take some responsibilities off employees' plates. The Mayor questioned the reason that the jobs were not being completed in 40 hours and asked if it was an issue of being disorganized, trying to do too much, or employees flying by the seat of their pants. He asked if the Village was not budgeting for things or was it not as well planned out that so much more work was being generated for the employees. He did not know the situation or whether the Village was properly staffed.

Nairn stated she would like another community similar to South Russell identified to see how many part-time and full-time employees it had. She thought this would be a good place to start. Nairn recalled the Mayor mentioning Plain City. The Fiscal Officer stated that it was similar in size and population but offered different services. The Mayor and Nairn addressed the activities offered by this community throughout the year.

The Mayor suggested that if the Police Chief had 400 flex hours, perhaps he should not have been involved with the rental house and maybe he should just concentrate on police jobs. Although he saved the Village time and money, the rental house was not his baby - the Street Commissioner should have been running this instead. He did not think the neighboring Police Chiefs would be involved with this, or with sanitizing the playground. The Mayor thought the Police Chief should be told to stick to his lane, but added that if not for the Police Chief, the playground would still be closed. He also questioned whether the Chief should be crawling underneath the cars and putting in wires. Other Police Chiefs were not doing this. Porter said that with smaller municipalities, people tend to do a lot of things. He asked if the Police Chief felt his department was understaffed, and the Mayor said he had not spoken to him about this. The Mayor thought the Police Department was adequately staffed and added that there were always two officers on the road.

The Fiscal Officer clarified that she and the Police Chief do what they do because they care about the Village. Neither were complaining about the time they put in. The Chief steps in to help, and with the Street Commissioner being new to his role, she thought the Chief stepped in to help with the rental house and playground as the Street Commissioner is still learning. Nairn

stated South Russell was unique in the way employees crossed over and helped one another. She felt this was what made South Russell special.

The Mayor stated that while the Fiscal Officer was on vacation, she worked 35 hours from home, and he did not feel that this was the way the employees should be treated. He did not know the answer but did not want to see the employees burnt out. The Fiscal Officer stated that the big part of the problem she noticed in the last several years was that the Village was not organized and things were being done without following proper procedures. She felt a lot of her time has been spent cleaning up problems after the fact. The Fiscal Officer gave the example of the Forest Drive project. She said she never heard about the proposed project and no one had come to her before the Council meeting to see if money were available for the project. It was approved by Council, but it was not in the budget. As a result, she had to write the legislation to get the money appropriated for the following meeting. The Fiscal Officer described having the feeling over the last couple of years of running around trying to clean things up after they were done incorrectly, rather than being notified ahead of time so that things could be done correctly the first time. She stated it was much more work to go around after the fact and clean things up. Nairn stated that communication needed to be addressed. The Fiscal Officer agreed.

The Mayor stated that the Village joked about getting the budget done early but noted that other communities were already hammering away on their budgets. He also thought it would be necessary to look at how much flexibility there was in the budget and questioned the necessity for Council to address \$200 for the Fire Inspector. The Mayor stated this was a waste of time. He thought the Village employees were being hamstrung having to come back for money. He questioned whether the budgets were being done too tightly that the Department Heads did not have flexibility. Nairn stated the budget needed to be done tightly because the alternative could be a disaster. She suggested that the Village should be more forward thinking with the allotments for the upcoming year and have more built in than the previous year to see if this helped. Perhaps Council had been too stringent. Nairn referenced the Mayor's statement that he could sleep well at night because the Fiscal Officer was watching the money. The Village did not have to worry about ending up on the news because the coffers were empty.

The Fiscal Officer explained that when the Village did its budget, it was done by fund and within the fund was broken out into salary / benefits, and then everything else. This is how she must report to the State and County. She felt that sometimes Council became wrapped up in the individual line items rather than giving Department Heads the flexibility they needed to run their department. Nairn agreed and said it was too detail oriented sometimes. The Mayor agreed and said the employees are micromanaged. He said the Village is penny wise and pound foolish and cited the purchase of a new copy machine and having to find money in the budget for it.

The Fiscal Officer stated the Village has the five-year plan, and the copier had been on her schedule to replace. She felt it was important to be more cognizant of these things. She referred to the management of the part-time Police Department employees, and stated that years ago, she had a budget for part-time help. She could decide how the hours were distributed. In the last couple of years, Council had become more focused on specifying exact work hours per week, which was not helpful. For example, when she was on vacation, there were Council packets to assemble, the copy machine was broken, and a newsletter to prepare and she had to tell her

Administrative Assistant that she could not work extra hours because of the limits made by Council. The Fiscal Officer stated that there should be the line item budgets as a guideline with expectations set from Council, and the Department Heads must work within the budget for the year. If the Department Head went over, then it would be on the Department Head to explain the reasoning why it was over to Council. The Mayor agreed and said that employees were given 24 and 25 hours as a limit, but some flexibility is necessary to get the job done.

Porter stated that the full-time employees were entitled to overtime, but the Administrative Assistant was not entitled to this. From a legal point of view, if she went over a certain number of hours, she would become full-time. The Fiscal Officer explained that this should be up to the Department Head to manage to make sure that it did not happen. If the Department Head were to go over budget, they would need permission for the employee to work. The Mayor stated he did not worry about the Department Heads doing this, and felt flexibility was important. If he were to need someone for 60 hours, he would require the ability to do this. The Mayor felt a change was necessary. Porter suggested a line item for overtime for the part-time employee. The Fiscal Officer stated it did not need to be overtime since it would be at the regular rate. It would just be a budget for part-time hours and the Department Head would manage it for the year. Porter suggested a line-item for part-time employee additional hours. The Fiscal Officer explained that when her Administrative Assistant was hired, her hours were not limited because the Fiscal Officer could manage her department. The Mayor suggested going back to this. Porter explained that it was set with a motion, limiting the Administrative Assistant's hours to 24 and the Building Department Administrative Assistant/Board Clerk to 25. Porter stated that the motion could be repealed, but this would impact Finance. He suggested talking to the Finance Committee. The Fiscal Officer clarified that she was not necessarily asking for an increase to her annual budget, but rather asking to be able to work within the line item budget. The Mayor suggested locating the motion to determine verbiage. The Fiscal Officer stated that the limit on hours came about with the Building Department Administrative Assistant/Board Clerk position. The Fiscal Officer's Administrative Assistant was originally hired as a part-time employee with an annual budget amount calculated by averaging 16 hours per week – this gave the Fiscal Officer flexibility to manage the hours based on the workload. When it was increased to 24 hour per week, she no longer has the flexibility. Porter clarified that the Fiscal Officer's Administrative Assistant was limited by Council to 24 hours. The Fiscal Officer agreed.

Nairn stated that this action was good, but the bottom line was a question of whether Council was doing the right thing so that the Fiscal Officer could take five consecutive days off without being called, texted, or bothered with any Village business. Nairn felt this was unfair to the Fiscal Officer and appalling that she would have to work from home on her vacation. She agreed with the Mayor that this would lead to burn out. Vacation should be restorative. Porter suggested amending it to raise the Administrative Assistant's hours up to 30. The Mayor said he would prefer to allow the Department Heads to manage their staff as needed. The Fiscal Officer explained that previously, she would estimate the time and provide that for the budget, and what mattered was that she stayed within her budget for the year. The Mayor stated that he had no problem if the Fiscal Officer were to come to Council in October to say she had used up all of her Assistant's hours and there was still work to do. The Fiscal Officer stated it would be her responsibility to come to Council to explain why. If Council were to find that it was not warranted, Council could say no and not allow the Assistant to work any more that year. This

would be where the Department Head would have to take ownership. The Mayor stated that if there were three snowstorms and the Street Commissioner were to come in and asks for more money for plowing, Council would give it to him. His concern was getting the job done and said Council would find the money. Nairn added that there would always be something unexpected that happened.

Regarding employee welfare, the Mayor stated that some of the administrative employees were working from 8:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m. without a break. The Fiscal Officer stated this was not a problem and that employees knew they were permitted to take a break, but they chose to eat at their desks while they worked.

The Mayor asked about the working from home policy. Porter asked if the Village had one, and the Fiscal Officer stated that the Village did not have one. She worked from home when she was sick in March because she had her laptop but did not receive overtime, so it was not an issue. The only other people who might work from home would be the Building Department Administrative Assistant/Board Clerk and the Administrative Assistant to the Fiscal Officer. It might be difficult for the Building Department Administrative Assistant/Board Clerk because of the foot traffic. Nairn clarified that working from home would not apply to the Service or Police Departments.

The Mayor stated that Employee of the Year had not been done. He thought this program should be examined. The Mayor stated that the Chamber of Commerce sponsored an activity in August to recognize and reward employees. He would look into this.

Porter addressed the possibility of hiring a part-time Building Inspector. He provided background about Inspection Solutions serving in the interim and doing building inspections. Porter stated that Hocevar may not be with the Village forever, and perhaps there should be a back-up plan of finding a part-time Building Inspector. The last time this was addressed, it did not go well. Porter spoke to Carroll, Canton, and other individuals, and thought if there were a part-time Building Inspector as a Village employee, it would be a better way to go for the long term. Porter welcomed input and wanted to obtain authorization to advertise the position at the next Council meeting. Carroll told Porter he wanted to see all the applications submitted for such a position before any winnowing. Nairn asked if there had been interviews for a part-time Building Inspector the previous year. The Mayor stated there had been. She asked if this was when a contractor culled the applications and Nairn asked how this occurred. Porter explained that Hocevar was one of the most qualified Building Inspectors in the State of Ohio and was on the State board for Building Inspections and Codes. Porter considered him a subject matter expert. Nairn clarified that this was why he jumped in and negated certain candidates. She asked who told him to do this and asked if this were not an irregular practice. Porter stated it was not irregular because it was an opinion. Porter asked that when there was someone in the business who knew everybody in the business, why would he not be asked for his opinion. Porter thought the problem with the previous job posting was that there were so few qualified candidates. It would be difficult to find someone with Hocevar's certifications and Electrical Safety Inspection (ESI) certification. The Fiscal Officer stated it might take a while to train someone about the Village and thought having a succession plan was a good idea. She added that Hocevar retired from the Village six years ago and the Village had been contracting with

him since. Nairn asked if Hocevar was planning to leave, and if this was the reason Porter was presenting the idea of hiring a part-time Building Inspector. Porter stated no, but added that the current contract could be easily terminated by either party. Porter asked what would happen if Hocevar were to terminate the contract. The Fiscal Officer stated that it would be good to have a plan to hire someone whom Hocevar could train so that there could be a succession plan in place.

The Mayor stated he had a couple of concerns. He said the HR Committee would be telling the Building Committee that they needed to hire a part-time employee. The Mayor stated this made him queasy and said the committee would not go to the Police Chief and tell him to hire another Lieutenant. Porter stated that it could. The Mayor stated that the committee was getting all over everyone else's turf. Nairn classified it as comparing an apple and an orange. She did not see how the Police Department could be compared with the Building Department, which had been tumultuous. The Mayor clarified that the HR Committee should not be telling the Building Committee to hire a part-time Building Inspector and asked if the committee would tell the Street Commissioner to hire another Street Department employee. Porter stated there had been communication between various Council members on the topic, and it would not surprise the Building Committee that HR was recommending a part-time Building Inspector. The Fiscal Officer stated that it would be a Council decision since it would be an employment structure change; Porter agreed. He reiterated that it would not surprise the Building Committee that HR was in favor of a part-time Building Inspector. He added that it would not surprise Finance Committee either.

The Mayor's other concern was that after 28 years with the Village, he would hate to have Hocevar think that now he had to sit down and interview for his job. He asked if the committee were proposing keeping Hocevar and grooming a part-time Building Inspector. Porter advised there would be a period of overlap. The part-time Building Inspector the Village finds may not have the ESI certification. Porter stated it would be a tall order to replace Hocevar because all the people like Hocevar are either independent contractors doing what Hocevar is doing or they are already employed by large municipalities. Porter offered that Hocevar could be a backup for the prospective part-time Building Inspector for inspections the person was not qualified to do. He offered that the individual could seek certifications.

The Mayor stated that Laura Heilman came into the position "raw" and said Hocevar turned her into \$100,000 Building Inspector over the years.

The Mayor added that he had Hocevar involved in the interviews because his opinion was respected. With the Fire Inspector interviews, Mike Carroll would be used to assess the candidates. Porter advised a subject matter expert would be wanted for this purpose. Nairn stated she understood. The Mayor asked the Fiscal Officer what was found with Hocevar's hourly rate with the other communities he served. The Fiscal Officer stated that although she had not had time to review all the information, what she did review showed them to be pretty much the same; \$75 per hour. One community had no written contract with Hocevar and one had no retainer and only paid by the inspection. Porter stated that Carroll told him that what the Village was paying was in line with the other places he was inspecting. The Fiscal Officer stated she would forward the information to Council.

Porter addressed the job description review. The Fiscal Officer noted that the individual who filled the position would be doing Zoning Inspections in the Village vehicle. The requirement to have a State of Ohio Driver's License should be added to the job description. Porter thought this should be added to all Village positions. The Fiscal Officer stated she would send Porter the exact verbiage.

The Fiscal Officer asked if the ability to obtain or be a licensed notary should be included in the job description because quite a few of the documents were required to be notarized. The current Administrative Assistant/Board Clerk was not a notary. Heilman and Kris Wilson were notaries. The difficulty was that customers at the Building Department must walk across the parking lot to the Fiscal Office to have items notarized. The committee discussed the process necessary to become a notary.

The Fiscal Officer asked if there were additional responsibilities that should be added to the job description when adding the Assistant Zoning Inspector as part of the position. The Village did not have an assistant Zoning Inspector, and the Fiscal Officer was unsure of the additional responsibilities that should be added to the job description. Porter suggested adding the Zoning Inspector would conduct inspections of properties in the Village per the Zoning Code. The Mayor suggested contacting Lorraine Sevich, who is an assistant Zoning Inspector for Newbury.

The Mayor asked if the question of accepting money was that the Zoning Inspector could not accept money. The Fiscal Officer stated this had been her concern and the concern of the Fiscal Auditor relative to reducing risks of fraud. It would not be wise to have someone collecting money and then also doing inspections, particularly with cash. In speaking with the State Auditor's office and the Ethics Board, she found that neither had a problem with this. However, she had learned in her fraud classes that this was not a good idea. However, the Building Department had always done it. The Mayor suggested seeing what Newbury was doing. The Fiscal Officer spoke to finance personnel in other small communities who were appalled and indicated that the money should be brought to the Fiscal Officer. This would be inconvenient to Building Department customers, but would help with checks and balances. Nairn asked if the Building Department Administrative Assistant/Board Clerk would be sent for notary training and the Mayor and Porter said yes.

The Mayor asked if mileage was paid. The Fiscal Officer stated that it used to be that employees drove their own cars. Now the Village has an unmarked police car and the Building Department car, and the requirement is to use one of these cars if available. It is preferred that the employee use the Village vehicle because it is less expensive and if there were an accident on Village time, it could get messy if the employee were in a personal vehicle.



Mark Porter, Chairman of HR Committee

Prepared by Leslie Galicki