

**HR Committee Meeting**  
**January 9, 2025, 7:30 a.m. Village Hall**

Present: Chairman Berger, Council Member Bell, Mayor Koons, Fiscal Officer Romanowski

Berger called the meeting to order. He noted that the Mayor provided an agenda which contained a new resident orientation package and Berger did not know how that related to HR. The Mayor responded that he had no idea, had never done it, and probably puts it down every other year to see if it is something the Village should do. No one has ever asked for it. He put it on the agenda this year because he received no responses from his request for board volunteers that was made in the electronic newsletter. In previous years he would have gotten five or six responses. He did not know about the effectiveness of the Village's communication. The Mayor added that most people think the restaurants on E. Washington Street belong to Chagrin Falls. He verified that the Fiscal Officer does not receive many requests for information about South Russell, and she explained that years ago under the previous mayor, a welcome packet was created, but it did not take off. The Village has the website with pertinent information and Council will be considering going with TextMyGov to send information to residents. Berger thought the matter fell under community relations along with other communication going out to the community. Perhaps this needs to be a separate entity or part of something else. However, it does not appear to be an HR issue. The Mayor agreed.

The Fiscal Officer offered that this was a good example of the benefits to define the duties and responsibilities of the standing committees. Berger stated that there should be a mission statement for each committee. He acknowledged that there is overlap, but sometimes duties get assigned to the committees based on personalities of committee members which should not be the case. The committees should stay focused on their purpose.

Berger addressed the Mayor's agenda item about the day after Thanksgiving. It is not an employee holiday, and most employees take it as a personal day. He noted that there appeared to be employees working that day this year. The Mayor said that the Building Department Administrative Assistant worked. Berger said this becomes a safety issue. He referenced a two-man rule, and the Mayor thought it was a good idea. The alternative is to replace a holiday. The Fiscal Officer explained that previously, the Village had Columbus Day off, but this was changed to a second personal day. Berger suggested compelling employees to take it off to ensure the safety of the employees. The Fiscal Officer added that the Street Commissioner also worked that day. Berger thought this matter should be discussed by the Mayor with the DHs at the next meeting and feedback obtained from the staff. Bell asked if there should be a DH present at all times. The Fiscal Officer advised that under the last mayor, there had to one DH working. Berger said the alternative would be to close the campus on that day and change it from a personal day back to a holiday.

Berger noted discrimination/harassment training sessions on the Mayor's agenda. The Mayor referenced a session he attended with Todd Hicks of Thrasher, Dinsmore & Dolan, and Bonnie Troyer who both suggested that every six months to a year, there should be training. Troyer is booked into March, but Todd Hicks is available, and he suggested to the DHs that the training take place from 1:30 – 3:30 for hourly employees and 3:30 to 5:30 for salaried employees. He would discuss with the Chief

the best way to handle the training for the Police Department. The Mayor suggested having the officers come in two hours before their shifts for the training, but the Fiscal Officer advised that all police officers are salaried and eligible for overtime. She suggested that the Village's insurance, PEP, provides online training that could be done individually by employees. Bell thought the online option provided flexibility, but in person was most effective. The Mayor concurred. However, Berger addressed the logistics of doing the training every six months. The Mayor thought this was excessive. Berger thought that with the requirement to complete two hours of training per six months or per year, the online format is more effective. The training is interactive and includes quizzes. Bell asked who the contact would be for an employee with questions about the training. Berger said it would be the committee. He added that Council should also do the training. If the committee cannot answer the question, the Village has the legal resources of the Solicitor and Mansour Gavin. The Fiscal Officer offered to explore training provided by Mansour Gavin for the next meeting.

The Mayor listed evaluation processes on his agenda and Berger explained that one has been proposed. The Fiscal Officer stated that she and the Chief had a question about the proposed policy. Per discussion at the last HR meeting, she needed clarification as to whether the policy was stating that the evaluation would be prepared with the Mayor before it goes to the employee. Berger explained that he envisioned that the DH would prepare the evaluation and then submit it to the Mayor for comments. After the Mayor signed off on it, the DH would meet with the employee. The Fiscal Officer had never heard of it being done that way and made an inquiry with the area clerks. Of the 14 responses, 8 do evaluations, 3 are optional for the DH, and one only has evaluations for the Police Department. Of those, twelve have the DH/Supervisor doing the evaluation. With 3 of the 12, the Mayor reviews the evaluations after they are done. For 3 of those, the Mayor evaluates the DHs and 2 of them have Mayor and Council evaluating the DHs. There are 2 that have the DH and employee set the goals and with 2 of them, the DH sets the goals. Berger said that the proposed policy has the DH and employee setting the goals. The Fiscal Officer explained that the way the process has been done in the past is that the DH does the evaluations and then the Mayor reviews them after they are done, and he signs off on them. Berger explained that he was trying to head off any issues that might arise before it gets to the employee. Bell asked for clarification as to whether this meant the Mayor could share that with the DH and the DH could address it during the review. Berger provided an example of a DH that writes a review stating he/she does not like the way the employee ties his/her shoelaces. If that goes to the employee, there is clearly animosity between the two over a petty issue. All he was doing by suggesting someone else review the evaluation before it goes to the employee to allow for a conversation with the DH about rethinking the shoelace topic. Bell thought this made sense. Berger concluded it was a way to head off conflict before it gets to the employee level. The Mayor suggested getting all of the evaluations done by March 31<sup>st</sup> and then taking a look in April to see what works and does not work. Berger asked if the plan was to follow the procedure. The Mayor said there is no procedure, so they could do this. The Fiscal Officer advised that there is an evaluation process currently in place.

Berger further suggested that the Mayor's review of the DHs should come to the committee for checks and balances. These are the only ones the committee would see unless an employee had an issue with

the DH or vice versa. It could be brought to the Mayor or the HR Committee. The Fiscal Officer reminded the committee of the grievance procedure. Berger clarified that he also wanted to avoid an employee with a problem with his/her review wanting to meet with Council as a whole. That would be a nightmare situation having Council and the Mayor in Executive Session trying to resolve the matter. It should come to HR first to attempt to resolve the issue. This would enable the committee to provide a recommendation to Council on how to handle the matter. Bell concurred. Berger concluded that he did not want Council to become the HR manager. He further advised that the evaluations should be completed in the first quarter of the year and the proposed policy would be utilized for this evaluation cycle. It can be edited if there are issues. The Mayor asked if this policy was reviewed by Mansour Gavin, and Berger stated the Solicitor reviewed it. The Fiscal Officer added that the Solicitor had comments on it, and Berger responded that he addressed the comments with her. He further explained that the policies are motions, not legislation, and can be modified. The goal is to provide the employees a sense of the process and steps that would be taken for any grievances. The Mayor's suggestion is to operate for three months with this process and then determine whether it needs to be modified before formally adopting it in April. The Fiscal Officer informed the Committee that the Chief has the Police Department evaluations completed.

Berger continued to address the Mayor's agenda items. The Ohio Police & Fire pension contribution, according to the Mayor had not come out of committee yet. Right now, it is dead but might come around again. The committee discussed options for correcting the OP&F pension system.

Work from home guidelines were discussed. The Mayor explained that the Village has none and asked if they were needed. The Fiscal Officer referenced the discussion of this matter at the previous HR meeting and explained that typically employees do not work from home. If she is working from home, it is on a vacation day when there is still work to be done. During COVID, there was a brief time when Admin personnel were sick, under quarantine, and not allowed to come to work for a couple of weeks. Other than that, there was the recent snowstorm. Bell asked if there was a push to be able to work from home, and the Fiscal Officer said no. Berger said there was a situation a couple weeks ago where there was a snow day, and the campus was closed. Employees were told to work from home. The Service Department workers cannot work from home, nor can the patrol officers. Can the Chief and Lieutenant work from home? The Fiscal Officer explained that the Chief will also work from home on occasion when there is something that has to be done. Berger explained he would treat DHs differently than other employees. In reality, the Building Department Administrative Assistant, Administrative Assistant, and part-time Administrative Assistant are the issue. Berger questioned whether the Building Department Administrative Assistant is asked to bring her computer home, and the Mayor said no. Berger concluded that she would not have access to any of her files in that case. Regarding the Part-time Administrative Assistant, he felt that if the campus is closed, it is a snow day and there is nothing to be done. Bell asked if they would be paid, and Berger said no, but he would be fine if the employee wanted to make the hours up. He further explained that a part-time employee does not have access to a computer, nor should she be issued one to take home. Bell did not want to hurt someone's livelihood because it snowed and did not want them on the road if it is dangerous. He suggested paying the employee for the 8 hours. Berger reminded Bell that it is a part-time position and would not

be 8 hours. The Fiscal Officer explained that the Part-time Administrative Assistant averages about 28 hours per week but has a flexible schedule that enabled the Fiscal Officer to offer her more time another day. Berger asked if the Administrative Assistant had a computer at home, and the Fiscal Officer said no but that during the storm she came to Village Hall to get it. Moving forward, if the storm is predicted, admin could take their computers home. But then there is the question if it is not known, or someone forgets. The Mayor concluded that the Building Department Admin Assistant nor the Administrative Assistant worked the day of the snowstorm but were paid for it. Berger said yes in theory. The Fiscal Officer clarified that the Building Department Admin Assistant was off on pre-scheduled sick leave, and the Admin Assistant worked her 8 hours from home because she came to get her laptop. Berger added that the Service Department staff worked because they were plowing snow for at least 8 hours. The situation only applies to a couple of employees. He added another complication could be if the employees took laptops home but then did not have internet access. He questioned how often this happens, and the Fiscal Officer said it was the first time in 18 years the Village campus was closed. Bell and Berger concluded that it was not a big issue. However, if there were to be another pandemic, this could be a problem. The Fiscal Officer advised that even then, admin came in because they were considered essential workers. It was only when they had COVID and were quarantined that admin worked from home. Berger suggested that the policy state that issues are addressed as they arise since it is a rare occurrence. Berger further stated that if an employee were to express interest in working from home two days a week, this would not be permitted. The Fiscal Officer concurred. There was further discussion of current employment trends relative to working from home. The blizzard is a one-off situation and will be decided at the time. The Mayor thought it was tough that both someone plowing snow and someone sitting at home both got paid. Berger stated this was the nature of the job. Furthermore, if someone does not want to plow snow and wants to get paid for those days, then they should apply for a job in the office. The Mayor agreed. Berger continued to explain that it is part of the job, and he thought the Village fairly compensates its employees in the Service Department especially with the events where they have to work through snowstorms. The Fiscal Officer added that there are other times that they are getting paid the minimum 4 hours for a callout where they do not work the full four hours. Berger concluded that this issue then goes away.

Regarding the part-time Administrative Assistant, Berger asked for a check-in with her progress over the last two months she has been with the Village. The Fiscal Officer said she is doing well, and everybody likes working with her. She is doing a great job in the Police Department, where she is typically scheduled two days a week. She is also scheduled one day at the Building Department, and she is now trying to get her in the administrative office for some hours. Although the Fiscal Officer will ask the Street Commissioner what he needs, the part-time Administrative Assistant feels she needs more time with the Building Department. Berger asked about the status of her LEADS certification, and the Fiscal Officer said she would be meeting with the Chief and part-time Administrative Assistant to discuss her progress. Berger asked the Fiscal Officer if the part-time Administrative Assistant had experienced any problems or issues. The Fiscal Officer said as far as working in the department, no, but has had concerns about the chain of command. Per her job description, she reports to the Fiscal Officer and Chief, but on a couple of occasions, she has been directed by the Mayor to do something.

This was upsetting to her because she does not want to be disrespectful but does not know to whom she is supposed to answer. Berger indicated that this was addressed in the last HR meeting and asked the Mayor if there was anything from his perspective that was not getting done. The Mayor explained that there was one situation on the snow day that if the part-time Administrative Assistant wanted to work, she could work from home looking into America-250. Next Wednesday, he is taking her and Ruth Cavanagh to the America-250 meeting. Normally she was assigned to work with the Chief, and the Chief is going to take care of that. The Fiscal Officer stated that on neither of those occasions did the Mayor speak to the Chief or her. Instead, he went directly to the Part-time Administrative Assistant which was the issue. Berger suggested that if the Mayor is going to change the routine, he needs to speak to her supervisors. The Mayor said he sent an email to all three people at the same time saying he was going to grab her and take her for two hours in the afternoon. The Fiscal Officer said that when they are all emailed at the same time, this creates confusion for the part-time Administrative Assistant. It also creates confusion for the DHs in how to handle the situation. Bell acknowledged that it could be intimidating receiving direct instructions from the Mayor and give the impression the DHs do not have control of their employee. He did not think it was nefarious, but he understood. Berger thought there was agreement that overall, they like the work the part-time Administrative Assistant is doing, and it is beneficial to the Village. The Fiscal Officer concurred and said that because the employee has been upset about these situations is the reason the Fiscal Officer is addressing them. The Village would not want to lose this employee, she is a great addition to the team, but the Village has a history of losing people in the past because this has been an issue, and the employee does not want to be put in the middle. Likewise, the Fiscal Officer does not want to be put in the middle. If she is the supervisor, she should be respected as such and know what is going to happen. When there were similar issues with the former Building Department Administrative Assistant, the Fiscal Officer asked to be removed as supervisor. No one wants to lose the part-time Administrative Assistant, and the Fiscal Officer does not want her to feel uncomfortable. Berger asked that the Mayor talk to his DHs and felt that would solve the problem. The Mayor reiterated that he sent the email to the three people telling them what was happening. Berger noted that from their perspective, what if the DHs had the employee scheduled to do another project and now the Mayor walked into the middle of it and stopped it? Instead, he proposed that the Mayor explain why he wanted to take the part-time Administrative Assistant and ask if the DHs can clear her for that time and to communicate any problems. Berger added that it is a matter of communicating to make sure everyone is on the same page from a management standpoint. He asked the Fiscal Officer to convey that the HR Committee is thrilled and glad the part-time Administrative Assistant is with the Village and would like to see her continue. The Fiscal Officer said that the part-time Administrative Assistant seems to like what she is doing and enjoys the rotating departments. The Fiscal Officer was scheduling her in a manner to take things slowly so as not to overwhelm her since some were concerned that that may be an issue. It has not been an issue.

Berger stated that he received a voicemail from one of the members of the Service Department saying that a new policy was implemented, and they have questions about it and want to talk to him. The Fiscal Officer asked for clarification, and Berger said he had no idea what the issue is. He was not aware that they had implemented any new policies from a Street Department standpoint. Berger asked if the Mayor had a meeting with them about the 14-hour day. The Mayor said yes, but no it was not a

meeting. He told them they were going to meet with the HR Committee. This started in November, and it still hasn't happened. Berger conveyed that he felt a little uncomfortable that an employee decided that he would call Berger and ask the question when he should have run it up the chain of command. The Fiscal Officer explained that the other day, there was a problem with ADP and the Service Department employees could not access their timesheets. The Administrative Assistant went over to the Service Department, contacted ADP, and got them logged back in. During this time, one of the Service Department employees brought up that there is a new policy in place that if they come in for a callout and work four hours, they automatically get a paid break. The Administrative Assistant relayed that this is not the policy and further explained that there are multiple versions of proposed policies and HR is working on them, but nothing has been adopted yet. The Fiscal Officer explained that in the DH meeting, the Street Commissioner said that this is how the staff has been operating. She only sees the timesheets and they are not supposed to put when they went to lunch. It is time in and time out and it is signed off by the DH. She pays what the DH says they worked. She was unaware of the half hour break, but knew one of the employees was upset about it. The FO concluded that she did not know if this had to do with the new policy. Berger stated that there is no new policy, and he will have to clarify this with the Street Commissioner to see what he is thinking and run it back through him. Then he will report back to the committee. Berger concluded that people jumped the gun. The Mayor agreed and said that they had wanted to have a meeting with the Service Department staff, but it got busy. They thought this policy was complete and had been passed. He met with them an hour after the Administrative Assistant was there helping with the timesheets. They called him and asked him to come over because there was an issue. The Mayor told them that nothing had been done, nothing is official, and nothing has changed. Berger advised that the committee needed to determine how the Street Commissioner has been operating and whether he has implemented a change without prior approval. They need to close the loop and communicate that the matter is still being discussed. The committee has agreed that there will be a conversation with the Service Department staff relating to callouts and number of hours in a 24-hour period, etc., but the committee is not at that point yet. The Mayor reiterated that nothing has been done. He thought it boiled down to some lunch. They worked and then they went to lunch and were paid and then not paid or something. He did not want to get into that stuff. Berger replied that if there is a problem, the guy who signs off on their timesheets is the guy they must deal with. If he handled it two different ways, then it will need to be sorted out. It is not the Fiscal Officer's job to validate their timesheets. This is the DH's responsibility. The Fiscal Officer processes payroll based on the information given. The Fiscal Officer explained that her office audits the sheets to determine how the overtime will be taken, use of comp time, review for callouts etc. If the Street Commissioner signs off that they should be paid, then she pays them.

Something that was ultimately discovered was that the Service Department employees were logging into each other's timesheets. Bell commented that this is falsification of timesheets. The Fiscal Officer explained that this was discussed in the DH meeting and the Street Commissioner was instructed that the employees have to do it themselves. If they did not have access, they could have written it on paper or he as the DH could have put it in. Berger was concerned about this practice because in industry, this was the number one way to get fired. The Fiscal Officer did not know how long this had been going on but shared that the Police Chief offered to put their timesheets on their

phones so that only they can enter their time. Additionally, the timesheets have a version history that shows who signed in to the document. The Mayor had received complaints about the timesheets from the Police Department as well as the Service Department, and he was sure they had been putting in each other's time for years. The Street Commissioner and Police Chief both agreed that it was best for them to have it on their phones. Bell asked what system was being used to clock in and out. The Fiscal Officer said it is a SharePoint Drive Excel spreadsheet. The Street Commissioner told her that the Service Department employees wanted a timeclock rather than doing it on the computer. Bell asked about using PayChex for this, and the Fiscal Officer explained that the Village tried this, but because it is government and there is flex time, comp time, vacation time, different rules for all outs, sick time, etc. it was an absolute mess. Berger said there is the opportunity for abuse because it is a handwritten spreadsheet and not a timeclock. Bell concurred. The Fiscal Officer reiterated that the document has a version history. She explained that technically, each employee has an account and gains access with a Gatekeeper device. However, the Service Department staff were giving access to each other's Gatekeeper. Bell noted that this creates a problem with ADP as well. Bell explained that in his private sector experience, he would be writing them up and giving them a warning. Berger suggested having a training session with them and letting them know that they should no longer be doing each other's timesheet. He did not think it was done maliciously, but just the way they were handling it. The Mayor asked Berger if they could speak to the Service Department staff the following day at 3:00 p.m.

The regular committee meeting schedule was discussed. The Tuesday after the first Council meeting of the month at 7:30 a.m. was decided.

Berger adjourned the meeting at 8:34 a.m.