

HR Committee Meeting Minutes
June 5, 2025, 7:30 a.m. Village Hall

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

The committee discussed the two final candidates for the Service Department position. The Mayor still needed to check references, but the Mayor thought he would be making a recommendation to Council at the June 9th Council meeting. Bell noted that they were both good candidates, and asked if the Street Commissioner had a preference, and the Mayor said yes. The Fiscal Officer reminded the committee that the candidate would have to pass a drug test, and it would be necessary to determine where the individual would fall on the salary chart. Bell asked about the background check, and the Fiscal Officer explained that typically the Police do a general background check when the candidate pool is narrowed down, so it should be done now before the offer. At 7:36 a.m. Berger made a motion to go into Executive Session to discuss the employment of a public employee pursuant to Section 121.22(G)(1) of the Ohio Revised Code inviting into the executive session the Fiscal Officer and Mayor, seconded by Bell. Roll call – ayes, all. Motion carried. Berger made a motion to go into Executive Session to discuss the compensation of a public employee pursuant to Section 121.22(G)(1) of the Ohio Revised Code inviting into the executive session the Fiscal Officer and Mayor, seconded by Bell. Roll call – ayes, all. Motion carried.

The committee reconvened at 7:46 a.m. Bell addressed the proposed uniform policy. He noted the \$500 annual allowance for boots, and Berger thought this amount was excessive. The Fiscal Officer stated that currently, the Village pays \$200 once per year. The Fiscal Officer provided comparable data from the Police Department. The Police Officers get \$1,200 which includes everything (shoes, boots, belts, holsters, coats, etc.) Walton Hills provides the Service Department staff \$300 for clothing. Mayfield Village gives \$1,000 for all clothing including shoes. Russell Township gives \$1,200 including shoes. It does not appear that Newbury gives anything, but the uniforms are to be worn to work only. Bell asked if the Village would cut the employees a check and they would buy their own. The Fiscal Officer did not know how the proposed policy would work. The Police Department uniforms, per IRS, could be tax exempt, but keeping track of this for the Village's police force was cumbersome and it was decided to cut the officers a check once a year which is taxed. It is the individual officers' responsibilities to buy/replace their uniforms. The Fiscal Officer noted that the proposed policy stated that the allowance would be tax free, but it is not per IRS rules. In order to be tax free, it must be a condition of employment whereby if they are not wearing their uniform, they cannot work. They must also be prohibited from wearing the uniform off duty, have a distinguishable logo, and cannot be suitable for taking the place of regular clothing. Arborwear clothing can easily be worn elsewhere, even with the logo. Therefore, it is taxable. The internal policy of the Police Department is that the uniforms are put on when the officer reports for duty and taken off when they leave. They are not permitted to wear it for side jobs. Berger added that the Service Department employees have other jobs they work, and they go straight from working for the Village to another job wearing the Village's 'uniform.' Is the Village subsidizing the employees' clothing for outside jobs? Technically it is.

Berger thought that the \$1,200 is on the high side and thought it should be \$1,000 as a startup, \$250 annually for the boots, and \$300 annually to replace worn or no longer functioning attire. The policy should also include that when the employees arrive for work, they put on a clean uniform daily. When they are on Cemetery duty, they should be wearing the polo shirts the Village previously purchased, and the pants should be clean to be respectful. As with the Police, the uniforms should be in appropriate condition for the job that is being done. Bell asked if the Street Commissioner also wore South Russell apparel. The Fiscal Officer said no. The committee discussed whether the Street Commissioner should be included in the policy, and Bell stated that the Street Commissioner is representing the Village on the roads and at people's homes and thought he should be included. Berger asked if the former Street Commissioner submitted for boots, and the Fiscal Officer said historically, they have all submitted for shoe reimbursement. Berger concluded that if they are in for part of the policy, they should be in for all of it.

The Fiscal Officer asked if it would be a check to the employee or a check to Arborwear, and would the uniform items be designated? Berger said this was requested of the Street Commissioner, but the committee had yet to see the list. The Mayor said there was one now, and Berger clarified that it contained the model number, color, etc. The Mayor did not know that it was that detailed yet. Bell said he would prefer that the Village establish an account with Arborwear and just pay them directly. Berger concluded that the \$1,000 would be a one-time allowance, the employee would select the uniform items, and the bill would come to the Village. The Fiscal Officer asked who would track the uniforms purchased. Berger said it would be the responsibility of the Street Commissioner to manage the uniform policy in his department and to stay within the budget, like the Police Chief who is responsible for the Police Uniform Policy.

The Mayor said he would find out why \$1,200 was selected and \$500 for boots. Berger thought the response may be that one pair of boots does not last a year, to which he would argue that this is due to wearing them for outside work. A \$250 pair of boots should last a year barring a catastrophic event. The committee discussed the possible need for identifying specific footwear specifications. The Mayor explained that the issue was that you do not wear the same pair of shoes everyday all year long, that you have two pairs. The committee discussed that the steel toed boots were a requirement of the job and other shoes may be worn during nonworking hours. There was discussion about the boot policy being a reimbursement.

The Fiscal Officer addressed the changes that would need to be made to the Employee Handbook with the new policy. The Mayor said this was provided with the proposed policy.

The Mayor referenced the section of the proposed policy that discussed full-time and part-time employees in the Service Department receiving \$300 annually. The Fiscal Officer stated that the Village does not have part-time Service Department employees. The Police Department does, and the uniform policy specifically explains how the allowance is paid based on the number of hours worked. He suggested that the policy be changed to read that full-time employees will receive \$300 annually, and part-time will receive \$150 annually. Berger added that the term allowance should be included so that there is no confusion that the employee is getting the money. It is an allowance to

replace worn uniforms, as decided by the Street Commissioner. Berger added that since the uniforms are taxable, there should be no references to non-taxable in the policy. The Mayor suggested revising the boot allowance section to read, “startup boots shall not exceed \$250 annually.” The tax issue was discussed, and the Fiscal Officer suggested, “the Service Department employees will receive an annual amount not to exceed \$250 reimbursement for safety boots.” It was clarified that the employees will not be taxed on the boots, but will, however, be paying sales tax on the purchase. The employees submit a receipt and are reimbursed for the actual cost of the boots, not to exceed \$250.

The Mayor asked if the employees are not subject to taxation, and Berger said they are. If the Village provides the uniform to them, it is a benefit to them and subject to an employment tax. The Mayor said that he just took what the Police were doing and copied it. Is the Village paying the same thing for the Police? Berger explained that the Police are different because the uniform is specific to them, and they have limitations on when they can wear it. However, the Fiscal Officer said that despite this, they pay tax on the uniforms due to the complexity of tracking. The committee discussed the specified quantities of clothing items, and it was agreed that the committee will not get involved in this. The Fiscal Officer verified that they would be required to wear the uniforms, and Berger concurred, and added it included the Street Commissioner. She further clarified that the Village would be providing the \$1,000 for each employee this year for the startup and then after that it would be \$300 for uniforms and up to \$250 for boot allowance. This would be for the budget, but the \$300 would be theoretical based on the employees physically turning in worn articles of clothing and requesting replacements. The Mayor proposed taking this through the Streets Committee and sitting down with the guys. He did not know where the \$1,200 came from and maybe that is not enough or is excessive. He also wanted to talk to them about the boots which are an emotional issue.

The Fiscal Officer asked for clarification about the allowance for part-time Service Department employees, will it be based on hours worked? What if they only work 20 hours and in year? The Mayor said to take the part-timers out and address this if and when it happens.

The Mayor reviewed what the committee discussed and then added that they need to look at the Police Department internal Uniform Policy because it needs some revision. The policy states one thing and the handbook another.

The Mayor asked why the Village hired Todd Hicks to do the employee harassment training. He did not understand why he was chosen over Bonnie Troyer. Bell said his proposal was stronger and less expensive. The Fiscal Officer asked if he was unhappy with the training, and the Mayor explained that the Village got an hour and a half for \$2,000 and Troyer would have been four hours for \$2,500 for two sessions. The Fiscal Officer reminded the group that Hicks allowed the Village to record the meeting for future training.

The Fiscal Officer reported that Dustbuster will be unavailable for a couple of weeks over the summer to provide cleaning services, which can be covered by the departments. In December, the

owner will be having surgery and will be out for a while. The Mayor had suggested hiring an outside source, but there are indications the gentleman may be scaling back. Is it time to try to find a new service or with an additional Service Department employee being hired, would the Service Department be able to cover this? Bell recommended having a conversation with Dustbuster about his plans since he has been with the Village for so long. Berger asked if there was a list of the work Dustbuster does because it would be necessary in order to get quotes for the job. Even if it is delegated to the Service Department, they will need to know what is done. The Mayor suggested having the Department Heads submit what Dustbuster does for each department. Berger proposed coming up with a job description and then decide whether the Service Department has time to do it, and whether the Village would want them to do it or get a quote from an outside contractor. He charges \$580 per month and cleans all the buildings weekly. There are extra charges for special work like windows, etc. The Fiscal Officer added that the Police Department handles some of the cleaning themselves. Berger suggested asking the Department Heads what gets done, what they would like to see done, what are weekly, monthly, and semiannual tasks that need to be done, etc. A thorough schedule is needed if considering a new service. The Fiscal Officer inquired about which committee to provide the results to, and Bell suggested the Properties Committee. Berger said that Properties has no responsibilities for the buildings, only the land, according to what he was told. The Mayor concurred. The Fiscal Officer said she would provide it to HR. For June and July, the Fiscal Officer advised that each department would handle the Dustbuster's absence. However, by December, something will need to be in place. Berger said that once the information is received from the Department Heads about the scope of cleaning work, the next step would be to determine the Service Department's ability or willingness to handle.

The Fiscal Officer reported that a representative from the Public Entity Pool (PEP) insurance met with her and the Chief on Monday for the insurance for the buildings. PEP comes out yearly to see what is new at the Village like the drone garage, park restroom, etc. Two recommendations were that the Village Officials formally acknowledge that they have reviewed the Employee Handbook or have their own written code of ethics. She thought the Council members acknowledged review of the Employee Handbook, but she would need to check. Bell thought they did. The other item mentioned by the representative is that every year, the mulch at the park must be a certain depth. She would inform the Street Commissioner of this. The Mayor asked why the Police Chief was involved in this process and the Street Commissioner was not. The Fiscal Officer explained that the Street Commissioner had been informed of the meeting but did not show up. The Mayor thought the Chief had better things to do, but the Fiscal Officer said the Chief is plugged into the insurance. The Mayor verified that the Street Commissioner knew about the meeting and did not show up. The Fiscal Officer verified he was forwarded the information about the meeting.

Bell adjourned the meeting at 8:28 a.m.