

Human Resources Committee Meeting
November 18, 2025, 7:30 a.m. Village Hall

Present: Chairman Bell, committee member Berger, Fiscal Officer Romanowski, Police Chief Rizzo, Mayor Koons (arrived approximately 8:10 am)

Salary Increase Discussion for 2026

- The Fiscal Officer explained that the draft budget traditionally assumes a 3.5% raise because that is what Council members receive per ordinance. This provides a baseline placeholder for salary increases in the budget draft while the HR Committee finalizes recommendations.
- Discussion:
 - Healthcare costs: 0% increase for the coming year.
 - Pension-related increases (OPERS, OP&F): No finalized changes, although OP&F contributions might increase in future years.
 - Federal COLA metrics exclude food and fuel—two categories that have sharply risen. Committee members agreed these exclusions distort the real cost pressures employees face.
- Projected payroll increase calculations:
 - 3.5% raise → approx. \$2,046,000 total annual payroll.
 - 4.0% raise → approx. \$2,055,000.
 - Difference: roughly \$9,000.
- Committee members discussed this difference at length and agreed the increase is relatively small in the context of the total budget. Employees are not responsible for increased capital expenses the Village may face and should not absorb the impact through lower raises. Morale and fairness strongly favor a full 4%.
- Committee will introduce legislation at the 11/24/25 Council meeting to consider a 4% increase for 2026. FO will update the Salary Schedule and draft the legislation for Council's consideration.

Veterans Breakfast -

- Committee members expressed concern that the Veterans Breakfast—although a Village-sponsored event—is not organized by the Village's administrative office and invoices and event details are not routed through typical administrative channels. This lack of oversight creates procedural and ethical risks.
- There was meaningful discussion about one department's attendance at the event and confusion and discomfort among employees who were excluded. Committee members agreed that inconsistent invitations create the appearance of favoritism.
- In referring to Ohio Ethics Law, supervisors may provide small tokens of appreciation, but not compensation for performing job duties. Attending a catered breakfast during paid working hours could be viewed as supplemental compensation. If one department is excused to attend, others may lawfully need to be included as well.
- All departments and employees have responsibilities, but singling out one group for additional benefits is not permissible.
- The Veterans Breakfast is meant to honor veterans, not Village employees. The event has drifted from its original purpose. The committee agreed this has created confusion and undermines the event's integrity.

- Additional discussion was held regarding early dismissal from work for one department over others.
- Council member Bell will make a motion on 11/24/25 that in the event employees are permitted to leave work early, they use their comp or flex time bank for their early release.
- The committee's recommendation is that beginning in January, the new Administration Committee should establish documented rules (who is invited, staff roles, vendor procedures), clarify employee attendance and eliminate inconsistencies.

250th Celebration -

- Discussion included concerns about a proposed January 1st event for the Village's 250th anniversary to include police and service staff who would require triple-time compensation for holiday work. Additionally, attendance would likely be poor due to family obligations.
- Committee members emphasized practicality and fiscal responsibility.
- A more workable date of perhaps July 5th was discussed by the Park Committee. It avoids holiday pay, is easier for community attendance, and offers more flexibility for staffing.
- These upcoming milestone celebrations should fall under the new Administration Committee rather than the Parks Committee or individual Council members.

Chain of Command and Department Oversight

- Discussion was held on the chain of command when a Department Head (DH) was out.
- Fellow DHs understand the Village's internal policies and procedures and can guide staff on how to properly proceed. Examples given of recent situation and the other DHs stepped in to assist without issue.
- Staff work well as a team and communicate effectively about absences.
- Committee members recognized that the team already functions with an informal but effective structure, but it needs to be codified.
- Recommendation is to draft a proposed written policy for Council's consideration to include:
 - A clear chain-of-command document should specify that if a DH is absent, authority is delegated to another DH, then the FO and then if no administrators are reachable, the PD chain of command.
 - Temporary delegation by the Mayor only when appropriate
- Councilman Berger will draft a policy for council approval.

Hiring Process Issues

- A candidate who ultimately withdrew his application had a reference contacted before reaching the agreed stage of the process.
- Concerns were discussed including the risk to the candidate's relationship with his/her current employer, violating the spirit of the Village's hiring sequence, and potentially damaging the Village's reputation and discouraging applicants.
- PD current hiring workflow:
 - Initial "surface-level" background review by a detective.
 - First interview with police leadership.
 - Committee interview.
 - Deeper background investigations only after committee approval.
- Because of these additional steps (voice stress test, records checks, personnel file reviews), the Police Department requires its own checklist.

- The committee agreed:
 - References (distinct from background checks) should be contacted only after the committee, Mayor, and DH agree to move the candidate forward.
 - Two checklists should be created: Police-specific and General Village employees.
- The Employee Handbook will need updates.

Probationary Period Length

- Discussion was held regarding extending the length of the probationary period for employees. In the PD, officers with significant prior experience may finish field training quickly and officers with less experience may still be in Phase 2 at six months.
- Some performance issues don't surface until later, once the officer feels independent.
- Surrounding agencies often use 12–18 months.
- Committee members agreed the Village should have enough time to evaluate employees fairly but thoroughly.
- Discussion was held on how probationary pay would be handled and whether the Village would maintain the current 5% probation difference for six months but keep probation open for one year, or split the raise: 2.5% at six months, and 2.5% at a year.
- The Fiscal Officer confirmed both options are administratively manageable.
- The committee agreed that the changes should apply to new hires starting after January 1, 2026 and current probationary employees must remain under the policy in place at their hire date.
- The committee will need to draft an amendment to the Employee Handbook.

Workers' Compensation Updates

- Injured worker is still on modified duty. Hopefully he will return to full duty soon.

The meeting adjourned at **8:25 AM**.