

## HR Committee Meeting Minutes

**February 9, 2026 - 7:56 AM, Police Dept Conference Room** (due to water issues at VH)

**Present:** Committee Chair Berger, committee member Rensel, Fiscal Officer, Police Chief

**Absent:** Committee member Bell

The Finance Committee meeting was called to order at 7:56 AM.

### **Retreat Proposals:**

The first item of business continued discussion of retreat proposals previously submitted by the Mayor. The purpose of these proposals was framed as improving working relationships among council, committees, and village departments.

Council Member Berger introduced the name of Bill Bowen, a retired professor of public administration from Cleveland State University. He explained that Mr. Bowen became known to council through a letter he wrote to the *Chagrin Valley Times* regarding governance issues in Pepper Pike, specifically challenges involving council–mayor relationships. Council Member Berger stated that Mr. Bowen appeared uniquely qualified due to his background and experience conducting training sessions for public bodies.

He emphasized that he had reached out to Mr. Bowen and was awaiting a response regarding availability and cost. Once that information is received, it will be brought back to the committee for consideration.

Council Member Berger reiterated that the overarching objective of any retreat or training effort is to foster better working relationships across departments and committees. He described the difficulties inherent in a small government staffed largely by part-time officials, noting that coordination often happens in short, fragmented interactions. This leads to departments working at cross-purposes rather than in alignment.

Council Member Berger referenced prior quotes for retreat services, including one estimate in the range of \$20,000–\$23,000, stating that such costs felt excessive given the village’s actual needs.

The committee agreed that while outside consultants and training sessions can be valuable, costs must be reasonable. There was consensus that ideally three quotes should be obtained, and additional options would be explored.

### **Administrative Staffing:**

The FO informed the committee she had not yet posted Administrative Assistant ads. She believes it would be more beneficial to place ads that were more specific for the needs of the Village than to post ads for “general” administrative assistant(s). Ads could be posted not only on general job search sites but also forwarded to specific target associations where there may be interested candidates with more job-specific skills.

A broader structural proposal was discussed regarding administrative staffing across departments. Berger suggested that all administrative staff—whether assigned to Building, Police, Streets, or Village Hall—should report to the Fiscal Officer.

This structure would:

- Allow for cross-training
- Enable coverage during absences
- Prevent situations where department heads or the Mayor must step in to perform administrative tasks

Past issues were acknowledged, including prior attempts to place the Fiscal Officer in charge of Building Department administration, which resulted in conflict due to interference and unclear authority and the FO requesting to be removed from the responsibilities. The Fiscal Officer stated she would only agree to this proposed structure if authority were clearly defined and supported by council.

In order to have a solid succession plan in place for potential upcoming changes in the Building Department, an ad will need to be posted, a new employee hired, and several months of full-time training potentially phasing down to temporary part-time if needed. This overlap would allow for training, especially for evening meetings such as BZA, Planning Commission, and ABR meetings. It was noted that these meetings should be recorded and that AI transcription tools are already being used successfully. While this may require short-term budget adjustments, the committee agreed it would provide the smoothest transition.

The Village needs a succession plan for the administrative roles. It was confirmed that the Building Department administrative role is full-time. However, complexities were noted regarding the current job description, which includes duties as a part-time zoning inspector at a higher rate of pay – responsibilities/duties the current employee has never actually performed.

For succession planning, the committee agreed that:

- The job description must be revised to remove zoning inspector duties.
- The salary should be adjusted accordingly.
- These changes require legislative approval.

Council members discussed expediting these revisions so they could be approved and placed on the agenda for February 17.

The current FT FO Admin has expressed an interest in moving to part-time status but has not provided an official request or date. It was discussed that the role is full-time, in-office coverage and a work-from-home or split arrangement would not meet operational needs. Until a formal notice is received, the Fiscal Officer stated she did not want to advertise a full-time position prematurely.

### **Safety Officer Compliance and Streets Department**

The committee briefly discussed safety officer compliance related to the Streets Department. It was agreed that the Street Commissioner should be consulted to determine the current status of the program and whether required steps have been completed.

### **Hiring Process Policy Review**

Berger presented a consolidated draft hiring process document, combining two previously received versions. Police-specific requirements were intentionally excluded to maintain a general framework.

Key points discussed included:

- Initial interviews should never be conducted one-on-one
- A minimum of two village representatives should be present
- Documentation of interview participants is essential

### **Pre-Employment Testing**

The committee reviewed pre-employment testing practices:

- Police officers undergo drug testing, physicals, and psychological exams
- CDL holders receive random drug testing through University Hospitals

Discussion centered on whether physical exams could or should be required for non-police positions. It was agreed that physical requirements must be job-related and reasonable, such as lifting requirements for Street Department employees.

Background checks through BCI/FBI were discussed, with confirmation that these can be conducted for all employees through coordination with the Sheriff's Office.

## **Probationary Periods**

The committee revisited prior discussion regarding probationary periods. It was confirmed that as a statutory village, probationary periods are governed by Ohio Revised Code and limited to six months.

While there was agreement that six months can be insufficient for evaluating part-time police officers, the committee acknowledged that extension is not legally permissible. The focus will instead be on improving evaluation practices within the six-month timeframe.

## **Over-time / Comp Time**

The FO reported that due to the extreme weather experienced in January, the Village has already spent \$8,000 in overtime for the Service Department out of an approximate \$13,000 budget. She said the Village has two options, either increase the overtime line-item budget, or amend the Employee Handbook to increase the number of hours employees can have in their Comp bank - it is currently limited at 80 hours. After discussion, it was agreed to amend the Employee Handbook and allow up to 160 hours in the Comp Time bank. The committee will look to make a motion to address this at the Council meeting on the 17<sup>th</sup>.

Meeting adjourned at 8:41 AM