

Minutes for March 19, 2023
Safety Committee meeting
Willowick City Hall
6:30pm

In attendance:

David Phares - Chairman
Charlie Malta - Committee member
Devon McFarland - Committee member
Theresa Bisbee - Councilwoman
Patrick Mohorcic - Councilman
Natalie Antosh - Councilwoman
Monica Koudela - Council President
Mike Vanni - Mayor
Fire Chief Bill Malovrh
Police Chief Daubenmire

Meeting began at 6:00pm

The first agenda item was fire department staffing. Chairman Phares stated that we are going to continue the discussion we were having at the previous Safety Committee meeting. He reviewed that three options that were brought up - those being nine full-time firefighters or a combination of three full-time Captains and full-time firefighters or just three full-time Captains and stated that the goal of the committee tonight is to come up with two options we can take to the Finance Director to start getting the numbers put together and get an idea of how much each option is going to cost.

Mayor Vanni agreed that we need to come out of this with an agreement on two options. He would like to get the cost on three full-time captains and six full-time firefighters and 9 full-time firefighters. He feels that both of these options will require a levy to fund them along with the modifications to the fire station. He brought up Concord Township and how their recent Safety levy failed.

He stated that he was favoring the nine full-time firefighters but after listening to the Chief and the input from the firefighters at the last Safety meeting, he favors the three full-time Captains and 6 full-time firefighters now. He mentioned that the Chief is partial to the three full-time Captains model and there are legal questions to be reviewed such as the new union for the full-timers. He reiterated that we should get two plans on the table and get them to the Finance Director and have the Law Director review the legal aspects. He reminded everyone that this will be a long process and he would like to get it to the ballot in the Spring of 2025.

Chief Malovrh feels that the three Captains model gives you the foundation to get the process started. He hopes this can be achieved without going to the ballot with a levy. This would allow those three to get in place and start learning personnel and how things work - those things are

important. And do this before you bring in a whole group of full-time firefighters because that will be a whole other challenge. It would also buy the Council time to get the levy setup and arrange financing to start the process moving forward.

Chairman Phares asked what the shifts would be like with a full-time Captain and two full-time firefighters - would it be total chaos or would things get done in an orderly fashion? Chief Malovrh stated that this type of scenario would not go over well. You would be taking away part-time positions and that would not be a favorable situation. Once we get the department prepared for the loss of part-time positions, the Chief could maybe stop hiring to ease into that position.

Chairman Phares asked how long it would take to move to the next stage once we have the three full-time Captains in place. Chief Malovrh said it would be up to Council as to how long it takes to get everything in place.

Councilwoman Antosh asked the Chief how long it would take to train the three full-time Captains. They would hire experienced members and it would be a matter of getting them up to speed on multiple aspects of the job. Probably six months. An unidentified person asked if they would be working during this training period and the Chief answered affirmatively.

Chairman Phares asked what tasks the Captains would be doing in a full-time capacity that they are not doing now in a part-time capacity. Chief Malovrh said it will give them some consistency in running their shifts.

Councilman McFarland feels that we need to get the leadership in place, so the three full-time Captain option is the one he favors. Councilman Malta expressed his appreciation for the firefighters input at these meetings. He asked them what would be their perfect scenario for staffing the department. They said a all full-time department would be their perfect-world department. A full-time department that is paid well and treated well is what we all want. It's best for the residents also. They feel that nonetheless, having three full-time persons on shift is a big step forward.

A discussion on what option he was referring to ensued. Mayor Vanni asked if the nine full-time firefighters option was the least attractive and he mentioned that this is the farthest we have gotten in making changes to the department.

The person speaking said that the nine full-time firefighters option would have to be funded by a levy and with the property tax increase coming up it would be a difficult sell to the residents. It would be a nine or nothing situation. The three full-time Captains might be attainable without the levy and get the leaders in place.

Mayor Vanni reiterated the two models as being three full-time Captains for one model and three full-time Captains and six full-time firefighters as the second model.

Chief Malovrh mentioned that nothing in these models is set in stone. We could start with three full-time Captains and then if the levy passes, go with a staggered approach of three full-time hires in the 2nd quarter and then three more in the 4th quarter, for example.

Chairman Phares stated that we will go to the Finance Director with these two options and see what the numbers look like.

Councilwoman Antosh asked when someone goes on vacation, how do they fill those slots? People going on vacation just don't sign up for slots. When it's full-time, they would have to come up with a system to fill in vacation openings.

Mayor Vanni mentioned the part-time Assistant Chief in the budget and that that person could fill in spots. He went into the issue of the Chief's position and the Civil Service test. He spelled out the scenario where Chief Malovrh would have to retire, leave for two months and we would have an interim Chief. Chief Malovrh stated that he would not have to be gone for two months, just for a day would suffice. You just forfeit two pension checks. He still has to take the test which does not guarantee that he comes back.

Chairman Phares stated that we should have the Law Director attend the next Safety meeting, possibly the first Tuesday in May.

Councilwoman Antosh stated that if we hire three full-time Captains and three full-time firefighters in the first quarter and then three in the fourth quarter, it would be the same budget. Councilwoman Koudela questioned whether that was accurate because you would only be paying six full-time to begin with and then three later in the year so the amount of money going out would be different.

The committee agreed to send the three full-time Captains model and the three full-time Captains with three full-time firefighters model to the Finance Department.

The second agenda item was the splatball gun incident at Dudley Park. Police Chief Daubemire explained that there was one gun that several kids were shooting at Dudley Park. A mother who was there with her kids was hit in the side of the head. Splat balls are made of gel and are like a BB full of water. Councilwoman Bisbee had several people reach out to her and they were concerned about toy guns in parks.. The belief is that BB guns are only covered in the ordinances. But anything propelled by a spring or gas is illegal to discharge outside your home.

The gun in question did not have an orange tip.

Councilwoman Bisbee would like to revisit the ordinance and make sure these types of guns are covered. Councilman McFarland suggested maybe setting up a specific area for them or just outright banning them. Chairman Phares suggested we review the ordinance and address this further.

Chief Daubenmire thinks we banned them at Manry Park - just through the Rec Director. Chief would hate to do something rash based on one incident. We have cameras there, so maybe we just review them and send it to the prosecutor and identify the culprits and that might take care of the problem.

Mayor Vanni mentioned the idea of locking down the basketball courts because this is where the problems seem to start. This is a common problem when the weather gets warm and with soccer starting along with baseball and camps, a plan should be in place. The Mayor reminded everyone that these problems occur every year. The Rec Director and Police Chief usually get together and put a plan together.

Meeting adjourned at 6:42pm

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "David Phares". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'D'.