



STAFF REPORT

DATE: February 7, 2018

REGULAR

ITEM: 21

TO: Mayor and City Council

FROM: Jake Foster, Assistant City Administrator/Fire Chief Greg Malmquist

AGENDA ITEM: Approve the Creation of New Employment Category – Substitute Firefighter

BACKGROUND:

Since the start of the fire department's shift coverage by part-time personnel, the most consistent hurdle has been scheduling to fill all shifts. Initially they struggled with properly pairing staff to allow for our new hires to get trained to our operations and become familiar with equipment, while maintain a balance between staffs availability and the required 18 – 24 hours of work per week. From nearly the beginning of the transition they experienced "availability" issues, primarily due to conflicts with their other jobs. Moving forward as the new employees met minimum competency levels, they had more options for scheduling.

One of our newly hired part-time employees from our paid on call ranks experienced a significant job change, between the interview/hiring process and beginning of shifts. He began working out of state, thus preventing us from consistently scheduling him. He is now back and being scheduled.

Contributing factors to scheduling difficulties, varying work schedules with additional jobs, vacations, sick leave, appointments, etc. Attached are the schedules to date for your review to help illustrate the struggles of availability.

The proposal before was developed and discussed at great length by the Officers of the dept. The Officers support this plan and believe that in addition to providing shift, back up coverage, it will also help with retention of current paid on call firefighters by allowing them alternative ways to "earn" Relief Credit and schedule their time to meet the requirements of the dept.

The Council discussed these issue at their work session on January 12 and directed staff to continue working on a way to utilize POCs for shift work while not triggering PERA , holiday or PTO beenefits since they would be working limited hours. Staff worked with our employment attorney to come up with the specific changes recommended to the personnel policy as outlined below.

At their January 22 meeting, the Human Resources Committee recommended to Council that the City's recently adopted personnel policy be updated to create a new employment category of "substitute firefighter."

ISSUE BEFORE COUNCIL:

Should the Council approve the HR Committee's recommendation to create a new employment category of "substitute firefighter" to allow paid on call firefighters to cover part-time shifts while still being allowed to earn relief credit and the part-time wage of \$17/hour?

PROPOSAL DETAILS/ANALYSIS:

The proposal for discussion is to allow our current paid on call personnel to be allowed to work shifts on an occasional, as needed basis. This would only be available for the paid on call personnel that currently

are not hired as part-time employees working shifts. Paid on call firefighters working these shifts will be considered “substitute firefighters,” earn a wage of \$17.00/hour, and earn fire relief credit.

To avoid confusion, provide clear separation and avoid “double dipping,” the following guidelines would pertain to these paid on call employees. They would not be allowed to exceed the minimum requirement of 18 hours of shift work per week on a regularly scheduled basis, (this may occur occasionally). By staying under the 18 hour required minimum, on a regular basis, they would not be entitled to the benefits received by the part-time employees such as holidays, PTO or PERA.

We believe this will help with the retention of our current paid on call employees. We are also hopeful that this will allow us to fill all shifts and prevent us from having to go outside to hire again.

The definition section of the Personnel Policy should be amended to include:

Substitute Firefighter: Any paid on-call firefighter for the City who, on an occasional and sporadic basis, voluntarily agrees to work an available part-time firefighter shift. Substitute firefighter are not eligible for benefits or seniority. A substitute firefighter shall not exceed 18 hours of shift work per week.

FISCAL IMPACT:

This approach will have no additional financial impact. It was already budgeted for the shift coverage. They are already trained and have all necessary equipment and gear. In fact, by guaranteeing 100% shift coverage, we will be able to reduce the need for ALL CALL paging and potentially reduce staff costs.

RECOMMENDATION:

“Motion to amend the Personnel Policy to create the substitute firefighter employment category under the definitions section as described above”

ATTACHMENTS:

None