

## Personnel Committee Minutes

Honorable Council  
City of Newark, Ohio  
January 3, 2022

There was a meeting of the Personnel Committee in Council Chambers on Monday January 3, 2022 following the Street Committee with these members in attendance:

Jonathan Lang -Chair  
Cheri Hottinger- Vice Chair  
Mark Labutis  
Spencer Barker  
Colton Rine

We wish to Report:

1. **Discussion on Ordinance No. 20-16-C** That was forwarded to Full Council on December 20, 2021 for Mayor's input on the matter

**20-16-C** AN ORDINANCE SETTING COMPENSATION AND STATING POLICY WITH RESPECT TO CERTAIN POSITIONS WITHIN THE OFFICE OF THE CLERK OF THE LICKING COUNTY MUNICIPAL COURT OF THE CITY OF NEWARK, OHIO AND REPEALING ALL ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS IN CONFLICT

**Mayor Jeff Hall** – Do you want just an overall prospective or do you have any particular questions.

**Mr. Lang** – I think just a general perspective and then we'll see if Mr. Marmie has any specific questions.

**Mayor Hall** – The timing has been very difficult on this. We've worked hard all year to be fiscally responsible and put together a solid budget which you've approved wonderfully and we've had years that we have had a hard time doing the budget. I think 2022 is kind of an uncertain year, it's just that word we've heard many times COVID, we just don't know what's going to present in many ways. We're funded by people paying their taxes on time and that could come into delinquency. Sometimes we can get comfortable with a budget when it passes, but we need to understand that it's a perspective base budget based on perspective revenue and those two things are tied in, if you are 10 percent short on revenue you have to cut the budget by 10 percent, that doesn't always happen that way and we can't always do that. With that being said, I think after we balance the budget, normally what we do, we obviously have union employees and non-union employees throughout the city, somewhere around 360 employees, normally what we do, wages or increases are set through contract negotiations and we've done what literally what is a courtesy to extend that to departments that are non-union. We're getting three straight forward increases which

are pretty sizeable to be honest with you. We were happy to do that and with Council blessing it's nice for our employees who work hard every day. When we start comparing cities I think it's very difficult and that's something that I don't think you're going to find a department in the city where you're not going to have a department head say I'd like more money for my employees or if you compare us to Westerville, employees there get \$25,000 more a year, so it's very tuff. Some of it boils down to income tax rate, if we had, which is way too much, Columbus' 2.5 percent that would give us 10 million more dollars a year and solves every problem we've ever had, but we don't and with that being said I don't advocate for that and I'd say at 1.75 we're very affordable and that's why people want to live here and we're proud of that. I think the timing of it and the finance of it is very difficult, when we pull out an individual department, it makes it tough on other departments. As I was saying, it's not an easy solution when we start comparing apples to apples, and what are benefits worth, we have one of the best health insurance plans there is, by far. We provide good paid days off, so you compare everything top to bottom, so comparing is very difficult. That's my standpoint on that.

**Marcia Phelps, Licking County Clerk of Courts** – I truly respect your comments. I want you to know that I understand, probably more than you can realize, however, I would like to also share that I would be more than willing to sit down and meet with you, HR Director, a member of Council, whoever that would be so designated if that be the case, so that we can have a discussion, so that we can find out when timing is right, because I am so concerned with where the paring is than what I was. I understand what you're saying about comparing to other municipalities or cities or other clerks offices, but I know the workload that they have, I know the dedication through the very stressful past two years that we've all experienced and having to come into the office, set cases out and so forth and so on. I just want you to know that I'm willing to work with whoever you so designate for me to work with, so that we could move on this a little bit. It's been before Council for over a year and I just think it's time for us to try to do something to make sure that we're being fair and impartial to the employees. That's just what I wanted to add.

**Mayor Hall** – There are a lot of parts and pieces in our departments and I don't want to pick out anybody in particular, but a lot of times it takes Personnel, it takes bricks and mortar, it takes vehicles and it takes equipment and at any one time we've got to be careful we don't lean too much in any one direction and Marcia and I get along good at the end of the day, it's just a little different view at times. They are very busy up on the third floor, I get it, I understand that. Realistically looking into the future there could be a third judge put in there. It probably will happen, it's when not whether. There's costs involved with that, there's cost involved with space, we've tried to work with them, you can't just make more space on the third floor, you can make adjustments, but you really don't get any more space out of it. I think I do also see some more expenses in other ways involving the courts. I think what it boils down to at the end of the day is what is fair and adequate, what works in our environment and things like that so, we work with different departments across the city and they want money in tis bucket and a little later on in this bucket and that's par for business, but you just have to be very careful. There are an amazing number of cities across this State that lost population in the last 10

years. If you look at Columbus' budget, they're about 83 percent on income tax and the Mayor has about \$1 billion operating budget. I don't what the next thing is, but we've had tough times on the budget and when years are a little easier it's a whole lot better in a lot of ways. There can be adjustments down the road sometimes. Very early in this budget, and am very anxious to get past the first quarter or maybe two quarters, but definitely a quarter and see how things play out. Are gas prices going to go up? There are things we've been very comfortable with that are going to get very expensive. I think inflation is in there a bit and that budget may need some assistance.

**Mr. Marmie** – As far as the tax revenue, do we know the impact now that people are working from home and I know we haven't had a quarter yet to see where that's at, but do we have any indication if it's going to impact us negatively or positively.

**Mayor Hall** - We don't know, that's why we always talk about bumps in the road and if you want to go back 50 years and economies go like this and economists are used to that, but this is something different. While you've got a low level of employment there are still lots of jobs out there, it's a catch 22. What I do know in some ways is a Walmart paycheck doesn't pay what an Owens Corning paycheck pays when you've got 3600 employees there. Those kind of things are very challenging because we get a percent of that. Columbus I think they're having a reduction in income tax, there's such a delay in income tax. Sales tax is immediate up or down, but income tax is a little different and I can sit there and like to think it helps a community this size, but also how many people do we have driving to Newark now to work and we never want to forget that. We think we're a small community that everybody works here, lives here and some people drive out of town to work, well that's obviously what's hurting when you're working from home. We are the big city around here and there are people that travel into this city, there's more people on 161 driving east than there were years ago and if they start working from home that could have a negative effect on us. We feel somewhat comfortable and steady, but it's going to have to play itself out a little bit. There is still volatile workload out there, we've got businesses still deciding what they are doing, if they're bringing people back, the longer it goes they figure out how to work not from the office and that's not always good. Now we're starting to learn they need to get into the office to get certain things done, but where that balances out we'll find out.

**Mr. Lang** - - This doesn't need to be voted on, since it's already before council.

## 2. Other Items at the Discretion of the Chair

**Mr. Lang** I did have one other agenda item I wanted to bring up since we have the Mayor here. With Chief Connor leaving in a couple of weeks, I just wanted to get some thought about where we are in that process.

**Mayor Hall** – First and foremost we've really set up a good structure and again with Council's blessings over the years, we've filled Deputy Chiefs in both departments, we have 3 in Police and 1 in Fire and there's intentions in that in many ways in successions of what you anticipate or in this instance what you didn't anticipate. They haven't skipped a beat either way and they will not, with that being said, they'll keep going through the selection process. I've had a couple people approach me that have some interest, we do that through discussion. If anybody knows me at all, I kind of like the

impromptu type discussions and to see how things come up in different directions. I'm a big personal advocate, it's not about the ABC, 123, it's about the attitude and then kind of what can come of that. That works for Newark and I think it works for our Community and our City. AS people know I ask questions, you're a Deputy Chief today and if you're Chief tomorrow what are you going to do different tomorrow than today, so it takes time to pan that out a bit. We don't have a rush to it, but I also don't want to delay. So there's a balance there. So I have all intentions of appointing an interim, which could be our Deputy Chief to take over when Pat moves on. Brandon Metzger is that person, Brandon is doing a good job now and understands that position and has been working side by side with Pat for quite a while, so I think the certainty of having stability in that department is not an issue at all and I want to be sure we go through this and pick the right person, so I'll keep you updated as it goes. I think we've got some good potential.

The Personnel Committee is adjourned

Jonathan Lang- Chair