

APPROVED

**CITY OF WAUSAU HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF OPEN SESSION**

DATE/TIME: June 12, 2023, at 4:45 p.m.
LOCATION: City Hall (407 Grant Street) – Council Chambers
MEMBERS PRESENT: Becky McElhaney, Gary Gisselman, Dawn Herbst, Tom Killian, Michael Martens
MEMBERS ABSENT:
Also Present: Mayor Rosenberg, J. Henderson

Approval of May 8, 2023 Minutes.

Motion by Herbst to approve the May 8, 2023 Human Resources Committee Meeting minutes. Second by Killian. No questions or discussion. All ayes. Motion passes 5-0.

Human Resources Report for May.

No questions were brought forward by the Committee.

Discussion and Possible Action Amending Employee Handbook Section 8.06 – Use of Sick Leave.

Henderson said that some concerns have come up about the sick leave policy being applied consistently for situations related to use for an employee's children or spouse, and wanted to include "transporting a spouse to doctor's appointments and caring for a sick child" within the language.

Gisselman asked if the wording could be changed from transporting to accompany to appointments. Henderson agreed to the change of wording.

Motion by Gisselman to approve amending Employee Handbook Section 8.06 – Use of Sick Leave to include accompanying an immediate family member to doctor's appointments and care for sick children in their household in case of an emergency. Second by Killian. All ayes. Motion passed 5-0.

Discussion and Possible Action Creating a Communications Officer Position (1 FTE).

McElhaney indicated that she had several requests for public comment that would be heard first.

Joanne Leonard of Wausau spoke against the creation of the position due to added cost to the City and believes that the responsibilities of communication should fall on the mayor with the assistance of the department heads.

Lou Larson, Alderperson of Wausau District 10, spoke against the Communications Officer position and believes the City should be talking about an Administrator or City Manager position.

Henderson said that he has worked in municipalities that have had communications positions and they are meant to provide one voice to the community.

Mayor Rosenberg said she began working on this position awhile back due to the outreach from media to department heads and uncertainty of who is responding to the inquiries. Rosenberg said a media

email address has been created but it has not solved the issue. Rosenberg believes that a Communications Officer would provide better response to the media and community, could take over the newsletter, communications for issues, road closures, internal communications, communications in a variety of formats, and the new City website.

Martens said that the Communications Officer position is a good idea for effective communication across the organization, but the position should also address crisis communications, which is not listed in the responsibilities, and he would like to see this included.

Herbst asked what the difference is between a City Administrator and a communications person. Henderson said that a City Administrator refers to the form of government, and a communications person has nothing to do with the running of the City, but rather communicates the City's message.

Killian said that he received feedback from citizens with concerns about the budget and priorities, and believes that what is needed is a focus on public policy response that could be addressed with current staff. Killian gave examples of areas he feels could be improved with current staff and better supervisory oversight of department heads, which he feels has been lacking for decades. Killian ended by saying that he will not support this position.

Gisselman asked if the position was in the 2023 budget. Henderson said that this is just for the creation of the position, not the funding of the position. Gisselman asked why the position was coming before them. Rosenberg said that the position is being brought forward for consideration and if approved by the HR Committee, then it would be determined if it would be funded.

McElhaney said that she has also received a large amount of response from citizens regarding this position that has been negative. McElhaney believes that citizens are not necessarily against adding new positions, but rather they are asking how the position will impact them and do not see the value in it and how it can help their lives. McElhaney said that she does not feel comfortable moving forward with this until it has been vetted more.

Troy Krezine, IT Manager, spoke on behalf of the C-CIT. Krezine shared that the City and County are in the process of changing websites, and that C-CIT could no longer provide a website that meets the needs for the City and County. The City has had two employees involved in the set up and management of the new website as part of their additional duties. Krezine said that having an employee dedicated to the website management would be a benefit to the City and its citizens, as C-CIT will no longer be involved in website management for the City. Krezine ended by saying that C-CIT feels the position would bring value to the City of Wausau.

Liz Brodek, Development Director, said that her department receives a lot of requests for information from the media and would appreciate a central point of contact that could pull all information together and respond. Brodek said that she understands residents asking how they benefit from this position, and feels that knowing what is going on in the City enhances quality of life. Brodek said that department heads are specialized in their area of expertise, not in communication, and having clear, concise, consistent communication would be valuable. Brodek went on to say that she believes good communication shapes what a community looks like and helps with the image that is projected to the rest of the world, and could help Wausau become more attractive as a place to live. Brodek said that

a lot of cities of the same size and of cities that Wausau aspires to be like have communication positions.

Killian said that the IT piece could be looked at in the future as it seems to be a technical need, whereas the request for someone to put out press releases is not necessary. Killian went on to talk about his history with Wausau and the desire to not have Wausau compared to other cities or aspire for Wausau to be like other cities, but rather be proud of the city we live in.

Doug Diny, Alderperson for Wausau District 4, said he did not see the urgency in the creation of the position and would like for it to be considered as part of the 2024 budget. McElhaney clarified that the position was to be created in the HR Committee and would proceed to the Finance Committee for inclusion in the 2024 budget.

Martens asked what would happen if the committee votes to approve or reject the creation of the position moving forward. Rosenberg said she was bringing this forward now because of the discussion earlier in the year about a position that was funded as an amendment in the 2023 budget before it was approved by the HR Committee. Further discussion took place as to what would happen if the committee approved or rejected the creation of the position and other options. Martens said that he thinks the position is worth considering and talk about more.

Killian said that the item should be voted on at this meeting since it was brought forward and did not want to delay or table it to another meeting.

Motion by Killian to approve the creation of the Communications Officer position. Second by Gisselman. McElhaney asked if anyone wanted to amend the motion. Gisselman said he would not be supporting the position as written. Herbst asked if amending the motion would allow it to be brought back to other meetings for further discussion. City Attorney Anne Jacobson provided the committee with its options. Herbst said that although she is in favor of the position she cannot vote to approve it at this time in light of the water and sewer increases. Vote 1-4 (Gisselman, Herbst, Killian, and McElhaney were the dissenting votes). Motion failed.

Adjournment.

Motion by Herbst to adjourn. Second my Killian. Meeting was adjourned.

Rebecca McElhaney
Human Resources Committee, Chair

Video available: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k628oDstnSo>