Present: Chairman Robert Pickrell, Commissioner John Hedges, Kira Tchang, Human Resources Director/Assistant Village Manager, Shatonya Johnson, Oak Park Police Chief

Also Present: Human Resources Generalist, Mary Avinger

Call to Order: Chairman Robert Pickrell called the meeting to order at 5:32 pm

Public Comment: No public comment

Approval of Minutes: Commissioner Hedges moved to approve the October 18, 2022 and February 27, 2023 minutes as presented. Chair Pickrell seconded the motion. Ayes: All, Nays: None.

Secretary Comments:

* Staffing: Police department is down by 23 FTE which includes 2 Deputy Chiefs, 4 Sergeants, and 17 Patrol Officers, at the moment there are no active lists except for the Sergeants promotional which is in progress. One Sergeant will be sworn in tonight at the Board meeting following the Commission meeting.
* Fire department: no vacancies at the Command & Lieutenant rank, 4 Firefighter Paramedics will be recruited, promotional in progress.

Commissioner Hedges inquired if those moving up taking on different responsibilities, if temporarily we are short that many people on the street. Chief Johnson confirmed they are short that many positions on the street. Commissioner Hedges inquired if the most loss is with personnel or services they provide. Chief Johnson responded the most loss is with public safety, patrol and community policing. Director Tchang advised that they have seen a higher number of laterals moving out in addition to regularly scheduled retirements. Commissioner Hedges inquired if exit interviews are done and reasons for leaving and Director Tchang advised most responses are regarding quality of life among other reasons.

* Entry Level Police & Fire Testing: Director Tchang indicated that she has the Sergeants list and they will be hiring over time for vacancies. There is an upcoming entry level police test being held on May 13th at OPRF for 15 eligible applicants out of 23 in total. Director Tchang indicated in terms of Fire for their entry level testing is taking place this week virtually for 122 eligible applicants out of over 140 in total. There is a pending retirement at the Battalion Chief level later this month where the cascading impact of promotions will create vacancies at the entry level. Director Tchang stated there is one FFPM on PETA over a year not slated to return to service creating another vacancy and three newly authorized FFPM FTE’s for fiscal 2024 budget for 6 vacancies in total at the entry level. Commissioner Hedges inquired if it’s tradition to promote within the Fire department and Director Tchang responded it is collectively bargained and may be state statue as well.
* New Board Member: Sara Spivey will be recommended to be appointed to the Board of Fire and Police Commissioners at tonight’s Board meeting and if approved, will be invited to the next meeting. Director Tchang advised that by state statute will have to swear her in and inquired if other commissioners have been sworn in before. The Village Clerk will be invited to the next meeting to swear commissioners in.

A discussion took place about other communities facing the same staffing issues, and how the same candidates eligible to take the Oak Park exam are also testing at other communities. The discussion continued regarding national perspectives being confused with local community perspectives, how the pay structure for the police department compares to other communities, how it is reviewed through the bargaining process, and how the Village is competitive.

Discussion Regarding Incentives for Police Lateral Hires:

Director Tchang advised they are working on putting together a program and had some preliminary conversations with the Board regarding lateral hires and is looking for feedback from the Commission. Commissioner Hedges inquired about bonuses for officers that have already been here and Director Tchang stated they are thinking about current staff however, bonuses would have to be negotiated with the labor unions but they are not seeking guidance on that currently. Commissioner Hedges asked about bonuses at different years and Director Tchang responded that for the most recent patrol contract they added a longevity step at ten years which used to top out at five years.

Director Tchang asked if there is a dollar amount or structure they feel would be appropriate for a signing bonus for a new hire or lateral. Chair Pickrell suggested $5000 and Commissioner Hedges agreed but to combine with something done internally and to so something so that it’s not paid out and they leave. A brief discussion took place about educational incentives, tuition reimbursement, how the bonus would be promoted and what internal employees would think. Director Tchang stated they are considering all the things but these incentives are for bringing on entry level lateral hires which they have the full authority to do with the Board of Fire and Police Commission.

Chair Pickrell stated he would be in favor of bonuses and enhancing perks such as educational incentives, gym memberships or anything that makes it seem like this is a nice place to work, and get people out of their squad cars and into the community.

Resolution of the Entry Level Appointment Committee of the Village of Oak Park, State of Illinois, adopting Rules & Regulations to waive the application fee for Entry Level Police testing:

Director Tchang stated as previously discussed, the POWER test is required at the time of application prior to being hired. Director Tchang presented an updated version of the rules in which it is proposed under this model that there will be four tests a year, that candidates will be placed on the initial eligibility list, there will only be one, and that candidate’s name will be good for one year on that list. On a subsequent test, if a candidate tests higher the preceding candidate would go above that person on the list. Commissioner Hedges inquired if someone could fall off the list and Director Tchang responded only if they were on the list for a year and weren’t called. After a year when the list expires, they would have to reapply. Other changes made were for typos and another section where it says the Board of Fire & Police Commission “shall” provide a report to the VOBT once a year, changed to say “may” provide a report. There is a resolution for adopting the waiver of the application fee, the POWER test, the cleaning of typos, and the new entry level initial eligibility list.

Chair Pickrell made a motion to adopt the resolution adopting Rules & Regulations for Entry Level Police testing as amended. Chair Hedges seconded the motion. Ayes: All, Nays: None. Chair Pickrell and Commissioner Hedges both signed the resolution.

Resolution of the Entry Level Appointment Committee of the Village of Oak Park, State of Illinois, adopting Rules & Regulations to waive the application fee for Entry Level Fire testing:

Director Tchang presented the resolution changing the Fire rules waiving testing fees.

Commissioner Hedges made a motion to adopt the resolution adopting Rules & Regulations to waive the application fee for Entry Level Fire testing as amended. Chair Pickrell seconded the motion. Ayes: All, Nays: None. Chair Pickrell and Commissioner Hedges both signed the resolution and in addition, Director Tchang and Chief Kobyleski will also sign the resolution.

Director Tchang advised police rules are entry level and promotional and board of fire and police commissioners can adopt those but for the fire department it is the entry level committee that does that. The resolutions will be posted in the Wednesday Journal or another newspaper for ten days and will take effect after the ten days.

Motion to Approve Entry Level Police Testing:

Director Tchang stated this is for testing multiple times a year. Last test was posted in March.

Commissioner Hedges motioned to approve entry level police testing. Chair Pickrell seconded the motion. Ayes: All, Nays: None.

There was a motion to adjourn by Chairperson Pickrell seconded the motion by Commissioner Hedges. Ayes: All, Nays: None. The meeting adjourned at 6:26 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Avinger, Human Resources Generalist