

**OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS
CITY OF COLUMBIA HEIGHTS
CITY COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING
MAY 28, 2019**

The following are the minutes for the Special Meeting of the City Council held at 6:00 pm on Tuesday, May 28, 2019 in the Conference Room, City Hall 590 40th Avenue NE, Columbia Heights, Minnesota

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Schmitt called the meeting to order at 6:15 pm.

2. ROLL CALL:

Present: Mayor Schmitt, Councilmembers Novitsky, Buesgens, Murzyn, and Williams.

Also Present: Kelli Bourgeois-City Manager; Lenny Austin-Police Chief, Gary Gorman-Fire Chief, Dan O'Brien-Fire Captain, and Shelley Hanson, Secretary.

Fire Personnel-Emily Kosman, Kelly Schmidt, and members of the community were also in attendance. Mike Pyka and Grant Dickinson arrived later in the meeting.

3. DISCUSS PUBLIC SAFETY STAFFING STUDY ACTION PLAN

Bourgeois said she would give a brief update on what action has taken place thus far based on recommendations in the staffing study. She told members that she had sent an email to all fire department personnel to update them on some of the changes that would be made going forward.

Fire Dept.-

1. The Fire Chief's last day is May 31, 2019. Therefore, Dan O'Brien was appointed Acting Fire Chief effective June 1, 2019, and the Fire Chief position has been posted. Priority will be given to applications received by June 3, 2019. It will be a priority to get this position filled as soon as possible.
2. The full time firefighter vacancy left by Rich Hinrich's retirement, is in the last stages of being filled.
3. Seasonal Inspectors are ready to start.
4. A firefighter came in and recommended putting a POC on as a temporary full time until such time as additional firefighters can be hired. Bourgeois would like to do this as soon as possible and is in the process of clearing it through all parties. The position would not be PERA eligible, but would get additional credits through the Relief Association.

5. Once the new permanent chief is hired, a decision will be made regarding a “second in command” position.

Police Dept –

1. The Council will consider creating the Lead Records Technician position at the regular council meeting following this meeting.

Comments from Council:

Bourgeois was asked if she had anyone special in mind for the Fire Chief position. She told members that the position was posted internally and externally, and is open until filled. She is giving priority points to those submitted by June 3, 2019. She will score the applications and proceed as quickly as she can.

Murzyn agreed it was a good idea to fill the firefighter position temporarily with a Paid on Call. Gorman and O’Brien also agreed as they need additional staff members. They acknowledged the two Paid On Call firefighters (Grant Dickinson and Mike Pyka) who have stepped up the last 2-3 months to alleviate the burden and staff the department even though they have other jobs. They have been working a lot of hours. And Bourgeois said a couple of firefighters are coming up against maximum vacation accrual so a Memorandum of Understanding will need to be entered into to extend that amount until such time the department is fully staffed again. Murzyn also commented that O’Brien would be a good candidate for promotion to Chief.

Public Hearing Opened.

Schmitt asked Gorman for comments. He said the steps being taken are a good way to proceed, but he still advises that a “second in command” position be filled, even if they decide to title it different.

Schmitt asked O’Brien for comments. He is all in favor of filling the positions to bring the department up to full staff as quickly as possible. He said scheduling enough coverage has been a problem.

Kelly Schmidt from the Fire Dept. has worked on the scheduling also and is finding it hard to find people to fill the vacant times on the schedule. Weekdays are the hardest since most of the POC have other day jobs. She stated that Emily has been working alone a lot during the day shifts. It is hard to cover the calls plus 28 inspections with only one person. Schmidt also agreed to speed up getting coverage and to hire a “second in command”.

Bourgeois stated they must keep their eyes on the long range goal and continue down the path we're going by getting the Chief position filled, then move on to the others.

Bourgeois then thanked Gorman for his service and his cooperation during this transition. His input has been very helpful. Gorman stated he appreciated Bourgeois making a point of meeting with the POC and emailing them to communicate directly about changes happening in the dept. He has never had a City Manager do that and felt it went a long way in making them feel like they are an important part of the City team.

O'Brien told members that whether they go with two firefighters, or one firefighter and one code enforcement officer, it will take about 6-8 months to train them for inspections, and get them enrolled in classes, so they can be up to speed by next year.

Kosman stated she isn't in favor of trying to curtail or screen medical calls since they aren't always what they seem. By not responding to calls you think are minor can result in life altering situations. She said the department does need more help and the continued redevelopment and added housing means more residents and more calls.

Schmitt asked Austin if he had any comments regarding the Police Dept. He told members they are moving forward on the Lead Records Technician; he is looking at a policy for cell phones; if the budget allows, he would like to start bar coding items for the evidence room; he would like to add an officer in 2020 and then phase other staffing recommendations into future budget cycles. He agrees with the City Manager and Council to leave inspections in the Fire Dept. He told members that even though it is not part of the study, they are proceeding with getting the details for the addition of a drone as previously discussed.

There were no other comments so the Public Hearing was closed.

Motion by Buesgens, seconded by Murzyn, to adjourn at 6:45 pm.

Respectfully submitted,



Shelley Hanson
Recording Secretary