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**WASILLA CITY COUNCIL INFORMATION MEMORANDUM**

**IM No. 04-18**

**TITLE: NOVEMBER 18, 2004 EMPLOYEE MEETING: CORRESPONDENCE SUBMITTED.**

Agenda of: November 18, 2004 (Special Meeting)  
 Originator: Clerk's Office

Date: November 30, 2004

Route to:	Department	Signature/Date
	Police	
	Recreational and Cultural Services Library, Museum	
	Public Works Planning	
X	Finance *signature required	
X	Clerk	<i>[Handwritten Signature]</i>

**REVIEWED BY MAYOR DIANNE M. KELLER:** \_\_\_\_\_

**FISCAL IMPACT:**  yes\$ or  no      Funds Available  yes  no

Account name/number:

Attachments: Written Correspondence Submitted by Employees (corespondence from members of the Wasilla Police Department and Ken Langlois and Keith Jones, Public Works)

**SUMMARY STATEMENT:** Attached are questions/comments presented in writing to the Wasilla City Council at the November 18, 2004 Special Meeting. The meeting was held pursuant to WMC 3.90.080.

Madam Mayor and Honorable Members of the Wasilla City Council:

We are pleased to have this opportunity to approach you with an issue we feel is appropriate to bring up at this time in the city's history.

The citizens of this city made an enormous decision in the end of 1992 to establish a sales tax whose primary purpose was to fund a city police department. The summer of 1993 saw the birth of this department and since that time the City of Wasilla and the Police Department have seen explosive growth. From the eight original officers to the nineteen who are currently sworn to protect our city, the Wasilla Police Department has transformed into one of the fastest growing and larger departments in the entire state of Alaska. In time, Wasilla will be among the very largest departments in Alaska.

The citizens of the City of Wasilla enjoy benefits that many in the nearby area do not. For example, if a citizen in the Municipality of Anchorage calls to report a broken car window, a stolen vehicle or other act of vandalism, the caller will not see nor speak with an officer if there is not a solid suspect or lead. The caller will speak with a call taker who will pass the information on or write up a basic report themselves.

In Wasilla, the same citizen will at least speak with an officer and probably speak to them in person. The officer gains a more personal knowledge of the area, the crime and the victim involved.

A citizen in the Mat-Su Valley who lives outside of the city limits of Wasilla may have to wait upwards of thirty minutes for an Alaska State Trooper to arrive for a similar call because of personnel shortages, call volume and significant distances traveled between calls.

Another huge benefit that residents outside of the city rarely enjoy is active patrol. The Alaska State Troopers in the Mat-Su Valley spend so much time traveling between calls, they rarely have time to drive through and learn specifics of neighborhoods and notice things and people that may be out of place.

Wasilla Police Department continues to be held in high regard throughout state law enforcement circles as a professional and progressive department.

While the Wasilla Police Department is looked at as one of the better departments in the state, one area that we, the members of the Wasilla Police Department, feel is not progressive is the area of pay. The scale set on the pay matrix is not bad; however, the pace at which the scale is climbed is painfully slow. The cost of benefits has increased and to the city's great credit, a bulk of that cost has been absorbed by the city. The wage to the officers of this department; however, continues to lag in comparison to other departments in the state.

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CLERK'S OFFICE  
CITY OF WASILLA

Finding a community that is comparable to Wasilla is a tremendous challenge. Wasilla is easily the fastest growing community in the state right now. Just to give you an idea of what a few other departments start at and how they move up, we have gathered some information for you. This information was gathered via the internet and phone interviews with supervisors from other departments.

First year officer	Wasilla PD	\$17.33 hour/\$36,052 per year
	Kenai PD	\$21.54 hour/\$44,820 per year
	Juneau PD	\$24.02 hour/\$49,961 per year
	Ted Stevens Airport	\$19.91 hour/\$41,424 per year
	AST	\$19.91 hour/\$41,424 per year
	APD	\$18.83 hour/\$39,180 per year
Officer off probation POII	Wasilla PD	\$19.63 hour/\$40,846 per year
	Kenai PD	\$22.74 hour/\$47,300 per year
	AST	\$23.07 hour/\$47,985 per year
	APD	\$23.46 hour/\$48,960 per year
	Juneau PD	\$25.09 hour/\$52,187 per year
Six year officer	Wasilla PD	\$22.53 hour/\$46,869 per year
	Kenai PD	\$25.58 hour/\$53,200 per year
	AST	\$28.56 hour/\$59,404 per year
	APD	\$30.25 hour/\$62,940 per year

Juneau PD maxes out at \$32.14 per hour/\$66,851 per year. It takes them thirteen years to reach their max step.

WPD rate is based on a "Meets Expectations" evaluation and a 3.5% raise every year. Very few officers in the department got a 3.5% raise this year despite the fact that the vast majority received a "Meets Expectations" evaluation.

At the 3.5% raise it would take a Wasilla Police Officer over thirteen years to get to the point an APD Officer reaches in six years. Midpoint in our system is roughly attainable in a ten year time span. Midpoint on our scale is \$53,321 (FY 04). In Kenai they are reaching that point in six years.

We feel this is an issue the city administration needs to address because experience really is priceless in this line of work. Knowledge of the people and the community is very difficult and expensive to replace. It is a reality that the City of Wasilla may begin to lose some of its best and most qualified officers to agencies like APD which offers \$23.46 per hour to any officers in the state with one year or more experience who will transfer over. That is a mark an officer in Wasilla will not see for over six years. The City of Fairbanks makes a similar offer at \$24.31 per hour to officers with current state certification. Both of these agencies offer an additional percentage based on college education as well. APD offers 4% for a 2 year degree and 8% for a 4 year degree.

A second, closely related, issue that we would like to approach is the method by which the raises are determined.

The Merit Increase System is good in theory. If an officer works harder, they will earn more money. With the police department this is not necessarily becoming the case. The basic premise is that at the end of the fiscal year, the supervisor will sit down, evaluate the officer based on several categories and the work performed in those categories.

The first problem in the police department is the evaluation itself. Every four months we rotate our shifts and our supervisor might be new to us or a supervisor may be unavailable for various reasons as was the case this year. Some members of the department were evaluated by a supervisor they had not worked for. To call this an evaluation is a stretch at best. To base an officers' raise on this is an ineffective practice.

Once the evaluation is turned in, the raise percentage is calculated based on this number that may or may not be an accurate reflection of the officers' performance. Another problem that exists is the raises on the pay matrix are consistently on the lower end of the percentage in each bracket. The decision is also left to the department head to pick a raise number. Two people with a 3.5 score may or may not get the same raise even if they make the same amount of money; it is subjective and up to the department head. One solution may be to eliminate the raise amount being picked by the department head. Develop a system with a more close correlation between the score and the raise, this would make it more objective. This option however, does not deal with the evaluation deficiencies.

The APD and AST both received raises on a straight step system. This may seem like it would reduce motivation to work harder. That possibility exists, but it is unlikely here as the nineteen raises in our department this year were all within about forty cents of each other. That is even with all of us in varied places on the matrix.

Juneau PD and Kenai PD both have a merit based step system. Any officer who receives an evaluation with a "meets expectation" receives a step raise. Neither department has ever had anyone not get the raise as day-to-day supervision tends to address any pressing issues. Either of these are ideas that could be a solution.

Both of these methods can help keep consistency through department heads and administration changes. Personality conflicts can never be called into question as everyone knows where everyone is going and how fast they go there. It also prevents new hires from starting within a few cents of someone with two or three years of experience which has happened in the past.


Feedback and evaluation are good and necessary. The greatest issue here is simply the slow speed at which the raises are going. They tend to be consistently in the lower end of the scale in comparison which causes us to lag behind many of the pay trends across the state.


We hope that this department will become more competitive again with other agencies across the state.


Thank you very much for your time and consideration in this matter.


Sincerely,


The members of your Wasilla Police Department:

  
Lt. Craig Robinson

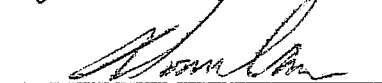
  
Sgt. Ken Conn


  
Sgt. Ray Chmielowski


  
Officer Jean Achee


  
Officer John McNeal

  
Officer Rick Manrique

  
Officer Doug Sonerholm


  
Officer A. T. Long

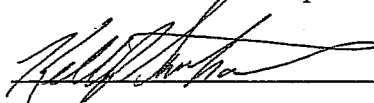
  
Officer Tim Jessen

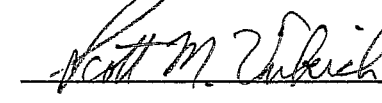
  
Officer Chris Watchus

  
Officer Joel Smith

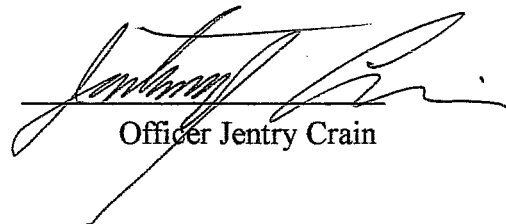
  
Officer Kristi Witherspoon

  
Officer David Eller

  
Officer Kelly Swihart

  
Officer Scott Vukich

  
Officer Cecil Dickerson

  
Officer Jentry Crain

1. It is my understanding that if the city employees unionize council is not required to recognize the union due to PARA. If the employees unionize will the council recognize the union as a bargaining unit and if not why?
2. I would like council to consider changing the code to give employees the option of overtime or comp. time. It is my understanding that comp. time must be approved by the Mayor and taken within the same pay period. I would like to suggest this time be monitored at a supervisor level, accrued and kept track of similar to the way PTO's are now.
3. According to the MBL group 30% of the city employees should fall in the exceptional performance and exceeds requirements area of the matrix. Some supervisors are reluctant to give out 4's 5's yet it would require 5's across the board to get an exceptional performance rating. I would like to know the actual number of employees that fall into exceptional performance and exceeds requirements categories, what departments they work in and would it be possible to recognize these individuals to serve as an inspiration to the rest of us?

*Keith E. Jones*  
*Ken Sengler*

*Public Works*  
*AG*

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CLERK'S OFFICE  
CITY OF WASILLA

I would like to ask Mr. Leonard to explain or show the employees the extra cost of doing our payroll bi-weekly versus bi-monthly. I understand that there is probably some hidden cost and would like to have a better understanding of the process.

Keith E. Jones  
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Public Works  
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