

MINUTES OF RAVENNA CITY PERSONNEL COMMITTEE MEETING
March 11, 2019

The March 11, 2019 meeting of the Ravenna City Personnel Committee was called to Order at 6:16 P.M., by Chairman, Scott Rainone. In attendance were Paul Moskun, Rob Kairis, Amy Michael, Bruce Ribelin, Andrew Kluge, Matt Harper and Joe Bica. Also attending the meeting were Mayor Frank Seman; Finance Director, Kimble Cecora; Director of Public Service, Kay Dubinsky; City Engineer, Bob Finney; Police Chief Jeff Wallis; Fire Chief, Geoffrey Cleveland; Human Resources Director, Heather Richkowski; Larry Silenius of 123 North Walnut Street, Ravenna, Ohio; Clifford Soudil of 434 Woodland Street, Ravenna, Ohio and Tim Calfee of 910 Murray Avenue, Ravenna, Ohio.

Mr. Rainone said the first item on the agenda is a change in the Assistant Finance Director position.

Mr. Cecora said they talked a lot about transitions being made in the next couple of years. He was going through the payroll ordinance and trying to shore things up. One of the things they have is the assistant finance position job out there. It's kind of interesting that under most elected official positions, they have directors. There are directors of street, water, sewer. For some reason, under this elected position, this is an assistant. This is what is more aptly described as a supervisory position, like a department head, because technically, it is. He thinks they know that the actual responsibilities and duties are that of the accounting supervisor, comptroller or whatever they wish to call it. It is supervisory and has been for a long time, overtime exempt. Secondly, as they move forward, they would like to make this a department head position as opposed to an assistant to an elected official. He and Ms. Richkowski talked about it a little bit. They just wanted to float that by Council. Along with this would be a commensurate pay range that would be at department head level.

Ms. Michael said when Mr. Cecora is done, there is no one replace him because nobody came forward.

Mr. Cecora said that's another discussion for another time.

Ms. Michael said she thinks that discussion needs to happen sooner rather than later. If that position were to be an appointed position. She had the clerk check to see when the ballot issue would be put forward and that deadline date is August 7. She thinks that if that is a hired position, not an elected position, that person would be under the mayor and would be required to be here 40 hours a week. She knows Mr. Cecora is but she's just saying that would be more the controller position and would they need an actually higher paid department head position. She thinks that would change the dynamics if they had a person in place that it was their job.

Mr. Cecora asked if an appointed finance director preclude them from having an assistant.

Mr. Kairis said he's asking to move a position from an assistant position to a director.

Ms. Michael said she would think it would be more of a cost savings.

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Mr. Cecora said that he was operating under the assumption it is going to be an elected position.

Mr. Kairis noted that is a problem too because the charter refers to the office of the Finance Director. That becomes confusing because are they talking about the person they are talking about here or the elected official.

Mr. Cecora said that you don't have an assistant mayor. You have a street supervisor. You have a wastewater treatment plant superintendent. This would simply be a comptroller or the accounting supervisor.

Ms. Michael said that she's thinking they are not going to have an elected official.

Mr. Rainone said, to unpack this; this situation they have at hand, there is an elected position and as of the filing date, no one filed. Now there is an opportunity for someone to file as a write-in; does anyone know that date.

The clerk said she would say that write-in date is probably the same day as the ballot issue which is August 7.

Mr. Rainone said what they need to determine first is it the wish of council to change this position and put it in front of the voters or to go forward with a temporary, interim finance director and hope that someone in a couple of years wants to go after the elected position. Do they want to leave it as is or a change to the charter.

Ms. Michael said her personal feeling is that it needs to be changed.

Mr. Kairis asked when the last time was a change to the charter was put on the ballot by Council as opposed by the Charter Review.

Mr. Rainone said Council puts all of them on the ballot.

The clerk noted Council has put a residency requirement on the ballot at least three times without the Charter Review Commission approval.

Mr. Kairis said the reason he says this is because they have a Charter Review Commission for a reason. He doesn't want to usurp their responsibility, even if it is every five years which is very inconvenient. This is a substantial change. This isn't a change to be in compliance with laws like a residency requirement. He understands that. How often does Council exercise that prerogative?

Mr. Rainone said he thinks this is a unique situation.

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Mr. Kairis said he's not saying they shouldn't do it because; he's just saying this is a big deal and if they really think this needs to happen, in spite of the fact there is no commission recommendation, they should probably start moving on it.

Mr. Ribelin said that they need to understand that even if Charter Review Commission makes a recommendation to City Council, City Council has the option of not putting that on the ballot if they wish not to do so.

Mr. Kairis said it's hard to get people on the Charter Review Commission. If they have the notion that they're just going to put stuff on the ballot anyway, it could be much harder to get people to volunteer.

The clerk said at the last commission, she tried to get them to put forth a request to bring down the number of people required, other than the 15 and to make it every seven or ten years rather than every five years like other communities but as far as she knows, they did not entertain that.

Mr. Rainone said he understands Mr. Kairis' position. But he feels they can't wait and Council would be shirking its responsibility. They have a little bit of time.

Mr. Moskun said that time is going to go quickly and if they keep waiting it's going to pass them by.

Mr. Rainone said he doesn't think they need to make a decision this evening. He thinks they could make a decision at the April meeting. He thinks then they can start soliciting public comments and getting people involved. There could be a public hearing. They can expand this to the entire Council, not just the committee. Right now, taking a straw vote, what is the feeling to appoint an interim or take something forward to the ballot.

Ms. Michael said that before making any changes to the structure of the department, she thinks the main priority would be who is going to be the finance director and what they would want.

Mr. Bica said that if they open it up to an appointed position, it does give them more flexibility to pull from other communities. He doesn't think the talent pool isn't in the city of Ravenna as it once was. He thinks it does give the city more flexibility and getting the best people to fill the position. His only other comment would be is if they would consider that for a finance director, they should discuss law director at the same time. If they are going to put something on the ballot, the voters should think about all those positions.

Ms. Michael said she sees them as separate issues. The law director and finance director as two totally different positions. She's not disagreeing that maybe eventually that could be a possibility but right now, they have somebody who is running. Maybe when that term expires, then they could put it on the ballot.

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Mr. Bica said that he thinks if they are going to go down that road and discuss this and put something that major; because it is a major issue, he thinks it needs to be discussed at the same time.

Mr. Kairis asked if it's possible to do that after a candidate has already been declared.

Mr. Bica said that it's a charter change and would take place in the next cycle.

Mr. Rainone said he understands what Mr. Bica is saying but he has to disagree. He just thinks right now they need to deal with the finance director and they could leave the law director position to the next Charter Review Commission. Is there just the general feeling that's the route Council wants to go; change the position to an appointed finance director. If they are making a charter decision and depend on the a voter decision, they also have to prepare for Plan B in case it doesn't pass. They have to have something to backstop.

Mr. Moskun said that if the public says it's been a voted position for decades, that's going to be a consideration.

Mr. Rainone noted there will need to be an education component to it.

Mr. Ribelin asked if the law director will be drawing up the ballot language.

Mr. Rainone said if it's the pleasure of Council, he will contact Mr. Cimino.

Mr. Soudil asked what the problem is with getting people to run for the position.

Mr. Bica said the pay isn't market rate.

Mr. Rainone said that instead of working in the private sector in an office, there is a lot more scrutiny.

Ms. Michael said that it's also the educational requirements. People come in with one qualification and not the other. She knows someone who has a two year accounting degree but a four year business management degree. Even though they've been doing accounting for 20 years, they weren't qualified.

Mr. Bica said that the market is so tight right now. These jobs are few and far between. If you get someone who is really good in finance or accounting, they are making \$75,000.00 - \$80,000.00 or up.

Mr. Soudil noted that the residency requirement could also put a wrench in the works.

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Mr. Bica said he agrees with Ms. Michael. They could probably find very capable people who might not have exactly an accounting of finance degree that may have a business or MBA that would be ideal for that position. Although there is another clause in there. Council changed the requirements on it a few years ago. There's another one in the Codified Ordinances.

Mr. Cecora said unfortunately, the charter takes precedence over whatever is in the Codified Ordinances.

Mr. Bica said that if Council changed the Codified Ordinances, that would also change it a little bit.

Mr. Rainone said he would get with the law director this week to discuss the issue further. He will give an update at Committee of the Whole and the issue reviewed again in the next Personnel Committee meeting.

There being no further business before the Committee, the meeting adjourned at 6:35 P.M.

ATTEST:

Clerk of Council

Scott Rainone, Chairperson
Personnel Committee