



Watertown City Council
Work Session

Mayor Michael Walters
Kay Thul
Adam Pawelk
Fred McGuire
Dan Schuette

6/13/2023 - Minutes

1. Call To Order And Roll Call

Mayor Walters called the Watertown City Council work session to order at 5:30 p.m. on June 13, 2023, in the council chambers of City Hall.

Council Members Present: Michael Walters, Adam Pawelk, Kay Thul, and Fred McGuire.

Council Members Absent: Dan Schuette.

Staff Present: Nick Johnson, City Administrator, City of Mayer.

Others Present: None.

2. New Business

2.1. 2024 Policing Contract Discussion

Foster introduced this item to the City Council.

Foster explained that the City of Watertown contracts for policing services with Carver County Sheriff's Office. He stated that at the March 28, 2023, City Council meeting, Sheriff Jason Kamerud and Commander Mike Wollin, from the Sheriff's Office, attended the meeting and provided an update on the current state of policing affairs within the City of Watertown, throughout the County, and around the State of Minnesota. He informed that Wollin and Kamerud also provided information on the outlook of the 2024 contract and into the future.

Foster said that Wollin informed that the Sheriff's Office is looking to shift all officer personnel to 12-hour shifts starting in the year 2024. He explained that current hours for the City of Watertown police services. He explained that change would be implemented countywide. Foster informed that with the proposed change, city staff from many County communities are trying to determine the impact on their communities and what the change would mean for services, etc.

Foster informed that the City Administrator of the City of Mayer, Nick Johnson, approached him to

discuss the proposed changes for both cities. He said there was discussion about a police staffing model that would include the regional, 12-hour shift approach, the current "town cop model" with 12-hour shifts, or the current Monday – Friday "town cop model" that the city currently has in place.

Foster reviewed the differences between the three models.

12-hour shift "town cop model"

Foster explained that the 12-hour shift "town cop model" would include the current day deputy (currently 8-hour shift) to a 12-hour shift (Team 2 Day Shift) where they would be working a schedule of Wednesday through Friday and every other Saturday. He stated that schedule of the night officers would be split between two teams: team 1/team 2.

Foster informed that the shift times could be from 6 am – 6 pm (day) and 6 pm – 6 am (night). He said per City Council decision, the night officers could work 4 pm – 4 am as another option to have a small crossover in the early evening. He did say that there would be a gap of 2 hours though between 4 am – 6 am.

12-hour shift "regional mode"

Foster provided information on the alternative model from the top cop model. He said that under this scenario, there would be a regional model shared between the cities of Watertown, Mayer, and New Germany to fill a 24/7/365 schedule. Foster said that coverage would be scheduled around the clock, but that the officer(s) on shift would be required to respond to calls in the City of Mayer and City of New Germany.

Foster explained that the City of Mayer prefers this model because it would eliminate what they feel is significant unscheduled shifts. He said that the City of Mayer is also will to "sell" additional hours (up to 10 hours per week) to the City of Watertown.

Foster informed that even though it is expected that the scheduled officer would respond to call throughout the entire region, the idea would be that the on-shift officer would be present within the City of Watertown more when no responding to calls.

Current Model

Foster stated that even though the change to the 12-hour model is preferred by the Sheriff's Office, the City Council could request that the model stays the same as the 2023 contract. He informed that would keep the current day deputy on a schedule of 8 am – 4 pm (Monday – Friday), and the night offices covering the nighttime hours (Monday – Sunday) on a schedule of 4:30 pm – 4:30 am.

Walters provided some history on the Carver County Sheriff's Office contract, stating that back in 2014, the City Council at the time determined that there was a need to gradually increase coverage. He explained that the City Council was able to increase coverage by gradually increasing the budget each year. He said that the goal eventually was to get to 24/7 coverage and increase response times and be more proactive in crime prevention. He stressed the importance of maintaining the presence within the City of Watertown and making sure response times are quick.

Walters mentioned that costs are increasing, but that the service presence may be less that what the city has been historically working towards. He stated that other options would include looking at starting a new police department or contracting with another city's department.

Pawelk asked for clarification on the proposal. He stated that the proposal specifically related to increased coverage and cost.

Foster reviewed the current number of officers and the contracted hours for each week. He discussed a

new algorithm that would combine the City of Watertown, City of Mayer, and City of New Germany 4 FTE deputies into one "contract" instead of two separate ones. He informed that Johnson doesn't believe that the City of Mayer currently needs all its current 30 hours and is therefore willing to give some to the City of Watertown to increase about the current 3 FTE that the city has.

Foster mentioned that there may be also an opportunity for the Watertown-Mayer School District to take on some hours as well if the City of Watertown is not interested.

Foster provided more clarity on likely improved response times between the 12-hour town cop model and the 12-hour regional model.

Pawelk thanked Foster for the additional information. He mentioned the fairly recent change throughout the state in policing including people retiring early, changing careers, and not entering the profession. He stated that he understands the difficulties that the Sheriff's Office is facing as it relates to personnel. He said he understands the efforts to make the job more attractive with 12-hour shift offerings as well. He said that he understands being more flexible. He explained that if the regional model ultimately can get better recruits and attract/retain personnel, then it could be a benefit to the community. He said that there are a lot of unknowns though. He stated that he doesn't want the city to be paying for regional costs. He explained that he wants the police driving throughout the community activity patrolling. He said that he doesn't want them sitting in specific locations looking for speeders, etc. Pawelk informed that he wants them to be active and proactive throughout and within the community. He expressed concern about those activities reducing if switched to the regional model. He stated that he understood that this contract, if changed to the regional model, would only be a year contract, but that if it wasn't working for the city, that it may be hard to change back. He discussed the historical discussion with the school district potentially needing police services. He stated that it could be an opportunity to partner with them. He expressed concern about the cost increase.

Foster acknowledged Pawelk's concern over the cost increase. He stated that there is a lot more details that need to be determined to narrow down costs.

Thul asked Foster if the current day deputy has provided any comments on what their preference is as it relates to the different model types.

Foster informed that he has had several conversations with the deputy and stated that the deputy prefers the current model and explained reasons why.

McGuire asked if the sheriff's office needs to respond to medical calls.

Walters stated that the deputies often serve as the first responders before medical services can arrive to scenes.

Foster explained that when emergency dispatch is done, that police, fire, and medical response teams know who and which people should be going to scenes.

McGuire mentioned that at a previous city council meeting that the Sheriff's Commander stated that the regional model is better for retention purposes and that there is less interest in the working within the town cop model. He stated that the City Council may have to seriously consider the change if that is the case.

Thul informed that she recently was on the League of Minnesota Cities and found a careers page where people can look up jobs. She said that many cities are hiring police officers right now and that those interested in these positions have a lot of options to choose from. Thul mentioned that retention is desired because they get to know the town.

Johnson introduced himself to the City Council. He stated that he has been with the City of Mayer since last October. He mentioned that he has been in local government for 12 years and that his three previous cities had their own police departments. Johnson stated that the City of Mayer is looking

at a projected 16% increase in policing costs for 2024 and therefore is looking at different ways to navigate the increase. He explained that the City of Mayer is fortunate in that there isn't a large amount of crime within the community. He stated benefits of the town cop model including being active in getting to know the community and businesses. He explained that the City of Mayer is looking to incorporate some town cop model "pros" in within a new model. He explained that the City of Mayer is wanting to be as flexible as possible within any model. He explained some of the coverage desires for the City of Mayer.

Walters thanked Johnson for his information. He said that he is open to a collaboration and more discussion on how it would work. He said that his priority is the coverage within the City of Watertown and making sure that it is adequate. He said that he doesn't want the City's coverage to go backwards. He understands that there will be cost increases. He reiterated that he is willing to investigate the model if it increases time within the City of Watertown and the cost makes sense.

Johnson stated that there is still a lot to investigate but is asking for guidance on if this is something that the City Council wants to keep exploring. He said that if at any point it doesn't, that both cities can stop the process.

Walters stated that he is open to future discussion. He stated that he outlined his priorities with the contract and that if there is a way to incorporate that, it could make sense.

Pawelk said that he wants to know more about what the current day deputy thinks. He agreed that more information is needed and that continued discussion and review is needed. He said that it will have to continue to be reviewed during implementation as well if a change is made. Pawelk mentioned current issues and crimes going on throughout the community.

Johnson stated that the purpose of bringing it to both city councils was to get a feel for how to move forward and provide direction to staff on how to move forward and potentially gather more information for future discussion.

3. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 6:15 pm.

309 Lewis Avenue South; P.O. Box 279, Watertown, MN 55388

Michael Walters,

Mayor

ATTEST: _____

Margaret Reisdorf, Admin. Services Director