



City of Jonesboro

Municipal Center
300 S. Church Street
Jonesboro, AR 72401

Meeting Minutes Finance & Administration Council Committee

Tuesday, April 26, 2022

4:00 PM

Municipal Center, 300 S. Church

1. Call To Order

2. Roll Call by City Clerk April Leggett

Present 7 - Charles Coleman; Ann Williams; John Street; David McClain; LJ Bryant; Joe Hafner and Brian Emison

3. Approval of minutes

[MIN-22:031](#)

MINUTES FOR THE FINANCE & ADMINISTRATION COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON
APRIL 12, 2022

Attachments: [Finance Minutes 04122022](#)

A motion was made by Councilperson John Street, seconded by Councilperson Ann Williams, that this matter be Passed. The motion PASSED with the following vote.

Aye: 6 - Charles Coleman; Ann Williams; John Street; David McClain; LJ Bryant and Brian Emison

4. New Business

RESOLUTIONS TO BE INTRODUCED

[RES-22:074](#)

RESOLUTION EXPRESSING THE WILLINGNESS OF THE CITY OF JONESBORO, ARKANSAS TO UTILIZE FEDERAL-AID TRANSPORTATION ALTERNATIVES PROGRAM FUNDS AND AUTHORIZING THE CITY OF JONESBORO GRANTS AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT TO APPLY FOR THE FY22 TRANSPORTATION ALTERNATIVES PROGRAM FROM THE ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION.

Sponsors: Grants, Parks & Recreation and Finance

Councilmember L.J. Bryant said, "Brian could you just speak to the length of that?" Brian Richardson, Chief Administrative Officer, approached the podium, "This is actually part of the One Jonesboro Master Connectivity Plan and it's proposed to be a solid surface trail that would basically run from here to Joe Mack Campbell Park. The current proposed route goes along the side of the railroad tracks for the most part but we are reviewing that. As you can see, we have started some work downtown with some of the sidewalks and pedestrian infrastructure, this will be kind of an extension to that. It's a component of the Raise Grant that we applied for as well. Just for this

section downtown from the ASU link, we are wrapping up the last of the easements there. There is one that we are still working on a little bit, but we're hoping that goes to construction this calendar year." Councilmember Dr. Charles Coleman said, "Is part of that going to be bicycle trail?" Brian Richardson said, "Yes, this would be a solid surface, shared, multipurpose type trail." Councilmember Dr. Charles Coleman said, "That's part of what has already been approved from before, correct?" Brian Richardson said, "The concept of this has been approved by this council numerous times over the past three to four years. It seems we have been stuck in the same revolving, seeking funding. Our Grants Department has done an amazing job of putting the leg work to try and help relieve the taxpayer burden on this. I want to thank them as well and the council for their support of this alternative transportation agendas." Councilmember Dr. Charles Coleman said, "Yeah, I appreciate that. I think we are doing a great job trying to keep us where we belong and moving where we need to go in Jonesboro. Thank you."

A motion was made by Councilperson John Street, seconded by Councilperson Brian Emison, that this matter be Recommended to Council. The motion PASSED with the following vote.

Aye: 6 - Charles Coleman;Ann Williams;John Street;David McClain;LJ Bryant and Brian Emison

[RES-22:075](#)

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF JONESBORO, ARKANSAS, TO AMEND THE SALARY AND ADMINISTRATION PLAN FOR UNIFORMED EMPLOYEES AND AMEND THE 2022 BUDGET

Sponsors: Mayor's Office, Fire Department, Police Department and Finance

Attachments: [Uniform Job Titles by Grade 2022.05](#)
[U1-U6 Step Plan](#)

Chairman Joe Hafner said, "Before we make a motion, April on section 1 it says indicted, will you change that so it's indicated please?"

Chairman Joe Hafner said, "Before we open up to the committee to ask questions or make comments I thought it may be prudent to allow the Mayor and any of his staff to talk about what the process is here today. I know there has been a lot of work spent on this." Mayor Harold Copenhaver said, "Thank you Mr. Chair. This is a very important time for our community and I must say with is administration, ever since we took forward in 2021, we've listened to all the concerns of not only the public but our employees as well. I would like to say, first of all, thank you to Steve Purtee, our Chief Financial Officer, and Chief Miller, Chief Elliot and the assistant Chief's Waterworth and Hamrick, for their help in review of this process as we bring the recommendation forward to council. With their corporation and input we can make this successful. We've had many meetings over the past eight months, but we shared priorities on what we can do for our salary engagement and salary concerns to have the interest and to see additional funding of capabilities for the city to provide, so we don't have the turn over situations and we're investing in our uniformed employees. We came forward with a recommendation and an agreement at the table for proposed rate, beginning salary at \$42,000.00 which effects 105 officers, that's a combination of our police force, which I believe is 71 officers and 34 firefighters. This has been a priority of this administration, and if you don't mind I'm going to read a few things here because I don't want to leave anything out, it's very important. This is a public safety and a quality of place improvement that is both in a physical, responsible way. This proposed \$850,000.00 annual estimate will put our starting salaries on par or above with other first class cities around the state. We strive to recruit and maintain the

highest quality of personnel, but we can't do that without competitive salaries. Improving public safety, though, has a lot of moving parts and we've been tackling them for the last 16 months. Public safety is investing in pedestrian infrastructure, which we're doing with council support. It's about calming speed in our neighborhoods, which we've focused on. It's about technology to help solve and prevent crime, which we're doing. It's faster response times, which we are achieving with the new common system that we have purchased. It's about investing in our E911 center, which we just completed the first phase of. It's about putting more officers on the streets in peak times, which we have done. These improvements represent a parcel list of more than \$4,000,000.00 in additional spending that we have invested toward my plan of keeping Jonesboro the safe city that we all love, and this will help us to in the future. Today's agenda represents a key component, investing in our fire and police salaries. This increase will provide our Chief's the tools they'll need to hire the best personnel and to fully staff critical positions. Addressing our U1 uniformed personnel is long overdue, and the patience of our officers and firefighters show their commitment to their mission. In addition to these increases the U1 uniformed personnel will have a pay raise for the first time since 2016, and all uniformed personnel received a 2% cost of living adjustment with this proposed salary today which will add an additional 1% to the overall for them in the past year. What this means is when we are including our step raises by the end of 2022 most uniformed employees will make 5% more than they did last year. I'm very proud of that and I want to thank the council in their support to make this happen. As with all city investments and salary concerns, myself and our staff will continue to research where improvements will need to be made because keeping a good employee should always be our priority."

Fire Department, Chief Kevin Miller approached the podium, "This, hopefully, is going to be an excellent tool that we are going to be able to use for recruitment. Make us more competitive, we're trying to bring in more people for the future. That has been a problem that we've been seeing for the last couple of years. Our numbers have steadily been declining over the last few years. I know we may not be unique to a lot of areas, a lot of people are having problems getting employees but we have seen a drastic drop, so hopefully that is going to help improve that situation. I know the police department has it worse than we do with their turnover rate." Police Department, Chief Rick Elliot approached the podium, "First, I would like to commend the mayor and staff for getting this together. It's almost to the point that it's a crisis that needed to be addressed, because we are suffering on recruiting and retention. By this act, it takes us from way down on the list for starting salaries to the top five in the state for Class A cities. Only to be out done by a couple other cities, one being Little Rock, but the ones ahead of us are only 200 to 400 dollars. We're in a very competitive market with this going forward. The good news is, just this weekend alone, this talk has gone around and I was approached by two certified officers from other agencies inquiring. I think some of our shortages and concerns may be addressed in the near future with certified applicants coming onboard. We're excited to see that. This is a good start to eliminating this problem. There are a couple other things that need to be addressed but this is the most important aspect. It's like the mayor said, the average numbers were 40-41 and we don't want to be average. Jonesboro is above average in everything we do and it's time we make this step also."

Chairman Joe Hafner said, "You kind of touched on this, this is an ongoing process, correct? This isn't the final phase of the review and in the resolution it says we continue to experience difficulty in both hiring and retention of personnel, so today's action helps with the hiring part and I know we mentioned the 2% COLA they got earlier in the year and the additional 1% they will be getting, but will there be additional work done as far as the more experienced for the retention part of this?" Mayor Copenhagen

said, "As you can see, and council has full information ahead of you on what the current pay structure is with the step, I think that went all the way to 22 years of service, we have got to continue to look at that, but I think the main objective here was this effected 105 of the employees that were under the \$42,000.00 level and we have brought them up. As you can see, the proposed increases is for the U1 and those are individuals as well that both Chief Miller and Chief Elliot wanted to address initially and that's what we're doing. We are doing it by a step by step, this is the first step and so we are going to continue conversations. I am very pleased to say, you as council, after our last budget everybody was looking at a basically 4% of the year, this is an additional 1% to that for U2 up to U6 classifications. There is an increase for all sergeants and above as well. Most of these are patrol officers and out in the streets many of which have decided to stay there many of years so we need to reward them as well. So yes, this is step one of an ongoing process." Councilmember Dr. Charles Coleman said, "I know we are doing something presently but we need to continue to look at this on a yearly basis or maybe sometimes six months, because we all know that everything is going up and I think within the next five years things are going to get really outrageous." Chairman Joe Hafner said, "I know an additional question I have been asked, when you look at this on an annual basis it's roughly \$750,000.00-\$800,000.00, I think our sales tax continues to be strong. We may have additional fine income from the court system. I feel confident, the way our revenues are, that we can sustain for the long term. I mentioned earlier today, we have invested a lot in public safety, whether it be technology, infrastructure, or what but we have to also invest in our people." Mayor Copenhaver said, "This investment is about \$833,000.00 and as Steve can contest and can speak more to the numbers, last year we did have a surplus of additional funding that we can also use. We are looking at it in a way of how can we continue these salaries. We felt comfortable with this recommendation and both departments were comfortable that they could be competitive and maintain. We invest a lot in an officer and when we lose an officer in the first five years that is money lost that this community has invested in those officers, so it's important that we maintain those. The great thing is we have a step program in place and many communities do not have that." Chairman Joe Hafner said, "We are also very aware that's it's important to retain experience. You can't replace that, if someone of five years leaves that bad then if you have 10-15 years people leaving that hurts a lot too. You've done a lot in your year and a half in office and we just got to keep pushing it forward." Councilmember David McClain said, "Are we also looking at bringing back incentive pay for education or additional training?" Mayor Copenhaver said, "Those are in the conversations. We are looking as of budget at the end of last year, we had several departments that we wanted to bring back to council and those will be on the forefront of our next conversation. That will be Code Enforcement and then there were two other areas in some departments that we want to address. Yes, we will continue these conversations." Councilmember John Street said, "We do have some senior officers that it may not seem quite fair, but in studying this, you and Chief will look at all our rank structure through the departments and try and get us competitive across the state, so that we can not only recruit but we can retain. I've sat here for 20 years and watched a lot of officers come and go, and it cost us money every time one leaves. I hope that you can stay on top of that. I think it is valuable to the city and public safety. I want to thank you and the Chief's and Finance for what you have done, it has taken a long time to get to this point but I think it's fantastic and I'm extremely excited to be where we're at, and I hope we can continue to progress with this."

A motion was made by Councilperson John Street, seconded by Councilperson Charles Coleman, that this matter be Recommended to Council. The motion PASSED with the following vote.

Aye: 6 - Charles Coleman;Ann Williams;John Street;David McClain;LJ Bryant and Brian Emison

5. Pending Items

6. Other Business

7. Public Comments

8. Adjournment

A motion was made by Councilperson LJ Bryant, seconded by Councilperson David McClain, that this meeting be Adjourned. The motion PASSED with the following vote.

Aye: 6 - Charles Coleman;Ann Williams;John Street;David McClain;LJ Bryant and Brian Emison