



City of Jonesboro

Municipal Center
300 S. Church Street
Jonesboro, AR 72401

Meeting Minutes Public Safety Council Committee

Tuesday, August 1, 2023

4:30 PM

Municipal Center, 300 S. Church

SPECIAL CALLED MEETING

1. CALL TO ORDER

2. ROLL CALL (ELECTRONIC ATTENDANCE) CONFIRMED BY CITY CLERK APRIL LEGGETT

Present 7 - Mitch Johnson; David McClain; Chris Moore; Brian Emison; Janice Porter; Chris Gibson and LJ Bryant

3. NEW BUSINESS

RESOLUTIONS TO BE INTRODUCED

[RES-23:144](#)

A RESOLUTION BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF JONESBORO, ARKANSAS TO AMEND THE SALARY AND ADMINISTRATION PLAN BY INCLUDING REVISED PAY GRADES AND SALARY RANGES FOR THE POLICE DEPARTMENT AND AMEND THE 2023 BUDGET

Sponsors: Mayor's Office, Police Department and Finance

Attachments: [2-JPD Revised Pay Grades & Salaries effective September 2023](#)
[3-2023 JPD Step Grid](#)
[4-2023 JPD Revised Base Salary & Total Benefit](#)

Councilmember David McClain said, I'll start if you don't mind, Mr. Chairman. A couple of questions, Mayor. I was going to see if we could get a couple of answers. I was looking at the proposed plan, which I think has come a long way. I want to say that. But then also one of the questions that I shot you this morning, just trying to get a little clarity on maybe the separation between when you look at the current plan that you guys have proposed here. Looking at the P1s going to P2, all that, if I am not mistaken, and I believe it's based on the policy that is in the police department right now. If I am a year ten patrolmen and I promote to a sergeant, if I am not mistaken, they automatically get the \$5,000 bump on top of moving to whatever the line that is. So I would get essentially \$8,000.

Mayor Harold Copenhaver said, Mr. Chair, if you would, I notice that most all council is here outside of one councilmember, and we have a short presentation. I think in that presentation, Councilman McClain, your question will be answered. So I think it will be uniform that way. I've got the finance director. We've had a question or two come up that we would like to go ahead and put in front of this committee to make you aware of that. So if you don't mind, could I approach the bench? Is that alright, David?
Councilmember David McClain said, yes, absolutely, especially if it's going to help me.

Mayor Harold Copenhaver approached the podium and said, so before you is my proposal. I want to first of all say thank you to Councilmembers Mitch Johnson, our Public Safety chair and Joe Hafner, our Finance chair for their continued input and discussions on this topic as well as the hardworking finance team. And I want to thank police leadership for their diligence and support of this plan, and I want to thank each council member who took time to meet with me to offer their suggestions. We valued their input, and we made some adjustments as a result. As I shared in the last Public Safety meeting, the proposal set starting pay for a certified officer is at \$52,000 including holiday pay. Currently that pay is \$43,260, and barely two years ago it was at \$34,500. Since this administration took over, every JPD position has improved at least 10% and that is before this adjustment. In addition to starting pay, my current proposal would significantly increase pay for longer tenured officers. This proposal also makes significant investments in our officers all the way through the ranks. You've been provided a listing of every rank and amount; and when you look at those base amounts, you can see that this is a great paying job in our city. And that's important to me, because we want to attract and retain great officers for Jonesboro. One notable change from the traditional alignment is the increase of chief and assistant chief positions to max pay effective on the first day this goes in operation. Several other cities we've reviewed followed that same format. This resolution also allows me to work with the police leadership to develop and fund incentives up to \$3,000 per year, the first of which will be paid in November of 2024. I am working with JPD on what those incentives will be and will have them for you shortly. Our calculations show this to be a budget increase of almost \$1.8 million, and when you add the city's \$0.24 on the dollar retirement contribution, the full impact is closer to \$2.25 million a year. Our city's current growth patterns have proven capable of supporting this movement without dipping into reserves. We also want to work and increase efficiency to help offset other cost increases. Chief Elliot and I have confidence that JPD can accomplish that with better staffing, which produces better police work with responsible management, and our leaders will demand that accountability.

After outlining numbers at the last committee meeting, I heard from quite a few people, most of which were supportive. The bottom line is we have to fill open positions and relieve pressure from supervisors challenged to put officers where they need to be. I think this proposal will accomplish that, and that is why I am proud to present it to this committee. Since this plan was released, one financial question has been raised, and I will ask Finance Director Steve Purtee to address it now, and then Chief Elliot will have a closing remark. And, Steve, if would as well, please follow up that question that the councilman had. It's going to be basically in accordance with what that question is. So, thank you for your time, Committee.

Finance Director Steve Purtee approached the podium and said, thank you, Committee Chair and Committee Members. Mayor Copenhaver did ask that I provide a couple of follow-up answers. Actually there are three questions that were raised relative to this program that we feel are very important to this discussion. The first question is simply how will this \$2.2 million in additional expenditures be funded? Again, that is a combination of the salary increase as well as the additional retirement funding. Very simply, based on our current data, our current revenue streams for general sales tax revenues, they are trending three million ahead of our 2022 total sales tax revenues. This is a 7% increase year over year, and that report was actually submitted and published in the Jonesboro Sun just this past week. The proposed general fund expense budget amendment of \$770,000 that is included in this resolution for the remainder of '23 will be absorbed through these current results. The most recent May surplus report that you were provided at the last council meeting showed a surplus

position of \$2.7 million through the month of May. After considering the \$770,000 budget amendment for this year, that would leave a remaining surplus position of \$1.8 million. The tentative June reporting which will be coming out next week shows an improvement in that position of \$700,000. So therefore, our favorable surplus position at the conclusion of the one-half of this calendar year will be at \$2.5 million following this \$770,000 budget amendment. Obviously we feel very strongly that the continuation of a similar year over year increase in revenue growth will provide a \$6 million additional funding for the budget year 2024, which will be the first year of the \$2.2 million total expenditure relative to this increase we are discussing today. It appears that continuation of current historical trends should more than support this additional cost in the immediate future. In the event a revenue growth slow down occurs later, available reserves may also be dedicated to support this salary enhancement until alternative funding sources are determined. That was the first question, simply how would we fund this.

The second question was relative to the retirement match. The question specifically is, is the City of Jonesboro increasing the LOPFI contribution on behalf of each officer from 23.5% to 24%? The answer is the current employer contribution or retirement match for the LOPFI retirement benefit is 24% for both 2023 and 2024. This information was confirmed through the pension review board plan reporting, which is public information as well.

The third question, how did we come up with the new steps, or what guidelines or parameters were used to determine each officer's step designation? I thought it important to provide a little background. The current step grid for uniform personnel was adopted in 2016; and it has commonly been communicated as a program accomplishing an average 2% step. However, the program was originally structured with step increases ranging from a low 0.9% between a step to a high 4.9% between a step. This is roughly less than 1%, equating to nearly 5% between steps in the grid that was fashioned. Through the first five years of the plan's existence, this did not present issues as there were no increases in step salaries proposed nor approved. Resulting from recent increases in proposed and approved over the past two years, both admin and JPD agree that a realigned step plan with specific 2% increases between steps will be a more consistent structure equally benefiting all JPD personnel regardless of where they may be in the step program. Additionally, this structure will provide better uniformity for future salary consideration.

With this objective in mind, the challenge was not only in determining salary ranges that address the specific pay issues, but to also transition personnel from a variable step scale to a fixed step scale, while at the same time achieving a significant per individual increase over their current salary and providing an individual with the opportunity to maximize their salary potential over a shorter duration. To accomplish this, a multi-step process was implemented. There are basically five steps to this process I want to explain in detail. Number one, the starting salary for a P1 officer category was determined based on the indicated competitive pressure existing in the market, which deemed to be preventing the hiring of certified personnel. This was agreed to be a starting salary of \$52,000 for certified personnel in the P1 job grade. Secondly, the upper rank salaries for P2 through P4 were aligned with a starting salary of \$65,000 for P2 with \$10,000 increases in starting salary applied between the advancing job grades of P3 and P4, increasing to \$75,000 and \$85,000 respectively. The starting salary also considered the potential scenario where a promoted officer may attain the combination of both the current \$5,000 promotional salary increase and achieve a mid-point level in steps of their preceding job grade. Having done this, they will then be positioned to promote to step one of the promoted job grade. Here is a

very simple example. It is really close to yours, David. This example is a P1 officer at step eight with an annual salary of \$59,732. With a \$5,000 promotion salary increase, their new salary would be \$64,732, and they would promote to a P2 step one with a fixed salary of \$65,000 for that category. So it's very similar to your analogy there.

Our third step to this process is to these starting salaries that we applied for all of those first four job grades, we applied a 2% increase between steps ending at max steps in each job grade where JPD deemed the max step would not create unmanageable compression when compared to the starting salary of the advancing job grade. Here is an example for that one. If you look at the max step for P1, step 15, it compresses by P2, step one by only \$3,613. In other words, \$68,613 compares to \$65,000, which is a step one for P2.

The fourth component of this exercise, the respective increase in proposed step one salaries from current step one salaries for each job grade was applied to the salaries of current personnel in each job grade. And then the final step, the revised salaries for each personnel were placed in the nearest step of the realigned 2% step grid for P1 through P4 job grades. The revised salary of the individual was placed in the respective realigned salary in step within the minimum plus or minus tolerance possible relative to that step. I just made a couple of comments here that I think are important to this process as well. If you'll recall, all steps for 2023 were granted effective the beginning of 2023 versus a staggered seniority date process throughout the year. This provided employees a maximum 2023 salary opportunity in the current year right out of the gate effective January 1. We feel that 2% steps will provide greater uniformity in future salary consideration relative to using this program. That was all the comments that I had.

Mayor Harold Copenhaver said, thank you, Steve, for your comments. Chief Elliot? Chief of Police Rick Elliot approached the podium and said, thank you, Mayor, Mr. Chair. First I would like to thank each and every one of you for your hard work on this. Just a few months ago, we came and talked about not only a problem in our community but across the nation; and that is recruiting and retention. I think with this move we have certainly helped address both. I think we made a move that helped retain what we got. I do understand that there are probably going to be some people that will continue to go to the state police. That is their desire for that line of work. On the other hand, there are those officers that will certainly stay here and continue to work for the city. Just in the short period of time that we've talked about this, of course, the news has spread across the state; and the inquiries that we've already had for employment opportunities have been outstanding. Just in the past few days, we have been seeing results, and we have not even got this thing passed yet. So this does put the agency as being one of the top pay municipal agencies in the state now. We compare with everybody else in the state, so that's something we have not been able to brag about in a while. As Mr. Purtee said, the whole plan was revamped; and again that was something that I asked to be done that the whole scale and everything be revamped. So that has been accomplished. Overall, this is a great step moving forward. Again, thank you to each and every one of you for your time committed and putting this together and getting it to this point.

Councilmember David McClain said, Chair, if I may while we have the chief sitting here. Chief, do you feel we should consider changing the \$5,000, if I move or if I promote, should we look at changing that to a different amount either now or in the future? And the only reason I am asking that is so we don't have a situation where I promote and I don't have any experience, but I also don't have supervisor experience and I end up making more than someone that has supervisor experience. That is the main reason

for my question. Police Chief Rick Elliot said, so years ago the promotion fee went from three to five because we couldn't get people to take the test for a \$3,000 difference in salary. They weren't willing to give up the weekends off, the days off, shift preference to go to back when we were working eight hour shifts to work night shift and being off during the week. So that was changed. In this process, again, we are just going by what is in the handbook, this section on promotions, is that not covered in the city handbook?

Councilmember David McClain said, I think that is the police policy if I am not mistaken. Chief Operating Officer Tony Thomas approached the podium and said, we are talking about two separate policies here. We have a salary administration plan, and then we have the pay plan. Right now, we are focused on the pay plan, and the salary administration plan is a separate document that governs our promotions and grades and different things along those lines. Councilmember David McClain said, so is that going to be for the PD, or is it for the city as a whole? Mr. Thomas said, well, the PD has a policy and non-uniform has a policy, and those are two separate policies but they are included. But we are talking about the pay plan here. Councilmember David McClain said, correct. But my question is, so it's separate.

Councilmember Joe Hafner approached Councilmember David McClain and briefly explained the difference between the two documents. Mr. Thomas said, there are two different documents. It's in the city's handbook. Councilmember David McClain said, so if I'm in HR and I promote, this is what I get, not just PD. Mr. Thomas said, not just PD. Councilmember David McClain said, got it. Thank you for that clarification. I thought that was just the PD plan, so thank you.

Chairman Mitch Johnson said, while you're there, Chief, just from my standpoint, I appreciate your dedication to your cause. I appreciate your dedication to the PD, and I appreciate your dedication to your men behind you. Chief Rick Elliot said, thank you. I do it for these ladies and gentlemen behind me. They do a great service for the city; and it's my job to stand up and make sure that we're the best paid, the best equipped, and we are. Right now, when this goes through, we have something to be very proud of as a department and as a city. Thank you, sir.

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

Aye: 6 - David McClain;Chris Moore;Brian Emison;Janice Porter;Chris Gibson and LJ Bryant

4. ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Chris Gibson, seconded by Chris Moore, that this meeting be Adjourned. The motion PASSED with the following vote.

Aye: 6 - David McClain;Chris Moore;Brian Emison;Janice Porter;Chris Gibson and LJ Bryant