

**UNION GAP CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION MEETING**  
**Council Chambers, City Hall**  
**Union Gap, Washington**  
**September 10, 2007**

Call to Order

Mayor Reeves called the Study Session Meeting to order at 6:05 p.m.

Council Members Present

Council Members Jim Lemon, David Butler, Dan Olson, Toni Webb, Glenn Bateman, Dan Vanover, and Roger Wentz were present.

Staff Present

Robert Noe, City Attorney, Robert Almeida, Police Chief; Shawn James, Police Officer; Tim Whitehurst, Fire Lieutenant; Karen Clifton, City Treasurer; and Kathryn Thompson, City Clerk were present.

Audience Present

Barry Kerth, Jo Collier, Brother Jack Henderson, Ryan Croffut, Randi & Celia Butterfield, Tony Reise, John Hodkinson, and others were present.

Fire Dept. Volunteer Recruitment & Retention

Barry Kerth, Volunteer Fire Lieutenant, informed he attended training in Portland in 2006 regarding recruitment of volunteers and stated it is difficult to find volunteers because of the time commitments involved. He then reviewed the information in the packet and explained the volunteers cover 12 hour shifts Monday through Friday from 6:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. and 24 hour shifts Saturday and Sunday. He informed the point system for the volunteers has not increased since January of 2003 and they are recommending the points be increased \$3.00 making each point value \$8.00. He stated currently the volunteers earn 8 points for a 12-hour shift, which equals \$40 to cover their meals, gas, etc. He informed for 480 fully staffed shifts in a year, the cost would increase from \$76,800 to \$122,880.

Council Member Wentz explained that the Council will need a very good idea of the total cost of the proposed point increase in order to consider the request in next year's budget.

Lt. Kerth stated he could estimate the other costs by calculating the average over the last three years.

Council Member Vanover questioned how this would impact recruitment.

Lt. Kerth stated this is mostly for retention of current volunteers and informed a couple of the volunteers have been working 20 shifts a month in addition to their full time jobs.

Council Member Wentz questioned how this compares to other departments.

Lt. Kerth stated it is difficult to compare because most other departments use local volunteers with pagers and they are called in for emergencies. Our department has volunteers from as far away as Ellensburg and the volunteers stay at the station.

Mayor Reeves questioned at what point the volunteers would lose exempt status.

Lt. Kerth stated as long as the volunteers receive less than 20 percent of the overall cost of a career fire fighter, they are exempt under FLSA.

Council Member Lemon questioned if all volunteers man the station after 5:00 p.m.

Lt. Kerth stated 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. the station is manned by career fire fighters and 6:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. the station is manned by volunteers, but because of staffing levels the career fire fighters have been filling in at night to cover for lieutenants and drivers.

Council Member Wentz questioned the reason the volunteers cover the night shift.

Lt. Kerth stated the majority of the volunteers work regular jobs from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. so it would be difficult for volunteers to work the day shift.

Council Member Wentz stated he thought having a career Captain on duty at all times had been discussed.

Mayor Reeves informed that is part of labor negotiations and the contract has not been settled yet.

Lt. Kerth stated there are currently 2 volunteer lieutenants and 1 acting volunteer lieutenant to cover all the night shifts. Being negotiated is a proposal to have a career Captain at the station 24 hours a day. He also informed that with no Fire Chief acting as the duty officer, assigned Captains are very necessary.

Council Member Wentz questioned when labor negotiations would be resolved.

Mayor Reeves stated he believes both sides are close to reaching an agreement, but we are waiting to hear from the mediator and the mediator has been tied up with teacher strikes.

Council Member Butler questioned how much money has been spent in labor attorney fees.

Mayor Reeves stated he did not have that figure.

Council Member Lemon stated he checked recently and the City has spent \$59,000 on the labor attorney.

Council Member Butler questioned the relationship between the career and volunteer fire fighters and if the volunteers believe having a career Captain at night will be an improvement.

Lt. Kerth stated the relationship is very good and the volunteers are in favor of having a career Captain at night for safety and leadership.

Brother Jack Henderson stated he has been a volunteer for 7 years and also works here in the City. He stated several months ago Mayor Reeves also questioned if the volunteers were supportive of the change to Captains so he attended a meeting with the volunteers and found them very supportive.

Mayor Reeves stated he met with approximately 15 volunteers with no paid staff present and they were 100 percent in favor of the Captain program and there were no negative comments made about the career staff.

Brother Jack assured the Council that the volunteers are very well trained and the citizens do not see any difference when they respond to calls.

Council Member Wentz commended the department on their training program and stated his nephew Jacob Smith is a volunteer and he is bored at the academy because he has already received the training.

Police Dept. Canine  
Drug Program

The Police Chief stated the department is very excited about the canine drug program and explained that this is not a “bite” dog, this is a dog used to search for drugs. He informed the dog we selected received the highest marks out of the eight dogs tested and is a female lab named Daisy. He informed the cost for the dog is \$2,200 and that has been covered by donations. He introduced

Officer Shawn James and stated Officer James has been selected as the dog's handler.

Councilmember Lemon questioned if the dog can only be used when Officer James is working, and if drug stops will only be done during certain hours.

The Police Chief stated yes, the dog will stay with Officer James, but next year the Police Department will be fully staffed and Officer James and the dog will work a special power shift from 7:00 p.m. to 3:00 a.m. the majority of the time. He stated the dog will be introduced during the day shift and will be used in populated areas like the mall and schools during the day.

Mayor Reeves stated Officer James and the dog will also be on call when needed.

Council Member Wentz questioned how call out will affect the budget.

The Police Chief stated there is a 4-hour minimum call out by contract, but call outs will be minimal when he is working during the prime hours. He also explained there is a process to follow before calling for the dog.

Council Member Wentz questioned if the dog will be used mostly for meth.

The Police Chief stated the dog will be for all types of drugs, including marijuana, and the dog will be used for vehicle searches as well as rooms, buildings, and lockers.

Council Member Wentz questioned how much money the City can expect from drug seizures and can the City legally keep that money.

The Police Chief stated the legal process for keeping the money will be followed, and informed our City Attorney has assisted Selah with their drug dog and seizures and will assist us also. He stated he does not know how much demand there will be for the dog, but the department has used Yakima dogs in the past. He stated the local motels have had issues and would like to see the dog in their parking lots, and when drug dealers learn we have a dog, they will not want to come here anymore.

Officer James stated he has been with the department full time for 6 ½ years, and stated the department has used dogs from Selah, Wapato, Yakima, and the State Patrol. He informed the agencies work together to avoid overtime by calling whatever dog is on duty. He also informed Union Gap has turned \$14,000 in seized cash over to Yakima so far this year, because the jurisdiction who owns the dog collects the money. He stated he will still be on routine patrol calls and be able to transport people because the back of the vehicle will be equipped so the dog's cage takes 2/3 of the room. He stated one of the reasons for varying his shifts will be so the drug dealers do not know when he is on duty because if they can figure out a routine they will avoid the area during hours the dog is working.

Council Member Lemon questioned if the use of the dogs is like mutual aid and if there is ever a time when a dog is not available.

The Police Chief stated, yes, it is mutual aid, and there are times when a dog is not available.

Council Member Wentz requested a full accounting of the cost of the program for the budget discussions.

Officer James stated the cost is hard to predict, but informed the major costs

such as veterinary care, food, and equipment have been donated for the life of the dog from Ahtanum Veterinary Clinic and Manning Dog Training, and Action Towing is donating window tinting and vehicle decals.

Adjournment

Council Member Wentz questioned what the training costs for Officer James will be.

Officer James stated the cost of the academy is covered by a State grant and he is staying with friends so the only cost to the City will be for lunch at the academy.

After discussion, Mayor Reeves adjourned the Study Session meeting at 7:03 p.m.

*These minutes dated September 10, 2007 were approved at the Regular Council Meeting of September 24, 2007.*

ATTEST:

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Aubrey C. Reeves, Jr.  
Mayor

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Kathryn Thompson, CMC  
City Clerk