The Finance Committee for the Village of Monroeville met on Thursday, 5/16/23, at 6:00 PM, in Council Chambers, for the purpose of discussing the wage ordinance.

Present were: Mayor Fries-Seip, Chris Raftery, Sue Rogers, Craig Franklin, Joe Galea, Bob Whitacre, Tom Gray, Bonnie Beck, Heather Alicea, Chief Gary Lyons, and Lieutenant Troy Kimball.

Sam Wiley had previously notified the Finance Committee that he would be unable to attend the meeting.

Chris provided a wage range proposal via e-mail, prior to the meeting, and copies were provided to everyone in attendance. Chris advised the pay ranges and a $5 per hour pay increase need to be decided upon. Bob asked why the pay rate for the Lieutenant is higher than the Chief. Chief said the Village picks up his share of his pension. Chief added that in the last couple of rounds of wage increases, he forwent an increase and that made Troy pass him up on the wage scale. Chris said that in the event that Chief would retire, the range needs to be fitting for anyone coming in. Chris asked Chief what kind of range would fit an experienced Chief of Police in a small community. Chief said $30-$32 per hour is a good starting point, and $45 per hour is something they can grow into. He said take someone like him for example, who has a masters degree, has extensive executive training through the Southern Police Institute, and FBI Academy etc., which is why he gets so many consulting things, and the person should definitely be at the top end of the scale, because of the experience and developed skills. Chief said Council could get someone like him, who is close to retiring, and applicants might look for a place like the Village. Chief thinks we have an excellent candidate here in house, but that is up to Council. There’s a lot more responsibility being Chief, and sometime it’s nice being # 2 instead of # 1. Chris said going back to the proposal, which includes the level 1, 2, and 3 police officers that Chief previously provided, the ranges need decided upon. Discussion. Chris forgot the correct page 1 of her wage proposal, and left the meeting to get it. The meeting paused at 6:14 PM and resumed at 6:24 PM. Chris passed out the corrected page 1 of her wage range proposal. Discussion regarding the MPD’s current wage, proposed wage, and proposed wage range. The following for the MPD was proposed:

**Chief of Police**: Current wage $28.60 / proposed wage $33.60 / wage range $30-$45 per hour

**Lieutenant**: Current wage $29.08 / proposed wage $34.08 / wage range $25-$38 per hour

**Level 3 police officer**: Current wage $23.37 / proposed wage $29.80 / wage range $29-$34 per hour

**Level 2 police officer**: Current wage $18.80 / proposed wage $25.80 / wage range $25-$29 per hour

**Level 1 police officer**: Current wage $18.80 / proposed wage $23.80 / wage range $23-$25 per hour

**Part-time police officer:** Current wage $16.58 / proposed wage $20.00 / wage range $19-$24 per hour

In regards to the Electric Department, Sue said she feels the starting pay for entry level needs to be higher than $16.31 per hour in order to attract job applicants. Discussion regarding the current wage, proposed wage, and proposed wage range. The following for the Electric Department was proposed:

**Electric Superintendent**: Current wage $31.42 / proposed wage $36.42 / wage range $32-$45 per hour

**Grade 4, year 5:** Wage range $30-$32 per hour (position is currently vacant)

**Grade 3, year 4:** Wage range $28-$30 per hour (position is currently vacant)

**Grade 2, year 3:** Wage range $26-$28 per hour (position is currently vacant)

**Grade 1, year 2:** Current wage $18.31 / proposed wage $23.31 / wage range $20-$24 per hour

**Entry level, year 1:** Wage range $18-$20 per hour (position is currently vacant)

Moving onto the Water/Wastewater Department, there was discussion regarding the current wage, proposed wage, and proposed wage range. Tom verified that Rick Whiteside hasn’t been moved into the Utility Tech/Specialist yet, he is still a Grade 3 Operator. Currently, there is no one in Grades 1, 2, 4, 5 and 6. The following for the Water/Wastewater Department, as well as the Utility Tech Specialist, was proposed:

**Water/Wastewater Superintendent:** Current wage $35.40 / proposed wage $40.40 / proposed wage range $40-$50 per hour

**Assistant Superintendent:** Current wage $30.44 / proposed wage $35.44 / wage range $35-$46 per hour

**Grade 6 Operator:** Wage range $34-$44 per hour (position is currently vacant)

**Grade 5 Operator:** Wage range $32-$42 per hour (position is currently vacant)

**Grade 4 Operator:** Wage range $30-$40 per hour (position is currently vacant)

**Grade 3 Operator:** Current wage $26.26 / proposed wage $31.26 / proposed wage range $28-$38 per hour

**Grade 2 Operator:** Wage range $26-$30 per hour (position is currently vacant)

**Grade 1 Operator:** Wage range $23-$26 per hour (position is currently vacant)

**Entry Level:** Current wage $17.31 / proposed wage $22.31 / proposed wage range $18-$23 per hour

**Utility Tech/Specialist:** Current wage $26.26 / proposed wage range $26-$38 per hour (position is currently vacant/about to be filled by Rick Whiteside)

Discussion regarding the current wage, proposed wage, and proposed wage range regarding the Street Department. The following was proposed:

**Street Superintendent:** Current wage $22 / proposed wage $27 / wage range proposal $26-$32 per hour

**Laborer, Grade 3:** Wage range $24-$26 per hour (position is currently vacant)

**Laborer, Grade 2:** Wage range $22-$24 per hour (position is currently vacant)

**Laborer, Grade 1, Entry Level:** Wage range $18-$22 per hour (position is currently vacant)

The next department discussed was the Administrative Staff and the MMC custodian. Bob asked why Ann Beck’s Administrative Assistant 4 description has an asterisk in red next to her proposed wage range. Chris said Ann is below the pay grade that she should be, and needs to come up. Joe asked if the Administrative Specialist is higher skilled than the Administrative Assistant, as far as progression goes. Heather confirmed that in the future, that will be the case, once she starts advancing through the higher levels. However, right now, Ann should be paid a higher wage because of her knowledge and longevity. The following was proposed:

**Village Administrator:** Current wage $30.24 / proposed wage $35.24 / proposed wage range $25-$40 per hour / Annualized $52,000-$83,200

**Fiscal Officer:** Current wage $37.01 / proposed wage $42.01 / proposed wage range $25-$40.25 per hour / Annualized $52,000-$83,720

**Administrative Specialist 4:** Wage range $32-$36 per hour (position is currently vacant)

**Administrative Specialist 3:** Wage range $28-$32 per hour (position is currently vacant)

**Administrative Specialist 2:** Current wage $21.47 / proposed wage $26.47 / proposed wage range $24-$28 per hour

**Administrative Specialist 1:** Wage range $20-$24 per hour (position is currently vacant)

**Administrative Specialist, Entry Level:** Wage range $18-$20 per hour (position is currently vacant)

**Administrative Assistant 4:** Current wage $22.02 / proposed wage $27.02 / proposed wage range $26-$30 per hour

**Administrative Assistant 3:** Wage range $24-$26 per hour (position is currently vacant)

**Administrative Assistant 2:** Wage range $22-$24 per hour (position is currently vacant)

**Administrative Assistant 1:** Wage range $20-$22 (position is currently vacant)

**Administrative Assistant, Entry Level:** Wage range $18-$20 per hour (position is currently vacant)

**Custodian:** current wage $18.40 / proposed wage NO CHANGE / proposed wage range $15-$22 per hour

Bonnie advised we still need to talk about part-time and seasonal. Chris feels Neil Scheid needs compensated for all the work that he does. Bonnie said Neil is considered seasonal, but he works almost year-round, and works a lot of weekends as well. The Mayor and Finance Committee said Neil seems like he is more part-time than seasonal and should be compensated as such. Tom said he and Bonnie talked about moving Neil into more of a part-time position. Seasonal worker Callie Rosser won’t be returning this year. Tom said we need an appropriate baseline rate for part-time employees. The Mayor proposed a wage range of $15-$18 per hour. Sue asked Tom if he would like to create a general, part-time position description for Neil. Tom said Bonnie had mentioned creating a part-time employee, globally, similar to what we did with the Utility Tech/Specialist. Joe said he wouldn’t want that to hold up this process, and maybe that description can be created secondary to this wage discussion. Chris said we could give Neil the $5 per hour increase right now, and then create a description later. Joe agreed. Bonnie said it wouldn’t take long to get a description together. Bonnie said she can put a description together. Council still has time to approve it, and have it be included with this, since they also still need to approve the MPD levels 1, 2, and 3. Bonnie asked when she creates it, what does Council want the wage range to be. The Mayor suggested $15-$18 per hour. With a $5 per hour increase, Neil would then be at $15.10 per hour. Bonnie asked if they want seasonal to be the same, $15-$18 per hour. The Mayor said since seasonal is just seasonal, it wouldn’t hurt to be in the $15-$18 range. It was proposed seasonal workers to be paid $15-$18 per hour. Bob asked if Dave Mahl needs an increase. Chris said she doesn’t feel as if he needs one, as he just had an increase recently. The following was proposed for part-time and seasonal employees:

**Part-time:** Wage range $15-$18 per hour

**Seasonal:** Wage range $15-$18 per hour

Chris said we need to discuss how all of this is going to be paid for. Bonnie said before the meeting today, she had e-mailed Council that there is only $153,000 in the General Fund. If Council recalls, two years ago the General Fund was in the hole, at nearly $200,000. We’re not a whole lot better, even with GATSO revenue. Bonnie said she understands that could change at any time, and she can’t tell Council what to do, but she is apprehensive of going with a $5 per hour wage increase. We already have $568,393 for the wage package in the General Fund for the 8.7% COLA wage increase that was given. Even without a $5 increase, we will be squeaking by at the end of the year. Bonnie wants to put it out there, and she can’t tell them what to do, it’s their decision and she just wants them to know where we stand financially. We’ve already spent over $1,000,000 this year out of the General Fund. There are 7 sub-accounts in the General Fund that were affected by the 8.7% COLA wage increase, and will also be affected by any increase thereafter. Bob asked how much this will increase will add annually. Bonnie said if we do a $5 per hour increase, that would an amount of almost $708,000 coming from the General Fund. Discussion regarding the handout that Bonnie previously provided showing how much payroll currently is and what it would be with an increase. Bob asked where we are with GATSO revenue. Bonnie advised that GATSO revenue is part of the General Fund, and the General Fund currently stands at $153,000. Bob asked if we were going to check and see if we could use the GATSO revenue out of the General Fund. Bonnie confirmed that money can be transferred out of the General Fund into the other funds, including the Enterprise Funds, as of 1/1/2018. However, the General Fund is only at $153,000 right now, so there is no money to transfer. Chris asked what happened to all the GATSO funds prior to this year. Bonnie said as she previously advised, the GATSO funds get spent every year, just like the income tax revenue. We’ve taken in over $3,000,000 in income tax in the last five years, but that is all used for General Fund expenditures. There are a lot of categories in the General Fund, and nine pages alone cover the General Fund expenditures. The MMC building is paid from the General Fund, advances done to other departments, like the Waterline Project, come from the General Fund, and then go back in once they are repaid. Bonnie said she is not saying that the General Fund is going to stay at $153,000, but coming into this year, we only had $600,000 in it anyhow. It’s not growing by leaps and bounds, because the money is being spent. For 2021 to 2022, we had $538,000 at the end of 2021 and $688,000 at the end of 2022. Chris asked Bonnie for what period of time is the 2023 payroll figure of $1,000,113 that is listed on Bonnie’s handout. Bonnie said she figured that amount for the entire year. It didn’t make sense to break it down, as we have different people coming in at different times throughout the year. Chris said there are only 7 more months to get through this year, but that figure is for a whole year. Going forward, a $5 per hour wage increase isn’t for the full 12 months of this year. Bonnie said they have to think ahead. If the money isn’t coming in as quickly as they would like it to, or as much as they would like it to, they aren’t going to be any further along when pulling into year 2024. That’s $568,000 that is being added to the General Fund expenditures. Chris asked Bonnie why that increase hasn’t been added to the budget yet. Bonnie advised it’s a time thing, there’s enough money to cover it, but it won’t get us through to the end of the year. She still has to make those appropriation changes to allow for the 8.7% increase that was given, in order to get us through to the end of the year. Joe asked if what Bonnie is saying is that we’re obligated right now at $568,000 for the General Fund and Bonnie confirmed. Money has to come out of both the General Fund and the Electric Fund, both of which we are already into the reserves. Again, she can’t tell Council what to do, she is just giving them the financial picture. Bob said on the other side of the coin, what will happen to the Village if we start losing employees like the Water and Electric Superintendents, and we can’t get police officers. Bob doesn’t know any other way of getting us back onto the playing field, except for increasing wages. Bonnie said last year, she proposed a $3 per hour pay increase, which Council was very hesitant to give, and at that time, they questioned where cut backs could be made. Now, a $5 per hour is being proposed, and those same questions aren’t being asked, and that is on top of an 8.7% increase. Chris asked where the Village can cut back. Bonnie said that would be up to the departments. Bonnie can suggest to them what to buy or what not to buy, but that’s not her place to make them do that. Joe said he takes a different approach. He said we have some low taxes in this town and at some point, that needs to change. Joe said reciprocity needs to be looked at. Craig said we have to stay competitive and stop hemorrhaging employees. Discussion regarding employees that we’ve lost in recent years. Joe asked Bonnie what our income tax receipts look like. Bonnie said it’s a little over $600,000 per year, and it fluctuates. The Mayor said serious choices need to be made about reciprocity. Bonnie said she emailed the Income Tax Administrator in New London to see how they started their process with reciprocity. Joe asked Bonnie and Heather if they could contact RITA to see what kind of numbers we would be looking at with reciprocity. Heather confirmed they can email the RITA rep and ask. The Mayor suggested making changes to the health insurance, since an increase is being considered, in order to sustain the increase down the road. Discussion in regards to the loss of recent employees and the fact that current employees deserve a better wage, as well as the ability to attract new employees. Heather said she thinks it’s pretty clear that all of the employees deserve the increase, but the question is, how do we pay for it. It’s not a question of if, it’s a question of how. How can we cut back while the cost of materials is skyrocketing. Everything has to be looked at. Bonnie said all of the department heads could take a serious look at their budget and see if there is a way to cut back. Joe asked if there are big expenditures that aren’t needed. Bonnie said she had a meeting with the department heads earlier in the year, and wants and needs were discussed. There have also been expenditures that weren’t anticipated. Examples are the $7,500 tax refund that had to be paid, $2,700 for the property on Hamilton Street that was purchased, $7,200 for the Village portion of the trash bin lifter, $4,000 in the shelter house roof at Clark Park, and $3,500 for a door at the Street Department. There is high dollar stuff coming through the budget and inflation is through the roof. Chemicals for the Water and Wastewater have gone up and there is no control over that. Bonnie said we’ve been blessed with small increases on our liability insurance and health insurance, but others costs are skyrocketing. The Mayor asked if any large equipment purchases can be postponed. Bonnie said she didn’t put the Z-turn for $14,000 in the budget. Heather said the little things add up at the end of the day, right down to what we pay for paper and ink. There could be a different way to do record retention in certain departments, be it email archives or whatnot, in order to prevent printing so much paper. When big ticket items come in front of Council, they could take a serious look and discuss if it’s a want or a need, and if it can be put off to a later date. The Mayor suggested doing to the newsletter online, and Heather advised that’s a great idea. Bonnie said $1,500 was appropriated this year for the supplies, permit, printing, and postage for the newsletter. The Mayor said per the upcoming change with the utility bills, is there an option for people to opt out of receiving it via mail, and instead, receive an online bill notice. Heather said we can ask our CMI rep and see if that’s an option. Bonnie said it will be another two to three months before the new layout is available, however, the draft has a section on the left-hand side where current news can be listed. With the new layout, we have to envelope all of the bills, which is an added expense. Heather said the GATSO expenses were discussed earlier. Heather confirmed that although there is GATSO revenue, there are also expenditures. For example, we’ve spent over $3,000 paying for small claims court filing for people who are contesting the citations, yet, we’ve not been reimbursed for even half of that money. There isn’t much we can do for reimbursement, other than bill the claimant and hope for payment. Bonnie confirmed people tell us they won’t pay that money back. Heather also advised we are paying GATSO 37% in fees from the revenue we are making. The Mayor said moving forward, how do we progress. Chris asked if there is a consensus. Bonnie asked Council if they agree with the job levels, not the wages, just the levels. Council confirmed. The Mayor asked if Rick is going to be appointed to the Utility Tech Specialist soon. Tom said once there is stability in the wages, Rick will be moved, it should be soon. Bob asked for Tom’s opinion of the wage structure. Tom said he agrees with what’s been said tonight, we have to be fiscally responsible while charting our course for the future. We have to get out in front of this, and it has to be a doable and affordable commodity. As Bonnie pointed out, there is some trepidation associated with any money fund management. Tom said Bonnie’s been really good about building the General Fund. We’re at an ebb now, a low point, because of the disbursements. If we don’t take a step now, hindsight will be 20/20. He heard a phrase recently and it stuck with him: “We do not want to burn down the bridge prior to us getting to the other side.” It’s all in our management techniques and we’ve got the ability to manage this going forward. It’s an opportunity to create a succession plan, to secure our well-being and retain employees, as well as attracting new employees. If we have this in place, dynamics change, and there could be a reduction in overtime. We then have some offsets. Some debt is being retired at the end of 2023, like water service debt. Thanks to the fiscal responsibilities that Bonnie has shouldered all these years, we’ve been able to do these things. The General Fund is the cookie jar, but it’s going to rebuild. This wage increase is doable, but it’s not without swallowing. Bonnie wouldn’t be doing her job if she didn’t point out to everyone that we have to be cautiously optimistic. It’s in our best interest to make this fit. In the Electric side of the account, we have some nice offsets from the operation of the solar field. We are diligently watching our chemicals, even though the costs are going up. We’re charting the right course while being optimistically cautious and we can do this. Bonnie has our backs making this fit. Employees are doing as much as they can all across the board. Troy just came off today’s shift without a break. Wes and Don are burning the candle at both ends and their personalities have changed. Tom has been seeing adverse effects and downright hostility from overtime hours. Tom is optimistic that we can make this happen. The Mayor said our Electric Fund is healthy, and the solar field gives us a voided cost in the Electric Department. The Mayor asked if there is any way that the Electric Department can take what we’re saving and give back to the Village. Tom said through the rate matrix, no. Tom said that’s why we established the solar field paying rent to the water division. We could increase it half a cent to a penny, and that comes over and gets burdened into the electric account. Tom can look at that and see what that does to our power cost. Tom said if we get the floating solar, that will be another $30,000 paid into the water division for lease of the water service. Bonnie said when a meeting was held previously with John Courtney at the MAC building, he projected $60,000 coming in from the solar field rental and we’re not even at $50,000 yet. Bonnie said she thought John had explained that something could be done in in order to bring in more revenue on that side. Tom said they would have to increase a half cent a kilowatt hour. Bonnie asked if we have to jump through hoops to make that happen. Tom said no, we just approve a new rental agreement with the electric division and the water division, to increase that to 1.5 cents a kilowatt hour. The impact on the electric side is minimal. Bob asked for a status of the Gray Matter situation. Tom said when we get to the point in time that their meter is turning, we propose to bring to Council a new Ordinance to modify how the kilowatt hour tax is collected. The kilowatt hour tax from the Gray Matter account only, legislatively, if approved, would stay in the General Fund. Their initial load could recognize $20,000-$40,000-kilowatt hour tax per month coming back into the General Fund. For the electric account, 0.0005 per kilowatt hour, at 8 million kilowatt hours a month, comes out to $40,000 going into the electric fund. Tom said Gray Matter initially agreed to a 10-year term. Kalpine Energy is going to supply Gray Matter. Kalpine Energy will sell it to AMP, AMP will sell it to the Village, and the Village will sell it to Gray Matter Data, with a goal at 3.5 to 4 cents per kilowatt hour. Main Lite is going to work with Gray Matter Data to build the electric distribution system expansion and the Village shouldn’t have any out-of-pocket money associated with that. The meter isn’t spinning yet. Bonnie said the Electric Department is unique in that we have to maintain, not just the reserves, but the 1.1 debt ratio. We failed on that during 2020, with Covid causing Berry Plastics to shut down for a period of time. We lost that revenue and didn’t meet the 1.1 debt ratio. John Courtney backed the Village up with the auditors. Tom said a number of municipalities didn’t meet their debt ratio. Tom said with diligence to the financial side, we will get there with this increase. Bonnie asked Council what they want prepared for the next Council meeting, do they want the ranges worked into the wage Ordinance. Council confirmed. Chris said that, and getting the approval of the job descriptions, including the Fiscal Officer’s. Bonnie said the levels that are being incorporated into the Ordinance, not the wage ranges, would have to be approved as well. The Mayor asked if the wage ranges have to be a different Ordinance or once they approve this thing, is it a whole package deal. Bonnie said the levels should have been approved separately a while back, however, Council can do it however they want. Chris said keep it as simple as possible, and verified to include the proposed wage ranges in the legislation. Joe said that should be with the understanding that they are going to look under every rock for savings and to review reciprocity and to possibly look into a levy. The Mayor asked if that will include the proposed increase. Bonnie said no, as that hasn’t been approved yet. Bonnie is only presenting what has already been approved for the wages, the 8.7%. If Council decides they are going to do a $5, $4, $3, or $2 per hour increase, she will present that at the next meeting. The Mayor asked if Council makes a motion the hourly increase at whatever rate, at the next meeting, can legislation be prepared for the next meeting. Bonnie said she can put that in the Ordinance, if that’s what Council wants. The Mayor doesn’t want the wage discussion to stale or stop, she wants it to keep moving, based on whatever Council wants to do. Chris said she wants it done as soon as possible, in order to get some new hires in. Bonnie asked if they want the $5 per hour wage increase proposal put in the Ordinance. Chris asked if it can be a separate Ordinance. Bonnie confirmed. The Mayor asked if there is a general consensus to the $5 per hour wage increase. Chris, Joe, Craig, and Bob confirmed. Bonnie said the budget is going to be really tight. The Mayor asked Bonnie if this is all going to be one Ordinance. Bonnie said she is going to do a piece of legislation for just the levels, and then she will have a separate piece of legislation draft, with the proposals discussed tonight. She will also do a separate piece of legislation that has all of what we’ve already passed in it, so that they can see exactly how the General Fund comes out. The Mayor asked for verification that all of these will be addressed via emergency passage, so that she doesn’t need to bring them up during her portion of the meeting. Bonnie verified it will all be addressed in the legislation packet. Bonnie asked if there is going to be a recommendation to take a hard look at the budget and see if there are other places to save. Bonnie said if Council is going to do this increase, she can’t tell them not to, but it’s going to be really, really, really tight. The Mayor asked if Bonnie met with all of the department heads when she went over their budget with them a few months ago. Bonnie said no, as the Chief has always done his own budget. The other Superintendents were there. The Mayor asked if it’s a good idea to hold another meeting with the Superintendents. Bonnie and Heather confirmed, and Heather suggested that everyone could bring ideas to the table on how to save. Joe said Council definitely defers to Bonnie, Tom, and Chief, to determine needs and wants in order to stay fiscally prudent. If Bonnie needs to be firm with Council, she can do so.

It was determined that a Work Session isn’t needed for this month. The next regular Council meeting will be 6/13/23, at 6pm.

There being no other finance business to come before them, the meeting adjourned at 8:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Heather Alicia