

Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Syracuse City Council held on June 13, 2016, at 2:30 p.m., in the Council Conference Room, 1979 West 1900 South, Syracuse City, Davis County, Utah.

Present: Councilmembers: Andrea Anderson  
Corinne N. Bolduc  
Mike Gailey  
Karianne Lisonbee  
Dave Maughan

Mayor Terry Palmer  
City Manager Bovero  
City Recorder Cassie Z. Brown

Staff Present: Finance Director Steve Marshall  
City Attorney Paul Roberts  
Community and Economic Development Director Brigham Mellor  
Public Works Director Robert Whiteley  
Police Chief Garret Atkin  
Fire Chief Eric Froerer  
Parks and Recreation Director Kresta Robinson

[2:33:26 PM](#)

1. Meeting Called to Order/Adopt Agenda

Mayor Palmer called the meeting to order at [2:33:31 PM](#) p.m. as a special meeting, with notice of time, place, and agenda provided 24 hours in advance to the newspaper and each Councilmember.

[2:34:09 PM](#)

Councilmember Bolduc offered an invocation.

[2:34:52 PM](#)

2. Discussion regarding Employee Recruitment and Retention Policy and Fiscal Year 2017 Employee Compensation Plan.

Councilmember Bolduc introduced a proposal assembled by herself and Councilmember Lisonbee to address concerns that have been raised regarding employee compensation as part of the proposed Fiscal Year 2017 Compensation Plan and total budget. She stated the proposal closely follows the pay scale used by the United States Military; it includes grades and steps and the steps could be adjusted according to the amount of time an employee must work in order to be eligible for full retirement. She reviewed the wage scale she was using as an example and offered several hypothetical situations and her opinion regarding how the scale would address certain concerns that have been raised over the course of several meetings to discuss the budget and employee compensation. The Council engaged in discussion regarding the recommendation to transition to a wage and step program, with a focus on ensuring competitive wages with other comparable cities. Councilmember Bolduc stated she would recommend a different wage scale for each Department as each Department has employees with different skill sets and minimum requirements. Councilmember Lisonbee stated that advancement through the wage scale would be based upon merit and would resolve any compression issues because an underperforming employee should be considered to have compression issues as the fact he/she may be lagging through the wage scale is directly related to performance.

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Councilmember Maughan stated he is concerned that the proposal would result in ‘scrapping’ the current Plan in its entirety; he would prefer to just address the areas of the Plan that are problematic and have been cause for concern. Councilmember Lisonbee stated she is recommending scrapping the plan completely because of issues like double and triple remunerations being offered to multiple employees due to the algorithm that was created to address wage compression. Councilmember Maughan suggested that section of the Plan could be addressed rather than completely rewriting it. He asked why a grade and step scale is needed. Councilmember Bolduc stated this type of wage scale will allow employees to move through their wage scale in an appropriate amount of time based upon performance; the scale is also predictable for employees. Council discussion regarding the proposal to amend the City’s wage scale continued, with a focus on various opportunities for employees to receive pay increases; there was also a discussion centering on how the City’s compensation practices may compare with compensation practices in the federal government and the private sector.

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Councilmember Lisonbee then indicated she has done some of her own research and fact checking on the data that was provided by City Administration relative to the results of the recent benchmark study and she has not arrived at the same conclusion as City Administration. She feels it is appropriate to conduct an ‘apples to apples’ comparison for employees to ensure appropriate remuneration. There is a need for a program that is fair and balanced and she believes the wage scale she is recommending will get the City further than benchmarking alone. She stated she believes the wage scale will ensure competitiveness for 20 years. Councilmember Anderson stated it will be necessary to at least ‘check-in’ with other cities every

10 years to ensure that City wages are still competitive. Councilmember Gailey stated it is not possible to adopt a wage scale that will not be adjusted for 10 years and think that it will remain competitive. He added that the federal government adjusts their wage scale annually. Councilmember Lisonbee stated adjustments in the federal scale are based upon census data and most adjustments have been downward and employees are being hired at lower wages based upon the market. Councilmember Maughan stated he feels the Council is focusing on the wrong issue; the problem is not inherent in benchmarking and, rather, the problem relates to the fact that senior employees were eligible for multiple 'stacking' adjustments that the City could not absorb. Councilmember Bolduc stated that issue would be addressed by the scale she is recommending as the only way an employee can move through is based upon merit; any additional increase for educational achievements would be incremental between steps. Councilmember Lisonbee added that if the City is going to pay for educational opportunities for employees, a policy is needed that would require them to maintain their employment with the City for a certain amount of time or reimburse the City for their training costs.

3:15:17 PM

Mayor Palmer stated that he does not believe what is being proposed mirrors what is happening in the private sector. He stated he would prefer to maintain the current Plan with some adjustments to address concerns that have been raised. He stated that he believes the biggest competitors for City employees are other cities and some private sector entities. He stated that the federal government is not a great competitor and he does not support 'scrapping' the current Plan in favor of adopting something used in the federal government. Councilmember Lisonbee stated it is her understanding from past meetings that all Councilmembers are supportive of 'scrapping' the current Plan and developing something new; this is why she and Councilmember Bolduc brought this proposal forward. She added that benchmarking is not working and does not reflect the actual market. She stated there are many variables related to multiple positions in the City that are not addressed through benchmarking. Discussion regarding benchmarking best practices continued, with Councilmember Maughan stressing his concerns about benchmarking is that it is very subjective and it is easy to manipulate data gained through benchmarking. He stated he feels it would be appropriate to address the subjectivity of benchmarking. Councilmember Gailey agreed and stated he would like to arrive at a solution that would regenerate the trust of employees. Mr. Bovero addressed concerns regarding subjectivity of benchmarking; the subjectivity lies in the algorithm that is used to determine wage increase proposals and the factors in the algorithm can be manipulated to weight the importance of certain parameters. He stated the algorithm was reviewed by and approved by the Council. Councilmember Bolduc stated that when the Council saw the results of the implementation of the algorithm, they were concerned and understood it would be difficult to afford. Councilmember Lisonbee stated that she was also concerned about the fact that multiple employees stood to receive more than one pay increase in one year. Mayor Palmer suggested that City Administration be given an opportunity to address the concerns with the subjectivity of benchmarking by contacting each benchmark city to gain data regarding the variables for various positions; this could include tenure, skill set, and number of employees supervised. Councilmember Lisonbee stated she is unsure she wants to move in that direction and feels it may be more appropriate to hire an outside consultant to complete a salary survey for the City. Mayor Palmer stated the Council may not accept the results of a study and he is cautious to spend money on a study for that reason. Mr. Bovero stated that he feels it is appropriate to dedicate staff time to gathering the information the Council is seeking as long as the Council can be clear about the information they are seeking in order to offer an apples to apples comparison. Councilmember Lisonbee stated that she would like a private sector comparison in addition to a comparison with cities in order to truly reflect the market and that is too much work for staff to perform. Councilmember Anderson stated it may only be appropriate to consider private sector data for certain positions. Discussion regarding benchmarking continued, with Councilmember Maughan indicating that after hearing the proposal made by Councilmembers Bolduc and Lisonbee and participating in discussion about a grade and step pay scale, his opinion has not changed and he feels it is appropriate to move on. He stated that he feels it would be inappropriate to abandon the current Plan and, rather, it is appropriate to address the concerns that have been identified. If it is impossible to address the concerns within the current Plan, more time will be needed to consider Plan amendments. He is uncomfortable doing away with the entire Plan at this point. The Council engaged in a discussion regarding the concerns that have been identified regarding the current Plan, after which Councilmember Anderson indicated she feels it is possible for the Council to work together to develop a policy that calls for 'checking in' with the market to determine if the City is still competitive. Councilmember Bolduc stated that she feels one of the guides for 'checking in' must be the census. Councilmember Gailey stated he would like to put the employee compensation issue on hold for now and come back for additional discussion with documentation regarding the proposal being discussed available to all Councilmembers. The Council engaged in discussion regarding the issues that should be addressed through policy amendments or a new policy. Mr. Bovero indicated it is acceptable to freeze employee compensation for general employees, but he would like to address wage issues in the Police Department due to the current 'wage war' underway between cities along the Wasatch Front. The Council discussed the possibility of convening in a closed session to discuss individual employees in the Police Department before acting on compensation for the Department, with

Councilmember Maughan indicating he would prefer to address the compensation system for the Department rather than talking about individual employees. He stated he would like to deal with the Department as a whole and address outliers during a closed session. Mr. Bovero suggested the Council approve a lump sum of money to be allocated to addressing Police Department compensation issue; he would work with Finance Director Marshall and Police Chief Atkin following the adoption of the budget to develop a proposal for allocating the money. He would seek approval of the proposal from the Council. The Council discussed this proposal and concluded they are not comfortable approving a lump sum of money sans a policy. Councilmember Lisonbee suggested that Mr. Bovero come to the Council tomorrow during their business meeting with a conservative recommendation that can be justified by all the data available to him relative to Police Department wages. The Council supported that recommendation and they discussed parameters Mr. Bovero should consider when developing his recommendation. Councilmember Lisonbee stated that the Department is currently very ‘young’ and that should be considered. Councilmember Maughan stated he would like the recommendation to focus on the most ‘at risk’ positions with the understanding that higher level positions are not being recruited as heavily. The Council also directed Mr. Bovero to consider whether the Department’s wages are competitive with other comparable cities in Weber and Davis Counties, with Councilmember Lisonbee stating she feels that the bigger the pool, the greater the data.

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Councilmember Gailey stated that following the last Council meeting where employee compensation was discussed he contacted each Department to talk to them about their concerns regarding the issue and each of them were altruistic and expressed their concerns about the employees they supervise. He stated he wants to be cautious to not take any action that will erode the trust of City employees. All Councilmembers agreed.

The meeting adjourned at [4:30:47 PM](#).

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Terry Palmer  
Mayor

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Cassie Z. Brown, CMC  
City Recorder

Date approved: July 12, 2016