

Amberley Village Council – Compensation & Benefits Committee
Meeting Minutes
Nov. 16, 2010

In attendance: Peg Conway, Merrie Stillpass, Fran Cohen, Louis Katz, Jon Chaiken, Ed Hattenbach, Jack Monahan, Bernie Boraten, Margie Crowley, numerous members of Public Safety, Maintenance, and Administration departments, Dianna & Brian Thiel

Prior Minutes

Minutes from the meeting on Sept. 20 were approved as distributed.

Meeting Process

Peg explained that the meeting was to be a working session for Council members and key staff. Visitors would be given the opportunity to speak after each agenda item.

Employee Health Care Benefits

Bernie provided recent history of the health care plan. The Village has been involved in cooperative arrangements through the Center for Local Government for quite a few years, and results overall compare favorably against national trends. Amberley's average increase is less than 5% over the past 5 years. Last year the Village entered a self-insured benefits pool with a number of these governments and made a three-year commitment. It's too soon to evaluate the pool's effectiveness. Bernie stated that the pool is not at equilibrium yet in terms of building up reserves. Results are being monitored. Currently there is a concern about the cost of medical imagery, so the possibility of contracting with specific providers for this service is being explored. Committee members expressed desire to have Dave Rinderle of USI present at the next meeting to give a report on the pool's status.

The possibility of implementing changes prior to the Aug. 1 renewal date was discussed. The Health Savings Account contribution has already been made and cannot be changed. Employee payroll deductions for coverage cost can be implemented. Bernie said that the 2011 budget calls for a 5% employee contribution for coverage. He said this is a reasonable start. He said it is important to be aware of salary and benefits as they compare with suburbs with which Amberley competes for employees. He stated that Amberley's pay increases of 1% in 2009 and 1.8% in 2010 were less than other suburbs who received 2.5-3%.

Amberley's cost per employee for family coverage is \$15,344 including HSA. Brian Thiel spoke about the costs associated with a private sector plan at the company where he used to work, which are less than Amberley pays. The committee looked at comparative data on other municipalities' plans and what employees pay. Jack Monahan noted that the police department agreed to remove the cost of a new cruiser from the budget when Council agreed to absorb the health care cost increase this year, though that option is not possible every year. Kevin Fryman said that employees have seen benefits reduced through the years; they are nowhere near what they were. The committee also wants to

Speak with Dave Rinderle about potential cost-reducing plan design changes for the future.

Employee Pay/Total Compensation

Bernie and Margie distributed a chart illustrating how Amberley salaries compare with some other municipalities. It was noted that comparison is difficult because Amberley has combined police/fire. Only one other municipality in Ohio has that – Oakwood, near Dayton. Peg and Louis initiated discussion about whether fire pay should be included with salary when looking at competitive data and how it should be evaluated. Clarifying information was presented by several staff members:

- Officers receive \$3,100 annually as base fire pay. They are paid time-and-a-half if they are called in from home to a fire. Firefighting duties that arise during regular shift do not receive additional compensation.
- All officers wear a pager 24 hours a day/7 days a week because of their added firefighting responsibilities, which requires sacrifice of their personal time beyond regular police officers.
- If they are called in for a fire during the night, they still must come in for their day shift the following day.
- If fire drills occur on their day off, they must come in.
- Firefighting adds additional risk to their jobs.
- For safety reasons, national standards for firefighting require that 4 people be on site in order to enter a burning house. The benefits provided by having maintenance workers trained and active as firefighters, in terms of quick response and efficiency in staffing levels for daytime shifts, was noted.

Officers shared several anecdotes about how their training as first responders and close proximity to residents along with the 911 call service located in Amberley leads to very quick response times and saves lives.

Officers acknowledged that people do not enter the public sector to become rich, but they expressed their belief that they are able to provide superior service to the residents and that their pay should not be cut.

The Thiels expressed that residents do value the police service. Brian Thiel said that the budget situation must be addressed in order to continue as a Village. Dianna Thiel said that she and Brian do not support reducing police pay. Her issue is with Council and the handling of the income tax credit reduction. Kathleen Harcourt provided clarifying information about Village revenues. A small portion of resident earnings are taxed by Amberley.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Chair: _____

Peg Conroy 12/2/2010