

**ST. LOUIS COUNTY
CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION**

Court House
Duluth, Minnesota

The St. Louis County Civil Service Commission met on Monday, October 23, 2023 at 1:30 P.M. in HR Conference Room 2, Ground Floor, Courthouse, Duluth, MN.

Members present: Ms. Lindsay Snustad, Member
Mr. Alan Widell, Alternate

Others present: Gordon Ramsay, County Sheriff
James Gottschald, Director, Human Resources and Administration
Megan Haworth, Human Resources Advisor
Emily Masterson, Information Specialist III
Joe Ditsch, MNPEA Labor Attorney
Jon Skelton, Deputy Sheriff - Division Commander
Nate Skelton, Deputy Sheriff - Division Commander
Josh Graves, Deputy Sheriff Lieutenant
Ben Fye, Deputy Sheriff Sergeant
Eric Hanegmon, Deputy Sheriff Sergeant
Kim Hanegmon, Deputy Sheriff Sergeant
Adam Kleffman, Deputy Sheriff Sergeant
Jessica LaBore, Deputy Sheriff Sergeant
Eric Sathers, Deputy Sheriff Sergeant
Kim Hoffmockel, Social Worker/AFSCME Council #5 President
Matt Farden, Janitor/AFSCME Council #5 Union Steward

1. Lindsay Snustad, Member, called the meeting to order.
2. A motion was made by Alan Widell and seconded by Lindsay Snustad to approve the minutes of the September 25, 2023, meeting as submitted.
3. The next item on the agenda under new business was the public hearing and consideration of Civil Service Rule 4 update. Director Gottschald began with some background information stating the purpose of the Civil Service rules and how they are applied to situations when civil service law is not particularly clear. He stated the proposed rule changes will focus on three areas that pertain directly to employee compensation.

Director Gottschald began with the change to Rule 4.2 entitled Salary Ranges, Rates and Limits. Director Gottschald informed the commission that during the recent Minnesota legislative sessions, the local government salary cap was rescinded, therefore Director Gottschald proposed removing this language from section B since this law no longer applies.

The next update referenced was Rule 4.5 entitled Salary on Class Change, specifically section A – Salary on Promotion. Director Gottschald recalled for the Commission, the civil service rule changes that took place back in January 2022. When contracts were being settled, Human Resources determined that there would need to be modifications to the civil service rules to address how employees stepped upon their promotion. The previous practice was that an employee received a two-step increase from where they were in the pay scale upon promotion which was approximately an 8% increase. However, with the new pay schedules in place, a two-step promotion could result in a smaller financial increase depending on where the employee was in the salary range. Director Gottschald stated the changes were implemented to rectify the situation and to keep employees whole when they promoted. A percentage book-end reference had been added to the civil service rules to allow for employees to move to the highest step, not to exceed 8%, or 9% if moving to a different bargaining unit, which would be comparable to the former two-step increase in the previous pay plans. Director Gottschald stated as it turns out, the additional 1% was just not enough. He added the rule change created a ceiling and unintended consequences that limited the compensation for employees who promoted in certain situations. Therefore, Director Gottschald proposed an update to Rule 4.5A which would allow the salary of an employee who is promoted to be increased to the next highest step in the new pay grade, which exceeds a 7.5% increase from the employee's current rate. Director Gottschald stated that all promotions dating back to the January 25, 2022 rule change were reviewed, and it was determined that most of the promotions would benefit from the new rule. In addition, Director Gottschald informed the Commission that one particular promotion was processed under the old rule and could potentially result in an overpayment for the employee if this new rule is not

implemented.

Director Gottschald acknowledged the many employees in attendance from the Sheriff's office and offered multiple examples of how the new rule change would benefit a handful of employees that were promoted within the department as well. Director Gottschald once again reiterated that by adopting the rule change, it will remove the ceiling and will better mimic the two-step increase that existed prior to the modification of the pay plans. He added that all promotions were identified as having a better financial outcome for the employee under the new rule change. Director Gottschald informed the Commission that some of the collective bargaining agreements have differing promotional language and stated the agreements do take precedence over the civil service rules.

The next proposed rule change Director Gottschald presented was Rule 4.7 entitled Other Salary Considerations, specifically section D – Work Out of Class Pay. Director Gottschald stated there are two different types of out of class pay. The first type of use is for an employee who is assigned to perform substantially all of the duties of a promotional position which is temporarily vacant. The other type of use is for an employee assigned to a special project with higher level duties. Director Gottschald stated both types of out of class would follow the Salary on Promotion language and the employee would receive a pay increase to the next highest step in their current pay grade which exceeds a 7.5% increase from their current rate. In addition, if there are insufficient steps in the pay plan for special projects, the employee will receive a 7.5% increase from their current rate.

In closing, Director Gottschald summarized the three proposed changes and turned the meeting back to Commissioner Snustad who opened up the floor to those in attendance for questions and/or comments.

Joe Ditsch, labor attorney for MNPEA, commented that while he and members of the Deputy Sheriff Supervisory unit are appreciative of the proposed improvements to the civil service rules, he stated it's the position of the union that the changes do not go far enough. Mr. Ditsch indicated they do

not oppose the proposed language updates, but stated the union and its members would like to see additional changes to the civil service rules. Mr. Ditsch made it clear the bargaining unit will continue to push for additional changes that will further benefit employees.

Director Gottschald thanked Mr. Ditsch and the members of the MNPEA, as well as representatives from AFSCME Council 5, for their interest and feedback regarding the proposed rule changes. Commissioner Snustad inquired as to whether the rule changes would need to go before the County Board and if the changes will be a consistent practice that would be used for all county employees. Director Gottschald responded that the changes would be brought to the County Board the following day for final approval and that the new rules would be applied to all county employees who are promoted, not just the bargaining units that were in attendance. Commissioner Widell asked if the bargaining units agreed to the proposed changes, to which both units responded yes, but once again, reiterated they will be looking for additional changes come time for the next round of negotiations.

A motion was made by Alan Widell, seconded by Lindsay Snustad, and the update to Civil Service Rule 4 was unanimously approved.

DIRECTOR'S COMMENTS

- Director Gottschald updated the Commission regarding the status of the collective bargaining process. He stated there is one remaining unit that has yet to settle their 2023-2025 contract. He stated there is an additional mediation session scheduled for October 27. Director Gottschald is hopeful an agreement will be reached.
- Director Gottschald informed the Commission there is a Meet and Confer scheduled for November 7 to discuss the compressed pay plans that were implemented in 2022. He stated the meeting will provide an opportunity for the exclusive union representatives to provide feedback and share any concerns regarding how the phase in of the plan has impacted the stepping of some

employees. Director Gottschald indicated he is aware there are issues with the implementation and stated he is looking forward to finding a remedy to address the situation.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James R. Gottschald". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'J' and a prominent 'G'.

James R. Gottschald
Director of Human Resources and Administration