**Trustee Aryeh Alex:**

It points around benefits and everything else. The information that Ron actually pulled includes all of that. Even with the healthcare and longevity, we are still substantially less than every other surrounding entity. We don’t need to do any more research. We’ve been researching this for years and we have the data, and Ron has shared this data with us.

I have no real interest in making any changes other than the administrative changes that happen, plus the raise that we can afford. Chief Welch’s numbers have been accurate for many years and if he says we can put “three, three and three” today with all the other costs we currently have associated with it, I am inclined to go with that.

The fact that we barely had any money this last year for overall funding was not the fault of budgeting from our fire department or the fire contract, it was just the previous fiscal officer policed this operation and misappropriated with that fund.

We cannot compound those two issues together, we really have to look at what we know. We know that Chief Welch and our fire union have been looking at this and working on this. I would be very fine moving forward with the administrative changes right now and putting on for a vote at Thursday’s meeting where we pass with “three, three and three” as proposed.

**Trustee John Fleshman:**

I would like to commend Trustee Alex for exactly what he said because he took a lot of words right from my notes that I have here. I’ve been here as a trustee, and Ron can contest to this, where every pay period, $100,000 or so was going out of the general fund. I’ve been through some very hard times in the Township and for us to do anything different to our HRA, I’m opposed to.

The “three, three, three” across the board, I think that’s more than fair. The most important thing that we have to keep in mind, it’s a Board decision. There are three votes that are going to make a decision and as Aryeh has mentioned, we have “beat” the facts to death and it’s not going to change, the facts are what they are, the sun rises, the sun sets. You can count on it everyday.

The only thing that I would like to do, Trustee Alex, I would love to have some conversation on what we would do to allow the people to use their comp time when we get to a situation, with the manpower the way it is. I honestly think that if the comp time was not used as a piggybank in what I am seeing, the budget would be stronger and we would actually be able to offer better than a three, three, three”. It is the not knowing at the end the amount that we pay out. You have some people who are members who may not have that much comp time but yet they are not going to benefit by us wanting to go “five, five, five” because of the way the budget is and what we pay out with that. Then again with the comp time and the longevity, those are just the two I would like to have discussion with Ron and the members to see if they want to “tweak” this.

**Chairman Ralph Horn:**

Looking at all of the facts that we have put together, I do agree with Fiscal Officer Mary Rhinehart on “tweaking” things that are in the contract which I have frankly not the greatest of knowledge on, but I have been working on it, and there are things that need to be worked out.

Chief Welch and Mr. DeLozier have gone over this a million times and they know what they do and do not need. From that standpoint, with the workload that we have and the corrections that need to be made, what I am really interested in is getting this to a point where we get as much of a paycheck as we can, that it is my top priority.

In my four-plus years as a trustee, and I almost totally agree with Trustee Fleshman, we need to take a look at the comp time. We need to take into consideration the conditions of the country as we still have hundreds of thousands of people on layoff. I agree that to lose good firefighters is going to be a “bad stamp” on us going forward. I think that from a standpoint of good available firefighters, I cannot see municipalities hiring many more safety personnel for the next couple of years, I don’t think the economy will handle it. I would like to take a strong look at the comp time and see what we can do to make the budget really viable. I think there needs to be some discussion on what is “sucking up the money”. We have to make some sort of adjustment. I think we have a fair understanding on what everyone wants.

**Ron Delozier:**

As far as maintaining certification in the terms of employment, I think we can sit down and figure that out. I am not set about having it in the contract. We can add an article that basically deals with the terms and conditions of employment.

I think everybody is not understanding comp time. These large comp time banks are happening because people are working overtime and not being paid for it.

I can’t get comp time any other way, other than what the federal government says you have to give me based on the 53 hour work week schedule, so that’s where the initial 78 hours comes from. Then every other time an employee works overtime, they have the option to put it into their comp time bank and save it. It actually saves the Township money by me saving it in my bank. If I take it in the paycheck that it’s earned in, so if I work overtime on a Monday and I cash it out when we get paid on Friday and it’s in that same pay period, the Township has to pay pension on it. So the Township is going to add an additional 24.5% to that comp time amount and pay to the Pension Board. If I put it in my comp time bank, the Township does not have to pay that pension, so it saves 24.5%.

The comp time that is earned is hours worked. It is not a free bank, it is not a bonus bank, I worked overtime.

**Trustee Fleshman:**

What I was looking at, a lot of times the way the comp time is set up, you can take a day and a half for every eight hours. The amount that we cash in versus if you use it to take time off, from my understanding, comp time is one of those things designed at other places, you use it or lose it and basically with us the amount that you can cash in.

What I would like to see, basically the amount that you can cash in. If we can’t do that, then we would have to turn it to regular overtime. There has to be a good balance because it does benefit the Township but it also benefits the person working the overtime and the amount of taxes that comes out when you work overtime.

Where it does seem to hurt our budget is when it is cashed in.

Chief Welch, how much comp time per contract do you allow to carry over and cash in?

**Chief Welch:**

Not allowed to carry any past the first pay in December. It has to be cashed out the first pay in December.

We are dealing with an FLSA issue and there are federal laws about how to use comp time and that would be worth consulting our Legal.

**Fleshman:**

It helps the Township if you burn that extra time off. You’re still going to get paid whether you’re there or not. It doesn’t hurt the budget of the Township.

**Ron Delozier:**

It’s an overtime federal law, do we get time and a half and we have to be compensated for it. You can’t make it that it has to be time off. There are places that say “if you take it as time off, we’ll give you two for one, if you take it as pay, we will give you one and a half.

There are ways around it but we can’t force people to take it as time off.

**Fleshman:**

This is a good discussion, it’s good if we have another option for people. It helps our budget and it helps your budget. I want to see what we can do. I don’t want to do away with comp time. We need to have discussions about this.

**Delozier:**

Comp time is an FLSA issue. When you start changing that around, it gets really technical and “hairy”, so you want Legal involved.

Nobody gets longevity checks until they have been on the fire department for more than five years, with comp time as well.

Seven or eight years ago, we were cashing out comp time two or three times a year. Typically when we got our draws, we said “anybody who wants to cash out time, you can cash out time now”. One of the trustees said he did not believe in it, he didn’t like it, he wanted us to wait until the end of the year. The rules said we had to wait until the end of the year and that’s what he wanted and was hard core about it, so we waited until the end of the year. Now we are having these big cash out banks. We wouldn’t be having these large cash out banks if we used the piggy bank and we made a fair wage.

**Ralph Horn:**

I about blew my stack when I saw $380,000 we paid out in December and then we turned right around and got a $90,000 fire truck payment in January. How in the world can a business go back to back through the holidays and spend a half million dollars unexpectantly.

I think you and I briefly discussed this, Ron, maybe trying to split that pay up for a couple pay periods per year.

**Delozier:**

I think that will make it a lot more palatable for everybody. Changing the FLSA issue is a “sticky” situation but if we can spread it out over the course of the year, when we get our draws in the spring and fall.

Before, there was always a worry “what will we do if somebody leaves and they have cashed out all their time and they owe the Township back some money”. You just take it out of their last paycheck.

**Horn:**

That could be written into the contract, it would save some disagreement down the road. Money issues are what need to be locked in the contract.

**Delozier:**

As far as the longevity issue, every fire department in Central Ohio has a “retention bonus”. The scale is different for just about everybody. We are comparable. Nobody gets it until they have five years of service. It’s a way to keep employees past five years.

**Fleshman:**

It does make a lot of sense, they would need it as a piggybank if they were making a fair wage in comparison to what is around us.

I would like to note that I don’t believe in giving you a penny, then taking five cents. I don’t believe that us cutting back in fear that something like the coronavirus would make the Township go bank because of HRA. I believe that the one thing we can give our employees is a great insurance package.

Ron, as you know, there are so many different things going on with the Fire Department, and the last thing we need to do is let families worry about something happening that takes more out of their pay.

I am fine with the “three, three, three” across the board and I am fine with keeping the HRA where it’s at, it has worked great.

**Fiscal Officer Mary Rhinehart:**

The issue with longevity: We have a four cent per hour, and the problem with that, we can’t verify attendance, we aren’t even picking up the breaks in service, we don’t have records back to 2002 or 1998. This is a nightmare for auditing purposes. I would prefer, if we can, looking at a step increase, that would be for instance $500 for five years, versus four cent per hour.

Converting sick leave to comp time: That makes sick leave an automatic switch to comp time which increases the comp bank and I have a concern of why we have that clause.

Garcia time for 40 hour employees: It is not supposed to be with 40 hour employees, I think we need to get that out of the contract.

**Fleshman:**

I think Ms. Rhinehart had a great idea, basically repackaging longevity, I think that would make a lot more sense to some of the residents.

**Horn:**

I have been involved with unions and union negotiations but it has all been related to a teamsters union, and municipal contracts are something I haven’t really dealt with prior to this. All of the department heads and anyone else involved have given me an honest and fair answer, and for that I really thank you.

I think we are on the way. There has been a lot of stress trying to get the financial aspect of the Township straightened out, and it appears we are on the verge on getting that done. It has been very tiresome and worrisome, and I would like to see everyone come together. It has been nice to have good, competent, honest people to work with and for that I thank everyone.

**Rhinehart:**

I just wanted to respond about the issue where people are cashing out their holiday time and then they quit and we can recover it in the last paycheck.

That doesn’t always work. We had one or two situations last year where the person only worked a couple days and then just quit. He could have cashed out his time and owed us money. It is hard to recover and it could be an issue with the “paying before they work” idea. It’s like getting paid for holidays that haven’t happened. I really think we need to look at cashing out those holidays only when they occur in that time period.

**Delozier:**

We don’t cash out any holidays past their time, that is the case for the Fire Department.

**Adjournment:**

With no further discussion, Chairman Horn adjourned the meeting.

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Aryeh Alex, Chairman/Trustee

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John Fleshman, Vice-Chairman/Trustee

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Ralph Horn, Trustee

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Mary Rhinehart, Fiscal Officer

 Minutes were taken & typed by: \_\_\_\_\_\_

Minutes approved by Board of Trustees on \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_