

Fertile City Council Minutes
Special Meeting
August 19, 2021

The Fertile City Council held a special meeting on Thursday, August 19, 2021 at 6 p.m. at the Community Center. Present were: Mayor Daniel Wilkens and Council members Stanton Wang, Todd Wise, and Matthew Massmann. Also present was Fair Meadow Administrator Angie Leiting, and City Administrator Lisa Liden. Fair Meadow Personnel and Budget Committee member Michelle Cote was present by phone. The purpose of the meeting was discussion of personnel matters and wage scale for Fair Meadow.

The meeting was called to order at 6 p.m. by Mayor Wilkens and there was a brief delay to the start waiting for Council members Wise and Wang to arrive.

Fair Meadow Administrator Angie Leiting began by explaining the September staffing sheet that had been shared by email earlier in the day. Paper copies of the sheet were also handed out prior to the meeting. Leiting explained that the sheet listed all of the open shifts that were available during the month of September. The number of open shifts totaled 113 where a typical month has maybe 20 to 25 shifts. Leiting explained further that the openings were mainly due to high school and college students leaving for school and also that Fair Meadow was not alone in having difficulties getting nursing staff.

Leiting had done a wage comparison with other area homes and noted that Fair Meadow was still lower than most for starting pay, particularly for CNA's. She noted also that everyone had stepped up in August and was helping on the floor. She herself had been working shifts on the floor to fill vacancies. All the activity staff were also working the floor so activities were on hold for the time being. Dietary and laundry were also helping with bedmaking and other tasks that didn't involve direct care.

Leiting said that while she was concerned about attracting new staff her main concern at the moment was keeping the staff that they did have. She had talked to the managers of each department about what would currently be the most effective way to keep staff and they all felt that higher pay was the answer. Based on what Leiting had learned about the wage scales at area nursing homes, she had calculated what it would cost to give temporary raises of \$2 per hour across the board for all staff. The cost would be a little over \$4,000 a week and she proposed leaving that in place until at least October 1st or until the new wage scale could be completed.

Council member Wise noted that the City would be receiving funds through the American Recovery Act and that those funds could be used to help with the cost of the \$2 per hour increase. Council member Massmann noted that something needed to be done as soon as possible since all health care facilities in the area were struggling and that many were offering sign on bonuses and incentive pay. Discussion was held on when the increased pay should start with Angie noting that the new pay period started just two days prior.

After discussion of the matter, a motion was made by Council member Wise to approve a pay increase of \$2 per hour for all Fair Meadow staff through October 1st starting with the current pay period. The motion was seconded by Council member Wang and was carried.

The next item up for discussion was the current vacation policy which only allowed new employees to use their accumulated vacation after six months of employment. Leiting explained that it was hard to recruit new staff and bring them in from other facilities that had better vacation policies. She noted in particular that Riverview allowed employees to use their vacation time after one month of employment. She reported also that she had recently hired a nurse from Riverview who would be starting soon and this new recruit had noted that she knew of other Riverview nursing staff who would be willing to work at Fair Meadow for the increased wages but only if the vacation policy was more liberal.

After discussion of the matter, a motion was made by Council member Massmann to change the vacation policy to allow new employees to use their accumulated vacation time after 30 days of employment. The motion was seconded by Council member Wise and was carried.

There was further discussion on the state of employment and the struggle that many employers were having in general and in the health care industry in particular in recruiting and maintaining staff. Council member Massmann noted that the shortages were affecting not only long-term elder care but also hospitals, emergency rooms, and clinics.

A brief discussion was also held on the staff surveys that had been returned. Council members Massmann and Wang made plans with Committee member Cote to meet on Monday, August 23rd to review the surveys prior to the Personnel and Budget Committee meeting that was scheduled for August 24th.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:35 on a motion by Council member Massmann.

Daniel Wilkens, Mayor

Lisa J. Liden, City Administrator