

CITY OF SAGINAW

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To: The SPOA Union Board
From: Dennis Jordan, ACM/Director of Human Resources
John Clark, City Labor Counsel
Robert Ruth, Chief of Police
Date: April 17, 2020
Subject: SPOA COVID-19 Related Requests

The following is a follow up response to the conference call with and the Saginaw POAM board members on Friday, April 17, 2020.

The additional individuals participated on the call with the SPOA Board: James Tignanelli - POAM, Chief Robert Ruth, John Clark, and Dennis Jordan

The purpose of the call was to address questions from a letter presented by the SPOA Union Board to Chief Robert Ruth dated April 9, 2020. Three items were addressed.

Item 1: Altered work schedules

In the letter and verbally during the call, the SPOA requested that the city allow altered work schedules. The representatives indicated that working 12 hour shifts for seven straight days, then taking seven straight days off, would reduce exposure time for the COVID-19 virus.

Response:

Every community in Michigan is not the same, so there is not a "one size fits all" approach. The Chief has reviewed multiple plans for an altered work schedule. He has spoken with SPD Command Staff, as well as Chiefs from other departments.

It has been determined that this type of schedule change could create a serious safety issue due to officer fatigue. It is also unclear and unproven that working seven days in a two week pay period, whether straight days or alternating shifts, would create less or more exposure either way as it is still seven days in a pay period. The City chooses not to change the current shift schedules at this time.

Item 2: Laptops for Detectives and allow remote access

In the letter and verbally the SPOA asked for Laptops and VPN's for detectives. The Union stated that there is a COVID-19 grant from the Federal Government for that purpose and that this technology will help them work more safely and efficiently.

Response:

There is no evidence that the Detectives would be able to work more efficiently from a remote location versus working at the police department. Detectives still have to go out and solve crimes in public as the Union acknowledges. Where they do their research, phone calls, or reports should not matter, and since the City already has work stations with all necessary equipment and support, there is no case to be made that work could be done more efficiently from home.

If social distancing is an issue in the detective offices, the City did offer to allow detectives to work from other existing work sites at currently vacant City offices.

Further, regarding the work environment, in the letter from the SPOA the Union acknowledges and states that they appreciate the fact that the City has taken additional steps to keep the workplace and officers safe by providing facemasks, gloves, sanitizer and bringing in professional cleaners to sanitize every car between shifts, as well as professionally sanitizing the building - which was done in addition to the daily sanitizing practices. There is also a wellness check performed on each police officer at the beginning of each shift to help protect all employees at the SPD.

As far as the COVID-19 grant the Union referred to, it is our understanding that the funds can only be used for safety equipment and for overtime related to the pandemic, and is not intended to buy additional computer equipment.

The City chooses not to change the current practice of Detectives reporting to the SPD at this time.

Item 3: Hazard Pay

In the Letter and verbally the SPOA requested hazard pay to help the officers cope with the extra burdens and stresses related to the Pandemic, and the impact it has had on their families. The Union cited 4 other agencies from around the state that are doing something extra for their officers.

Response:

There is no question about the additional burdens and stress that is associated with the COVID-19 Pandemic. The additional stress is felt by all city employees and all of the Saginaw citizens that we serve. This is an unprecedented time of reductions in work hours, unemployment,

layoffs, budget cuts, and illness – all due to an uncontrollable factor that is a worldwide pandemic. We are all under additional stress and burdens.

The City has already taken steps to provide additional benefits to SPD staff and officers, as well as other City employees. The City provided an additional 40 hours of Paid Time Off for all employees to assist those who may have to miss work due to COVID-19 or other personal reasons. The City also approved the ability of SPD Officers, and some other city employees, to earn comp time at a 1.0 rate for every regular hour worked during the state “Stay Home Stay Safe” Executive Order, up to a max of 80 hours. That is a total of 120 hours of additional leave time to SPD officers who are reporting and working regular hours during the month of April. Given the economic uncertainty in the state, and the coming probability of revenue shortfalls, the 120 hours of additional time off is how the City decided to help our employees that are required to come to work during these difficult times.