

FRATERNAL ORDER OF POLICE WHEELING LODGE #38



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Mr. Herron,

This letter is to request a meeting to discuss the upcoming 2014-15 City of Wheeling budget. I have been authorized by the FOP to present proposals to you and discuss possibilities in regards to the wages and benefits of the Wheeling Police Department. I hope that you are able to find time in your schedule to arrange a meeting, as I look forward to discussing these matters with you. I thank you for your attention in this matter.

  
Michael Anderson

# **Wheeling FOP Pay and Benefits Proposal**

## **Fiscal Year 2014-15**

This proposal is intended to express ideas offered by the officers of the Wheeling Police Department. These ideas are conceived in hopes of working with City of Wheeling officials to make the Wheeling Police Department a positive and attractive work environment. Working together, officers believe that the Wheeling Police Department can offer an attractive and competitive pay and benefits package. A package, that will reflect the dangerous and demanding occupation that officers operate in. Officers of the Wheeling Police Department consider themselves to be exposed to more hazardous work environments, and more difficult working schedules than most employees of the City of Wheeling. Officers are required to be on duty 24 hours a day, 7 days a week including weekends and holidays. As our working conditions are inherently different from other occupations within the City, and we would request that our pay and benefits package should also reflect this. We therefore ask to be considered separately from other City employees who may have different duties and hazard levels. This proposal is intended to reflect these differences not only in scheduling and hazards, but also in the amount of training and liability required as a result of our position.

## **Current Problems**

Currently, the Wheeling Police Department suffers from several internal problems related to wages and benefits. Retention, recruiting, experience, and training are all topics that need addressed.

Retention of officers is alarming, as we have lost a number of officers in recent years. In the past three years alone, 19 officers have resigned their employment with the Wheeling Police Department. That does not include officers who have retired after twenty or more years of service. The average time on the department for officers who have resigned is roughly 3.5 yrs. One of those resignations was a sergeant with 18.5 years on the department who got a better paying job, and couldn't afford to wait to lock his retirement.

The expense of losing officers is evident when we examine how much it costs to train a new police officer. Tuition, equipment, and transportation to the academy totals \$2,407.55. Salary for that officer while attending the academy is \$8,519.58. When totaled together, that adds up to \$10,927.13, and doesn't include any overtime that is paid to cover the officer's absence while he is in the academy. So, as you can see, it is very much in the City's fiscal interest to retain as many officers as possible.

Recruitment is at an all time low also. Currently, we have an eligibility list of 23 persons. With several positions already vacant, and the possibility that many of these candidates will be disqualified, that list is hardly adequate to meet our needs for the next two years. When I was hired in 1994, our department had over 300 applicants testing for this position.

Experienced officers are irreplaceable in police work. There is an old adage that you're a rookie for your first 5 years. That couldn't be more true. Officers

are required to attend 16 weeks at the West Virginia State Police Academy, which is a very militaristic environment. After that, they are required to complete a minimum of 14 weeks of field training before possibly being allowed to patrol on their own. Even then, they are not fully prepared. In an environment of dealing with so many different citizens, groups, and problems, it is impossible to be fully competent without years of experience. In 1994, only 9 officers of the department had less than 5 years on the street, or roughly 10 percent. Now, almost 1/3 of the department has less than 5 years experience, and over half the department has less than 10 years of experience. This directly increases our officer's safety risks, and also the City's legal liability risks.

## Competition

As with any occupation, competition with other employers determines who gets the highest caliber employees. Currently, at least 8 Wheeling Police officers are ranked on eligibility lists with other police departments. That is 10 percent of the total work force for the police department, which is already short by 6 positions. Hiring efforts are not keeping pace with our attrition. The most common factor with officers leaving, lies within the pay and benefits offered by our department as compared to nearby departments.

Below you will find a comparison of our department when compared to nearby departments in regards to pay and benefits.

Wheeling police officer

Pay- \$16.89/hour

Health- \$260/month family

Benwood police officer

Pay- \$17.25

Health- fully paid

McMechen police officer

Pay- \$13.50/hour

Health- fully paid

Bethlehem

Pay- \$16/hour

Health- fully paid

As you can see, these smaller and less busy departments are extremely competitive with Wheeling police salaries, and offer a much better benefit package.

When compared to our sister cities of similar size in West Virginia, the difference in pay and benefits becomes even more striking.

Wheeling Police Pay per Rank

Patrolman	\$35,180	Health- \$260/month family
Pfc	\$36,900	Longevity- \$3/pay for every 3 years
Corporal	\$38,850	Hazardous Duty- none
Sergeant	\$42,000	
Lieutenant	\$44,900	

Morgantown Police Pay per Rank

Patrolman	\$37,790	Health- \$31/pay family
Pfc	\$39,930	Longevity- Max at \$4443 at 30 years
Sergeant	\$43,347	Hazardous Duty- \$1.06/hour
First Sergeant	\$45,448	
Lieutenant	\$49,088	
Captain	\$56,555	

Parkersburg Police Pay per Rank

Patrolman	\$36,025	Health- \$280/month family
Pfc	\$37,065	Longevity- .30/hour per year of service
Sergeant	\$40,040	Hazardous Duty- none

Lieutenant            \$43,014

Captain                \$45,990

Morgantown not only has a better pay scale, but when added to their benefit packet of much cheaper health insurance, longevity and hazardous duty pay, there is an extremely evident pay differential with the Wheeling Police. While Parkersburg has a similar pay scale and health cost, their longevity pay lifts them well above the pay of Wheeling Police officers that would have similar time in service.

Hopefully, these figures show what a disadvantage the Wheeling Police Department is at when competing against other police departments from similar sized cities in West Virginia. To make matters worse, the West Virginia State Police has just adopted a lateral transfer policy which will accept currently certified officers in West Virginia into a shortened academy. The starting pay for a West Virginia state trooper is \$44,699. During the first application period, Wheeling Police had 4 officers apply, which is the largest amount of any department in the entire state.

## **Solutions**

As a proposal for a solution to our current problems, it is apparent that the discrepancy and shortcomings in pay and benefits must be addressed. Therefore the officers of the Wheeling Police Department would like to request a remedy that would address the problem by adopting 3 pay and benefit changes.

1. 15% raise in pay
2. \$2.00/hour hazardous duty pay
3. Fully paid health benefits

These incentives are directly intended to address the pay and benefit deficiencies that are currently plaguing the Wheeling Police Department. Also given that in the past few years, the influx of workers from the oil and gas industry have driven up the cost of living in the City of Wheeling by increasing prevailing rental and real estate prices. Combined with the already low wages that currently exist, the officers of the Wheeling Police Department feel that the above requests are equitable, and are not exorbitant demands.

The officers of the Wheeling Police Department would like to express their appreciation for the review of this material, and look forward to working with City officials to come to an agreement on the upcoming fiscal budget.

