



Patrick S. Mitchell
Chief of Police

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Deputy Chief Chris Marks

FROM: Captain Steve Beyer

DATE: March 11, 2022

SUBJECT: Police Department Communications Recruitment and Retention Issues

The West Allis Police Department's Dispatch Center is comprised of 1 full time dispatch manager, 6 full time dispatch supervisors and 9 full time dispatchers. Eight (8) part time dispatcher positions are also allotted to the Dispatch Center to assist with staffing needs.

As of March 20, 2022, there will be 0 dispatcher supervisor vacancies and 3 full time dispatcher vacancies. Five (5) part time dispatcher positions had been allotted to the Dispatch Center up until about 5-6 years ago. At that time, the allotment increased to 8 positions. Due to lack of qualified candidates, it has never been possible to fill all 8 positions (at one point, 6 positions were filled). As of March 1, 2022, there will be 3 part time dispatcher vacancies.

To account for vacancies and ensure the Dispatch Center is adequately staffed, members of staff have worked overtime as follows:

- 2019: Approximately 736 hours.
- 2020: Approximately 572 hours.
- 2021: Approximately 1597 hours.

The effects on employees of having to fill vacancies and work overtime have been:

- Full time dispatchers have been paid at the rate of time and half, not straight time.
- Dispatch supervisors started flexing their hours in early 2021 to fill vacancies, but, by mid-March 2021, it became difficult for supervisors to flex their hours and use accrued hours to take time off. The result was time off hours increased throughout the year and some came dangerously close to losing hours at the end of 2021. They did not receive time and a half for excess hours worked.
- Dispatch Manager Doreen Blattner related that none of the Dispatch Center staff have been '*happy*' about having to sign up for overtime or be held over to cover vacancies. She further related that part time dispatchers are part time for a reason (they don't want to or can't work a lot of hours because of other commitments) and she has had to make accommodations to convince part time dispatchers to work (e.g., convince them to work a shift by agreeing not to hold them over at the end of their shift). These accommodations sometimes result in full time dispatchers being held past their shift on overtime.



- As far as how employees have been holding up, Dispatch Manager Blattner related that staff members have remained professional. However, she said there have been complaints about overtime and growing concern that staff members are getting burned out and wanting to have time off to enjoy some rest. She said that staff members believe the vacancies will eventually be filled, but a number of staff members *'have voiced opinions about the substantial pay differences in other agencies as well as supervisors not being able to normally cash out their straight overtime.'* Dispatch Manager Blattner further related that staff members are *'burned out'* and morale is low because of increased overtime and low pay.

In the past few years, recruitment of personnel for the Dispatch Center has occurred on a regular basis in an attempt to fill vacancies. Quantity of applications received in recent years is as follows:

- 2019: Dispatcher recruitment A = 21 applications
- 2019: Dispatcher recruitment B = 69 applications
- 2019: Dispatch supervisor recruitment = 17 applications
- 2020: Dispatcher recruitment A = 51 applications
- 2020: Dispatcher recruitment B = 40 applications
- 2021: Dispatcher recruitment = 19 applications
- 2022: Dispatcher recruitment = 22 applications

During these recruitments, and after application reviews, testing, and interviews are conducted, typically only a few quality candidates have been identified. Then, some of those candidates withdraw from the process and some candidates do not pass a background investigation. Once it is realized that there are not enough new hires to fill current vacancies, a new recruitment is started.

Members of Dispatch Center who have resigned or declined employment in recent years is as follows:

- 2019:
 - Dispatcher recruitment A: Three (3) quality candidates were identified; 2 did not pass a background investigation; 1 was hired as a part time dispatcher.
 - Dispatcher recruitment B: Five (5) quality candidates were identified; 4 withdrew from the process; 1 was hired as a part time dispatcher. At least 1 of the 4 who withdrew did so because they found a *'better opportunity.'*
 - Dispatch supervisor recruitment: One (1) quality candidate was identified and that person filled the sole vacant position.
 - Part time dispatcher Katie Wrightsman resigned because she wanted to focus on her family more. She had worked in the Dispatch Center for approximately 9 years.
 - Dispatch supervisor Natalie Dobschuetz took a voluntary demotion to dispatcher so that she could work dayshift hours and be eligible for overtime at time and a half, which is not available to dispatch supervisors.
- 2020:
 - Dispatch recruitment A: Five (5) quality candidates were identified; 3 withdrew from the process; 2 were hired as a part time dispatcher.
 - Dispatch recruitment B: Three (3) quality candidates were identified; 3 were hired as a part time dispatcher.

- Part time dispatcher Reid Seghers resigned to become a police officer with the Department. He had worked in the Dispatch Center for less than a year.
- Part time dispatcher Tom Koerner resigned so that he could focus more on his full time job and family. He had worked in the Dispatch Center for approximately 15 years.
- Full time dispatcher Gina Wrycza resigned to become an administrative support assistant with the Department, partially to have Monday-Friday dayshift hours. She had worked in the Dispatch Center for approximately 11 years.
- 2021:
 - Dispatch recruitment: Three (3) quality candidates were identified; 1 did not pass a background investigation; 1 withdrew from the process; 1 will be hired as a part time dispatcher (on February 28, 2022).
 - Part time dispatcher Sara Gonzales resigned because she felt the job was not a good fit for her. She had worked in the Dispatch Center for less than 1 year.
 - Part time dispatcher Cassandra Santana resigned so she could focus more on her family. She had worked in the Dispatch Center for approximately 10 years.
 - Part time dispatcher Phil Russell resigned/retired. He had worked in the Dispatch Center for approximately 6 years.
 - Part time dispatcher Lora Vander Schaff resigned/retired. She had worked in the Dispatch Center for approximately 1.5 years.
 - Part time dispatcher Riley Parker resigned for 'a better opportunity' in the military. He had worked in the Dispatch Center for less than a year.
 - Part time dispatcher Kyle Meltesen resigned for much better pay at the Wauwatosa P.D. Dispatcher Center. He had experience working in other Dispatch Centers for better pay as well. He had worked in the Dispatch Center for less than 1 year.
 - Full time dispatcher Elizabeth DeFrances resigned for better pay in private sector. She had worked in the Dispatch Center for approximately 10 years.
 - Full time dispatcher supervisor Eric Jansen resigned for better pay in private sector. He had worked in the Dispatch Center for approximately 15 years.
- 2022:
 - Part time dispatcher Morgan Strom resigned to focus more on another part time job and a full time job as a dispatcher with Twin Lakes P.D., where she was paid more than \$3 more per hour. She had commented that she would never accept a full time job with West Allis Police Department because of the low pay. She had worked in the Dispatch Center for less than 1 year.
 - Prospective part time dispatcher withdrew from recruitment process. She works as a part time dispatcher for Wauwatosa P.D. and West Milwaukee P.D., both of which offer better rates of pay.

As demonstrated, the Department has a problem with recruitment and retention of staff for the Dispatcher Center:

- Vacancies have been carried for the last 5-6 years despite conducting regular recruitments and attempting to eliminate vacancies.
- The quantity of applicants has declined in the past few years (there was an average of 45 applicants in 2019 and 2020 recruitment processes; there were only 19 applicants in the 2021 recruitment process and only 22 applicants in the 2022 recruitment process).
- Only a limited number of qualified applicants have been identified in recruitment processes.



- The use of overtime to fill vacancies and ensure adequate staffing increased dramatically from 2020 to 2021.
- Morale has decreased among staff members; staff members feel unappreciated; burn out among staff is a concern.
- A number of employees have resigned over the past few years.

Dispatcher Pay:

In a recent survey, it was determined that the hourly pay rates for dispatchers (part time and full time) in other Dispatch Centers in our area are as follows:

Agency	STEP 1	STEP 2	STEP 2.5 (18 mos)	STEP 3	STEP 4	STEP 5	CONTROL	Maximum
Franklin P.D.***	\$25.59							\$33.26
Greenfield P.D.	\$25.90	\$26.70		\$27.54	\$28.34			\$29.28
Hales Corners P.D.	\$21.87			\$24.52				\$27.88
Oak Creek P.D.	\$21.65		\$25.79	\$27.56				\$27.56
Waukesha P.D.	\$28.76							\$38.82
Wauwatosa P.D.	\$23.37	\$24.06		\$24.71	\$25.38	\$26.07	\$26.70	\$32.04
West Allis P.D. (non-resident)*	\$18.97	\$19.51		\$20.05	\$20.60	\$21.14	\$21.68	\$21.68
West Allis P.D. (resident)*	\$19.63	\$20.19		\$20.75	\$21.32	\$21.88	\$22.44	\$22.44
West Milwaukee P.D. (full time)	\$22.53	\$24.65		\$26.77				\$28.88
West Milwaukee P.D. (part time)	\$21.42							
WCC**	\$23.27					\$27.03		\$30.78

* Based on West Allis Salary Schedule 2/2/2022. While West Allis employees have the ability to reach 120% of their control point, there have been few, if any, cases of that occurring since the inception of that rule approximately 5 years ago. As it does not appear to be a realistic option, the 120% mark was not included in the chart or considered. While West Allis employees have the ability to earn an annual 1-time bonus each year for individual performance, and that has been occurring, the possibility of a bonus was not included in the chart or considered either.

** WCC has 15 pays steps; steps 1, 8, and 15 are reflected on the chart.

*** Franklin's starting pay and pay increases are based on prior experience(s); maximum pay increases in line with other City employees.

Starting Pay for Dispatcher:

Out of the 9 agencies, West Allis P.D. is ranked 9th (last) for starting pay. A dispatcher living in the City of West Allis starts at \$19.63/hour, which is \$2.02/hour less than the 8th ranked agency (Oak Creek P.D.). A dispatcher living outside of the City of West Allis is \$2.68/hour less than the 8th ranked agency.

Out of the 9 agencies, the average starting pay is \$23.62/hour (Note: West Allis resident rate used to determine average). A dispatcher living in the City of West Allis starts at \$3.99/hour less than the average. A dispatcher living outside of the City of West Allis starts at \$4.65/hour less than the average.



Maximum Pay for Dispatcher:

Out of the 9 agencies, West Allis P.D. is ranked 9th (last) for maximum pay. A dispatcher living in the City of West Allis maxes out at \$22.44/hour, which is \$5.12/hour less than the 8th ranked agency (Oak Creek P.D.). A dispatcher living outside of the City of West Allis is \$5.88/hour less than the 8th ranked agency.

Out of the 9 agencies, the average maximum pay is \$30.10/hour (Note: West Allis resident rate used to determine average). A dispatcher living in the City of West Allis maxes out at \$7.66/hour less than the average. A dispatcher living outside of the City of West Allis maxes out at \$8.42/hour less than the average.

Note: The pay rate of West Milwaukee P.D. part time dispatchers was not considered in rankings.

Shift Differentials for Dispatcher:

Out of the 9 agencies, 4 offer shift differentials for dispatchers working 2nd or 3rd shifts. The shift differentials range from an additional \$.25/hour to an additional \$.50/hour. The average shift differential is \$.26/hour for 2nd shift and \$.38/hour for 3rd shift. West Allis P.D. does not offer shift differentials.

Dispatch Supervisor Pay:

In a recent survey, it was determined that the hourly pay rates for dispatch supervisors in other Dispatch Centers in our area are as follows:

Agency	STEP 1	STEP 2	STEP 3	STEP 4	STEP 5	CONTROL	Maximum
Oak Creek P.D.**	\$29.34						\$29.34
Waukesha P.D.	\$37.78						\$51.01
Wauwatosa P.D.	\$25.29	\$26.02	\$26.73	\$27.46	\$28.20	\$28.90	\$34.67
West Allis P.D. (non-resident)*	\$25.26	\$25.98	\$26.70	\$27.43	\$28.15	\$28.87	\$28.87
West Allis P.D. (resident)*	\$26.14	\$26.89	\$27.63	\$28.39	\$29.14	\$29.88	\$29.88
West Milwaukee P.D.**	\$32.78						
WCC	\$37.78						

* Based on West Allis Salary Schedule 2/2/2022. While West Allis employees have the ability to reach 120% of their control point, there have been few, if any, cases of that occurring since the inception of that rule approximately 5 years ago. As it does not appear to be a realistic option, the 120% mark was not included in the chart or considered. While West Allis employees have the ability to earn an annual 1-time bonus each year for individual performance, and that has been occurring, the possibility of a bonus was not included in the chart or considered either.

** For Oak Creek and West Milwaukee, maximum pay increases in line with other City employees.

Starting Pay for Dispatch Supervisor:

Out of the 6 agencies, West Allis P.D. is ranked 5th (2nd last) for starting pay for a West Allis resident and is ranked 6th (last) for starting pay for a non-resident. A dispatch supervisor living in



the City of West Allis starts at \$26.14/hour, which is \$.85/hour more than the 6th ranked agency (Wauwatosa P.D.). A dispatch supervisor living outside of West Allis starts at \$25.26/hour, which is \$.03/hour less than the 5th ranked agency (Wauwatosa P.D.).

Out of the 6 agencies, the average starting pay is \$31.51/hour (Note: West Allis resident rate used to determine average). A dispatcher supervisor living in the City of West Allis starts at \$5.37/hour less than the average. A dispatcher supervisor living outside of the City of West Allis starts at \$6.25/hour less than the average.

Maximum Pay for Dispatch Supervisor:

Out of the 4 agencies with maximum salaries listed, the average maximum pay is \$36.23/hour (Note: West Allis resident rate used to determine average). A dispatch supervisor living in the City of West Allis maxes out at \$29.88/hour, which is \$6.35/hour less than the average. A dispatch supervisor living outside of West Allis maxes out at \$28.87/hour, which is \$7.36/hour less than the average.

Shift Differentials for Dispatch Supervisor:

Three (3) of the agencies have shift differentials for dispatch supervisors working 2nd or 3rd shifts. The shift differential ranges from an additional \$.25/hour to an additional \$.50/hour. The average shift differential is \$.27/hour for 2nd shift and \$.42/hour for 3rd shift. West Allis P.D. does not offer shift differentials.

Miscellaneous Information:

In considering size of the 9 jurisdictions, WCC is the largest. West Allis and Waukesha are similarly sized. The other 6 agencies are smaller than West Allis.

Out of the 9 agencies, only WCC, West Allis, and Wauwatosa provide Priority Dispatch Emergency Medical Dispatching services, which are considered top-of-the-line by many.

If you have any questions or would like to further discuss, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Steve Beyer
Captain of Police