

TOWN OF COATS
Board of Commissioners
Thursday, February 27, 2025

The Town of Coats Board of Commissioners met in a scheduled work session on Thursday, February 27, 2025 at 7:00 p.m. in the Board of Commissioners' Meeting Room at Coats Town Hall.

Members Present:

Mayor Chris Coats
Mayor Pro Tem Marc Powell
Commissioner Kelvin Gilbert
Commissioner Shirley Allen
Commissioner Monique Warren-Clegg

Staff Present:

Kenneth Cole, Interim Town Manager
Connie Lassiter, Finance Director/Town Clerk
Ken Storicks, Police Chief

Members Absent:

Commissioner Jerry Beasley

CALL TO ORDER

A quorum being present, Mayor Chris Coats called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

INVOCATION AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mayor Coats delivered the invocation and led those in attendance in the Pledge of Allegiance.

POLICE DEPARTMENT WORK SESSION

Interim Town Manager Kenneth Cole directed the Board's attention to the document given to them with the current approved positions and pay grades for the Town of Coats and surrounding towns that was compiled by Finance Director Connie Lassiter. He noted that Coats was lower than all the others.

Commissioner Kelvin Gilbert pointed out that he had attempted to get an overall picture of the pay difference by looking at the total area miles that Coats Officers had to cover in comparison to other towns across the state as well as taking into account the populations and crime rates of the towns.

Mr. Cole suggested that groups available to conduct a pay study would be valuable in determining what Coats should be paying Police Department employees and noted that it was needed for all other departments as well.

Mayor Pro Tem Marc Powell suggested looking at developing a pay grade step system for police officers that would not necessarily just promote individuals when an officer leaves. For example, officers would achieve pay steps by accomplished training and certifications. He also noted the need to prepare to get ahead of the growth that is coming.

Mr. Cole announced during the time he left as Town Manager and returned as Interim that the town had grown but the number of staff at Town Hall had not been increased. He cited the need for a planning director and additional finance staff.

Mayor Chris Coats inquired about the cost of a pay study, and Mr. Cole responded between \$10,000 and \$15,000 noting that it depended on varying factors such as population. Finance Director Connie Lassiter mentioned that Erwin was currently conducting a pay study, and they had offered to share their findings.

Mr. Cole said he could look into it further, but there was a need now to address pay for the lieutenant position.

Police Chief Ken Storicks informed the Board that he promoted Ben Wise to fill the position left vacant by Lieutenant Michael Blackman and requested that his salary be increased to the same amount Lt. Blackman was making which was approximately \$53,500.

Mayor Pro Tem Marc Powell asked about the duties of a lieutenant. Chief Storicks presented the Board with written documentation that included a list of Lt. Wise's accomplishments and qualifications as well as job duties required of a lieutenant.

Interim Town Manager Kenneth Cole informed the Board that it was within his duties to hire within range of pay after the consensus of the Board was to proceed with pay increase.

Chief Storicks handed out a list of starting salaries for police officers that he had gathered from other agencies and commented that it was difficult to staff with our starting salary. Interim Town Manager Kenneth Cole asked that discussion be held until the budget work sessions.

Mayor Pro Tem Marc Powell asked if pay was the only reason for not being able to retain staff. Chief Storicks commented that Officer Fuerch had given his two week notice due to taking a position with a town closer to his home. He added that a new officer would be sworn in on Friday.

All current officers were present at the meeting, and Chief Storicks introduced each of them and asked if the Board had questions for them.

Commissioner Shirley Allen asked Officer Fuerch to comment on his leaving. He replied that the commute had become an issue for him, so the offer from a larger agency appealed to him because of the opportunity to reach his law enforcement goals that a smaller agency could not provide.

Mayor Chris Coats addressed Lt. Wise because of his experience as a BLET instructor and inquired about the candidates being solicited by departments before they even got to the academy. Lt. Wise responded that the trend was that they were already hired before coming to the academy. His process was to ask students on the first day if they had a job already and try to appeal to those that had not already been hired. He commented that he loses them when he discussed starting pay.

The Board discussed the costs of sponsoring a candidate for the academy and the downside of them not honoring the agreement to work for the town.

Each of the officers recounted their experience as an officer with the town.

Commissioner Kelvin Gilbert asked Finance Director Connie Lassiter to weigh in with her thoughts on what could be done for pay. Ms. Lassiter recommended the pay study previously mentioned as a good place to start to address pay in all departments and added that pay studies were only useful if you planned to implement changes from the findings.

Commissioner Monique Warren-Clegg asked Chief Storicks if he sought out minority officers. The Chief replied that the newest hire was a black male.

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Chris Coats called for a motion to adjourn.

RESOLVED, to adjourn the work session.

MOTION BY: Mayor Pro Tem Marc Powell

SECOND BY: Commissioner Monique Warren-Clegg


APPROVED: Unanimously Approved

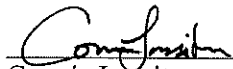
Meeting adjourned at 7:51 p.m.

The attached documents of reference are incorporated herewith and are hereby made a part of these minutes.

Minutes prepared by Finance Director/Town Clerk Connie Lassiter.

ATTEST:



Chris Coats
Mayor

Connie Lassiter
Finance Director/Town Clerk