

TO: Personnel Board

FROM: Michael Lipski, Human Resources

DATE: March 22, 2012

SUBJECT: Police Public Information Specialist-Police Department

At the request of the Police Chief, Noble Wray, I have studied the position (#4021-occupied by J. DeSpain) and classification of Police Public Information Specialist (CG18, Range 08). The classification was created and classified in 2006. Previous to 2006, the public information function was performed by a sworn officer. Since the position's creation, the incumbent has taken on increased responsibility for deciding which information should be released relating to the activities of the department. After reviewing the position description (see attached), and conversations with Captain Mary Schauf, Assistant Chief Randy Gaber, and the incumbent, I recommend that a new series of Police Public Information Specialist 1 and 2 be created in CG18, Ranges 08 and 10 respectively, and that the incumbent be reallocated to the Police Public Information Specialist 2 level for the reasons outlined in this memo.

As stated above, the Police Department, in 2006, decided to create a civilian position to handle its public information function. The classification of Police Public Information Specialist was created in CG18, Range 08, with the following training and experience requirements:

Two years of responsible professional public relations experience either within an agency or in the print and/or broadcast media (or other closely related public relations or promotional activities which involved the creation of written materials and the development and implementation of public relations campaigns). Such experience would normally be gained after graduation from an accredited college or university with a major in public relations, communication, journalism or a closely related field.

While the Knowledge/Skills/Abilities section required "Working knowledge of the Open Records law and appropriate confidentiality standards," it is difficult to see how someone with the training and experience requirements above would acquire such knowledge. Rather, the goal of the Department at the time was to hire someone with public relations skills, and train that person on Department-specific policies and procedures, including records.

Joel DeSpain was hired into the Police Public Information Specialist position in 2007. Prior to that, he worked as a reporter for Channel 3 News in Madison. Since his hire, Joel has attended numerous trainings on police procedure and records. Joel admitted that he had a long learning curve on records requirements surrounding what can and cannot be released at various stages of an investigation. At this point, Joel's knowledge has increased to the point where he independently determines what can and cannot be released and advises the Chief and his command staff on this issue regularly. He would not have been able to do this at the time he started.

Information management is a critical function for the Police Department. The goal of hiring someone into the position with the above credentials is wise in that hopefully the person will be able to foster positive relationships with the various media outlets in town. However, to expect someone with that background to walk in with detailed knowledge of records law is ambitious at

best. The Police Department records program is highly complex, dealing with sensitive matters currently under investigation. Release of improper information could compromise an entire investigation. Because of the complexity of the records work in the Police Department, it is appropriate that a progression series be created. At the first level, at the current CG18, Range 08, the incumbent would be responsible for cultivating the contacts with the various media outlets, and under direction, would begin releasing information according to Records law and Department standards. Only a basic knowledge of records law would be required at the 1 level. However, during that time, the incumbent would be required to attend formal training in Open Records and Juvenile Law, and training in Police Policy and Procedures. After approximately 2 years, when the incumbent has taken on independent responsibility for releasing information, and has attended the required training, the movement to the Police Public Information Specialist 2 level, at Range 10, would be accomplished. At the higher level, the incumbent would be performing the full range of responsibilities associated with the release of records and media contacts. The class specification (see attached) for the Police Public Information Specialist 2 would include the higher working knowledge of open records based on the training and experience received at the 1 level.

Placement of the 2 level at Range 10 is appropriate as the Public Information Specialist has additional responsibility within the department for managing the Intern Program, and overseeing the awards program for the department. This is comparable to the Streets Public Information Officer/Recycling Coordinator classification, also in Range 10, which has broad PIO responsibility but also responsibility for the City’s recycling program. As the incumbent has been performing work at the higher level for at least 2 years, it is appropriate that he be reallocated to the higher level.

We have prepared the necessary Ordinance and Resolution to implement this recommendation.

Attachments

Compensation Group/Range	2012 Annual Minimum (Step 1)	2012 Annual Maximum (Step 5)	2012 Annual Maximum +12% longevity
18/08	\$53,878	\$63,935	\$71,604
18/10	\$58,485	\$70,288	\$78,728

cc: Police Chief Wray
Assistant Chief Randy Gaber
Captain Mary Schauf
Joel DeSpain