

Personel Committee meeting  
January 16, 2024

Good morning and thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today.

My name is Mark Tiedke, I am an Airport Maintenance worker for Mitchell International and Timmerman airports. I am here to express concerns over the challenges of recruitment and retention of employees to include the inability to earn a salary increase either through longevity or performance.

WAGES AND

During last months months personel committee meeting a recruitment and retention bonus program was approved for the third straight year. Thanks you for approving this as every little bit helps. However, this does not address the root cause of our hiring and rentention challenges.

Just this past fall a company named Birchwood Snow and Landscaping parked a plow truck at Drexel Towne Square with a sign that read, "drive me for \$30 per hour". The truck was not much larger than the one-ton trucks we have in our fleet. in fact, after an internet search, I found no less than nine other companies hiring for operators to start at \$25 per hour to operate a skid steer. (SHOW PIC OF SKID STEER) We have two of those in my department Due to the inability to properly staff, the airport has been in contract with a private snow removal company to plow our parking ramps, this is where the planes park at the gates, also known as the tarmac. This company is paying 30 to 50 dollars to operate small loaders, about one-third the size of the loaders we use at the airport, no CDL required. (SHOW PIC OF COMBO) This is a combo unit, A 24 foot plow in front, 22 foot broom in back, twin deisel engines with a combined total of around 800 horse power, six wheel steering and a pair of high speed blowers and is 60 feet long. This is an airport specific piece of equipment, you will not see this on any roads or parking lots. Milwaukee Mitchell airports starting wage to operate this highly technical one million dollar piece of equipment, twenty-five dollars and change per hour. (SHOW PIC OF FLYER). This extermely large snow blower also has two engines combining to produce around 600 horse power, four wheel steering and the auger opening is 8 and-a-half feet accross 5 and-a-half feet tall and its overall length is 30 feet.. (SHOW PIC OF LOADER) We also have a fleet of these loaders, (SHOW PICS) dump trucks, Liquid chem trucks a Hagie etc. A Hagie is used mostly in agriculture as seen in this photo but we have one unit used mostly to spray liguid potassium acetate to aid in ice and snow control. Everyone is trained on how to operate each of these and all are paid \$25 to start.

Each year my department along with our Operations department are required by the FAA and TSA to take a computer recurrent training program that takes seven hours and an airfield recurrent test. The computer testing is to not be confused with LMS. This is in additiong to the 30 modules of LMS I must complete each year. The airfield initial and recurrent is rather similar to the drivers test you took to obtain your derivers license, only it's every year and if you don't pass you can lose your job. The stress of the recurrent testing and operating such complicated equipment makes 25 dollars per hour and the inability to earn a raise seem out of

balance.

When Act 10 was passed into law in 2011 Milwaukee County froze all wages and all step increases. According to Milwaukee county code of ordinances 17.10 (6) states " The intent of this section is to temporarily suspend incremental salary advancements for employees represented by District Council 48 for 2011, 2012 and 2013 consistent with the terms of the 2-011 and 2012 budgets. In other words, the freeze due to the passing of act 10 was to end in 2013 resuming normal step increases. Eleven years later hourly Milwaukee County workers still can not earn a salary increase based on either longevity or performance. For example, I was at a starting wage for the first ten years of my employment here at Milwaukee County. Just last winter a mistake occurred during an Equity Increase which allowed me and several of my co-workers to advance one step. Had it not been for that mistake I would be earning the same amount as a brand new employee walking through our doors for the first time. ~~Actually, my first ten years at Milwaukee County was exactly that.~~

Recently ~~all of~~ our new hires on first shift learned they can not earn a pay raise. One has since quit, another is now looking for another job, another is currently enjoying operating the equipment and is letting everything he has learned time to digest. But, how long will that last and this person quits?

The airport is in compromising situation. Having enough personnel to operate the necessary equipment is not only necessary but also a requirement set forth by the FAA approved Airport Certification Manual. Failure to follow the procedures within this manual can lead to an FAA investigation resulting in fines. Example is Cleveland Hopkins International in 2015 where they did not have the appropriate number of employees to maintain runways during a winter weather event causing aircraft to divert to other cities. Due to not having enough people on hand as stated in their manual the FAA find them nearly three-quarters of a million dollars. There was no plane crash, or one skidding off the runway. Aircraft had to divert to other cities which is extremely costly to the airlines. In fact, any profits to be made on those diverting flights were now gone.

As you may know, recruitment, hiring, on-boarding comes at a cost. The investment made into a new hire will take some time to earn a return on that investment. Currently, Milwaukee county is willing to spend to recruit, hire and train but before it receives a return on its investment the employee finds *A FUTURE* employment elsewhere. Because the employee can not earn past a starting wage they leave and Milwaukee county loses on its investment. Only to hire again and the process starts again. Each time losing its investment.

A constant flow of new hires is costly and dilutes the experience level. There is a learning curve in operating these airport specific machines, it often takes several years to become efficient. An overload of inexperience often leads to mistakes that cost money, inflict damage to equipment and possibly harm to others.

Each year Milwaukee County presents to its employees a wage adjustment often around 1 to 2 percent. Going back to 2020 a 1% increase was given and inflation that year was 1.23%. In 2021 we received a 1% increase and inflation reached 5.9%, 2022 a 2% plus another 2% six months later agains an inflation rate of 8.7%. ~~in this year~~ <sup>year</sup> 2023 2 % again was given to the employees and inflation hit 3.2% and this year we received another 2% to offset another 3.8% expected inflation rate. In addition, Milwaukee county residents ~~will see~~ <sup>will see</sup> their sales tax nearly double and those that live within the city of Milwaukee will ~~begin paying~~ <sup>begin paying</sup> and additional 2.9% sales tax. ~~Milwaukee county is losing employees due in part it can not keep slaries competitive as the private sector reacts much more quickly.~~ <sup>STARTING two week ago</sup>

I understand Milwaukee County is revamping the compensation structure and is currently implimenting one department at a time, which is expected to take two-and-a-half years to complete. As I have presented, Milwaukee County is way behind the curve and waiting another two years to complete the conversion will be extremely costly. Every week that passes by experience levels are dropping among hourly workers. The airport maintenance department has had over 100% turn over rate since I've been employeed here. And that number continues to grow several times per month on average.

Each month the Personel committee is presented a document called Advancment within the pay range etc. This document presented in December has at least 34 new hires from various departments receiving a higher starting wage citing "Training and experience exceed the minimum qualifications for this position." Hiring individuals to work at the airport without prior airport experience for a wage above the current starting salary where many who have been at the airport for over a decade still earning starting wage, is unconscionable. This compression issue has occurred at the airport in the past. A coujple individuals in my own department, hired after me, started at wage higher than myself with multiple years of experience.

During inclement weather, heavy snow or extreme cold, many county employees are instructed to stay home. Airport workers are required to drive through heavy snow and cross their fingers their cars will start when its 10 degrees below zero. We worked during the pandemic, at the airport not from home, every day. We don't receive extra pay for braving the weather or a disease that required social distancing and mask wearing. Many Americans received bonus' for working during the pandemic to keep the nation going. Milwaukee Mitchell Airport workers did not receive a dime.

My suggestion is to reinstate the step increases that were frozen eleven years ago. The new compensation program can be implimented by replacing the steps when its that departments turn. Also, complete a salary study to determine where The county needs to be to be competitive with the private sector.

The airport is unique within Milwaukee County as its is self sustainable. The airport will require zero money form the tax levy as presented by Milwaukee County Department of Transportaion last month. Milwaukee county will not need to fund any raises at the airport either. In a discussion with Airport Director Drazik he can not raise salaries without the approval of the County Board. Your Authorization is what is needed for the airport to move forward.

There is concern over having departments throughout the county having vastly different wages and its effects on transfers. The worry is many departments will be depleted. However, there are so many positions that can be filled.

In conclusion I want to leave you with a thought. In review a local company pays its employees 30 to 50 dollars to drive a common dump truck to plow a grocery parking lot to ensure you have a place to park your car and safe passage to the store. Milwaukee Mitchell International airport pays 25 dollars an hour for its employees to operate a fleet of airport specific, one million dollar pieces of equipment to ensure safe landing of a 60 ton aircraft with 200 passengers during a heavy snow storm. Which do you feel is more safe for you and your loved ones? *AT 1.20 11/11*

Thank\$ you for allowing me the time to speak today.

#### ADDITIONAL POINTS TO MAKE

#### LOWER JOB REQUIREMENTS

The challenges in hiring is causing to lower job requirements. Up until recently one of the requirements to become an Airport Maintenance Worker was to have a CDL. No longer the case as now we will hire without a CDL and require a person to get one while employed at the Airport. A new hire knowing they will not earn more for getting their CDL, and that a pay raise is impossible its only a matter of time before they leave for a position that pays more to start and can earn a raise after six months, then after their first year and each year after that.





