



Certified Public Safety Personnel Pay Adjustment Justification

Town Manager

November 4, 2021

The primary purpose of this brief is to justify an immediate pay increase for certified public safety personnel and give assurance that additional action will be taken July 1, 2022 based on professional pay analysis and report. The secondary, but no less important, purpose of this brief is to identify the challenges and solutions to recruit and retain highly qualified certified public safety personnel to serve the Town of Lake Lure.

Certified Fire Fighters/EMTs (Fire Department)

Challenges Identified are...

- The high cost of living in Town of Lake Lure virtually eliminates fire fighters' ability to live in town.
- The isolated location of the Town results in a limited pool of possible applicants.
- Local demographics limit the numbers of individuals who volunteer.
- Personnel must commute long distances, which limits the use of personal time for which they are not getting paid.
- Surrounding jurisdictions are providing their certified public safety personnel with higher pay
- The Town of Lake Lure is an exceptionally large jurisdiction (13.5 Sq. mi) and each firefighter is responsible for an exceedingly large coverage area.
- Recent changes in availability of Rutherford County EMS / Rescue units places much greater demands on Lake Lure Fire Fighters.

- Decreasing interest in volunteering resulting in increased demand on paid staff
- Demand has increased for paid staff to remain on call when off duty
- Lake Lure Fire Fighters are required to be in extraordinary physical condition because of kind/type of rescues performed
- Lake Lure Fire Fighters are heavily recruited by surrounding agencies, such as Rutherford County, that offer higher pay.
- Fire Fighters are transitioning to other emergency services agencies due to the higher pay and less expectation to remain on call when off duty.
- Lake Lure Fire Department has been understaffed by one fire fighter since September 2021; moreover, very little interest has been expressed in the open position.
- Current staff is working considerable amounts of overtime as a result of personnel shortage.

Possible solutions to mitigate challenges are...

- Immediate 5% pay increase for full-time staff effective December 1, 2021
- Immediate pay increase to \$14.25/hour for part-time staff to effective December 1, 2021.
- Firm commitment to a professional pay analysis with a written report complete with recommendations.
- Firm commitment to implementing recommendations in the report on or by July 1, 2022

Certified Law Enforcement (Police Department & Park, Rec & Lake Department)

Challenges identified are....

- High cost of living in Town of Lake Lure virtually eliminates fire fighters' ability to live in town.
- The isolated location of the Town results in a limited pool of possible applicants.
- Personnel must commute long distances, which limits the use of personal time for which they are not getting paid.
- Surrounding jurisdictions are offering higher pay. The Town of Forest City is but one concrete example.
- The response times from the Sherriff's Department for Rutherford County Section C-1 are usually very long because deputies assigned to C-1 are assisting areas with higher crime rate.

- The Town of Lake Lure is an exceptionally large jurisdiction (13.5 Sq. mi) and each officer is responsible for an exceedingly large coverage area.
- A sharp decline in persons wanting to pursue a career in law enforcement
 - Every law enforcement agency in Rutherford County (and surrounding counties) is operating below normal staff levels. Jurisdictions in South Carolina are experiencing the same trend. Florida, for example, is offering now \$5,000 relocation bonus to recruit officers from other states.
 - Winston-Salem has a billboard in Asheville for the purpose of recruiting local officers to relocate to Winston-Salem.
- Current law enforcement officers are increasingly departing from the profession.
- The demand for law enforcement professionals substantially exceeds the supply of law enforcement professionals.
- Larger jurisdictions are using non-traditional ways and means to recruit/retain law enforcement officers (sign-on bonuses, higher pay, recruitment bonuses, etc.).
- Lake Lure Police Department has been understaffed by one officer since August 2021; moreover, two highly qualified law enforcement officers interviewed (via phone) declined to pursue the open position because the pay was not competitive.

Possible solutions to mitigate challenges are.....

- Immediate 5% pay increase effective December 1, 2021
- Immediate pay increase to \$15.75/hour for reserve officers effective December 1, 2021
- Firm commitment to a professional pay analysis with a written report complete with recommendations
- Firm commitment to implementing recommendations in the report on or by July 1, 2022