

## Executive Summary – Council Work Session (January 8, 2026)

The first council work session of 2026 was called to order at 7:05 p.m. Attendees included Mayor Southard, Chief Matt Delp, council members Eric Fischer, Tony Pinter, Tommy Grant, J.P. Martin, Cathy Paessun, and Stacy Koss.

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### 1. Background and Purpose of Resolution 2025-36

Council member J.P. Martin introduced the proposed resolution, which aims to establish clearer **council oversight of police department hiring and personnel decisions**.

- The proposal originated after **past hiring issues** raised concerns about procedural transparency, candidate vetting, and communication breakdowns between council, the mayor, and the police department.
  - The goal is to prevent future mistakes and ensure that **council is involved earlier in the hiring process**—before conditional job offers are made or candidates are sworn in.
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### 2. Identified Problems in the Current Hiring Process

Council members and the mayor discussed several issues:

- **Timing of Council Involvement:** Council often receives notice of hires only after candidates are already employed and in uniform.
  - **Lack of Access to Background Information:** Council members expressed frustration about not seeing candidate background checks or being able to raise questions in time.
  - **Responsibility and Accountability:** While the mayor is the statutory hiring authority, the process has sometimes led to confusion over who bears ultimate accountability for hiring decisions.
  - **Public Perception and Risk:** Some recent hires—despite interview panel objections—were later viewed as potential liabilities, causing reputational risk to the village and backlash from residents.
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### 3. Discussion and Diverging Viewpoints

#### Council's Position:

- Council members (especially Martin, Paessun, and Koss) emphasized the need for **earlier, formal council input** before conditional offers are extended.
- They argued that codifying this oversight (through a resolution or ordinance) ensures **transparency and collective accountability**.
- There was strong sentiment that the mayor should not shoulder the full burden of hiring decisions alone.

#### Mayor's Position:

- Mayor Southard acknowledged prior shortcomings and accepted partial responsibility for not being more assertive in questioning recommendations.
- She supported improving transparency and documentation but expressed that the **statutory role makes her the final hiring authority**.
- The mayor preferred updating the **Employee Manual** rather than codifying procedures in a rigid ordinance, arguing that manuals are easier to amend.
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#### **Police Chief's Position:**

- Chief Delp agreed that council should be included earlier in the process but suggested this be formalized via the **employee handbook** rather than legislation.
- He proposed that council be looped in **after background checks but before conditional offers**.
- He also emphasized the need to **revise interview procedures** to comply with employment laws and eliminate outdated questions.

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#### **4. Proposed Solutions and Next Steps**

- **Option 1:** Proceed with **Resolution 2025-36** as a temporary measure establishing earlier council oversight, to remain in effect until the Employee Manual can be revised.
- **Option 2:** Delay passage of the resolution and first **revamp the entire hiring process**, incorporating council review and updated legal guidance directly into the Employee Manual.
- **Consensus Emerging:**
  - Council members generally agreed that a **comprehensive overhaul** of the hiring process is needed.
  - There was support for defining a **step-by-step procedure**: initial interview → background check → mayoral review → council review (before conditional offer).
  - Members also discussed forming a **formal interview panel** including a council member, a police representative, and potentially a community member for additional transparency.
- **Action Items:**
  - Review the Employee Manual within 30 days for updates.
  - Consult legal counsel (Jesse) at the next session before the January 15 vote.
  - Consider establishing an official “hiring panel” and defining executive session protocols for candidate discussions.

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#### **5. Broader Themes and Reflections**

- The session revealed broader concerns about **governance, accountability, and professionalization** within a small village administration.
  - Members recognized that the current system relies heavily on personal trust and informal communication rather than clear procedural structure.
  - The discussion underscored the tension between **statutory authority (mayor)** and **council's oversight responsibility**.
  - Participants expressed a shared desire to **protect the village's reputation, ensure ethical hiring practices, and improve interdepartmental transparency**.
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## 6. Closing Points

By session's end, the group agreed to:

- Seek legal clarification from counsel before finalizing any legislative action.
  - Work collaboratively on drafting a detailed, legally compliant hiring process.
  - Delay immediate adoption of the resolution if necessary to ensure a more complete and lasting procedural framework.
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## Summary Statement

The January 8, 2026 work session centered on rebuilding trust and structure in the village's police hiring process. While there was disagreement over whether to codify or amend policy, all participants shared the goal of **preventing hiring missteps, enhancing transparency, and strengthening council–executive collaboration**. The meeting concluded with a commitment to further review and reform before formal adoption of Resolution 2025-36.

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Jeffrey Wilcheck, Fiscal Officer

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Tiffany Southard, Mayor