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Office of the Sheriff

Jesse Jahner, Sheriff

November 24th, 2021

Chad Peterson, Chair

Cass County Commission

Mr. Chair,

Cass County Annual Leave Policy 303 requires employees to use all annual leave over 240 hours by January 15th of each year. However, an exception can be made for extreme hardships or emergencies if approved by the county commission. That exception includes extending the time period in which the vacation can be used by 90 days.

As you are aware, the Cass County Jail has experienced an extreme employee vacancy situation for several months now. Currently, we find ourselves down 26 employees. Because of the number of vacancies we currently have, employees are being asked to work on their days off, and vacations are not always approved. Because of this, we are in a situation where those having over 240 hours of vacation have been told they can't take vacation because of our short staffing issues. As I look to the near future, I do not see that these individuals will be able to use vacation for several upcoming months so extending the time by 90 days will not resolve the issue. Therefore, I am respectfully requesting that the Cass County Commission make an exception to our County Annual Leave Policy and allow us to pay Vince Smith, Brad Mclean, Nick Pestel, and Dave Swenson for their vacation hours over the 240 hours policy allowance carryover through December 31st, 2021.

Suggested Motion

"Move to approve the vacation payout for the year ending December 31st, 2021 for vacation hours accrued over 240 hours for Sergeant Brad Mclean, Corporal Nick Pestel, and Deputies Vince Smith and Dave Swenson."

Respectfully,

Jesse Jahner

Cass County Sheriff

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Below is a breakdown of the total vacation hours that each individual will accumulate by the end of the year. It includes the total over the max bank of 240, and each individual's current hourly rate of pay. At this point, due to our vacant positions, the only way we could schedule these staff any portion of this time off would be to hire additional overtime, beyond what we are already struggling to fill.

Further, each of these individuals is also scheduled to work some overtime the rest of this year, and will be needed to work additional overtime in the coming months. Taking leave in the same month will impact their actual hours worked, putting that overtime effectively into straight time, thus disincentivizing them to contribute to filling other existing vacancies.

	Total End Year Balance	Over Max Hours	Hourly Rate	Payout Cost	Min OT Cost to Cover
Vince Smith	432	192	\$28.41	\$5,454.72	\$6,007.68
Brad Mclean	275	35	\$39.39	\$1,378.65	\$1,095.15
Nick Pestel	369	129	\$30.86	\$3,980.94	\$4,036.41
Dave Swenson	292	52	\$26.82	\$1,394.64	\$1,627.08
				\$12,208.95	\$12,766.32

The final column is the minimum cost to allow them to take their vacation time, assuming at best that we can fill with overtime using people at the lowest paygrade. This minimum overtime cost assumes a Step 1, lowest possible qualified person to work, which is unlikely to be the actual realized result. Likely these shifts would be covered by people at a much higher rate of pay at 1.5x per hour.

These rates also assume payout and overtime costs are incurred on or before Dec 31, 2021. Any payouts or overtime incurred after Jan 1 would increase the cost of either option, due to across the board COLA increases that take effect (5.1%), but also that the agency has a huge number of people whose step increases take effect January 1 due to the paygrade reorganization that occurred last year.

Best case scenario, it is at least \$558 cheaper to payoff the excess vacation of these four staff on the December payroll, than to hire overtime, which would also have the additional benefit of not imposing even more necessary overtime on staff who are already approaching burnout.

It is highly improbable, even with a standard 90- day extension beyond Jan 15th, that our hiring efforts will result in any discernable improvement to allow the time to be taken in the near future with less overtime needed.

Further, these staff will also continue to accrue leave during any extension beyond 90 days, putting us in a similar situation next year as well.