

Akron Mayor Don Plusquellic sent the following letter to all city employees today.

August 14, 2009

To my fellow employees of the City of Akron:

The purpose of this letter is to announce the extension of the deadline to sign-up for our Voluntary Separation Plan to **4:30pm, Monday, August 24**, for eligible employees, and to urge those who have the "safety net" of a pension to strongly consider taking this buyout benefit.

I have had some feedback from some employees that they needed more time - because of family vacations, the inability of some to connect with their pension boards, and those who just need time to meet with a financial advisor to discuss this difficult choice.

Also, many employees may have mistakenly thought that if they are not in entry level positions, they are immune from layoffs.

Make no mistake - as agonizing as it is for me to consider - there will be layoffs in September of permanent, full-time city workers on multiple levels in order to fill a projected budget deficit of approximately \$12 million before year's end. I would hate to see someone miss this opportunity for a one-time cash payout, and then suffer the loss of their job when this alternative is being made available to all.

As of today, more than 75 long-time employees have chosen to accept the VSP, and I thank them for making this tough decision. By and large, these are employees with a pension "safety net," I would call it, accepting the buy-out in large part to save the jobs of those who have no "safety net" at all.

Not since 1982 has the city been required to take such drastic steps, and not since the 1930's have we faced such severe restrictions on our income. The City of Akron's operating budget has been hard hit due to decreasing revenue from income taxes, property taxes, investments, and state tax-sharing formulas that are impacting every Ohio city.

Together with the managers of our city departments and with the help of some of our bargaining units, we have worked to trim costs, trying to find ways to avoid this most unfortunate situation.

If you have thought about taking the Voluntary Separation, but have not yet done so, I encourage you to review the details again with your family. Every full time employee as of January 4, 2009 is eligible for this benefit, and all five bargaining units have agreed to make this incentive available to their members. You will find details of the VSP on our Intranet under "Voluntary Separation." There is a summary and a full description of the Plan, an application for employees, and FAQ's,

Informatively, while PERS counselors have not been readily available on the telephone in some cases, and appointments are only available months from now, I am being told that all who have driven to Columbus for a “walk-in” appointment at PERS have been helped on the same day.

I have personally met with a number of long-time employees who have shared with me the agony they have gone through in making the decision to leave the city before they expected to do so. It is agonizing for me to know that we are losing some of our most dedicated and competent employees.

But given the harsh realities of the state and national economic downturn, and the legal requirement to balance our budget, it will be necessary for all of us to assist in any way we can.

I appreciate your dedication to our residents and the caring attitudes so many have shown to each other during this difficult time.

Sincerely,

Don Plusquellic

Mayor