

Memo

To: City Council
From: Amy E. Gilson, P.E., Director of Public Works
Date: June 18, 2020
Re: Filling Vacant DPW Positions



It is my understanding that the City Council voted at the meeting on June 8, 2020 to institute a hiring freeze.

Background

The DPW garage is staffed by ten employees. Of those ten, four are assigned to jobs that are not typically out on the "street crew": foreman, clerk, mechanic and service truck. That leaves six people to take care of the streets, sewers, watermain, sidewalks, snow, trees, parking lots, etc. We have asked the last two years for one more person to help with the work load, but it hasn't made it into the budget.

Just before the pandemic took hold, the DPW clerk moved to Texas. We were able to fill his position from within by promoting the mechanic. That left us without a mechanic, other than the clerk/mechanic trying to do both jobs. During the furlough, we lost one laborer to a better paying contractor, and another laborer left for what he felt was a better job. That leaves the DPW down three (3) employees.

Consequences

Being short three staff members, there are tasks that are not being done, or not being done in a timely manner. They include, but are not limited to, pothole patching, cleaning parks, stump grinding, street sweeping, jetting sanitary sewers, verifying service leads for compliance with the lead service line (LSL) rules, downtown maintenance, airport maintenance, landscaping, etc.

Regarding the vacant mechanic position, it is not sustainable for the DPW clerk to learn and continue with that new job and try to keep up with the mechanic work. Each is a separate and full-time position. Currently the vehicles are only receiving minimal maintenance on an as-needed basis. There is regular preventative maintenance that is not getting done on vehicles and heavy equipment. This shortens the life of the entire fleet and ends up costing more in the end. Again, not sustainable.

On top of being behind from the furlough, the big storm came through on June 10th. The whole DPW crew has been collecting brush full time since the 10th with the exception of one day where two employees had to go to a training class. They are still not done. We expect that will put us back two more weeks. We expect the same type of situation in the winter when it's time to plow snow. It takes all nine workers to handle a snow storm, especially if the downtown needs to be cleaned out in the middle of the night. They have to sleep sometime. Without those three positions, the level of service will suffer, and the safety of those working will be compromised.

Solution

I am respectfully asking that City Council allow the DPW to fill these three positions that were in the budget because at the time, there were bodies in those positions. The mechanic's wages are charged mostly to the Motor Vehicle Pool, and the other two laborers' wages are largely charged to the Water & Sewer Account and the Major & Local Streets accounts. The impact to the General Fund is minimal, and we will be conscious of the time that is charged to that fund.

Please let me know if you have any questions.