

COMMITTEE ON HUMAN RESOURCES/INSURANCE

March 5, 2024 at 6:15 PM

Chairman E. Sapienza called the meeting to order.

The Clerk called the roll.

Present: Aldermen E. Sapienza, Kantor, Vincent, T. Sapienza, Burkush

Messrs.: L. Drabik, T. Clougherty

1. HR Reports submitted by Lisa Drabik, Human Resources Director:
 - Position Summary Report
 - Vacancy Requisition Requests and Approvals
 - Summary of Arbitrations/Grievances
 - Sapphire SmartShopper Report*(Note: Provided for informational purposes only; no action is required.)*

Alderman Burkush stated last month I asked you about vacancies and I was hoping to talk about vacancies that are currently being frozen. My understanding is, like all other aldermen, we are getting numerous calls for city services. It is concerning that some vacancies are still being held and that departments are plus-rating people. Can you explain how that works?

Lisa Drabik, Human Resources Director, stated absolutely. I want to direct you to the requisition report in your packet to set the stage. Because of the way the agenda timing works, we have to provide this information to the Clerk's Office well in advance of the meeting tonight, about a week and a half. So, some of this data is stale by the time we get here this evening. As far as the positions that are listed here, I did go back and double-check this afternoon and as you can see right now the way it appears all of the positions except for four have been sent to the mayor and he approved them. Four have not been approved by the mayor for filling or posting. Three of those four have now been approved as of the time I submitted this report. The one that remains unapproved for posting is the Equipment Operator III. I believe that is one of the positions that is being what we call plus-rated, such that someone in a lower classification who has the skills to do that position is being paid a plus-rate in order to fill that role while it remains vacant.

Alderman Burkush stated it is important for the Committee members and the public to know that when somebody is plus-rated they get a 7% bump and if the person was promoted to the position, they would get 10%.

Ms. Drabik stated correct but it depends. It is not necessarily always 7%. The way the ordinance functions is that they are moved into either step 1 of the higher grade or the closest step. It works out to be different for different folks, but it could be.

Alderman Burkush stated we also have employees perform this necessary work but not getting the pay they are entitled to. I think that needs to be brought up.

Alderman T. Sapienza asked is there a time limit. If they are plus-rated and are doing a higher job, can that go on indefinitely?

Ms. Drabik answered it is meant to be temporary but the ordinance doesn't specify a time-limit.

Alderman T. Sapienza stated so right now there is only one job that is not approved.

Ms. Drabik replied as far as this list, that is correct. There have been new positions that have been put through as requisitions since we submitted this on the 23rd of February. Many of those have been approved but some have not yet been approved for posting.

Alderman T. Sapienza asked if there was a long-standing vacancy, it would be showing up here.

Ms. Drabik responded correct.

Alderman T. Sapienza asked once the mayor approves it, there is nothing that would hold it up except for not being able to find a candidate correct.

Ms. Drabik answered it is a two-step process. The first step is the requisition is put in by the department. I review it, HR reviews it to make sure it is indeed a vacancy. Then the mayor has to approve it to be posted and go out to look for candidates. Then we have a second step whereby the mayor has to approve an actual hire once a candidate has been identified.

Alderman T. Sapienza asked so this report ends with approval by the mayor.

Ms. Drabik replied correct. That reference is when it is approved to be posted through our requisition system, not necessarily when it has been approved for hire. That would take yet another step in the process and that would be reflected in the first report that we give you, which is the authorized position report which is first in your materials. Those don't have dates on them. They just show when we had a vacancy, the vacancy existed, and then a vacancy was hired, if hired.

Alderman T. Sapienza asked so all these that don't have a number are vacant.

Ms. Drabik responded you would have to match them up one for one meaning if there is a new vacancy in a dispatcher, but there is not a corresponding new hire, then you can assume it is still a vacant position. Unfortunately, the timing of the meetings doesn't always line-up with when we produce these reports because we do these on the first of the month so they are not lining up exactly for our purposes here in terms of the question that you are posing.

Alderman T. Sapienza stated right but as of the first of the month they would be accurate.

Ms. Drabik stated not as of March 1, because we have to give our materials to the Clerk's Office by February 23 for this meeting of the month. So those are always a month behind.

Alderman T. Sapienza stated that's fine. I understand that part of it.

Alderman Burkush asked how many vacancies do we currently have city-wide.

Ms. Drabik answered I don't have that number as of today. It usually hovers somewhere between 220 and 250. I didn't pull that number. It is constantly evolving, of course.

Alderman Burkush asked ten percent most of the time.

Ms. Drabik replied we have 1,200 employees so it is more like twenty percent.

Alderman Burkush stated the position is the claw pickup truck that we all call. Obviously, Public Works had to do something. So, they plus-rated a driver into the position. The driver is temporarily promoted and not getting the full pay.

Alderman T. Sapienza stated and nobody is doing his job that he got taken out of because he is doing somebody else's job.

Alderman Burkush stated I think the Committee needs to know that.

Alderman Kantor stated I was wondering if you could clarify what the aldermen are discussing. Do you have applicants? Are you able to hire them and fill those positions?

Tim Clougherty, Director of Public Works, stated the position that Alderman Burkush is referring to is a more seasoned position. That would be an internal promotion. So, right now we are requesting that vacancy be filled.

Alderman Kantor asked within the department.

Mr. Clougherty responded correct. It would be filled by an internal candidate. Currently, we have an individual, and we have to perform that function. We are going to continue to perform that customer service for the residents of Manchester. We are plus-rating someone that is in a lower position, as the alderman correctly pointed out.

Alderman Kantor asked can you fill the other position. Are there applicants for the other position?

Mr. Clougherty asked what position are you talking about.

Alderman Kantor replied if you've taken one person out of their other position...

Mr. Clougherty interjected no that is not the way it works. Once we have approval to fill that vacancy, the individual would be promoted into that position and then we would request approval to fill the subsequent vacancy.

Ms. Drabik stated there is a vacancy but there is not a vacancy that has been approved to be filled as of this moment. It will have a cascading effect once approved, but it has not been approved.

Mr. Clougherty stated this is part of the reason that it is difficult for us to make ardent strides toward reducing the number of vacancies that we have. In the case we are talking about, it is an Equipment Operator III. Below that is an Equipment Operator II and I. These are public service workers, refuse collectors, etc. The way our collective bargaining agreement works, the senior person that is qualified applies for the position. When you have an Equipment Operator III that retires, it is traditionally an Equipment Operator II that will apply for that. Then that creates another vacancy, and then we get an Equipment Operator I, and that creates another vacancy when that individual is promoted. It takes a long time before you are actually hiring somebody off the street, a new employee, to make a dent in that vacancy number.

Alderman Vincent asked is there anything that stops you from hiring. It looks like the mayor approved two Equipment Operator II positions. You have an Operator II working as an Operator III right now; I get that. Is there anything that stops you from trying to hire the two Operator II positions right now while you have an Operator II working as an Operator III? I don't want to say can you play the game, but can you hire? You have the two vacancies so can you hire the two? Can you start that process? Is the one that is doing the Operator III job right now probably going to be the one that gets the job?

Mr. Clougherty stated if they are approved then we post them and we go through the process of filling those positions.

Ms. Drabik stated technically, within our system, we only still have an Equipment Operator II. He is still classified as a II. He has been plus-rated to a III. We don't have a slot we have to fill. That is the hold-up.

Mr. Clougherty stated if we are afforded the opportunity to fill that Equipment Operator III, then we restart the process all over again. We start with a requisition, and it goes through the steps.

Alderman Vincent stated I am trying to think how we can be preemptive and hire now with the anticipation, but we don't have the opportunity to hire a III, so we are technically clogged.

Ms. Drabik stated we maintain strict controls in HR on the actual number of authorized positions, of course. We make sure that there is a slot for that position before it goes out.

Alderman T. Sapienza stated you mentioned it has to do with the collective bargaining agreements. The hold-up is more of the process than the collective bargaining agreements.

Mr. Clougherty stated I am only recognizing who these open positions go to; who is afforded the opportunity to take advantage of that vacancy. That is not holding up anything.

2. Communication from Fred McNeill, Chief Engineer, requesting the following changes to the Environmental Protection Division complement:
- Eliminate three (3) vacant full-time Laborer positions, grade 10, and one (1) vacant seasonal Laborer position, grade 10
 - Add three (3) Public Services Worker I positions, grade 12, and one (1) seasonal Public Services Worker I position, grade 12
 - Adopt the amendment of the class specification for Public Services Worker I, grade 12, which specifies that a CDL is not required

*On motion of **Alderman T. Sapienza**, duly seconded by **Alderman Vincent**, it was voted to approve the request.*

*There being no further business, on motion of **Alderman T. Sapienza**, duly seconded by **Alderman Vincent**, it was voted to adjourn.*

A True Record. Attest.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Matthew Normand". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Clerk of Committee