

COMMITTEE ON HUMAN RESOURCES/INSURANCE

April 5, 2022 at 6:30 PM

Chairman Cavanaugh called the meeting to order.

The Clerk called the roll.

Present: Aldermen Cavanaugh, George-Kelly, Barry, Gamache, Burkush

Messrs.: K. Ferguson, T. Clougherty

1. HR Reports submitted by Kathleen Ferguson, 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.)*

Chairman Cavanaugh asked is the first item showing us requisitions that haven't been filled.

Ms. Ferguson, HR Director, asked are you talking about the requisition summary report.

Chairman Cavanaugh answered yes.

Ms. Ferguson responded they are not actually requisitions. It is just showing you if there was a new vacancy for the month and if we hired someone for the month. It gives you an idea of how many people have left the city and how many have been hired. So we have 20 new vacancies so 20 people resigned or retired and they hired 17 to fill those positions.

Chairman Cavanaugh asked regarding the grievances and arbitrations it looks like three are active and three are pretty much settled. Could we in the future get something that shows the cost of the arbitrator? That is something I would like to see if it is settled within the city.

Ms. Ferguson asked what are you asking for.

Chairman Cavanaugh answered a cost for the arbitrator. If we can get that going forward because I would like to see that. Ideally, I would like to see these things settled in-house instead of having to go to outside counsel. I would like to see what we are spending.

Ms. Ferguson responded some of these grievances are pending so they haven't even gone to an arbitrator but yes we can make sure that after a grievance has been completed and we take it off the list that we tell you what the cost of the arbitrator was.

2. Communication from the HR Director recommending:
 - 1) Engineering position reclassifications to take effect on July 1, 2022:
 - Highway Chief Engineer grade 25 to grade 27 (cost: \$4,527.76);
 - Traffic Engineer grade 22 to grade 24 (cost: \$4,413.22);
 - Civil Engineer III grade 22 to grade 23 (cost: EPD \$3,485.05 and Water Works \$3,697.23; DPW and Airport have vacant positions currently); and
 - Chief Sanitary Engineer grade 25 to grade 28 (cost: \$6,815.26)
 - 2) Revision of the Chief Sanitary Engineer class specification to more accurately reflect the advanced current duties, skills and responsibilities of the position.
 - 3) Elimination of the following positions:
 - One (1) Boiler Plant Operator grade 16;
 - One (1) Maintenance Mechanic grade 14;
 - One (1) Recycling Coordinator grade 20; and
 - One (1) Shop Supervisor grade 19

Alderman Gamache moved to approve. **Alderman Barry** duly seconded the motion.

Alderman Barry stated I see that Tim is here and I would like him to come up and justify these. We are in contract negotiations right now and the last thing I want to see is us giving these raises and pay upgrades to people up towards the top when our lower employees are going to be struggling to get raises and we are going to have a difficult time. How does it benefit the city? These are pretty big raises.

Tim Clougherty, Deputy Public Works Director, stated speaking to your first point, relative to where we are in the salary scale we have made several strides in order to improve the salary scale across the board from our entry-level positions all the way up to these. I think one of the higher ones you will see is the Chief Sanitary Engineer. We are certainly not keying in on positions at the top. We are making efforts to improve the salary scale for recruitment as well as retention. I think you can see that Ms. Ferguson has articulated the reasons behind the recommendation for the upgrade of these positions. She talks about advance degrees as well as the recruitment and retention and the fact that right now our department is sitting at about a 23% vacancy rate. We have 44-45 vacancies and that is just not sustainable. We cannot perform our daily duties adequately over a long-term with that level of vacancies. The positions that you see here that are being requested for upgrade are for both recruitment purposes...we have had positions open for months at a time without any qualified applicants or qualified applicants that would accept the positions at the current pay scale. It is also about retention of the quality employees that we have because I can tell you with confidence that some of the people you see on this list could leave the city and make 40-50% more in the private sector and those opportunities are available to them right now. I think it is important for us as directors and deputy directors to advocate for our employees and that is what we have done in consultation with the Mayor. Our engineering group alone has about 50 projects totaling over \$40 million that two people are managing right now and I am very concerned about the workload that those individuals have.

Alderman Barry asked how many years have the people in these four positions been working for the city. It is not about retention. It is about them deserving a pay raise because retention to me, and this is my opinion only, is like someone that is towards the

bottom and you want to keep those people. Those are the vacancies. You have 40 vacancies at Highway but those are all low level positions or most of them are. That is where our problem is. We as a city are not paying enough down at the bottom. There is no way we are going to retain people if we pay them less than \$15/hour to start or just above \$15/hour to start. My first question is how many years have the people in those four positions been with the city?

Mr. Clougherty responded I don't have those numbers off the top of my head but in round numbers our Highway Chief Engineer has been with us for six years, our Traffic Engineer has been with us for about six years, and to your point these Civil Engineer III's with DPW are vacant right now. We can't find those people.

Alderman Barry stated I agree that we do need to pay them what they deserve. I am hoping that we are comparing these engineers with Nashua or any other big municipality throughout the state of NH because I am a true believer in comparing apples to apples and Manchester shouldn't be behind anyone. That was just my concern. Thank you.

Ms. George-Kelly asked can you speak to that a little bit. If these reclassifications were passed, could you speak a little bit as to where we rank as far as other cities or communities throughout NH in regards to these same positions? Are our salaries kind of in line with other communities or are we falling behind?

Mr. Clougherty replied I think Manchester is falling behind generally. It is hard for me to say in broad strokes because of the quantity of positions that we have. I can tell you that Wastewater Treatment Plant Operators make 50% more in another large city that was previously mentioned. It is \$10/hour more. So we are struggling with some of those things and those are some of the things that you have seen being brought to the committee. You will see us working with HR to continue to upgrade our salary structure. You are going to see that when we write a letter to Alderman Long talking about the Mayor's budget. We are advocating for our employees across the board in order to retain them and retaining is across the board. It is low level employees all the way to high level employees. Like I said, Director Sheppard and I have had long serious conversations about the state of the department and how we are going to be able to provide the level of service...and I think the Department of Public Works has always provided a high quality level of service but how are we going to continue to sustain that given the number of vacancies that we have. That is a really difficult question to answer. We have to be able to fill those vacancies and retain the people that we currently have.

Ms. Ferguson stated I think it is important to know that we have two vacant Civil Engineer III's. One of them was with us and she left and now it is vacant. These are professional engineers with NH professional engineering licenses. We have the Highway Chief Engineer. The previous Highway Chief Engineer left and I am not sure if he went to another municipality or went to the private sector...

Mr. Clougherty interjected he went to a private company and he is making a lot more money.

Ms. Ferguson stated the fact that these are higher grades is true but we are talking about the engineering division. When you look at the current job market for engineers, we want to be competitive. It is one thing to recruit but the retaining is so important. It costs a lot to have a new engineer come in and learn the projects that we have right now. If we can increase the morale of these engineers and bring them up a little bit because they are highly talented and licensed professional engineers, I think it is a win-win for the city.

Alderman Barry stated honestly I am fine with this but I would like to raise the morale of every employee in the City of Manchester.

Mr. Clougherty stated the position reclassifications are not going to take effect until July 1. Our intention is to get through some of the budget...you will hear us advocating for other positions over the next few months but until that time we thought it would be best to make these effective in the next fiscal year.

Chairman Cavanaugh stated I agree with some of the comments by both the alderman and the staff. I think from new employees to experienced employees in my opinion the city has already fallen behind and we are doing catch-up and we have to jump ahead to get there. I know that we can't fill new positions and I don't think we have to go too far...look at Todd Connors who left to go into the private sector. There is a reason people are leaving and we have to try to work on the benefits package and I don't know if instead of vacation and sick time we just call it PTO time and be more flexible with that and be more flexible with other things that I think this committee can look at. I know at the state level from General Mikolaities that with their tuition reimbursement for the National Guard, it is not just employees or people in the armed forces but it is also for their spouses. We have to be flexible. If anyone listens to the radio you hear about a \$4,500 signing bonus to \$15,000. It is going to be tough for us to match that so how do we do it? Flexibility with benefits and is this a good place to work. That is what we need to look at.

Ms. Ferguson stated it is interesting because we did start a new program, the Student Loan Repayment Program. It is not funded but it is a way to assist some of our employees who have high student loan debt to be able to stay here and be loyal to the city knowing that the city will kick-in \$50/month or something to that effect to help bring down that student loan debt for some of our employees. We are trying to come up with some new programs. It is just a matter of funding.

Alderman Burkush asked Tim isn't it true that bringing consultants in to administer these programs costs us more money.

Mr. Clougherty answered yes about four times as much and that is what we are forced to do right now with our road program. Those are dollars and cents that could be used somewhere else.

Chairman Cavanaugh called for a vote. *There being none opposed, the motion carried.*

TABLED ITEM

3. Proposed Resolution from Alderman Long supporting a minimum wage of \$15.00 per hour for City employees.
(Note: Tabled on 3/1/22.)

This item remained on the table.

*There being no further business, on motion of **Alderman Barry**, duly seconded by **Alderman Gamache**, 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