

**Finance & Personnel Committee  
of the City of Onalaska**

Wednesday, March 3, 2021

1

1 The Meeting of the Finance & Personnel Committee of the City of Onalaska was called to order  
2 at 7:15 p.m. on Wednesday, March 3, 2021. It was noted that the meeting had been announced  
3 and a notice posted at City Hall.

4  
5 Roll call was taken, with the following members present: Ald. Dan Stevens, Ald. Jim Olson,  
6 Ald. Diane Wulf

7  
8 Also Present (either in person or remotely): City Administrator Eric Rindfleisch, Mayor Kim  
9 Smith, City Clerk JoAnn Marcon, City Attorney Amanda Jackson, Financial Services  
10 Director/Treasurer Fred Buehler, City Engineer Jarrod Holter, Planning Manager Katie  
11 Aspenson, Parks and Recreation Director Dan Wick, Payroll/Human Resources Specialist Amy  
12 Hewitt, Police Chief Charles Ashbeck, Fire Chief Troy Gudie, Ald. Tom Smith, Ald. Cari  
13 Burmaster, Nils Housker of IT Services

14  
15 **Item 2 – Approval of minutes from the previous meeting**

16  
17 Motion by Ald. Olson, second by Ald. Wulf, to approve the minutes from the previous meeting  
18 as printed and on file in the City Clerk’s Office.

19  
20 On voice vote, motion carried.

21  
22 **Item 3 – Public Input (limited to 3 minutes/individual)**

23  
24 Ald. Stevens called three times for anyone wishing to provide public input and closed that  
25 portion of the meeting.

26  
27 **Consideration and possible action on the following items:**

28  
29 **FINANCE**

30  
31 **Item 4 – 2020 Omni Center Financials**

32  
33 Fred directed committee members to page 3 of their packets and referred to the footnote showing  
34 the Omni Center had received a transfer of \$228,306.91. The funds are broken down as follows:

- 35  
36
- The Special Revenue Fund transferred \$63,174.
  - The resolution the Common Council passed at its February 9 meeting directed \$93,932 to the Omni Center to assist in helping the facility become budget-neutral.
  - Room tax funds totaled \$56,700.91.
  - Additional Tourism funding totaled \$14,500.
- 37  
38  
39  
40  
41

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42 Fred next directed committee members to page 2 of their packets and reported that revenues  
43 totaled \$580,163.15, and expenditures totaled \$580,259.28 for a deficit of \$96.13. Fred next  
44 directed committee members to page 6 of their packets, which is a recap of the funds the Omni  
45 Center had received. The recap includes the following information:

46

- 47 • Sales totaled \$5,670,090.98. The Omni Center received 1 percent of the sales  
48 (\$56,700.91).
- 49 • Fund 204 collected \$43,688.05.

50

51 Fred referred to the document he had distributed earlier Wednesday evening and noted the fund  
52 in which there once had been \$1.5 million (Tourism Restricted Fund Balance) carried a balance  
53 of \$760,280.27 as of December 31, 2020. Fred next addressed the room tax account, noting this  
54 account typically brings in \$77,000 to \$80,000 annually. Fred also noted the city gives the Omni  
55 Center via the budget process approximately \$67,000 to \$70,000 yearly. Fred told committee  
56 members it had been necessary to utilize funds from the reserves, and that account now carries a  
57 balance of \$67,936.83. Fred noted the city had utilized funding from the reserves a few years  
58 ago when it attempted to prevent the Badger Coulee Line from passing through the city.

59

60 Motion by Ald. Wulf, second by Ald. Olson, to accept and place on file the 2020 Omni Center  
61 Financials.

62

63 On voice vote, motion carried.

64

65 **Item 5 – 2021 General Fund Financials**

66

67 Fred directed committee members to page 12 and noted \$9,977,315 had been budgeted for  
68 revenues in 2021, and the city had collected \$281,692 as of January 31. Fred addressed the  
69 city’s payroll and told committee members, “All the days that represent last year’s business, an  
70 accrued journal entry was done to transfer it into 2020. You don’t see a lot of expenditures a lot  
71 smaller because of the fact that I think four of the days were transferred into last year on that first  
72 payroll. I think roughly 40 percent of it was charged to last year, and 60 percent was 2021.”

73

74 Motion by Ald. Wulf, second by Ald. Olson, to accept and place on file the 2021 General Fund  
75 Financials.

76

77 On voice vote, motion carried.

78

79 **Item 6 – Authorization to approve Resolution 19-2021 – State Trust Fund Loan (S.T.F.L.)**  
80 **on the 2021 Capital Projects that are not eligible for General Obligation Bonds in the**  
81 **amount of \$253,388**

82

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83 Motion by Ald. Stevens, second by Ald. Olson, to approve Resolution 19-2021 – State Trust  
84 Fund Loan (S.T.F.L.) on the 2021 Capital Projects that are not eligible for General Obligation  
85 Bonds in the amount of \$253,388.

86  
87 Fred told committee members the city is going into the bond market and said the results will be  
88 shared at the March 9 Common Council meeting. Fred said he also had completed an  
89 application for the State Trust Fund Loan, and he noted the identification number found on page  
90 25 of committee members’ packets is the State Trust Fund Loan for the City of Onalaska in the  
91 amount of \$253,388. Fred noted page 27 in committee members’ packets outlines how the city  
92 intends to utilize the funds. Fred also noted the Council will approve this resolution at its March  
93 9 meeting and it will move on to the State of Wisconsin, at which time the Commissioner of  
94 Insurance will review and authorize the loan, which carries an interest rate of 2.5 percent over  
95 five years.

96  
97 On voice vote, motion carried.

98  
99 **Item 7 – Review and approval of modifications to the 2021 Fee Schedule**

100  
101 Katie said staff is bringing forward proposed modifications to the 2021 Fee Schedule. Katie  
102 noted that previously both major and minor home occupations were charged the same fee, and  
103 she said staff is looking into breaking it into two separate fees. Katie noted that individuals who  
104 hold Minor Home Occupation Permits do not have many individuals coming to their homes, and  
105 she said staff is attempting to keep them at a very low level. As staff members find them, they  
106 can send individuals letters and work through the process. Major Home Occupation Permits  
107 would be kept as a higher value as such businesses have employees. Katie said, “We want to  
108 encourage home occupations to the degree that people are able to start up a new business and see  
109 how it goes. But the intent for those, if they become truly successful, is they would move to a  
110 commercial building. That’s why there is a differentiation in the fee, and also city staff review  
111 time.”

112  
113 Katie next addressed the building permit fee cap for commercial and multifamily structures,  
114 telling committee members there previously was a \$40,000 cap for the maximum amount the city  
115 would charge for a Building Permit. Katie noted the value had not changed for more than 10  
116 years, and she said city staff wanted to add it back in. The cap has been increased to \$50,000,  
117 and Katie said it would be instituted only if a very large structure came into the city.

118  
119 Katie next addressed Recreational Burning Permits, noting they have been relocated to the Fee  
120 Schedule. Katie also noted staff has added a new fee for the Open Burning Permit. This is a  
121 new application that would run both through the City Clerk and the Fire Department.

122  
123 Ald. Wulf addressed Major Home Occupation Permits, noting the initial fee is higher and the  
124 renewal fee is a lesser amount. Ald. Wulf said this is the first time she can remember the first  
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125 year being less (\$50) and the renewal fee being more (\$100), and she asked Katie to explain the  
126 change.

127

128 Katie told Ald. Wulf, “It’s essentially going back to the original where it’s a new business  
129 starting out. We want to do our best to support them. Then we would also have the opportunity  
130 in the subsequent years to see if any issue with neighboring residents has come upon that, so it’s  
131 an opportunity for the city to take in complaints. On the same token, if they keep growing, it  
132 would be at that point a push to go to more of a commercial business as opposed to keeping that  
133 in a residential area. We’re basically getting them in and starting them small, and then if they do  
134 progress [the city will charge] the additional fee.”

135

136 Motion by Ald. Wulf, second by Ald. Olson, to approve modifications to the 2021 Fee Schedule.

137

138 On voice vote, motion carried.

139

140 **Item 8 – Modifications to the Purchasing-Budget-Accounting Finance Manual**

141

142 Amanda directed committee members to the first page of the manual, which shows the  
143 Purchasing Policy Matrix, and she said the questions she is most asked relate to if a contract is  
144 needed and who is required to sign off on it if someone wishes to make a purchase. Amanda said  
145 the goal is to provide city staff with a one-page document that specifically outlines the process  
146 for purchases. Amanda noted the Finance Manual had been updated to address purchasing along  
147 the lines of the Purchasing Matrix. The updates address the different requirements for the  
148 different amounts and what would be required. Amanda said the policy is now clearer, noting  
149 there previously was not an in-depth policy. Amanda noted the requirement for surplus property  
150 had been removed this past fall, and she said a requirement to provide the Common Council with  
151 an update regarding surplus property would be included. That policy has now been clarified, and  
152 it also describes how the city would address surplus property (i.e., donations, auctions, sealed  
153 bids, negotiated sale, trade-in). An annual report will be provided yearly. Amanda said  
154 typographical errors had been corrected, and a signature line had been added. Any city  
155 employee who does purchasing will acknowledge he or she understands these policies moving  
156 forward.

157

158 Ald. Wulf thanked everyone who had worked on updating the manual and said she appreciates  
159 the Purchasing Policy Matrix, which she said she believes will simplify the process for city  
160 employees. Ald. Wulf said she appreciates the fact city employees are being encouraged to  
161 purchase local, if it is possible to do so, and also the fact they do not always have to choose the  
162 lowest bid. Ald. Wulf next addressed surplus property, stating she believes it is appropriate to  
163 include it in this policy. Ald. Wulf noted the Common Council previously either had to grant  
164 permission to sell surplus property or receive a report regarding surplus property. Ald. Wulf  
165 referred to page 60 and noted it states that the Finance Director shall give an annual report each  
166 year in December, outlining the sale and/or disposition of any surplus property. Ald. Wulf asked

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167 Fred if the Council had received such a report in 2020.

168

169 Fred acknowledged that there had not been such a report and said, "I'd be happy to."

170

171 Ald. Wulf said she does not believe the Common Council needs to be making decisions  
172 regarding surplus property; rather, the department heads should be doing so. Ald. Wulf said she  
173 would like to request a report from Fred for 2020 whenever he has the opportunity to provide  
174 one.

175

176 Ald. Stevens said, "A report at the end of the year every year on the surplus. The Council  
177 doesn't micromanage surpluses. We're just advised of what transpired."

178

179 Fred told committee members he believes they are seeking information on larger surplus items  
180 such as police squad cars and dump trucks.

181

182 Ald. Wulf told Fred that is correct and said, "I'm also looking at making the report so you have  
183 that information. What information do you have readily available?"

184

185 Fred told Ald. Wulf all the information is contained in a folder.

186

187 Jarrod told committee members the city sells most of its equipment on the Wisconsin Online  
188 Surplus Auction site. Jarrod items that do not receive a bid are disposed of.

189

190 Ald. Wulf requested a report regarding surplus items for 2020.

191

192 Fred told Ald. Wulf he will provide one.

193

194 Ald. Wulf addressed the matrix and said it is her understanding that the Common Council and/or  
195 the Board of Public Works would not see anything for approval until the threshold begins at  
196 \$15,000.

197

198 Jarrod said the amount for Public Works construction is shown to be \$25,000. Amounts between  
199 \$5,000 and \$24,999 will require written quotes, with a Class 1 notice afterward. Jarrod added,  
200 "It's by the Administrator, assuming it's budgeted. We're trying to follow the state statutes as  
201 far as you have to bid over \$25,000."

202

203 Ald. Wulf inquired about the previous threshold.

204

205 Jarrod told Ald. Wulf the previous purchasing policy stated that \$25,000 needed approval, and he  
206 said, "If it was budgeted up to \$25,000, you could put the two quotes in the ... There was a  
207 convoluted way of doing it, and it was different for different things. That's the reason we're  
208 going to this. It doesn't mean that staff did not bring forward items that were under \$25,000. I

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209 know on the Board of Public Works many times we brought forward ... The air compressor  
210 [approved Tuesday by the Board of Public Works] was \$20,990.”

211

212 Ald. Wulf asked, “Going forward, we would not see that?”

213

214 Jarrod said, “You would not have to. It doesn’t mean it couldn’t come [forward], but we would  
215 not have to bring it forward.”

216

217 City Administrator Rindfleisch noted the exceptions are the awarding and placing the order  
218 approval, and he said, “For new contract services and equipment, that’s \$50,000 and above.  
219 Renewal of contract services and equipment previously budgeted for, over \$30,000 and above,  
220 the award will still come to Council. That’s not a change; that’s current practice. Hence, the  
221 need for the matrix because some things are \$50,000. Some things are \$25,000.”

222

223 Ald. Wulf said she agrees with Jarrod’s statement that the process was convoluted over the years  
224 and stated she supports what is before the committee this evening.

225

226 Mayor K. Smith’s comments were inaudible on the recording.

227

228 City Administrator Rindfleisch said, “If it’s a non-budgeted item, it has to become a budgeted  
229 item by going to Council.”

230

231 Motion by Ald. Wulf, second by Ald. Olson, to approve modifications to the Purchasing-Budget-  
232 Accounting Finance Manual.

233

234 On voice vote, motion carried.

235

236 **PERSONNEL**

237

238 **Item 9 – Discussion on Public Works Department organizational structure alterations**

239

240 Jarrod noted he had included a memorandum in committee members’ packets that outlines the  
241 reorganization of the Public Works Department. Jarrod referred to the memo and said the  
242 primary of the proposed changes include the upcoming retirement in June of Public Works  
243 Manager Jim Prindle as well as what Jarrod said he believes are deficiencies in a very vertical  
244 structure. Jarrod said, “We show that all duties fall under multiple people, when in reality not all  
245 of those duties can be performed by those individuals that we currently show in our  
246 organizational chart. We would like to make it more horizontal where we actually have duties  
247 assigned to individuals that would make sense as far as workload, and also to define a structure  
248 where we have a chain of command that is much easier to follow. Right now, we have so many  
249 people vertically that it is hard and difficult for things to get moved around properly.”

250

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251 Jarrod noted a department reorganization had occurred approximately 3½ years ago and he said  
252 he believes it had been very beneficial at that time. However, Jarrod also said, “I think we’re  
253 due for more. Part of it is ever-changing structure of duties such as the addition a year-and-a-  
254 half, two years ago of the full IT functions in the Public Works Department – just trying to find a  
255 home for that and trying to find where that’s going to fit into the overall structure of the Public  
256 Works Department. Tonight, I just wanted to bring this forward to let you know it is happening.  
257 If you have questions, come see me. If you would like to discuss it further, come see me [and]  
258 come gather input. I wanted to make sure you knew it was coming before I come forward with a  
259 new organizational chart, job descriptions and things such as that.

260  
261 One of the biggest impetus for this is with our retirement and not budgeting for the replacement  
262 of our Public Works Manager, we really need to restructure. And I feel it’s an opportunity for  
263 the Public Works Department to be even better than it is now and really define roles. We’ve  
264 learned a lot in the last 3½ years since the last reorganization. I’ve been the City  
265 Engineer/Director of Public Works for 15 years now, and I think this is about the fourth time.  
266 We do keep trying to get better and better as time goes on and reevaluate where we’re at and do  
267 the best we can.”

268  
269 City Administrator Rindfleisch referred to the last sentence in the second paragraph of Jarrod’s  
270 memo, which reads *“New job descriptions will more accurately reflect roles and responsibilities*  
271 *allowing them to be scored properly within the approved compensation plan,”* and he told  
272 committee members he wishes to reiterate the fact that as the city proceeds with continuing to  
273 improve the structure of departments, Public Works Department employees have provided input  
274 regarding their job descriptions, including the fact they want to ensure that the tasks they perform  
275 are fully incorporated in the job descriptions. City Administrator Rindfleisch said, “I do want to  
276 publicly state that a consideration as Jarrod moves forward is to make sure the job descriptions  
277 reflect the duties as input given by those employees. There will be additional changes with  
278 employee input.”

279  
280 Ald. Wulf said the goal is to reorganize the Public Works Department and ensure that everything  
281 aligns with the city’s new Compensation Plan.

282  
283 Jarrod said his goal is to present his plan either in April or May, telling committee members it is  
284 progressing. Jarrod said this is the type of plan one needs to finish, step away from for a few  
285 days, then reexamine it and attempt to incorporate input. Jarrod said the goal is to ensure that the  
286 plan is not completed in one week because he hopes the organizational chart will be  
287 longstanding.

288  
289 Ald. Stevens said he generally supports “flatter” organizational structures as they are better  
290 suited to making sure employees accomplish every task.

291  
292 **Item 10 – Update on Recruitment and Open Positions within the City of Onalaska**

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293

294 Amanda shared the following update:

295

- 296 • The Police and Fire Commission conducted interviews Monday evening for the vacant
- 297 Assistant Fire Chief position, and commission members decided to extend an offer to a
- 298 candidate, who has yet to respond.
- 299 • There is ongoing recruitment for a Police Department eligibility list.
- 300 • The Fire Department will conduct agility testing in April. Invitation letters will be sent to
- 301 candidates.
- 302 • Interviews will be conducted March 11 for the open Paralegal position. Four candidates
- 303 will interview.
- 304 • Two round-robin interviews are scheduled March 10 for the vacant Human Resources
- 305 Manager position.

306

307 **Item 11 – Review and consideration of the updated Finance Director job description**

308

309 City Administrator Rindfleisch said following the format of the Human Resources Manager job  
310 description that had come before both the Finance and Personnel Committee and the Common  
311 Council in February, the standard format for the Finance Director position is slightly shorter than  
312 it was in the past. City Administrator Rindfleisch said the purpose for doing so is not have an  
313 entire checklist of every task each position will perform for marketing purposes. Rather, the  
314 purpose is to present the key components, a new standard, and a new format for the position.  
315 City Administrator Rindfleisch stressed that this does not mean some of those lists of tasks and  
316 duties of the Finance Director will not still be done by that individual. City Administrator  
317 Rindfleisch told committee members it becomes problematic for an organization that is  
318 attempting to recruit candidates when every possible task is listed. Individuals believe they are  
319 unable to achieve every task, and thus they do not apply even though they are capable of  
320 completing the tasks and/or learning them.

321

322 Ald. Stevens asked if it would be problematic if a specific skillset was not listed and the person  
323 the city ultimately hires does not possess that skill. Ald. Stevens asked if the city would require  
324 that individual to become proficient in that skill, and if the city would pay for the proper training.  
325 Ald. Stevens also asked what would happen if the individual was unable to achieve that skillset.

326

327 Amanda told Ald. Stevens she believes the fundamental skillsets are covered in the job  
328 description that is before the committee. Amanda noted the Finance Department tends to  
329 oversee the Assessor's Department, and she said that is something for which the city is able to  
330 train someone. Amanda said it is possible a Finance Director who currently is employed by  
331 another municipality might not have experience managing an assessment office, and she stated,  
332 "To Eric's point, that might be something that if somebody saw that and said, 'I don't have that  
333 [and] maybe I shouldn't apply for this,' we don't remove candidates because that is a teachable

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334 skill, and that is something that is kind of Onalaska-specific.”

335

336 Ald. Stevens asked if the primary purpose is not to discourage qualified candidates, and also to  
337 widen the pool of potential applicants.

338

339 Amanda said yes.

340

341 Motion by Ald. Wulf, second by Ald. Olson, to approve the updated Finance Director job  
342 description.

343

344 On voice vote, motion carried.

345

346 **Adjournment**

347

348 Motion by Ald. Wulf, second by Ald. Olson, to adjourn at 7:55 p.m.

349

350 On voice vote, motion carried.

351

352

353 Recorded by:

354

355 Kirk Bey