

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

Wednesday, March 4, 2020

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 4, 2020. 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: City Administrator Eric Rindfleisch, Mayor Kim Smith, City Attorney Amanda
9 Jackson, Financial Services Director/Treasurer Fred Buehler, Human Resource Director Hope
10 Burchell, City Engineer Jarrod Holter, Planning Manager Katie Aspenson, Parks and Recreation
11 Director Dan Wick, Police Chief Charles Ashbeck, Fire Chief Billy Hayes, Ald. Tom Smith

12
13 **Item 2 – Approval of minutes from the previous meeting**

14
15 Motion by Ald. Olson, second by Ald. Wulf, to approve the minutes from the previous meeting
16 as printed and on file in the City Clerk’s Office.

17
18 On voice vote, motion carried.

19
20 **Item 3 – Public Input (limited to 3 minutes/individual)**

21
22 Ald. Stevens called three times for anyone wishing to provide public input and closed that
23 portion of the meeting.

24
25 **Consideration and possible action on the following items:**

26
27 **FINANCE**

28
29 **Item 4 – 2020 Omni Center Financials**

30
31 Fred reported the Omni Center’s deficit is \$24,838.12 (\$76,287.45 in revenue, \$101,125.57 in
32 expenditures).

33
34 Motion by Ald. Wulf, second by Ald. Olson, to accept the 2020 Omni Center Financials and
35 place them on file.

36
37 On voice vote, motion carried.

38
39 **Item 5 – 2020 General Fund Financials**

40
41 Fred reported revenues totaled \$479,474.72, and expenditures totaled \$1,196,602.36.

42

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43 Motion by Ald. Wulf, second by Ald. Olson, to accept the 2020 General Fund Financials and
44 place them on file.

45

46 On voice vote, motion carried.

47

48 **Item 6 – Authorization to set aside \$20,000 annually in a Depreciation Fund for the Storm**
49 **Water Utility with a maximum cap of \$400,000**

50

51 Fred reminded committee members the city had done a Water and Sewer Mortgage Revenue
52 Bond Issue in 2019 that totaled slightly more than \$8 million, and also a Storm Water Mortgage
53 Revenue Bond Issue that totaled approximately \$500,000. Fred said there are three components
54 that must occur, and they must comply with the Mortgage Revenue Bond requirements under the
55 bond covenants of the Water and Sewer Mortgage Revenue and the Storm Water Mortgage
56 Revenue. The components are:

57

- 58 1. Depreciation Funds
- 59 2. Special Redemption Fund
- 60 3. Reserve Requirement

61

62 Regarding Depreciation Funds, Fred said the resolution the Common Council had passed was
63 “somewhat silent” as normally the exact funding to be set aside annually would be stated. Fred
64 told committee members the Common Council may establish a figure, and he said the annual
65 sum of \$20,000 is very similar to the Water and Sewer. Fred said he believes the Water
66 Department has set aside \$25,000, with a maximum cap of \$475,000, and the Sewer Utility has
67 set aside \$20,000, with a maximum cap of \$400,000. Fred said the funds are set aside for any
68 emergency that might occur in the Storm Water Utility.

69

70 Fred next addressed a Special Redemption Fund, noting it is the principal and interest payment
71 for 2020. The funds that were set aside as of December 31, 2019 totaled \$65,061. Fred said
72 when the payments come due – interest payments are due twice a year, and principal payments
73 are due once a year – there is adequate funding in the Special Redemption Fund to make the
74 payment.

75

76 Fred next addressed the Reserve Requirement, which means an amount equal to the least of:

77

- 78 a. 10 percent of slated principal amount of 2019 bonds
- 79 b. Maximum annual debt service on the 2019 bonds
- 80 c. 125 percent of average annual debt service on the 2019 bonds

81

82 Fred noted Requirement ‘a’ for the Storm Water Utility totals \$221,500; Requirement ‘b’ totals
83 \$154,063; and Requirement ‘c’ totals \$189,065. Fred said the \$154,063 under ‘b’ will be placed
84 in the Reserve Account until 2025.

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85

86 Fred said he believes the Storm Water and Sewer Utilities are similar in nature; thus, that is how
87 he established setting aside \$20,000 annually.

88

89 Ald. Stevens asked Fred if the funds must be replenished the following year should the
90 Engineering Department need to utilize the funds for an unbudgeted emergency within the Storm
91 Water Utility.

92

93 Fred told Ald. Stevens the funds are set aside yearly until the account reaches the maximum
94 threshold. Once that threshold is reached, it remains there. Fred said he believes there have been
95 two instances in which the Board of Public Works and Common Council had voted to utilize
96 funds from the Water and Sewer Utility Depreciation Fund.

97

98 City Administrator Rindfleisch noted there is “cash on hand” in both the Special Redemption
99 Fund and the Reserve Requirement, and he said, “In setting rates for utilities, depreciation is a
100 non-cash expense that you account for rates. However, since we have debt issued against the
101 utility providing revenue in, what our covenants say for our bond holders is that we will have a
102 reserve so that if an emergency does arise, we don’t have to borrow additional money to cover
103 those expenses. We have a reserve on hand for those expenses, therefore not putting the health
104 of the utility at risk. Basically you’re taking that non-cash expense and making it a cash expense
105 until you build up the maximum reserve, as required.”

106

107 Motion by Ald. Wulf, second by Ald. Olson, to approve authorization to set aside \$20,000
108 annually in a Depreciation Fund for the Storm Water Utility with a maximum cap of \$400,000.

109

110 Ald. Stevens asked Fred if the funds will come from the Storm Water fees or the levy.

111

112 Fred said they will come from the Storm Water Fund Balance, with No. 3 being the exception.
113 Fred said, “Number three, when the funds were received by the city, that was the [funding] we
114 received, and it was called the Debt Service Reserve back then.”

115

116 On voice vote, motion carried.

117

118 **PERSONNEL**

119

120 **Item 7 – Resolution 18-2020 - Authorization to allow for replacement of full-time vacant**
121 **budgeted positions without committee approval provided the grade and essential job**
122 **functions do not change and Human Resources provides a monthly update on staffing**

123

124 Ald. Stevens said the committee received updates through the end of 2019 regarding positions
125 that would become available both in the Police Department and the Fire Department, “with the
126 idea that we wanted to make it more efficient that Human Resources could go ahead and fill

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127 positions that were vital in an emergency sense to the city.” Ald. Stevens referred to the copy of
128 the resolution included in committee members’ packets and said the wording might be slightly
129 different than how it is listed on this evening’s agenda.

130
131 Hope told committee members a request had been made to the Common Council in July 2019 to
132 have all Police Department and Fire Department Sergeant and Lieutenant positions filled
133 automatically because staff did not want a delay in hiring to cause issues with filling those
134 positions. Hope said, “The catch-all with ... If we have budgeted positions in the budget already
135 to kind of carry that over with all positions, with the caveat that if there is any major job
136 description changes, which typically if there are essential job function changes or something
137 that’s going to change the grade, those would have to come to the Council for approval because
138 that’s going to change something significantly. We’re saying that other than those types of
139 changes that we would bring that back to the Council.

140
141 Essentially what we’re asking is if we already have it budgeted, rather than having to wait for
142 Council approval to come back because, for example, what happens oftentimes is after we get
143 through our committee process is I might have a resignation right after the Council meeting.
144 And unless I hold a special meeting, I have to wait until the next month’s meeting to actually
145 request to get it filled. That might delay that department’s ability to find staff, and even take
146 longer to get assistance. For some departments that’s not a big deal. But for other departments,
147 it could be a big deal. It depends on the department, it depends on the number of staff, and it
148 depends on the tasks that are being done and the size of the department. I think the intent of
149 what we put together here ... I think Amanda put the resolution together with the idea that
150 having the resolution would help assist us in finding, where do we have this information? I think
151 the intent is still the same. If we’re making major changes or making grade changes, it comes
152 back to the Council. Ultimately the Council has to make those changes because those weren’t
153 budgeted, and those changes have to be approved by the Council. But if they’re already
154 budgeted positions that the Council has approved through the budget process, then we’re just
155 requesting that those positions get filled. Then we don’t have to bring them back every time.
156 That’s similar to Police, Fire, and those types of positions.”

157
158 Motion by Ald. Stevens, second by Ald. Olson, to approve Resolution 18-2020 – Authorization
159 to allow for replacement of full-time vacant budgeted positions without committee approval
160 provided the grade and essential job functions do not change and Human Resources provides a
161 monthly update on staffing, with an amendment to delete the word “major” so that the final
162 phrase reads as follows: *“Now, therefore, be it resolved that where no changes to the essential
163 job functions and pay grade exist and where the position has been budgeted and funded, City
164 staff shall be authorized to fill such vacancies as needed and that a monthly report shall be
165 provided related to vacancies and hiring within the City at the monthly Finance and Personnel
166 Committee meeting.”*

167
168 Amanda told committee members, “My only hesitation would be sometimes we update job
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169 descriptions simply to update the language of the technology software we use to we're not
170 making a major change to the essential job function, but we're updating a procedure to what it
171 currently is. I guess if we can't make any changes, then we're getting back to coming back and
172 having approve what could be a two-word change that really has no bearing on the actual job
173 duties themselves. But because we're making a change now, we have to bring it back. I guess
174 that's my only concern with removing the [word] 'major.' "

175
176 City Administrator Rindfleisch said, "Going back to councils and boards with midyear hiring
177 replacements, in my experience it's relatively common. But the purpose for it, especially for
178 currently budgeted positions, is the ability for the Council to make substantial changes to the
179 organization's staffing, look for efficiencies, downsize – what have you – during the year. If a
180 vacancy occurs, [it is] the opportunity to say, do we really need to fill that position, or do we not
181 need to fill that position? That is a policy decision, and I strongly support those decisions
182 coming back to Council if we're looking at any change in pay, a change in major duties, or a
183 reorganization. Those communities [where] it generally goes back to the Council all generally
184 have one thing in common: They do not have an Administrator. The Administrator position
185 reports directly to Council. Part of my annual review is guidance by the Council in terms of ...
186 are there efficiencies [and] are there ways of reorganizing? Any opportunities as they present
187 themselves, this will not preclude that from occurring [and] of saying, 'No, this is a
188 reorganization [or] this is a substantial position change. Here's our opportunity to put forth the
189 Council's agenda and goals and prepare a plan that comes back to the Council to do so.'

190
191 In the absence of that, we are effectively continuing the practice we've had in the past which, to
192 change or not to change is a policy decision [that is] completely in the Council's hands of all
193 decisions coming back to the Council at all times. If that is the desire of the Council, that is
194 acceptable. It does not improve efficiency, however, to fill the existing positions as they stand.
195 To Amanda's point, something that does not affect what our position would score could be the
196 type of technology used or if there are required changes to a position. For example, most of the
197 positions say, 'requires a driver's license.' Is that an accurate statement or not? If an
198 opportunity arises that a position opens up and we want to make a change, we can make that
199 change on a staff level without coming to the Council and waiting that cycle to come back. ...
200 Those are, in my mind, changes that can be made administratively that certainly don't have to
201 come back and take up the time of the Council."

202
203 Ald. Olson asked, "If we're going to change the way we normally do business with this way, in
204 order to go back and question some things, we need the Council's approval to do so?"

205
206 City Administrator Rindfleisch told Ald. Olson the Common Council may question anything at
207 any time and said, "My expectations for what this Council is looking for is if there are
208 opportunities to become more efficient or downsize, that's the opportunity for the Council on
209 setting goals for that year. I'm responsible for doing so. If we simply fill positions and miss that
210 opportunity, that's on the Administrator's shoulders."

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211
212 Ald. Wulf said, “I wasn’t on [the Finance and Personnel Committee] at the time, but I know the
213 motion was done at Council. ... I know in July 2019 at Council, then-Aldersperson Kim Smith
214 was representing [the Finance and Personnel Committee] to approve authorization to fill any
215 vacant Police Officer, Sergeant, Lieutenant, Firefighter budgeted positions for 2019 that may
216 come up between now and the end of 2019. She reflected the motion at [the Finance and
217 Personnel Committee level] was simply to fill a simple vacancy. But after further review and
218 discussion with Human Resources, it was decided to expand this. I felt it was Council’s position
219 – at least it was my position – to aid in the efficiency for Human Resources and for staff to go
220 ahead and fill those positions expediently, especially with [the] Fire [Department] due to staffing
221 situations that we had last year, and that we have to this day. I will continue to advocate for that
222 very strongly because I think we need to continue doing that and remove whatever barriers we
223 need to so you can do your job and we can keep as much staff as we can.
224

225 I will say that I was surprised at the February [Finance and Personnel Committee] meeting ...
226 The ‘For Information Only’ wasn’t on the January [Finance and Personnel Committee] meeting
227 [agenda], and it wasn’t on the February [Finance and Personnel Committee meeting agenda]. I
228 felt uncomfortable because it wasn’t on the agenda. I felt the need to [ask], ‘Where is it?’ That’s
229 when Hope reported that because you gave it approval [she] gave the reports [and] that ended at
230 the end of the year. Now any position would have to come back to the Council to get filled. I
231 apologize. If it was last July, I didn’t remember that it was going to expire. I just didn’t know. I
232 think I made the mistake ... I inadvertently assumed that ... I guess in a perfect world what I
233 would have liked to have seen is ... Maybe going forward, this is something I would suggest ... I
234 don’t know what the current protocol is for staff for something like this. Whether it’s in
235 Engineering or Planning or Human Resources or anyone, if a policy or a vote is taken and
236 Council has decided we’re going to go ahead and we’re going to try for the end of the year, I
237 guess I mistakenly assumed that Hope or whomever would have gone to the Finance and
238 Personnel Chair at the end of December and said, ‘This has lapsed now at the end of the year, per
239 the motion in July. This has really been working, and would you consider putting it on the
240 [Finance and Personnel Committee] agenda since [Ald. Stevens] chairs it and he has the capacity
241 to say, ‘Yes, put it on the agenda. I think [the Finance and Personnel Committee] would like to
242 revisit that going forward for 2020.’ ’ I personally would like to be able to do that again. Going
243 forward, if something is going to lapse, I would like to think that instead of we having to
244 remember that, I don’t think it’s my job to have to remember that something is going to lapse. I
245 want to make your job easier. That’s what I would have liked to have seen.
246

247 I personally do not feel comfortable with the resolution for a number of reasons. We all know
248 that as elected officials we are not supposed to talk as committee members with walking
249 quorums. We can’t talk about how we feel about this or anything. This is where we come
250 together and talk publicly [and] openly [and] very transparently how we feel about these things,
251 and [also] at Council. I don’t know if Jim or Dan are thinking about the possibility of a
252 reorganization, or do we need a position? When those positions come before us, then we as a
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253 group can talk about them, or if we have a different idea, or maybe we haven't had a chance to
254 talk to Eric to talk about something that has come up. While I personally feel very strongly that I
255 want to empower Human Resources to continue doing what we did last year from July through
256 the end of the year, I would like to continue that for 2020, if the rest of [the Finance and
257 Personnel Committee members] and the Council were to agree. But I personally do not feel
258 comfortable moving forward for all employee vacancies. I think as long as I've been here, all
259 past Councils have been very open to, if there is ever a position that comes open that Human
260 Resources feels strongly that depending upon what the position is and the pressing need for it to
261 be filled more immediately than the next Council cycle, I am fine having a Special Common
262 Council meeting, because that's what we're here for. If you feel there is that need, I for one will
263 say, 'Yes, we need to meet.' And I will defend you on that if you feel the need to meet.

264
265 If someone can convince me otherwise tonight why I should support this, I am certainly willing
266 to listen. But I just don't feel comfortable with Council's capacity to oversee this being taken
267 away from us."

268
269 Ald. Stevens told committee members he wishes to clarify why he requested the change that is
270 part of the amendment, stating, "My goal is to also make it as easy as possible for Hope to fill
271 positions that were already budgeted for, where we know what the positions are and we know
272 we're going to fill them. I don't think there are very many instances where we had a position
273 that became vacant and then Human Resources came to Council and then we didn't refill that
274 position. I guess that could happen. But my concern is that I don't want to see Council's ability
275 to oversee any changes. By having the word 'major' in there, that brings some concerns. I think
276 that can be subjective; who is defining what a major change is? What is major to me might be
277 very different and not major to Eric. And if you have very small minor changes that happen over
278 a period of time, that could equate to a single major change. In my view, if the position is where
279 there is no change and we're budgeted for it, then I think it's easiest – not just Police and Fire,
280 but any position – that we should just fill it because that's a more efficient process for us to
281 conduct city business.

282
283 If there is something where it's appropriate to have a change in the job description or anything
284 that would require a change, I can't imagine it would be an emergency position where we need to
285 fill it and we need to make a change within that 30-day period. I think that it would be
286 appropriate, if there are any changes, that we send that back to [the Finance and Personnel
287 Committee]. If there are no changes, fill the position to the best of your ability as quickly as you
288 can. I want to make it as easy as possible for Human Resources to start the hiring process. But
289 if there are any changes to the job description, I'm not comfortable with Council ceding that
290 ability. That's where I was coming from with that change. That said, with the amendment, I'm
291 comfortable with it and am likely to support it."

292
293 Amanda said that while she does not necessarily have the same background and history, "I did
294 want to highlight that one of the reasons I created the resolution is because I think they're easier
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295 to track. Sometimes when we have motions, we don't always remember the exact motion or
296 whether it expired of what the intent was, so then we're digging through trying to remember
297 what meeting that motion was made at, going back trying to take the context of that evening and
298 remember what exactly happened. I did want it to be a resolution because they're a little bit
299 easier to keep track of, we're all on the same page and we have a document that we can refer to
300 in the future should we ever need to decide what was talked about here tonight.

301
302 Secondly, not from just the Human Resources perspective, I have an opening in the City
303 Attorney's department right now, and I can tell you I am really behind on Municipal Court
304 responses. I feel the pain of having a vacancy right now in that sense. That was a job
305 description that had very, very minor changes, [and it] probably could have gone through without
306 having any changes. I could be three weeks ahead in the hiring process right now if I hadn't had
307 to come to Council. I don't know that it's entirely just about Hope, but just about those of us
308 who have staff that we rely on to help make city business flow easier. I think sometimes we are
309 unnecessarily delaying the process by having this requirement. I guess one compromise I would
310 urge you to consider if you're really leaning toward not approving this would be at the least to
311 consider allowing us to post the job pending Council approval, because I really do think this
312 affects a lot of departments – especially Police and Fire, but really any department that has
313 people they rely on, and that citizens rely on.

314
315 We did do some due diligence and research and reach out, and this is really common. I reached
316 out to the legal community to see what most cities do, and the vast majority of cities do not
317 require any approvals for budgeted positions, which is part of why I supported this.”

318
319 Ald. Olson said, “It's always nice that when we're discussing something like this and I'm
320 listening to everybody's view, I'm kind of impatient, so it would be nice if we could come to
321 something clearer in about five minutes instead of 30. But that's not going to happen. I just
322 have one comment to make on this, and I'm really not taking an issue with this, per se. But I
323 want to remind everybody who is an employee here that whatever decisions we make here as a
324 Common Council, we are responsible for, and we are responsible for the taxpayer at a higher
325 level than any staff is, in my opinion. When we make changes [and] we all agree on them,
326 please keep that in mind because we're going to catch the flak if it's not right much faster than
327 any of you sitting out there. That's my concern. So we do the right thing, and I don't have a
328 problem with that right thing being something different as long as it's efficient and it's working
329 OK. That's fine.”

330
331 Ald. Stevens noted there is a motion with an amendment on the floor and said he wants to clarify
332 what the committee's options are. Ald. Stevens said, “Diane was preferring the system of what
333 we did last year, with the caveat that at the end of the year, if something were expiring, Council
334 would be apprised of that. And if we wanted to make it on the agenda for the following year,
335 then the Chair can bring that up. I will support this resolution with my amendment on there for
336 the reasons that I cited. Jim, I guess you'll be a surprise. [Amanda], are you OK with, from a
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337 legal standpoint, the resolution with the amendment? Or are you preferring that we just allow
338 the resolution to post the position?"

339
340 Amanda said, "I guess from an efficiency standpoint, if we're going to have to bring really minor
341 changes, I would almost advocate for allowing us to post the position and then bringing the
342 change forward for approval."

343
344 Fire Chief Hayes said he understands Ald. Olson's statement that elected officials are held to a
345 higher accountability level, adding that the city's department heads also are held to the same
346 accountability level as they serve in a position where they are required to make decisions that are
347 best for the city. Fire Chief Hayes said if no changes may be made to a job description before a
348 department such as his may proceed, "it enables us to not do anything." Fire Chief Hayes noted
349 a new certification may come out either for his department or for Police Chief Ashbeck's
350 department, and he said, "If it delays us 30 days to make any type of posting to where we can
351 hire somebody, especially in our positions to where we're behind most of the time because of a
352 slight change in the job description, it really disables us, and it kind of undermines us as
353 department heads to be able to make the decisions you pay us for. We would not do anything as
354 department heads – at least speaking on my behalf – that would undermine the organization, the
355 city, that would put us in a position to where a simple job description would hurt us. Nor would
356 we want to disable our organization to be moving forward with staffing because we're waiting
357 for a simple word change, certification name, or whatever it may be, just for something like
358 that."

359
360 Ald. Stevens said, "The old way of doing things is whenever there was a position that became
361 vacant, Human Resources would have to wait until Council approved the hiring of it. The
362 variance here is we don't have to wait as long as everything stays the same. If there is a change
363 that happens, at any point [the Finance and Personnel Committee] can still change that. We just
364 want to retain the ability to control what is being changed. ... This isn't just for this year; this is
365 how the city will hire going forward. ... I think [the Common Council is] giving up the will of
366 the people to really dictate what those changes are. I'm not over what's major to me might be
367 major to somebody else, and many little changes could become large ones. I'm not comfortable
368 with Council just ceding that. But in cases where nothing is different, then we should be able to
369 expedite that process. In cases where there are changes, we still have the process where those
370 changes can be brought before [the Finance and Personnel Committee. If they're major or
371 they're minor, Council can decide at that time."

372
373 Hope noted she has more than 20 years of experience in human resources and told committee
374 members, "I have done many a job description, and I can't tell you a time we have not made a
375 job description change – minor or otherwise. What I am telling you is I can't tell you a time I've
376 ever lied to this Council or any group of people. When we have a minor change to a job
377 description, it is a minor change. It is wordsmithing things. It is sometimes adjusting periods,
378 commas, [or] combining some of the language in there so it actually makes sense. Sometimes

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379 the job descriptions, they might look good five years ago, [but] they don't look good anymore.
380 Things change. Things like even what we need now, things like Word Excel, access, databases –
381 things like that. Programs are different, so what we need from those things, we don't necessarily
382 need somebody to be good at something. We might say they need to be proficient [or] they need
383 to be an expert. Some of those are just minor changes. They're not going to change the scoring
384 for that position, and that's what we mean by major changes to the grade, or essential job
385 functions.

386
387 When Amanda put this together and we were talking about major job functions or grade changes,
388 that's what we're talking about. If it's going to affect the pay or a major job function or an
389 essential job function, that means there's something major that's changing in that job description
390 that would impact their pay or grade. That's what we don't want to have happen. We don't
391 want to take in front of this Council or try to slide behind the group. What is in the budget has
392 the pay and has the grade, and if it's not what's in that budget, we're not just going to slide
393 something behind you. We are going to bring something in front of you that has all of those
394 changes in there. I'm trying to be as respectful as I possibly can, but department heads spend a
395 lot of time and effort. We have a lot to do. I know right now I'm buried trying to get
396 recruitment done [and] trying to get it posted and advertised. We have positions all over the
397 place right now that we're recruiting for. This would save me an incredible amount of time to
398 not have to take it to Council. And I think even just the minor changes like what we had for
399 Amanda's position for the Administrative Assistant/Paralegal, they were very minor changes.

400
401 I know for you, you do report to the citizens, and I highly respect that because I feel I report to
402 the citizens as well. I would not do something that I felt was not in their interest. But I'm also
403 not going to do something that's going to make you look bad because I'm working for the
404 citizens, I'm working for the Council, I'm working for Eric. This is where my expertise is in,
405 and I'm respectfully asking that ... I understand it's change, and change is hard. We're not
406 asking for positions that if you have a feeling where you don't think that position should be
407 filled, that's a discussion we need to have prior to that. But that's where some of these updates
408 come in where I have the update for the position. If you [say], 'I don't think we should fill that,'
409 that's a discussion you have with the City Administrator. But I think those are things we can
410 have open and honest discussion about. But I really think if we need to tweak the wording in the
411 resolution, then let's come up with some better wording in there that maybe appeases what
412 you're looking for. If you're not liking the major changes, let's come up with some wording that
413 appeases that so that you're more comfortable to come up with some sort of at least resolution."

414
415 City Administrator Rindfleisch said that in his almost three years serving the City of Onalaska,
416 "there hasn't yet been any position that has come up for vacancy that the first thing we haven't
417 done is look at the position and see any changes. Sometimes, to use the term 'major or minor,'
418 they're minor, and sometimes they turn out to be major and they lead to perhaps other
419 opportunities. But the first thing we look at is the job description before we replace it – every
420 time. It hasn't happened yet that we haven't done so. And quite frankly, I don't think there's

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421 been a chance yet where we haven't made some kind of change that when Council approves the
422 hiring of that position, you're also approving those changes in that position description.

423
424 Perhaps offering some insight as to the intention of major changes and what that phrase is, the
425 positions themselves are graded. And especially as we go through the _____ study that is
426 coming up, it is the position description that dictates where that position grades out. We have a
427 grade and we have a step program. Some of those items like criteria that each position grades
428 out is experience necessary, number of years, education required to apply for the position,
429 certifications required, and also things like amount of danger, amount of time inside versus
430 outside, technology used, [and] the number of people who report to you, if that changes. All the
431 items I just listed could potentially lead to a grade change. All those items I just listed to you
432 could potentially still, under the major changes, lead to going to Council for approval because
433 that potentially could lead to a grade change. And that grade change is a change in what is your
434 policy document, the annual budget. So when we're talking about major changes, it's a broader
435 scope than perhaps what you're thinking because it's not simply we're going to take one position
436 at a Grade 12 and make it a Grade 22. That's not what we're saying. What we're saying is any
437 change that will impact that position because of where it scores in a grade will have a budgetary
438 impact to you. Anything outside of that very broad scope, which really does include a lot of
439 major items, will not impact where that position ends up on the pay grade.

440
441 That's what the staff and myself are requesting from the Council: that through the policy
442 document, [which is] the annual budget, if we're meeting those guidelines that we have and there
443 have been no changes that we recommend to the position description that would impact where
444 that position ends up in a grade, which impacts the organization and impacts wages and benefits
445 paid out, that we're able to move forward with that position description [and] make those
446 changes. Or, as Amanda pointed out, perhaps another way of doing it is allowing us to post with
447 those new changes, subject to approval, to move forward with that. I think right now we're hung
448 up on what 'major' means. Anything that would impact your policy document becomes major.
449 Anything that doesn't impact your policy document is something that I would say is
450 administrative, [such as] to stay up on the times [or] perhaps correct clerical errors in the
451 document itself that would not impact what the guidelines the Council has given staff through
452 your policy document."

453
454 Ald. Wulf said hearing definitions of "major" and "minor" from Hope gave her a greater comfort
455 level and stated, "I would have a great comfort level with the word 'post.' If the resolution
456 passes as is, that would help you tremendously. If we removed the word 'fill' and replaced it
457 with 'post,' would that still help you with the efficiency? Or the same equal efficiency, whether
458 it's 'fill' or 'post?' "

459
460 City Administrator Rindfleisch said "post" is subject to Common Council approval.

461
462 Hope said staff would post subject to the Common Council making changes to the job
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463 description, adding the job description would include a note stating it might be subject to change.

464

465 Ald. Wulf asked how often a job description changes when it comes before the Common
466 Council.

467

468 Hope told Ald. Wulf she has been making several changes as of late.

469

470 Amanda said Ald. Wulf is asking how often the Common Council is changing job descriptions.

471

472 Hope said the Council typically is not making changes; rather, the changes involve items such as
473 punctuation.

474

475 Ald. Wulf said she feels very comfortable with retaining “no major changes” in the resolution
476 and substituting the word “fill” with the word “post” so that the final section of the resolution
477 reads in part as follows: *“Now, therefore, be it resolved that where no major changes to the
478 essential job functions and pay grade exist and where the position has been budgeted and
479 funded, City staff shall be authorized to post such vacancies as needed, subject to Common
480 Council approval ...”*

481

482 Ald. Stevens suggested to Hope that perhaps she could hire an individual if there are no changes
483 to a job description. If there are minor changes, the position may be posted and it may be
484 approved at a later date. Ald. Stevens asked Ald. Wulf if that would be amiable.

485

486 Ald. Wulf said she still wants the word “post” in the resolution.

487

488 Ald. Stevens said, “That’s not different. No changes [means] hire. Any minor changes [means
489 Hope] can post, but we approve it later.”

490

491 Ald. Wulf told Ald. Stevens that is different.

492

493 Ald. Stevens said he believes this item, if it moves forward, will appear on the Non-Consent
494 Agenda at the March 10 Common Council meeting.

495

496 Ald. Olson said, “The only comment I want to make is about what [Fire] Chief Hayes said,
497 because I think it’s important and it covers all the jobs. You made a comment about the quality
498 of the position he was talking about, and I think it’s important that if we enhance the quality of
499 the work, and there is some way to exude that to the applicant, to me that’s impressive. That’s
500 important that we’re going for an excellent job description, and it may be a higher type of
501 situation we’re trying to accomplish here.”

502

503 Ald. Stevens said it appears that it would be helpful to staff members if they were allowed to
504 post the position, and immediately filling a position with no changes is of little value.

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505

506 Ald. Olson said, “The other way of doing this is you could approve this based on the comments
507 everybody said. It’s always open for discussion if it doesn’t work.”

508

509 Ald. Stevens said he could rescind his motion with the amendment and suggested that Ald. Wulf
510 could make a new motion that would change the word “fill” to “post.” This item then could
511 proceed to the March 10 Common Council meeting and likely be placed on the Non-Consent
512 Agenda.

513

514 Ald. Wulf asked Ald. Stevens if he would not object to retaining the word “major.”

515

516 Ald. Stevens said, “If it’s just posting and Council ... Like I said, I just don’t want to give up the
517 ability for Council to ... When we talked about budgetary impacts, but sometime in the future
518 things could be different where the role might be something we want to have a say in. This is
519 not just this year. This is a resolution, so it’s changing how the city does business going forward.
520 I think it’s important that we get it right. If this helps, I want things to be quicker and better for
521 the city. If it does not remove Council’s ability to have that input and approval on positions and
522 we can fill positions more quickly, I think that’s better than what we have. I would be likely to
523 support that. I’m hearing that that’s a preferable option with staff.”

524

525 Motion and second withdrawn.

526

527 Motion by Ald. Wulf, second by Ald. Olson, to forward to the March 10 Common Council
528 meeting Resolution 18-2020 – Authorization to allow for replacement of full-time vacant
529 budgeted positions without committee approval provided the grade and essential job functions do
530 not change and Human Resources provides a monthly update on staffing, with the following
531 amendment: *“City staff shall be authorized to post such vacancies, subject to Common Council
532 approval.”*

533

534 On voice vote, motion carried.

535

536 Ald. Wulf asked Hope if the resolution provides her as much efficiency timewise to what was
537 done with Police and Fire in 2019 if the Common Council were to pass the resolution as
538 presented, or if it will be slower.

539

540 Hope said, “We will still be able to post them, but it will still delay if we have to make changes
541 to the job description. That part will still be delayed because if we have changes to the job
542 description we will have to make a notation in the actual posting and make a caveat that will say
543 the job description is subject to change [and] we are putting something in front of the Council for
544 changes. They won’t actually know what the full job description will actually say. That could
545 be problematic.”

546

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14

547 City Administrator Rindfleisch noted there are hiring lists created for positions in the Police
548 Department and the Fire Department and said the Common Council must approve filling
549 vacancies to positions with or without a change in the position description. City Administrator
550 Rindfleisch said, “With the change, what would occur even with no changes to the position
551 description – and if we had a hiring list from the Police and Fire Commission approved – we still
552 have to come to Council to approve even if we post that position. We can’t hire for the position
553 until the Council approves it.”

554

555 Ald. Wulf asked if it would be helpful to reinstate what had been done from July 2019 to
556 December 2019.

557

558 Hope noted it only affects the Police Department and the Fire Department and said, “All of the
559 department heads are looking at having something in place for all budgeted positions.”

560

561 Amanda said it is possible to put an end on a resolution as they do not have to be indefinite and
562 told committee members, “If you’re going to do something like that again, I would encourage
563 you to do a limited resolution to have that paper trail and documentation.”

564

565 Ald. Stevens said he is open to any suggested language that could be discussed at the Common
566 Council meeting and stated he believes everyone has the same goal of attempting to improve the
567 system, ease staff’s burden, and make it easier for the city to meet its staffing needs going
568 forward.

569

570 **Item 8 – Update from Human Resources on staff vacancies – (For Information Only)**

571

572 Hope said one police officer still needs to be hired and told committee members there is an
573 opening to fill that vacancy. Also, the Fire Department Lieutenant position has been posted.
574 The Police and Fire Commission will interview candidates for both positions at its April 2
575 meeting, and the professional panel also will conduct interviews. Hope also reported there are
576 two firefighter vacancies as two former staff members have accepted positions in the City of La
577 Crosse. Hope said one contingent offer has been extended and told committee members staff is
578 performing the background investigation, and the applicant must complete the physical
579 agility/psychological/medical examination. Hope said the vacant Administrative
580 Assistant/Paralegal position closes Friday. Hope also said the open positions do not include the
581 three positions apiece for both the Police Department and Fire Department that were approved in
582 the budget. Hope said the eligibility lists for both departments have been exhausted, and there is
583 a posting for the Fire Department to establish another eligibility list.

584

585 **Item 9 – Review and consideration of out of state travel for Corey Yonkovich and Jarod**
586 **Benson to attend FDIC (Fire Department Instructor Conference) Hands-On Training**
587 **Evolutions with full conference in Indianapolis, IN from April 23 through April 24, 2020**

588

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15

589 Motion by Ald. Olson, second by Ald. Wulf, to approve out-of-state travel for Corey Yonkovich
590 and Jarod Benson to attend FDIC (Fire Department Instructor Conference) Hands-On Training
591 Evolutions with full conference in Indianapolis, IN from April 23 through April 24, 2020.

592
593 Fire Chief Hayes said he has put in Lieutenant Yonkovich's name as the second fill as this
594 conference is related to the purchase of the Quint Apparatus purchase that the Board of Public
595 Works approved Tuesday evening and will go before the Common Council on March 10. Fire
596 Chief Hayes noted FDIC is the largest fire conference in the nation with approximately 50,000
597 attendees, including vendors. Fire Chief Hayes told committee members that while Lieutenant
598 Yonkovich's name had been submitted, Firefighter/EMT Jim Netwal will accompany
599 Firefighter/EMT Jarod Benson.

600
601 On voice vote, motion carried.

602
603 **Item 10 – Review and consideration of authorization to fill positions:**

604
605 a. Full-Time Firefighter/EMT

606
607 Motion by Ald. Olson, second by Ald. Wulf, to approve authorization to fill the Full-Time
608 Firefighter/EMT position.

609
610 Hope told committee members this is to fill two Full-Time Firefighter/EMT positions as there
611 are two vacancies.

612
613 On voice vote, motion carried.

614
615 b. Part-time Community Risk Reduction and Outreach Specialist

616
617 Hope told committee members this is a new position and said the job description has been
618 included in their packets. Hope said there currently are part-time staff members in the Fire
619 Department, but no job descriptions have been created for them to move into other positions.
620 Hope said Fire Chief Hayes has been working to have individuals who no longer have the
621 physical capability to be Firefighter/EMTs serve in new roles such as community outreach,
622 media relations, and inspections. Hope said current staff members would be moved into these
623 positions.

624
625 Fire Chief Hayes noted the Fire Department has had generic job descriptions for decades that are
626 Firefighter/EMT, and he told committee members the organization performs more than
627 Firefighter/EMT duties. Fire Chief Hayes noted the job descriptions Hope had described have
628 been nonexistent and he is trying to bring the department up to date. Fire Chief Hayes explained
629 that a Community Risk Reduction and Outreach Specialist puts the department into a category
630 where Fire Inspectors may perform inspections on a part-time basis. Individuals such as teachers
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16

631 may perform public education for children and/or seniors. Also, individuals who have expertise
632 in media, marketing, and social media may serve the department in that capacity by developing
633 recruitment videos and is proficient in graphics and design. Fire Chief Hayes told committee
634 members he will be bringing forward a new job description at their April 8 meeting.

635
636 Ald. Stevens asked if there is no budgetary impact.

637
638 Fire Chief Hayes said there is no budgetary impact, noting it is a job description to place
639 individuals within a defined job description.

640
641 Ald. Wulf asked Fire Chief Hayes if there is anyone in the department who is currently doing
642 this type of work.

643
644 Fire Chief Hayes said there are two older individuals who currently are with the organization and
645 wish to remain with it, and he told Ald. Wulf there must be a job description that is a good fit for
646 these individuals. Fire Chief Hayes said there was an individual within the organization who
647 was responsible for much of the Fire Department's social media and marketing, "but it did not fit
648 in anywhere. As Hope and I have been working together, [we're trying] to define, let's make
649 things right. Let's define how things should be. I think it makes this organization more
650 reputable and more credible."

651
652 Ald. Wulf inquired about the Grade 6/7 pay range.

653
654 Hope said she believes it was \$12 or \$13 per hour and told Ald. Wulf it depends on
655 certifications. Hope noted many of the certifications are labeled "preferred" and said individuals
656 with the certifications will go to the higher rate, and the individuals who do not will go to the
657 lower rate.

658
659 On voice vote, motion carried.

660
661 c. Part-time Office Clerical Support – Inspection

662
663 Katie said she is anticipating retirements within the coming months in the Inspection
664 Department, including the Clerical Support position. Katie said the goal is to facilitate the best
665 transfer of knowledge for what the department currently has. Katie noted there are individuals
666 who have been employed for decades in the Inspection Department and said the best course of
667 action to facilitate a retirement is to make the transition as seamless as possible. Katie said she is
668 requesting the creation of a new part-time position based off the existing Office Assistant
669 position. The outgoing assistant would train the new part-time employee. Katie said there is the
670 potential to come before the Common Council in the future either to refill the current position the
671 department has as a vacancy, give the employee the opportunity to attain full-time status, or
672 leave the position as part-time.

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673
674 Katie told committee members two individuals serving as inspectors could be retiring soon and
675 said she is proposing that GEC complete permit inspections on an as-needed basis until a final
676 plan for a replacement is devised.

677
678 Ald. Stevens asked Katie if the goal is to add another position, allow that individual to be trained
679 by the individual who currently holds the position and will be retiring, and then the individual
680 who is hired part-time eventually could become a full-time employee.

681
682 Katie said that is correct, if the Common Council chooses to take that action.

683
684 Ald. Stevens inquired about outsourcing inspections to GEC.

685
686 Katie told Ald. Stevens the city currently utilizes GEC to perform residential inspections, and she
687 said the city also has contracted with GEC on an as-needed basis to perform commercial
688 inspections. Katie said she is recommending continuing to utilize GEC on an as-needed basis
689 once the retirement occurs until a decision is made whether to refill the position or take another
690 course of action.

691
692 Ald. Stevens inquired about the budgetary difference.

693
694 Katie said the unexpended funds due to the anticipated retirements will be utilized on the part-
695 time position.

696
697 Motion by Ald. Wulf, second by Ald. Olson, to approve authorization to fill the Part-time Office
698 Clerical Support – Inspection, and also to allow the Planning Department to utilize GEC on an
699 as-needed basis for permit inspections.

700
701 On voice vote, motion carried.

702
703 **Item 11 – Review and consideration of approval of new part-time job descriptions:**

704
705 a. Community Risk Reduction and Outreach Specialist

706
707 Motion by Ald. Wulf, second by Ald. Olson, to approve the new part-time job description for the
708 Community Risk Reduction and Outreach Specialist.

709
710 Ald. Wulf inquired about the job description's origin.

711
712 Hope said Fire Chief Hayes created the job description.

713
714 Fire Chief Hayes said he and Fire Department staff tried to identify a catch-all without having to
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18

715 bring 10 different job descriptions before the committee. Fire Chief Hayes said he cannot be the
716 leader of the CERT Team all the time, telling Ald. Wulf he needs an individual who is able to
717 handle that as it is not a function full-time Firefighters are able to do all the time. Fire Chief
718 Hayes he needs individuals who are able to develop a Citizen's Fire Academy, perform public
719 education duties, and mandatory fire inspections. Fire Chief Hayes said the goal is to develop a
720 community risk reduction, and he attempted to create a catch-all job description by utilizing 10
721 different job descriptions from across the nation.

722

723 On voice vote, motion carried.

724

725 b. Office Clerical Support – Inspection

726

727 Motion by Ald. Wulf, second by Ald. Olson, to approve the new part-time job description for the
728 Office Clerical Support – Inspection position.

729

730 Ald. Wulf noted that this part-time position is Grade 10, and she thanked City Administrator
731 Rindfleisch, Hope, and city staff for the foresight of having a succession plan.

732

733 On voice vote, motion carried.

734

735 **Item 12 – Closed Session**

736

737 To consider a motion to convene in Closed Session under Section 19.85(1)(e) of the Wisconsin
738 Statutes for the purpose of deliberating or negotiating the purchasing of public properties, the
739 investing of public funds or conducting other specified public business, whenever competitive or
740 bargaining reasons require a closed session:

741

742 • Request for Reductions/Forgiveness of Truancy Forfeitures

743 • IAFF, International Association of Firefighters, Local 127

744

745 And to consider a motion to convene in Closed Session under Section 19.85(1)(g) of the
746 Wisconsin Statutes for the purpose of conferring with legal counsel for the governmental body
747 who is rendering oral or written advice concerning strategy to be adopted by the body with
748 respect to litigation in which it is or is likely to become involved:

749

750 • IAFF, International Association of Firefighters, Local 127: Prohibited Practice
751 Complaint – RE: Part-Time Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs)

752

753 If any action is required in Open Session, as a result of the Closed Session, the Committee will
754 reconvene in Open Session to take the necessary action and/or continue on with the printed
755 agenda.

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756

757 Motion by Ald. Olson, second by Ald. Wulf, to convene in Closed Session.

758

759 On roll call vote: Ald. Diane Wulf – aye, Ald. Jim Olson – aye, Ald. Dan Stevens – aye. In
760 Closed Session.

761

762

763 Recorded by:

764

765 Kirk Bey