

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

Wednesday, March 6, 2019

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 6, 2019. 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. Jim Olson, Ald. Kim Smith, Ald.  
6 Jerry Every

7  
8 Also Present: City Administrator Eric Rindfleisch, Financial Services Director/Treasurer Fred  
9 Buehler, Human Resource Director Hope Burchell, City Engineer Jarrod Holter, Fire Chief Billy  
10 Hayes, Ald. Jim Binash

11

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

13

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

16

17 On voice vote, motion carried.

18

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

20

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

23

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

25

26 **FINANCE**

27

28 **Item 4 – 2018 Omni Center Financials**

29

30 Fred told committee members the audit will be performed Monday, March 11, and also that the  
31 unaudited 2018 financials will be coming in with the revenues at \$608,242, and expenditures at  
32 \$622,158. Thus, there is a deficit of \$13,916. Fred next addressed the 2019 financials, reporting  
33 that revenues totaled \$73,208.75, and expenditures totaled \$92,394.65 for a deficit of  
34 \$19,185.90. Fred reminded committee members there is a two-month lag of room tax. The  
35 room tax for January is not due until late February/early March. Fred also noted funds are  
36 transferred quarterly from the Special Projects Fund, which totals approximately \$60,000 in one  
37 year. In addition, the Omni Center receives 1 percent (approximately \$3,500 per quarter) of the  
38 room tax.

39

40 Motion by Ald. Every, second by Ald. Olson, to approve the Omni Center Financials and place  
41 them on file.

42

Reviewed 3/8/19 by Hope Burchell & Fred Buehler

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2

43 On voice vote, motion carried.

44

45 **Item 5 – 2018 General Fund Financials**

46

47 Fred said he does not expect anything unusual heading into the audit, noting the General Fund  
48 for December 31, 2018 shows \$9,522,632 in revenue, and expenditures of \$9,211,746. This  
49 leaves a surplus of \$310,886. Fred next addressed the 2019 financials, noting revenues totaled  
50 \$417,269.99, and expenditures totaled \$1,136,342.76. Fred explained the reason for the  
51 \$719,072.77 deficit is he performs a journal entry to doing the transfer of the tax agency fund  
52 that is not reflected in the financials before the committee this evening. Fred also noted all the  
53 insurance for the City of Onalaska is due to CVMIC during the first quarter. Fred next addressed  
54 Street Department Expense Account No. 100-53311-370 (“Salt & Sand”) and invited Jarrod to  
55 comment about this account.

56

57 Jarrod said the Street Department has been working off what it had in the salt shed prior to the  
58 start of winter. The Street Department began the season with approximately 1,600 tons of salt,  
59 and there is approximately 400 to 500 tons remaining in the salt shed. Jarrod said the Street  
60 Department had submitted its order for the 400 tons it had coming. However, the salt will not be  
61 coming as there is no salt even though it is under state contract. Jarrod said the salt supplies  
62 were exhausted, and therefore delivery is not anticipated. Jarrod said the salt shed will receive  
63 an early fill, and he told committee members 1,000 to 1,100 tons will be needed. However, this  
64 assumes there will not be another snow event this winter, as Jarrod said the weekend forecast  
65 calls for snow. Jarrod said he is projecting the Street Department will be over budget with salt  
66 and sand usage, and he told committee members he likely will be presenting a report with more  
67 concrete data either at the April 3 or the May 8 Finance and Personnel Committee meeting.  
68 Jarrod said no funds have been expended as of yet because the Street Department is working off  
69 the supplies on hand. Jarrod told committee members a significant amount of fuel has been  
70 utilized, and he said that while the department is not yet over budget, “those accounts are getting  
71 fully used.” Jarrod also said there have been a number of repairs, including a truck repair that  
72 cost slightly more than \$4,000, and several miscellaneous repairs.

73

74 Fred noted Jarrod had previously stated there are communities that currently have no salt.

75

76 Jarrod told Fred he is correct.

77

78 Motion by Ald. Every, second by Ald. Olson, to approve the General Fund Financials and place  
79 them on file.

80

81 On voice vote, motion carried.

82

83 **Item 6 – Discussion regarding Resolution 15-2019 to Establish a Budget Stabilization**  
84 **Account**

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3

85  
86 Ald. Every described the resolution as being “just a little bit different twist on what we’re doing  
87 now, except that it would do two things. It would help us to keep the tax levy level, and at the  
88 same time we could be designating our money the way we spent it, just exactly the way we do  
89 now, and we would have money to put into our surplus, so we would accomplish all three of  
90 those things. Obviously, there may be times we can’t do that. We may not have money to put  
91 into surplus. That could occur at any time with any kind of system you’re on. But what my  
92 thought was, this is a way that we could do exactly what we’re doing now. Nothing would  
93 change, except that we would just be putting money in different places, and at the same time  
94 keeping the levy level, or as level as we could. My hope was that we could get together and talk  
95 about it all together at one time and flesh it out and see if it is something you’re maybe interested  
96 in now or in the future. As a matter of fact, it might be more timely when we get the new  
97 Council [in April].

98  
99 I’m sure you have probably read through it and you have a lot of questions or some questions,  
100 but my idea was that hopefully we could somehow get a discussion going on this and bring it up  
101 again, talk about it and see if it would work for us. Maybe it will, maybe it won’t. This idea  
102 comes right from the State of Wisconsin. There are people that are doing this type of thing. This  
103 comes out of the Legislative Branch. That was my idea, and I would be interested to hear your  
104 comments.”

105  
106 Ald. Smith asked Ald. Every if there are several communities of similar size that already have  
107 enacted a similar resolution.

108  
109 Ald. Every told Ald. Smith he is unable to do so, and he also told her the Legislative Bureau  
110 website has a significant amount of information, possibly including the information she seeks.  
111 Ald. Every said, “This is a real flexible document. The figures that are mentioned and the  
112 percentages, you can vary and make them anything you want. But the fact of the matter is in our  
113 particular case, it would free up immediately some money that’s now in the surplus, but at the  
114 same time keeping at least 25 percent, which is the percentage that most municipalities are using  
115 for a surplus amount – 25 percent of their budget expenditures. That’s what I’ve tried to do.  
116 And again, my idea was to think about this and see if maybe it would be something we could do.  
117 I know there are places we would like to spend money that we never seem to have enough,  
118 obviously. But this would free up some of that money for some things we want to do. That  
119 might be helpful, and at the same time keeping the levy level or near level, which keeps the  
120 taxpayers happy. That was my idea. I don’t know where you want to take it from here, but I was  
121 hoping we could possibly do some more discussion on this or hopefully refer it to the Committee  
122 of the Whole or to the Common Council, and to get the future direction on what we want to do  
123 with it.”

124  
125 Ald. Smith said, “I think what we talked about is at this point we would need to have more  
126 discussion here until we could get to the point of a viable document. But I guess listening to  
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127 what you're saying and having read the document, the first thing you said is [to] keep the tax  
128 levy level. You said you had three goals: keep the tax levy level, keep the budget as it is now,  
129 but any excess money would go into the surplus fund. Those are your three goals of this?"

130

131 Ald. Every apologized to Ald. Smith for not hearing her question.

132

133 Ald. Smith said, "When you introduced your item this evening, you said it had three goals: to  
134 keep the tax levy level, to keep the budget as it is now, and to put money into a surplus fund."

135

136 Ald. Every said yes, and he told Ald. Smith the budget procedure would not have to be changed  
137 much from what the city currently does. Ald. Every said currently some of that surplus is being  
138 utilized for specific items, noting that State of Wisconsin Statute allows this. Ald. Every said,  
139 "But you'd better be very specific about what you're going to do with that. And that had better  
140 be where you spend it. We may have some other specific things that we want to designate funds  
141 for."

142

143 Ald. Smith said she does not see what the advantage would be to what Ald. Every is proposing,  
144 and she asked him, "You feel this tax levy has been erratic?"

145

146 Ald. Every said no.

147

148 Ald. Smith asked, "But if this is going to help keep it level, isn't it fairly level already?"

149

150 Ald. Every said, "It has been fairly level, yes, except for this year."

151

152 Ald. Smith reiterated she does not see what the advantage would be to changing to the method

153 Ald. Every is proposing.

154

155 Ald. Every said, "The advantage would be that you're going to free up some money that's  
156 currently in the surplus account. You can use it for things that you might want to designate now  
157 to use it for – specific designations. Then you still would have money that you're putting into  
158 the surplus, making sure that a reasonable effort has got to be made to keep a certain amount of  
159 money in surplus."

160

161 Ald. Smith asked Ald. Every if he is saying the city does not have enough money in surplus.

162

163 Ald. Every said, "What I'm saying is we have enough, and we could probably have less."

164

165 Ald. Smith asked, "But this would help us have money in a surplus fund?"

166

167 Ald. Every said, "You'll always have money in the surplus fund with this system as long as  
168 you're going to have a surplus. If you don't have a surplus, there is nothing to put in any place.

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169 But you'll always have some money to put in there with this system. The only way you  
170 wouldn't is if you're not making any money at all. This is just a little bit different twist on how  
171 to do it. We could accomplish some things that we might want to do sooner than we thought we  
172 could."

173

174 Ald. Smith said she would like to see it in action in another community of similar size to  
175 Onalaska as it would help her be able to comprehend some of the details of how this system  
176 would be advantageous to the city compared to its current practice, which has given the city an  
177 excellent bond rating. Ald. Smith also said the city is in sound financial condition at this time,  
178 and she told Ald. Every, "It's difficult to consider making changes to the way we manage our  
179 money. And the way you're describing this, it doesn't really seem like it's a difference to me.  
180 I'm sorry if I'm not understanding it, but maybe if I had an example of a community, that could  
181 help me."

182

183 Ald. Every told Ald. Smith, "I'm not going to research that for you. That you can do yourself."

184

185 Ald. Smith asked Ald. Every, "But you have not done that? You have not researched any other  
186 community that has done this?"

187

188 Ald. Every told Ald. Smith he had not.

189

190 Ald. Smith asked Ald. Every, "And yet you're confident it would make a difference for us?"

191

192 Ald. Every said yes and told Ald. Smith, "The Legislative Bureau seems to think it would, and  
193 they would have all the information for you. If you want to research it there, you can. They're  
194 experts in this type of thing, and that's where this document comes from. But as I said, it's a  
195 flexible document. Obviously, the amounts and the percentages are going to change depending  
196 on what you want to do and what you want to accomplish."

197

198 Ald. Smith asked, "The document came from that website?"

199

200 Ald. Every said, "This document would come largely from them, yes, and you'll see that on  
201 there. This is my own. I generated this, but the ideas are all in the Legislative Bureau. I think I  
202 did say that, and you could have referenced that if you wanted to. But that's where it's at. If you  
203 want comparisons, I'm not going to go to each community and find out what they do. That's not  
204 my purpose. The idea here was that it might be something that might fit here because we have  
205 some things we want to do. It might be a good way to do it. To flesh it out further, you'd have  
206 to have the City Administrator and the Finance Director and legal people take a look at it. You'd  
207 have to decide on what kind of money we would want to use and what percentages we would  
208 want to use. That should be a Council decision. It's another one of those things that I think you  
209 need to take a look at and sort it out and talk about and see how you feel about it. It might work.  
210 Maybe it wouldn't. But I don't think it would do any harm."

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211

212 Ald. Olson said, "The only thing I'm questioning is, you don't know of any municipalities that  
213 are currently doing this this way."

214

215 Ald. Every said, "Apparently that's the mantra. No, I don't. If you folks want to do that, you go  
216 ahead and do that. I'm not comparing us to anybody. I think we're unique. We have a good  
217 situation here. Things are going well. To me, this would just make it run a little bit better, and  
218 we could do it in a way that doesn't look like we're constantly asking for more money."

219

220 Ald. Olson said, "I would like to be a little bit more unconfused."

221

222 Ald. Every said, "I think if you read through the document and try to think to yourself, 'What  
223 would I think about it?', it might help. But again, I think the final decision has to be a Council  
224 decision, and it has to fit our situation. I didn't want to take a lot of time to do that, but that's  
225 basically the idea. What I would like to see happen is we would have further discussion."

226

227 Ald. Olson asked if the Common Council had discussed this item at its February 12 meeting.

228

229 Ald. Smith said it had been referred back to the Finance and Personnel Committee as this is the  
230 working committee. Ald. Smith added, "This is where we should flesh this out and not at  
231 Council. But that's my opinion."

232

233 Ald. Olson said, "If there is any merit in this, there must be somebody else that is using this  
234 somewhere in municipalities in Wisconsin. And if this is an idea that you're for, then some of  
235 that information must be available to you. And if it's your idea, I don't know why you ask us to  
236 go research this, because it's your idea."

237

238 Ald. Every said, "Because it's obvious to me that this is kind of the common mantra and the  
239 common question, so obviously they're doing some talk about it. I had hoped that that wouldn't  
240 go that way, but apparently it is. Actually, what I wanted to do was just to talk about it and  
241 discuss it and not look for ways that it won't work. I think we do too much of that here. We  
242 look for ways that things won't work rather than look for ways things will work. We need to do  
243 more of that, and I don't think we can do it with the situation that we have and the setup that we  
244 have."

245

246 Ald. Smith told Ald. Every, "You were saying three reasons that you think we need to change it,  
247 and I don't have buy-in on those. Keep the budget as it is now. That's not an impetus for  
248 change. Keep the tax levy level. I don't think we're having a problem with our tax levy. Have  
249 money in a surplus fund. We have enough money in our surplus fund. Obviously when you  
250 budget you don't want to be under budget every year. You like to be just a little over that  
251 [because] it means you did a good job and you're not scraping at the end of the year. What I'm  
252 looking for in this discussion is finding some reason to change when the city is in a good

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253 financial situation right now. Why would we want to change it? And the way you're describing  
254 it, I understand it's partly because you probably feel defensive [and] you're trying to defend your  
255 idea. I'm not trying to shoot down your idea. I'm trying to envision how it could work here in  
256 our community. One of the ways I could do that is by seeing how it worked in another  
257 community. Then also, before that I would need to see why we would change our budget  
258 process, because I think we're in sound financial position right now, and I don't think there is  
259 any way you can discredit that. That's why I'm asking for an example of why these people did it  
260 and how it worked for them and what improvements they saw."

261  
262 Ald. Every said, "I'm not defending my idea. I'm defending an attitude that I ascertain here.  
263 I'm not talking about changing the budget. Your budget is going to change every year, and  
264 every year you're going to need more revenue, I would assume. That's just the way things are  
265 going. And as long as expenditures and the revenue are balanced, we're OK with the state. The  
266 fact of the matter is, we have had surpluses, if you read through there, and they're substantial.  
267 I'm saying there is more that we could do with that than what we're doing rather than let it sit in  
268 a surplus account. It might gain interest."

269  
270 Ald. Smith said, "Taking away a lot of the words out of this resolution, because to me it's very  
271 wordy, and just boiling it down to the fact of the matter of saying if we have excess revenue at  
272 the end of the year, instead of expending it on needed items like we do now, we will hold a  
273 percentage of it aside in like a rainy day account. That's the substance of what you would like to  
274 do."

275  
276 Ald. Every told Ald. Smith she is incorrect and said that is what the city is currently doing. Ald.  
277 Every said, "That's what I'm saying I would like to see changed. I would like to see us use more  
278 of that money for designated items – things that we want to accomplish. Specific items. I do not  
279 like it when we use the money to buy non-budgeted items at the end of the year or wish list  
280 items. I've stated that at I don't know how many meetings. If you've been here two years  
281 you've heard me say it a lot. I don't think that's the way to spend taxpayers' money. If you're  
282 going to buy something with unbudgeted funds, it should be going through the regular approval  
283 process, and it's not. You can go through the minutes and you can look and see how many non-  
284 budgeted items that we've bought this year. It's in the thousands. That's not a proper use of  
285 taxpayer funds."

286  
287 Ald. Smith said, "It would be over \$50,000 because we just bought a time-punch clock."  
288

289 Ald. Every said, "That was just one time. If you go back and look over the year, the non-  
290 budgeted items that we've bought ... Not that we didn't need them. There is always something  
291 that you need. I'm just saying it would give us an opportunity to redirect that money and spend  
292 it on more things that we want instead of putting so much into the surplus account."  
293

294 Ald. Smith asked Ald. Every, "Would it be possible for you to ... I'm wondering if, after this  
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295 discussion and previous ones, would it be possible for you to revamp this resolution into  
296 something less wordy and more ...?"

297

298 Ald. Every said, "No. I'm not going to put any more time into it. I have put quite a bit already.  
299 I think if we are interested, it would be something to get to a discussion group and to get together  
300 with Finance and legal and come up with a document that's going to reflect what we want to do.  
301 The percentages ... For instance, I've said 50 percent of the amount should go here, and so on.  
302 You may want to change all those things. You may want to change the percentages. You might  
303 want to change the amounts. That would be where I think it should go for some future  
304 discussion someplace."

305

306 Ald. Smith said, "I hate to have a lot of city staff on something that is not ... I feel like I can't  
307 stand behind this resolution that is in front of us today, to put it that simply. I'll just say it right  
308 out, what we have here. I'm listening to you and I'm hearing you, and I'm thinking that there  
309 may be some ideas in there that I maybe could get behind. But it's not going to be this."

310

311 Ald. Every said, "That's fine. That's kind of what I expected, but it kind of gets the ball rolling.  
312 It gets you thinking, and as I said, the document itself ... You wouldn't need a lot of staff time.  
313 It would be a fairly simple thing, or the [City] Attorney would do the final ... The percentages  
314 and the dollar amounts you have to come up with yourselves. You have to be able to sit down  
315 and get together and talk about what it is you want to do. We've never done that as a Council.  
316 We have never sat down together and decided, what is our vision for the city? What do we want  
317 to accomplish? Different things that come up. We've never discussed those – never. I  
318 introduced a resolution in August. It was very specific ideas of what we wanted to discuss at the  
319 behest of Mr. Binash and the Mayor. That got shot down, so I didn't expect anything different.  
320 But I do think this idea is worthy of some merit and some discussion. If it could be that we  
321 would refer it to, first of all, the staff and see what they think of it, and to get their opinion of the  
322 thing, or suggest some amounts. Then sit down and figure out what it is we want to do, then see  
323 if it will work, then go about drafting a document. That's what we're supposed to be here for.  
324 We haven't done it yet. It's just an idea that I had, and I thought it might work well for us. If  
325 you don't like it, it's fine. But if there is a way we could move it and talk about it some more,  
326 that would be something that I think would be to our benefit."

327

328 Ald. Olson said, "I think if we're going to enter into a discussion, I think that gentleman over  
329 there also should be part of that discussion."

330

331 Ald. Smith said, "I don't want to use a lot of staff time if it's just going to get shot down. It's  
332 kind of like asking them ... I'm saying right now, based on my knowledge and experience and  
333 this resolution, I'm not going to support this exact resolution. Then if we turn it over to the staff,  
334 we're asking them to do, what? That's not fair to them, either. I guess I was kind of hoping that  
335 Jerry would go back, maybe find a couple examples of communities and get something more  
336 concise. But he doesn't think that's the appropriate course of action, either. I'm just having a

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337 discussion, Jerry.”

338

339 Ald. Every told Ald. Smith each community is different and said, “It’s like comparing tax levies.  
340 You can compare all you want to, but the communities are so different that budgeting is  
341 different. Everything is different. We’re our own entity. We’re our own community. We have  
342 a nice, unique thing going on here. We have some opportunities in front of us that I think we  
343 should take advantage of. But to do that, we have to really go after it. And I think this might be  
344 a way we could do that. If you’re willing to take a look at it and talk about it and see what it is  
345 we want to do – how we can accomplish that, what it would cost – then maybe you’re right for  
346 the document.”

347

348 Motion by Ald. Every to forward Resolution 15-2019 – to Establish a Budget Stabilization  
349 Account – to a Special Meeting of the Common Council and discuss whether or not to proceed  
350 with it.

351

352 Ald. Every noted not all the alderpersons are attending this evening’s meeting and said he  
353 believes it would be improper not to take this item to the March 12 Common Council meeting  
354 because they have not had an opportunity to ask questions. Ald. Every said, “If there’s a general  
355 feeling we might like to do this, let’s go ahead.”

356

357 Ald. Smith asked if any of the alderpersons in the audience wish to ask a question pertaining to  
358 the resolution.

359

360 Ald. Binash asked if a motion may be made on a discussion item. Ald. Binash also asked, “If  
361 not, then this is not something you can really move forward, is it?”

362

363 Ald. Every said this item may be placed on the regular agenda for the March 12 Common  
364 Council meeting if not.

365

366 **Item 7 – Authorization to approve bid from Hastings Air Energy Control, Inc. regarding**  
367 **the new Vehicle Exhaust Evacuation System in the Fire Department not to exceed \$79,798**  
368

369

370 Fire Chief Hayes said that prior to his arrival in Onalaska, the Fire Department had submitted a  
371 grant request to FEMA and the Department of Homeland Security for a vehicle exhaust system  
372 for firefighter health and safety. The Fire Department’s current vehicles have vehicle exhaust  
373 that crank inside the apparatus bay inside the station without some type of an exhaust system to  
374 capture the carcinogens that come out of the exhaust. This poses a health and safety threat to  
375 firefighters, and Fire Chief Hayes noted that firefighter cancer is “one of the highest important  
376 factors we’re dealing with in the fire service.” Fire Chief Hayes told committee members the  
377 Fire Department had been awarded an \$80,000 grant in August 2018, with the City of Onalaska  
378 having an \$8,000 match that has been secured. Fire Chief Hayes said the Fire Department had  
presented Requests for Proposals. FEMA requires two RFPs, and the Fire Department received  
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379 two: one from Plymovent, and one from MagnoGrip. Fire Chief Hayes said Assistant Fire Chief  
380 Troy Gudie had worked with Jarrod and met with vendors, and he said the Fire Department is  
381 recommending the purchase of a Plymovent Vehicle Exhaust Removal System at a cost of  
382 \$79,798 – the amount the Fire Department was awarded in its grant.

383  
384 Fire Chief Hayes said the Fire Department had chosen Plymovent because the City of La Crosse  
385 Fire Department also has Plymovent. Fire Chief Hayes also noted the Village of Holmen Fire  
386 Department also had been awarded the grant and is considering purchasing Plymovent. Fire  
387 Chief Hayes said it provides interoperability, noting a City of La Crosse engine was standing by  
388 at the fire station in January while the City of Onalaska’s firefighters attended their banquet.  
389 Fire Chief Hayes told committee members City of La Crosse engines are able to pull into the  
390 Fire Department’s bay and hook up to that exhaust system. Fire Chief Hayes also said  
391 Plymovent is able to meet a 120-day installation deadline, compared to 160 days for MagnoGrip.  
392 This would put the Fire Department on the threshold for having to request an extension from  
393 FEMA, thereby creating more paperwork. Fire Chief Hayes noted several fire departments in the  
394 area (La Crosse, Sparta, Black River Falls) and state (Eau Claire, Madison) have Plymovent, and  
395 he also noted Plymovent has a representative in Wisconsin. By comparison, MagnoGrip’s  
396 representative is based in Ohio, and it could take two or three days for a MagnoGrip  
397 representative to come to Wisconsin for a service call.

398  
399 Motion by Ald. Olson, second by Ald. Every, to approve bid from Hastings Air Energy Control,  
400 Inc. regarding the new Vehicle Exhaust Evacuation System in the Fire Department not to exceed  
401 \$79,798.

402  
403 Ald. Every asked Fire Chief Hayes if the Fire Department has the grant.

404  
405 Fire Chief Hayes said the Fire Department’s \$8,000 matching portion is secured and told Ald.  
406 Every, “Once we start the system, then we request from FEMA for them to send the remaining  
407 amount to us, so it will come in.”

408  
409 Ald. Every referred to the prepay amount listed on the memo Fire Chief Hayes had prepared for  
410 the committee.

411  
412 Fire Chief Hayes asked Ald. Every to disregard the prepay amount, noting he had spoken with  
413 Fred and stating it would create some unnecessary logistics. Fire Chief Hayes said it was an  
414 extra discount and assured Ald. Every the Fire Department had been awarded the \$80,000.

415  
416 On voice vote, motion carried.

417  
418 **PERSONNEL**

419  
420 **Item 8 – Review and consideration of monthly department presentations**

Reviewed 3/8/19 by Hope Burchell & Fred Buehler

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

Wednesday, March 6, 2019

11

421  
422 Ald. Smith said that in going through the budgeting process in the fall of 2018, “it occurred to  
423 me that commonly Council members, and especially new Common Council members, aren’t  
424 familiar with all the details of the different departments we have here and how many  
425 responsibilities our department heads have and how many personnel we have on staff. It’s really  
426 a lot of responsibility.” Ald. Smith said she had spoken to Hope about potentially establishing a  
427 schedule where one of the department heads would give a short presentation (perhaps 5 minutes)  
428 at each month’s Finance and Personnel Committee meeting. The department head would talk  
429 about his/her department, and topics could include structure, staffing, and responsibilities. Doing  
430 so would be an attempt to build rapport with the Council, and also to make the alderpersons  
431 aware of items outside the budget process that are occurring within the department. Ald. Smith  
432 said she hopes both Ald. Olson and Ald. Every will be supportive of her idea, or at least have a  
433 consideration of it.

434  
435 Motion by Ald. Every, second by Ald. Olson, to approve monthly department presentations at  
436 Finance and Personnel Committee meetings.

437  
438 On voice vote, motion carried.

439  
440 **Item 9 – Review and consideration of new job descriptions:**

- 441  
442 a. City Attorney  
443 b. Paralegal  
444

445 Hope said the city had budgeted for this position to start July 1 and told committee members she  
446 is seeking approval of the actual job description. Hope said the job description encompasses all  
447 the things the city seeks in an in-house City Attorney, who would not only provide legal counsel  
448 to city staff, but also to the Common Council, the Mayor, and other committees, commissions  
449 and boards.

450  
451 City Administrator Rindfleisch said the position description is the same as it had been in  
452 December and told committee members it has been brought before them for future review.

453  
454 Ald. Every addressed Item G under “Essential Job Functions,” which reads in part as follows:  
455 “Assists City staff in lobbying efforts to promote and oppose legislation favorable to the City.”

456 Ald. Every inquired about the wording of that sentence.

457  
458 Hope said the League of Municipalities has worked on the dark store loopholes, and she told  
459 Ald. Every those are the type of things the city is looking at if city staff is working with the  
460 League of Municipalities in an attempt to eliminate the types of issues other municipalities are  
461 experiencing.

462  
Reviewed 3/8/19 by Hope Burchell & Fred Buehler

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463 Ald. Every said, "To promote and to oppose."  
464

465 Hope said, "Correct, that the Council doesn't want to see happen. I think those are discussions  
466 that have happened at the Council level that you have said, 'We want to do something.' I think  
467 that's the intent of that piece of that language in there."  
468

469 Ald. Every next addressed Item B under "Related Job Functions," which reads, "*Prepares*  
470 *periodic and special reports.*" Ald. Every asked, "To whom, and about what?"  
471

472 City Administrator Rindfleisch said, "As directed by Council or City Administrator, or by  
473 somebody."  
474

475 Ald. Every next addressed Item E under "Related Job Functions," which reads, "*May review the*  
476 *official agenda for the City Council meetings to ensure proper legal language is being utilized.*"  
477 Ald. Every said, "We do that now."  
478

479 Hope said City Attorney Sean O'Flaherty does that now.  
480

481 Ald. Every said he does not remember discussing a paralegal, and he asked if the city had  
482 budgeted for one.  
483

484 Hope said yes, noting it is a part-time position.  
485

486 City Administrator Rindfleisch addressed the comments Ald. Every had made regarding Item G  
487 under "Essential Job Functions," and he suggested making the following modification: "*Assists*  
488 *City staff in lobbying efforts to promote or oppose legislation which impacts the City.*"  
489

490 Ald. Every moved ahead to Item 9b, noting Item G under the "Essential Job Functions" of the  
491 Paralegal position and noted it reads, "*Organizes and schedules meetings and appointments for*  
492 *the City Attorney and/or City Administrator as requested.*"  
493

494 Ald. Smith said both 9a and 9b may be taken together.  
495

496 City Administrator Rindfleisch said the Paralegal position was always intended to become a full-  
497 time position in 2020. City Administrator Rindfleisch told committee members there is an  
498 anticipated retirement in the Inspection Department in 2020, and he said his intent was to utilize  
499 those funds to convert the part-time Planning Technician position into a full-time position, and  
500 also to utilize the saved funds to convert the Paralegal/Administrative Assistant position for the  
501 Confidential Suite (City Administrator, Human Resources, City Attorney) into a full-time  
502 position. City Administrator Rindfleisch told committee members there was a resignation in the  
503 Inspection Department, and therefore the plan may come to fruition in 2019 instead of 2020 as  
504 the necessary funds will be available. City Administrator Rindfleisch said he is requesting that  
Reviewed 3/8/19 by Hope Burchell & Fred Buehler

**Finance & Personnel Committee  
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13

505 the position title be changed from Part-Time Administrative Assistant/Paralegal to Full-Time  
506 Administrative Assistant/Paralegal as he wishes to begin recruiting for that position in an attempt  
507 secure the services of an individual who would have more experience than a part-time employee.

508  
509 Ald. Smith asked City Administrator Rindfleisch if it is better to proceed with the City Attorney  
510 job description and hold back with the Paralegal position until the details are finalized.

511  
512 City Administrator Rindfleisch told Ald. Smith the Paralegal job description would not change.  
513 Rather, it would be when Hope begins the recruitment process of either a part- or full-time  
514 position.

515  
516 Ald. Smith reminded City Administrator Rindfleisch he had said his goal was to find an  
517 individual with more credentials.

518  
519 City Administrator Rindfleisch told Ald. Smith she is correct and said, “The credentials didn’t  
520 change, but then who’s applying for that work – applying for a full-time job versus a part-time  
521 job.”

522  
523 Ald. Every noted the financials would not change as the budgeted funds are the same.

524  
525 City Administrator Rindfleisch said it would be over expense of what was budgeted in Legal, but  
526 under expense in Inspection.

527  
528 Ald. Every asked if the committee will approve that change at its April 3 meeting.

529  
530 City Administrator Rindfleisch told committee members they may amend the job description  
531 before them to a full-time position this evening. That position, as amended to full-time, would  
532 be approved at the March 12 Common Council meeting so the recruitment process may begin.

533  
534 Hope said she has information for the March 12 Common Council agenda to take the Paralegal  
535 position and change it from part-time to full-time. Hope noted it will appear on the Non-Consent  
536 Agenda.

537  
538 Ald. Smith asked Hope if she is saying whatever action the committee takes this evening, she  
539 will be requesting something different on the Council agenda.

540  
541 City Administrator Rindfleisch said this is an attempt to speed up the process.

542  
543 Motion by Ald. Olson, second by Ald. Every, to approve the new job descriptions for the City  
544 Attorney and Paralegal positions.

545  
546 Ald. Every asked Ald. Smith if Item 9b should be amended from part-time to full-time.

Reviewed 3/8/19 by Hope Burchell & Fred Buehler

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

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547

548 Ald. Smith said yes.

549

550 Motion by Ald. Every, second by Ald. Olson, to amend the previous motion and change the  
551 Paralegal job description from part-time to full-time.

552

553 Vote on the amendment:

554

555 On voice vote, motion carried.

556

557 Original motion restated:

558

559 To approve the job descriptions for the City Attorney and full-time Paralegal positions.

560

561 On voice vote, motion carried.

562

563 **Item 10 – Review and consideration of filling budgeted positions:**

564

565 a. City Attorney

566

566 b. Paralegal

567

568 Hope said the goal is either post the City Attorney position for one month, or it will be open until  
569 it is filled. Hope said the goal is to have applicants the city can interview and then begin the  
570 interview process so that someone is hired in May and he/she will have time to close out  
571 business with his/her clients. Hope reiterated the goal is for the new City Attorney to begin  
572 his/her employment July 1.

573

574 Motion by Ald. Every, second by Ald. Olson, to approve filling the budgeted positions of City  
575 Attorney and Paralegal.

576

577 On voice vote, motion carried.

578

579 **Item 11 – Review and consideration of out-of-state travel for Chief Hayes to attend the Fire**  
580 **Department Instructors Conference (FDIC) International in Indianapolis, Indiana from**  
581 **Wednesday April 10-Saturday, April 13, 2019**

582

583 Fire Chief Hayes said the Fire Department Instructors Conference is the largest fire conference in  
584 the nation, and also that he has been selected as a presenter. Thus, Fire Chief Hayes' airfare and  
585 lodging will be covered. The only cost to the city will be Fire Chief Hayes' meals and his time  
586 away. Fire Chief Hayes said other firefighters will not be able to attend the event due to a  
587 limited travel budget, noting that in 2020 the Fire Department will be looking at funding for  
588 some of its aerial apparatus, which has reached its lifespan. Fire Chief Hayes said this

Reviewed 3/8/19 by Hope Burchell & Fred Buehler

**Finance & Personnel Committee  
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15

589 conference has the largest number of vendors to where specifications may be examined. Fire  
590 Chief Hayes said he will have the opportunity to examine the apparatus, and as a result the  
591 department's travel and training budget will not be depleted because he is traveling alone.

592

593 Motion by Ald. Every, second by Ald. Olson, to approve out-of-state travel for Chief Hayes to  
594 attend the Fire Department Instructors Conference (FDIC) International in Indianapolis, Indiana  
595 from Wednesday April 10-Saturday, April 13, 2019.

596

597 On voice vote, motion carried.

598

599 **Item 12 – Closed Session**

600

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

605

- 606 • City snowplow damage to a parked vehicle

607

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

611

612 Motion by Ald. Olson, second by Ald. Every, to convene in Closed Session.

613

614 On roll call vote: Ald. Jim Olson – aye, Ald. Jerry Every – aye, Ald. Kim Smith – aye. In  
615 Closed Session.

616

617

618 Recorded by:

619

620 Kirk Bey