

**COUNCIL ACTION FORM**

**SUBJECT: STAFFING AUTHORIZATION TO INCREASE 0.75 FTE CUSTOMER SERVICES CLERK TO FULL TIME**

**BACKGROUND:**

Changes to the City Council-authorized staffing level are usually presented for Council consideration during the annual budget process. However, staff reviews positions as openings occur and may recommend changes to best meet our citizens' service level needs. With the retirement of a Utility Customer Services Clerk, a review was done and a recommendation is now being made to increase that position from .75 Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) to 1.0 FTE.

The primary purpose for this proposed change is to maintain customer service levels to a growing utility customer base. The Utility Customer Services Division currently has 2.75 FTEs as Grade 56 Utility Customer Services Clerks. The FTE level for this position was reduced from 3.00 FTEs in 2004 when a decision was made to contract out the printing of utility bills. The 0.25 FTE reduction was based on time required to prepare bills for mailing. Since that time, there has been a large increase in the number of utility accounts, reflected in a 26% increase in meter reads per day, a 17% increase in phone calls answered per day, and a 55% increase in work orders processed per day. This is reflective of both residential and commercial growth in the city and the growth in ISU and shift of student housing to apartments.

The Utility Customer Service Division has been well supported by Council in funding of improvements in technology that have helped to meet the increased service demand, but certain tasks, such as answering phones and emails, require increased staffing as our account base continues to grow. Some areas of service such as handling of delinquent accounts require personal interaction and are important to be handled well both from a customer service perspective and to assure fair and predictable funding of our utilities. Additionally, the 0.75 FTE position has experienced considerable turnover, primarily as the employees in the position have applied for and been selected for full-time positions in the City.

With the retirement of the Utility Account Services Clerk, we are currently in the process of establishing a Civil Service list to fill an open position. We are recommending that the 0.75 FTE Utility Account Services Clerk be increased to a full-time position and that we fill the position by selecting two candidates from the civil service list.

**Budget Impact**

For the current year (FY 17/18), staff expects no budget impact, as savings during the

time the position is open and lower pay for the new employee will offset the increased cost for an additional 0.25 FTE. The recently adopted FY 18/19 budget was prepared assuming the status quo. With the increase in 0.25 FTE and new hires at the lower end of the pay range, the impact on the FY 18/19 budget will be a savings of between \$2,500 and \$8,500, depending on health insurance selected. Total cost over the long-term will be higher with an increase in FTEs, but the budget adopted by Council in March is more than adequate to cover the increase of a 0.25 FTE. Staff also anticipates some decrease in overtime costs.

### **Customer Service Impact**

The addition of a 0.25 FTE will provide an additional 480 hours of service to customers over the course of the year. Also, if staff is able to select two employees from the Civil Service list, employees can be in place and basic training completed prior to the busy season of apartment rental turnover.

### **ALTERNATIVES:**

1. Authorize an immediate 0.25 FTE increase in the Finance Department Utility Customer Services Clerk staff.
2. Do not authorize an FTE increase.

### **MANAGER'S RECOMMENDED ACTION:**

The increase of 0.25 FTE in the Utility Customer Services Clerk position will allow the Finance Department to better serve its growing utility customer base with no impact on the current or next year budgets.

Therefore, it is the recommendation of the City Manager that the City Council adopt Alternative No. 1 as stated above.