

**COUNCIL ACTION FORM**

**SUBJECT:** REALLOCATION OF AN UNFILLED POWER PLANT COAL HANDLER FTE TO AUXILIARY OPERATOR

**BACKGROUND:**

The City's Electric Power Plant is a year-round 24/7 operation. Operational staffing is comprised of a team including an operator, fireworker, and two auxiliary operators who work 12-hour shifts. There are four teams plus one relief team. The relief positions are used to cover sick leave, vacations, training, etc.

Since July 2019, several auxiliary operators have been out of work for an extended period due to personal issues. To continue to operate the plant, the duties were assumed by the relief auxiliary operators. This in essence brings the functioning auxiliary staffing from ten to eight. Over a short period of time, this is manageable. However, as the short-staffing situation has continued over several months, management has had to deny vacation requests. **With no clear date on when or if those who are out due to personal issues will return, staff is requesting a temporary increase of one full-time equivalent (FTE) in the auxiliary operator classification to alleviate the impact on the remaining auxiliary operators.**

Presently, the Electric Department has 81 FTEs in its approved budget. Within this staffing, there exists two vacant coal handler positions. The department has been developing a long-term plan to reallocate these positions, along with a lead coal handler vacancy, to other functions within the department. **As a result of these vacant positions, the staff is also requesting a reduction in one coal handler FTE to offset the proposed increase in auxiliary operator FTEs.**

Staff expects a few retirements to occur within the next year in the Power Plant, so the increase to an eleventh auxiliary operator will eventually be reduced back down to ten through attrition. If Council provides approval for hiring an eleventh auxiliary operator, staff will be able to hire from the civil service list and start the eight to ten weeks of training as quickly as possible.

If everyone returns after the new auxiliary operator is trained, there will then be eleven auxiliary operators who are all capable of performing their responsibilities. Staff will use the increased position to train the next fireworker and operator, which are promotional opportunities within the auxiliary operator career path. With the expected retirements in the next year, vacancies in the fireworker and operator groups are expected.

Once staff is able to reduce back to ten auxiliary operators because of retirements, the reorganization plan utilizing the three vacancies from the former coal handling positions

will be undertaken. **There will be no changes to the Electric Department budget because of this action, because the funding for the vacant positions is already included.**

**ALTERNATIVES:**

1. Approve the reallocation of an unfilled coal handler FTE to create an additional temporary eleventh Auxillary Operator position.

Under this alternative, the overall FTE approved total for the Electric Services Department will remain at 81 positions.

2. Do not approve the requested reallocation.

**CITY MANAGER'S RECOMMENDED ACTION:**

**A temporary staffing shortage among auxiliary operators in the Power Plant has created challenges in continuing to operate the facility. Temporarily increasing the number of authorized FTEs for this auxiliary operator position to eleven, by reducing the number of authorized coal handler FTEs by one, will relieve the current challenges. Once the Power Plant returns to having ten consistent auxiliary operators, the extra FTE will be removed by natural attrition and returned to the coal handler position. The division reorganization will then take place using the two vacant coal handler and one lead coal handler FTEs.**

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