



MEMORANDUM

FY24-25 Mid Biennium Budget Amendments – Departmental Staffing Needs

Item Type: Backup Memorandum
Prepared For: Mayor Castner and Homer City Council
Thru: Melissa Jacobsen, Interim City Manager
Date: May 22, 2024
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At Interim City Manager Jacobsen's direction, we have prepared this report to provide Council with:

- Any position changes that are incorporated into the FY25 budget
- Additional staffing needs outlined by individual departments

Moving forward, Administration would like to ensure that City Council is informed at all times of City staffing needs. We will provide both "wishlist" type positions, which solely allow us to provide better service to the community, as well as more critical positions for Council consideration.

Administration

Special Projects *The position funding is incorporated into the FY25 budget*

There is currently an unfilled .5 FTE (full-time equivalent) allocated to Administration as a part-time Special Projects position.

Staff Recommendation: Assign the part-time position to Special Projects Coordinator Jenny Carroll, allowing her to hire a part-time employee who reports directly to her.

Fiscal impact: no change

Community Rec *The position funding is incorporated into the FY25 budget*

Currently has one part-time position that was budgeted by Council in FY24.

Staff Recommendation: Convert this part-time position to a full-time position. Remove temporary employee expenses of \$67,396 to help offset the cost.

Fiscal impact: \$11,891 to General Fund

Community Development *The position funding is incorporated into the FY25 budget*

Economic Development There is a current vacancy in Economic Development of 1 full-time position. Staff Recommendation: Reduce this position to 24 hours (part-time).

Fiscal impact: \$44,845 savings to General Fund

Planning Currently has a part-time position in the FY24 budget that has been unfilled for much of FY24.

Staff Recommendation: Assign other .5 FTE from Economic Development to Planning, make this position whole, adding 1 additional full-time position in Planning. Proposed budget reductions totaling \$17,300 between Planning and Economic Development budget will offset fiscal impact.

Fiscal impact: \$14,771 savings to General Fund

Finance Department *The position funding is incorporated into the FY25 budget*

There is currently an unfilled position in Finance, which was unfunded in the FY24 budget.

Fiscal impact: no change

Port and Harbor *The position funding is incorporated into the FY25 budget*

The Port removed the Temporary (seasonal) Ice Plant/Fish Dock allocation when adding a new full-time position to Port budget in FY24. Now OBI (formerly Icicle Seafoods) is unsure if they are going to operate their ice plant this season. If OBI does not produce ice that would mean an additional 1500 tons of ice that our Ice Plant will need to produce to cover their needs.

Staff Recommendation: Add funds to FY25 budget for Temporary/ Seasonal employee.

Fiscal impact: \$26,626 to Port Operations

Public Works *The position funding is incorporated into the FY25 budget*

Parks Parks currently has one full-time staff member. There is \$55,306 in seasonal wages/benefits set aside to assist with parks duties. One year-round person is not enough to operate this division well, and manage the growing needs in the community.

Staff Recommendation: Create a 28-hour/ part-time (year round) position totaling \$56,405. Reduce temporary/casual employee wages/benefits line items of \$55,306 to \$12,891 to help offset the cost. This \$12,891 will allow the Parks division to hire one 3-month temp each summer.

Fiscal impact: \$13,990 to General Fund

Police Department

Jail *The position funding is incorporated into the FY25 budget*

The Jail currently has three (3) full-time positions, and one part-time position. For many years the jail operated with four (4) full-time Jail Officers, as well as Casual (limited hours) staff who filled in. Due to budget constraints years ago, one position was converted to part-time. This means that there are 26 hours per week with no Jail Officer on duty (in a 24-hour facility).

During those hours, Police Officers book arrestees, but monitoring falls on our Public Safety Dispatchers. Sometimes there is only one Dispatcher on shift, and they are busy with 911 calls, requests from officers, walk-in traffic, and much more. They have very little time to even glance at the video monitors, let alone pay close attention. At times observation is the only way to catch behavior build-up of an inmate. Intervention can save an inmate, and greatly reduces the City's liability. Currently if a "high risk" type of inmate comes in when no jailer is on-duty, a Jail Officer or Police Officer is called in to work overtime. Additionally, our jail contract with the State requires us to fully staff the jail with a trained jail officer when a prisoner is present.

Staff Recommendation: Convert the part-time position to a full-time position. Remove temporary/casual employee expenses of \$34,941 to help offset the cost.

Fiscal impact: \$4,967 savings to General Fund

Dispatch *No staffing changes incorporated into FY25 budget.*

Working as a Public Safety Dispatcher is an extremely stressful job that requires an extensive amount of training. The Police Department currently has seven (7) Dispatcher positions. They had an additional 8th position until 2015, when budget cuts necessitated losing one FTE. Since that time, our Dispatch Center has operated with 7, which often means only one Dispatcher on shift. Best-practice says Dispatch should have two people on shift at all times, and in many dispatch centers that is a requirement. In order for Homer Dispatch Center to operate 24/7, as soon as a Dispatcher takes annual or sick leave- it creates overtime for another employee. Additionally, mandatory overtime has an adverse effect on staff. The job is tough, and they need their time away to decompress. Hiring one additional Dispatcher would restore to full staffing level. This is not incorporated into FY25 budget, but fiscal impact is below for Council review.

Fiscal impact: \$81,272 to General Fund

Patrol *No staffing changes incorporated into FY25 budget.*

HPD currently has 13 Police Officer positions. When fully staffed with no injuries or absences, things are manageable. However, as soon as a Police Officer takes annual or sick leave, is injured, or participating in a trial – it creates overtime for another employee. When compared to other agencies with similar caseloads, we have less patrol staffing. When we lose an officer to retirement or resignation, it takes many months to recruit and train a new lateral officer (an officer from another agency). If they are brand new to law enforcement, which is often the case, we have to send them to the DPS Academy in Sitka for 17 weeks. That is followed by a 3 ½ month field training upon return. That is 8 months to get a new officer out on their own! One more Police Officer would alleviate some of the mandatory overtime and burnout at the department. This is not incorporated into FY25 budget, but fiscal impact is below for Council review.

Fiscal impact: \$117,237 to General Fund

Information Technology (IT) *No staffing changes incorporated into FY25 budget.*

The City of Homer needs an additional full-time position in the IT Department. The current workload is more than three individuals can effectively manage if the department is to perform at a level that actually addresses the technology needs of the City. For instance:

- The current team routinely starts each week with a backlog of between 40-60 requests carried over from prior weeks.
- Non-urgent requests average over a week (5.75 business days) before a technician begins to respond.
- The Department has overshot OT budget each of the past two years.

What these figures actually mean is that the IT Department is only serving the basic needs of the City. Many important technology decisions historically have been made without coordination with the in-house IT professionals, and this structure essentially re-enforces habits where staff work around more pressing problems, which drives inconsistency and irregularity across the organization and leads to greater cybersecurity risk. The more important work of planning the development of digital systems that improves how City staff do their jobs and how citizens connect to City government is barely addressed. Benchmarking against similar-sized organizations, including other Alaskan municipalities that are excelling in their IT operations, reveals that they typically maintain a staff of around five (5) full-time IT professionals.

Adding a full-time system administrator/security administrator would address the workload and target the most strategically important duties that are presently shared among the three current positions. The role would oversee server administration, security patching, system backups, and permissions and access control. The security administration duties would include administering the City's antivirus and threat detection software, developing our vulnerability management program, and ensuring overall compliance with NIST standards.

Many of the IT Department's priorities for the coming years involve cybersecurity-related initiatives and programs. These initiatives include things like implementing Multi-factor Authentication (MFA), building up our backup and recovery capabilities, and addressing the findings of our Cybersecurity Risk Assessment. These initiatives will require skilled staff to implement and sustain. Meanwhile, these sorts of initiatives tend to experience delays when daily operations demand urgent attention. If the City can afford it, the department's priority is to add a full-time position of system administrator and security administrator to help further our strategic goals around cybersecurity and infrastructure reliability. This is not incorporated into FY25 budget, but fiscal impact is below for Council review.

Fiscal impact: \$116,189 to General Fund

Fire Department *No staffing changes incorporated into FY25 budget.*

Firefighter/Basic EMT The current model allows for two responders at the station 24/7/365 excluding any vacations, sick, or training vacancies. Run volume is increasing and volunteerism is at an all-time low, nationally and locally. Even when current model is fully staffed, HVFD operates at high risk because much of what we do requires more than a two-person response. A safe and effective crew size, according to Chief Kirko and industry professional organizations is 3-4 people, based on HVFD run volume and services provided. City Council has approved three (3) new Firefighter/EMT positions in the past five years. This is not incorporated into FY25 budget, but fiscal impact for one new Firefighter/Basic EMT is below for Council review.

Fiscal impact: \$102,457 to General Fund

Library *No staffing changes incorporated into FY25 budget*

The Library Department currently has one person officially dedicated to children, the Youth Services Librarian. Ideally, the Library would like to upgrade one current part-time position to a full-time Youth Services Assistant position. This position would assist at the desk, but would have a youth services component built into their job description.

Fiscal impact: \$41,896 to General Fund

Second Priority would be another Library Tech II position. This could be accomplished by creating a new FTE or upgrade a current part-time (Tech I) position to full-time. Cost of upgrading a current part-time Tech I position to full-time below.

Fiscal impact: \$39,067 to General Fund