



Onondaga County Legislature

JAMIE McNAMARA
Clerk

TIMOTHY T. BURTIS
Chairman

TAMMY BARBER
Deputy Clerk

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ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION COMMITTEE MINUTES – MAY 21, 2024 **JULIE ABBOTT, CHAIR**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Dr. Kelly, Ms. Cody, Mr. Romeo, Mr. Brown

ALSO ATTENDING: Chairman Burtis, also see attached list

Chair Abbott called the meeting to order at 1:36 p.m. and the previous meeting's minutes were approved.

1. WATER ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION: Shannon Harty, Commissioner **a. Authorizing Advance Step Hiring and Placements**

Purpose: There are eight (8) critical management positions with the Onondaga County Department of Water Environment Protection (WEP) that need to be filled to ensure proper oversight of various programs and program personnel. Vacancies in these positions are impacting Department processes including regulatory programs associated with industrial discharge permits, treatment plant and sewer capacity evaluations to support community development, oversight and management of pump station maintenance and implementation of vital capital improvement projects. WEP has been unsuccessful in recruiting and hiring highly skilled, and experienced candidates for these positions due to more competitive opportunities in the private sector. WEP is seeking legislative authorization for one-time advanced step hiring and placement for the following management positions to ensure that we can attract and retain qualified personnel to continue to rebuild and grow WEP's technical services.

- *Authorize advanced step hire for Deputy Commissioner of Regulatory Programs (L109572) - Grade 37, up to Step 20 (\$135,848) - This Deputy position is responsible for oversight of all regulatory programs – process control (oversees plant capacity management and expansion), collection systems programs (oversees new sewer service requests, capacity management, sewer expansion, I/I abatement), industrial wastewater discharge permit programs, the environmental laboratory and plumbing control. In addition, this position is vital to oversee the regulatory issues related to supporting Micron and community-wide development. The position requires strong regulatory compliance and municipal experience, and preference for PE though not mandatory.*
- *Authorize advanced step hire for Industrial Pretreatment Director (L109604) - Grade 36, up to Step 14 (\$115,110) - This position is responsible for the management of WEP's EPA required industrial pretreatment and source control programs, which include the 35 permitted industrial wastewater customers in the CSD, the waste hauler program for septage, grease and other waste disposed at Metro, the mercury minimization program and the upcoming PFAS control program. This position will be instrumental in developing the new pretreatment program to support MicronNY.*
- *Authorize advanced step hire for Management Engineer (L109564) - Grade 36, up to Step 15 (\$116,532) - This position is responsible for the management oversight of WEP's \$485M CIP implementation, and particularly WWTP expansion and upgrade projects. Candidates must be licensed Professional Engineers and have experience designing and managing sewer infrastructure capital investments.*

- *Authorize advanced step hire for Collection System Director (L109581) - Grade 36, up to Step 15 (\$116,532) - This position is responsible for the management oversight of the collection system capacity management programs, including new service requests/capacity assurance letter, sewer investigation studies, management of I/I abatement efforts, CSO system improvements, and miscellaneous flow metering programs. Candidates must be licensed Professional Engineers and have relevant experience in sewer capacity programs.*
- *Authorize advanced step hire for Sewer Maintenance Superintendent (L105681) - Grade 36, up to Step 7 (\$105,632) – This position is responsible for management and oversight of the 177 Pump Stations located throughout the CSD, and the 3 large regional treatment facilities (Clinton, Midland, Harbor Brook) located in the City of Syracuse. This position requires the same skill set and experience as our WWTP Maintenance Superintendent – strong mechanical maintenance of industrial equipment. This position is critical for ensuring collection system functions to support community development.*
- *Authorize advanced step hire for I/E Superintendent (L105492) - Grade 36, up to Step 18 (\$120,902) - This position is responsible for management and oversight of all electrical and instrumentation systems throughout the CSD facilities – including the 6 WWTPs, the 177 pump stations, the 3 RTFs, and all office building spaces. This position is responsible for oversight of all high voltage electrical infrastructure, communication systems (fiber, cellular, phones), SCADA systems necessary for remote monitoring and operation of all process equipment. This position requires significant relevant industrial experience and supervisory oversight of electrical personnel with a strong competency in staff development as this group is undergoing significant hiring/onboarding.*
- *Authorize grade change and advanced step hire for Process Control Director (L109575) - Grade 36, up to Step 7 (\$105,632) - This position is responsible for oversight of the optimization and regulatory reporting for all 6 WWTPs. In addition, the position will be required to build a new WWTP capacity management/process oversight program to support community development and evaluate future plant expansions. The position must be a licensed WWTP operator.*
- *Place the incumbent Director of Asset Management (L109584) - Grade 36, at Step 15 (\$116,532) - This position is responsible for the management and oversight of WEP's Maximo computerized maintenance management system (CMMS), which is the database that is used to inventory all the individual assets/equipment at each of the 6 WWTPs, 170+ pump stations and the 5 RTFs. The Director also oversees all the inventory/purchasing of spare parts and equipment needed to support maintenance and repair and must develop and ensure compliance with processes and procedures for Work Orders and asset condition assessment. The position is critical for data collection needed to support WEP's capital investment planning. The position requires a Professional Engineering license with at least 10-15 years' experience.*

Summary: *WEP is experiencing recruitment and retention challenges due to salaries for various managerial positions. To attract and retain qualified talent, WEP is seeking one-time authorizations to advance step hire for those positions.*

Fiscal Impact: *Appointments authorized by this resolution will be funded within the existing 2024 101 budget. There is no fiscal impact to the 2024 Operating Budget.*

- Critical management positions have been vacant for 2 years
 - Vacancies impact WEP's ability to move forward with capital and regulatory programs
 - Union personnel are operating without supervision

Request: Legislature to correct Collection System Supervisor title to Collection System Director

Questions/Comments from the Committee:

- Roughly how many candidates were lost due to lack of flexibility to provide step increases?
 - Deputy Commissioner of Regulatory Programs – employee resigned for a private sector opportunity
 - Vacated in December 2023
 - Industrial Pretreatment Director – lost 2 candidates to private sector
 - Vacant since created
 - Management Engineer – 3 candidates that were unsuccessful to get to step 3
 - Vacated in October 2023
 - Collection System Director – employee resigned for private sector opportunity
 - Vacated in March 2024
 - Sewer Maintenance Superintendent – lost candidate to private sector
 - Vacant since created
 - I/E Superintendent (Instrumentation/Electrical)
 - Employee will be retiring in summer 2024
 - Process Control Director - have in-house union candidate that would take a pay cut if accepted promotion
 - Vacant since created
 - Director of Asset Management is a former union employee; looking to advance step to correct salary
- Please explain which positions WEP needs and why they are critical
 - Sewer Maintenance Superintendent
 - In charge of collection systems, sewer consolidation
 - County owns ~70 of the 170 Pump Stations
 - Need Superintendent oversight as the additional 100 Pump Stations are rolled into County responsibility
 - Lack of Superintendent is impacting ability to grow the Pump Station maintenance program
 - Superintendent of Gravity is currently overseeing this role
 - Deputy Commissioner of Regulatory Programs
 - Majority of positions are within Regulatory Programs
 - Collection System Director
 - Manages the entire 2000 miles of sewer within the six service areas
 - Process Control Director
 - Partners with Collection System Director
 - Looks at how Waste Water Treatment Plants are operating
 - Collection System and Process Control Directors are currently managed by Commissioner and Deputies
 - Industrial Pretreatment Director – most urgent
 - Oversees all industries connected to the sanitary sewer system, including Micron
 - EPA regulated program
 - Overseen by the Deputy Commissioner of Regulatory Programs (currently vacant)
 - The Industrial Pretreatment Director prepares staff for PFAS
 - WEP not sure when PFAS will kick in

Request: WEP to send Metro Permit to Legislature

- What is the salary difference between Sewer Maintenance Superintendent and where the County might lose someone?
 - County Step 1 is ~ \$95k; need to be in the low \$100k's
 - Pump Station Maintenance Coordinators are a Grade 13 or 14 (~\$82k plus overtime)
 - Senior union Supervisors make over \$100k
 - Promotional path to Superintendent is not lucrative
 - Management is salary; not eligible for overtime
- Deputy Commissioner of Regulatory Programs and Industrial Pretreatment Director are supporting Micron
- Is the cost of these positions covered with the 2024 budget?
 - There is no fiscal impact to the 2024 budget
- Where is WEP at as it relates to education (SU, OCC)?
 - Majority of these positions require advanced certifications

- WEP is ramping up training budget; sending employees out for training programs across the country
- Professional development should be a daily conversation

Request: WEP to send Organizational Chart and Vacancy Report to Legislature prior to June 4, 2024

- Funded for 374 positions
- Actively recruiting for 38 funded vacant
- What is WEP doing to keep culture of the organization in place with the upcoming managerial changes?
 - Bringing in new management has a very strong psychological impact on an organization
 - It takes time for new management to know what the needs of the workforce are
 - Will be getting a more robust training program together to include:
 - Safety programs
 - HR policies; handbook; new orientation program
 - The union contract had 74 positions that were re-graded; \$647k worth of salary incentives for union employees
- What is the additional cost for the 8 positions?
 - Finance
 - Up to approximately \$140k annually
- What opportunities are available to improve flexibility with staff?
 - Implementing OpenGov public portal
 - Using digital dashboard will allow information to move quicker and more efficiently
- What other dashboards are being considered?
 - OpenGov will be on-line later this summer
 - WIMS software is being developed as a tool to be used by the Process Control Director
 - Facility Connex software is being used by Collection System Director
- Have union workers been identified as candidates for these positions?
 - Have a candidate from the union for the Process Control Director
- How are the Steps determined?
 - Determined by the Market
 - Need to close the salary gap with the private sector
- This will provide more flexibility
- Do candidates take the benefits and time off into account?
 - Yes, there is a strong quality of life working for the County
 - The work force is changing, people want better quality of life
- In terms of education, is there enough training for some of these positions locally?
 - Need to develop relationships with schools so they are aware of career opportunities
- Steps need to be taken to make these positions more competitive

b. Personnel Resolution

Purpose: The Onondaga County Department of Water Environment Protection (WEP) is seeking legislative authorization for the creation and funding of a Deputy Commissioner of Administrative Services (WEP). This Deputy Commissioner position will be responsible for the oversight of administrative personnel and human resource processes for the Department – including Employee and Labor Relations (ie. Workplace policies/procedures, complaint and disciplinary investigations and discipline, payroll, employee record keeping), Workforce Development (ie. Recruitment, Hiring, Onboarding, Workplace Safety, Training, and staff development) and Public Communication and Outreach. Executive management of these functions

is crucial for aligning organizational goals with talent strategies, ensuring optimal utilization of resources, and fostering employee growth and engagement. The Deputy Commissioner will be responsible for advancing WEP’s Workforce Redevelopment strategy and cultivating a culture of innovation, retention, and adaptability. Effective leadership in this area will also safeguard against legal compliance issues and promote diversity and inclusion, further bolstering Department productivity and reputation.

Authorization of appointment up to Step 12 will allow WEP to provide a competitive job offer and salary to attract and retain optimum talent in this competitive job market.

Summary: *A Deputy Commissioner of Administrative Services is needed to provide executive oversight of human resource functions and ensure a cohesive Workforce Redevelopment program throughout the entire department.*

Fiscal Impact: *Appointment authorized by this resolution will be funded within the existing 2024 101 budget. There is no fiscal impact to the 2024 Operating Budget.*

- Need to build a stronger HR program for training, safety, workforce development, and apprentice opportunities
- Have a strong internal candidate with government experience
- Private sector HR does not necessarily translate to government HR

Questions/Comments from the Committee:

- Does County HR help?
 - WEP is unique and has very specific procedures
 - The County has general policies and procedures and provides oversight
 - Director of Health and Safety assists with safety programs
 - Personnel Department assists with advertising
 - WEP has over 100 titles and does own detailed recruiting, interviewing, and training
- Is there a blueprint for other municipalities with similar issues?
 - Yes, looking at organizational charts from other similar sized utilities
 - Network frequently with other municipalities

A motion was made by Dr. Kelly, seconded by Ms. Cody, to approve item 1a. Passed unanimously; MOTION CARRIED.

A motion was made by Mr. Romeo, seconded by Ms. Cody, to approve item 1b. Passed unanimously; MOTION CARRIED.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:28 p.m.

ATTENDANCE

Respectfully submitted,



TAMMY BARBER, Deputy Clerk
Onondaga County Legislature

COMMITTEE: ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION COMMITTEE
DATE: MAY 21, 2024

NAME (Please Print)	DEPARTMENT/AGENCY
Kristi Smiley	Finance
Joseph Hourigan	Finance
Darcie Lesniak	Leg
SHANNON HANNING	CDWEP
MB Pina	CE
Nancy Lowery	CE
John DiSantis	Leg
Jim Barber	Leg
Joe Fratreschi	Counsel