

MEMORANDUM

Date: April 21, 2023

To: Scott Huizenga, Interim City Manager

From: Grant Watanabe, Director of Public Works & Engineering Services

CC: Joanna Merrill, Director of Human Resources & Communications
Summer Fleming, Acting Director of Finance
Carole Vanzant, Assistant City Manager

Subj: **Justification for New FTE Position – Utility Technician**

As part of the FY2023-2024 budget process, the Public Works Department respectfully requests to add a new FTE position (Utility Technician) to our organization. The position is necessary to maintain the level of service that our utility customers expect to receive and our City Council expects us to provide. Please find my justification responses below:

• What circumstances have changed significantly since the previous budgets were finalized to justify a position change request?

The last time a new Utility Technician position was approved was in 2018. Since then, our city has experienced significant growth with over 430 new water/wastewater connections added, miles of new pipeline constructed, and increasing number of leaks/breaks due to aging infrastructure. In addition, new EPA/TCEQ rules and regulations related to lead and copper have placed unfunded mandates on our utility. Additionally, new proposed drinking water standards regarding per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) are pending final approval. All new rules and regulations require increased testing, inspection, monitoring, public notification and action to reduce levels if they exceed regulatory standards.

Our utility currently operates with ten field employees. The ratio of water/wastewater connections to employees is currently 522. In 2018 (after last FTEs approved) the ratio was 478 connections per employee. When compared to other cities in TX, our city lags in terms of adequate utility staffing. A recent benchmark staffing study conducted by the City of Pearland showed many cities (i.e. Denton, Round Rock, Sugar Land, Baytown, League City and Abilene) are staffed between 146-432 customer accounts per utility employee. Based on past experience from utility supervisors who have been with the city prior to 2018, it is our position that the 478 connections/employee ratio should be the minimum standard to maintain sustainable operations with a target of 425 connections/employee as the goal. The addition of one new FTE will bring the ratio down to 474 connections/employee which is within the minimum standard. See attached Utility Tech Staffing Matrix for details.

Without the one additional FTE, when utility staff take leave, attend off-site training or positions are vacant due to retirement/resignation, there is a strain on the current staff. Current staff members feel they cannot take time off without leaving their team short-staffed and often hesitate to use their vacation. In the past, utility supervisors have also volunteered to serve as the on-call operator

so that other utility staff were not on-call for more than one week per month. The Public Works Department respectfully requests one FTE be approved in the FY2023-2024 budget cycle, with the goal of achieving 425 connections/employee in the future.

- **If this is a new position, please include a description of the location where the desk/work location will be.**

The new FTE would be co-located with utility staff in the designated shop area.

- **Include any additional startup costs, if any. ○ Equipment, Furniture, Computer, Phone, Training, Vehicle, Supplies, Uniforms, etc.**

Cell Phone-\$1000

Training/cert/conference-\$1000

Supplies/Uniform-\$800

- **Describe why this position will, or will not, be needed in future budget years?**

Our city's utility customer base and infrastructure is expected to continue to grow for the foreseeable future. The need for the new position will not go away.

- **How do you plan to fund this position creation or reclassification increases in your budget? ○ Salary savings from the previous budget year should not be used as justification for your department's ability to fund a new position or a reclassification increase.**

TCEQ requires that all sewer mains within the Edwards Aquifer Recharge Zone be cleaned and inspected (by CCTV camera) every 5 years to identify any cracks/breaks and protect our groundwater resources. In the past, the Utility has contracted with a third party to camera the zone, which has cost anywhere from \$200,000-\$300,000. With the addition of one new FTE and additional equipment (hydro-excavator requested as capital purchase), the department would be capable of conducting this in-house. This will result in savings of \$200,000-\$300,000 every 5 years. In addition, the Council is supportive of a wastewater rate change which will cover the wastewater cost of service and will likely occur prior to FY2023-2024. As a result of the rate change, the water utility will have surplus revenue (\$400-700k/yr) since it will no longer need to supplement wastewater rate payers.



CITY OF FAIR OAKS RANCH

Position Description

Job Title:	Utility Technician
Department:	Public Works
Pay Grade:	14
Reporting Manager:	Water/Wastewater Supervisor
FLSA:	Non-Exempt

GENERAL PURPOSE

Under supervision, performs a variety of skilled technical duties and semi-skilled labor in the operation and maintenance of the City's water and wastewater treatment facilities.

SUPERVISION RECEIVED AND EXERCISED

Works under the supervision of the Water/Wastewater Supervisor. No supervision exercised.

ESSENTIAL DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- Assist with assigned treatment plant and facility rounds; inspect, monitor, troubleshoot, performance test and document plant processes by reading plant equipment gauges, meters, SCADA systems and other instrumentation.
- Record plant operation logs and reports; perform and record mathematical calculations related to plant operational activities.
- Mix and add treatment chemicals; install and replace chlorine cylinder tanks.
- Assist in installation, maintenance, and repair of plant machinery and equipment including pumps, valves, motors, meters, feeders and analyzers.
- Assist in the repair of water/sewer line breaks, installation of water meters, fire hydrant flushing/inspections, utility locates and other duties as assigned.
- Collect water and wastewater samples as required by TCEQ.
- Perform general plant and facility maintenance such as cleaning, painting, and repairing plant facilities; performs various grounds maintenance duties as required.
- Operate a variety of heavy equipment including backhoes, loaders, mini-excavator, and tractors (Training provided). Operate light equipment including, mower, pavement saw, chainsaw, weed eater, power washer, and other various shop power tools.
- Performs routine inspection and preventative maintenance on assigned equipment and refers defects or needed repairs to supervisor.

MINIMUM EDUCATION & EXPERIENCE

Graduation from high school or GED equivalent, basic mathematical skills, and familiarity working with common hand and power tools. Any equivalent combination of education and experience sufficient to successfully perform the essential functions of the job may be considered.

KNOWLEDGE ABILITIES & SKILLS

Knowledge of:

- Equipment, facilities, materials, methods and procedures used in maintenance, construction and repair activities.

Ability to:

- Perform heavy manual tasks for extended periods of time.
- Work safely.
- Communicate effectively verbally and in writing.
- Establish and maintain effective working relationships with employees, other departments and the public.
- Understand and carry out written and oral instructions.

Skills:

- Operation of listed tools and equipment.

SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS

Valid Texas Class C Driver's License and a Valid Texas Class B Commercial Driver's License or the ability to obtain within 90 days of employment. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) training.

PHYSICAL DEMANDS

The physical demands described here are representative of those that must be met by an employee to successfully perform the essential functions of this job. While performing the duties of this job, the employee is regularly required to use hands to finger, handle, feel or operate objects, tools, or controls and reach with hands and arms. The employee frequently is required to stand and talk or hear. The employee is occasionally required to walk; sit; climb or balance; stoop, kneel, crouch, or crawl; and smell. The employee must frequently lift and/or move up to 25 pounds and occasionally lift and/or move up to 250 pounds. Specific vision abilities required by this job include close vision, distance vision, color vision, peripheral vision, depth perception, and the ability to adjust focus.

WORK ENVIRONMENT

The work environment characteristics described here are representative of those an employee encounters while performing the essential functions of this job. While performing the duties of this job, the employee regularly works in outside weather conditions. The employee frequently works near moving mechanical parts and is frequently exposed to wet and/or humid conditions and

vibration. The employee occasionally works in high, precarious places and is occasionally exposed to fumes or airborne particles, toxic or caustic chemicals, and risk of electrical shock. The noise level in the work environment is usually loud. All employees are required in the scope and course of their employment to provide services for the benefit of the general public during emergency situations that threaten the safety of citizens. Employees must be able to work immediately before, during and/or immediately after an emergency.

SPECIAL NOTES FOR APPLICANTS

Formal application, rating of education and experience; oral interview and reference check; job related tests may be required.

This position description is not intended to be construed as an exhaustive list of responsibilities, duties, and skills required. City management has exclusive rights to alter this job description at any time without notice. Employees will be required to follow any other job-related instructions and to perform any other job-related duties requested by any person authorized to give instructions or assignments. This document does not create an employment contract, implied or otherwise, other than an "at-will relationship".

Employee Signature

Date