



Folsom City Council Staff Report

MEETING DATE:	6/23/2026
AGENDA SECTION:	Consent Calendar
SUBJECT:	Resolution No. 11651 - A Resolution Approving a New Staffing Model for the Water and Wastewater Divisions to Improve Operational Efficiencies in the Utilities Department and Appropriation of Funds
FROM:	Human Resources Department

RECOMMENDATION / CITY COUNCIL ACTION

It is recommended that the City Council adopt Resolution No. 11651 - A Resolution Approving a New Staffing Model for the Water and Wastewater Divisions to Improve Operational Efficiencies in the Utilities Department and Appropriation of Funds.

BACKGROUND / ISSUE

Providing safe, reliable, and uninterrupted water and sewer service is one of the City's most critical responsibilities. Water and sewer operations are a 24-hour, 365-day essential service that directly impacts public health, emergency response capabilities, fire protection, regulatory compliance, and overall quality of life for our residents. To maintain these services, state regulations require qualified and properly certified personnel to continuously monitor and operate essential water and sewer system functions.

The department is currently experiencing significant challenges in staffing on-call positions and hiring certified operations staff. At present, only a limited number of employees are available to fulfill these critical assignments, resulting in the same individuals repeatedly carrying on-call responsibilities. This creates operational and safety concerns related to employee fatigue, insufficient recovery time between shifts, and increased risk of human error in a highly sensitive utility environment. Sustaining this model long term is neither operationally effective nor safe for employees or the community we serve.

Updating the staffing model is an operational need that will strengthen service continuity, improve workforce sustainability, improve recruitment efforts, and ensure the City can continue meeting its obligations to residents without interruption. Expanding staffing flexibility will allow employees to be placed into positions that appropriately align with their State of California certifications, training, and qualifications. This creates a more efficient workforce structure while also providing management with the ability to better allocate personnel where operational demands are greatest.

Recruitment and retention are also critical factors in maintaining a resilient and dependable water and wastewater utility program. The proposed model establishes clearer career pathways, promotes employee development, and enhances the City's ability to attract and retain qualified operators in an increasingly competitive labor market. Without modernization of the current structure, vacancies will remain difficult to fill, placing additional strain on existing staff and increasing the risk of service disruptions.

A successful water and wastewater utility program depends on maintaining a robust and reliable on-call staffing pool. Expanding opportunities and flexibility within the staffing model will help increase employee participation in on-call assignments and ensure adequate coverage during emergencies, after-hours incidents, system failures, and critical infrastructure events. In emergency situations, timely response from qualified personnel is essential not only for maintaining water quality and system integrity, but also for protecting public health and safety. Reliable staffing in these roles can have implications during fires, infrastructure failures, contamination events, or other critical emergencies. During emergency response events, certified water or wastewater operators may need to respond immediately to system alarms, pressure fluctuations, pump station failures, power outages, water main breaks, sewer overflows, or other operational issues that could impact water or wastewater operations. Reliable and qualified staffing is therefore not only an operational necessity, but an essential component of protecting the health, safety, and welfare of the community.

In addition to addressing current operational challenges, this proposed staffing model is a proactive investment in the future of the City's water and wastewater operations. It aligns the department with industry standards and neighboring agencies that have successfully implemented similar flex-series staffing structures to improve operational resiliency, workforce retention, and long-term service delivery outcomes while also establishing a clear and direct career ladder for the Department's certified operators.

Implementing this model is essential to ensuring the City can continue providing safe, compliant, and uninterrupted water service to the community both now and into the future.

POLICY / RULE

Government Code Title 1, Division 4, Chapter 10, commonly known as the Meyers-Milias-Brown Act (MMBA), requires public agencies to meet and confer in good faith with recognized employee organizations regarding wages, hours, and other terms and conditions of employment.

In accordance with the MMBA, the proposed updates to the staffing model were negotiated with the International Union of Operating Engineers - Stationary Engineers Local 39.

ANALYSIS

The current staffing model for the water and wastewater utility divisions comprise of three (3) different classification levels based on experience and level of certification. While an employee with the required certifications and experience can be promoted within a classification (for example from Maintenance Worker I to Maintenance Worker II), moving to a different classification (for example from Maintenance Worker II to Water Utilities Worker I) requires either a reclassification of the employee's current position or for the employee to successfully apply to a vacancy in the higher classification. A reclassification study requires input from department staff, Human Resources, Finance and the City Manager, while a vacancy requires the city to complete all steps of the recruitment process, including advertising, review of applications and interviews. Both reclassification and recruitment are time-consuming processes which incur costs for the city. Meanwhile the lengthy processes involved can negatively affect employee morale, impact retention, and provide for a reduced number of staff available for the City's on-call pool of staff to cover after hours' incidents.

The Utilities Department recommends updating the water and wastewater utility division classifications to allow employees to be assigned to positions that properly align with their qualifications in a more efficient manner. Creating one series per classification, comprising four classes ranging from trainee level (0) up to journey level (III), establishes a clear career pathway through which employees can be promoted as they gain experience and relevant certifications, which aligns with the State's requirements for a water or sewer system, the size of the City's system. By obtaining the required licenses, certificates and experience, a new employee hired at the trainee level can be promoted as deemed appropriate, without the need for lengthy reclassification or vacancy processes. The streamlined process will result in improved employee morale and retention.

Employees who perform critical on-call work are required to hold specific licenses and state certifications. Current job specifications include no requirement to improve knowledge and skills beyond that required for the position held, consequently employees may currently opt to limit their development to a level which makes them ineligible for on-call work. This, in turn, limits the number of employees able to perform this critical service, increasing pressure on and affecting morale of qualified personnel. Effectively, there are less employees that are available to go on-call and more on-call shifts required of the eligible employees.

The proposed specifications include requirements for employees in the lower classes to obtain certifications within a specified period of time. By requiring continued staff development, the department will maintain a workforce of overall higher quality. Ultimately, the pool of employees eligible for performing on-call work will also be increased, improving efficiency and safety of operations.

Under the current model, the application pool for any recruitment is limited by the classification of the vacancy. A vacancy for the entry level position of Maintenance Worker I/II generates applications from candidates with no or very limited experience. A vacancy for the higher-level classes of Water Treatment Plant Operator I/II, Water Distribution Operator I/II, Water Utilities Worker I/II, or Wastewater Collection Technician I/II, generates applications from candidates with some experience and certifications. If the department advertises to hire a higher-level class position, there may be no suitable candidates with the required experience and certifications, but if the department advertises for a Maintenance Worker, it may miss the opportunity to hire an excellent candidate who is an experienced technician.

With the updated staffing model, recruitments will invite applications for all four levels (0, I, II and III) in the relevant class series. A hiring manager can therefore anticipate receipt of applications from a broader range of candidates, with mixed experience and qualifications. A wider pool of applications will help alleviate challenges experienced in the hiring process and improve opportunities to hire candidates who are a good fit for the department. With regional comparable salaries and benefits at other agencies, hiring new employees within the I, II, and III classification has been a challenge for the Utilities Department over the last 3-5 years. To try and minimize the length of time positions remain vacant, the Department has underfilled these operator positions with maintenance worker positions.

Under the current classification system, moving employees from the maintenance worker classification to an operator classification has been difficult. Even more challenging is getting employees to move into the III classification and enter the on-call pool and this limits the number of employees that are available for responding to emergencies after hours.

The proposed model includes a separate, higher classification within each class which requires more advanced technical skills. Incumbents in these positions will be responsible for specialized duties, and promotion to these positions can occur only when there is a vacancy in that specific position. Some examples of the specialized duties for these positions are as follows:

- Water Distribution Operator III (A)
 - Assistance in tasks associated with Capital Improvement Projects; preparation of shutdown plans and technical reports; implementation of the Unidirectional Flushing program.
- Water Treatment Plant Operator III (Shift)
 - Assigned to a 48-hour shift, responsible for independently monitoring treatment plant processes and performance when supervisory staff are not on site.
- Water Utilities Worker III (A)
 - Management of division programs including Underground Service Alert, Leak detection and Advanced Metering Infrastructure connectivity.
 - Water meter testing and calibration
- Wastewater Collection Technician III (A)

- Management of division programs including sewer lateral inspections, fats, oils and grease (FOG) inspection, and Underground Service Alert.
- Managing data for state reports.

Different classification steps exist because water and sewer systems differ in complexity, risk, and operational needs. Tiered certification ensures that each operator is qualified for the specific system they operate, protecting public health, meeting legal requirements, and enabling efficient workforce management, including operator expertise or experience in areas that require specific technical knowledge.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

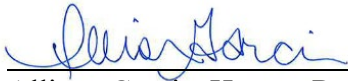
If approved, the additional salary and benefit costs associated with the proposed staffing model are projected at \$143,957 for Fiscal Year 2026-27. Of this amount, \$48,860 will be funded by the Wastewater Operating Fund (Fund 530) and \$95,097 will be funded by the Water Operating Fund (Fund 520). This supports 14 employees and one currently vacant position within the water and wastewater divisions of 41 employees.

Implementation of the new staffing model will require appropriations of \$48,860 in the Wastewater Operating Fund (Fund 530) and \$95,097 in the Water Operating Fund (Fund 520) for Fiscal Year 2026-27. Sufficient funding is available within each fund to support the additional costs associated with the proposed staffing model.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Resolution No. 11651 - A Resolution Approving a New Staffing Model for the Water and Wastewater Divisions to Improve Operational Efficiencies in the Utilities Department and Appropriation of Funds
2. Current and Proposed Staffing Models

Respectfully Submitted,



Allison Garcia, Human Resources Director

Attachment 1

RESOLUTION NO. 11651

A RESOLUTION APPROVING A NEW STAFFING MODEL FOR THE WATER AND WASTEWATER DIVISIONS TO IMPROVE OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCIES IN THE UTILITIES DEPARTMENT AND APPROPRIATION OF FUNDS

WHEREAS, water and sewer operations are a 24-hour, 365-day essential service that require qualified and properly certified personnel to continuously monitor and operate essential system functions; and

WHEREAS, the department is currently experiencing staffing challenges that impact the ability to safely and efficiently fulfill these critical assignments; and

WHEREAS, the department has proposed an updated staffing model that will improve workforce recruitment and sustainability, the ability to perform critical services, and operational efficiencies; and

WHEREAS, the City and the International Union of Operating Engineers - Stationary Engineers Local 39, have met and conferred in good faith and reached an agreement on the proposed updates; and

WHEREAS, the additional salary and benefit costs associated with the proposed staff model are projected to be \$143,957 for Fiscal Year 2026-27 and of this amount, \$48,860 will be funded by the Wastewater Operating Fund (Fund 530) and \$95,097 will be funded by the Water Operating Fund (Fund 520); and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council of the City of Folsom approves the new staffing model for the Water and Wastewater Divisions to Improve Operational Efficiencies in the Utilities Department.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Chief Financial Officer is authorized to appropriate \$48,860 in the Wastewater Operating Fund (Fund 530) and \$95,097 in the Water Operating Fund (Fund 520) for Fiscal Year 2026-27.

PASSED AND ADOPTED this 23rd day of June, 2026, by the following roll-call vote:

AYES: Councilmember(s):
NOES: Councilmember(s):
ABSENT: Councilmember(s):
ABSTAIN: Councilmember(s):

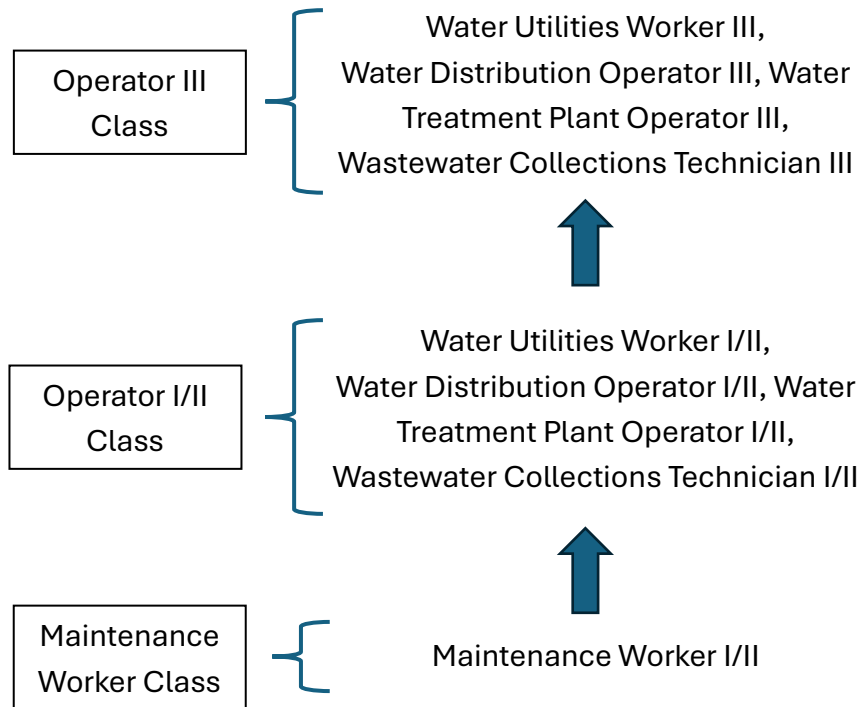
Justin Raithel, MAYOR

ATTEST:

Christa Freemantle, CITY CLERK

Attachment 2

Current Staffing Model



Proposed Staffing Model

Water Utilities Worker 0/I/II/III,
Water Distribution Operator 0/I/II/III,
Water Treatment Plant Operator 0/I/II/III,
Wastewater Collection Technician 0/I/II/III

- ❖ Staff would move up in this staffing model once certification and experience meet the minimum qualifications for the class



Movement here can only occur if there is a vacancy or if a re-classification study is completed

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to facilitate double-sided printing
and minimize paper use.*



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FOLSOM
DISTINCTIVE BY NATURE