

To: Mayor Stocks & Members of the Finance Committee  
From: Peter Hartz – Water Systems Manager

11/12/2025

Re: Water System agenda item for Finance committee meeting 11/18/2025

Dear Mayor Stocks & Committee Members:

**Water Systems agenda item:**

1. Review and take possible action – Approval to hire JB for Utility Billing Coordinator

**Background:**

JB has been an employee with the Watertown Water Systems Department for more than 12½ years. The Utility Billing Coordinator position is open due to the retirement of the incumbent, LB, who served for 32 years.

Consistent with Finance Committee guidance from February 10, 2025, and in accordance with the Hiring and Promotion Policy (Handbook, pp. 17–22), the Utility Billing Coordinator position was posted within the Step 1 through Step 6 range. Per policy, hiring above Step 3 requires both the mayor’s approval and Finance Committee authorization (Compensation Plan Flexibility, p. 17).

**Policy References and Applicability:**

**1. Internal Equity and the “5% / 8% Rule” (p. 18)**

The Internal Equity section provides that when a newly promoted or hired employee’s pay would exceed that of a current employee, the incumbent’s pay may be increased by up to 5% for equity and up to 8% for promotional adjustment, ensuring fairness and recognition of experience.

JB’s twelve years of service and consistently strong performance evaluations warrant placement that reflects experience, responsibility, and contribution to department operations. Step 6 placement aligns with this rule by maintaining equitable differentiation between long-tenured incumbents and less experienced new hires.

**2. Pay Structure and Step Plan (p. 17–18)**

The Pay Structure/Ranges policy specifies that “each pay range is designed to recognize and reward different levels of performance and experience.” The Step Plan further directs that “placement within a pay grade should reflect an employee’s performance, qualifications, and experience.”

JB’s experience and performance notably exceed the baseline expectations for this position. Placement at Grade H, Step 6 accurately represents her qualifications, ensures internal equity, and maintains consistency with established compensation principles.

### 3. Determining Pay for New Hires (p. 22)

This section states: “New employees should be hired between the minimum and midpoint (Step 6) of the pay range for the position, with actual step placement based on individual qualifications.”

While JB is not a new employee, her qualifications surpass those expected of a typical new hire. Thus, placement at Step 6 mirrors how a new candidate with comparable experience would be treated, ensuring fairness and alignment with this policy.

### 4. Compensation Plan Flexibility (p. 17)

The policy authorizes the Finance Committee to approve compensation decisions that fall outside standard guidelines when justified by experience or internal equity. This provision provides the procedural authority for this recommendation.

#### **Key Points:**

##### 1. Recognition of Experience and Tenure:

JB’s 12½ years of service, education, and performance record exceed those of less experienced staff. A placement at Step 6 appropriately differentiates her from newer or less qualified employees, consistent with the Step Plan’s intent.

##### 2. Consistency with Hiring and Promotion Practices:

The position was internally posted in accordance with the City’s hiring procedures, ensuring transparency and equal opportunity.

##### 3. Budget and Equity Impact:

The proposed Step 6 placement is supported within the current Water Utility budget (the incumbent is several steps higher on the pay scale). It also aligns with the City’s Employee Retention and Development Goals by recognizing long-term commitment and promoting internal advancement.

#### **Recommendation:**

Based on the Hiring and Promotion Policy (pp. 17–22), JB’s tenure, qualifications, and performance record support placement at Grade H, Step 6 as an appropriate and equitable step within policy. This step reflects the midpoint guideline for qualified hires, honors the minimum 5% / 8% equity principle, and supports the City’s compensation objectives of fairness, retention, and recognition of employee experience.

Sincerely,

*Peter Hartz*

Watertown Water Systems Manager