


REPORT TO CITY COUNCIL

Approved by:



Keith Helmuth, P.E., Department Director



Arnaldo Rodriguez, City Manager

Council Meeting of: March 18, 2020

Agenda Number: E-1

SUBJECT:

Consideration of a Request by the Engineering Department to adjust organization allocations of the Engineering Department by reducing part time staffing allocations and adding one full time Assistant Engineer.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends City Council approve the proposed reorganization of staffing for the Engineering Department, reducing part time staffing allocations and adding one full time Assistant Engineer.

SUMMARY:

Staff has experienced a significant increase in workload in the last two to three years that is not expected to meaningfully diminish in the near future. This increased workload when combined with other on-going efforts has exceeded current staffing resources. To offset this disparity, staff is requesting Council authorization to add one additional full time Assistant Engineer to the Engineering Department position allocations. This is supported by the recent reduction in part time hours being provided by Engineering Project Managers.

DISCUSSION:

Request to increase staff has been prudently delayed to minimize the potential for increasing staff costs in an environment where funding might be uncertain. Over the course of the last couple of years the workload of the Engineering Department has progressively increased to a point that some adjustments are necessary to maintain expected levels of service, react to private development demands and work toward reducing project and non-high priority citizen concern backlogs. In addition, the Engineering Department has partially relied on part-time support which due to several retirements has exacerbated the need to re-assess staffing levels. While it is common to make staff adjustments during the annual budget process, immediate and ongoing needs necessitate this request.

The increase in workload, and by virtue of that, growing backlog, is due to a number of one-time and recurring factors that include:

- *New State and Federal Requirement or Laws*

- Groundwater Sustainability Agency Duties; New to Engineering as of April 2019 - Recurring though anticipated to diminish going forward – Managed primarily by City Engineer
- Floodplain Management regulations
- Updated National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) regulations
- *Private Development (Recurring)* – Land use entitlements such as commercial development, subdivision maps, plan checks, and inspections have seen a notable rise as illustrated via yearly revenue below:
 - Fiscal Year 2015/16 - \$80,200
 - Fiscal Year 2016/17 - \$149,900
 - Fiscal Year 2017/18 - \$202,200
 - Fiscal Year 2018/19 - \$288,900
 - Fiscal Year 2019/20 through January (7 months) - \$234,600
- *Village D (On-going and future recurring work)*– Environmental Impact Report, including Traffic Impact Study and Master Plan preparation, including associated private capital improvements
- *Increased Road Maintenance and Rehabilitation Account (RMRA) Funding (Recurring)* – RMRA contributes in excess of \$1,100,000 per year that must be utilized on an annual basis where road maintenance projects were previously scheduled on a bi-annual basis.
- *State Route (Yosemite Avenue) as Downtown Main Street Plan Transportation Grant (One-Time, Still in Progress)* – Not originally planned for until approximately three years ago.
- *Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities Program (AHSC) Grant (One-Time)* - Not originally planned for until approximately three years ago.
 - Includes substantial pedestrian-oriented improvements
- *Public Projects:*
 - Fire Station 58
 - Transit Facilities (One-Time)
 - Wastewater Treatment Plant Upgrades and Emergency Repairs (One-Time)
 - Probable need to accelerate new water well to accommodate growth
- *Staff Turnover (Intermittent)* –
 - *Retirement.* The Engineering Department was fortunate to have the services of several part-time Engineers and Project Managers with extensive experience. Unfortunately, these Engineers have retired or reduced their roles to the point that there is a significant decline in the support available through part time staff.

- *Attrition.* Four Assistant Engineers have resigned in the last three years. Each recurrence results in loss of productivity and includes a learning curve.

Backlog items of importance include:

- Capital Improvement Program (CIP) that have rolled from year to year with minimal progress
- Floodplain Management Ordinance – Replaces previous City flood damage regulations to be in conformance to California Building.
- National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Ordinance – Additional new and required section to Madera Municipal Code providing the City with additional legal authority to enforce regulations that have been put in place by the State.
- Roadway/Pedestrian Safety Concerns (Recurring) – Backlog of non-emergency, yet still important items have been increasing over the last several years.

There are numerous methods for addressing the backlog that staff is considering in addition to a recommended Assistant Engineer. Each method has advantages and disadvantages. Examples include:

- **Additional Staff:**
 - This is the preferred method when workload is anticipated to be predictable and consistent in the foreseeable future. Costs are generally less in comparison to consultants when the work is continuous. Intermittent needs tend to change this conclusion.
- **Temporary staffing:**
 - Preferred when need is short term or experienced permanent staff are in short supply. Recent attempts to use this method have shown that the labor pool currently lacks the experience required.
- **Consultants retained through a Request for Proposal (RFP):**
 - Preferred when in-house staffing is not sufficient to complete individual projects or staff does not have the expertise required to complete certain projects. Staff anticipates several consultant projects in the next year as well as going forward. Use of consultants for smaller projects is not always beneficial as management of consultants can be fairly extensive when compared to in-house efforts to complete a project.
- **On-Call Consultants:**
 - Preferred when there are a number of projects anticipated over the course of several years. One or likely more consultants are pre-qualified for different engineering or design disciplines. Through the use of a generic agreement, they are hired to perform work without the need for multiple RFP processes, thus saving staff time and money. Staff is in the process of preparing an RFP for various types of on-call services.

Regardless of the many options for securing outside services, it is staff's opinion that additional internal staff is necessary at this time when considering just the increase in private development. Staff does at present use consultants for plan checks when the demand is greater than our staffing level. When used, expenses tend to spike for plan checks, sometimes exceeding the fees received. Staff would therefore recommend that Council approve the addition of one Assistant Engineer. Staff will continue to assess

optimal staffing levels for full time employees versus consultants or part time employees. It is anticipated that further recommendations, if any, will be brought with the annual budget process. However, there is currently a critical need to provide some immediate relief, and the recommended addition of an Assistant Engineer, is necessary at this time.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

The proposed reorganization does not create a budgetary impact in the current fiscal year as it would be funded through salary savings. The reorganization would result in a gross monetary impact of approximately \$74,400 per year prior to cost allocating salary and benefits cost to various capital improvement projects. It is anticipated, this position would cost allocate a minimum of 60 percent of cost to capital projects resulting in a net general fund cost of approximately \$30,000.

CONSISTENCY WITH THE VISION MADERA 2025 PLAN:

The requested action is not specifically addressed in the Vision Madera 2025 Action Plan; however, the requested action will provide for greater efficiencies within the department helping to achieve the Vision.

ALTERNATIVES:

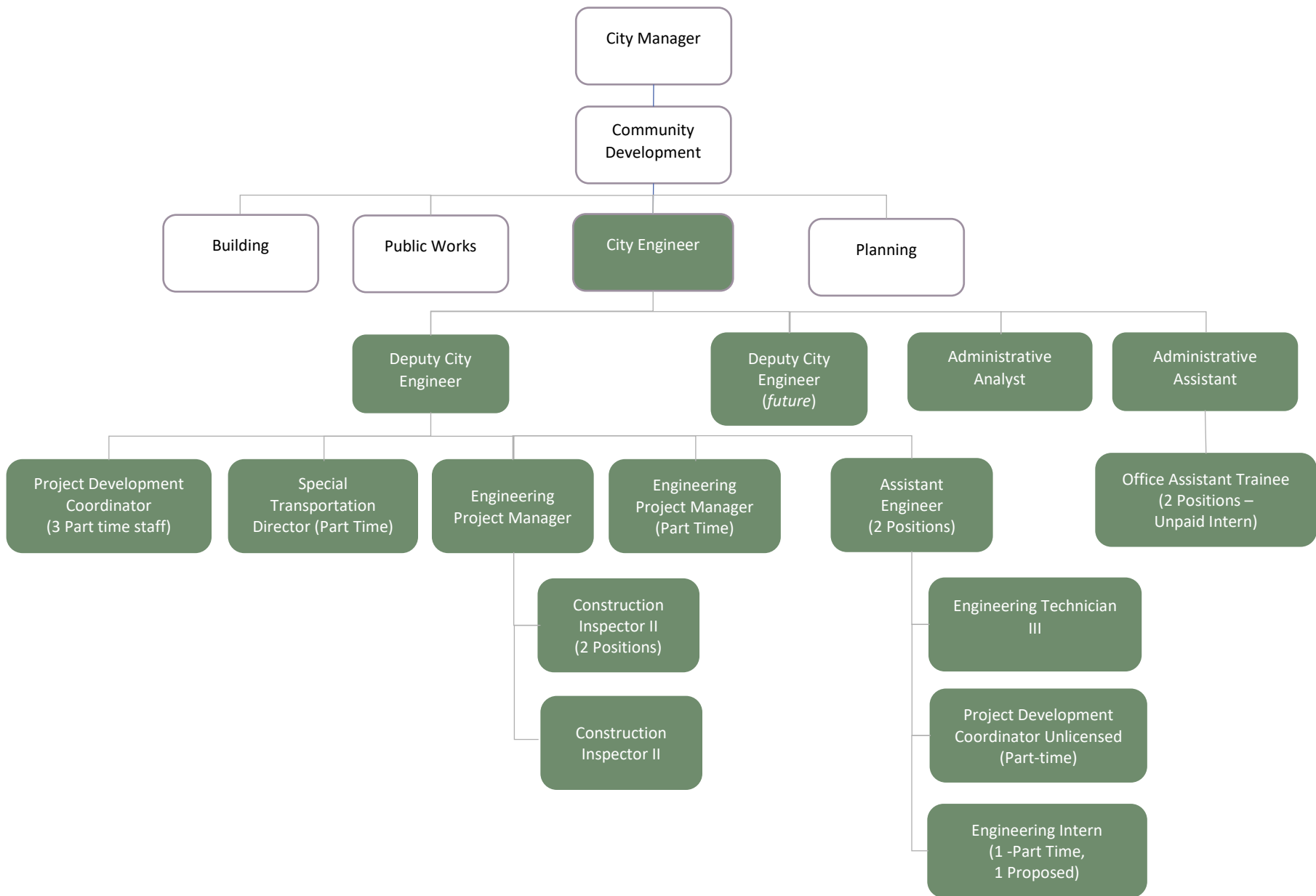
Council may direct staff to consider other methods for obtaining assistance with workload, such as hiring consultants. Council may direct staff to continue with current staffing levels.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Current 2019/20 Engineering Department Organizational Chart of Approved Positions
2. Proposed Engineering Department Organizational Chart

ATTACHMENT 1

Current 19/20 Engineering Department Organizational Chart of Approved Positions



ATTACHMENT 2

Proposed Engineering Department Organizational Chart

