

**MINUTES
CITY OF LAUREL
CITY COUNCIL WORKSHOP
TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 2024**

A Council Workshop was held in Council Chambers and called to order by Mayor Dave Waggoner at 6:31 p.m. on November 19, 2024.

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:

| | |
|---|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tom Canape | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Heidi Sparks |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Michelle Mize | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Jessica Banks |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Casey Wheeler | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Irv Wilke |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Richard Klose | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Jodi Mackay |

OTHERS PRESENT:

Brittney Harakal, Council Administrative Assistant
Michele Braukmann, Civil City Attorney
Kelly Strecker, Clerk/Treasurer
Kelly Gauslow, Accounts Payable
Amber Hatton, Payroll

Public Input:

There were none.

General Items

1. Appointment of Doug Myers to the Laurel Airport Authority for the remainder of a 5-year term ending 6/30/2026.

Doug Myers, 1915 Waterwood Drive, introduced himself to the Council.

Jim Wise, 2202 Avalon Road, spoke in support of the nomination to the board.

Executive Review

2. Resolution - A Resolution Of The City Council Approving Amendments To Appropriations And Revenues For The City Of Laurel's Fiscal Year 2023-2024 Budget.

The Clerk/Treasurer stated this budget amendment is for the last budget year. During the audit, it was noted that there was unanticipated revenue for the Splash Park. There was 180k donated for the Splash Park.

Council noted that it is an amazing amount donated by the Community.

3. Resolution - A Resolution Of Intent To Increase The City Of Laurel's Water And Sanitary Sewer Rates And Charges To Become Effective On January 10, 2025, And Setting A Date And Time For A Public Rate Hearing.

The Clerk/Treasurer asked the Council to review the draft letter that will be sent to residents.

Council asked that the letter include a statement stating that the City has not changed our billing software, just the rates will be changing.

Council asked for a graphic to explain the usage. It was clarified that sewer usage is the same as water usage during the winter. In the summer, residents are on an average from their winter consumption. Sewer is not metered, just water. Sewer rates are based on actual usage and are not tiered like the water rates.

This resolution is just a resolution of intent setting a public hearing.

4. Resolution - A Resolution Of The City Council Directing The City Of Laurel Mayor To Recommend Appointment Of A Chief Administrative Officer And To Negotiate A Written Contract For Approval By The City Council.

Mayor Waggoner read the attached letter into the record.

Council thanked Staff for the information included in the packet. Council noted that other positions have not been filled throughout the City.

It was noted that the person who is being considered for this role is not a new employee. There will be a little more added to the budget. He will be taking on additional job duties in addition to his current job duties.

Council questioned why the urgency. They questioned if moving the existing employee into the CAO role would create another vacancy. It was clarified that he would be doing both his current job duties as well as those of the CAO for awhile.

Council asked for a while to be defined. It was clarified that has not been decided yet.

A Council Member asked that this discussion be directed solely to the role and not the person filling the interim role.

Council asked what the compensation would be and would the Mayor be reducing his pay. The Mayor clarified that he would not be giving away any of his current job duties.

A Council Member noted that historically others have come in from outside the City and used this position as a stepping stone into a bigger City. They would like not to see this happen again.

Mayor Waggoner stated that the CAO will be handling personnel issues and lawsuit issues.

Council was given a copy of the resolution from 2008 approving the job description for the Chief Administrative Officer, see attached.

The Clerk/Treasurer read the attached statement into the record.

Council asked why the Court Clerk position had not been filled yet.

The Civil Attorney stated that LMC requirements only contemplate one full-time Court Clerk.

It was questioned if that information had been conveyed to Staff.

Mayor Waggoner added that as long as there is an active lawsuit involving the Court, that position will not be filled until those lawsuits have been resolved. Emails have been sent communicating that with the Judge.

Council noted during the budget, Departments were asked to make cuts to their budgets. It was questioned what impact this position would have on everyone's budget.

The Clerk/Treasurer clarified that the General Fund does not pay administration fees. Currently, the City is pulling 311k in administrative fees to help the General Fund.

Council questioned why the job was not posted. They also questioned if this person would be a contracted employee.

It was clarified that the City is not required to post the job. It was further clarified that this position is a contracted position and will have a 2-year contract. That contract would come before the Council on the next Council cycle. The job of a CAO is to provide continuity during the change between elected officials. The Civil Attorney put together the attached memo regarding the benefits of having a CAO. Currently, the City does not have an HR Department. The CAO's job is to absorb the gaps that exist within the City.

Council asked for more clarification regarding the HR needs of the City. It was clarified that the Union Collective Bargaining Agreement has multiple levels of grievance. The first step in that process should be to HR personnel. The last step of the grievance process should be the Mayor. Currently, the Mayor is included in the personnel issues very early on in the process. The Mayor needs to remain unbiased in this process. This has caused issues in the past.

It was questioned how an existing employee would be able to do their current role as well as the role of CAO.

Council noted that previous CAOs were considerably less. It was questioned whether the intent was to keep the compensation the same. It was clarified if Mr. Lurker was still with the City his wage with all the raises would have been 95k with 10 years less experience.

A Council Member noted that there was an article where Mayor Nelson stated he received his wage increase because there was no CAO. The Clerk/Treasurer noted that Staff spent a lot of time trying to find any information regarding that pay increase. It was not included in the budget memo to the Council the year it was enacted. Staff asked for the article to be provided. It was noted that the Council also received a substantial raise as well the same year.

It was questioned if the CAO would need to make a certain percentage over other employees. It was clarified that historically the CAO is the highest-paid employee within the City. That is the case across the State as well.

It was questioned if this resolution is to approve having a CAO with the next cycle approving the applicant. It was clarified that legally the Mayor has the right to recommend to fill this position. This resolution is not legally required.

Council Member Mackay noted that she will be absent from the December 10th meeting and would like to be here for the vote.

A Council Member noted that past Mayor's have not put in the number of hours like our current Mayor puts in.

A Council Member noted that past CAOs have abused this position. They would like to see a CAO that does not put words in the Mayor's mouth.

Council noted that the City is raising rates for both Water and Sewer. They find that it might be hard to sell an increase in Water and Sewer rates while also increasing administrative fees to these funds. It was clarified that the City has not increased its rates since 2015. Most Cities raise a certain percentage annually.

Council Issues

There were none.

Other Items

There were none.

Attendance at Upcoming Council Meeting

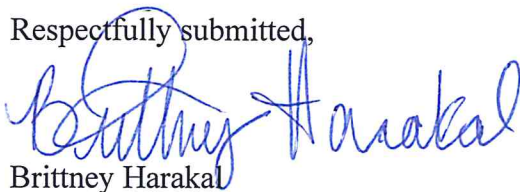
Council Member Banks will be absent from next week's meeting.

Announcements

There were none.

The council workshop adjourned at 7:39 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Brittney Harakal

Administrative Assistant




NOTE: This meeting is open to the public. This meeting is for information and discussion of the Council for the listed workshop agenda items.



DRAFT

Dear Customer,

We are reaching out to inform you about important updates to the City of Laurel's water and wastewater rates, based on a recent comprehensive rate study. Our rates need to be updated to address several key issues, including:

-  Increasing operational costs
-  Urgent maintenance and upgrades for our aging infrastructure
-  Ensuring every customer covers the cost of their water and sewer service

The City Council carefully considered these changes. A public hearing to share more information about these rates is scheduled for December 17, 2024, with a vote on the proposed rates within 30 days.

The results of the rate study recommended a change to how we charge for water. The water rates structure will change to prioritize affordable and equitable rates, and encourage water efficiency. We're moving to a tiered water rate structure. Under this model, the cost per gallon increases as usage rises, which encourages conservation and ensures that high water users contribute more to support the system's additional capacity needs. Many customers may find themselves in the higher tiers during the summer months and in the lower tier during the winter months.

These rate changes are a necessary step towards achieving a balanced and efficient rates structure and will ensure we can continue providing safe and reliable water and sewer services for generations to come.

We appreciate your support as we continue to work to be a stronger and more resilient water utility and community. The following page includes details of the new rates structure. If you have any questions about these new rates or would like assistance with understanding your bill, please contact our customer service team at (406) 628-4796.

Sincerely,

XX

OUR PRIORITIES

-  Minimized Customer Impacts
-  Affordability
-  Revenue Stability
-  Fairness
-  Long-Term Planning

EXAMPLES OF THREE RESIDENTIAL CUSTOMERS WITH 3/4" METERS WITH DIFFERENT WATER AND WASTEWATER USAGE AND ANTICIPATED IMPACTS ON THEIR BILLS

| Indoor Use 4,000 Gallons of Water 3,000 Gallons of Wastewater | Average Use 6,000 Gallons of Water 3,000 Gallons of Wastewater | Summer Use 15,000 Gallons of Water 3,000 Gallons of Wastewater |
|---|---|--|
| Water: Monthly Increase of \$0.10 Sewer: Monthly Increase of \$9.54 Total Change: \$9.64 | Water: Monthly Decrease of \$0.74 Sewer: Monthly Increase of \$9.54 Total Change: \$8.80 | Water: Monthly Increase of \$0.94 Sewer: Monthly Increase of \$9.54 Total Change: \$10.20 |

Water Rates Structure

Water

Monthly Minimum Charge/Base Charge, \$ per Bill

| Meter Size | Existing | Proposed |
|---------------|------------|------------|
| <i>Inches</i> | | |
| 3/4" | \$32.61 | \$32.61 |
| 1" | \$56.11 | \$56.11 |
| 1.25" | \$85.57 | \$85.57 |
| 1.5" | \$121.86 | \$121.86 |
| 2" | \$215.28 | \$215.28 |
| 3" | \$478.86 | \$478.86 |
| 4" | \$852.82 | \$852.82 |
| 6" | \$1,915.49 | \$1,915.49 |
| 10" | \$5,291.82 | \$5,291.82 |

Includes capital charge of \$8 per EDU

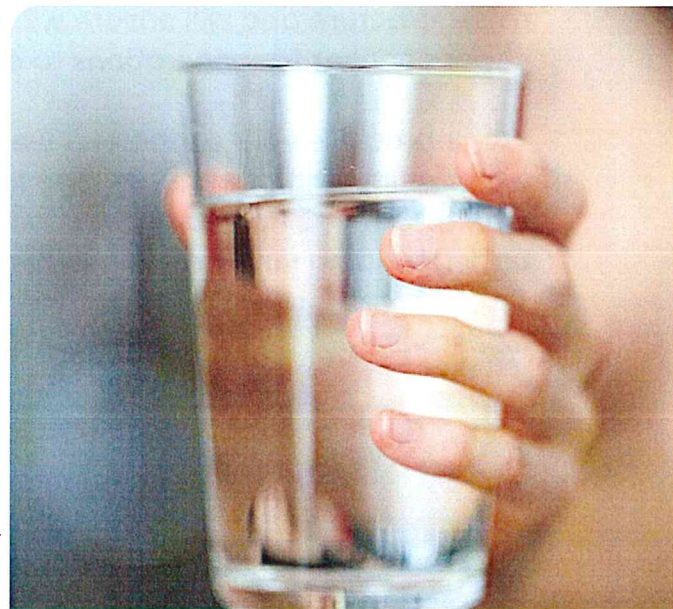
Volume Rate

\$ per 1,000 gallons

| Threshold | Existing | Proposed |
|--------------------|----------|----------|
| Residential | | |
| 0 - 1,000 | \$0.00 | \$2.17 |
| 1,001 - 5,000 | \$2.86 | \$2.17 |
| 5,001 - 10,000 | \$2.86 | \$2.71 |
| 10,001 - 20,000 | \$2.86 | \$3.26 |
| Over 20,000 | \$2.86 | \$4.34 |
| Commercial | | |
| 0 - 1,000 | \$0.00 | \$3.27 |
| Over 1,000 | \$2.86 | \$3.27 |
| Industrial | | |
| 0 - 1,000 | \$0.00 | \$4.02 |
| Over 1,000 | \$2.86 | \$4.02 |

Sewer Rates Structure

| Meter Size | Existing | Proposed |
|------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <i>Inches</i> | | |
| 3/4" | \$29.24 | \$29.24 |
| 1" | \$52.34 | \$52.34 |
| 1.25" | \$81.29 | \$81.29 |
| 1.5" | \$116.96 | \$116.96 |
| 2" | \$208.77 | \$208.77 |
| 3" | \$467.84 | \$467.84 |
| 4" | \$835.39 | \$835.39 |
| 6" | \$1,879.84 | \$1,879.84 |
| Multi | \$29.27 | \$29.27 |
| All Usage | Rate, \$ per Kgal | Rate, \$ per Kgal |
| | \$5.27 | \$8.45 |



Mayor's appointment for the CAO Position

After serving as Mayor for almost three years, I have determined that having a CAO tend to the affairs of the city is needed. The City Council passed an ordinance in 2007 to gauge what type of government the citizens of Laurel wanted, and 744 citizens went and voted to change our charter and the way the City Government was to be conducted. The role of a CAO was placed into the Charter to help the mayor carry out the duties that the citizens expect. The previous 4 Mayors had full-time employment and had to rely on phone calls and emails to communicate with City Staff.

I have won two elections for the mayor's position, and I could not fill the first as I could not work for the city and be its mayor and I still needed an income greater than what the Mayor's position paid. The second time I won the mayor's race, I retired from city employment so that I could comply with the ordinance that the City Council passed disqualifying city employees from being Mayor and a city employee. I ran the second time for Mayor because I believed that with my city employment, I had insight on issues that I wanted to improve upon. Since being sworn into office I have not prepared a budget with any increase to the mayor's stipend. The stipend I received was prepared by a previous Mayor and approved by the city council when the yearly budget is finalized. I am the only recent Mayor that walked away from a good paying job to take the position, and I feel that I have a lot to offer this community. I am human and I have made mistakes, hiring a CAO will help me and any other Mayor carry out the responsibilities of the executive branch. The Laurel residents wanted change when they voted to change the charter to allow for that position to help the mayor. I believe that the person I have asked to fill the position will not only help me as he has done for the last three years but will help me better communicate with the department heads. Having a CAO in the office on a regular schedule will allow better discussions between all employees in the city. The City of Laurel is a great community, and we need to continue to employ great people to help manage the citizens' needs and expectations.

I believe the CAO position should be filled, and I would ask you all to support this effort. I hope that I can be elected to another term to work with the CAO to better the city.

RESOLUTION NO. R08-58

RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL TO CREATE A POSITION CALLED THE CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER (CAO) FOR THE CITY OF LAUREL, TO ADOPT A JOB DESCRIPTION AND APPROVE THE MAYOR'S DELEGATED DUTIES AND SUPERVISORY AUTHORITY CONTAINED IN THE JOB DESCRIPTION.

WHEREAS, the City Council has determined that it is in the best interest of the City of Laurel to create a new administrative position within the City Government to assist the mayor in his/her duties and supervisory authority consistent with Section 3.10 of the City's Charter; and

WHEREAS, Sections 3.10(2) and 3.10(3) of the Charter authorize the Mayor to delegate his/her duties and supervisory authority to the Chief Administrative Officer, in writing upon approval by resolution of the City Council; and

WHEREAS, the Mayor specifically intends to delegate and hereby delegates all the duties and supervisory authority contained in the attached Job Description for the Chief Administrative Officer and has requested the City Council's approval of his official delegation by the approval of the Job Description; and

WHEREAS, the City Council desires to approve the Mayor's official delegation of duties and supervisory authority, as required by Sections 3.10(2) and 3.10(3) of the Charter; and

WHEREAS, by approving this resolution and adopting the job description attached hereto, the City Council intends to approve the Mayor's delegation of duties and supervisory authority as required by the City's Charter.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the City Council of the City of Laurel, Montana,

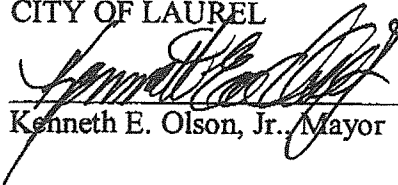
1. That the job description of Chief Administrative Officer, a copy attached hereto, is approved and adopted as the official job description for the position of the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) for the City of Laurel.
2. That the City Council hereby approves all of the delegated duties and supervisory authority authorized and delegated by the Mayor contained in the attached job description as required by Sections 3.10(2) and 3.10(3) of the City's Charter.
3. That this job description may be amended, altered, modified, or deleted as the Mayor, with City Council approval, may deem in its best interest, or as required in the future.
4. The Mayor is authorized to commence recruitment, in accordance with the Transition Plan previously adopted by the City Council through Resolution No. R08-07, for a qualified candidate immediately upon the adoption of this Resolution.

Introduced at a regular meeting of the City Council on June 3, 2008 by Council Member
Mace

PASSED and APPROVED by the City Council of the City of Laurel this 3rd day of June, 2008.

APPROVED by the Mayor this 3rd day of June, 2008.

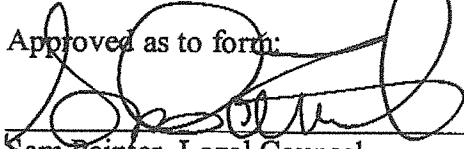
CITY OF LAUREL


Kenneth E. Olson, Jr., Mayor

ATTEST:


Mary K. Embleton, Clerk-Treasurer

Approved as to form:


Sam Painter, Legal Counsel
Elk River Law Office, P.L.L.P.



| | |
|--|---|
| City of Laurel | Job Description |
| Job Description Title: Chief Administrative Officer | FLSA Status: Exempt / Non Union |
| Accountable To: Mayor | Position Status: Regular Full-Time |

Job Summary:

As defined by the City of Laurel Charter, Article III, Section 3.10, the Chief Administrative Officer, directs and coordinates administration of the City government in accordance with policies promulgated and approved by the Mayor and City Council. The Chief Administrative Officer shall directly oversee the operations and provision of services to citizens within each department of the City. He/she shall regularly perform complex work requiring significant interpretive judgment in analyzing, recommending and implementing City policy concerning fiscal matters and personnel matters. The Chief Administrative Officer shall coordinate day-to-day operational matters of all departments through the respective Department Heads. He/she shall recommend alternative courses of action and policies to the Mayor and Council for their consideration and approval.

Scope of Responsibility:

This position reports directly to the Mayor. This position directly manages and supervises the City's employees including, but not limited to, Department Heads of Public Works, Planning, Clerk/Treasurer, Police, Library, Fire, and Ambulance in accordance with policy.

Essential Duties and Responsibilities:

1. Duties Specific to Administration
 - 1.1. Confers with Department Heads in the proposed development and implementation of policies and programs.
 - 1.2. Manages and supervises Department Heads by providing sufficient direction and guidance to Department Heads, including coaching, documentation, performance evaluation and/or assessment and discipline.
 - 1.3. In association with Department Heads, manages and supervises all City employees including but not limited to development, coaching, performance evaluation and/or assessment and discipline.
 - 1.4. Makes recommendations to the Mayor regarding the termination of City employees and Department Heads.
 - 1.5. Facilitates the coordination and communication between departments and Department Heads.
 - 1.6. Works with Department Heads to ensure department goals and operations are within the City's overall mission and goals.
2. Duties Specifically Assigned by the Mayor
 - 2.1. Directs and coordinates the administration of the City government in accordance with approved policy; keeps Mayor/Council informed of all pertinent information.
 - 2.2. Assist Mayor in enforcing laws, ordinances, and resolutions as adopted by City.
 - 2.3. Reports to the Mayor on the affairs and operations of the City government.
 - 2.4. Reports to the Council as the Mayor requires.
 - 2.5. Assist Mayor in Council meetings and take part in discussion.
 - 2.6. Carry out all approved City policies.
 - 2.7. Recommend measures and actions that are in the City's best interest to the Mayor.

- 2.8. At the Mayor's direction, reviews and negotiates the terms and conditions of contracts, bonds, notes and other obligations of the City. Recommends to the Mayor for his/her approval prior to the City Council's consideration of the same.
 - 2.9. Oversees the preparation of the budget in consultation with the Clerk/Treasurer, other Department Heads, Mayor, and Council.
 - 2.10. Under the Mayor's direction, executes the budget adopted by the Council.
 - 2.11. Perform duties required by law, charter, ordinance or resolution.
3. Performs other related duties as assigned by the Mayor.

Minimum Qualifications:

- Bachelor's degree (B. A.) or equivalent in Public Administration, Business Administration, Business Management, Accounting or Finance; and/or four to ten years' related experience in City, County or local government management, business and/or operational management in the private sector, financial management in the government or private sectors required; or a combination thereof.
- Must possess a valid Montana Driver's license.
- Must be bondable.

Personal Attributes/Skills Required or Preferred:

Problem Solving - Identifies and resolves problems in a timely manner; Gathers and analyzes information skillfully; Develops alternative solutions; Works well in group problem-solving situations; Uses reason even when dealing with emotional topics. Ability to define problems, collect data, establish facts, and draw valid conclusions.

Team Work - Balances team and individual responsibilities; Exhibits objectivity and openness to others' views; Gives and welcomes feedback; Contributes to building a positive team spirit; Puts success of team above own interests; Able to build morale and group commitments to goals and objectives; Supports everyone's efforts to succeed; Recognizes accomplishments of other team members.

Leadership - Exhibits confidence in self and others; Inspires and motivates others to perform well; Effectively influences actions and opinions of others; Inspires respect and trust; Accepts feedback from others; Provides vision and inspiration to peers and subordinates; Gives appropriate recognition to others; Displays passion and optimism; Mobilizes others to fulfill the vision.

Judgment - Displays willingness to make decisions; Exhibits sound and accurate judgment; Supports and explains reasoning for decisions; Includes appropriate people in decision-making process; Makes timely decisions.

Planning/Organizing - Prioritizes and plans work activities; Uses time efficiently; Plans for additional resources; Sets goals and objectives; Organizes or schedules other people and their tasks; Develops realistic action plans.

Interpersonal - Focuses on solving conflict, not blaming; Maintains confidentiality; Listens to others without interrupting; Keeps emotions under control; Remains open to others' ideas and tries new things.

Oral Communication - Speaks clearly and persuasively in positive or negative situations; Listens and gets clarification; Responds well to questions; Demonstrates group presentation skills; Participates in meetings. Keeps the Mayor and City Council promptly informed of all matters of major importance and recommends actions with respect to such matters as may be required; Ability to respond to common inquiries or complaints from customers, regulatory agencies, or members of the business community.

Written Communication - Writes clearly and informatively; Edits work for spelling and grammar; Varies writing style to meet needs; Presents numerical data effectively; Able to read and interpret written information.

Adaptability - Adapts to changes in the work environment; Manages competing demands; Changes approach or method to best fit the situation; Able to deal with frequent change, delays, or unexpected events.

Dependability - Follows instructions, responds to management direction; Takes responsibility for own actions; Keeps commitments; Commits to long hours of work when necessary to reach goals; Completes tasks on time or notifies appropriate person with an alternate plan.

Initiative - Volunteers readily; Undertakes self-development activities; Seeks increased responsibilities; Takes independent actions and calculated risks; Looks for and takes advantage of opportunities; Asks for and offers help when needed.

Professionalism - Approaches others in a tactful manner; Reacts well under pressure; Treats others with respect and consideration regardless of their status or position; Accepts responsibility for own actions; Follows through on commitments. Deals with the public in a manner that effectively promotes the image of the City and handles complaints tactfully but thoroughly.

Financial Analysis - Ability to read, analyze, and interpret financial reports, and legal documents.

Physical Demands & Working Conditions:

The position requires the ability to communicate orally and in writing. Duties require some limited physical movement of lifting up to 30 pounds (greater with assistance), bending, prolonged sitting, and stooping; work is performed in an office and is controllable; must be bondable; must possess a valid Montana Driver's license. Work conditions require high attention to detail and frequent deadlines with frequent interruptions.

MEMO

Council & Mayor,

As you are aware the mayor would like to place Kurt Markegard in the interim CAO position. After listening to last week's council meeting as I was not present, several questions arose. I can speak about the impacts of budget in moving a current employee into this position. Currently, Mr. Markegard receives a wage of \$98,822.54. He is currently funded out water, sewer, garbage, planning, gas tax, streets and the general fund. The mayor is currently proposing a wage for the CAO position at \$115,000. With Mr. Markegard being an already budgeted employee the impact on the budget is minimal. Since we are nearing December and almost 6 months into the budget the impact on the budget is less than \$12,000. With the budget savings that have already occurred this fiscal year we will not have to use reserves to fund this position or the wage increase. The current general fund cash balance is 1,015,726.54. Keep in mind that we have not received any tax payments for this fiscal year. I expect to see a very large tax payment on or around the first week of December. A Budget Amendment will have to occur to give us the budget authority to charge wages and benefits out of the CAO budget since there is nothing budgeted at this time, and there will not be any reserves used to fund this position at this time.

Over the last few days, I have a couple of you asked me for prior wages for the CAO and the Mayor. They are as follows:

Administrative Assistant - Mr. Asher: \$55,000.00, Mayor Olson \$10,600.00.

CAO – Mr. Sheridan \$75,000, Mayor Olson \$10,600.00

CAO – Mrs. Jenson \$80,000, Mayor Mace \$10,811.00

CAO- Mr. Lurker \$78,000, Mayor Nelson \$11,140.00

In FY 2019-2020 Mayor Nelson's set his wage at \$27,846.00. When Mayor Waggoner was elected as mayor, he assumed the wage that was set by the previous mayor and has not received an increase in pay since. When council members are elected, they assume the same wage as the previous council members.

Since the City has not had a CAO in the last 5 years, there has been cost savings of more than \$500,000.00.

When looking forward to the next fiscal year, the impact on the budget and the reserves is less than 2% to fund this position. While the auditors were here doing our annual audit, I spent a lot of time meeting with them regarding the best way to fund this position. They stated that when adding the CAO position to our budget next year we are able to charge each department administrative fees like we do for all administrative positions besides the

funding to each designated department. This will lessen the impact on the general fund. With this position being an administrative position we are able to do this.

As I look back onto the conversations that were had by the city council in May regarding the fire truck, there were none. I presented a memo regarding the health of the general fund, as I was very concerned as to how we were going to fund this large purchase. I asked the question more than once as to "How are we were going to fund it". It was silent and no suggestions were to be had. This purchase is going to have a huge impact on the general fund in the upcoming fiscal year and years to come, whereas adding a CAO position with a current already funded employee with 20 years as a city employee and an incredible amount of history and knowledge behind him will not.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kelly Strecker". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kelly Strecker
Clerk Treasurer

CITY HALL
115 W. 1st. St.
PUB WORKS: 628-4796
PWD FAX: 628-2241
WATER OFFICE: 628-7431
WTR FAX: 628-2289
MAYOR: 628-8456

City of Laurel

P.O. Box 10
Laurel, Montana 59044



Mayor's Office

DEPARTMENT

MEMORANDUM REGARDING BENEFITS OF EMPLOYING A CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

A Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) is an important role in many cities and municipalities. The CAO is typically a senior executive who manages the day-to-day operations of the City's government, reporting directly to the Mayor.

Below are some of the significant benefits of a City having a Chief Administrative Officer:

1. Streamlined Governance and Decision-Making

Centralized Leadership: The CAO acts as the central point of contact for all administrative operations within the City government. This centralized leadership helps streamline decision-making and ensures that policies and directives are consistently implemented across departments.

Consistency and Efficiency: By having a single individual overseeing the daily operations of the City, the CAO can reduce duplication of efforts, resolve inter-departmental conflicts, and ensure a unified vision is executed across various City functions.

2. Professional Management of City Operations

Executive Expertise: The CAO typically has extensive management experience and expertise. This professional background helps ensure that the City is run efficiently and that public services are delivered in a manner that is both effective and accountable.

Operational Focus: While elected officials, such as the Mayor or City council, are responsible for setting policy and strategic direction, the CAO focuses on implementing those policies. This professional management helps ensure that the City's operations run smoothly and that daily governance is not bogged down by political cycles or micromanagement.

3. Improved Accountability and Transparency

Clear Reporting Structure: The CAO acts as a key figure who provides transparent reporting on the City's operations, fiscal health, and performance metrics. The CAO is typically responsible for preparing reports and updates for the City Council and Mayor, making it easier to track progress and identify issues in real time.

Accountability to Elected Officials: The CAO helps ensure that the City's administration is accountable to elected officials (e.g., Mayor, City council). They report to these elected leaders about operational outcomes, ensuring that decisions are based on accurate data and effective performance metrics.

4. Improved Fiscal Management

Budget Oversight: One of the critical responsibilities of the CAO is overseeing the City's budget. By managing the budget preparation process, ensuring cost-effective allocation of resources, and identifying areas for financial improvement, the CAO helps ensure that the City's financial resources are used efficiently and in accordance with strategic priorities.

Long-Term Financial Planning: The CAO is also responsible for ensuring long-term fiscal health, including planning for future capital projects, managing City debt, and working on sustainable revenue generation strategies.

5. Crisis Management and Risk Mitigation

Crisis Leadership: In times of emergency or crisis (natural disasters, economic downturns, public health issues), the CAO plays a crucial role in coordinating responses across City departments, allocating resources effectively, and ensuring that the City can respond to emergencies quickly and efficiently.

Proactive Risk Management: By overseeing all departments and operations, the CAO can help identify potential risks to the City, such as financial mismanagement, security threats, or operational inefficiencies, and implement strategies to mitigate these risks.

6. Strategic Planning and Long-Term Vision

Implementing Policy Goals: While elected officials set the policy agenda, the CAO is responsible for translating these goals into actionable plans. The CAO works with various departments to align operational efforts with the City's long-term strategic objectives, ensuring that policy initiatives are carried out effectively.

Fostering Innovation: The CAO's role often involves driving innovation within City operations. This could mean improving service delivery, implementing new technologies, or finding creative solutions to problems like housing shortages, infrastructure issues, or environmental sustainability.

7. Improved Service Delivery and Public Satisfaction

Better Public Services: With a CAO managing the day-to-day operations, City services (e.g., public safety, parks, public health) are better coordinated, and the focus is on customer satisfaction. The CAO ensures that services are not only delivered efficiently but also with a focus on responsiveness and quality.

Citizen-Centric Approach: The CAO can help establish systems that focus on continuous improvement of service delivery based on community feedback, thereby increasing citizen satisfaction.

8. Personnel and Organizational Development

Human Resources Oversight: The CAO plays a significant role in managing the City's workforce, overseeing hiring practices, employee training, development, and retention. Effective human resources management helps ensure that the City employs qualified professionals who are aligned with the City's values and objectives.

Cultural Leadership: The CAO helps set the tone for the culture of the City government, emphasizing values such as transparency, efficiency, accountability, and responsiveness. They work to create an organizational culture that supports these values, ultimately improving the effectiveness of the City government.

9. Improved Collaboration and Coordination Across Departments

Cross-Departmental Collaboration: Many City functions (e.g., planning, public works, emergency response services, transportation, library services) require coordination between different departments. The CAO plays an important role in fostering inter-departmental collaboration and resolving conflicts that may arise between departments.

Breaking Down Silos: The CAO's oversight can help eliminate silos between departments, ensuring that all City services are aligned towards common goals, such as improving quality of life or addressing challenges for citizens.

10. Political Stability and Continuity

Buffer Between Politics and Administration: The CAO can act as a buffer between political leadership and administrative functions. This is especially important in cities where political leadership changes frequently (e.g., through elections), as the CAO provides continuity in governance and ensures that long-term City operations are not disrupted by political transitions.

Stability in Government: The CAO ensures that the day-to-day functioning of the City remains stable, even as elected officials change or policy priorities shift. This provides stability for employees, residents, and stakeholders who rely on consistent governance.

11. Enhanced Public-Private Partnerships

Engagement with the Private Sector: The CAO can help foster productive relationships between the City government and private companies, non-profits, and other external stakeholders. These partnerships can lead to more innovative solutions, better resource allocation, and enhanced service delivery in areas like infrastructure, development, or economic growth.

Leveraging Resources: With a CAO in place, a City can more effectively identify opportunities for collaboration with the private sector to fund and execute large-scale public projects, such as public transportation, affordable housing, or urban renewal.

Conclusion

In summary, a Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) brings significant benefits to a City by providing professional, efficient, and coordinated management of day-to-day operations. This role enables better decision-making, improved service delivery, financial oversight, crisis management, and long-term strategic planning. By overseeing the implementation of policies, managing resources effectively, and fostering collaboration across departments, the CAO helps ensure that the City functions smoothly, remains financially sustainable, and is able to meet the needs of its citizens.