



# AGENDA REPORT

**Department:** Administrative Services – Human Resources  
**Prepared by:** Molly Brennan, Administrative Services Director  
**Meeting Date:** Tuesday, March 7, 2023  
**Approved by:** Brad Raulston, City Manager

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**SUBJECT:**

Recruitment and Retention Update

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Receive the report.

**BOARD/COMMISSION/COMMITTEE PRIOR ACTION:**

Not Applicable.

**EXPLANATION:**

**Citywide Update**

In August 2022, staff gave a presentation to City Council regarding the City's recruitment and retention efforts. During 2022, specifically the first half of the calendar year, the City experienced more than double the separations as compared to the 10-year average. The City was not spared from the national labor market trends of a record numbers of employees resigning, a shrinking unemployment rate, and a reduction in the civilian labor force overall. In addition to higher turnover, the applicant pools responding to our job openings were smaller than years past.

Thankfully, due to the efforts of staff discussed at the August 16, 2022 City Council meeting (presentation attached as Exhibit B) and some changes in national labor trends, we are now seeing larger and more qualified applicant pools and reduced turnover. Through the efforts of Human Resources staff, hiring managers, and recruiting focused advocacy within each department, we have hired a record number of excellent full-time employees to join the City's team.

Attached as Exhibit A are the last three Civil Service Commission Personnel Reports, which list hires, promotions, and separations for all full-time positions and covers activity from July 2022 through February 2023. Over this period, the City had 32 new hires, 24 promotions, and 16 separations. For fiscal year 2022-2023, City Council authorized 340 budgeted full-time positions. Given the numbers above that means over the last 8 months we have hired 9% of our workforce, promoted 7%, and separated 5%.

Over the last five years, the City Manager's office has lead reorganization efforts for the Executive and Management level positions across the departments. In an effort to encourage succession planning and right-size operations for a City our size, the Executive team was reduced from 15 staff to 13<sup>1</sup> staff and the Management team has grown from 25 staff to 30 staff members between 2018 and current day.

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<sup>1</sup> Which will be further reduced to 12 upon the retirement of the Assistant Police Chief

Retention has also improved, as evidenced by a reduction in turnover. From January-July 2022 32 full-time employees separated from the City. During the following 7 month period (August 2022-February 2023), only 12 full-time employees separated. Retention efforts included an employee engagement survey, which identified supervisor and customer service skills gaps across the City. To address these concerns, HR and the City Manager's office have created the Together We Grow training program. In September 2022, we hosted a supervisor's academy over five days, which was attended by supervisors, managers, and directors from various departments. Next up will be the Citywide customer service training.

The City has been more active at organizing and hosting events for our employees, with the majority of the work coordinated by the City's Culture Club. In October, there was a Citywide Halloween dress-up contest. In December, the Culture Club and City Manager's office held a Citywide Holiday Party. In January, HR coordinated a Citywide Employee Health Fair. The Culture Club is made up of employees from each department and they continue to rollout new initiatives to improve employee morale and make National City a wonderful workplace environment.

Since the last recruitment and retention report, all employees have received wage increases in accordance with past City Council action and the labor MOUs. In August 2022, members of the Police Officers Association (POA) received increases based on the results of a regional salary survey to maintain our salaries at mid-point of the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> ranked comparison agencies. In January 2023, part-time employees, confidential group members, Firefighters' Association (FFA) members, and Municipal Employee Association (MEA) members received wage increases. In February 2023, Managers and Executives received wage increases. These increases represent the second year of three years' worth of significant wage increases for all employee groups.

In September of 2023 and 2024, the salary schedule for POA will be adjusted once again based on the results on a new salary survey to maintain National City's position as the mid-point of the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> ranked agencies in the region. The MEA, Confidential, Management, and Executive annual wage increases from 2022-2024 were based on a classification and compensation survey of cities within San Diego County. Each position is receiving a 3% COLA increase each year, in addition to an equity adjustment that brings the top step for their position to within 70% of median over the three-year period.

The current MOUs with all three National City labor unions are effective through December 31, 2024. In spring of 2024, staff, City Council, and labor group representatives will begin a new round of negotiations for the collective bargaining agreement to begin January 1, 2025.

The remainder of the report is going to dive into details on the recruitment and retention efforts of the City's three largest departments. Vacancies within the Fire, Police, and Engineering & Public Works departments can be the most impactful for residents since these staff provide emergency services during life or death situations, as well as provide critical maintenance and operation of the City's infrastructure. In addition, these positions are often the most challenging to recruit for and the stakes are the highest for finding a quality candidate who is a good fit. Ideally, we aim for fire and police operations staff to stay at National City for their entire career in public service. On the engineering and public works side, the technical training and learning that takes place on the job also supports an emphasis on longevity.

### **Fire Department Update**

Over the past six months, the Department has accomplished several goals in our efforts to recruit and retain current and future employees.

In 2022, we hired our first class of Lateral Firefighters, two of which just recently successfully passed their 1-year testing and now have completed probation. Of these two, one is the second

female firefighter in the 135-year history of the Fire Department. In line with our retention efforts, the department sponsored one of our second year Firefighters to receive the training required to become a Paramedic and has now successfully completed all of the required testing. Once he receives his State of California Paramedic license, he will be providing advanced care to the community.

Currently the Fire Department is working with our HR Department and the City of Coronado (Fire and HR) on the first joint promotional process for our two cities. Through this collaborative effort, the Department has not only enhanced the testing process, strengthened local partnerships (Coronado and Southwestern College), but also saved the City approximately \$20,000.00 in costs. This savings was the direct result of not using an outside vendor to facilitate this test.

On the recruitment front, the Department created a Recruitment Coordinator position from within our existing ranks, Firefighter/Paramedic Christopher Berry, whom has developed a strong social media presence and established a collaborative outreach program with local colleges that have Fire Science programs as a means to attract new recruits. Through these efforts, we have hired and are currently conducting a 10-week fire academy with 5 full time permanent employees and the Fire Department's first open-enrollee (a volunteer position offered to a resident of National City). These employees will allow us to backfill current and forecasted vacancies, as well as allow us to enhance daily staffing based on recommendations from the CPSM study.

Moving forward, we will continue to work collaboratively with HR to develop and pursue innovative strategies to ensure we only attract highly qualified candidates and to develop programs to retain those whom we have brought into our organization.

#### **Police Department Update**

The police department continues to recruit for police officer, dispatcher, and professional staff positions. Our Recruiting Team primarily focuses their efforts in the South Bay, however, due to the competitive job market they have expanded their focus to neighboring counties. As we continue to broaden our efforts, our best source of candidates come from current employee referrals.

The hiring bonuses for dispatchers have proven to be effective. We continue to receive lateral applicants from San Diego County and from across the nation. Currently, there are three vacancies in dispatch and we remain optimistic we can fill the vacancies in the coming months.

For police officers, there are currently three vacancies. The Recruiting Team continues to target recruit and police lateral candidates. We also remain optimistic in that we will fill those vacancies by the summer, however, proactive recruitment efforts must continue as we anticipate retirements at the end of the year. At this point in time, the long term effectiveness of lateral police officer bonuses is unknown as we are only a few months into the program.

The recruitment and hiring for professional staff members continues to progress very well. We are receiving several candidates for every vacancy. The only drawback is that many candidates are unable to pass the police background required for employment. Fortunately, we have been able to hire quality candidates from the remaining pool of eligible applicants.

#### **Engineering & Public Works Department Update**

Despite additional turnover in several divisions of the engineering and public works department, we have made great strides in the overall recruitment and retention efforts. With the addition of an Assistant Director, we have been able to put more focus on streamlining the hiring process. In partnership with HR, a priority list for filling vacancies was established and progress has been on-going to recruit for these time-critical roles.

In the past six months, we have filled several openings in the engineering, parks, streets/wastewater, and facilities divisions. We are still in the process of filling the 13 vacancies, including those from two very recent separations. One challenge we have faced in all the roles that require more technical expertise or training (i.e., engineers & technicians, mechanics, tradespeople, equipment operators) is that the applicant pools have been very small. We believe this may be partly due to a general shortage of skilled workers, as well as lower compensation than what other employers offer for similar credentials. In an effort to counteract some of this effect, in addition to the standard recruitment done by HR, the department has augmented the effort by posting on local college and university job boards via Handshake, and sharing out to industry-specific organizations for a broader reach and audience.

The department's depth of knowledge from the longevity of its team members is invaluable. Every division within it enjoys the benefit of having employees who have been with the City for two decades or much longer. On a forward looking basis, we are aware of the impending retirement windows for employees in key roles. In order to facilitate the capture of this institutional knowledge, we will be working with HR to identify options for early recruitment, role overlap, and succession planning. With regards to retention, more deliberate onboarding to ensure new employees are properly welcomed and feel part of the team immediately, as well as some additional opportunities for job-specific training, licensing, and role cross-training, enable us to build a strong foundation for long-term employment.

**FINANCIAL STATEMENT:**

N/A

**RELATED CITY COUNCIL 2020-2025 STRATEGIC PLAN GOAL:**

Not Applicable

**ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW:**

This is not a project under CEQA and is therefore not subject to environmental review.CCR15378; PRC 21065.

**PUBLIC NOTIFICATION:**

Agenda Report posted within 72 hours of meeting date and time in accordance with Brown Act.

**ORDINANCE:**

Not Applicable

**EXHIBITS:**

Exhibit A – Civil Service Commission Personnel Reports

Exhibit B – August 2022 Recruitment and Retention Presentation

Exhibit C – March 2023 Recruitment and Retention Presentation