

TO: Personnel Board

FROM: Mike Lipski, Human Resources

DATE: August 15, 2018

RE: Secretary 1—Common Council Office

At the request of Common Council Chief of Staff Kwasi Obeng, I have studied position #54 of Secretary 1 (CG17, R10), currently occupied by Debbie Fields. This position provides support for the City's 20 Alders through the Common Council Office, and over time, the amount of constituent work and technology changes have required a review of the position. After reviewing the updated position description and meeting with Mr. Obeng and Ms. Fields, I recommend that the current position be recreated as a Program Assistant 2 in CG17, R12, and Ms. Fields reallocated to the new position for the reasons outlined in this memo.

The class specification for a Secretary 1 describes

...responsible secretarial and administrative support work. Employees in this class exercise judgment and discretion in the performance of a variety of activities requiring interpretation and/or application of policy. Secretary 1s often serve as the first level of review and resolution on correspondence and personal contact, and independently gather information, draft routine correspondence, or take other action to assist managers in the most effective utilization of their time by relieving them of administrative detail.

Sample duties include:

Respond to a variety of in-person, e-mail, and telephone inquiries by providing or obtaining information, making appropriate referrals, explaining routine department and City procedures, and receiving or relaying messages.

Provide routine assistance in the collection and organization of budget data as directed. Prepare budget documents in final typed form for submission. Ensure mathematical accuracy of all calculations on budget document.

The class specification for a Program Assistant 2 describes

...highly responsible, advanced-level programmatic support work in a department, division or other independent program unit. Employees in this class support a particular program or programs by performing or coordinating specialized program functions, interpreting and applying programmatic policies and procedures, and performing administrative tasks in support of the program...employees are responsible for performing a variety of complex program related functions. Employees in this class work under the general supervision of the department, division, or program head. Work is distinguished from a Program Assistant 1 in that a Program Assistant 2...may develop operating systems and procedures for the program, as well as have a greater depth of knowledge, independent decision making, and coordination of program activities at a higher level than a Program Assistant 1.

Ms. Fields started working in the Common Council Office in 2000 as an Administrative Clerk 1 (CG17, R09) and was reclassified to a Secretary 1 in 2003 based on higher-level support duties.

However, since that time, both the nature of the work and the level of independence displayed by Ms. Fields in completing that work has increased. Until earlier this year, the only permanent staff in the Common Council Office was the current position and a higher-level Administrative Assistant, Lisa Veldran. Both position originally provided constituent support, but Ms. Veldran also had responsibility for the office budget and office operations. Ms. Veldran would normally assign work to Ms. Fields and oversee the work. However, in 2006, the City transitioned to an on-line database, Legistar, to track meetings. Ms. Veldran took on responsibility for the Legistar system, and as a result, more of the constituent work fell upon Ms. Fields. Now, Ms. Fields independently handles requests from Alders in setting up citizen meetings. This includes securing the space, sending notices, and making sure all other arrangements are in place, including if City staff are needed to participate. Ms. Fields also independently responds to citizen requests regarding issues that may be happening in a district. She may talk with the Alder to get specific information but then responds to the requests. Ms. Fields has drafted and edited press releases on behalf of Alders. In addition, the technology changes have changed how this position functions. Ms. Fields works with Alders who wish to produce newsletters for their district. She formats the newsletter and sends it to the appropriate residents. Ms. Fields also has learned how to maintain and update blogs for various Alders.

The work of this position is complicated by the fact that requests for work may come from one of 20 Alders, all of whom have unique styles and preferences for how the work is produced. Ms. Fields may be responding to an issue in one aldermanic district at the same time she is working on a newsletter for a different Alder, while setting up a citizen listening session for a third Alder. It is apparent from a review of the above class specifications that Ms. Fields is performing work beyond the level of a Secretary 1. The class specification for Secretary 1 emphasizes the routine nature of the work or correspondence that is created. As outlined above, Ms. Fields’s work is anything but routine. In reviewing how a Program Assistant 2 is distinguished from a 1, it is emphasized that the incumbent has greater depth of knowledge and independent decision making as it relates to the program being supported. This describes Ms. Fields’s work. She must be aware of what is happening in 20 different aldermanic districts throughout the City, she works independently with Alders to respond to issues or to set up meetings, and she independently ensures that all necessary resources are available for meetings. This is the type of high-level work envisioned by the Program Assistant 2 class specification. As such, I recommend that her current position of Secretary 1 be recreated as a Program Assistant 2 and she be reallocated to the higher level. The necessary resolution to implement this recommendation has been drafted.

Editor’s Note:

Compensation Group/Range	2018 Annual Minimum (Step 1)	2018 Annual Maximum (Step 5)	2018 Annual Maximum +12% longevity
17/10	\$44,926	\$51,106	\$57,239
17/12	\$47,827	\$54,128	\$60,624

cc: Kwasi Obeng—CC Chief of Staff
Debbie Fields