

TO: Tom Heikkinen—Water Utility General Manager  
FROM: Emaan Abdel-Halim, Human Resources  
DATE: 21 August 2014  
SUBJECT: Accountant XX – Water Utility

At the request of the Water Utility General Manager, Tom Heikkinen and Financial Manager, Michael Krentz, I have studied the position of Accountant XX in the Water Utility Budget to determine the appropriate classification for the position, and subsequent compensation group and range. This position will provide additional professional level accounting work for the Financial Section at the Water Utility. In addition to the reviewing the duties and responsibilities of the position description, this study included a review of comparable duties for the Accountant 2 in Finance. This position study included interviews and discussions with the Water Utility General Manager, Tom Heikkinen; Water Utility Financial Manager, Michael Krentz; and Accountant 4 – Finance, Craig Franklin. Based on my review of the duties and responsibilities of the Accountant classification series; I conclude that this current vacant position of Accountant at the Water Utility be classified as an Accountant 2 in CG18, Range 08, consistent with other City positions in this classification. The Water Utility would have the option to underfill the position as an Accountant 1 or 2 because of the career progression provided in the Accountant series.

When conducting a position study, it is the HR Analyst's responsibility to evaluate the duties and responsibilities assigned to a position and determines how those duties and responsibilities, and the associated levels of discretion, judgment, and other factors, compare to other positions within the City's classification system. All position studies must focus on the factors mentioned above, as well as those described more fully in the City of Madison Personnel Rules.

The classification of Accountant 1 is defined as:

... entry level professional accounting work. Employees perform **routine professional accounting assignments** under the supervision of a professional accountant or higher manager. Employees are typically **assigned one or more accounting projects of limited scope**. This class requires a body of theoretical knowledge applicable to a wide variety of professional accounting assignments. Work is performed under close supervision initially, and under limited supervision as employees demonstrate skill in assigned work. Employees may lead or supervise subordinate clerical or paraprofessional staff on a project basis or in a limited context. [emphasis added]

The classification of Accountant 2 is defined as:

...the **objective level** of the **professional Accountant** series. Employees perform professional assignments **requiring developed judgment and discretion** in the application of professional accounting theory. Work is typically performed under the general supervision of a professional accountant or higher manager. Employees **perform a variety of accounting assignments** and/or **assume ongoing responsibility for an element of a larger accounting program, or a program of limited scope**. Employees may lead or supervise subordinate clerical or paraprofessional staff on a project basis or in a limited context. [emphasis added]

The classification of Accountant 3 is defined as:

...the **limited program supervisor** level and/or **advanced project level** of the **professional Accountant** series. Under the general supervision of a higher manager, employees at this level **supervise specific City accounting functions of limited scope** and/or **perform a wide variety of high level professional accounting projects** or assignments. Employees typically supervise professional, paraprofessional, and/or clerical employees. [emphasis added]

Under the supervision of the Water Utility Financial Manager, this section is budgeted for staffing at one Accountant 2 (18/08), one Water Accountant/Computer Specialist (20/16) and one Account Clerk 3 (20/11). The Water Utility also currently has approved in the 2014 budget one position for an Accountant XX. The work of the existing positions, respectively, is comprised of three areas – general accounting, accounts payable, and payroll/HR support functions. The responsibilities of the Accountant 2 primarily are the general costing accounting for the entire agency's project work, including preparing journal entries, storm water reconciliations, interagency transfers, preparing LPOs for billing and other reporting functions. The Water Accountant/Computer Specialist is responsible for reconciling and payment of all purchasing cards; as well as issuing new cards. This position is also responsible for the Utility's other accounts payables and bank reconciliations, works as the liaison with City IT, handles workstation and laptop computer issues, has some involvement with the Customer Service/Billing software, and coordinates the Utility's accounting and financial software. The Water Utility's payroll function is the primary the responsibility of the Account Clerk 3; which also serves as the agency's HR liaison, in addition to accounts receivables and some billing duties. The proposed new professional Accountant position would be to provide a high level of analysis of the accounting data, increased follow up on outstanding collections, and perform other complex and varied professional accounting functions. This section also works collectively to pull together the accounting information necessary for the annual operating budget process, as well as several annual financial statements to the Public Services Commission and the Water Utility Board.

Upon the review of the proposed position description provided by the Water Utility's Financial Manager, I found that a majority of the duties and responsibilities for this position appears to be in line with the entry level accounting work of an Accountant 1-2. While some of the assigned responsibilities are consistent with Account Clerk and Accounting Technician duties throughout the City, there are components that do require more specialized professional Accountant skills. For example, the preparation of general ledger journal entries, account reconciliations for monthly, quarterly, and year-end closing, and the preparation of schedules for the Water Utility's annual reporting all fall into the responsibilities consistent with a professional Accountant. Additionally, the proposed position description indicated this position would assist in the preparation of the Utility's Capital and Operating budgets. These duties primarily entail entering information into City Finance budget templates. Finally, this position would assist in the preparation of information for updating the Utility's financial planning model. These last two items of the position description clearly indicate that the position would assist in providing this information to the Financial Manager who is ultimately responsible for producing the final products for the Water Utility. Therefore, although the work in assisting the Financial Manager may be professional in nature, these higher level responsibility still remains within the scope of the Financial Manager and would not be considered advanced level accounting functions for this proposed position.

In comparison, after discussions with the supervisory accountant in Finance, the main distinction between the Accountant 2 and Accountant 3 work is the level of program responsibility and analysis involved with the application of higher level accounting theories. In general, the Accountant 3s in these agencies are overseeing highly complex, detail oriented functions from start to finish. This requires a high level of judgment and analysis to extrapolate meaning from the accounting reports; in addition to being able to create and produce such reports. This ability to take the analysis a step further and derive meaning from the data is reflective of the higher level application of accounting theory seen at the Accountant 3 classification.

As the class spec states:

...this series is structured to provide advancement from Accountant 1 to Accountant 2, as a function of the employee's career development and generally occurs after two years of starting employment as an Accountant 1. Progression to an Accountant 3 or 4 is not automatic, but rather is dependent upon the incumbent taking on additional duties and responsibilities as well as the needs of the department and is generally accomplished through competition.

Given the nature of the work proposed for this Accountant position at Water Utility, I find that the duties and responsibilities would be most fit as an Accountant 1 with progression to an Accountant 2 after two years of working with the Water Utility's accounting systems. This position's duties related to the higher level accounting functions of budget development and financial modeling is not sufficient to warrant classification at the higher Accountant 3 level at this time. These responsibilities have the potential to develop into full project responsibility for these accounting functions, but would require more in depth, advanced accounting work related to these projects from beginning to end; not merely assisting in the preparation of information for these special projects.

For all the reasons discussed in this memo, I find the nature of the proposed Accountant XX work at the Water Utility is consistent with the work performed by others in the Accountant 2 classification throughout the City. As such, I recommend the Water Utility's proposed Accountant XX position be classified as an Accountant 2 in Compensation Group 18, Range 8. However, as noted earlier, the Water Utility would have the option to recruit for an Accountant 1 or 2, consistent with the career ladder series. The necessary resolution to implement this recommendation has been drafted.

Editor's Note:

Compensation Group/Range	2014 Annual Minimum (Step 1)	2014 Annual Maximum (Step 5)	2014 Annual Maximum +12% longevity
18/06	\$51,222	\$60,311	\$67,548
18/08	\$55,560	\$65,931	\$73,840

cc: Brad Wirtz – Human Resources Director  
 Michael Lipski – HR Services Manager  
 Michael Krentz – Water Utility Financial Manager