

City of Madison

Report on Position Studies in the City of Madison

2009-2010

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Executive Summary

The position study process outlined in the City of Madison Personnel Rules is designed to have no impact on the City's Operating Budget. Departments are asked to provide a funding plan for any outcome that would result in an increase to a position's salary range. This ranges from funding through salary or other departmental savings, grant money, or anticipated increased revenues. Otherwise, new positions are created through the Operating Budget process with appropriate funding allocated at that time.

Between 2003 and 2008, there was an average of 55 position study requests processed by the City of Madison Human Resources Department. In 2009, the Human Resources Department received 49 position study requests. Of the 49 requests, 18 resulted in encumbered positions moving to a classification in a different, usually higher, salary range. Of the 18 requests that resulted in encumbered positions moving to a different classification, 11 involved positions represented by a union, or 61%.

In 2010, the Human Resources Department received 33 position study requests. Of the 33 requests, 16 resulted in encumbered positions moving to a classification in a different, usually higher, salary range. Of the 16 requests that resulted in encumbered positions moving to a different classification, 8 involved positions represented by a union, or 50%.

The remaining requests in each year either involved vacant positions, newly created positions, were denied, or had a different outcome described in greater detail in this report.

During 2009-2010, every department or division in the City requested at least one position study, except for the Treasurer's Office and the Municipal Court.

Overview

The City of Madison Personnel Rules outline the process by which positions are assigned to classifications and salary ranges. This can be accomplished in a number of ways. One common way is through creation of a new position which is then classified within the City's classification system. This generally happens through the budget process, although it is possible to create a new position outside the budget process. The other common way is through the position study process whereby an encumbered position is studied to determine whether it remains appropriately classified based on the duties and responsibilities it is assigned.

The City of Madison has approximately 2,750 permanent budgeted FTE. Between the years 2003-2008, there was an average of 55 position study requests a year, or approximately 2% of the workforce. Until 2008, there was no formal method of tracking position study requests. Files were maintained, although they were not always complete. Beginning January 1, 2009, an Excel based tracking method was instituted by which each study would be logged with the request and the ultimate outcome. In 2009, Human Resources received 49 position study requests and in 2010, Human Resources received 33 such requests, for a total of 82 requests in 2 years.¹

It is important to highlight that these numbers are the total number of requests received in Human Resources. This includes requests that were later withdrawn or denied. These outcomes are never seen by the Council or Board of Estimates as they do not result in a change to the classification or compensation systems. The position study process will be described in greater detail in the next section of this report.

The Position Study Process

Chapter 4 of the Personnel Rules outlines the process by which a position study may be initiated. The study request may be made by the supervisor or by the employee pursuant to the criteria outlined in the Personnel Rules. The requesting party is required to submit 2 documents to initiate a study request. The first document is a position description with the current duties and responsibilities assigned to that position. The second document is a Classification Change Worksheet which provides information such as:

- The incumbent's position and pay range

¹ I have only included requests through September, 2010 as studies received later were not completed for this report.

- The changes in duties and responsibilities which require a study to be done
- The consequences of not assigning these changed duties and responsibilities to this position
- A funding plan for how the reclassification (if any is approved) would be paid for in the current and subsequent years.
- Signature of the Department/Division Head.

As noted, the Classification Change Worksheet asks the department/division to develop a plan to fund an increase in its Operating Budget. If an employee is moved to a higher range or a new position is created in a department/division, this money must come from elsewhere in the department/division budget. This type of action is generally not funded with an additional appropriation of the City’s general revenues unless it is a new position that was approved during the budget process. Some departments/divisions fund reclasses through anticipated increased revenues; some fund through salary or other savings within their department; some fund through grants. In any case, the department is required to pay for the change in budget in some fashion, making the action cost neutral on the City’s overall Operating Budget. Once the paperwork is complete, these documents are submitted to Human Resources, and specifically to the Compensation and Benefits Manager. The documents are reviewed to ensure they are complete before initiating the position study process.

Generally, the first step in the study process is to meet with the supervisor of the position and then with the incumbent to ensure an understanding of the duties and responsibilities in the position description. Assuming the position description accurately reflects the information received in these interviews, Human Resources staff will then compare the position being studied to other positions in the City’s Classification Plan to determine the appropriate classification.

A number of indicators are listed in the Personnel Rules which factor into a classification determination, including:

Technical Knowledge	Specialized Knowledge	Required education
Managerial Responsibility	Budgetary authority	Programmatic authority
Policy development	Policy interpretation	Autonomy
Required licenses/certifications	Required years of experience	Physical Demands
Supervisory Responsibility	Specialized Training related to the position	Mental Demands
Physical Environment including hazardous conditions	Compensation of position compared to relevant labor market	Decisional impact

The Personnel Rules also outline a number of factors that are not considered in the study process, including:

- Employee's current rate of pay
- Employee's length of service
- Special training the employee has received not related to the current position
- Employee's performance
- Employee's likability

If it is determined that an encumbered position has undergone a change in the duties and responsibilities resulting in a change in classification, then Human Resources must evaluate what to do with the incumbent. If the changes are logical and gradual, the incumbent will be reallocated to the new classification and salary range. If the changes are not logical, the position will be reclassified and filled through competition. If the changes are logical but not gradual, the position study process will wait until the changed duties and responsibilities have been associated with the position for at least six months to ensure that the changes are permanent. These concepts are explained in greater detail in the Personnel Rules.

Regardless of the outcome of a position study, Human Resources will prepare a memo outlining the final recommendation. If a position is to be changed and/or an incumbent moved, Human Resources will also prepare the appropriate ordinance and/or resolution for Council consideration. Position changes involving encumbered positions, new classifications, or title changes will be referred by Council to the Personnel Board for recommendation on the action, as well as the Board of Estimates for financial consideration, before being referred back to Council for final approval. If an agency is only seeking to add FTE to an existing classification, the request will be referred by Council to the Board of Estimates for financial consideration before being referred back to Council for final approval.

The Personnel Board is made up of 5 citizen representatives. Four of the members are appointed by the Mayor, the fifth representative is appointed by organized labor, and all members are subject to Council approval. In general, the Board's responsibility regarding classification/compensation determinations is to ensure we are following the Personnel Rules and appropriately classifying positions according to the City's Classification Plan.

Position Study Outcomes

There are generally 2 outcomes of position studies. The first outcome involves encumbered positions and results in employees moving to another classification without having to compete. This can happen by a position being moved to a new classification based on changed duties and responsibilities, by an employee progressing through a career ladder, or by an entire classification being changed and then incumbents moved to the new classification. The second type of outcome does not result in a change to an encumbered position. It may be that a new position is created and posted to be filled through competition, a vacant position is recreated, or that the study results in no change to the incumbent. The different outcomes will be described in more detail in this section. However, the following summary table outlines the different outcomes and their impact on represented classifications/positions over the past 2 year period.

Table 1—Position Study Outcomes

Study Outcome	Represented Position/ Classification affected	Non-Represented Position/ Classification affected	Total
Reclass of individual	13	11	24
Career Ladders	3	4	7
New classification created	3	0	3
New position created	3	12	15
New hourly classification created	2	0	2
Retitle classification/ position	1	5	6
Recreate vacant position	4	4	8
Downgrade position	1	2	3
Request denied	4	1	5
Other outcome	4	5	9
Total	39	43	82

Movement of Encumbered Positions

Reclass of Individual—There is a general presumption that the result of all position studies involves employees moving to a higher salary range without having to compete. While this can be true, it is not the case in the majority of position studies submitted to Human Resources. Of the 82 position study requests received since January 1, 2009, 24 resulted in employees being reallocated to higher classifications and salary ranges without having to compete (not including career ladders or the creation of new classifications). This represents 29% of the total requests received in this period. Another common misconception is that represented employees do not have their positions studied and reclassified to higher salary ranges as often as non-represented employees. However, of the 24 studies just referenced, 13, or 54%, involved represented employees moving to higher classifications.

Career Ladders—Certain classifications in the City are set up intentionally for employees to advance to higher salary ranges as a function of the employee's career development. This can be seen prominently in a number of the professional classifications such as Accountant, Engineer, Architect, Landscape Architect, Administrative Analyst, and others. Represented classifications also have career ladders established, such as Clerk Typist 1-2, Police Report Typist 1-2, Property Code Enforcement Officer, Code Enforcement Officer, and others.

A career ladder works as follows: The position is usually included in a department budget at the full-performance level but actually filled at the entry level. Then as an employee gains experience and is able to work independently with a demonstrated level of skill, the employee may be moved to the next level. Career ladders may include 2 or 3 steps, depending on how it is designed. Certain steps may require the incumbent to acquire certifications in order to achieve the step. In many cases, the top level of a career ladder classification is not achieved through a reclass process but rather a competitive process. The benefit of the career ladder is that it provides a department with the opportunity to train an employee and provides the employee with defined opportunities to advance as the employee's skills develop. In career ladder situations, positions are placed in the compensation plan based on the objective level of performance and generally the entry level will be 2 pay ranges lower, although this may vary.

In a career ladder situation, a department is allowed to budget the position at the higher level and then move incumbents to the next level by sending a cert to Human Resources when the incumbent has achieved the criteria of the higher level. In many cases, the department will put forth a study request as described above and Human Resources will determine whether the individual meets the criteria of the next level.

Of the 82 position study requests since January 1, 2009, 7 have been the result of individuals moving through a career ladder. Of the 7, 3 have involved employees moving through represented career ladders. However, it should be noted that the represented Clerk Typist and Police Report Typist career ladders are established by Ordinance and do not require a formal position study so this number does not include those positions.

New Classifications—In certain cases, a department will determine that an existing classification no longer appropriately describes the work of the department. This was the case in 2009 when the City Clerk, Maribeth Witzel-Behl, requested a study of the positions in her office. The outcome was that a new classification was created with a career ladder for the Clerk’s Office employees. The new Municipal Clerk series outlined different criteria for advancing through the series. Although for the most part, incumbents were not given an immediate pay increase because the series started at the same salary range as the existing positions, it created an opportunity for the employees to advance. Similar actions were taken in the Assessor’s Office with the Assessment Aides being converted to Assessment Technicians in 2010, and the Comptroller’s Office with the Administrative Support Pool.

Of the 82 position study requests since January 1, 2009, 3 resulted in the creation of new classifications and the reallocation of the incumbents to the appropriate levels within the new classification. All three of these studies involved represented classifications.

The previous discussion involved those position study requests that actually resulted in employees being moved to a new classification and salary range. This represents a total of 34 of the 82 study requests (41.4%) received in Human Resources in the last 2 years.

Outcomes Resulting in No Change to Encumbered Positions

New Positions—Many times, a department will create a new position in the budget and then ask Human Resources to place the new position within the Classification and Compensation

Plans. In other cases, the department will ask for additional FTE within existing classifications. These types of requests do not result in individuals being reclassified. Rather, these requests involve vacant positions and after the request has been approved, the position is posted and filled through competition.

Of the 82 position study requests since January 1, 2009, 15 resulted in the creation of new positions. Of the 15, 4 studies resulted in the creation of new represented positions, including 4 new custodial/maintenance positions in Engineering as the result of one such study.

Create New Classification (Hourly)—In certain cases, an entirely new classification is needed in the Classification Plan. This is sometimes the case when creating new positions through the budget process. However, those positions are counted above when creating a new position because in addition to the classification, a new position is actually created as well. Of the 82 studies in the last 2 years, 2 involved the creation of a new hourly classification—Forestry Specialist Assistant and Command Center Operator. Both of these new classifications are represented.

Retitle Classifications or Positions—In certain cases, a classification title fails to appropriately describe the work of the classification. In other cases, a position within a classification may have changed such that the position is performing the work of another classification in the same salary range. When this happens, the classification or position will be retitled to appropriately reflect the work. For instance, one title change involved the Community Development Grants Administrator classification. The Police Department received grant money and wanted to create a grants administrator. The City’s classification plan did not have a general title of Grants Administrator so a recommendation was made to retitle the Community Development Grants Administrators to Grants Administrator so the title/ classification could be used in other departments. Similarly, when Engineering wanted to hire a different type of engineer, the hourly classification of Civil Engineer was retitled “Engineer” to provide greater flexibility. A change in title does not result in a change of salary when the position or classification stays in the same salary range.

Of the 82 position study requests since January 1, 2009, 6 involved a title change without any change in compensation.

Recreate Vacant Positions—Once a position becomes vacant, the department is required to update the position description and send it along with the certification request for the purpose of recruitment. In some cases, this updating process causes the department to adjust the duties and responsibilities leading to a position study. In other cases, when Human Resources receives and reviews the cert and position description, it is determined that the position description no longer actually reflects the classification. In these cases, Human Resources will conduct a position study resulting in a change in classification. However, because the position is vacant, no employee is affected. Rather this is accomplished before the position is posted.

Of the 82 position study requests since January 1, 2009, 8 involved vacant positions being reclassified and placed in a higher salary range prior to the position being posted and filled through competition. Half of those studies resulted in represented positions being placed in a similar or higher salary range.

Downgraded—The previous section discussed recreation of vacant positions and studies which resulted in the position being moved to a higher salary range. In some cases, when Human Resources reviews the position description for a vacant position, it is determined that the position is classified higher than it should be. When this happens, the outcome is the vacant position is appropriately classified in a lower salary range and then posted.

Of the 82 position study requests since January 1, 2009, 3 involved vacant positions being reclassified to lower salary ranges prior to the position being posted and filled through competition. Two of the three positions being downgraded were non-represented positions.

Denials—As mentioned earlier, the department initiates the position study process for encumbered positions. There are times when a department believes that changed duties and responsibilities should result in a change in classification. Other times, the supervisor does not believe a position has changed but the employee puts in the study request per the Personnel Rules. Regardless of the supervisor's position, Human Resources will conduct a study of the position based on the duties and responsibilities outlined in the position description. The duties and responsibilities are what we base our conclusions on, within the context of the criteria listed earlier in this report. There are times when we receive a position study request and determine that the position remains appropriately classified regardless of the changed duties and

responsibilities. In those cases, Human Resources will prepare a memo outlining our conclusions and what the conclusion is based on.

Of the 82 position study requests since January 1, 2009, 5 resulted in no change to the incumbent or classification.

Other Miscellaneous Results—The preceding categories were the major results of the position studies in the last 2 years. Certain studies did not fit neatly into the above categories and will be discussed briefly in this section.

- Create new positions and underfill-(1) This study created 2 new Administrative Clerks in the Human Resources Department but the incumbents continued to underfill the positions in their Clerk Typist capacity. One Administrative Clerk was later filled through competition and the other was filled due to a position study a year later.
- Underfill existing position-no action-(1) This study was in Metro where they were seeking a Transit Ridership Improvement Specialist. As the study progressed, it was determined that they would underfill a current vacancy of Transit Marketing Specialist 2 with a Transit Marketing Specialist 1, with a working title Ridership Improvement Specialist. Because the Marketing Specialist 2 position was vacant, this could be accomplished without having to go to the Personnel Board, BOE, or Council.
- New Compensation Group-(1) When the Stagehand contract was ratified in April, 2010, a new compensation group needed to be created. The Stagehands were in CG19, but that group was for non-represented employees. Since the Stagehands were represented by IATSE, this was no longer an appropriate placement. CG28 was created for the stagehands.
- Withdrawn-(3) Three requests were withdrawn or processing was stopped for various reasons before a conclusion could be reached.
- Incomplete-(3) Three requests were not finished at the time this report was created.

Position Study Requests by Department

Concerns have been raised in the past that certain departments receive a greater benefit from the position study process than other departments. As can be seen from the table below, almost every department has requested at least one position study in the last 2 years. The number of studies in a given year may vary by department depending on whether a reorganization is

occurring within that department. However, all studies are evaluated based on the factors outlined earlier in this report. It is apparent that departments are aware of the position study process and have been requesting studies as situations dictate.

Table 2—Position Study Requests by Department/Division

Department/Division	2009 Study Requests	2010 Study Requests	Total
Fire		1	1
Police	3	2	5
Public Health	2		2
Common Council Office		1	1
Mayor's Office	1		1
Municipal Court			0
Dept. of Civil Rights		3	3
City Attorney's Office	1		1
Assessor's Office	1	1	2
Clerk's Office	1		1
Treasurer's Office			0
Comptroller's Office		4	4
Information Technology	1		1
Human Resources	4	1	5
Overture Center	1	0.5	1.5
Monona Terrace	2	0.5	2.5
Engineering	2	5	7
Parks	5	2	7
Streets	1		1
Water Utility	1	6	7
Metro Transit	3		3
Traffic Engineering/ Parking	5		5
Fleet Service	1		1
PCED Office of the Director		1	1
Planning Division	2	1	3
Building Inspection	1		1
Economic Development Division	1		1
CDA/Housing	2	4	6
Community Development Division	6		6
Library	2		2
Totals	49	33	82

Conclusion

Much goes into the position study process and as can be seen in this report, a variety of outcomes are possible. As discussed herein, in an average year less than 2% of the total positions in the City are impacted by the position study process, and less than 1% of encumbered positions are reclassified. In addition, the position study process is designed so that it does not have a significant impact on the City's Operating Budget. Departments are required to develop a funding plan for any salary increases that result from a position study. Finally, represented positions are just as likely to be impacted by a position study as non-represented positions.