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CITY OF VANCOUVER

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Report Date: November 14th, 2008
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Meeting Date: November 25, 2008

TO: Vancouver City Council
FROM: General Manager, Engineering Services
SUBJECT: Automated Meter Reading System Implementation - CUPE 15 Positions

RECOMMENDATION

THAT four CUPE 15 Regular Full Time Water Rates Inspector I positions and one Water Rates Inspector III position be eliminated effective December 31, 2008.

COUNCIL POLICY

Creation and deletion of regular full time CUPE 15 positions requires Council authorization.

SUMMARY

The installation of the Automated Meter Reading (AMR) equipment is complete. This equipment allows electronic downloading of water consumption and customer information from all the meters either via radio or touch pad. As a result, there is no longer the requirement for CUPE 15 Meter Rates Inspectors (meter readers) to manually read meters and record water consumption.

Effective January 2009, electronic downloading of consumption will occur at the start of each month using equipment installed and maintained by employees under the jurisdiction of CUPE 1004. Accordingly, and to realize the operational savings from the automated meter reading system, this report recommends the deletion of the five Meter Rates Inspector positions in CUPE 15.

Following the Council Committee meeting on October 2nd, Engineering and Human Resources met with CUPE 15 on three occasions to facilitate the transition of the existing meter readers into other positions within the City. Considerable progress has been made on identifying

appropriate positions and strategies for the placement of the meter reader employees. The final placement of all of the employees will not occur until layoff notice has been given and the employees are able to bump into positions that they are interested in performing and for which they are qualified, if they are not satisfied with the positions that are available without bumping. The cost to transition the meter readers into new positions is approximately \$20,000. Funding is available from the anticipated savings in the Meter Reading budget.

PURPOSE

This report requests Council approval to eliminate four Water Rates Inspector I positions and one Water Rates Inspector III position effective December 31, 2008, all of which are no longer required as a result of the installation of an Automated Meter Reading System.

BACKGROUND

At the Standing Committee on City Services and Budgets meeting on October 2nd, Council approved the implementation of the Automated Meter Reading and Billing System improvements and proposed by-law changes. Council postponed consideration of the recommendation to delete five Water Rates Inspector positions, to facilitate further development of a transition plan for affected staff. Staff agreed to meet with CUPE 15 to discuss the deletion of the positions and report back to Council by December 16th, 2008.

The implementation of the Automated Meter Reading System and the billing changes have been approved by Council to take effect on January 1st, 2009. This report on the deletion of the existing Water Rates Inspector positions is being brought forward to allow for the staffing changes to occur concurrently with the January 2009 implementation of the AMR system.

DISCUSSION

Following the Council Committee meeting on October 2nd, 2008, Engineering and Human Resources staff met with CUPE 15 on three occasions to seek an agreement on transitioning the affected employees into positions within CUPE 15 or CUPE 1004. A strategy to find position vacancies for possible placement of the meter readers has now been developed and meetings with the employees are underway.

As it currently stands, one of the employees intends to move into Operations Worker II position in the Meter Shop. He will be able to port his sick bank and can access some additional training time as an incentive to upgrade his skills for future opportunities. Another employee would like to become a Storekeeper or Warehouse Worker and Engineering has arranged for her to fill a temporary position at the National Yards Traffic and Electrical Stores for training purposes. Following this trial she can compete for a full time position, work as an auxiliary, or exercise her layoff and bumping rights under the collective agreement.

The remaining Water Rates Inspector intends to move into a position within CUPE 15 and has indicated some preferences for which he is qualified. Human Resources staff is working to facilitate a transfer, without utilizing the layoff and bumping provision in the Collective Agreement if possible.

To assist the Supervisor of the meter readers (the Water Rates Inspector III), staff is working with him to find a position for which he is qualified and can bump or transfer into. This employee has been with the City for 33 years and discussions are continuing on options such

as topping up his salary to the level of Water Rates III for a period of one year if he is only able to find a new position at a lower pay grade.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Eliminating the four Meter Rates Inspector positions will mean that the cost savings from the implementation of an AMR system can be realized, generally as detailed in the October 2, 2008 report to Council. The proposed transitional strategy with CUPE 15 will result in a reduction in the savings by approximately \$20,000 in 2009.

PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

Four Water Rates Inspector I positions and one Water Rates Inspector III position will be eliminated effective December 31st 2008. Only three of the four Water Rates Inspector positions are currently filled. If positions are not found where the existing employees can be placed or compete on vacancies, under the terms of the collective agreement the individuals will be given 30 days notice of the layoff upon which they are eligible to bump into another position with CUPE 15 for which they are qualified. The employees may also transfer to an Operations Worker II position in CUPE 1004, where they will be assigned to the meter shop. If they follow through with this option, they will also port their City seniority, which means that they will continue to qualify for benefits and quotas for vacation based on their original start date with the City.

Staff also met with CUPE 1004 to see if they would be in agreement with porting the union seniority for any employees who transfer to Ops Worker II positions in CUPE 1004. As with previous CUPE 15 personnel who were offered positions in Operations, CUPE 1004 has indicated that they are generally supportive of porting seniority (for layoffs or competition postings), but will not provide a commitment in advance.

Human Resources and the Waterworks Branch have been working with CUPE 15 and the employees who will be impacted by this job elimination. The employees have been offered and are taking training courses to upgrade their skills. Most of the meter readers have attended a day long course on career development which covers the following topics to help them in transitioning to a new position within the City: Managing Change, Building Your Personal Inventory, Insights Discovery, Interests, Values in the Workplace, Your Skills, Education, Creating Your Future, Resume Writing, and Interview Skills.

CONCLUSION

Staff recommends that the elimination of the Water Rates Inspector I positions and the Water Rates Inspector III position proceed in conjunction with the AMR and billing system improvements. Transition plans are being developed for affected staff.

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