

December 10, 2024

MEMORANDUM

To: Government, Accountability, and Economic Development Committee
From: Karina Bull, Analyst
Subject: Council Bill 120925: Fourth Quarter 2024 Employment Ordinance

On December 12, 2024, the Government, Accountability, and Economic Development Committee will discuss and may vote on [Council Bill \(CB\) 120925](#), the Fourth Quarter Employment Ordinance. This legislation proposes changes to civil service classifications, job titles, and rates of pay (i.e., compensation schedules). This memo provides a summary of CB 120925, describes potential impacts, and identifies next steps.

Summary

The Council authorizes certain City of Seattle (City) personnel actions through quarterly employment ordinances. In the Fourth Quarter 2024 Employment Ordinance, the Council would authorize the Seattle Department of Human Resources (SDHR) Director to implement the following personnel actions:

1. Exempt four positions from civil service,
2. Return 11 positions to civil service,
3. Revise two job titles,
4. Establish 13 job titles and corresponding rates of pay, and
5. Adjust rates of pay for two job titles.

Council's approval of CB 120925 would not have immediate fiscal impacts: (1) any compensation changes related to implementation of these personnel actions would be subject to the appointing authority (i.e., head of department) and (2) any necessary position authority and/or appropriations would require separate legislation. However, in the interest of fiscal transparency and long-term budget sustainability, the City Budget Office (CBO) provided information on the potential *associated costs* of the recommended reclassifications, revised job titles, and adjusted salary steps; this information indicates a net impact of less than \$10,000. CBO also provided status updates on the recommended new job titles, including whether the 2025-2026 Adopted Budget includes position authority and/or appropriations for the relevant positions; this information is included in Attachment 2.

CB 120925

1. Exempt four positions from civil service.

The SDHR Director determined that the body of work of four positions meets the criteria for an automatic civil service exemption under [Seattle Municipal Code \(SMC\) 4.13.010](#) and recommends exempting these positions from the civil service system. The SDHR Director's recommendation for these exemptions would only take effect upon approval by two-thirds vote of the Council. Attachment 1 provides an overview of the civil service system; Table 1 provides an overview of the proposed exemptions.

Table 1. Positions exempted from civil service.

	Department	Initial Classification (Civil Service)	Final Classification (Exempt)	Vacancy Status
1	Seattle Public Utilities (SPU)	Strategic Advisor 1, CSPI & P L21 - BU	Information Technology Professional A, Exempt	Vacant
2	SPU	Information Technology Professional B - BU	Information Technology Professional A, Exempt	Filled
3	Seattle Police Department (SPD)	Strategic Advisor 2, CSPI & P	Strategic Advisor 3, Exempt	Vacant
4	Seattle City Light (SCL)	Information Technology Professional C - BU	Information Technology Professional A, Exempt - BU	Vacant

2. Return 11 positions to the civil service system.

The SDHR Director determined that the body of work of 11 positions no longer meets the criteria for civil service exemption and recommends returning these positions to the civil service system. Attachment 1 provides an overview of the civil service system; Table 2 provides an overview of the proposed returns to civil service.

Table 2. Positions returned to civil service.

	Department	Initial Classification (Exempt)	Final Classification (Civil Service)	Vacancy Status
1	SPU	Strategic Advisor 2, Exempt	Strategic Advisor 2, Utilities-BU-P	Vacant
2	SPU	Strategic Advisor 2, Exempt	Strategic Advisor 2, Utilities-BU-P	Vacant
3	SDHR	Strategic Advisor 1, Exempt	Personnel Analyst, Senior	Filled
4	SPD	Legal Assistant	Personnel Specialist, Assistant	Filled
5	Office of City Finance (OCF)	Information Technology Professional A, Exempt	Information Technology Professional B-BU	Vacant
6	OCF	Information Technology Professional A, Exempt	Information Technology Professional B-BU	Vacant
7	Office of Economic Development (OED)	Strategic Advisor 1, Exempt	Community Development Specialist, Senior	Vacant
8	OED	Strategic Advisor 1, Exempt	Strategic Advisor 1, General Government	Vacant
9	OED	Strategic Advisor 2, Exempt	Strategic Advisor 1, General Government	Vacant
10	Finance and Administrative Services (FAS)	Executive 2	Painter Crew Chief	Vacant
11	Community Assisted Response & Engagement (CARE)	Strategic Advisor 1, Exempt	Manager 1, Information Technology	Vacant

3. Revise two job titles.

The SDHR Director recommends revising two job titles to address a pay discrepancy (i.e., inversion issue) and update a body of work in Seattle Center (CEN); and align a position in SDHR with a new class series created for administration of the Public Safety Civil Service personnel programs. Table 3 provides an overview of the proposed revisions to job titles.

Table 3. Revised job titles.

	Department	Current Title	New Title	Vacancy Status
1	CEN	Facility Technology Supervisor	HVAC Technology Supervisor	Filled
2	SDHR	Special Exams Analyst	Public Safety Civil Service Examiner	Filled

4. Establish 13 job titles and corresponding rates of pay.

The SDHR Director recommends establishing new job titles and corresponding rates of pay for positions in multiple departments. Table 4 provides an overview of proposed changes.

Table 4. New job titles and salary steps.

Department	New Title	Salary Steps	Effective Date
SCERS	Retirement Specialist, Senior	\$51.22 - \$53.19 - \$55.33 - \$57.51 - \$59.63	5/10/2024
SDHR	Public Safety Civil Service Examiner, Trainee	\$40.71 - \$42.32 - \$43.97 - \$45.71 - \$47.56	10/1/2024
SDHR	Public Safety Civil Service Examiner, Senior	\$51.22 - \$53.19 - \$55.33 - \$57.51 - \$59.63	10/1/2024
SDHR	Public Safety Civil Service Examiner, Supervisor	\$59.63 - \$61.95 - \$64.25 - \$66.69 - \$69.22	10/1/2024
SFD	Fire Equipment Technician, Senior	\$37.07 - \$38.46 - \$40.02 - \$41.52 - \$43.10	10/1/2024
SFD	Fire Equipment Technician, Supervisor	\$40.02 - \$41.52 - \$43.10 - \$44.83 - \$46.71	10/1/2024
SCL	Conservation Fish Hatchery, Assistant	\$30.13 - \$31.33 - \$32.42 - \$33.71 - \$34.96	1/1/2025
SPU	Water Treatment Plant Operator, Assistant	\$39.22 - \$40.71 - \$42.32 - \$43.97 - \$45.71	1/1/2025
SPU	Water Treatment Plant Operator	\$45.71 - \$47.56 - \$49.32 - \$51.22 - \$53.19	1/1/2025
SPU	Water Treatment Plant Operator, Senior	\$49.32 - \$51.22 - \$53.19 - \$55.33 - \$57.51	1/1/2025
SPU	Water Treatment Plant Operator, Supervisor	\$54.30 - \$56.39 - \$58.65 - \$60.83 - \$63.15	1/1/2025
FAS	Veterinarian	\$67.91 - \$70.56 - \$73.27 - \$76.04 - \$78.97	1/1/2025
FAS	Veterinarian, Principal	\$78.97 - \$81.98 - \$85.04 - \$88.34 - \$91.69	1/1/2025

- SCERS: Retirement Specialist, Senior
SCERS requested a senior classification for the Retirement Specialist series because the current series only includes assistant and journey levels. The salary recommendation is based on the Personnel Analyst, Senior classification.
- SDHR: Public Safety Civil Service Examiner classifications
SDHR requested review of the Special Exams Analyst classification to create a job series for administration of the Public Safety Civil Service personnel programs. SDHR Class/Comp developed salary structures that align with the Personnel Analyst series per the terms of an MOU between SDHR and the Civil Service Commissions.
- SFD: Fire Equipment Technician series
An incumbent requested review of Fire Equipment Technician classification. SDHR Class/Comp recommended a revision to the existing title and the creation of two new titles to reflect an updated body of work and provide career progression. SDHR Class/Comp used existing pay as the benchmark to develop salary structures as market data was not available.
- SCL: Conservation Fish Hatchery, Assistant
SCL requested an entry-level classification to supplement the Conservation Fish Hatchery Operator and Supervisor classifications created in 2023. SDHR Class/Comp developed the salary structure for this classification based on comparable data and an internal equity review.
- SPU: Water Treatment Plant Operator Series
SPU requested four job classifications to take over the operation of the Tolt Treatment Facility in 2025 at the end of the Design-Build-Operate contract. SDHR conducted a market survey to develop job responsibilities and salary structures for these job titles.
- FAS: Veterinarian and Veterinarian, Principal
FAS requested job classification for Veterinarian and Principal Veterinarian. Absent these titles, veterinarian work would be placed within the APEX/SAM program at the Manager 1 level. SDHR Class/Comp conducted a market survey of 12 jurisdictions to develop job responsibilities and salary structures for these job classifications.

5. Adjust rates of pay for two job titles

The SDHR Director recommends adjusting the rates of pay for two job titles to update a body work and provide a pathway for career progression at SFD; and provide a temporary counselor job classification at Human Services Department (HSD). Table 5 provides an overview of the proposed changes.

Table 5. Adjusted salary steps.

	Department	Title	Salary Steps	Effective Date
1	SFD	Fire Equipment Technician	\$34.40 - \$35.68 - \$37.07 - \$38.46 - \$40.02	10/01/2024
2	HSD	Counselor (Temporary)	\$39.49 - \$40.97 - \$42.63 - \$44.23 - \$45.92	01/01/2025

Financial Impacts of CB 120925

This legislation would not directly result in increased costs for departments. Any compensation changes for incumbents or new hires related to the personnel actions in this legislation would be subject to the appointing authority and would not relate directly to the Council’s decision to approve changes to civil service status, job titles, or salary structures. Any necessary position authority and/or appropriations to implement the personnel actions in this legislation would require separate legislation.

However, in the interest of fiscal transparency and long-term budget sustainability, CBO provided information to indicate the potential *associated costs* of the recommended reclassifications, revised job titles, and adjusted salary steps.¹ **This information indicates that the associated costs of these recommended personnel actions would have a net impact of less than \$10,000.** CBO based this estimate on the difference between the mid-point salaries of the initial and final job titles. Table 6 provides a summary of mid-point salary differences between existing and recommended personnel actions (e.g., initial and final job titles); the accompanying [summary/fiscal note](#) for this legislation provides information for each position.

Table 6. Estimate of associated labor costs of personnel actions

	Recommended Personnel Action	Mid-point Salary Difference
1	Exempt four positions from civil service	\$120,668
2	Return 11 positions to civil service	(\$210,842)
3	Revise two job titles	\$94,624
4	Establish 13 job titles and corresponding rates of pay	***1
5	Adjust rates of pay for two job titles	\$3,387
	Total	\$7,837

For context, each department’s personnel budget is calculated by summing the mid-point salary for each position in that department. This calculation is based on the job classification when the department initially receives position authority and is not adjusted when a reclassification occurs. Therefore, the department’s personnel budget will not reflect the difference between the midpoint for the previous classification compared to the new classification unless the department requests and receives additional appropriation authority during the budget process.

¹ CBO did not provide an estimate of the associated costs for establishing new job titles due to the complexities and/or uncertain impacts of each recommendation. However, Attachment 2 provides a status update for each recommended new job title, including whether the 2025-2026 Adopted Budget includes position authority and/or appropriations for relevant position. The budget could include these positions absent Council’s approval of CB 120925 due to the assignment of work to existing job titles.

In practice, most departments absorb the costs of reclassifications and other personnel actions; this practice typically allows flexibility for departments to use savings achieved from positions that are currently paid below the mid-points for costs associated for positions paid above the mid-point. However, the personnel costs for departments that experience high staff retention rates or multiple reclassifications could eventually exceed a department's existing personnel budget and result in requests for additional appropriation authority.

From a long-term budget sustainability perspective, projected costs of mid-point differences illustrate how a new classification might increase (or decrease) costs in the future, even if the reclassification does not immediately impact a department's budget.

Racial Equity Impacts

Increasing the number of positions with civil service status supports the City's commitment to eliminating racial disparities and achieving workforce equity.² The City's [2021 Workforce Equity Update](#), 2024-2029 Workforce Equity Strategic Plan,³ and [2023 Workforce Equity in Promotions Audit](#)⁴ report that Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), and especially BIPOC women, are underrepresented at the top levels (e.g., supervisors and high wage earners) of City employment when compared to the general population. Increasing the number of positions with civil service protections, especially those with opportunities for higher pay and/or additional benefits, could achieve more equity for BIPOC employees by requiring a competitive hiring process and removing the barriers that create risk and uncertainty for employees seeking career growth.

Exempting positions from civil service creates greater risk for employees. In recognition of these risks, SDHR has partnered with CBO and Finance Managers to prioritize civil service status for new positions and decrease the number of exemption requests.

Additionally, SDHR is initiating a comprehensive review of the Citywide Classification and Compensation program that will include examination of ways to ensure consistency and equity in the civil service exemption process and other initiatives to promote employee recruitment/retention and advance pay equity. SDHR's 2025-2026 Adopted Budget includes appropriations for the first phase of this multi-year project.

² The City's [Workforce Equity Initiative](#) defines "workforce equity" as (1) when the workforce is inclusive of people of color and other marginalized or under-represented groups at a rate representative of the greater Seattle area at all levels of government and (2) where institutional and structural barriers impacting employee attraction, selection, participation, and retention have been eliminated, enabling opportunity for employment success and career growth.

³ The 2024-2029 Workforce Equity Strategic Plan is available on the City's internal website.

⁴ The Workforce Equity in Promotions Audit specifically found that women received lower promotion pay increases compared to men; women of color received lower promotion pay increases compared to men of color, white women, and white men; and American Indian or Alaska Native employees received the lowest promotion pay increase compared to other racial/ethnic groups (p. 10-13).

Next Steps

If the Committee votes to recommend approval of CB 120925 on December 12, the Council could consider this legislation on December 17, 2024 (subject to approval of waiving Council rules) or in early January 2025. Council's approval of this legislation would authorize the SDHR Director to implement the recommended personnel actions.

Please contact me if you have questions about this legislation.

Attachments:

1. Civil Service Overview
2. New Job Titles: Status Update

cc: Ben Noble, Director
Yolanda Ho, Deputy Director
Lish Whitson, Supervising Analyst

Attachment 1 – City of Seattle Civil Service Overview

City of Seattle Civil Service Overview

The [City Charter Article XVI, Section 3](#)¹ requires civil service membership for all City employees except for those in positions specifically exempted from civil service in the Charter and [Seattle Municipal Code \(SMC\) 4.13](#).² Approximately 90 percent of City employees are in the civil service.

Civil service provides a range of job protections for City employees, including merit-based hiring and promotions, opportunity for employees to correct performance issues, and “for cause” termination (i.e., termination based only on unsatisfactory job performance). In contrast, employees exempt from civil service may be appointed without a competitive hiring process and are subject to “at-will employment” (i.e., employment that may be terminated at any time for any reason not prohibited by law).

The SDHR Director has authority under [Personnel Rule 2.2](#) to review the duties and responsibilities of certain positions to determine whether such positions merit a return to civil service status or designation as exempt. The Director may only recommend exemptions the following types of positions:

- Positions automatically exempted by statute, Charter, SMC 4.13, or other ordinance;
- Positions requiring a particularly high degree of professional responsiveness and individual accountability;
- Positions requiring a confidential or fiduciary relationship with the appointing authority;
or
- Judicial positions requiring insulation as a third branch of government.

The SDHR Director determines whether a change to a position’s civil service status is warranted during a “classification review” performed by the Compensation/Classification unit.³ The Compensation/Classification unit performs classification reviews upon the request of a department, employee, or union representative (depending on the nature of review) for the following situations:

1. A new position is created (e.g., after Council adds a position during a budget process),
2. A position’s body of work gradually changes over a period of six months or longer, or
3. A department intends to change a position’s body of work.

¹ The Charter exempts the following from civil service: elected officers, certain appointive offices, assistant city attorneys, heads of departments, members of boards and commissions, and job titles/positions exempted by legislation approved by two-thirds vote of the Council.

² SMC 4.13 exempts certain job titles in all employing units and specific positions from civil service. Examples of exempted job titles include temporary employees, interns, administrative secretaries, executives, office/maintenance aides, and exempt strategic advisors, managers, and information technology professionals. Examples of exempted positions include electric utility executives at Seattle City Light, administrative staff and executive assistants identified by position number, and all directors of offices in the Executive Department.

³ A “classification” is a management tool that groups positions by similarities in duties, responsibilities, knowledge and skills, and ability requirements. Creating classifications helps the City plan, budget, recruit, and select employees, set compensation, and handle other personnel processes including promotions, transfers, and demotions.

Attachment 1 – City of Seattle Civil Service Overview

After completing the review, the Compensation/Classification unit issues a “classification determination report” with notice of the appropriate classification and, if applicable, the recommended change to civil service status. The Compensation/Classification unit completes classification reviews within SDHR’s administrative authority⁴ and only transmits legislation for the small subset of determinations that require Council approval for changes to civil service status. In 2023, SDHR completed 568 requests for classification review, resulting in 246 classification changes – only seven of which required Council approval to change a position’s civil service status.⁵

Note, the Council also has authority to introduce legislation that would change a position’s civil service status.

⁴ See [City Charter XVI, Section 1](#), [SMC 4.04.040](#), and [SMC 4.04.130](#).

⁵ Of the 568 requests for classification review, 50% were for new positions added during the budget process (SDHR requires review of budget positions to ensure that the intended body of work matches the classification) and 50% of the requests were for existing positions.

Attachment 2 – CB 120925 / New Job Titles Status Update

New Job Titles: Status Update

This table shows whether the 2025-2026 Adopted Budget includes position authority and/or funding to implement recommendations for new job titles in [Council Bill \(CB\) 120925](#): the Fourth Quarter Employment Ordinance.

	Department	New Title	Position Authority and/or Funding in the 2025-2026 Adopted Budget.
1	Seattle City Employees' Retirement System	Retirement Specialist, Senior	No position authority or funding; department may request position authority and funding in the future.
2	Seattle Department of Human Resources (SDHR)	Public Safety Civil Service Examiner, Trainee	Yes, position authority and funding.
3	SDHR	Public Safety Civil Service Examiner, Senior	Yes, position authority and funding.
4	SDHR	Public Safety Civil Service Examiner, Supervisor	Yes, position authority and funding.
5	Seattle Fire Department (SFD)	Fire Equipment Technician, Senior	No position authority or funding; department may request position authority and funding in the future.
6	SFD	Fire Equipment Technician, Supervisor	No position authority or funding; department may request position authority and funding in the future.
7	Seattle City Light	Conservation Fish Hatchery, Assistant	Yes, position authority but no funding.
8	Seattle Public Utilities (SPU)	Water Treatment Plant Operator, Assistant	Yes, position authority and funding.
9	SPU	Water Treatment Plant Operator	Yes, position authority and funding.
10	SPU	Water Treatment Plant Operator, Senior	Yes, position authority and funding.
11	SPU	Water Treatment Plant Operator, Supervisor	Yes, position authority and funding.
12	Finance & Administrative Services	Veterinarian	No position authority or funding; department may request position authority and funding in the future.
13	Finance & Administrative Services	Veterinarian, Principal	No position authority or funding; department may request position authority and funding in the future.