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The Honorable Mayor Dan Devine
and Members of the Common Council
7525 W. Greenfield Ave.
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Dear Mayor Devine and Common Council Members:

I would like to update the Committee regarding the status of the still-vacant Buyer/Senior Buyer position in the Purchasing Division of the Finance Department.

The Purchasing Division experienced significant turnover during 2016. Two of the three employees in the division retired. One of those employees primarily handled accounts payable and was replaced by an Accounting Specialist hired in October. A recruitment was conducted for a Buyer/Senior Buyer to replace the remaining vacant position. We were unable to agree to terms with the lead candidate and opted not to pursue the remaining other candidates. As a result, that has left one Senior Buyer to handle the bulk of the city's purchasing workload since mid-summer.

While it's been difficult to handle the needs of city departments for supplies, service contracts, and capital purchases; it's important to take this time to re-evaluate city purchasing procedures and consider whether new methods or new processes might improve results or more efficiently achieve results. Examples of new methods already put in place include expanded use of procurement cards, expansion of the Office Max web portal, and the roll out of an Amazon Business account so departments can quickly and easily obtain necessary supplies, with payment being made electronically to the vendor.

There is still additional analysis to be done; specifically, a review of the city's purchasing policy including dollar thresholds for multiple quotes, and formal bidding requirements. Additionally, an analysis of the city's on-going supplies needs, to evaluate current procedures for efficiency and effectiveness.

At the Public Works Department, for example, the Inventory Services Division has been an integral part of the process to ensure DPW staff has the supplies they need to get their work done. Effectively, Inventory Services staff have served as "buyers" for DPW. Acknowledging that role, improved cooperation between Inventory Services and Finance/Purchasing creates the potential to improve existing processes that may benefit both departments. In fact, there is the potential that the vacant Buyer/Senior Buyer position in Purchasing, when filled, should be dedicated to DPW needs and perhaps physically located at DPW rather than at City Hall. There is also the potential to expand the role of Inventory staff in the procurement process. The Finance Department is still analyzing this option. DPW management will also need to analyze this option. If pursued, such an arrangement may steer the position description and recruitment to include a focus on supply chain management and sourcing to more closely align with DPW needs. Further discussions with DPW are still needed before any action can be taken. As a result, the Buyer/Senior Buyer position will remain open until those discussions can be had and a direction determined. At that time, I will report back to the Committee.

Until then, if you have any questions or comments, I would be happy to address them.

Respectfully,

Kris Moen

Interim Finance Director/Comptroller/City Treasurer