



CITY OF WASHINGTON, ILLINOIS

City Council Agenda Communication

Meeting Date: November 3, 2025

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Agenda Item: Finance Director Search Update

Explanation: Finance Director Joanie Baxter has announced her intention to retire in June 2026. Over her tenure, Ms. Baxter has accrued a significant amount of vacation leave, which she plans to use prior to retirement. As a result, her final day in the office is anticipated to be in late April 2026.

Given the critical nature of this position and the complexity of municipal finance operations, staff discussed the upcoming transition during the budget process and included funding to allow for an overlap period. This will enable a new Finance Director to be hired in early 2026 and work alongside Ms. Baxter to gain experience with year-end closeout and the full budgeting process.

While there are many qualified Certified Public Accountants and private-sector finance professionals, individuals with municipal or governmental finance experience are less common. The ideal candidate will possess both strong accounting skills and familiarity with governmental fund accounting, budgeting, and municipal software systems.

Ms. Baxter's schedule from February through May typically exceeds 55 hours per week, leaving limited opportunity for her to step away from the active duties to catch the new Finance Director up during that period. Therefore, hiring a replacement in January 2026 will provide the best opportunity for hands-on onboarding.

Historically, Department Head hiring has involved a collaborative interview process including the City Administrator and other Department Heads. While the new City Administrator may not yet be in place, staff intends to include them in the process—either in person or remotely—should the Council make a City Administrator selection before interviews start.

Tentative Schedule:

Applications Accepted: Ongoing

Late November: Candidate review and outreach

Week of December 8: Interviews conducted*

Mid-December: Candidate selection and offer

January 2026: Anticipated start date for new Finance Director

*If a new City Administrator is selected the first week of December, Staff will reach out to the new City Administrator to bring him/her up to speed on the Finance Director search and ask if he/she wants to be apart of the interviews (in-person or remotely).

If the search does not yield a suitable candidate, the incoming City Administrator will be responsible for the continued search and may choose to use a search firm.

Salary Range: The proposed salary range for the Finance Director position is \$90,000–\$130,000, consistent with comparable municipalities. Any offer above this range would require City Council approval.

Comparable Salaries

- Effingham – \$87,000
- Streator – \$92,000
- Morton – \$116,000
- Dixon – \$125,000
- East Peoria – \$130,000
- Pekin – \$133,000

Some of these were from compensation reports from 2024.

Advertising: The job is posted to our applicant tracking system, AAIMTrack, and can be accessed through our website. It has also been advertised through:

- Illinois Municipal League (IML)
- International City/County Management Association (ICMA)
- Illinois Government Finance Officers Association (IGFOA)

A recruitment flyer will also be shared by Jim Arndt and on the City's Facebook page. All applicants are instructed to submit a cover letter, résumé, and references through the online application portal.

Fiscal Impact: The current budget includes funding to accommodate a transitional overlap between the outgoing and incoming Finance Directors.

Action Requested: No action requested