

Despite Hiring Freeze, City Gets New Secretary

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Despite the city manager's recent declarations that there would be no new employees hired as long as the budget continues to be adjusted because of declining revenues, there's a new, but familiar, face at City Hall these days.

Former City Clerk Pam Malmstrom, who retired last year from her \$115,000 job with the city, has been hired by the city as a part-time floating secretary who will see much of her time spent in the Community Development Department.

The disclosure caught many City Hall "insiders" off-guard since it would have been expected that the department secretary position once held by longtime employee, Tina Cluver who was "eased" out of her job, would have been left vacant.

But, apparently it's not only what you know, but who you know.

At the August 24 City Council meeting, City Manager Vicki Mayes declared that if SolBio Energy's \$800,000 lease payment wasn't received by September 1, she would "...Implement an expense reduction plan (of) about \$800,000" and that it would be accomplished partially by "...holding open vacant (but budgeted positions)..."

Last year at this time, the city had two part-time floating secretaries who faced termination by July 1, with one leaving the city long before the end of the fiscal year while the other has since moved into the city clerk's office as a part-time deputy clerk.

Malmstrom's pay classification and rate of pay is unknown at this time, but this fiscal year's approved budget sheds some light on what might be paid to the former city clerk.

- Clerk typists annual range of pay is \$35,069 to \$42,099
- Office assistant earns \$38,730 to \$46,467 a year.

At the secretarial level:

- A Department secretary makes \$47,195 to \$56,638 every 12 months
- An executive secretary is paid \$57,746 to \$65,707 annually.

Add to those numbers the cost of benefits, which adds another 40 percent on average.

Three of the four positions are covered by the Teamsters bargaining agreement where only the office assistant's job is a non-bargaining unit position.

Besides those four positions, the current budget lists as a lump sum, without benefits, \$12,500 for temporary help in the city clerk's office and another \$15,000 in the Community Development Department, but no money for temporary help in the city manager's office.

Arguably, paying \$15,000 in the Community Development Department for a part-time office assistant is considerably less than the \$83,695 in wages and benefits paid to the department secretary who is no longer there.

Such is the case given that in the Community Development Department budget, the city manager planned and had already counted on saving the \$83,695 by "the elimination of one position."

But whether there are cost savings or not, the concept of reducing expenses by \$800,000 because of SolBio Energy's lack of performance is thrown out the window because the city will be paying as much as \$15,000 for temporary help in the Community Development Department when it could have saved the money instead.