

Position Paper Supplement

Separation of the Public Works Department and Water & Sewer Department

Purpose

An important objective of the proposed Public Works Director ordinance is to clearly distinguish the responsibilities of the Public Works Department from those of the Water and Sewer Department. This clarification reinforces the City's organizational structure and eliminates any implication that one department is intended to supervise or absorb the other.

Separate Department Heads

The City has already established the Water and Sewer Department as a separate department headed by the Water and Sewer Department Manager. That department is responsible for the operation, maintenance, regulatory compliance, and long-range planning of the City's potable water distribution and wastewater collection systems. The proposed Public Works Director is not intended to supervise or assume responsibility for those utility operations.

Public Works Mission

The Public Works Department is responsible for the City's general public infrastructure, including streets, rights-of-way, storm drainage infrastructure accepted for City maintenance, culverts and drainage structures, traffic control devices, pavement markings, fleet and equipment management, general public infrastructure maintenance, and coordination of public infrastructure capital improvement projects.

Coordination Without Overlap

Although the two departments will routinely coordinate activities—particularly when utility repairs require street restoration, infrastructure improvements affect drainage, or capital projects involve multiple public assets—each department will remain independently managed by its respective department head. This preserves clear accountability while encouraging cooperation.

Benefits

Maintaining separate department heads provides distinct operational accountability, allows each department to develop specialized expertise, and gives the Mayor and City Council separate perspectives during the annual budget process. Each department head can present staffing needs, capital priorities, maintenance programs, and long-range planning recommendations specific to that department.

Conclusion

This proposal should not be viewed as expanding the responsibilities of the Public Works Department into utility operations. Rather, it recognizes that both Public Works and Water and Sewer have evolved into separate municipal functions deserving independent leadership, clear lines of accountability, and direct reporting relationships consistent with Arkansas's mayor-council form of government.

Together with the Planning Director, Water and Sewer Department Manager, Director of Parks, Museum, and Grants, Human Resources Director, and other department heads established by ordinance, the Public Works Director completes an organizational framework that provides clear accountability, specialized operational leadership, and direct executive reporting consistent with Arkansas's mayor-council form of government.