



Council Agenda Report

From: Mariah Birks, Assistant Human Resources/Risk Manager

Subject: Public Hearing on the Status of Personnel Vacancies in Compliance with California Assembly Bill 2561

CEQA Determination: The City finds that this action is not a project under the California Environmental Quality Act pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines, §§ 15060, subd. (c)(2)-(3), 15378.

Date: April 21, 2026

Facts

1. On September 22, 2024, Governor Newsom signed Assembly Bill (AB) 2561 into law effective January 1, 2025.
2. AB 2561 amended the Meyers-Milias-Brown Act adding Government Code section 3502.3. This section requires public agencies to present the status of vacancies and recruitment and retention efforts during a public hearing before the governing board at least once per fiscal year prior to adoption of the budget.
3. AB 2561 also requires the City to identify any changes to policies, procedures, and recruitment practices that may create hiring obstacles; and provide recognized employee organizations with the opportunity to make a presentation at the hearing.
4. The City has three employee organizations: Service Employees International Union, Local 620 (SEIU), Paso Robles Professional Firefighters, Local 4148 (IAFF), and Paso Robles Police Association (POA). Each group has been invited to participate in this public hearing.
5. If a vacancy rate within a bargaining unit exceeds 20%, upon request, agencies must provide additional information including: total job vacancies within the bargaining unit; total number of applicants for vacant positions; average number of days to complete the hiring process from when a position is posted; and opportunities to improve compensation and working conditions.

Options

1. Take no action;
2. Hold the public hearing and receive and file the report required by AB 2561;
3. Provide alternative direction to staff.

Analysis and Conclusions

Assembly Bill 2561 (AB 2561) is intended to increase transparency regarding public agency staffing levels and to identify barriers to recruitment and retention.

Vacancies

As of March 17, 2026, the City of Paso Robles has 312.44 full-time equivalent (FTE) budgeted positions, of which 299 FTEs are represented by bargaining groups. No bargaining group currently meets or exceeds

the 20% vacancy threshold that would trigger enhanced reporting under AB 2561. Vacancy rates by employee group are shown below:

Full-Time Employee Group	Budgeted FTEs	Vacancies	Vacancy Rate
Unrepresented Management	54	5	9.26%
SEIU	132	12	9.09%
POA	72	6	8.33%
IAFF	41	3	7.32%
Total	299	26	8.70%

Compared to the prior year, the City’s overall vacancy rate decreased from 10.31% (May 1, 2025) to 8.70%, indicating improved recruitment outcomes. Overall, the City’s vacancy rate remains below the 20% threshold and is relatively consistent across bargaining units, with no single group experiencing significantly elevated staffing shortages.

Vacancies occur for a variety of reasons, including newly budgeted positions, internal promotions, and employee separations such as retirement, resignation, and termination.

During calendar year 2025, 28 full-time employees separated from the City. The majority of separations were due to retirement and voluntary resignation as presented below:

- 13 employees resigned voluntarily
 - 5 found employment at another government agency
 - 5 resigned without securing alternative employment
 - 3 accepted a position in the private sector
- 9 employees retired
- 6 employees were terminated involuntarily

Separations by employee group were as follows:

- SEIU: 18
- POA: 5
- Unrepresented Management: 4
- IAFF: 1

Turnover was most concentrated within the SEIU bargaining unit, reflecting the size and diversity of classifications within that group.

Recruitment and Retention

In 2025, the City launched 41 recruitments and hired or promoted 120 employees (76 full-time and 44 part-time). The average employee tenure is 7.47 years, reflecting a relatively stable workforce.

Despite these efforts, certain classifications remain difficult to fill due to a limited pool of qualified candidates and increased competition among public agencies. In 2025, staff received and evaluated 1,757 applications, demonstrating strong interest in City employment. However, a high volume of applications does not necessarily translate into a sufficient number of viable candidates, as not all applicants meet minimum qualifications or complete the recruitment process.

Since the initial vacancy hearing, the City has continued to build upon previously implemented recruitment and retention strategies, with key updates and enhancements including:

- Continued use of hiring incentives and referral programs.
- Ongoing investment in professional development opportunities for staff.
- Approval and implementation of three-year labor agreements that include targeted compensation enhancements, such as:
 - Expanded incentive pays (e.g., K9, Detective, Community Action Team (CAT), Paramedic)
 - Increased standby rates
 - Increased City contributions toward employee health benefits and deferred compensation
 - Reduced employee retirement cost sharing contributions
- Completion and implementation of a comprehensive classification and compensation study to maintain a competitive compensation structure.
- Improved and standardized classification and compensation review processes through the use of Position Analysis Questionnaires (PAQs), supporting greater consistency and internal equity.
- Transition toward conducting sworn background investigations in-house, resulting in improved efficiency, increased control over the process, and a reduction in overall hiring timelines for public safety positions.
- Continued expansion of employee benefit offerings, including the addition of a Roth 457 retirement option.
- Implementation of an employee recognition program to support engagement and retention.
- Expanded wellness initiatives for first responders, including daily fitness programs through Chalk it Pro and functional mobility training.
- Continued investment in workplace environments, including ongoing enhancements to City Hall and Police Department facilities.
- Progress toward improving the workers' compensation process for IAFF-represented employees through implementation of alternative dispute resolution (ADR).

The City has made measurable progress in recruitment and retention, with vacancy rates trending downward and staffing levels remaining stable across bargaining groups. This report fulfills the requirements of AB 2561 by providing a public update on vacancies and ongoing efforts. The City remains committed to investing in the organization and its most important asset—its employees.

Fiscal Impact

There is no fiscal impact associated with receiving and filing this report.

CEQA

The City finds that this action is not a project under the California Environmental Quality Act pursuant to State Guidelines Section State CEQA Guidelines, §§ 15060, subd. (c)(2)-(3), 15378.

Recommendation (Option 2)

Hold the public hearing and receive and file this report in compliance with AB 2561.

Attachments

1. SEIU Local 620 Written Comment