

Human Resources Department

Mission

To provide professional, respectful, caring and ethical Human Resource services and solutions with supporting policies and procedures to enhance the fair recruitment, retention, training and development of our most valuable resource – the employees of the City, and to provide them with a safe, inclusive and positive workplace with fair compensation.

The Human Resources Department provides a wide range of services to the City of Newton's employees and management team, including but not limited to:

- Leadership, Departmental Support and Counseling
- Talent Acquisition and Professional Development
- Development of Policies and Procedures
- Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Programs and Initiatives
- Wellness Initiatives
- Administration of Employee Benefits
- Worker's Safety, Worker's Compensation and Injured on Duty Administration
- Compensation and Classification Plan Management
- Labor and Employee Relations
- Labor and Employment Law Compliance
- Management of Grievances and Discipline
- Personnel Record Keeping
- Risk Management and Compliance
- Succession and Business Continuity Planning
- Employee Onboarding and Orientation
- Management of the Employee Experience

In FY2024 the Department of Human Resources continued to invest heavily in **supporting the needs** of our individual employees, city department leadership, and union representatives. Our Deputy Director of Human Resources, Francoise Charlot, celebrated her one-year anniversary with the HR team. We also added **two new experienced professionals** in the positions of Human Resources Generalist and Human Resources Coordinator who are immediately began supporting our workforce.

Recruitment Successes and Challenges

In FY2024, we began to see **signs of improvement** in the Greater Boston job market following the difficult impacts of pandemic era instability and work shortages. While FY2024 brought some **new challenges** to our recruitment efforts, our HR team continues to do great work hiring, retaining, and developing our employees.

HR supported the **hiring of talented new employees** in approximately eighty full time and part time employees through February 2024. Sixty of these were full time positions, including four school nurses, fifteen positions with our Newton Free Library, thirty-nine positions with our Police Department including five Emergency telecommunications Dispatchers, fourteen Police Officers and four school traffic supervisors, twenty-two positions in the Department of Public Works, and nine Firefighters. Twenty of these were part time positions throughout the City.

Additionally, the HR team helped hire approximately 300 seasonal employees for the Park, Recreation and Culture Department and 115 temporary employees to support the Clerk's Office for City elections throughout FY2024.

Through March of FY2023, the HR team also supported the recruitment of **several key leadership positions**, including the

Commissioner of Inspectional Services, Deputy Commissioner of Inspectional Services, DPW Director of Finance and Administration, DPW Director of Transportation, Chief Preservation Planner, Assistant Director of Parks and Open Spaces, and the Newton Free Library Manager of Programs and Communications. As we close out FY2024, we will begin the process to fill the position of Commissioner of Health and Human Services.

FY2024 also brought new challenges, requiring our HR team to constantly stay **ahead of trends** and meet the demands of the market and the City's hiring needs.

Soon after the start of the fiscal year and into the fall of 2023, we noticed an increase in applications for our skilled labor positions, such as those in our Department of Public Works, and in the areas of technology and finance. Like many employers looking to fill positions in these professional areas, we had experienced challenging retention and recruitment efforts just a year before. This return of interest from the available labor market was welcomed by our HR team and hiring managers but with it came with **strong competition** from other employers, especially other municipal employers.

The U.S. Chamber of Commerce reported in February 2024 that there were 9.5 million job openings in the U.S., but only 6.5 million unemployed workers. While these numbers are an improvement overall from the year before, job creation was higher in government sectors than in others and this increased the level of competition we experienced with other municipal and government employers. The increase in interest was very welcome but we also found that candidates were often entertaining multiple employment offers.

The HR team **quickly adapted** by implementing processes that allowed us to negotiate quickly

and attract candidates away from the competition to bring the best talent to our team in Newton.

Unfortunately, we did not see an increase matching our demand and need in **policing and dispatching**. This professional area continues to see a decline in interest not only in Newton but throughout the Commonwealth and the country. According to *MASsterList*, the number of civil service exam applicants for State Police dropped from 14,314 in 2013 to 4,744 in 2023. Even with this sharp decline in interest, our team was able to fill five Emergency Telecommunications Dispatcher positions and fourteen Police Officer positions.

I also serve as the HR Chair for the *International Association of Police Chiefs* (IACP), working with human resource professionals around the country to learn, and lead conversations about **increasing interest in the policing and public safety profession** and bring successful recruitment and retention strategies from police departments across the country to our team here in Newton.

In light of these challenges, the HR team **increased our utilization of social media and expanded our reach through other avenues**. We improved our *LinkedIn* page, created and developed position specific marketing brochures and materials, analyzed places where we can expand to draw quality candidates, utilized professional organizations and other government and quasi government agencies to advertise vacant positions, used professional social media sites to seek out candidates with the experience we are looking for, connected with local organizations and schools, attended in person and virtual local, regional and state job fairs and career events, increased direct recruitment, and researched our competitive strategy and compensation in comparison to our neighboring communities. The HR team's *Department Support Division* (who is

responsible for recruitment activities) also worked closely with our *Specialty Division* (who is responsible for employee benefits) to **analyze and develop profession specific benefits, enhancements, and outlines**, to better target our strategic activities towards specific professional areas. Additional creative recruitment activities and plans are added each month.

In FY2025, the HR team will continue to **develop and enhance our recruitment strategies** and work with the Mayor's Office, department leadership and union partners to recruit and retain quality candidates.

Employee Benefits

In FY2024, the HR team continued our **commitment to enhancing the employee experience** and ensuring that our staff provides **equitable access** to comprehensive resources.

The first of many notable initiatives during the beginning of the fiscal year was the transition of 8,615 people to **Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts** as the health insurance carrier of choice. The HR team, with the help of other departmental teams, navigated the complexities of transitioning to a new health plan. We successfully rolled this out in the midst of a national data breach that impacted thousands of members of the former Harvard Pilgrim HMO plan. The HR team **worked diligently** to make sure our employees and retirees had access to the necessary resources and support during this time.

During the transition to our new health plan provider, the HR team in partnership with Blue Cross Blue Shield, provided dedicated account education phone lines exclusive to City of Newton employees, retirees, and their family members where they could speak with account representatives and learn more about each new health insurance plan. We worked hard to reach the **retiree population** of covered members.

We used innovative techniques to amplify outreach efforts with the assistance of tools like *Constant Contact* for a subscription service, leveraged our social media platform through *LinkedIn*, created interactive benefit guides, and established **continuous lines of communication and engagement** through electronic mail notifications on a regular and consistent basis.

As we look ahead to FY2025, our focus remains on providing seamless transitions, **equitable access to resources**, and fostering collaborative partnerships to prioritize the health and well-being of our employees and retirees. Our benefits Open Enrollment period in May 2024 will feature a dedicated day for the Human Resources Department's third annual in-person *Employee and Retiree Health and Wellness Benefits Fair*.

Employee Wellness

The HR team worked diligently to provide **equitable wellness resources** to all our employees, regardless of benefit eligibility, emphasizing our commitment to fostering a **healthy and inclusive workplace environment**. Our initiatives focused on maintaining a healthy work-life balance, health improvement programs, and accessible mental health support services. In line with this commitment, we established a **wellness room**, offering a comfortable space for lactation and other health-focused activities.

We achieved a significant milestone this year as our *Employee Assistance Program (EAP)* utilization services saw its first increase since the initial onset of the pandemic. This rise in utilization reflects our ongoing efforts over the past year to **share information consistently** about the benefits of EAP services, and our goal of **breaking down barriers and stigmas** surrounding their use. Our partner, *CMG Associates*, provides 24/7 access to crucial EAP resources.

Employee Communications

We were thrilled to launch of our **first-ever 'HR Connect' employee newsletter**. Our goal is to provide valuable insights and resources to our entire workforce. The newsletter, delivered quarterly, will keep **employees informed** of important updates, upcoming events, and opportunities within the City of Newton. The pages feature wellness tips, employee highlights, and development resources to empower employees to thrive in and outside of the workplace.

The HR team, in collaboration with the Information Technology Department, is beginning to roll out an *Employee Self Service (ESS)* platform. The goal is to **streamline and modernize** our HR processes to empower employees and allow them access to managing their personal information, financial documents, and time-off requests through the ESS portal.

In the summer of 2024, we will process our first group of seasonal hires using ESS, an estimated 300 candidates, using onboarding tools built in the applicant tracking module of ESS. This is a **significant step forward** that will allow for a more efficient and easier candidate experience from application to onboarding.

With the applicant tracking module live for seasonal hiring, we look forward to the next stages of this project in FY2025.

We **reimagined** our new employee onboarding and orientation process in FY2024. With the employee experience in mind, we implemented monthly orientation sessions designed to increase engagement and provide more information with our new hires. Following each session, the HR team has instituted a practice of sharing a survey to each new hire that attends orientation to gather feedback on their experience. This feedback enables us to identify areas for improvement and make adjustments

to ensure that future new hires have an even more **positive onboarding and orientation experience**.

Employee Safety

Employee safety continues to be a top priority. We are pleased to report improvements due to enhanced safety and compliance training, modified work schedules, greater access to resources, and the continuation of hybrid remote work options.

This year we did an analysis of employee injury reports by profession, department, affected body part, and injury type to identify opportunities for reducing both the frequency and severity of incidents. Using these strategies, we are developing additional **safety-oriented goals** to improve safety and mitigate risks for our employees.

Our partnerships with *Safety Net* and the *Teamsters Local 25 Training Fund* continue to play a crucial role in our safety initiatives. Safety Net provides weekly “toolbox talks” to the Department of Public Works. Moving forward, we will be using these partnerships and targeted training on the most common injuries and those with high risk factors.

An additional **safety initiative** is our coordinated Commercial Driving License (CDL) training for all CDL licensed employees, totaling 130 individuals. This covered crucial topics such as drug and alcohol awareness, DOT regulations, and CDL rights and responsibilities.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

In FY2024, we moved forward with our commitment to **diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging** (DEI&B) and continued our collaboration with the *Racial Equity Group*, led by Bird Guess, and the staff of the Mayor’s Office.

Building on the foundation laid in the previous year, we delved deeper into addressing racial implicit bias and **fostering a culture of inclusion** within our organization. The City’s leadership team met regularly for comprehensive training sessions to further their understanding of DEI and explore actionable strategies to **promote fairness and equity** across all aspects of our city operations.

Working closely with the Mayor’s Office and Racial Equity Group, we engaged in **meaningful discussions and initiatives** aimed at **dismantling systemic barriers** and **fostering a culture of belonging** for all employees, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, socioeconomic status, or religion. We look forward to creating the metrics to measure our progress and apply additional important steps in FY2025.

Employee Development

Employee training and development continued to be a key focus in FY2024.

Two training highlights from the year include the **Supervisory and Leadership** Training and Development Program offered onsite in Newton by the Edward J. Collins, Jr. Center for Public Management for over 50 supervisors, and eight rounds of **Customer Service for the Public Sector and De-escalation Techniques**, presented by Cally Ritter of Positive Ripple Consultants, for over 120 staff members at all levels of our organization.

Labor and Employee Relations

In FY2024, our HR team continued developing **positive and collaborative relationships with all the City’s unions**, including how we manage the City’s bargaining process. Having finalized in the previous year two successor agreements with AFSCME unions covering our DPW and PRC Superintendents, parking control officers and traffic supervisors, we entered into one year

successor agreements in FY2024 with both our Police Superior Officers Association and our Firefighters union, bringing all but two contracts up to date by the close of FY2024. One union agreement just expired in FY2023 and we are working with that union now as we close out FY2024. We are continuing to work closely with our remaining unions to discuss successor contracts.

I also continue to work with our partners in the Law Department, department leadership, and union representatives to review and fully incorporate past agreements into **fully comprehensive and organized collective bargaining agreements**. While this important project takes time and has been a work in progress since FY2023, we expect to have completed the review and update of these agreements with our union partners, for the Newton Police Association, the largest of the AFSCME unions, and our Teamsters Local 25 group by the close of FY2024.

Best Practices

The HR team is **excited and energized** for the future as we delve into **strengthening core human resource best practices**. This includes the development and updating of our policies, procedures, contracts, and departmental operations. With the addition of the two new staff in FY2024, we are looking forward in FY2025 to further improving our operations and services and making a positive impact on our valued workforce in the years to come.

Our organization structure reflects our priorities:

(1) Our *Citywide/Executive Leadership Division* which focuses on **citywide initiatives** (e.g., collective bargaining, personnel policies and procedures, diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives, employee relations, and employee development) is led by the Director and Deputy

Director of Human Resources and supported by our Senior HR Generalist.

(2) Our *Departmental Support Division* which provides **direct departmental support**, and all recruitment activities, includes our Senior HR Business Partner who serves as the division supervisor, an HR Business Partner and our HR Coordinator. This allows departmental leadership and staff the ability to go to a core HR support team with all personnel matters which can be addressed at their level or triaged to other divisions within HR, ensuring a **timely response and coordinated support**.

(3) The *Specialty Division* focuses on specialized areas of Human Resources that require a **specific level of expertise** and experience such as employee injury management (workers' compensation and injured on duty for police and fire), employee safety, employee benefits and wellness, employee leave administration, and requests for reasonable accommodations, among other specialty human resources needs.

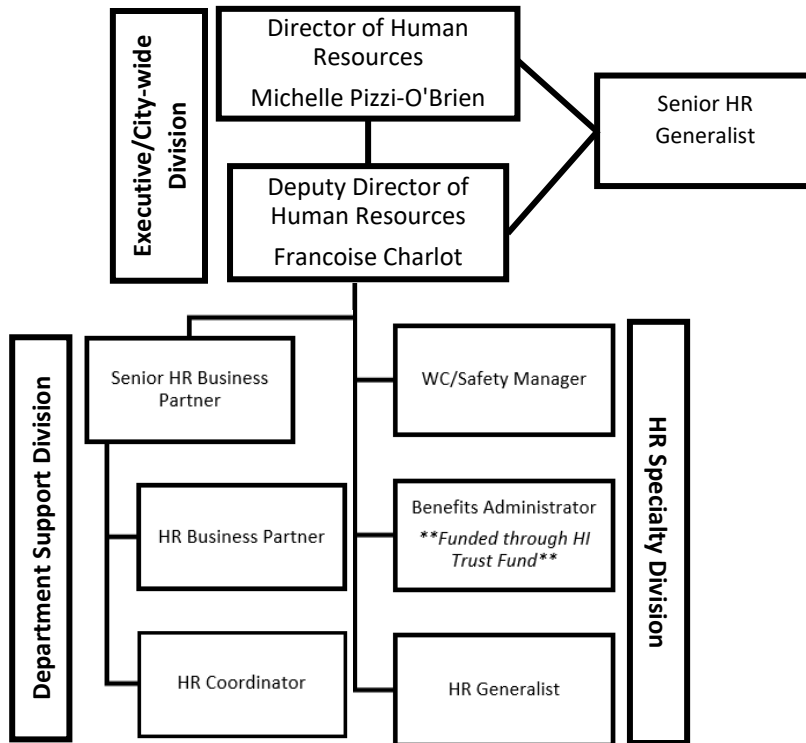
My goal continues to be an HR Department which provides an exemplary level of service to our employees and management team with a **supportive, professional, and strategic Human Resources Department**.

I am immensely proud to have recently celebrated my **fifth-year anniversary** as the Human Resources Director for the City of Newton and I look forward to working with, **and for**, our employees in the years ahead.



Michelle Pizzi O'Brien, M.P.A.
Director of Human Resources

Human Resources



Financial and Operating Highlights

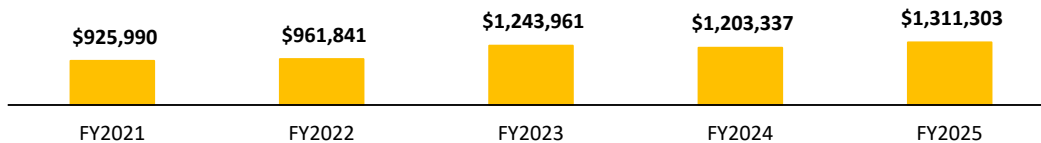
Financial Highlights

	< -----Actual ----->				Original FY2024	Proposed FY2025
	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023			
Expenditure by Department						
Human Resources	\$ 925,990	\$ 961,841	\$ 1,243,961	\$ 1,203,337	\$	1,311,303
Total	\$ 925,990	\$ 961,841	\$ 1,243,961	\$ 1,203,337	\$	1,311,303
% Incr	-3.95%	3.87%	29.33%	-3.27%		8.97%

Personnel

Full-Time	7	8	9	9	9
Part-Time	1	0	0	0	0
Total	8	8	9	9	9

Total HR Expenditures



Operating Highlights

Positions Supported: Through February of 2024, supported the hiring of 80 full time and part time employees and over 400 temporary/seasonal positions.

Health Insurance: HR team successfully transitioned approximately 8,615 lives as of July 1, 2023 to BCBS. As of March 2024, the City has 2827 active and non-Medicare plans and 2479 Medicare plans. Through the transition to BCBS, the City reduced its projected health insurance budget by approximately \$6M.

Wellness: implemented Citywide wellness initiatives through the BCBS Wellness Fund of \$30K. Through continuous engagement efforts we were able in increase the overall utilization of the City's Employee Assistance Program by 36.75%.

Training: Over 450 hours, including the Supervisory Leadership Development Program, Customer Service and De-escalation, and Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.

Personnel Actions: through February of 2024, processed 1,317 personnel actions.

The Department of Human Resources

Fiscal Year 2025 Outcomes and Strategies

Our management philosophy is to continuously improve the hiring process and employee professional development.

Hiring talented people means updating and reviewing position descriptions and compensation on a regular basis; updating the City's hiring website and platforms using a modern applicant tracking system designed to meet the needs of our candidate pool and hiring managers; ensuring professional and organized interviews where our candidates feel comfortable and can share their professional experience and interest in working for the City, and where we can share what we have to offer as an employer; creating and conducting training for hiring managers; developing guidance and training for Newton's hiring managers on best practices; capitalizing on creative and inclusive interview platforms, options and styles; and accessing a wide range of professional associations and diversity boards to make vacancies more available and reach our future employees where they are. Our work on talent acquisition and employee development is done in collaboration with, and guided by, our DEI goals.

We also will invest in employee development through training initiatives. We have experienced great success in past years on training topics such as those within the important umbrella of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, Supervisory Leadership and Development, Workplace Respect and Customer Service. Our goal in FY25 is to create a more comprehensive, inclusive, and accessible training curriculum that will address both the standard best practices in the workplace and topics that meet the growing needs of our workforce and reflect relevant and timely subjects, and a curriculum that will become part of our workplace culture and enhance our recruitment and retention goals.

Outcome 1

Hire Talented People and Provide Employee Development

Outcome 2

Focus on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Initiatives

The Department of Human Resources recognizes the importance of DEI in supporting our employees, improving our services, and driving positive change within the organization and the community we serve. Building upon previous efforts, we have initiated a comprehensive approach to promote DEI across various aspects of the employee lifecycle from recruitment to professional

development with a focus on meaningful action. In FY2025, we will continue and strengthen this work as an employer.

The Department of Human Resources

Fiscal Year 2025 Outcomes and Strategies

Not only do we want to have excellent and comprehensive health insurance options for our employees, we also aim to empower our employees with knowledge about the range of benefit offerings available to them and to provide information on the differences between these benefits. With

excellent and transparent information and customer service, we will enable our employees to make informed decisions that align with their individual needs and preferences. Through these efforts, we are committed to strengthening our workforce as a whole and individually through supporting the health, well-being, and financial security of our employees.

Outcome 3

Deliver Excellent Employee Benefits,
including Health Care

Outcome 4

Have Strong Relationships with Our
Employees and their Representatives

A critical FY2025 goal for the Department of Human Resources is to continue our work on the City's relationship with our employees and their representatives. Our goals are to address employee issues as soon as they surface, ensure employees have a safe work environment, and vigorously follow and apply fair employment practices. We will be mindful of the federal and state laws that govern the relationships between labor unions and employers. We will work continuously to have a positive labor-management relationship by communicating regularly, bargaining in good faith, and coordinating the development of fully executed labor agreements. By working closely with our labor unions, the Law Department, department managers, and Executive staff, we will use communication tools, training, policies, and procedures to reduce the number of grievances, the time period in which grievances are processed, and the number of grievances which end with arbitration.

A critical FY2025 goal for the Department of Human Resources is to continue documenting and updating personnel policies and procedures following best practices. This includes reviewing our existing policies as well as related personnel City Ordinances to develop policy and procedure documents that address our obligations as an employer, document employee rights and employer obligations, implement best practices, and ensure employment law compliance. This will also include internal standard operating procedures to ensure the consistent application of human resources practices. Our policy and procedure work will always be guided by our vigorous standards for equity throughout our organization.

Outcome 5

Document Personnel Policies and
Procedures using Best Practices

The Department of Human Resources

Fiscal Year 2025 Outcomes and Strategies

Outcome 6

Enhance Organizational Culture
and Attract & Retain Employees

In FY2025, the Department of Human Resources will focus on enhancing organizational culture and retaining talent, fostering employee

engagement, and reinforcing the City's reputation as an employer of choice. By leveraging various platforms and initiatives, the Department of Human Resources aims to enhance and showcase the city's special workplace culture and foster opportunities that resonate with existing employees and attract prospective employees.

FUND: 0001 - GENERAL FUND
 DEPARTMENT: 109 - HUMAN RESOURCES

**CITY OF NEWTON BUDGET
 DEPARTMENT LEGAL LEVEL OF CONTROL**

	ACTUAL 2021	ACTUAL 2022	ACTUAL 2023	ORIGINAL 2024	RECOMMENDED 2025	CHANGE 2024 to 2025
HUMAN RESOURCES SUMMARY						
51 - PERSONNEL SERVICES	480,721	570,489	608,445	754,746	788,412	33,666
52 - EXPENSES	248,053	274,040	284,885	277,550	311,550	34,000
57 - FRINGE BENEFITS	174,254	117,312	129,276	171,041	211,341	40,300
TOTAL DEPARTMENT	903,028	961,841	1,022,605	1,203,337	1,311,303	107,966
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CITY OF NEWTON BUDGET
DEPARTMENTAL DETAIL

	ACTUAL 2021	ACTUAL 2022	ACTUAL 2023	ORIGINAL 2024	RECOMMENDED 2025	CHANGE 2024 to 2025
109 - HUMAN RESOURCES						
0110952 - HUMAN RESOURCES						
PERSONNEL SERVICES						
511001 FULL TIME SALARIES	475,666	568,489	597,665	834,038	870,197	36,159
511101 PART TIME < 20 HRS/WK	20,012	0	0	0	0	0
514001 LONGEVITY	1,500	1,500	1,500	3,000	3,300	300
514005 WORKING OUT OF GRADE	0	0	313	0	0	0
515005 BONUSES	0	500	0	0	0	0
515006 VACATION BUY BACK	3,555	0	8,967	0	0	0
519700 CURRENT YEAR WAGE RE	0	0	0	-82,292	-85,085	-2,793
TOTAL PERSONNEL SERVICES	500,733	570,489	608,445	754,746	788,412	33,666
EXPENSES						
524010 OFFICE EQUIPMENT R-M	371	500	0	500	500	0
524080 DEPARTMENTAL EQUIP R-	23	825	136	1,000	1,000	0
527400 RENTAL - EQUIPMENT	5,913	5,073	4,698	6,000	6,000	0
530100 CONSULTANTS	78,053	56,713	80,113	25,000	25,000	0
530218 FLEX SPENDING PLAN AD	36,255	37,440	38,245	40,000	45,000	5,000
530220 INVESTIGATION SERVICES	31,716	25,698	32,585	40,000	40,000	0
530221 FIT FOR DUTY SERVICES	8,482	5,206	4,300	10,000	10,000	0
531900 TRAINING EXPENSES	14,091	43,978	3,768	50,000	75,000	25,000
532100 TUITION ASSISTANCE	2,743	2,947	2,855	4,000	8,000	4,000
534010 TELEPHONE	634	585	515	750	750	0
534020 CELLULAR TELEPHONES	1,981	2,267	3,185	4,000	4,000	0
534100 POSTAGE	1,390	786	8,864	2,000	2,000	0
534200 PRINTING	1,113	1,362	5,366	1,500	1,500	0
534300 ADVERTISING/PUBLICATIO	5,325	12,735	7,330	10,000	10,000	0
537100 MEDICAL SERVICES	57,536	69,209	80,551	70,000	70,000	0
537200 MEDICAL SCREENINGS	2,950	0	0	0	0	0
542000 OFFICE SUPPLIES	2,272	5,731	9,201	5,000	5,000	0
571000 VEHICLE USE REIMBURSE	0	0	14	300	300	0
571100 IN-STATE CONFERENCES	0	0	1,058	2,500	2,500	0
571200 REFRESHMENTS/MEALS	0	1,557	604	500	500	0
572000 OUT-OF-STATE TRAVEL	0	0	0	3,000	3,000	0
573000 DUES & SUBSCRIPTIONS	156	1,428	1,496	1,500	1,500	0
TOTAL EXPENSES	251,003	274,040	284,885	277,550	311,550	34,000
FRINGE BENEFITS						
570200 UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFIT	104,759	30,373	53,495	90,000	90,000	0
57DENT DENTAL INSURANCE	1,980	2,274	1,922	1,906	2,319	413
57HLTH HEALTH INSURANCE	49,407	63,808	54,101	49,746	84,881	35,135
57LIFE BASIC LIFE INSURANCE	227	246	255	238	284	46
57MEDA MEDICARE PAYROLL TAX	6,710	7,516	8,176	11,855	12,666	811
57OPEB OPEB CONTRIBUTION	11,171	13,095	11,327	17,296	21,191	3,895
TOTAL FRINGE BENEFITS	174,254	117,312	129,276	171,041	211,341	40,300
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