



CITY COUNCIL STAFF REPORT

TO: City Council

DATE: June 9, 2025

DEPARTMENT: Administration Department

PREPARED BY: Juli Mortensen, Human Resources Manager

PRESENTER: Juli Mortensen, Human Resources Manager

AGENDA TITLE: AB 2561 Vacancy Report

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the City of Fort Bragg receive the FY 2024-2025 Assembly Bill (AB) 2561 Vacancy Report. The report provides an update on the status of vacancies, recruitment, and retention efforts for the City of Fort Bragg, in compliance with the AB 2561 law, which took effect on January 1, 2025, and was codified. ("AB") 2561. (Gov. Code § 3502.3)

BACKGROUND

AB 2561 was introduced to address the issue of job vacancies in local government, which adversely affects the delivery of public services and the workload of employees. Among other requirements, the bill mandates that public agencies conduct a public hearing to present the status of vacancies, recruitment, and retention efforts during a public hearing before the agency's governing body at least once per fiscal year prior to the adoption of the next fiscal year's budget and identify any necessary changes to policies, procedures, and recruitment activities that may lead to obstacles in the hiring process. The bill was enacted into law and is codified as Government Code section 3502.3, effective January 1, 2025.

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

In compliance with the new legal obligations, the City is required to do the following:

1. Public Hearing – Report on Vacancies: For the fiscal year 2024-2025, the City's annual average percentage of vacancies (i.e., regular, full-time equivalent) is 13%. The table below shows a breakdown of the percentage of vacancies:
2. Employee Organization Participation: Allow the recognized employee organization for each bargaining unit at the City to make presentations during the public hearing concerning vacancies and recruitment and retention efforts. The

Human Resources Department notified the two (2) represented bargaining units at the City of the opportunity to present. (Gov. Code § 3502.3(b).)

City of Fort Bragg AB2561 Vacancy Rate

Employee Group	Vacancy Rate
FBEO	0%
FBPA	2%
Conf/Nbarg	16%
CV Starr	20%
Temporary	20%
Mid-Mgmt	1%
Executive	33%
Total Vacancy Rate	13%

As shown above, the City has several employee groups with vacancy rates of 20% or higher. For FY 2024-2025, within the City's bargaining units with recognized employee organizations, both the Fort Bragg Employee Organization (FBEO) and the Fort Bragg Police Association have very low vacancy rates of 0% and 2%, respectively. Several non-bargaining employee groups also have low vacancy rates. Specifically, the Mid-Management group's vacancy rate is 1%. As shown in the table above, several employee groups have vacancy rates of 20% or higher. Several non-bargaining groups also have low vacancy rates. Specifically, the Mid-Management group has a vacancy rate of 1%.

Confidential/Non-Bargaining Employee Group

Although the Confidential/Non-Bargaining vacancy rate is below the threshold at 16%, depending on how certain positions are calculated, such as the Public Information Coordinator, Administrative Assistant – Administration, and City Clerk roles, the rate could exceed 20%. For transparency, further explanation is provided.

Another factor was the vacancy in the City Clerk position in December 2024. The City advertised both a certified and non-certified version of the role to attract a broader applicant pool, due to the specialized skills and certifications required. The position was ultimately filled in February 2025 at the City Clerk – Non-Certified level, which is classified under Confidential/Non-Bargaining rather than Mid-Management. Because the position straddled classifications and was partially filled during the fiscal year, the calculation of the vacancy rate is open to interpretation. While technically below 20%, the City is providing this context to ensure transparency regarding staffing levels in this group.

C.V. Starr Employee Group

The C.V. Starr vacancy rate is 20%, meeting the AB 2561 threshold. This rate is largely driven by a 50% vacancy rate in the Senior Lifeguard classification. The Senior

Lifeguard classification is a full-time position. Lifeguarding is a physically and emotionally demanding job- staff must remain alert at all times and be prepared to save lives. The challenge is amplified by the facility's unusually deep lap pool, which requires stronger swimming abilities and a higher level of physical fitness.

These physical demands limit the applicant pool. According to the World Health Organization, more than 80% of adolescents and 27% of adults do not meet the recommended fitness levels. The City, in collaboration with Mendocino County's Blue Zone initiative, may broaden the future labor pool. Most part-time lifeguards are high school students, whose availability is often limited due to school, social, and family commitments. While the position pays \$19 - \$23 per hour, it competes with less stressful jobs like-fast food—which now offer \$20 an hour minimum wage, creating a recruitment disadvantage. Additionally, lifeguards often face high responsibility and stress, and sometimes patron complaints, which the City is addressing through improved work practices.

Staffing shortages have required supervisors to step in as lifeguards and invest heavily in recruitment efforts. These challenges are expected to grow, especially as the center recently expanded Sunday hours. Further complicating staffing is the pool layout: safety regulations require more lifeguards on duty when both pools are open and the adjacent water slide are open, stretching already limited staffing resources.

Temporary Employee Group

The Temporary employee group has a vacancy rate of 20%, comprising seven positions. The positions are: Assistant Planner – Temporary, Construction Project Manager – Temporary, Grants Analyst, Intern, Office Assistant, Seasonal Laborer, and Seasonal Parking Attendant. Since the employee group has only seven classifications, a single vacancy will have a significant impact on the vacancy rate.

Recruiting for temporary positions is challenging because these positions typically offer limited sick leave as a benefit, but no other benefits are available. In this labor and economic environment, the compensation for temporary positions is on the lower end, and the lack of benefits deters interested individuals from applying.

Currently, the Seasonal Laborer pays \$18 per hour. Effective January 1, 2025, the minimum wage is \$16.50 for all employers. For fast food workers, the minimum wage is currently \$20 per hour. This will become more of an issue when the delayed minimum wage increase for healthcare workers goes into effect. As the minimum wage continues to rise, it will likely exert upward pressure on the City to reevaluate its lower-paying classifications, including temporary positions.

Executive Management

The Executive Management group has a vacancy rate of 33%. The Executive Management employee group consists of seven positions. The positions are the Assistant City Manager, City Manager, Director of Community Development, Director of

Finance/City Treasurer, Director of Public Works, Police Chief, and Police Chief – Executive POST.

However, not all seven positions were authorized for the FY 2024-2025. Specifically, the Police Chief classification was not funded, as the Police Chief–Executive POST is currently filled: only one of these positions would be filled at a time. The Director of Finance/City Treasurer was not budgeted, as the City Manager currently performs both roles. Additionally, the Assistant City Manager was not included in this year's budget.

Of the four authorized positions, three —City Manager, Director of Public Works, and Police Chief — were filled throughout the year. The Director of Community Development position remains vacant, resulting in the group's 33% vacancy rate.

This role has been vacant since late 2019, following over 13 years of stability. Despite multiple recruitment efforts, the position has been difficult to fill. Interim coverage has been provided by the Director of Public Works and the Assistant Director – Engineering Division, with support from a planning consultant. A dual recruitment for a Senior Planner and Community Director was launched in March 2025 and is currently in progress. While details remain confidential, the City remains hopeful for a successful hire.

Recruitment Challenges for the Community Development Director/Senior Planner Position

The City has experienced persistent challenges in recruiting for the Planner position within the Community Development Department. Feedback from both public agencies and executive recruitment firms indicates a key barrier is the current salary range, which is considered too low to attract qualified candidates. In fact, several firms have declined to support the search, citing that the compensation does not justify their time or resources.

Why has this position been such a challenge to recruit for? When reaching out to other agencies and recruitment firms, one challenge is determining the appropriate salary range. Executive Recruitment firms have provided guidance stating that the salary range for the position is too low and is not worth their time and effort. The local political climate is one possible barrier to successfully attracting qualified candidates. It is reasonable to assume that qualified candidates with the requisite information would do research and view past and current public meetings. Interested parties may be deterred by what they see in the meetings.

Geographical location also presents a significant hurdle. Fort Bragg's remote setting, while offering natural beauty and a tight-knit community, can be a deterrent for some candidates, particularly those with partners who may be concerned about the limited retail and service amenities, the high cost of living, or the availability of quality housing. These broader quality-of-life factors can impact a candidate's decision to relocate.

The City recognizes these barriers and is actively working to address them. Efforts include initiatives to improve housing availability and affordability, strengthen the local

economy, and invest in critical infrastructure. One such effort is the City's recent acquisition of Mendocino Community Network (MCN) from the Mendocino Unified School District. This acquisition is a cornerstone of the City's broader municipal broadband initiative, aimed at enhancing connectivity and fostering economic development. The City is currently in the process of transitioning MCN staff to City employment as part of this strategic effort.

Retention Efforts

Even though the City's Strategic Plan sets ambitious goals and demands high performance in a fast-paced environment, the City Manager has also made it a priority to foster a healthy work-life balance and support employee career growth. This includes investing in professional development, establishing clear career ladders within each department, and creating opportunities for internal advancement.

The City has prioritized expanding access to wellness resources, such as mental health apps and enhanced employee benefits. Employee retention remains a key focus, with improvements made to breakroom access and workplace amenities, along with ongoing investments in teambuilding, training, and wellness initiatives. Recent training sessions have covered topics such as accountability, leadership development, and handling difficult customer interactions. Team-building activities have helped build camaraderie and collaboration.

Mental and physical wellness are also emphasized. Employees receive free subscriptions to Calm.com for mental well-being and complimentary single memberships to the C.V. Starr Community Center to support physical fitness. These efforts reflect the City's to creating a supportive work environment, retaining valued employees, and maintaining a strong, resilient workforce.

Hiring Summary FY 2024-2025

Number of Requisitions

To date, during FY 2024-2025, the City has processed or is working on filling 12 requisitions. The term 'requisition' is interchangeable with 'job posting'. Of these, five (5) have been filled and seven (7) are unfilled. As shown below, the Seasonal Laborer recruitment is hiring two people. Because of this, the Seasonal Laborer requisition is being treated as two vacancies.

Requisition Number	Requisition Title	Number Of Vacancies	Requisition Status	Assigned Analyst	Department Name	Employee Group	Hiring Managers	Code - Requisition Job Term/Job Type	Text - Requisition Job Term/Job Type
202400025	Administrative Assistant	1	Filled	Mortensen, Juli	City Manager (Administrative Services)	Confidential/Non-Bargaining	Isaac Whippy	FT	Full-Time
202400022	City Clerk	1	Filled	Mortensen, Juli	City Manager (Administrative Services)	Confidential/Non-Bargaining	Isaac Whippy	FT	Full-Time
202400026	Public Experience Liaison	1	Open	Mortensen, Juli	City Manager (Administrative Services)	Confidential/Non-Bargaining	Isaac Whippy	PT	Part-Time
202400024	Community Development Director	1	Open	Mortensen, Juli	Community Development	Executive	Isaac Whippy	FT	Full-Time
202400029	Director of Broadband and Digital Infrastructure	1	Open	Mortensen, Juli	Broadband & Digital Infrastructure	Executive	Isaac Whippy	FT	Full-Time
202400020	OFFICE ASSISTANT - TEMPORARY	1	Filled	Bryant, Lesley	Police Operations	FBPA	Neil Cervenka, Thomas O'Neal	Seasonal/Temporary	Seasonal/Temp
202400021	PART-TIME GRANTS ANALYST	1	Filled	Bryant, Lesley	Police Operations	FBPA	Neil Cervenka, Thomas O'Neal	Grant Funded	Grant Funded
202400019	Police Sergeant	1	Open	Bryant, Lesley	Police Operations	FBPA	Neil Cervenka	FT	Full-Time
202400028	Social Services Liaison	1	Open	Bryant, Lesley	Police Administration	FBPA	Neil Cervenka	FT	Full-Time
202400023	Senior Planner	1	Open	Mortensen, Juli	Community Development	Mid-Management	Isaac Whippy	FT	Full-Time
202400027	Seasonal Laborer	2	Open	Mortensen, Juli	Public Works: Corporation Yard	Temporary	Heath Daniels, John Smith	Seasonal/Temporary	Seasonal/Temp
Totals		12							
Total Number of Vacancies		12							
Total Number of Filled Requisitions		5							
Total Number of Unfilled Requisitions		7	*The Seasonal Laborer has two positions for the single recruitment so it was counted as two vacancies.						

Time to Fill FY 2024-2025

In the FY 2024-2025, the City filled six requisitions (positions). The time to fill was 67 days. Time to Fill metric to assist Human Resource professionals in identifying how long the agency takes to move an applicant through their hiring process from start to finish. This period includes advertising the job, extending the conditional offer, completing pre-employment processing, and finally, the date the hire assumes the position. A table reflecting the Time to Fill by Employee Group is shown below.

Requisition Title	Requisition Status	Job Id	Hire Candidate Full Name	Department Name	Time to Fill - Days
City Clerk	Filled	4727540	Paoli, Diana	City Manager (Administrative Services)	86
City Clerk	Filled	4732893	Paoli, Diana	City Manager (Administrative Services)	86
Police Sergeant	Open	4621591	Frank, Jarod	Police Operations	14
OFFICE ASSISTANT - TEMPORARY	Filled	4679803	Ponts, Jennifer	Police Operations	71
PART-TIME GRANTS ANALYST	Filled	4679867	Morse, Jason	Police Operations	101
Administrative Assistant	Filled	4883326	Remington, Stephanie	City Manager (Administrative Services)	43
					67

How does the City of Fort Bragg compare to other public agencies? According to NEOGOV, local government entities average 130 days. The average time for state government entities to fill positions is 96 days. In the private sector, the average time to fill is 36 days. As you can see from the above table, the City of Fort Bragg is doing excellent. The City's Time to Fill is 51% of the 130-day number that NEOGOV states in their article, *"Why Time-to-Hire is So Important, and How to Reduce It."*

The Part-Time Grants Analyst position has taken the longest to fill. Part-time positions are often challenging to fill because most people are seeking full-time positions that offer benefits. The Part-Time Grants Analyst has limited sick leave, but is not entitled to any other benefits. Another factor is the position's specialized knowledge in grant writing and administration.

The City Clerk's requisition is listed twice because of the dual advertising approach the City took. There was only one hire. The City Council did not approve the staff's recommendation for the City Clerk, Mid-Management position during the January 28,

2025, City Council meeting. As a result, this added twelve days to the hiring process. If the additional 12 days were not included, the Time to Hire for the City Clerk position would reduce the duration to 74 days and lower the overall Time to Fill average to 62.8 days. If one were to remove one of the City Clerk positions, because only one of the two positions would be filled, it would change the City's Time to Fill average to 63 days.

Recruitment Successes and Challenges

In summary, the City's vacancy rate is 13%, and the Confidential/Non-Bargaining, C.V. Starr, Temporary, and Executive Management employee groups are the groups that contribute to the vacancy rate. Another clear success is the City's Time to Hire metric. This helps ensure that those who apply and are extended a conditional job offer join the team and do not drop out during the pre-employment process. This is especially remarkable due to the challenges in scheduling pre-employment medicals in our area. In addition, the City has been successful in its recruitment and retention efforts during fiscal year 2024-2025; however, it also faces challenges. The City is committed to overcoming these challenges and continually improving the organization by onboarding more highly qualified, motivated staff to bring the City's strategic goals to fruition.

FISCAL IMPACT/FUNDING SOURCE

The cost of publication of the public notice in the local paper is the only fiscal impact. The advertising cost was \$254.10 to publish the hearing notice in the Fort Bragg Advocate. Other than the advertising cost, there is no direct fiscal impact associated with conducting the public hearing required under Government Code § 3205.3.

ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) does not apply to activities that will not result in a direct or reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment or is otherwise not considered a project as defined by CEQA Statute §21065 and CEQA State Guidelines §15060(c)(3) and §15378. The public hearing and reporting on vacancy rates, recruitment, and retention efforts meet the above criteria and are therefore exempt from CEQA. No additional environmental review is required.

STRATEGIC PLAN/COUNCIL PRIORITIES/GENERAL PLAN CONSISTENCY

This is in alignment with the City's Strategic Plan: 6A Develop and implement a Recruitment and Retention Program for all departments that attracts the best and brightest who will invest in the well-being of our City, where we build community through work.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Notice of the hearing to the public will be provided in accordance with the Ralph M. Brown Act, Assembly Bill 2561 (Gov. Code § 3502.33502.3(a)(2), Gov. Code § 3502.3(a)(3)), Gov. Code § 3502.3(b), Gov. Code § 3502.3(c). The City of Fort Bragg has provided outreach to notify each of the respective bargaining units, the Fort Bragg Employee Organization (FBEO) and the Fort Bragg Police Association (FBPA), of their board of directors in compliance with Assembly Bill 2561 (Gov. Code §3502.3(b)). A notice of public hearing was published.

ALTERNATIVES:

There is no alternative. This is a legal obligation as outlined in Assembly Bill 2561 (Gov. Code Section 3502.3).

ATTACHMENTS:

- Assembly Bill 2561
- 2025.06.09 AB 2561 Vacancy Report

NOTIFICATION:

Service Employees International Union Local 1021

Field Representative – Patrick Hickey, patrickhickey@seiu1021.org

Fort Bragg Employee Organization Board

President - Cody Filosi, cfilosi@fortbraggca.gov

Vice President – Steve Baxman, sbaxman@fortbraggca.gov

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Fort Bragg Police Association Board

President - Jarod Frank, jfrank@fortbraggca.gov

Vice President - Padraic Ferris, pferris@fortbraggca.gov

Secretary - Rory Beak, rbeak@fortbraggca.gov

Treasurer – Antoinette Moore, amoore@fortbraggca.gov

Member at Large – Anthony Welter, awelter@fortbraggca.gov