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**CITY OF GARDNER**  
**Department of Public Works**

Highway  
Water  
Sewer  
Forestry  
Parks/Playgrounds  
Cemeteries



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Mayor Michael J. Nicholson and City Council Members  
City Hall  
95 Pleasant Street  
Gardner, MA 01440

July 20, 2023

RE: DPW Staffing

Dear Mayor Nicholson and City Council Members:

Attached is a list of every property the Municipal Grounds Department (MGD) has to mow and weed whack in the City and the number of hours each property takes to complete. I must be honest, as I started to compile this list, I quickly became surprised how many properties there actually are. The MGD Foreman then calculated how much time the crew is at each site.

The total hours to complete this list is about 256 hours and that does not include packing up equipment and tools and trailering back and forth to each destination. The City currently only has 4 MGD employees, so this means we need a 64-hour work week for each employee, or the parks, playgrounds, and cemeteries become overgrown. This is what is what is happening in the City.

If the MGD includes cutting trees for a few weeks instead of cutting grass, the grass grows to the point we need to bag the cuttings, thus increasing the amount of time to complete the mowing.

Just to mow and weed whack, the MGD needs 7 full-time employees. An additional 4 employees are needed to cut and trim trees for forestry work and other MGD projects. With the proper staffing level, we can ensure timely and proper maintenance of city properties.

The Highway Division currently has 9 employees, including 2 foremen. 2 employees typically work on "Specialty Projects" that are assigned to them, such as the Lawrence St. sidewalk project, various downtown beautification projects, drainage projects, etc. This only leaves 7 employees, including the foreman, to patch potholes, repair drainage structures, road repairs, cut brush along roadways, street sweep, clean catch basins, unclog blocked culverts, pick up roadside trash, complete driveway tie-ins/walks/loam/seed on recently paved streets, and PLOW and SAND.

The services to the City by the DPW cannot be fulfilled as they have been in the past if the current staffing levels continue. This winter will have several routes without coverage. The crew will continue to do their best to try and keep the streets clear and safe, but with less coverage, comes longer hours. The crew can only work so many hours before they must sleep. Unfortunately, our current workforce is unable to cope, leading to potential delays and compromising the safety and well-being of our citizens.

The City has hired contractors in the past, but just like the DPW salaries, the contractor salaries are not even close to what the State or other communities pay, so Gardner is unable to obtain more than a few extra pieces of equipment from private contractors.

The Department has already frozen 3 positions and rolled the salaries of those positions into existing salaries. However, with the 10%+ inflation and the private sector increasing their starting salaries, the slight increase was lost. The City must become more competitive with their salaries. Cumberland Farms, McDonalds, Walmart all have walk in the door starting salaries between \$16-\$18 per hour; the DPW's is \$16.24. These are positions not out in the elements, heat, cold, rain, snow, and a lot less physically demanding than an employee at the DPW.

The challenges faced by the MGD and the Highway Division are significant and require prompt attention. Neglecting these issues will not only impact our department's efficiency but also jeopardize the quality of services provided to the City's residents. The City MUST adjust the salaries of the DPW in order to encourage new hires with CDL's and retain the employees we currently have.

I am grateful for your consideration and urge you to take the necessary steps to address these concerns. By investing in our workforce and adjusting salaries to be competitive with other industries, we can attract and retain skilled professionals who will contribute to the prosperity and well-being of our city.

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter. I am available for further discussions or to provide any additional information required.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dane E. Arnold', with a stylized, flowing script.

Dane E. Arnold, Director  
Department of Public Works



**Cemeteries**

Congo Cemetery (1.3 Acres)	13
Crystal Lake Cemetery (13 Acres)	64
Green Bower Cemetery (11.3 Acres)	32
Wildwood Cemetery (13.5 Acres)	32

**Parks/Playgrounds**

Bickford Playground	8
Greenwood Playground	10
Jackson Playground	10
Leo Drive Playground	4
Monument Park	3
Ovila Case Playground	7
Pulaski Playground	7
Park St Park	1
Wilder Field	7
Little League Field	4

**City Owned Property**

City Hall	1.5
Crystal Lake Park	1.5
Derby Drive	1
DPW	3.5
Greenwood Pool	2
Helen Mae School	2
Lafayette Square	0.75
Maki Lot	0.5
Orpheum Park	0.5
Prospect School	4
School St School	1.5
Stone Field	2
Volney Park	0.5
Waterford St School	3
West St Wall/Garden	0.5
Bike Path	1.5
Police Department	1.5
Uptown Rotary	0.5
Parker Hill Island	0.5
College/Green St Field	5
Animal Shelter	1.25

Ryan/West St Corner	0.5
South Main Corner	0.5
Connors St Island	0.5

#### **Parking Lots**

Animal Shelter Parking Lot	0.25
City Hall Parking Lots	0.25
Connors St Lot	0.25
Fire Station Parking Lot	0.25
George Sweeney Park	0.25
Knowlton Street Parking Lot	0.25
Library Parking Lot	0.25
Municipal Garage Parking Lot	0.25
Municipal Parking Lots	0.25
Nichols Street Parking Lot	0.25
Pleasant Street Parking Lot	0.25
Police Department Parking Lot	0.25
Uptown Parking Lot	0.25
West Lynde Street (North) Parking Lot	0.25
West Street Parking Lot	0.25

#### **Water/Wastewater**

CLWTF	2.5
SPW	1.25
WWTF	4
James St Tanks	1
Banner Road Pump Station	0.5
Minott Street Pump Station	0.5
Parker Street Pump Station	0.5
Willis Road Pump Station	0.5
Coleman Street Pump Station	0.5
Dyer Street Pump Station	0.5
Racette Avenue Pump Station	0.5
Summit Industrial Park (Suffolk Lane) Pump Station	0.75
West Broadway Pump Station	0.5

Total Hours	256
4 employees	63.9

Need 7 employees just to mow and weed whack	6.4
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