

**COUNTY OF MILWAUKEE**  
Inter-Office Communication

Date: 10/30/2025

To: Marcelia Nicholson, Chairwoman, Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors

From: Amos Morris, Executive Zoo Director *Amos D. Morris, Jr.*

Subject: From the Executive Zoo Director requesting approval to create 4.0 FTE Maintenance Worker positions offset with reductions to repair and maintenance accounts

File Type: Action Report

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**REQUEST**

The Executive Zoo Director is requesting to create four Maintenance Worker positions offset by reductions to the Zoo's repair and maintenance contractual accounts to increase operational efficiency, reduce reliance on costly outside contractors, and ensure timely, high-quality upkeep of Zoo facilities and animal habitats.

**POLICY**

Wisconsin State Statutes:	Chapter 59.17
Milwaukee County Code of General Ordinances:	Chapter 17.05 (1)
Specific Adopted Budget:	2025 Budget

**BACKGROUND**

The Facilities Division Maintenance Section is responsible for the upkeep and maintenance of the Zoo's mechanical systems, implementation of preventative maintenance programs, HVAC (heating, ventilation, and air conditioning) systems, and electrical and plumbing repairs. Currently, the Zoo has 62 buildings requiring HVAC maintenance and an additional 137 structures that need ongoing upkeep. Staffing in the Section includes one Mechanical Services Manager, one Maintenance Supervisor, one Electrical Mechanic (Permits), one Plumber (Permits), one Steamfitter (Temperature Control), one Welder Mechanic, and one Maintenance Worker Assistant. In addition, there are five Maintenance Worker positions, for a total of 12 staff members, covering operations seven days a week, 365 days per year, across multiple shifts.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, the cost of outside contractors has increased substantially, with no anticipated decrease and likely further increases in the future. As the County and Zoo's finances face continued fiscal pressures, the Zoo is requesting the creation of four additional Maintenance Worker positions. Expanding in-house maintenance capacity will allow the Zoo to:

- Avoid contractor markups on materials and labor.
- Maintain consistent, predictable labor costs, whereas contract expenses can fluctuate based on project scope, urgency, or market rates.
- Reduce the premium costs contractors charge, which often include profit margins, travel, and administrative overhead.
- Enable faster response to daily repairs, animal area issues, or facility emergencies, minimizing downtime and improving guest and animal safety. Contractors often require advance scheduling, which can delay repairs and increase operational risk.

In-house staff have deep familiarity with Zoo-specific systems, including animal buildings, life-support systems, HVAC in sensitive habitats, water features, and public pathways. Staff adhere to internal standards and protocols for safety and animal welfare, ensuring consistent quality, whereas contractor work may vary in compliance or workmanship. Employees' investment in the Zoo's mission promotes proactive maintenance and higher-quality outcomes. Additionally, staff can prioritize internal needs based on weather, animal schedules, or visitor volume without waiting for external availability.

The Zoo projects that the savings generated from reduced reliance on repair and maintenance contractors will fully offset the cost of creating four additional Maintenance Worker positions, including pension and fringe benefits.

### **ALIGNMENT TO STRATEGIC PLAN**

Describe how the item aligns to the objectives in the [strategic plan](#):

- 1B: Create and nurture an inclusive culture across County government:** By expanding County employment opportunities and strengthening the internal workforce, fostering a committed and mission-driven staff culture.
- 2B: Break down silos across County government to maximize access to and quality of services offered:** By centralizing maintenance expertise within the Zoo, staff can respond quickly to facility needs, maintain consistent standards, and ensure high-quality services for both the public and animal habitats without delays caused by contractor scheduling.
- 3B: Enhance the County's fiscal health and sustainability:** By reducing the reliance on outside contractors, the Zoo can achieve predictable labor costs, avoid premium contractor rates and markups, and better forecast its maintenance budget, contributing to the long-term financial sustainability of Zoo operations. Additionally, the remaining repair and maintenance funds can be redirected to address more

projects, increasing overall operational efficiency.

**3C: Dismantle barriers to diverse and inclusive communities:** By creating a clear career pathway from a seasonal Zoo Worker to Maintenance Worker Assistant to Maintenance Worker provides employees with opportunities to gain experience and skills in the skilled trades, supporting workforce development and broader access to careers traditionally underrepresented in these fields.

### **FISCAL EFFECT**

There is no fiscal impact on the 2025 Budget for this item, as it is requested for the December 2025 County Board cycle. The 2026 position cost, including social security, health and pension for the Maintenance Worker position, including the 2026 proposed 1% raise, is \$62,647 to \$84,890. Based on candidate experience, skills, and market conditions, the Zoo anticipates hiring at an average annual cost of \$71,952 per position, for a total of \$287,809 for the four positions.

Based on filling the four positions by pay period 6 in 2026, the total cost for these positions is \$243,295. An administrative fund transfer is requested to realign the repair and maintenance accounts to the appropriate position accounts for a zero net tax levy impact once the positions are filled.

<b>Position Description</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Pay Grade</b>	<b>FTE</b>	<b>2026 Annual Salary Range (based on 2088 hours)</b>
Maintenance Worker	Create	NR17	4.0	\$41,925 - \$62,908

### **VIRTUAL MEETING INVITES**

Amos Morris, Executive Zoo Director, [Amos.Morris@milwaukeecountywi.gov](mailto:Amos.Morris@milwaukeecountywi.gov),  
 Vera Westphal, Deputy Zoo Director, [Vera.Westphal@milwaukeecountywi.gov](mailto:Vera.Westphal@milwaukeecountywi.gov),  
 Matthew Haseman, Facilities Director, [Matthew.Haseman@milwaukeecountywi.gov](mailto:Matthew.Haseman@milwaukeecountywi.gov),  
 Jacob Konkel, Mechanical Services Manager, [Jacob.Konkel@milwaukeecountywi.gov](mailto:Jacob.Konkel@milwaukeecountywi.gov)

### **PREPARED BY:**

Vera Westphal, Deputy Zoo Director

### **APPROVED BY:**

Amos Morris, Executive Zoo Director

### **ATTACHMENTS:**

Resolution, Fiscal Note, DHR Report, JEQ, OSBP Report

cc: Kelly Bablitch, Chief of Staff, Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors  
 Janelle M. Jensen, Legislative Services Division Manager, Office of the County Clerk

Clarence H. Kinnard, Personnel Committee Coordinator  
Allyson R. Smith, Finance Committee Coordinator  
David Crowley, County Executive  
Mary Jo Meyers, Chief of Staff, County Executive  
Margo Franklin, Chief Human Resources Officer  
Tony Maze, Director of Total Rewards  
Christine Carlson, HR Compensation Manager  
Vera Westphal, Deputy Zoo Director  
Matt Haseman, Facilities Management Director,  
Jacob Konkel, Mechanical Services Manager  
Steve Cady, Research and Policy Director  
Joe Lamers, Director, Office of Strategy, Budget and Performance  
Anthony Rux, Sr Analyst, Budget and Management  
Sarah Schuler, HR Business Partner