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REPORT

TOWN OF GRANTHAM, NH

STAFFING/ NEEDS ASSESSMENT OF TOWN HALL FUNCTIONS

NOVEMBER 2022

A. INTRODUCTION

The Town of Grantham, NH, engaged Municipal Resources, Inc. (MRI) to conduct a general review of the staffing/ needs of municipal departments located within Town Hall. The results of the review along with findings and recommendations, are contained in this report.

1. Scope of Services

The objective of the review was to assess the staffing required to complete the functions normally associated with departments located in Town Hall, and to identify potential opportunities for efficiencies, cross training, consolidation, and functional areas that may be understaffed. It also was to consider the impacts of growth on staffing needs in order to assist the Town in planning for future needs.

2. Overview

The Town of Grantham is a small rural town that is rapidly growing. It is conveniently located off exit 13 on I-89 and is a short distance to the cities of Lebanon and Concord. It is located along the Sugar River, surrounded by beautiful mountains, and preserved land and covers an area of 28 square miles. It also enjoys having a portion of the planned community of Eastman located in the town which has added to the impact of development along with other building

and renovations. Grantham has a population of 3,404 per the 2020 Census. Despite continued growth, Town Hall staff has not grown for some time and has carried on with varied combined duties over the years to accomplish the tasks required to operate an effective Town Hall. Town Hall facility is a very pleasant, well- maintained building and houses the Police Department in one portion of the building, and the rest of the facility houses Administration with the Town Administrator, Administrative positions, Board of Selectmen and a meeting room for varied boards and committee meetings. It additionally houses the Town Clerk/Tax Collector office. The focus of this report is on the Town Hall functions and staffing needs, excluding the Police Department which is also located in the Town Hall facility. The primary services and functions provided or supported by Town Hall staff included the following: Administration, Board of Selectmen, Assessing, Finance, Information Technology Human Resources, Building Inspection, Planning, Zoning, Town Clerk/Tax Collector and Welfare. All of these services demand sufficient staffing to effectively provide services required by the public.

3. Methodology

The methodology utilized included a wide variety of data collection, research, and analytical techniques to include review of best practices in the industry, comparisons with other communities of similar size, and interviews with the majority of personnel currently located in Town Hall, as well as review of the physical space occupied by the employees. Key administrative positions located in Town Hall that support the many functions provided were interviewed in person or provided written input. Interviews were conducted with the following employees:

Town Administrator
Administrative Assistant
Office Assistant
Receptionist – part time

Additionally reviewed were current job descriptions of the administrative positions, and varied town materials available from town departments to include several years of Town Annual Reports, along with data and information from the following resources:

- Annual Town Reports, 2014 – 2021
- Varied NH Communities of Similar Size
- Bloomberg BNA
- Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM)

- International Public Management Association for Human Resources (IPMA-HR)
- International City/County Management Association (ICMA)

The following summarizes the study methodology used:

1. Conducted comprehensive interviews with employees located in Town Hall. This was done to obtain insight into the operations, services, activities, and programs provided by the positions for functions located in Town Hall.
2. Received and reviewed relevant information and documentation provided by employees and management officials.
3. Conducted additional analyses related to issues identified during the interview process.
4. Conducted an external review to determine and analyze somewhat comparable communities providing similar services and demographics.
5. Compared service levels with the consultant's assessment techniques based on current trends and "best practices."
6. Evaluated operations and services in detail and developed the analyses contained in this report as it relates to current and future staffing requirements.

4. Town Hall Personnel History

A review of the history of staffing and responsibilities of positions indicated that the staffing has remained at the same level for many years. As a result of increase in various workloads over time, several duties were combined for some of the positions in order to provide backup during busy times.

B. FINDINGS

The following sections provide analyses and recommendations for staffing options and related measures that should be taken to provide Grantham with the necessary workforce to address both the growing needs of the community and improve current efficiency. It also addresses some techniques that should be considered to ensure effective operation of functions.

1. Town Administrator

The current Town Administrator has been with the town for fifteen years, and ten of those years as Town Administrator. The workload and expertise required has continually changed and expanded. The position performs complex professional and management work in providing daily administration of town operations. The Town Administrator acts as the Chief Administrative Officer for the Board of Selectmen and carries out the orders and policies of the Board in accordance with all laws and town rules, regulations, ordinances, policies, and procedures. The position also serves as the town's Finance Director and Welfare Director and is liaison to the Board of Selectmen and Departments. Other tasks required of this position are to handle all legal issues for the town, IT and Code Enforcement which involves land use and building code compliance, permits and applications.

In the capacity of Finance Director, the Town Administrator prepares and oversees budget and warrant articles, balances the cash account to the Treasurer's monthly report, prepares the town report, and prepares materials for the annual audit. This role continues to become more complex as the auditors currently calculate the depreciation of capital and property, however they desire to have the town do that function.

A review of town records indicates that the activity requiring building inspections has increased 104 percent since 2014. The system currently utilized for processing applications by administrative staff, scheduling of inspections and follow-up to ensure everything has been completed in compliance with requirements, may warrant more time by the Building Inspector, and improved computerization of the inspections scheduled. The Building Inspector is also the Facilities Manager and has been requested to spend two hours per day working on inspections to include follow-up. Land use applications are extremely complex now which requires substantial staff time. The Town Administrator developed an outstanding training manual for staff involved with helping the public and varied administrative duties to include permits (building, raffle, driveway), applications (planning, zoning, current use, varied exemptions, office duties to include banking, posting materials on the website, transfer station hang tags and various assessing duties. The Town Administrator has been trying to prepare items such as the training manual and various policies that greatly assist the town with improving service and efficiency, however due to the many varied duties involved with the position along with interruptions, it is difficult to work on these important items.

The Town Administrator handles a variety of IT troubleshooting which takes her away from many other tasks she already is trying to address such as updating critical policies and being a true liaison with Department Heads and the Board of Selectmen. The town does outsource IT issues and the Town Administrator is handling a variety of troubleshooting in lieu of requesting

IT assistance. More funds should be allocated to address all IT issues including addressing potential cyber security issues to ensure no breaches in the system occurs.

The Town Administrator additionally has responsibilities to be involved with and keep the Board of Selectmen informed of various large important projects such as overseeing the revaluation project, broadband expansion, tax-deeded property, cable franchise renewal and varied personnel projects to include updating the personnel policy and conducting employee evaluations. Keeping up with the laws and regulations the town must abide by also requires implementing them appropriately which is another time-consuming task.

Fortunately, the town has not experienced a high volume of welfare requests, however when the Town Administrator serves in her Welfare capacity, it takes a substantial amount of time and she must also verify current welfare guidelines as she does not handle it on a regular basis.

The Town Administrator works with and oversees the administrative positions of Administrative Assistant, Office Assistant and Receptionist and has tried to have variety of cross-training for these positions, so they all can handle a variety of duties and assist each other during busy times or during the absence of an employee in one of these positions. The Town Administrator was interviewed in-person, completed a Position Analysis Questionnaire (PAQ) pertaining to the position, and the current job description was reviewed.

2. Administrative Assistant

This position performs responsible bookkeeping related duties with respect to payroll, accounts payable/receivable, and prepares required financial reports and tax reporting. It also provides varied administrative support and secretarial assistance to the Board of Selectmen and the Town Administrator.

The position is responsible for preparing and processing payroll for town employees on a bi-weekly basis using BMSI payroll software. This position meets with new hires, reviews, and processes all new-hire paperwork. It also administers employees benefits for all full-time employees. This position is responsible for completing numerous payroll and benefit related reports, quarterly tax return reports, workers' compensation, property and liability, unemployment compensation, W-2's, W-3's and 1099's.

In addition to the many financial responsibilities, the Administrative Assistant also prepares the agenda and packets for the Board of Selectmen, attends their meetings, transcribes minutes, and processes consent calendar items on the Selectmen's agenda following the Board of Selectmen meeting. It additionally assists the Town Administrator in everyday operations and research/preparation of special projects and performs confidential clerical duties for both the

Town Administrator and the Board of Selectmen. The position also maintains personnel and vendor files and assists

Assessing items handled by this position include processing deed transactions in BMSI tax software and Vision assessing software and updating tax cards and BMSI Building Permit software with new owners imported from tax software and removes varied exemptions when appropriate.

The Administrative Assistant reviews building permit applications before Selectmen receive them for approval, to ensure they are complete and meet appropriate requirements.

This position additionally helps with answering the phone and assisting the public on a frequent basis.

The Administrative Assistant was interviewed in-person, completed a Position Analysis Questionnaire (PAQ) pertaining to the position, and the current job description was reviewed.

3. Office Assistant

This position performs skilled administrative and clerical work in supporting varied town services to include assessing, planning, zoning, and administration, aids the public with wide range of municipal issues and processes Accounts Payable.

The Office Assistant works at the counter window and assists the public both in- person and on the phone with varied town questions and procedures. She processes all of the Accounts Payables for the town which is then reviewed by the Town Administrator. The position handles the ordering of supplies, purchase orders, seasonal decorations and flowers and building permits. The position is responsible for the review and processing of numerous applications submitted for completeness prior to further action, to include veteran's credits, elderly exemptions, shoreland cutting permits, and Zoning and Planning Board applications. Files are maintained for the Treasurer.

The Office Assistant updates numerous town policies, forms and applications and has developed many some excellent forms and processes associated with building permits. This position, similar to the other administrative positions that handle a variety of work both in-person with the public and departments, must be able to multi-task and possess proficient computer skills with varied software.

This position additionally assists the Town Administrator with varied research projects and also serves as the Wellness Coordinator for the town which involves facilitating various wellness activities for the benefit of employees.

The Office Assistant was interviewed in-person, completed a Position Analysis Questionnaire (PAQ) pertaining to the position, and the current job description was reviewed.

4. Receptionist

This position is currently vacant and has been a part-time position and one that has been difficult to fill. This position works at the counter window and receives and provides paperwork, processes payments, and updates and provides Transfer Station material to include hang tags. The Receptionist answers the phone and directs calls and provides information and sorts and places mail in appropriate department mailboxes. This position processes building permits, scans assessing material and updates assessing files. The previous Receptionist completed a Position Analysis Questionnaire (PAQ) regarding information pertaining to the duties and responsibilities of the position. The other administrative positions all divide the work of this position until another part-time employee is hired. Interview regarding this position was conducted with the Town Administrator as well as received input from the two administrative positions.

C. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following action plan provides a variety of recommendations and options for consideration that provides the town with a roadmap for both immediate as well as future staffing, potential position modifications, and associated actions for consideration. The recommendations are a result of analysis of the positions and operational functions, best practices for a growing community such as Grantham, and provides a variety of opportunities the town may desire to further explore both now and in the future.

D. ACTION PLAN

The following Action Plan provides the town with a variety of recommended options to consider. Decisions on which option to move forth with should be based on a variety of factors to include budgetary constraints and/or availability, space availability for the addition of any new positions as well as best meeting the public's needs for efficient, effective service. Additionally, some of the potential options may require being phased in over a period of time.

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR - RECOMMENDED ACTION

Consideration should be given to the following staffing opportunities:

1. The Town Administrator has been doing an excellent job of handling the many roles of the position, however as the Town continues to grow, and more mandatory requirements are added that must be addressed, and significant town projects continue to expand. The role of the position needed to maintain expertise in all areas and meet the necessary expectations of the Town to perform timely, accurate, and responsive work products and meet necessary requirements warrants some modification of responsibilities.
2. The Town Administrator also serves as Welfare Director, and while the Town has not experienced a substantial number of needs to be addressed, this could change, and the laws continue to be updated that the Town must comply with. Many towns either share a Welfare Director from another community on a specific day and time to be available to meet the needs of the town or contract with a community to provide the service. One option suggested to the Town is to consider reaching out to a close community that does have an experienced Welfare Director. The City of Lebanon has a Welfare Director and the Town should consider approaching this option with the City perhaps on a contractual basis that should not be substantially costly and would provide the expertise and service and alleviate some of the time to provide this additional function as part of the Town Administrator's role.
3. IT is another segment of time that the Town Administrator utilizes for a variety of troubleshooting IT issues. While the town does contract for IT services, it is recommended to consider perhaps the service be expanded and budget some funding to ensure not only extended troubleshooting issues are addressed to alleviate the Town Administrator and allow more time to focus on ever-changing policies and other issues that need to be addressed, but also address cyber security safeguards. For example, a penetration test, also known as a pen test, is a simulated cyber- attack against your computer system to check for exploitable vulnerabilities. In the context of web application security penetration testing is commonly used to augment a web application firewall and other varied tests.
4. The Town Administrator is responsible for overseeing the Building Inspections in the Town. At this time, due to difficulty in finding qualified staffing, the full-time Facilities Manager is also the Building Inspector and tries to spend two hours per day addressing

Building Inspections and follow-up situations. A review indicates that there needs to be an improved system of scheduling and ensuring all requirements have been completed within the allocated time or a new building permit is needed. The administrative personnel all deal with varied aspects of building permits which it timely. Various software should be explored to streamline not only scheduling appointments but ensuring all requirements are met. In the future, consideration should be given to trying to recruit perhaps a retired, qualified person in the profession who only wants to work a few hours each week for the town. Another option it to contract with a neighboring town that has a qualified Building Inspector who could take on the work generated in Grantham. As noted earlier, Building Permits have increased by 104 percent since 2014.

The recommendations associated with alleviating some of the workload of the Town Administrator by shifting some of the current duties to other qualified individuals is a step towards planning for the future. MRI has viewed similar situations in other communities where a Town Administrator who has been in the position for several years handles so many duties similar to Grantham, that when they leave or retire, one replacement is not sufficient and additional employees need to be hired to cover all of the necessary work due to community growth.

ADMINISTRATIVE POSITIONS- RECOMMENDED ACTION

The functions of the positions of Administrative Assistant, Office Assistant and Receptionist all have core responsibilities as listed in in their job descriptions which should again be updated if any of the essential functions have substantially changed, however they all assist the public in-person and on the phone with overlapping duties. In order to have a more consistent title structure and associated duties, the following title changes are recommended:

Current Title	Proposed Title
Receptionist	Administrative Assistant I
Office Assistant	Administrative Assistant II
Administrative Assistant	Administrative Assistant III

The part- time Receptionist position that has been vacant is recommended to be become a full-time position with benefits. This proposed change may attract more skilled applicants along with having benefits, the position may be more attractive. The increase in hours due to the extensive workload of all the administrative positions is warranted.

Due to the critical importance of all human resource functions, including implementing policies as a result of updated laws and regulations, and ensuring proper personnel files and records are



updated along with associated processing procedures, it is recommended the town consider in the future the addition of one part- time position at the Administrative I level that would strictly focus on human resource functions. This would alleviate some of the workload from some of the current positions which would allow the other positions to focus on the counter window and associated work including processing varied permits.

The recommendations associated with the Administrative Positions is a step towards moving forth to address the workload and necessary skilled staff to accommodate the needs and growth of Grantham.

CONCLUSION

Municipal Resources, Inc. (MRI) conducted a general assessment of the staffing/ needs of municipal departments located within Town Hall, in order to provide Grantham with a fresh look at current and future staffing requirements that may be impacted as a result of turnover in positions, growing expansion of town development and necessary services required to meet these expanding needs that are expected by the community. The town has an outstanding staff of employees, many wearing several different “hats” with varied responsibilities. The time and input received from Town Hall staff is appreciated. It is clear that with the volume of activity in Grantham, some future staffing along with modification of some current positions will be necessary to provide the level of service the community expects.

The Action Plan provides Grantham with some viable options to consider, in order to continue to efficiently provide appropriate service in the active environment it continues to enjoy.