



# CITY MANAGER RECRUITMENT PLANNING COMMITTEE AGENDA

Remote Meeting Only  
Essex Junction, VT 05452  
Monday, April 11, 2022  
5:30 PM

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This meeting will be remote participation only. Available options to join the meeting:

- JOIN ONLINE:  
<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/85803213705?pwd=aWdrVHp1dER5Yy9YbzF5OXQzd3N4UT09>
- JOIN CALLING: (toll free audio only): (888) 788-0099 | Meeting ID: 858 0321 3705

1. **CALL TO ORDER** [5:30 PM]
2. **PUBLIC TO BE HEARD**
3. **BUSINESS ITEMS**
  - a. Discuss community survey re: City Manager
  - b. Discuss Trustee input opportunity re: City Manager
  - c. Discuss staff and department head input opportunity re: City Manager
  - d. Discuss community profile
  - e. Identify next steps
    - Community profile
    - Advertising locations plan
  - f. Set next meeting date & time
4. **ADJOURN**

*This agenda is available in alternative formats upon request. Meetings of Village committees, like all programs and activities of the Village of Essex Junction, are accessible to people with disabilities. For information on accessibility or this agenda, call the Manager's office at 878-6944.*

Certification: 04/08/2022      Brad Luck

## CITY MANAGER RECRUITMENT PLANNING COMMITTEE DELIVERABLES

**With input opportunities from the Trustees, the public, staff, and department heads:**

- Identify a recruitment timeline & strategy
- Create a community profile
- Identify the desired qualities/experiences/education of the ideal candidate
- Create a job posting
- Identify recruitment outreach and advertising plan

## Essex Junction City Manager Search/Survey Questions

The Trustees and the City Manager Recruitment Committee are asking community members to weigh in on the qualities and skills they would value most in their new City Manager. Your answers will help the Recruitment Committee gather information to present to the Trustees. All opinions are welcome and will be kept confidential. If you have additional information you would like to share, you can reach out to the committee co-chairs Bridget Downey-Meyers at (802) 879-5409 or Mike Plageman at (802) 879-1989. The finalized job posting will appear on the Essex Junction website, all Essex Front Porch Forums, and other locations. The Committee thanks you for your time and your responses.

**(1) From the list below please select the three most important issues, challenges, and opportunities facing the City of Essex Junction? (Please order from 1-3 with 1 being most important)**

- Development ( \_\_ Too Much \_\_ Too Little )
- Community Services ( \_\_ Too Few \_\_ Too Many )
- Taxes ( \_\_ School \_\_ Municipal )
- Municipal Infrastructure (Streets, Sidewalks, etc.)
- Crime
- Housing Costs
- Other (Please elaborate \_\_\_\_\_)

**(2) What skills and experiences are most important for the new City Manager to succeed in Essex Junction? (Please order from 1-10 with 1 being most important)**

- Prior Experience as a Town/City Manager
- Budgeting and Financial Management Skills
- Communication & Interpersonal Skills
- Organizational & Management Skills
- Success with Community Development and Planning
- Success with Economic Development
- Experience with Labor Relations and Human Resources
- Leadership & Strategic Planning
- Experience with Enabling/Fostering Diversity
- Skills with Group Facilitation and Collaboration

**(3) What management and leadership attributes should the next City Manager have? (Please order from 1-5 with 1 being most important)**

- Adaptable
- Attention to Detail
- Motivating
- Collaborative
- Other

**(4) How would you like the new City Manager to interact with the community? (*Please order from 1-6 with 1 being most important*)**

- Town Halls (Bridget/Mike - I'm not sure what this means. GT)
- Meet & Greet
- Community Events
- Zoom Meetings
- Office Hours
- Other

**(5) What else should the Trustees consider when selecting the new City Manager?**

**(6) Do you have any recommendations of where we should advertise for the City Manager position?**

(For in-person interviews with staff)

**What management style brings out your best?**

Revised 6 April 2022

## Profile: City of Essex Junction

Essex Junction is a progressive, growing, high-quality-of-life small city in the heart of Chittenden County, within a short distance to the University of Vermont and the UVM Medical Center, Champlain College, St. Michael's College, Burlington International Airport, and the shores of Lake Champlain. Boston, New York City, and Montreal are all within a reasonable drive and are also accessible by commuter flights, bus service, and Amtrak.

Of the 10,590 Essex Junction residents counted in the 2020 census, 27% are under 18, 58% are 19-65, and 15% are over 65; approximately 82% identify as White, 1% as Black, 10% as Asian, 2% as Hispanic, and 5% as two or more races or Other. The median household income is \$80,019, and 48% of residents have a bachelor's degree or higher. Essex Junction is a core member of the Essex-Westford School District, consistently ranked among the best in the state for special services, test scores, and college acceptance.

Global Foundries, a major microchip manufacturer, is the City's largest private employer. Other nearby large employers include the University of Vermont, UVM Medical Center, and the Vermont Air National Guard base in South Burlington.

With 4,500 households in 4.6 square miles interlaced with sidewalks and mostly residential streets, the city has a neighborly, tree-lined, family-friendly feel. The community prioritizes investment in education, health-wellness, and recreation. Besides a full slate of year-round recreation programs and community activities, the Essex Junction Parks and Recreation Department offers licensed pre-school and childcare programs. The Brownell Library is the state's second largest municipal library and is located next to the Essex Area Senior Center, which is operated jointly by Essex Junction and Essex Town.

In 2014 the City began intensive collaborations with private developers and state agencies to revitalize its small historic downtown with the aim of creating a lively and sustainable high-density residential-commercial core. Among other improvements, four multi-story commercial-residential buildings were constructed between 2015-2022, providing over 200 new housing units, including 42 units of senior housing. In the same period the city received over \$8 million in state and federal funds for major infrastructure projects in the downtown core and is on track to receive an additional \$3.5 million in federal funds to renovate the Essex Junction Amtrak Station, the state's busiest.

With its comfortable, walkable neighborhoods and its easy accessibility to Burlington and the diverse employment and educational opportunities of Chittenden County, and the excellent, year-round recreational opportunities of the Green Mountains and Lake Champlain, Essex Junction has become one of Northern Vermont's most desirable communities for those seeking to create their own, meaningful work-life balance.

## Memorandum

9/30/2021

**From the Office of the Mayor of Winooski**

Kristine Lott, Mayor  
klott@winooski.vt.gov

To: Winooski City Council

Re: Update on City Manager Hiring Process – search extension

### Overview

Per the City of Winooski Charter (§ 101 (b)), the City Council is responsible for the hiring and appointment of the City Manager. The Council is further charged with appointing a City Manager “solely on the basis of executive and administrative qualifications”. At the March 15<sup>th</sup> meeting of the City Council, a [hiring process](#) was approved including the establishment of a City Manager Search Committee to screen and interview candidates and select finalists for the City Council to interview. The City Council interviewed finalists at the end of August, and selected two to advance to the final interview phase: a public presentation at the September 20<sup>th</sup> City Council meeting. At a special meeting on September 27<sup>th</sup>, the Council voted in favor of extending the search.

The purpose of this memo is to outline the prior search process and potential recommendations for improving the process so that Council can decide how to move forward with the search for the next City Manager.

### Hiring Process Outline

- Search Committee
  - A search committee was appointed by Council with the intention of bringing diverse community representatives into the search process. The committee included: The Mayor and one Councilor, HR Manager and one other Department Head, one non-department head staff member, a local business owner, a representative of the Winooski School District, a representative of a partner/community organization specifically serving New American populations, and a resident at-large.
  - The Equity Director joined the committee once hired and onboarded.
  - Anti-bias and equity guidance were provided to committee members and discussed during meetings.
  - A meeting schedule was agreed upon by committee members, and stipends were offered for participation.
- In April and May, the Committee met to discuss competencies for the City Manager role, approve a job description, and select [questions](#) to ask candidates in first round interviews. These meetings



were open to the public, advertised, and public input was solicited through regular outreach: Agenda posting, social media, City alerts, and direct outreach by committee members.

- Job was posted on April 28, 2021 at the following outlets, with the intention of reaching a diverse candidate pool:
  1. ICMA
  2. National League of Cities (NLC)
  3. National Forum for Black Public Administrators
  4. Vermont Professionals of Color Network
  5. Vermont League of Cities and Towns
  6. International Network of Asian Public Administrators
  7. Seven Days Ad
  8. LinkedIn
  9. Local Government Hispanic Network
  10. Bright Leadership Institute
  11. VLCT Equity Council
  12. Women Leading Government (VT and National)
  13. RISPNET
  14. State Racial Equity Council
  15. Vermont Center for Independent Living (VCIL)
  16. Pride Center
  17. Peace and Justice Center
  18. VT Partnership for Fairness and Diversity
  19. Vermont Works for Women
  20. Champlain/Rutland/Windham Area NAACP
  21. Howard University Graduate School
  22. Harvard Kennedy School
  23. Winooski School District
- In June, the committee met in executive session to review and select applications for invitation to interview. Interviews were conducted in early July and followed by a final meeting July 27 to evaluate candidates and determine recommendations for advancing to City Council.
- Committee recommendations were shared with the City Council at the August 2 meeting, including 3 semi-finalists, additional questions and topics for the Council to use in their interviews, and suggestions for increasing public engagement. The City Council used these recommendations to draft a list of questions to ask finalists during the second interview, and to create a selection of topics for finalists to present on to the public.
- Council interviewed 3 finalists at the end of August, offering candidates the choice of socially distanced and masked in-person interviews or Zoom.
- At the September 7 City Council meeting, Council chose to advance 2 of the 3 finalists to the public presentation. Later that week, one of the 2 finalists withdrew after accepting another offer.
- The remaining finalist was given the opportunity to do a 10-minute presentation for the public at the September 20 City Council meeting. The meeting was advertised in the normal City outlets, as



well as via a flyer distributed to partners by the Equity Director, and direct outreach by members of Council. Public input was invited live during the meeting or for the 7 days following via an online form on the City's website or written feedback dropped off at City Hall or the O'Brien Community Center. The meeting was attended by one person in public at City Hall, 6 people via Zoom, and 2 families at the O'Brien Community Center where the meeting was live streamed and childcare was provided.

- Following the public presentation, the finalist was invited to an informal meet and greet with the City's Leadership Team staff. Staff asked the candidate questions and wrote emails to City Council with their feedback.
- The City Council met on September 27 to evaluate all input on the final candidate and chose not to move forward with an offer.

### **Equity Director Recommendations**

The City Council met with the Equity Director in Executive Session on September 20 as well to hear feedback on the hiring process. The recommendations included:

- Widen search by partnering with a firm (examples):
  - <https://sparksgroupinc.com/diversity-recruiting/>
  - <https://tgsus.com/technology-executive-search/diversity-recruiting/>
- Balance streamlining process so it's more efficient, while ensuring a thoughtful approach.
  - Thoughtful does not have to mean slow.
    - Building the structure around vacation schedules of the people of privilege on the hiring team is NOT equitable nor inclusive.
  - Commit to timeframe and STICK TO IT.
    - Don't begin a search if members aren't prepared to commit the time to interviews, etc.
  - The longer the process takes, the more likely you are to lose ideal candidates.
- Be more transparent in the process.
  - Every step needs to be available to the public.
  - Involve the public whenever you see an opportunity.
  - Transparency builds trust among the community.
- Be more proactive with inclusivity.
  - Council needs to take a larger part in the logistics and outreach.
  - Winooski needs to SEE you being involved with those outside of your own comfort zones/ingroup.
  - That will show you are supportive of ALL residents and thinking about communities for whom you don't identify with.
    - That creates buy-in for the decisions making of the council i.e. Hires.
- Remember this is only a piece of the puzzle.
  - The systems we are utilizing are NOT adaptive.



- To provide more inclusivity and be more attractive to potential candidates, we need to avoid catering to the status quo.
  - Open-ended, innovative approaches, questions and formats.
    - i.e. if asking for a presentation, remove the barriers around choice and allow the candidate to present on a topic of their own, without providing a list of choices. This will provide the opportunity to ascertain if the candidate has initiative, interest and also understands thoroughly the priorities of the city.
    - A good change would be, "Please show us what your first 3 months will look like and what can people expect as tangible outcomes from your work?"
- Focus on skills, NOT on qualifications or experience- Is the person proving they can do the job by giving answers that demonstrate their skillset.
- Be sure to speak to how this position will be supported; don't wait for the candidate to ask you that question. BE SPECIFIC.

### **Candidate Feedback takeaways**

The Mayor was able to speak with one of the top 3 candidates and has summarized takeaways from their feedback:

- Overall thought the process was fair and made sense.
- Liked that we offered Zoom or in-person but felt there were tradeoffs to each format.
- Longer, compound questions in the second interview were harder to keep track of. Would have preferred to see them written down, or have interviewers restate the question if the candidate did not address all parts.
- The first interview felt more conversational, with interviewers providing affirmation or asking follow-up questions, allowing more opportunity to infer information.
- We could consider offering more questions in writing or having them available in writing in the moment, telling candidates that they can pass on a question and ask to come back to it later.

