

Herb Durfee

From: Mary Layton <marydlayton@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, March 08, 2020 8:40 PM
To: Roger Arnold
Cc: claudette brochu; John Langhus; Robert Gere; Herb Durfee; Miranda Bergmeier
Subject: Re: Finance Office re-org plan

Memorandum:

To: Norwich Select Board
From: Mary Layton
Date: March 8, 2020
Subject: Finance Department Staffing

In terms of giving direction to Herb regarding staffing of the Finance Department, I think he is on the right track if the following information is true: The market for financial people willing to live and work in Vermont, who have knowledge of fund balance accounting plus know how to use NEMRC software, is really weak. I have no idea if this is really the case but I think it is plausible. If that is the case then I think Herb is wise to try to keep Becky Grammer employed and to help her improve with more education and experience.

I feel strongly that there need to be two finance department employees in order to handle the workload and to provide redundancy if one is not available. In addition two step verification of ACH payments is necessary and two Finance Department employees could provide this service. Cross training in HR requirements would also be helpful.

I gave a lot of weight in my thinking to John Langhus reply to Herb during a recent SB meeting in which he noted that finance is not Herb's primary strength as a manager, and that having a really sharp and competent Finance Director would enable Herb to concentrate on general management. I think if such a person was actually available it would be really helpful not only to Herb but to the Town. I am just skeptical that we can find this person given the market.

I think a factor in the failure of the hire of the last Finance Director is that a person can look very good on paper and in an interview and still be incompetent. How to find a really good person is problematic.

As I am skeptical that we can find a very high quality Finance Director I think Herb has determined an alternative course of action that is practical and that will work out in the long run. I feel strongly that he should advertise for a financial assistant immediately.

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Hi All

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Whether or not we decide to do the addendum it is still our responsibility to do our best to direct the TM with our recommendations about how to best staff the Finance Office.

I am ok with developing a short memorandum to be read into the record at the next SB meeting on this topic.

It would be a very good idea at this meeting to have the opportunity to act on this topic via a motion(s) and voting.

I am feeling urgency about setting a direction and boundaries regarding this staffing decision.

Mary

On Sat, Mar 7, 2020 at 8:28 AM Roger Arnold <rogerarnoldvt@gmail.com> wrote:
This is about the agenda so I believe it is perfectly fine to reply all, actually.

Four Points:

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- 4) I personally don't necessarily need email reminders on certain agenda items.

Roger

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It is a very important topic and I would like to submit a written opinion for a Monday addendum.

Sent from my iPhone

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> DO NOT reply per OML.

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recommendations before Monday. I meant to get something for inclusion in packet but clearly, too much happening this week for me to get to it. As much as I hate to defer this item to the next mtg, we may end up doing just that.

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- > C

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Please note that any response or reply to this electronic message may be subject to disclosure as a public record under the Vermont Public Records Act.

Memo to Selectboard

Finance Office Reorganization

March 7, 2020

The Town Manager(TM) has asked the Board to comment on his memo for staffing the Finance Office. The TM has proposed hiring Becky Grammer as Interim Finance officer with the ultimate goal of advancing her, over time and with the requisite educational achievements, into the position of Finance Director. A subsequent memo outlines various proposals for staffing the Finance Office with a request from the Board for feedback.

I have researched how other towns in Vermont staff their Finance Office. Surprisingly, I have found that even in towns with a Town Manager form of government, most towns rely on the Treasurer alone, or the Treasurer with an assistant. Three exceptions that I found: Hartland has a Finance Administrator, assistant and Treasurer; Hartford a Finance Director and two clerks responsible for accounts payable/receivable and payroll and a Treasurer. Woodstock employs a staff accountant and a payroll clerk which I presume are under the direction of the Treasurer since that position is listed first.

I do not know why or when Norwich scaled back the responsibilities of the Treasurer and opted to shift the responsibilities of town finance to the Finance Director. I expect this practice evolved over time and Town Managers. I question if this direction was and is the correct one. I strongly believe the error in past hiring was based on not having the correct people involved in the interview process.

I am opposed to hiring Ms. Grammer as Interim Finance Officer. Although personable and hard-working, Ms. Grammer does not have the requisite education, background and experience to fill this critical role. In my humble opinion, the Town can not risk its financial health to someone who is learning on the job. I do agree that we should do what we can to hire Ms. Grammer in some

capacity, just not as Interim Finance Officer or whatever title we wish to bestow. We need a financial professional in this office supported by an assistant. This person should have at minimum a BA/BS in finance, accounting, or a related field with the requisite certifications (or willingness to achieve with a specified time frame) and experience with municipal or non-profit finance.

Until the Finance Office is fully staffed and functional, any discussions on cross-training for functions other than finance are premature. If we need to go to the Town with a Special Town Meeting for the ability to finance two full-time employees, I am prepared to do that and fully understand the costs/efforts that decision would entail.

I present three options. I am strongly opposed to the Interim Staffing Plan proposed by the TM. I struggled with how to acknowledge the “soft” skills needed in today’s employment environment with the need for the town to have a strong, competent and professional Finance Office. Right now, the need for a competent and professional Finance Office took precedent.

Option A:

1. Hire Ms. Grammer as the Accounts Payable/Receivable and Payroll clerk (or as whatever title) with responsibility for the above functions. Hire as a FTE of 0.75 with pay commiserate with experience. (Starting salary \$37K with max salary for Finance Officer with BA/BS \$64K based on my research). Cross-train in HR after stabilization of the Finance Office.
2. Hire a Finance Officer/Administrator for the higher level functions at FTE of 0.5 or 0.75 who has the education, certifications and experience to run the office. Until hired, the Treasurer would be responsible for the higher level functions.

Option B:

1. Hire Ms. Grammer as the Accounts Payable/Receivable and Payroll clerk or as Finance Administrator Assistant with responsibility for the above functions. Hire as a FTE of 1.0 with pay commiserate with experience.

Cross-train in HR after stabilization of the Finance Office. See above for salary range.

2. Utilize the Treasurer for the higher functions needed. The current stipend for the Treasurer will not cover the added workload so how can/do we adjust?

Option C:

1. Hire Ms. Grammer as the Accounts Payable/Receivable and Payroll clerk or as Finance Administrator Assistant with responsibility for the above functions. Hire as a FTE of 1.0 with pay commiserate with experience. Cross-train in HR after stabilization of the Finance Office. See above for salary range.
2. Hire a new Finance Director as a FTE 1.0. Until hired, the Treasurer would be asked to oversee the higher level functions.

Claudette

March 9, 2020

Board Members:

Below I have drafted a potential job description for the next Finance Director. This draft should be understood as an exercise completed as a response to our Town Manager's request for input regarding the future structure of the Finance Office. This exercise was informed by 1) reading posted job descriptions for municipal Financial Directors positions via LinkedIn; 2) considering the Finance Office structures in the towns of Vergennes, Charlotte, and Shelburne VT; 3) joint Board conversations and individual conversations with the Town Manager and Treasurer.

*Looking forward to discussing at our March 11 meeting,
Roger Arnold*

Town of Norwich, Vermont seeks Finance Director

The Town of Norwich, VT is seeking an experienced Finance Director. Reporting to the Town Manager, the next Finance Director is a professional in local municipal finance, is up-to-date and open to current trends and solutions, and has an established track record of being engaged, collaborative and strategic, with the ability to work effectively within a Town Manager form of government. The next Finance Director will interact regularly with the Town's elected Treasurer, who is entrusted with duties determined under Vermont state statute.

Department and Position Responsibilities:

The Finance Director, with the assistance of a part-time Finance Assistant, works with the Town Manager to develop and manage an operating Town budget of \$4.5 million and carries out the functions of accounting, financial reporting and designated fund management, accounts payables, revenue collections and payroll processing. The next Finance Director will also be actively involved in project management and capital improvement planning, strategic planning and performance measurement.

Significant upcoming priorities include the conversion from NEMRC to another financial software, strategizing on funding options for a first-generation Capital Improvement Program (CIP) to last for the next five to ten years, working with Town Staff to manage ongoing CIP projects, and working with the Town Manager, Selectboard, and Treasurer to identify and

update financial policies and practices to meet or improve financial best practices for municipal government.

The Successful Candidate is:

- Knowledgeable of Vermont Statutes governing municipal financial practices and procedures, principles and practices of public finance administration, including principles and practices of municipal accounting, and principles and practices of automated systems and their use in a municipal environment;
- A collaborator who has experience in partnering with Town Manager and department heads to effectively budget and manage financial resources;
- Expert in capital improvement budgeting, and financing and implementation of capital projects;
- Savvy with financial management technology solutions and software; is current with existing software options and is able to make recommendations as appropriate
- An excellent and effective communicator including one on one, small groups and public speaking who makes complex financial topics understandable to staff, Board Members, and the general public
- An advocate of best practices who can persuasively present options in layperson terms to the Town Manager and Selectboard
- A responsive, detailed and deadline-oriented professional

Qualifications and Compensation

Minimum of a bachelor's degree in accounting or business, with five or more years of experience in public finance administration including some supervisory experience; or an equivalent combination of education and experience. Preference given to Certified Public Accountants.

The hiring minimum is expected to be [\$63,000] with compensation negotiable based upon experience and qualifications. The Town offers a generous benefits package.

Herb Durfee

From: johnlanghus@gmail.com
Sent: Monday, March 09, 2020 12:54 PM
To: Roger Arnold
Cc: Mary Layton; claudette brochu; Robert Gere; Herb Durfee; Miranda Bergmeier
Subject: Re: Finance Office re-org plan

I'm in general agreement with Roger on this. Don't see addendum as necessary but don't feel strongly. I continue to be apprehensive of having a finance officer without a degree or formal accounting/finance training.

Sent from my iPhone

On Mar 9, 2020, at 11:45 AM, Roger Arnold <rogerarnoldvt@gmail.com> wrote:

Okay. Attached is my FYI / contribution. I wrote a job description.

Roger

On Mon, Mar 9, 2020 at 7:08 AM Mary Layton <marydlayton@gmail.com> wrote:
Hi All

Claudette, will you please include my comments if you are gathering them for an addendum.

I am ok with transparency.

Mary

Sent from my iPhone

On Mar 8, 2020, at 10:53 PM, claudette brochu <cbrochu30@gmail.com> wrote:

All,

I believe that to have a substantive discussion on the Finance Office staffing, we need to be prepared to discuss. Feedback was asked for but can certainly be provided at the meeting. I presumed that we would provide each other and Herb with our thoughts prior to the meeting. I have not reviewed the tape so not sure if that was part of the discussion. Regardless, my thoughts will be sent to you all as an attachment.

As Mary mentioned, the bigger issue for the sake of transparency, is whether we feel we need to provide these docs to the public prior to the discussion. Do these docs meet the level of "unforeseen circumstance"? No. Might it be wise? Maybe. Hate to be indecisive, so I vote for transparency and an addendum to the packet. Roger-#4-noted but some of us do need the tickler.

C

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<Memo to Selectboard_Finance office re-org_cb.docx>

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<FinanceDirector_RAArnoldJobDescription.pdf>