

FINAL

**CITY OF NORWALK
PERSONNEL COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING
DECEMBER 20, 2017**

ATTENDANCE: Faye Bowman, Chair; Greg Burnett, Beth Siegelbaum, Doug Stern, Nick Sacchinelli (7:02 p.m.); Doug Hempstead (7:05 p.m.)
Beth Smyth

STAFF: Ray Burney, Personnel Director; Laoise King, Assistant to the Mayor

OTHERS: Diane Lauricella

CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Bowman called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. A quorum was present.

PUBLIC Comment.

Ms. Lauricella presented the Committee with a container of holiday peppermint bark.

Mr. Sacchinelli joined the meeting at 7:02 p.m.

She thanked the Council Members for sending the job description for the Communications Manager back to Committee. She requested the job description and other back up materials be posted on line for the public.

Ms. Lauricella said that she wanted to address agenda items concerning the Communications Manager and the proposed 2018 meeting schedule.

Ms. Lauricella said that she did not think that a Communication manager was needed but felt that a Grants Coordinator would be more beneficial to the City. As a member of the defunct Energy Committee, she wondered whether there were grants that the City was not taking advantage of.

Mr. Hempstead joined the meeting at 7:05 p.m.

Ms. Lauricella said that the Zoning Department is in desperate need of another Zoning enforcement staff member and pointed out that the Police Department and the BOE has two spokespersons on staff. There need to be fewer silo positions and the departments should be able to share skills.

Ms. Lauricella said that the Mayor holds staff meetings on Thursdays and she felt that the Mayor could find someone on the staff that could fill the Communications position.

Ms. Lauricella said regarding the proposed calendar that last year only 4 or 5 meetings were held out of the 12 scheduled meetings. She said that she had not been able to ask Mr. Burney why this was so. The job descriptions need to be updated and the Committee should be updating

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM MEETING HELD ON
SEPTEMBER 27, 2017**

**** MR. SACCHINELLI MOVED THE MINUTES OF THE SEPTEMBER 27, 2017 MEETING.**

**** THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE SEPTEMBER 27, 2017 MEETING AS SUBMITTED PASSED WITH TWO (2) IN FAVOR (HEMPSTEAD AND SACCHINELLI) AND FIVE (5) ABSTENTIONS (BOWMAN, BURNETT, SIEGELBAUM, SMYTH AND STERN)**

DISCUSSION OF COMMUNICATION MANAGER POSITION.

**** MR. SACCHINELLI MOVED THE ITEM.**

Mr. Stern said that it would be helpful to have an overview of how the grant writings ties into other departments. Mr. Burney said that the Grants Coordinator worked from the Mayor's Office. The staff member left in March and during the evaluation of the position, it became obvious that there was some room to add additional responsibilities. It was felt that it would be good to add in the responsibilities for communications.

Ms. King explained that the former staff member also had an assistant that handled the tracking of the grants. There are daily releases of the grants and many of them require basic information about the City (size, land mass, etc.).

Regarding the communications, the current practice is that the department heads decide when something should be released to the public. They write the release and send it to the City Clerk. Ms. King gave a recent example of a Public Works Department news release. There were several key pieces of information missing such as why the bulky pick up program would benefit everyone. There are several major projects such as the new mall, the Walk Bridge and other key projects on the event horizon. Discussion followed about the details about the Communications Manager responsibilities and adding those responsibilities to that of the Grants Writers.

Mr. Hempstead said that he would like to have copies of the job descriptions for the Mayor's Office. Mr. Burney made a note of this.

Mr. Hempstead went on to give a brief overview of the history of the position and pointed out the job responsibilities descriptions were vague. Ms. Bowman suggested that the Committee members think about how they would like to have included in the position. Mr. Hempstead said that he remembered the Economic Development Director position, which included many of the communications director. Mr. Hempstead suggested that Mr. Burney check CCM for a description. Mr. Burnett suggested that Mr. Burney also check with the BOE about the Communications Director. Mr. Burnett expressed concern that one or the other aspect of the job would fall off the radar.

Mr. Burney said that after the former staff member left, the evaluation determined that the amount of work that the Grants Coordinator was not a full time work load. The City's need for a Communication Director was also discussed and the suggestion was made to combine the two positions. He added that the administration expected both positions to grow in the future.

Ms. Siegelbaum asked whether the Committee was creating a position that was too large for one person to do. Ms. King explained that the administration was not looking for someone who would be writing extensive grants. The majority of the grants that the City currently gets are pro forma grants through the State. The outlying grants are much smaller and do not require a great deal of experience to complete. Ms. King pointed out that the City did not foresee many new Federal or State Grants being released. If a large grant arrives on the horizon, there is always the opportunity to seek outside help. However, the Communication Director is vital because of all the events happening in the City. By creating a policy for the communications flow, the administration can funnel the information to the community.

Mr. Sacchinelli asked how much time Ms. King envisioned the position handling. Ms. King said that she thought that it would probably about 75% communications and 25% grants. Discussion followed.

Mr. Hempstead asked if salary ranges could be included in the job descriptions. Mr. Burney said that he would get some ranges from Fairfield County.

Mr. Sacchinelli said that he would like to have two part time positions because it appears that there would be a strong Communications role and a smaller grants role.

Ms. Bowman said that the first requirement for the Grants Positions was having knowledge for applying for grants. That is not included in the new description. While it is important to think about the finances, it is important to be sure that the grants are filed and the position generates money. She would like to see someone hired in the Grants Coordinator that can bring in more than their salary. The Communications Director is a separate entity.

Mr. Burney explained that the actual reality was that the Grants Coordinator was not generating funding for the last few years. There have not been as many grant opportunities available at this time. Mr. Burnett said that he felt that the Communications Manager was a priority. The Grant Coordinator position is often confused with a Grant Writer. He suggested that there might be someone on staff already that could fill the Grant Coordinating as part of their regular duties.

Mr. Hempstead said that he would like to know what kind of grants were generated during the former staff member generated during her tenure.

Mr. Sacchinelli said that the grants have very strict deadlines and there were numerous occasions when Council was expected to approve a grant because of an impending deadline.

Ms. Smyth said that she would have concerns about a part time job because people need benefits and that comes with a full time position.

Ms. King said that she wanted to make sure that she wanted to bring the information that the Committee needs. While she feels the Communications Director needs to be full-time, the administration was trying to be fiscally responsible. The nearby cities all have Communications Directors that have six figure salaries. However, it is important to fill the need and let it grow. She asked the Committee for direction regarding whether they want a full time positions or a part time position.

APPROVAL OF THE 2018 SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS.

**** MR. HEMPSTEAD MOVED TO ACCEPT THE 2018 CALENDAR.
** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Mr. Stern asked if there was a past practice of putting the back up materials on the website. Mr. Burney made a note of this request.

ADJOURNMENT.

**** MR. SACCHINELLI MOVED TO ADJOURN.
** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 8:16 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

S. L. Soltes
Telesco Secretarial Services

City of Norwalk
Personnel Committee
Regular Meeting
December 20, 2017