

VILLAGE OF FONTANA-ON-GENEVA LAKE, WI

**DEPARTMENT OF  
PUBLIC WORKS  
LEADERSHIP STUDY AND  
RECOMMENDATIONS**

Addendum to: Study and Recommendations for the positions of Village Administrator, Village Treasurer, Village Clerk and Director of Public Works;  
Ancillary: Human Resource Management Assessment, Dated December 2013

Allan J. Kaminski, PHR  
7/29/2014

## Introduction

Fontana Department of Public Works, guided by common sense, accountability, organization, planning and control, strives to plan, construct and maintain the infrastructure of the Village to deliver a roadway network, water, wastewater, solid waste management services and public facilities/grounds management to enhance the quality of life for all residents, businesses and visitors alike.

The Department of Public Works, under the management of the Director, (Manager, Supervisor), of Public Works, is divided into two major divisions: Water and Sewer Utilities and Roadways and Grounds/Facilities Management. The Department of Public Works is responsible for the construction, maintenance and acceptance of the Village roads, bridges and associated structures, traffic safety, water resources management, storm water management and sediment control, management of capital projects, and water and sewer utilities.

Historically, for decades, the department has always been under the direction of a Director of Public Works which has been met with various levels of success. The previous Director, having moved on in 2012, ran a very efficient and effective organization and was highly regarded by all accounts.

Upon the departure of the previous director in 2012, two (2) Lead positions were created, one for each division of Public Works. The value received in terms of leadership and operational effectiveness, oversight and fiscal responsibility has recently given cause for this review and assessment. The following pages will reveal my findings in this regard.

## **Fontana-on-Geneva Lake Department of Public Works Leadership Study**

The goals of this project include determining the appropriate level of management and/or supervision for the potential benefits of; economy of scale, improved level of service, and sound fiscal policy, among others.

The process involved occurs in four phases:

Phase 1 consists of a Concept Study to determine what the major challenges of leadership are or should be and if those challenges can be overcome, as well as identification of criteria to be met as a condition of employment. It is during Phase 1 that current lead personnel participation and agreement must be obtained to define exactly what the department's services, service area, and responsibilities are or should be. Concurrence with Village Administration's assessment is vital. Phase 1 typically concludes with a decision by Village leadership to move forward with the process or not and at what level.

Phase 2 is the planning stage during which a detailed approach to determining candidate core competencies and requisite knowledge and experience are developed including identification of critical tasks, resources, responsibility, scheduling, human capital management and cost controls through established budgeting protocols.

Phase 3 focuses on the execution of the plan developed in Phase 2. It is the phase during which agreement among Village leadership must occur as to the desired candidate attributes and then finally; the recruitment/selection process must take place in a timely manner.

Phase 4 encompasses the first six months of department operation under the new leadership, also referred to as the Probationary Period. It is a time for measuring results and adjusting strategies and tactics to ensure optimum performance.

I have spent the past three (3) months assessing the operations of the Department of Public Works through job shadow, (observation), internal and external interviews with all persons who interface with the department and its members and announced and unannounced job-site visits, some covertly.

Generally; the organization operates efficiently and effectively in the delivery of services to the community. The employees are loyal, dedicated and hard working. The employees are excellent technicians however, the Lead Technicians have been asked to become managers without management experience or training. Ten (10) issues were identified in several areas

that would benefit from objective leadership in my opinion. These issues range from minor to critical in need. They do not necessarily reflect upon both divisions individually or simultaneously and some may occur with less frequency than others.

I have suggested the areas for improvement on the following page.

Organizational skills – moderate.

Project planning and implementation, manpower allocation, timing.

Scheduling work shifts – moderate.

No work shift flexibility as may be necessary for efficiency and cost effectiveness, i.e., “Swing Shift? May be a function of existing collective bargaining agreement? Time management is essential particularly during emergency call-outs.

Scheduling assignments generally – minor to moderate.

Urgency of need and/or demand. Impromptu and non-scheduled service demands requiring re-allocation of time and manpower which causes delays. Daily demands can be unpredictable which must be managed to the extent possible.

The Perception of Prioritization of need – moderate.

Most to least important not always followed. Impromptu demands from others as described above.

Time keeping – serious.

Time clock for uniformity and accountability? Collective bargaining issue?

Safety programs, training and practices – critical.

No written programs or training records observed. No safety rules observed.

Use of personal protective equipment – minor to moderate.

Workers observed not wearing PPE at times and in certain situations.

Cost controls, budgeting – critical.

Budget not always being followed. Cost effectiveness, etc. Training issue? This is an area where in-service training is essential to fully understanding the process.

Overtime control – critical.

Excessive O/T at times may result from planning, prioritization and scheduling issues? Training and regular communication with Village Administrator/Treasurer is needed through one-on-one and/or weekly staff meetings.

Workplace maintenance, housekeeping – minor.

A contributor to workplace health and safety concerns.

Understanding that my assessment is not all-inclusive and somewhat subjective on its face; I do believe that there is sufficient evidence to suggest that a leadership gap currently exists within the department.

Therefore; it is my recommendation that a search for a non-represented leader for the Department of Public Works commence as soon as is practical with the goal of having that position budgeted for and in place by January 1, 2015. A Manager or Supervisor would suffice in my opinion, as long as that individual possesses ALL of the desired attributes in order to have the best possible chance for success at the position.

### Public Works Director Job Description

A Public Works Director supervises the activities of both departments within the public works sector. In general, the director oversees the physical facilities of a community and any services that enable a community to function. A public works director works under the direction of and provides administrative assistance to the Village Administrator. He/she must possess demonstrated skills, knowledge and abilities in the following areas:

1. The function of local government administration.
2. The function of a municipal department of public works including but not limited to; streets, bridges, highways construction and maintenance. Water, sewer and storm water construction and maintenance. Waterways maintenance. The operation of heavy equipment. Knowledge and training in workplace health and safety.
3. Organizational skills.
4. Human capital management.
5. Strong interpersonal and communication skills, verbal and written.
6. The demonstrated ability to lead others.
7. Municipal budgets including forecasting, payroll costs and capital spending.

### Public Works Director Duties

One main aspect of a director's work is the ability to develop long-term programs that enhance the community. Additionally, the director is responsible for reviewing the proposed projects. The director presents the top plans to the appropriate department heads for consideration and then assigns work to staff once a project has been selected. The director analyzes completed projects against the budget in order to track the group's spending and the success of the project.

Public works directors are responsible for assessing employees and establishing the criteria for which their employees are assessed. Directors continually monitor the progress of their staff, provide guidance for employees who receive low evaluations and, in some cases, provide alternate work plans. Directors may conduct yearly performance reviews, hire employees, discipline and handle terminations as well as any other human capital responsibilities as may become necessary.

It's also essential that public works directors participate in the process of hiring outside vendors. They may have to create bid specifications and recommend vendors for projects. Directors are ultimately responsible for ensuring that all work is completed properly by contractors, vendors and public works staff members. They may also have to answer questions from the general public and relay all feedback with the utmost tact. The ability to work within budget, forecast and control labor costs through effective scheduling and work assignment is essential to the position.

#### Internal Candidates

It is recommended that this process be open to all qualified candidates, internal and external however, it must be emphasized that prior management training and experience along with the willingness to participate in on-going management training and any and all relevant in-service training when and if called upon to do so, should be an absolute requirement. Additionally; I must further stress the importance of this being a “Non-Represented” management position.

#### Public Works Director Outlook

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), jobs for top executives, including public works directors, are expected to increase five percent from 2010-2020 ([www.bls.gov](http://www.bls.gov)). In 2012, the BLS reported that chief executives working in local governments earned an average salary of \$110,600 per year. Department heads are typically paid between 20-40% less nationally.

According to the 2012 Job Classification and Compensation Study conducted by Carlson Dettman Consulting for the City of Fond Du Lac, WI, market estimates for top end, (97%), salaries surveyed for comparable position descriptions are:

- Director DPW: \$111,280
- DPW Operations Director: \$81,640
- Wastewater Operations Superintendent: \$70,200

Again; these are market estimates for mostly larger communities. I only point this out to create perspective. Salaries in smaller communities vary widely, often arbitrarily.

The Village of Fontana considers the public works director to be a department head who works under the direction of the village administrator. It may therefore be reasonable to assume that a **starting salary range** for this position, all things considered, is \$60,000. to \$65,000.

Respectfully submitted,

*All Kaminski*

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July 25, 2014