

The Board of Selectmen, The Manager and Municipal Leadership

A Team Oriented Job Description

This brief position paper is based on the need to develop a partnership that allows the Town Manager and Board of Selectmen to deal with several aspects of **communication, planning and conflict management**.

There's no shortage of job descriptions for the Town Manager. However, many of them have two basic flaws.

- First, they seldom address the underlying issue of working relations between the Town Manager and the Board of Selectmen.
- Second, they tend to reflect a shopping list designed to touch every possible base of operation rather than to set clear professional priorities for a Town Manager.

This paper doesn't present a radical departure from the **intent** of most job descriptions of the Town Manager's position. It does, however, provide a job description, which **integrates** many of the governance and leadership issues facing the Board of Selectmen and their Town Manager. It clarifies parameters through which the Town Manager can integrate his/her priorities with those of the Board of Selectmen and with those of other department heads. It clarifies the essentials of leadership at the top, leadership which should seek to **preserve** the positive aspects of the community and **change** those aspects which aren't as effective as they could be.

The job description reflects the hopes and needs of many Town Managers and Board of Selectmen. This integrated job description is a tribute to their eagerness to provide municipal services in an efficient and effective way.

A. The Town Manager as Chief Administrative Officer

The Town Manager is the officer responsible for the overall planning, operation and performance of the Town. She/he provides staff support for the Board of Selectmen and is the leader of the municipality's senior management team.

B. The Board of Selectmen's Role

The effective Board of Selectmen exercises its governance role in three major areas:

1. It employs the Town Manager and works through him/her in the best interests of the municipality as a whole. Implied in this statement is the need for the Board of Selectmen to:
 - identify clear expectations of the Town Manager,
 - support internal procedures which will ensure effective communication through appropriate channels,
 - elicit continuous feedback from the Town Manager and provide continuous feedback to him/her, and
 - evaluate the Town Manager on a regular basis.

2. It sets policy and strategic direction in the best interests of the municipality as a whole. Implied in this statement is the need for the Board of Selectmen to:
 - adopt policies which promote change and development in those areas in which the municipality could benefit most,
 - adopt policies which preserve those aspects of the municipality deemed most appropriate to the municipality as a whole,
 - accord the Town Manager the professional latitude to implement policy through effective management practices,
 - accord the Town Manager the professional latitude to provide leadership and vision among staff, within the community and with the Board of Selectmen, and
 - give high priority to the Town Manager's recommendations in its deliberations regarding approval of appropriate policies and strategic direction.

3. It resolves only those appeals and special problems not resolved at lower levels. Implied in this statement is the need for the Board of Selectmen to:
 - support procedures which direct appeals and special problems through administrative channels,
 - avoid becoming directly involved in problem solving and conflict management except through the Town Manager, and
 - upon recommendation of the Town Manager, hear those appeals and special problems, which have not been resolved at lower levels, and provide a fair and just resolution based on existing policy.

C. **Primary Duties of the Town Manager**

1. Work closely with the Board of Selectmen, and with the chair as appropriate, to develop and sustain the working relationships implied in Sections A and B;
2. Establish programs and practices for a constructive relationship of the municipal organization structure within the community;
3. Direct planning and implementation of municipal services which will ensure the highest possible effectiveness level of each department;
4. Direct planning and implementation of business related functions to enable the municipality to support service delivery in an efficient and cost effective manner;
5. Organize and lead the municipality's senior leadership team responsible for strategic municipal planning, and implement a leadership development program for all Managers and supervisors within the municipal system;
6. Participate in a high quality program of staff selection, training, supervision, evaluation and compensation;
7. Develop and implement a performance monitoring system to measure service delivery in quantitative and qualitative terms;
8. Ensure that all department operations meet legal requirements and local policy requirements;
9. Perform all other duties consistent with Sections A and B of this job description.

D. **Qualifications**

All qualifications deemed appropriate by the Board of Selectmen or required by law.

E. **Implementation of Job Description**

This job description provides direction while the Town Manager and Board of Selectmen exercise their legitimate roles and responsibilities. The Board of Selectmen-Town Manager team should retain the best interests of the municipal system **as a whole** in terms of its capacity to provide services. The Town Manager delegates responsibilities to members of his/her team while she/he remains accountable for overall effectiveness.

This job description emphasizes **integrated teamwork** at the top. It strongly implies a working partnership not found in very many communities. It sets the stage for a common purpose, legitimate leadership over political expedience, and realization of the legitimate hopes and aspirations of Board of Selectmen members and Town Managers. Such leadership at the top is essential if the community is to receive services efficiently and effectively.

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