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REPORT

TOWN OF HUDSON, NH

STAFFING/ NEEDS ASSESSMENT OF MUNICIPAL DEPARTMENTS IN TOWN HALL

MAY 2022

A. INTRODUCTION

The Town of Hudson, NH, engaged Municipal Resources, Inc. (MRI) to conduct a general review of the staffing/ needs of municipal departments located within Town Hall. The results of the review along with findings and recommendations, are contained in this report.

1. Scope of Services

The objective of the review was to assess the staffing required to complete the functions normally associated with departments located in Town Hall, and to identify potential opportunities for efficiencies, cross training, consolidation, and functional areas that may be understaffed. It also was to consider the impacts of growth on staffing needs in order to assist the Town in planning for future needs.

2. Overview

The Town of Hudson is a vibrant community located in southern New Hampshire, 44 miles north of Boston, MA. It offers many outstanding resources of parks, facilities, activities, and events. It provides easy access to several state routes and is a diversified community. Hudson has a population of 25,294 per the 2020 Census and is the tenth largest municipality in the

state. It enjoys extensive development and growth and is a great place to both live, work and do business. The Town Hall facility has been expanded over the years and currently houses the following functions: Administration, Board of Selectmen, Assessing, Engineering, Finance, Information Technology, Inspectional Services, Planning, Town Clerk/Tax Collector, Water, Welfare and Zoning/Code Enforcement. The Town has 192 full-time and 38 part-time employees (excluding seasonal recreation positions). There are 34 employees housed in Town Hall. The Select Board and Planning Board as well as other boards meet in two meeting rooms at Town Hall. All of these services demand sufficient staffing of all departments to meet the needs of the community and provide excellent, efficient, customer service in a timely manner. This impacts all positions located in Town Hall.

3. Methodology

The methodology utilized included a wide variety of data collection, research, and analytical techniques to include review of best practices in the industry, comparisons with other communities of similar size, interviews with the majority of personnel currently located in Town Hall, interviews with Select Board members, as well as review of the physical space occupied by the employees and related department equipment, materials, and storage space. A majority of employees in departments located in Town Hall were interviewed either via Zoom or telephone, as a result of their preference. Interviews were conducted with the following:

Administration

Town Administrator

Select Board

Three Select Board Members

Finance

Finance Director
Town Accountant
Human Services Specialist

Town Clerk/Tax Collector

Town Clerk/Tax Collector

Planning

Town Planner

Engineering

Town Engineer

Zoning/Code Enforcement

Zoning Administrator/Code Enforcement Officer

Assessing

Chief Assessor

Additionally reviewed were current job descriptions of the Town Hall positions, and varied town materials available from town departments, and data and information from the following resources:

- Business NH Magazine, Article, Hudson Among Hottest Communities in Nation
- Annual Town Reports, 2000 – 2021
- Varied NH Communities of Similar Size
- Bloomberg BNA
- Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM)
- International Public Management Association for Human Resources (IPMA-HR)
- International City/County Management Association (ICMA)

The following summarizes the study methodology used:

1. Conducted comprehensive interviews with employees located in Town Hall. This was done to obtain insight into the operations, services, activities, and programs provided by the positions and departments located in Town Hall.
2. Reviewed all space of functions currently located in Town Hall. This provided insight into availability of adequate space for efficiency of each operation as well as location for convenient accessibility between departments for services provided.

3. Received and reviewed relevant information and documentation provided by employees and management officials.
4. Conducted additional analyses related to issues identified during the interview process.
5. Conducted an external review to determine and analyze somewhat comparable communities providing similar services and demographics.
6. Compared service levels with the consultant's assessment techniques based on current trends and "best practices."
7. Evaluated operations and services in detail and developed the analyses contained in this report as it relates to current and future staffing requirements.

4. Town Hall Personnel History

A review of the history of staffing and responsibilities of positions indicated that a variety of changes have taken place over the past several years. The town previously had additional positions of an Assistant Town Administrator, Community Development Director, Zoning Administrator and Code Enforcement Officer. These positions were eliminated many years ago or combined as the Zoning Administrator and Code Enforcement Officer position currently is. The result of some of these changes is that now there are some two- person separate department functions that report to the Town Administrator, thus increasing the span of control of the Town Administrator position significantly.

5. Town Hall Facility Space

An on-site tour of the Town Hall facility revealed it has many different levels with different entrances to various departments. Most of the functions that are visited by the public are on the main level of Town Hall, such as the Town Clerk/Tax Collector and other high- volume operations. Other services are located on the other levels. The building is somewhat of a maze and also includes two meeting rooms for Boards and Committees. All areas viewed were fairly crowded with workspace areas, files, and storage throughout the facility.

B. FINDINGS

The following sections provide analyses and recommendations for staffing options and related measures that should be taken to provide Hudson with the necessary workforce to address both the growing needs of the community and improve current efficiency. It also addresses some techniques that should be considered to ensure effective operation of functions.

1. Administration

Town Administrator, Executive Assistant, Administrative Aide, Custodian and Select Board's Office

This function includes the administrative positions of Executive Assistant and Administrative Aide that provide varied administrative and clerical assistance to the Select Board and Town Administrator. These positions adequately handle the associated duties.

The Select Board establishes the policy for the town and the Town Administrator oversees the day-to-day operation of the town and implements the policies adopted by the Board. Under the current operation, the Town Administrator does not possess the authority to hire and fire and departments conduct hiring processes within their departments and handle personnel-related issues. Any hiring or terminations require action by the Select Board. Additionally, there are a variety of actions required at Select Board meetings that if the Town Administrator had more authority, he could sign off and streamline some of the procedures and improve efficiency.

The Town Administrator's span of control is very wide due to having 18 direct reports of all departments and functions. With this wide span, it is most difficult to effectively manage and be knowledgeable on all functions as well as conduct evaluations efficiently. There are two areas the Town Administrator could utilize assistance in order to have a more productive operation.

A critical need for the town is to have a knowledgeable Human Resource Director or Manager that would oversee and assist with human resource functions of effectively handling recruitment, working with departments on appropriate and legal interviews of applicants, working with union contracts and advising employees and departments on matters such as disciplinary issues, personnel policy practices, and counselling employees/departments as needed on personnel matters. Due to the size of Hudson, it is most warranted as according to Bloomberg BNA's HR Department Benchmarks and Analysis Report, the rule of thumb ratio is 1.4 full-time HR staff per 100 employees. Based on the number of employees the town has, the addition of a professional human resource position is long overdue.

The next area of need to be considered is to have an Assistant Town Administrator to assist the Town Administrator by supervising some functions currently supervised by the Town Administrator and reduce the Town Administrator's span of control to be more in the range of 9-11. A recent market data survey indicated that the average span is around 10 to be effective. Other projects could also be supervised by the Assistant.

It could also be of benefit to the town and Select Board to eventually change the Town Administrator position to a Town Manager position which would then operate with the power and duties outlined in RSA Chapter 37. This would provide the Town Manager the authority to sign some paperwork, currently that must go to the Select Board for signature; allow the TM to hire personnel; and overall provide more efficiency in running the day-to-day operations of the town.

It would be beneficial for the Town Administrator or an outside facilitator to conduct an Orientation Session for the Select Board. Some members may have attended programs offered by the NH Municipal Association (NHMA) which is most helpful, however the addition of an internal orientation into how the town operates, policies, procedures and department information would be helpful. It would also be positive for the town for the Select Board to have a goal setting session and establish goals that could then be discussed with departments and departments could then work towards those goals when preparing budgets. If conflict arises within the Select Board consideration should be given to having a third party facilitate a session with the Board to work cooperatively together to accomplish the goals of the town. Some of the thoughts expressed are the result of feedback from both employees and Select Board members regarding some areas of concern.

2. Assessing

Chief Assessor, Deputy Assessor, Administrative Aide (PT)

This department is responsible for the appraisal and assessment of all real estate in the town. It also handles tax abatements and processing several tax exemptions. In addition to the current staff listed, it contracts out cyclical reassessments to a third party. The Department works closely with the Town Clerk/Tax Collector regarding taxes and indicated that there is too much for just one person and was supportive of splitting the Town Clerk/Tax Collector position, as it would provide improved efficiency to the town. The current staffing of the department and space in Town Hall are both sufficient for the Assessing function. The department is in the process of changing the Assessing software system from Patriot to Vision. This will take time to transition fully to a new system.

3. Engineering

Town Engineer, Civil Engineer, Administrative Aide

This is listed as a separate department and the Town Engineer reports directly to the Town Administrator. Some of the duties seem to have expanded over time as some things were not getting accomplished, so this department has taken on a variety of duties. It provides technical support to town boards, commissions, committees, and reviews and inspects development projects and handles applications for varied driveway sewer, water, acceptance, and allocations. It has also taken charge of the maintenance of 14 traffic lights in town. There is additionally extensive oversight of Hudson's water utility which includes a contract with Whitewater to provide operational services to the Hudson Water Utility. The Town Engineer is involved with traffic lights, water operation, and handles compliance for the land fill with an environmental focus. The Town Engineer has developed and maintains the Town's GIS system. This system could be expanded for other uses in the Town, however the Town Engineer would need to be provided the time and resources to do so. The Civil Engineer primarily handles the projects with review and oversight. The two positions, along with the Administrative Aide handling the associated administrative functions for the department, cannot take on any additional tasks without additional personnel. It is unusual to have this function report directly to the Town Administrator and not be part of the Public Works Department or have a separate Water and Sewer Department. This department does work with the Land Use Planning Department also on a regular basis.

4. Finance

Finance Director, Town Accountant, Senior Accounting Clerk (1 FT 1 PT), Human Services Specialist and Water Billing

There have been some personnel changes in this department which involved the Town Accountant being promoted to the Finance Director and the hiring of a new Town Accountant. As such, both these positions have been in the process of learning the job along with keeping the department running smoothly. The Department has started cross training more positions within the department to assist with having a more efficient, knowledgeable group of employees. The functions of payroll, benefits and human services are all handled in the Finance Department. The functions are performed by the Senior Accounting Clerks and Human Services Specialist. Additionally, the Water Billing is handled in this department. The Audit has been conducted and there are some management notes that address some issues that should be addressed. The Finance Department is moving forth to address issues noted in the audit.

Once all staff are fully knowledgeable of all responsibilities of their positions, this function does not require additional staffing. A major issue that will impact the department is when it moves

forth with either an updated financial software system, or a new system is installed. The current system utilized of MuniSmart does not meet the current needs and a change in the near future is warranted. This of course will have significant impact on the department. The water billing operation works effectively. The department is working also to address some audit notations. This department has an adequate number of staff and oversees appropriate functions in accordance with best practices of similar sized operations.

5. Information Technology (IT)

IT Director, IT Technician II, IT Specialist (2)

An Assessment Study of this department was conducted in 2020 and the department has been in the process of implementing many of the recommendations since that time. The Information Technology Department (IT) manages all hardware, software, and networking needs, from purchasing through installation and maintenance, for all Town departments including Public Safety services. IT staff support approximately 300 users, including employees, elected officials and volunteers who use Town resources. They maintain telephone and other technology in 12 town-owned buildings and several remote sites.

The prior IT Director retired during the past year and after a recruitment process an employee from within the IT Department was promoted to the IT Director position. The department is in the process of filling a vacant position, and once all positions are filled, will continue to proceed with moving forth with implementation of some of the recommendations. Currently the IT staffing is adequate.

6. Inspectional Services

Fire Marshal, Fire Prevention Officer, Building Official, Administrative Aide

Inspectional Services is a Division of the Fire Department that is housed in the Town Hall facility. It is responsible for regulating the construction, demolition, occupancy and safety of all buildings and structures, within the Town. It reviews, approves and issues permits required by code for the repair, alteration, addition, and new construction of all residential, commercial, and industrial buildings. This division reviews plans, performs inspections and provides fire prevention education and performs fire investigations. The personnel in this division work jointly with several departments located in Town Hall to include Planning and Zoning/Code Enforcement. The location in Town Hall is positive for both customer service and access to materials and personnel located in Town Hall. The location helps the customers with “one-stop” assistance, rather than going to several different buildings for services.

7. Planning

Town Planner, Administrative Aide

The Planning Department provides staff assistance to the Planning Board and general public. It coordinates development plans and is involved in all town economic and development issues. The state, however, does more work on economic development and the town has concentrated more on business retention.

Some time ago there was a Community Development Department that included the functions of Planning, Zoning and Engineering and included another position in Planning of an Associate Planner. Since that time, all of these functions have become separate departments all reporting to the Town Administrator.

The Town Planner has the contracted assistance of an Assistant Planner from the Nashua Planning Commission that works under eight hours per week and assists with preparation for Planning Board meetings. The town has experienced the largest project in history of the redevelopment of a golf course for Amazon Distribution (500,000 square foot distribution warehouse with over 77 acres.) Due to the impact of this large project and other ongoing activities there are major items that have not been addressed and need to be. The Master Plan has not been updated since 2006, the Land Use regulations have numerous contradictions, and the Zoning map is riddled with inaccuracies. These items should be addressed. The addition of an Associate Planner would allow the position to handle staff reports for Planning Board meetings and other areas dealing with varied agenda items and the Town Planner could begin to work on the Master Plan, Land Use Regulations and other high- level needs. Absent hiring a full time Associate Planner, the hours of the Planner available through the Nashua Regional Planning Commission should greatly be increased, however my understanding is that there may not be the availability of personnel to increase hours.

8. Town Clerk/Tax Collector

Town Clerk/Tax Collector, Deputy Town Clerk, Clerks, Sewer Aide

The Town Clerk/Tax Collector is a combined position that is an elected one. The department is staffed with four full-time positions and also in charge of the Sewer Billing Aide position. The staffing is adequate to handle the combined services of the Town Clerk functions of voter registration and various licenses to include vital records, marriage licenses and dog licenses. The Tax Clerk functions handle motor vehicle registration and property taxes. A significant issue that needs to be addressed is the handling of the Tax Collector functions which requires reconciliations and providing the Finance Department with timely, accurate collection information. It has been several months behind and while several individuals have tried to

assist and train the Town Clerk/Tax Collector this function, it still continues to be a problem and was cited in the audit.

The position is an elected one and thus does not require specific requirements pertaining to accounting, bookkeeping, and math requirements. It only requires being a resident, but no other mandatory education or experience requirements. There are a few options to address this issue that will be addressed in the recommendations.

9. Zoning/Code Enforcement

Zoning Administrator/Code Enforcement Officer, Administrative Aide

This function has been changed a few times and previously had been under the Fire Department and the Job Description has never been changed to reflect it is no longer part of Inspectional Services. The primary focus of this position has been on the Zoning Administration side, working with the Zoning Board, reviewing building permits and signs for Zoning, issuing Administrative Decisions in accordance with the Zoning Ordinance and attending Zoning Board meetings. The Code Enforcement portion has concentrated mainly on glaring issues along the primary routes within the town. In order to better address the Code Enforcement side, the addition of a part time Code Enforcement Officer could greatly assist. This a desirable position for a part time retired, knowledgeable person with the codes. One Administrative Aide position for this function is adequate to cover the associated administrative and clerical work. Rather than have this position report the Town Administrator or Town Engineer it may make more sense to have it part of either Inspectional Services or a Land Use Department function.

C. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following chart provides a variety of recommendations and options for consideration that provides the town with a roadmap for both immediate as well as future staffing, potential position modifications, and associated actions for consideration. The recommendations are a result of analysis of the positions and operational functions, best practices for a growing community such as Hudson, and provides a variety of opportunities the town may desire to further explore both now and in the future.

D. ACTION PLAN

The following Action Plan provides the town with a variety of recommended options to consider. Decisions on which option to move forth with should be based on a variety of factors to include budgetary constraints and/or availability, space availability for the addition of any new positions as well as best meeting the public's needs for efficient, effective service. Additionally, some of the potential options may require being phased in over a period of time.

ITEM	RECOMMENDED ACTION
Administration	<p>Consideration should be given to the following opportunities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Reduce the Span of Control of the Town Administrator, as too many departments and functions report directly to this position and thus does not allow the TA to be thoroughly familiar with all activities of each function and provide meaningful supervision and guidance. This would increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the TA position. Some of the positions currently directly supervised by the TA could be incorporated into other Departments, such as Public Works and others, and that Department Head would then directly supervise the function. Another option is to add the position of Assistant Town Administrator that could then have the responsibility of supervising some of the functions.<li>2. A critical need that was expressed by several Department Heads as well as Selectmen is the addition of a knowledgeable Human Resource Director or Manager. This position would possess a human resource background and assist all departments and employees with their human resource needs to include recruitment, selection, labor relations, union contracts, training, mediation, and employee-related issues. Payroll and benefits should continue to be in the Finance Department. This position should report directly to the Town Administrator. Space for this position could possibly be provided either in the current Select Board office, or in another portion of Town Hall as many times employees do not want to meet HR near the location of the Town Administrator.

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Another option to consider is to hire an Assistant Town Administrator/HR Director. The individual should have a strong HR background and could handle both the HR function and assist the Town Administrator with supervision of some departments and oversee some special projects. 4. The preferred option of the above mentioned is to hire a Human Resource Director that would only deal with personnel issues and advisement and move some of the direct reports to the Town Administrator to be incorporated within larger departments. 5. In order for both the Select Board and Departments to all be working towards the same goals of the town, especially when preparing budgets, it would be beneficial to have the Town Administrator or an outside facilitator to conduct an Orientation Session for the Select Board that would include an internal orientation of how the town operates, policies, procedures along with information about each department. As a second part of this session, a goal-setting session should be conducted, so the Select Board, Town Administrator and Town Departments would all be working on the same goals. 6. Select Board Members are currently designated as liaison to specific departments, and this practice seems to be positive and should also continue. 7. In order to be more productive, if conflicts continue to exist among some Select Board members, it is recommended the Board work with a Facilitator/Trainer to learn how to effectively work together harmoniously, in order to be more productive and accomplish goals of the town effectively.
<p>Assessing</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. This department is currently staffed appropriately and operating effectively. With the transition to the new Vision software system, it may take some time for all staff to effectively learn the system. All staff are encouraged to take advantage of the various Vision training opportunities available to them.



Engineering	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. This function has limited staff to accomplish the varied functions it has taken on. Fortunately, the personnel are talented to be able to accomplish the varied work as they have the best interests of the Town. However, if the function stays as a separate one, they must learn to say “No” and not take on any additional duties. 2. The location seems to work well near land use, however, Engineering is normally a Division of the Public Works Department. The Town’s website lists the traffic light function as one responsible to Public Works. 3. Consideration should also be given to separating the Water Utility as possibly another division within the Public Works Department, as it has grown to have many users.
Finance	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cross-training of positions should continue so there will not be any voids in services when an employee is on vacation or ill. 2. A Procedure Book should be developed for the different functions within the Finance Department, as some functions only occur periodically and a Procedure Book would greatly assist as well as when staff may be out, or there is a change in personnel. 3. Activity should continue to address the notations listed in the recent audit. Some of this is the result of long-time personnel leaving with no written procedures, as well as new, untrained staff in some departments that have not provided the Finance Department with timely information required. 4. Staffing is adequate in this department.
Information Technology	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. This department is adequately staffed and should continue moving forth with recommendations previously made as part of a department assessment in 2020.
Inspectional Services	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. This Division should continue operating with the current staffing.



<p>Planning</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The addition of an Associate Planner is needed in order to maintain the level of service warranted in this department due to the continued growth of the department. 2. If the addition of a position is not feasible, then the hours of the currently contracted Planner from the Nashua Regional Planning Commission should be increased significantly. 3. Consideration should also be given to establishing this department as a Community Development Department that includes Planning, Economic Development and Zoning/Code Enforcement. These are all Land Use functions and it is more the norm with best practices of comparable communities. This would involve the Zoning Administrator/Code Enforcement Officer becoming a part of this department and the Town Planner, if having an adequate background becoming the Director of the Department. The department could also simply be called Land Use Department or Planning and Zoning Department, based on the desires of the Town.
<p>Town Clerk/Tax Collector</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Take steps to continue having the Town Clerk as an Elected position but change the Tax Collector to an appointed position. This may require Town Meeting action. 2. Until there can be an experienced separate Tax Collector, due to the unreconciled financial issues, the Town should have an experienced accountant come in and get the records caught up and train the current Town Clerk/Tax Collector on how to effectively handle the Tax Collector duties and perhaps provide a step-by-step procedure book to assist.
<p>Zoning/Code Enforcement</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A part-time experienced Code Enforcement Officer should be hired to address more of the Code Enforcement issues which would greatly assist the Zoning Administrator/Code Enforcement Officer. 2. Consideration should be given to incorporate the Zoning/Code Enforcement function in the proposed department of Community Development, or a Land Use/Planning Department rather than have this position report to the Town Administrator.
<p>Town Hall Office Space for Staffing</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Town Hall is very crowded with offices and limited storage areas. It does include two good sized meeting rooms for Select Board Planning Board meetings as well as other committees. These are areas that could be viewed for some possible modifications if additional office space overall would be needed. The Town might want to consider in the future having some type of space study to better utilize the space in Town Hall.

CONCLUSION

Municipal Resources, Inc. (MRI) conducted a staffing and administrative needs assessment of the Town Hall departments in order to provide Hudson with a fresh look at current and future staffing requirements that may be impacted as a result of turnover in positions, growing expansion of town development and necessary services required to meet these expanding needs that are expected by the community. The Town has an outstanding staff of employees, many wearing several different “hats” with varied responsibilities. The time and input received Town Hall department staff and the Select Board is appreciated. It is clear that with the volume of activity in Hudson, some future staffing along with modification of some current positions will be necessary to provide the level of service the community expects.

The Action Plan provides Hudson with some viable options to consider, in order to continue to efficiently provide appropriate service in the active environment it continues to enjoy.