



## City of Cambridge

410 Academy Street  
Cambridge, MD 21613

TO: Mayor and City Commissioners  
FROM: David J. Deutsch, Acting City Manager  
SUBJECT: City Manager Recruitment  
DATE: September 23, 2021

I have been requested to outline various options that can be used to recruit Cambridge's next City Manager. The options are somewhat limited, and are listed below:

- A. Retain Mercer Group Associates (MGA) to conduct the search. I am a Senior Associate with MGA, having been affiliated with MGA and its predecessor organization, The Mercer Group, Inc., for over five years. During that time I have conducted over one dozen local government searches. I have also hired numerous senior level management staff during my twenty-three years as City Manager in Bowie, including chief of police, human resources director, economic development director, information technology director, community services director, city clerk and more. Conducting the search (under a separate contract) while serving as acting City Manager replicates the dual role I had in Cheverly in 2019. The benefit of this approach is that the acting City Manager is in a better position to understand the Cambridge community and the City government organization given the "insider status" gained from the acting City Manager role. No other executive search consultant will be able to say that.
- B. A Request for Proposals (RFP) could be prepared, and submittals from various firms may be obtained. Mercer Group Associates will compete if necessary, but it should be understood that the RFP process will consume some time at the outset of the recruitment effort, and it will delay the actual start of the search by some weeks.
- C. A third option is to conduct the search in-house, using existing staff to assist the Mayor and Commissioners in conducting the search. Cities that go this route are generally communities with a dedicated human resources staff, which clearly does not exist in Cambridge.

Administrative Standard Operating Procedures (ASOP) address a range of policy matters in Cambridge. While ASOP No. 24 regarding procurement was last amended in 2015, it does not address professional services, which is addressed in ASOP No. 15, which was adopted in 1988 and is outdated. I have discussed this with the City Attorney, and together we will recommend changes to the relevant ASOP. One feature of the Bowie, Maryland City Charter (Section 61 (b) (4)) that should be considered in updating procurement regulations relates to professional services: "All procurements involving professional services, including but not limited to accounting, architecture, auditing, engineering, law, planning, and surveying need not be on a bid basis but may be negotiated by the City Manager or the Council or both. The City Manager shall advertise the intention to negotiate for such professional services prior to making any contract in excess of twenty-five thousand dollars (\$25,000)." Executive search clearly falls under the heading of "professional services". I can safely state that the executive search contract for a full-time Cambridge City Manager will be less than \$25,000.

There are other issues that should be addressed, and they are beyond the scope of the search process that is outlined above. These matters include:

1. **Residency:** Section 3-39(b) (4) requires residency within Cambridge city limits within one (1) year of appointment. Residency requirements limit the depth of the applicant pool.
2. **Search committee:** Cambridge City Charter Sections 3-39 (b) and 3-39 (b) (6) reference a search committee as part of the City Manager selection process. At minimum there will be additional time consumed in the search process as the search consultant will need to meet with the committee. The role of the committee needs to be clarified. I must say that a Charter mandated committee is quite unusual. The committee may have been a valuable asset for the first search process when Ms. Tripp-Jones was hired under a new Charter Section, but it is difficult to see how such a committee fits into the search process for the third City Manager.
3. **Charter changes:** There is currently a Charter Amendment Resolution (CAR) pending that addresses the human resources function and the provision of legal services (city attorney). The City Charter in Section 3-39 (d) "Powers and Duties" states "S/he shall serve as the chief personnel officer of the city, which shall include all matters regarding human resources". A human resources director position should be created and filled. The pending CAR strips the human resource function from the City Manager's aegis, and presumably would have the HR Director reporting directly to elected leadership.

Cambridge operates with a Council/Manager form of government. Removing positions from the purview of the City Manager is inconsistent with the Council/Manager form of government, and could potentially create confusion and upheaval in city government. Carving out the HR function, or any other line or staff function in the City government, and having a position(s) report directly to elected leadership will clearly be seen as a lack of support for the Council/Manager form of

government. The mere existence of the proposed CAR is potentially problematic, but if the Charter is amended as described in CR-2021-01, the impact could affect the depth and quality of the applicant pool for the City Manager position. Recruiters hear the question all the time: "How solid is the charter and is there elected and community support for the position?"

#### **RECOMMENDATION SUMMARY**

The Mayor and City Commissioners need to decide as soon as possible on the process that will be used to acquire the next City Manager. Most recruitment proposals suggest a 90 to 120 day process for the recruitment. A week from Friday is October 1, and therefore a realistic expectation for the start date for the new manager is sometime in the middle of the first quarter of 2022. One of the factors that needs to be realized is that if the person chosen as your next City Manager is currently a City Manager elsewhere, he/she may have a contractual obligation for notice to a governing body regarding a departure. Those notice requirements start at thirty (30) days.

I look forward to discussing this important matter with you in the Work session on Monday night (September 27). I believe you all have my contact information if any Member would want to discuss this report prior to the Monday session.

#### **Attachments:**

- a. City Charter 3.39 – City Manager
- b. City Manger - Resolution
- c. Charter Resolution No. CR-2021-01