



City of Cambridge

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TO: City Council
FROM: David J. Deutsch, Acting City Manager
SUBJECT: Economic Development and Grants Positions
DATE: March 23, 2022

Often a staff vacancy provides an opportunity to assess organizational needs. That situation exists now with the departure last month of the Economic Development Director. The person occupying that position focuses on the more traditional twin goals of business retention and attraction. The incumbent will need to establish productive relationships with local businesses, as well as organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce, Cambridge Main Street, Dorchester County, State agencies and others. An annual work plan should be created that will provide direction, as well, insuring that the work of the economic development staff is consistent with Council goals, provides a template for communication with, and evaluation by the city manager, as well as facilitating productive complementary relationships with City staff. Solid internal communication will help avoid the “silos” that sometimes can occur, often at the expense of organizational productivity.

The prior economic development director spent a significant amount of her time on grant funded projects such as the Mace’s Lane School Rehabilitation project and the rehabilitation of the Pine Street area. These matters still require staff’s attention. The common element of both of the aforementioned projects is grant funding. Grant funding has become an important aspect of financing the implementation of various Council goals. I would suggest that a new position of Grants Administrator be created. Some have suggested the title of “Grant Writer”. I prefer the term “Grants Administrator” to suggest a broader role in which we would expect the position to work not only on grant writing, but also on grants management. Grant funding is not “free”, as there are often increasingly complex reporting and compliance requirements, which require a significant time commitment by staff. The Grants Manager would be someone who would work with all operating departments, as well insuring compliance with various regulations by assuring, in concert with the operating department and the Finance Department, that the appropriate communication occurs internally to facilitate compliance with the regulatory requirements of funding agencies.

With Council’s support of these positions, we will return shortly with specific recommendations on a recruitment timetable, budget impact and salary recommendations for both slots.