



Watertown City Council

Administration Building
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Watertown, MA 02472
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ELECTED OFFICIALS:

Mark S. Sideris,
Council President

Vincent J. Piccirilli, Jr.,
Vice President &
District C Councilor

John M. Airasian,
Councilor At Large

Caroline Bays,
Councilor At Large

John G. Gannon,
Councilor At Large

Anthony Palomba,
Councilor At Large

Nicole Gardner,
District A Councilor

Lisa J. Feltner,
District B Councilor

Committee on Personnel and City Organization

August 14, 2023, 7:00 pm
City Council Chambers

Members present: Chair Caroline Bays, Vice Chair John Gannon, and Secretary Nicole Gardner. Additional people present were City Manager George Proakis, Emily Monea (Deputy City Manager), Councilor Vinnie Piccirilli, and the following members of the public: Jacky Van Leeuwen, Ilana Mainelli, Jacqui Gross, and (via zoom) Rachel Kay and Tiffany York.

The Committee held a public meeting to discuss the qualities desired in the hiring of a Human Resources Director with City Manager George Proakis and the public.

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 pm.

Councilor Bays welcomed all present, and invited City Manager Proakis and Deputy City Manager Monea to share background on the HR Study recently released, and the thinking regarding the new department and position.

Mr. Proakis thanked the Council for funding the study, and said that he looked forward to working with the Council and others to prioritize and implement the findings. He noted that the job is already posted, and there has been some promising interest expressed. The job posting is attached.

Ms. Monea then shared the study's key findings in four areas:

1. Strategy and leadership
 2. Recruitment and retention
 3. Organization development and culture
 4. Efficient and effective workflows
- (slides attached)

The public were then invited to ask questions or share their views.

Ms. Mainelli raised the issue of training needed for members of Boards, Committees, and Commissions, based on her experience as an Elections Commissioner. In the ensuing discussion the need was taken under advisement by Mr. Proakis, both for general training (i.e. open meeting law) and board specific training (i.e. elections law). It is not clear yet whether this responsibility would fall into the purview of the HR Director, or elsewhere.

Ms. Van Leeuwen spoke to long-standing and serious cultural issues within the Administration, and the need for change. She pointed out staff retention challenges and the fact that no employees were

participating in the meeting as evidence of a lack of trust and feeling of fairness and belonging. She said this is not unique to Watertown, and that these issues must be discussed to be addressed. She also hopes that the HR Director would work together with unions to tackle issues of discrimination. Ms. Van Leeuwen thinks it is essential that the City be open in the challenges it faces, when interviewing candidates, so they know what they are coming into.

Councilor Bays noted that the reason the HR Study was commissioned, and an HR Department is being created, is to create the capacity within the City to address such issues directly, professionally, and in a timely manner. She noted that a successful HR Director needs to understand that change will not come about simply through training.

Manager Proakis acknowledged the need to share what is working well and what is not, with candidates. He also noted that up until now, the city had only one HR professional for all the work that needed to get done, and that much of it is still being done inefficiently using paper forms. The day to day "must do" work of getting people hired (or retired) and paid left no time for things like development, training, performance management and so on.

Councilor Gannon said that he believes the following are important to look for in an HR Director:

- the ability to work with leaders of all departments
- the ability to work with a diverse workforce
- familiarity with MA labor and personnel law
- the expertise to conduct sensitive and savvy investigations of personnel matters, where employees will feel heard
- collective bargaining experience
- the ability to serve as the City's ADA Officer

Ms. York felt it was important that the city hire a seasoned HR professional, who knows how to build a team, and who is prepared to hold people accountable. She noted that exploring how the Director would conduct Performance Reviews was important.

Councilor Gardner shared a comment from a resident via Facebook that the HR Director should have a broad readiness to learn the perspective of marginalized groups, and a non-defensive, curious and collaborative personal style.

Councilor Gardner said that in addition to what had been said so far, she believes the following are important to look for:

- demonstrated experience in change management
- demonstrated strong executional skills given the work plan in the report
- embracing data as key to accountability -- knowing what should be measured, and how to use the information for organization improvement
- philosophy that people are an asset to the organization, and that centering the employee experience matters
- the ability to lead, influence and be a trusted advisor to others

Councilor Bays added negotiation skills to the list.

Councilor Gannon asked what the vision is for a revised HR Ordinance. Mr. Proakis replied that creating an Employee Handbook was the first step, because he wants clear and accessible codes and regulations. A review of the 40+ year old ordinance would follow later.

Ms. York said she believed mistakes have been made in the past, that not all employees have felt that they have a safe place to have a conversation, and that the City needs to address long standing personnel matters.

Mr. Proakis noted that he has restructured the city organization chart, with every department having either a direct or liaison role to either the Deputy Manager or the Assistant Manager. Until now, they have relied on people outside the organization for advice and counsel. He looks forward to having an HR Director as part of the team.

Councilor Piccirilli said that the HR Director will have a broader reach and thus more impact than other leaders. He agreed with the point that the Director must be able to serve as a change agent. Ultimately, the City is here to provide services to residents, and happy employees provide exceptional service.

In closing the meeting, Councilor Bays noted that the creation of the HR Department came out of the HR Study, which itself resulted from a referral to the PCO after the murder of George Floyd and the resulting discussion of racism and discrimination in our City. She hopes that the investment in HR will help Watertown improve the day to day experience of City employees, and result in strong recruitment, development, and retention of our staff.

The meeting adjourned on a unanimous vote at 8:26pm.

Minutes submitted by Councilor Nicole Gardner

Watertown City Council

Personnel & City Organization Meeting



August 14, 2023

On tonight's agenda

- Discuss the considerations of qualities for Director of Human Resources with the City Manager
- → this is directly tied to the recent Personnel/HR Department Study completed by Raftelis
- → the following slides summarize the key findings and recommendations from that study.

“Modern local government human resources management has been driven by technological advancements, changing workplace dynamics, and global workplace trends. Today’s approach to human resources is built upon the idea that HR must be a strategic organizational function, and the actions and focus of HR should be based on meeting the needs of the organization and the people within it. In other words, HR does not exist solely to process transactions; HR exists to ensure that the organization has the workforce it requires to accomplish its objectives.”

HR Service Level Evaluation (pg. 7)

Human Resource Function	Program Area
HR Leadership and Administration	• HR Strategy and Leadership
	× Policy Development and Administration
	✓ Department Administration
Labor and Employee Relations	• Labor Relations
	• Employee Relations
Recruitment and Retention	• Active Recruitment
	× Proactive Recruitment
	• Onboarding
	× Retention Analysis
Compensation and Classification	• Position Classification
	• Employee Compensation
HR Customer Service and Workflows	• HR Customer Service
	• Personnel Records Administration
	✓ Unemployment
Risk and Benefits	× Benefits Strategy
	× Employee Wellness
	• Risk Management
	• Employee Safety
	✓ Workers' Compensation
	✓ Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) Administration
	✓ Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Administration
Organizational Development and Culture	× Learning Management
	× Employee Training
	× Succession Planning and Leadership Development
	× Employee Engagement and Recognition
HR Information Systems (HRIS)	× HRIS Administration
	× Process and Workflow Improvement

HR Study Key Recommendations: Strategy & Leadership

“Shifting to an HR management approach, capable of providing fundamental HR services to the organization, will necessitate the creation of a new way of doing business for the Department.”

- Rename the Department to Human Resources ✓
- Hire a professional HR Director ★
- Restructure the Department & add 2 new positions
- Create an employee handbook & develop standard operating procedures
- Update the City’s 40+ year-old personnel regulations
- Develop communication & outreach strategies

HR Study Key Recommendations: Recruitment & Retention

“Recruiting and retaining a high-quality workforce is an acute issue for local governments across the country... Changing workforce expectations about work-life balance, flexible work arrangements, career development, and longevity have shifted candidates’ expectations for employers, and organizations are being challenged to adjust their workplace policies and compensation practices to remain competitive.”

- Streamline application process & use web-based technology to automate it
- Expand recruitment outreach
- Develop proactive recruitment strategies
- Develop strategies & policies that position the City as an employer of choice

HR Study Key Recommendations: Organizational Development & Culture

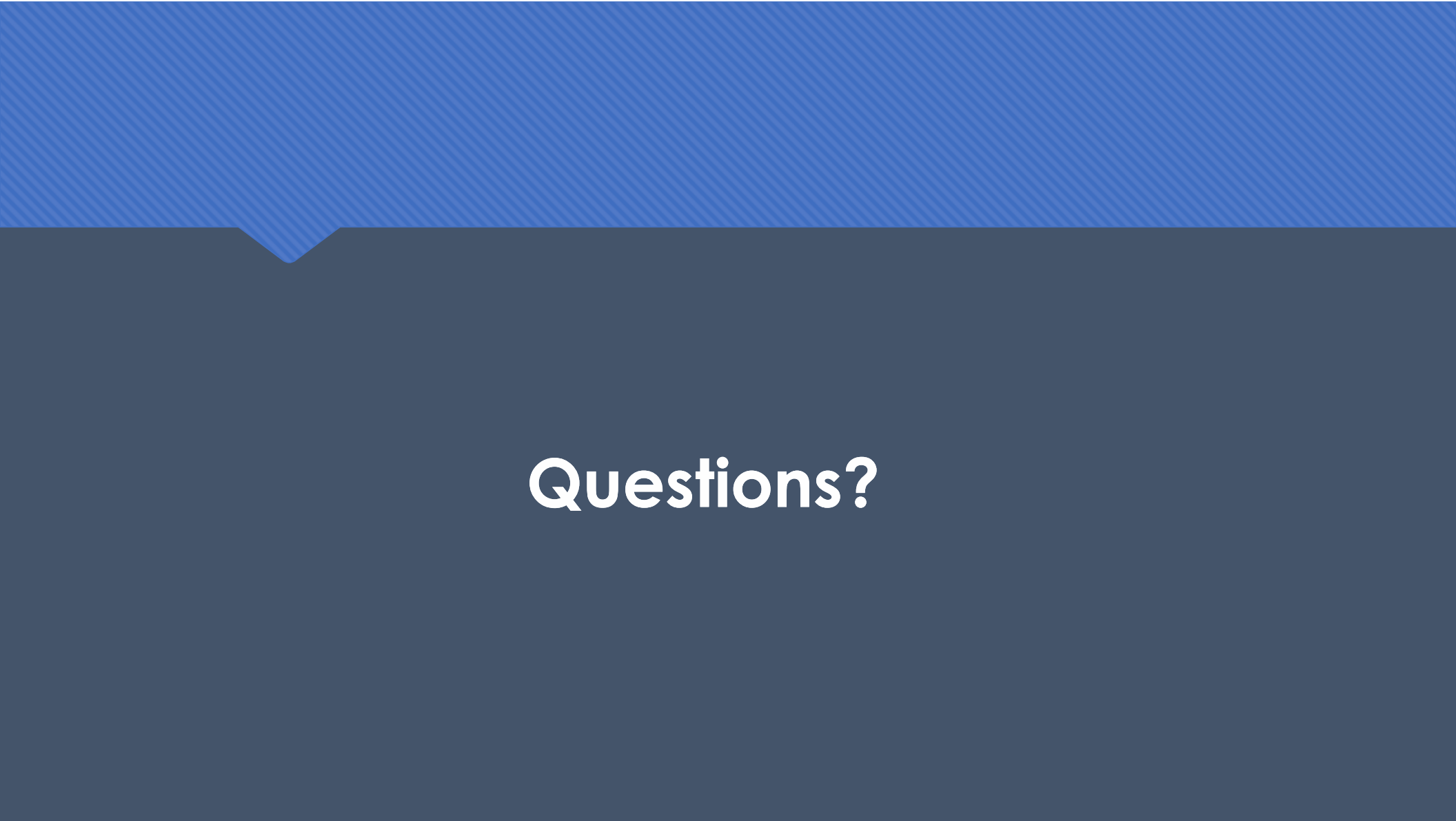
“Investing time and resources in employee development improves workforce retention and helps to promote a positive and engaged workplace culture. These are especially important in the public sector, where single employer, long-tenured careers are no longer the status quo.”

- Conduct needs assessment for organizational training & development
- Develop leadership development & supervisory training program
- Promote activities that support employee engagement

HR Study Key Recommendations: Effective & Efficient Workflows

“The HR Department has historically relied on manual, paper-based processes to accomplish many of its core functions. This approach requires a significant commitment of staff time and resources, promotes inefficiency, and boosts the risks associated with human error... [and limits] opportunities to focus on improving and expanding core HR services. ”

- Streamline the workflow for processing personnel-related changes.
- Negotiate union provisions that promote effective and efficient workflows.
- Leverage human capital management capabilities currently available to the City.



Questions?

Dear Nicole, Caroline, and John,

Circumstances prevent me from being there tonight, but I wanted to weigh in on your discussion.

As the City Manager pointed out during the recent State of the City address he delivered with the Council President, the voter-approved *Preamble* to the revised Watertown City Charter serves as an effective template for consideration of policy priorities, practices, and partnerships with respect to active civic and environmental stewardship of the City's precious resources. Those resources are not just financial. They also are human, social, environmental, built environment, even spiritual — to the extent that "hope" is in the air.

I consider the Director of Human Resources position as one that can embody, quite literally and figuratively, the best of those "multi-capital" commitments, even as it formally covers "human capital."

But we all know that we live in a world defined by systems and networks, so no form of "capital" — financial, human, social, environmental, built environment, or spiritual — is independent. To the contrary, they all interact and are interdependent.

As you discuss the qualities of candidates eligible for consideration as Director of Human Relations, I hope you rely, as City Manager Proakis did, on the *Preamble*'s Guiding Principles, which include: Safety & Tranquility; Health & Well-Being; Education and Excellence; Creativity & Innovation; Equity & Diversity; and Accountability & Transparency.

More specifically, I hope you raise questions about capabilities associated with the use of ongoing professional education and development, so as to maintain awareness and application of "best practices" with respect to specialized domain responsibilities. This is a critical component of resilient organizations, so as to remain "fit for future purpose" in a variety of ways.

Finally, I'd like to add this: I wanted to include "**Dignity & Respect**" as the seventh Guiding Principle at the time the *Preamble* drafting process was underway, but time did not permit that. When we again engage in the Charter Review, which will take place in a few years, I will advocate for its addition.

Seems to me that ought to be at the centerpiece of any decent HR Director, and all of those who have the honor to work as employees as the City of Watertown.

Thank you for your consideration.

With every good wish,

Marcy.

Marcy Murningham

Principal Architect, Equity Culture / Civic Fiduciary Action Labs

Select writings on "Wealth, Power, and the Public Interest:

Building Equity Culture and Civic Stewardship," New England Journal of Public Policy, Vol. 30, no. 1 (2018)

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recruiting@watertown-ma.gov

Posting Date: June 21, 2023

Posting # 23-06-07

POSITION VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

Human Resources Director

Human Resources Department

The City of Watertown is searching for a full-time Human Resources Director to serve as a key member of the City's leadership team and to implement the findings from the City's forthcoming Human Resources study, which calls for transforming the department from a transactional service provider to a strategic partner for the organization.

The forthcoming study will provide a roadmap for the incoming Human Resources Director. Expected focal points from that study include but are not limited to:

- Developing modern and best-practice human resources policies and procedures and a comprehensive employee guidebook.
- Reimagining the City's employment brand and talent acquisition experience.
- Strengthening the City's organizational culture to improve the employee experience and increase employee engagement and retention.
- Establishing a culture of learning, training, and growth for all employees.
- Embedding diversity, equity, and inclusion in all human resources functions.
- Collaborating with the Auditor's Office to transition the City's human resources functions from largely paper-based systems to a comprehensive human resources information system; and
- Restructuring the Human Resources Department, including creating new positions and modernizing internal processes.

The Human Resources Director will also collaborate with the City Manager's Office to implement the ongoing Classification & Compensation Study and to design a performance management program.

Additional responsibilities include management of the Human Resources staff; participation in collective bargaining negotiations and associated activities; and intaking and appropriately responding to complaints or claims related to discrimination, harassment, or other policy violations.

Required Minimum Qualifications

- Bachelor's degree in a relevant field such as human resource management, business, or public administration.
- 10 or more years of demonstrated progressively responsible leadership and management experience in human resources management, including in the public sector.
- Broad experience in the various disciplines of Human Resources including experience with collective bargaining units, compensation and benefits, payroll/human resources information systems, alternative dispute resolution techniques, and risk management/workers compensation.
- PHR or SPHR certification or the ability to obtain within a reasonable period is desired.
- Or any equivalent combination of education, training, and experience which provides the required knowledge, skills, and abilities to perform the essential functions of the job.

Starting Salary Range: \$125,000 to \$140,000 commensurate with experience

To Apply: Submit a resume and cover letter by email to recruiting@watertown-ma.gov or by fax to 1-617-923-8195.

Application deadline: Open until filled.

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