

City of Portage

Human Resources Committee Meeting

(This meeting will constitute a meeting of the Finance/Administration Committee, the Community Development Block Grant Committee and the Municipal Services and Utilities Committee as a quorum of members will be present; but no business of those committees will be taken up)

Tuesday, April 30, 2013, 6:30 p.m.

Municipal Building, Conference Room One

Agenda

Members: Bill Tierney, Chairperson, Rick Dodd, Jeff Garetson, Rita Maass, Frank Miller, Michael G. Oszman

1. Roll call
2. Approval of minutes from previous meetings
3. Discussion and possible recommendation on Ady Voldedge Phase II Report.
4. Adjournment

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the Community Development Block Grant Committee and the Municipal Services
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**Thursday, April 11, 2013, 6:00 p.m.
Municipal Building, Conference Room One
Agenda**

Members: Kenneth H. Jahn, Chairperson, Rick Dodd, Jeff
Garetson, Doug Klapper, Michael G. Oszman

Excused: Ald. Ebnetter

Also Present: City Administrator Murphy, Engineer Redelings and Attorney Spankowski.

Media Present: Bill Welsh from Cable TV

1. Roll call

The meeting was called to order at 6:00p.m. by Mayor Jahn.

2. Approval of minutes from previous meeting.

Motion by Dodd, second by Oszman to approve the minutes of the March 28, 2013 meeting. Motion carried unanimously on call of roll.

3. The committee will go into closed session pursuant to Wisconsin State Statutes 19.85(1)(c) to consider preliminary personnel concerns.

Motion by Dodd, second by Oszman to convene into closed session pursuant to Wisconsin State Statutes 19.85(1)(c) to consider preliminary personnel concerns. Motion carried unanimously on call of roll at 6:01p.m.

Motion by Oszman, second by Garetson to return to Open Session. Motion carried unanimously on call of roll at 6:38 p.m.

4. Discussion and possible recommendation for hiring Engineering Technician.

Mayor Jahn noted that the position description for Engineering Technician had been reviewed by HR Committee but had not subsequently been approved by Council. Attorney Spankowski commented that the position description may be approved in conjunction with a motion on hiring Engineering Technician. Murphy presented proposed employment offer for Ms. Salmon. Motion by Oszman, second by Garetson to recommend approval of the Engineering Technician position description as presented and recommend hiring of Erin Salmon as Engineer

Technician pursuant to Murphy's memo dated 4/11/13. Motion carried unanimously on call of roll.

5. Adjournment

Motion by Oszman, second by Garetson to adjourn. Motion carried unanimously on call of roll at 6:53 p.m.

BACKGROUND

In 2012, the City of Portage retained Ady Voltedge to evaluate available properties, identify target industries, and to develop its optimal position for business recruitment positioning and provide recommendations for implementing marketing activities. While the City's leaders are eager to move forward with the marketing and business recruitment activities, they wisely recognized that the City was not fully prepared to implement the plan. Framework items, such as staffing, committees and organizational structures, needed to be addressed so as to support a successful array of economic development activities. This memo contains the results of this second phase of activities. While it addresses a wide range of issues, it is important when reviewing the recommendations contained within to keep in mind that its primary focus is to help the City to lay the foundation for the launch of a successful comprehensive economic development program.

Ady Voltedge, working in conjunction with the Urban Associates Group, was asked to undertake an assessment and provide recommendations regarding the structure and alignment of the City's economic development activities. Based on conversations with City leaders, Ady Voltedge/UAG centered their efforts on the following questions:

1. What are the City's key gaps/weaknesses relative to its ability to deliver an effective economic development program?
2. In what ways could the structure and capacities of City Staff be amended in order to help advance the economic development strategy of the City?
3. How might the structure, roles, duties and authorities of City bodies, such as the CDA, Planning Commission, or City Council, be clarified or amended to improve the City's ability to set and achieve economic development goals?
4. In what ways might the City enhance its relationships with other economic development partners, policies, and programs, including those that it does not directly fund, so as to leverage greater levels of positive economic impacts for the community?

To address these questions, Ady Voltedge/UAG developed a research framework to investigate the following areas:

- *Staffing Analysis:* Ady Voltedge/UAG meetings with key staff to review job descriptions, duties, functions and capacities related to economic development.
- *Organizational Analysis:* Ady Voltedge/UAG meetings and interviews with representatives and key stakeholders representing both internal groups (e.g., the Community Development Authority, Planning Commission, etc.) and external groups (e.g., Main Street Portage, the Business Improvement District, the Portage Area Economic Development Corporation, etc.) to formulate opinions and recommendations regarding the City's positioning for future interaction.
- *Best Practices:* Based on knowledge and experience in other communities, Ady Voltedge/UAG formulated recommendations for Portage which incorporates a best practices approach.

In summary, the objective of this project is to *develop a set of recommendations which will guide the City in its efforts to align, manage, and implement a set of sustainable economic development activities that will benefit the City of Portage, its businesses, and residents.*

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METHODOLOGY

There is no single recognized process for undertaking a project such as this. Ady Voltedge/UAG utilized the information, expertise and community contacts developed in the initial phase of work to inform our current efforts. Much information was gathered through numerous interviews and conversations with key leaders and stakeholders, as well as the desk review of materials provided by the City administration. The research and information was then combined with our extensive knowledge of economic development and municipal administration gained through our work across Wisconsin, the Midwest, and the United States.

Information for the desk review was gathered throughout the fall of 2012, with interviews conducted in December/early January. Approximately fourteen people, representing a variety of stakeholder organizations and interests intimately involved with Portage's economic development activities, were interviewed over the course of this project. These individuals provided a robust picture of the City's economic development infrastructure, both past and present. Included in this group was Shawn Murphy, the interim City Administrator, whose experiences in other communities provided additional and valuable insights. He also served as the City's project liaison, helping to gather and provide access to information sources as requested by the consultant team.

It is worth noting that as the project was being initiated, the City was already swinging into action. The FY2013 budget process sought to advance the City's economic development initiative by allocating funding for a staff position focused on economic development. This position, informally referred to as an "economic development ombudsman," is a critical but yet-to-be defined piece of the City's strategic approach. This memo will attempt to provide additional guidance to help the City in implementing this position.

**KEY THEMES**

Some of the key themes that we have seen in our work with the City include:

- A realization that the City needs to be more proactive in managing its economic destiny. This includes developing a solid foundation of basic economic development activities – Business Expansion, Attraction, & Retention ("BEAR"). It also includes working to overcome the reputation, whether earned or not, that the City is not "business-friendly."
- Recognizing that the City's current organizational structure may need some realignment. In addition to addressing the core economic development competencies mentioned above, there is a need to address structural weaknesses in the staffing of planning and development services (comprehensively defined to include infrastructure investment, development review, and the administration of TIF districts). While issues are pointed at staffing, there is a need to also look at the City's Boards, Commissions, and Committees for corollary improvements and adjustments.
- An acknowledgement that in its current financial state, the City must laser-focus its resources on those activities that are the most important and urgent, or risk diluting efforts by trying to please all constituencies. There is a dire need to instill a sense of urgency and common direction among the diverse group of community stakeholders which currently appear to be acting from a balkanizing position of self-interest. Despite financial challenges, the City must exercise resourcefulness in pulling together people, a plan, and available resources to chart a new direction.



RECOMMENDATIONS

The following sections will present narratives and corresponding recommendations under three general headings. These are not presented in any specific sequence of importance or priority. In some cases, the City has already initiated action and the challenge will be to sustain the efforts; in other instances, there is a need to chart a new course of action and marshal the resources and political will to move forward.

Internal Organizations

This section addresses three organizations which are internal to the City of Portage.

1. **Focus the Community Development Authority on development/redevelopment projects.** The City has exercised the authority granted to it under Wisconsin Revised Statutes 66.1335 to create a Community Development Authority (CDA). The CDA is “a separate body politic for the purpose of carrying out blight elimination, slum clearance, urban renewal programs and projects and housing projects.” While the CDA has certain planning powers, the statute does not intend the CDA serve as the de facto economic development agency for the city. The CDA has at its disposal significant tools to foster physical development. Because of comments received during the interview process, the consultant team is concerned that the CDA may be trying to undertake more activities than it has capacity for – one result is the potential “burn out” of experienced members of the organization. As such, our recommendation is to restore the CDA to the role of being the redevelopment wing of the City, working in partnership with the ED Director, the Planning Commission, and private sector entities (such as PAEDC/PVI) and perhaps a new Economic Development Committee (see below) to achieve the City’s redevelopment objectives.
2. **Consider establishing a City Economic Development Committee.** In order to elevate the importance of planning and implementing a comprehensive economic development program, the City of Portage Council should consider the creation of an Economic Development Committee. The primary purpose of this Committee would be to maintain a strong bond between the Council and economic development activities. One of the core justifications for creating this Committee is that the Economic Development Director (and by extension, the City Administrator and other staff) would have a single source of input and direction on ED activities. It is strongly recommended that the Committee have adequate representation from the City Council so as to provide a reasonable level of support and consistency of expectations for items before the Council. There are two viable options for organizing such a Committee. Option One would be to make it a working committee of the Council. In this construct, the Committee basically serves a screening function and reports to the Committee of the Whole on economic development issues. Option Two would be a larger group which could include City Council members, a representative from the Planning Commission, and other members as necessary to represent key stakeholder groups. Under either construct the Committee would be responsible for focusing on the “traditional” economic development functions of the City - establishing plans and priorities for economic development activities, TIF management/oversight, oversight of the Enterprise Center, liaison with Main Street and BID organizations, etc. The Committee would work in partnership with the CDA (thus relieving the CDA of some of its current non-statutory functions) and coordinate with other local entities (e.g., Main Street, Chamber of Commerce, etc.). While each model has its strengths and weaknesses, the consultants generally recommend the larger group so as to gain the advantage of many minds and hands. [Note: Please see item #1 under *External Organizations*, below, for a discussion about PAEDC/PVI and their role.]

- 3. Continue to focus the efforts of the Plan Commission on forward-oriented plans and streamlining the development review process.** The Plan Commission has two important roles in the City: it is responsible for articulating a shared vision for the physical, social, and economic development of the City and all of its sub-districts and it is responsible for ensuring that development activities meet the necessary technical standards to protect the health, safety and welfare of the community. On the first role, it is important that the Plan Commission continue to be proactive in establishing long range plans for the City. The City's Comprehensive Plan is just the start. The City should ensure that it has specific and detailed plans for areas such as the CBD, emerging neighborhoods, parks & recreational facilities, and transportation (including multiple modes such as transit, freight, bicycles and pedestrians). The Comprehensive Plan is often too general to guide specific developments in these areas, and so additional plans may be necessary.

The second role of the Plan Commission falls into the "regulatory" category, the review of development proposals under the zoning and land division ordinances. In these areas, the City can use speed to market as a competitive advantage to help it compete with locations with richer incentives. This shouldn't "cost" the City any significant cash to execute, and should also send a strong positive message to existing businesses that the City is working to be more "business-friendly." While a new zoning ordinance is in the works, the Plan Commission might consider creation of a task force to document how the development approval process currently works and to make recommendations for streamlining it. Continue efforts to create incentives for targeted new development (e.g., waiving residential review fees).

External Organizations

This section addresses the City's relationship with several external organizations which are engaged in economic development-oriented activities.

- 1. Work with the Chamber of Commerce to renew the role of the Portage Area Economic Development Corporation and Portage Ventures, Inc. as private sector economic development partners.** Having a private sector partner to assist in the implementation of a comprehensive economic development strategy can be extremely useful. The Portage area has two related organizations, PAEDC and PVI, which have the potential to fill this role. PAEDC was described by one interviewee as "a branch of the Chamber of Commerce" while PVI was incorporated as a 501(c)3 by the First National Bank to serve as the recipient of the land where the Phoenix Building was constructed. Interestingly, the two groups share the same Board of Directors. Over the past few years, these groups have been inactive. It was reported that the last time the PVI met was when they voted to sell the Phoenix property a few years ago. PVI has cash assets of approximately \$70,000 but no longer has a source of revenue (i.e., they received rent for the land). PVI has five members on their Board of Directors, all experienced local business people. Part of the reason that PVI has become inactive is there was a thought that their activities would primarily be assumed by the Community Development Authority.

Historically, PVI/PAEDC served as the de facto economic development organization. They were particularly adept at responding to business relocation queries via a well-organized "Quick Reaction Team." These organizations are currently sitting on the sidelines, waiting to see the "new plan," and would welcome the

opportunity to play an active role once again. They also acknowledge the need to bring some “new blood” to the organization and have some general thoughts about individuals they might enlist.

It is worth noting that if City staff or resources (e.g., funding, office space, and direct in-kind support) are dedicated to this organization, recent case law would indicate the organization would be subject to various Open Meetings/Records requirements (see *Wisconsin vs. Beaver Dam Area Development Corporation*, Wis. Sup. Ct., 2008, #2006AP662).

- 2. Review the City’s relationship with the Business Improvement District and Main Street Portage organizations.** The interview process revealed there is significant tension between these two central business district organizations and the City. The most recent source of tension seems to stem from the recent retraction of City funding from the BID during the most recent budget cycle. However, there appears to be other historical issues. It is important to acknowledge that the CBD is an important part of the City of Portage. Having an active and vibrant CBD is asset in the economic development game. And it is clear that, like so many communities across America, Portage’s CBD faces significant challenges – aging infrastructure, deferred maintenance, and market obsolescence work to undermine the vitality of the CBD.

The consultant team strongly encourages the BID/Main Street programs engage in a strategic planning process to identify challenges and prioritize possible solutions. Discussions about alternative funding sources, the respective roles of public and private groups, and brainstorming about future ideas for the CBD area are important topics for the entire City. This planning process would provide a potential forum for all entities to strengthen relationships while jointly defining roles and goals.

As part of the background research, the consultants interviewed Mr. Jim Engle, Manager of the Wisconsin Main Street Program for the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation. Significant points of discussion included:

- There are several highly successful Main Street programs which Portage may wish to network with to learn more about their operations. These include Marshfield, Fond du Lac, West Allis, Tomahawk, Rice Lake, and On Broadway (Green Bay). [Information from the most recent BID/Main Street Survey conducted by WEDC appears as an appendix to this memo.]
 - There are Main Street programs which have been recently de-certified due to non-compliance with program requirements. The Portage program is currently in arrears with regard to meeting the State’s reporting requirements and should make an immediate effort to rectify the situation.
 - The Wisconsin Main Street Program staff would be willing to meet with Portage to address the current issues in more detail.
- 3. Review participation with organizations engaged in civic capacity-building with an eye towards economic development.** The reader might ask why a study focused on economic development cares so much about the “civic fabric.” While it is not often tacitly acknowledged, the presence of a strong and proactive civic realm can serve as an asset to the economic development process. Civic organizations often serve as training grounds for future community leaders (elected and otherwise). A vibrant civic realm can also help to change the tone and culture of a community from one of apathy to action. Potential “investors” will be more impressed when there are tangible signs that the community cares about itself, its residents and their lives, and can demonstrate the ability to “get things done.” Therefore, the consultant team was heartened to learn of the success of the recent library capital expansion project. The joint efforts of the public, private and philanthropic organizations of the community to fund and construct a project such as this

bode well for the future of the City as a whole. The next question is “what’s next?” The challenge will be to hold together the project-focused coalition to take on the next community project. The City must continue to be an active partner and participant in these types of endeavors.

4. **Build active relationships with organizations which can help expand the geographic reach of the City’s economic development efforts.** As discussed earlier, the majority of the City’s economic development resources should be internally focused. The return on investment will be higher if the City concentrates on business expansion and retention more than recruitment and attraction. However, that isn’t to say the City should ignore recruitment/attraction. In fact, the City needs to build a systematic response to these types of inquiries so they can efficiently and effectively respond when an opportunity arises. However, there are other organizations which are more focused on these issues who the City can seek to partner with and rely on. Specifically, the City (through its Economic Development Director and Administrator) needs to become familiar with and an active partner to the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation, THRIVE, and the Columbia County Economic Development Corporation. A failure to engage with these groups could prove perilous as they have the ability to direct new prospects in Portage’s direction. There are other organizations which may provide useful networking and training resources, such as WEDA, IEDC, and the Wisconsin Technology Council. At a minimum, familiarity is strongly recommended.

Economic/Community Development Program

This section addresses specific aspects of the City’s Comprehensive Economic/Community Development program. While the Marketing Implementation Plan provides additional details, the issues below surfaced during the current phase of work.

1. **Leverage the financing tools and incentives the City currently has access to.** The City is not without financial tools which can be used to help accomplish economic development objectives. Several examples include:
 - The WEDC is in the process of regionalizing the CDBG program. The City needs to be actively engaged in these discussions. Working to ensure access to both grant and revolving loan fund decision making is important to the City’s future.
 - Tax Increment Financing continues to be a significant tool for local governments in Wisconsin. Portage currently has five active districts. Unfortunately at least two of these are incapable of achieving solvency without further development (TIDs 2 & 6). Projected solvency for the remaining TIDs range from 10 to 18 years without significant new development. Taking a proactive management role will be one of the challenges for the City’s next Administrator. Coordination and targeting of growth to these areas also needs to become a task shared with the ED Director and the various other internal/external organizations involved in economic development.
 - The Enterprise Center is approaching cash flow capability. This facility should continue to be well-managed and focused on providing tenant resources such as technical assistance, access to grants, etc. As its viability increases, it should be possible for it to become more self-sufficient and contribute funding to both staffing and programming.
2. **Develop a plan so there is a pipeline of available properties for development.** No significant growth can occur unless there are sites and buildings in which to put the relocating and expanding businesses. Develop a plan so there is always a pipeline of properties being readied for development (and preferably, these properties will help to feed the TIDs). For example:

- Complete an inventory of available properties for industrial development, including City-owned properties. Map them using GIS and make the information available via a web-based application.
 - Prioritize the sites in terms of develop-ability and attractiveness to development. For example, is the Evans property viable for development? If it is, what would it take to make it “shovel ready”? If it is not, then look to dispose of the property and continue to move ahead.
 - Make progress on the “shovel-ready” criteria. Even if not fully certified, assemble the information you can to facilitate the effort (including documentation of efforts to streamline the permitting and approval processes).
3. ***Be responsive and provide the expected information to get Portage on the radar with relocating and expanding companies and the site selectors who advise these companies.*** Earlier in this report we emphasized the need to focus on business expansion and retention, however we also pointed out the importance of creating a systematic response to outside requests. Some of the things that can be done to accomplish this include:
- Create an economic development website that provides the full range of data and information that relocating and expanding industrial companies require. Websites are the number one way that companies from outside the region first learn about a community.
 - Create a Community Profile to position the City as favorably as possible yet still provide all the required data that industrial companies require during their initial review of competing areas/regions.
 - Provide additional fact sheets which demonstrate Portage’s advantages for manufacturing and distribution businesses. Target these sectors with a laser-guided focus.
 - Conduct outreach to existing businesses.
 - Conduct outreach to welcome new businesses.
 - Communicate regularly with City stakeholders as to the activities that are occurring, via monthly meetings, email newsletters, etc. Consistency and frequency are going to be very important for the first 12-18 months in order to establish trust and to communicate value.
 - Develop a strategy to increase participation and visibility in *THRIVE* and before WEDC as these are the organizations which will receive the most attention from site selectors who are considering the region.

Staffing

This section will address the consultant team’s findings and recommendations relative to staffing issues internal to the City.

1. ***Implement the recently funded Economic Development staff position.*** Clearly the topic City leaders are most anxious to receive recommendations for is the question of “*what to do with the economic development staff position which was recently funded?*” There are several challenges inherent in responding to this question. First, it is important to understand there is no “right” or “wrong” answer. Each community addresses this issue a little bit differently. Some combine the duties of the position with other functions (usually in the planning or community-development areas); other communities have sought to out-source the functions via external organizations; and many are now recognizing the value of having a staff member who is 100% focused on economic development, who can serve as a “bridge” between development

interests and city government (i.e., the “ombudsman” role), and whose performance is tied to accomplishing an aggressive and measureable work program. In Portage’s case, the situation includes relationships with several external organizations which are seeking restoration of resources to help further their own economic development related functions. Based on conversations with community leaders and our experiences and knowledge of other locations, we offer the following commentary. In addition, we have provided a *sample job description* (see Appendices) to help jump-start the City’s efforts in this area.

- a. **Job Title:** The choice of “title” will affect the type of candidates the City attracts and will set the tone for expectations on the part of outside entities. Typical titles include Economic Development “Coordinator,” “Manager,” and “Director.” When combined with other duties, titles may include “Economic and Community Development” or “Economic Development and Planning.” When combined with an administrative capacity, the position might be called “Deputy Director of Administration-Economic Development.” And there are a variety of creative titles, such as “Director of Economic Innovation” or “Economic Development Ombudsman”, which some cities have used. We recommend keeping it simple – “Economic Development Director.” This title will convey to the outside world that the individual in this position should have a requisite amount of experience and will wield significant level of authority on economic development issues within the City.
- b. **Reporting Structure:** Again, there is wide variation, largely depending on the size of the City and its staff. One area of unique concern that is widely held is that economic development officials should be afforded a certain amount of autonomy and should be semi-shielded from direct influence by other staff or elected officials, or to keep the activities out of the “public’s eye.” In rare cases, this has caused communities to place the position and/or support it as an external position. While this certainly can provide a high level of autonomy, sometimes too much control and oversight is ceded. Our recommendation is that the position be attached directly to the City Administrator. This should provide a reasonable level of insulation for the position, provide a clear chain of accountability, and ensure that lead elected officials, the administration and other departments, and economic development activities are all linked together via the City Administrator. As the Economic Development Director’s “supervisor,” the Administrator will assume responsibility for all performance issues and therefore should have hiring/firing power over the position.
- c. **Duties and responsibilities:** The most difficult question to resolve is “what should this position do?” The primary reasons this is a challenge for most communities is that (a) needs far outweigh the resources (hours) available and (b) it can be a challenge, particularly for communities just launching comprehensive ED programs, to figure out what to do first because it seems like everything is the most important thing! Here is a short list of duties the ED Director should focus on:
 - The ED Director should be charged with managing the Marketing Implementation Plan (MIP, August 2012). The MIP provides the new ED Director with a solid start to building a prioritized, resource-constrained, comprehensive ED program.
 - The ED Director should serve as the single point of contact for industrial business expansion and relocation leads. When the City’s phone rings, the ED Director gets the call first.
 - The ED Director needs to be focused on Business Retention. This should include conducting regular, documented visits among existing businesses. There are a variety of “tools” available to help achieve this in a systematic way.

- Helping to ensure there is a pipeline of available properties for expansion and relocation. This may mean taking a lead role in establishing and maintaining a GIS database (preferably with a web site presence) which will provide fast and accurate access to data on sites and buildings.
 - The ED Director should also focus on business recruitment and attraction activities. Primarily, this will mean developing relationships with existing regional and State organizations (e.g., Thrive, WEDC) which have business attraction as a primary responsibility. There may be the occasional need to attend a trade show or some similar activity; however, we encourage local ED professionals to focus on growing local interests and using those interests to leverage other new businesses.
 - The ED Director should serve as the lead staff to the Community Development Authority and, if established, the City Economic Development Committee (see below).
 - The ED Director may serve as the City's liaison to external groups, such as the Business Improvement District, Main Street Portage, and the Portage Area Economic Development Corporation. However, we emphasize that serving as the liaison means being a conduit for the sharing of information and initiatives, and not providing direct staff support to these organizations. It is important the ED Director find the correct "balance" between networking with these important organizations and their leaders and having enough time in the day to manage the other aspects of the comprehensive ED strategy.
 - As discussed previously, there is an option of having the ED Director serve as the manager of the Enterprise Center incubator.
2. **Ensure continuous and competent management of the Enterprise Center.** The Enterprise Center is currently managed through a contractual arrangement with the Wisconsin Business Innovation Corporation. According to the current on-site manager, he spends approximately an average eight hours per week on these activities (although we suspect this number may underestimate his contributions). The management of the Enterprise Center requires a unique set of skills which range from serving as the property manager, to working with educational institutions (e.g., MATC) to create appropriate training programs for targeted industries or employers, to helping fulfill the "BEAR" activities of the overall economic development program. The consultant team did not analyze the Center or its financial operations. However, it is clear to us that the Center and its manager are playing an important role in the City's overall economic development strategy. We are not currently recommending the Enterprise Manager role be combined with the Economic Development staff position; however, that is something the City could explore if costs become a concern (e.g., loss of current grant funding).
3. **Review how the City currently meets its Planning & Community Development needs.** The City's planning commission is currently staffed by the Director of Public Works (see comments above) in his capacity as "zoning administrator." The City relies on occasional consultants for help with special projects, such as the comprehensive plan or the recent update of the zoning code. During the interviews, the consultant team learned that (a) the City has experimented with waiving various development fees as a way of trying to incentivize development and (b) the time required to "process" various development reviews is not inordinate and is assisted by the Planning Commission's scheduling flexibility (i.e., they are willing to meet to help expedite reviews if necessary). These are positive items. Our suggestion is that planning activities represent one of the three legs on the stool of a successful economic development program (the other two being capital programming for infrastructure and a proactive "BEAR" process). Ideally, a City the size of Portage would have a professional planner on staff who could manage this process (and many

others, ranging from trail projects to grantsmanship to taking on other “special projects” on behalf of the City). In many cases, comparable communities will engage a “planner of record” in the form of a planning consultant (holding AICP credentials is strongly recommended) to assist with these duties. When development picks up, many of these services are supported through fees. The acquisition of grants through various public and private organizations can also help fund this role.

Note: the following sections might be considered “beyond the scope” of the current assignment. However, because these issues surfaced during the analysis, and because they are at the least peripherally related to the City’s overall economic development capabilities, they are included here.

4. **Change the City’s General Telephone System.** One of the issues the consultant team discovered is that the City relies on an automated telephone answering machine. While it may seem trivial, we strongly suggest this system be replaced by an actual person (at least during business hours). Our personal experience was that the current system can induce frustration in callers who may not know the extension or the appropriate person to search for in the cumbersome directory. If we were frustrated by this, imagine how site selectors, representatives of potential businesses, or John/Jane Q. Public feel. This should be step one in trying to overcome some of the City’s reputation for being “unfriendly”. If staffing is an issue, seek a community volunteer! But don’t delay - address this as soon as possible.
5. **Review the City’s Organization Chart; develop a succession plan.** Our general impression was that the staffing levels for critical senior management functions within the City may be “thin” for a community the size of Portage. We acknowledge there are no established “standards” by which to make this assessment and that each community has different needs and resources. We certainly don’t want to suggest Portage develop a top-heavy approach. However, we would suggest that once a new full-time Administrator is appointed, one of his/her first tasks may be to review the job duties, descriptions, and assignments of senior staff. It is useful to conduct an “audit” of these types of positions to ensure the tasks being performed are still valid and that valuable staff resources are not overburdened or, conversely, underutilized. Specific areas where we heard comments include finance, public works/utilities, and community development/leisure (recreation) activities. Related to this is the need to develop a clear succession strategy. One of the biggest challenges which will face local governments in the years ahead is the “brain drain” caused by the retirement of senior staff that has expert knowledge of the community’s various “systems.” If these key individuals are allowed to retire without the transfer of this knowledge to the next generation of leaders, a community will find itself in difficult (and expensive to resolve) situations.
6. **Review the functions and capacities of the Public Works Director/City Engineer/Director of Utilities.** In the case of the City of Portage, the comments listed above certainly ring true. It is highly likely that the incumbent in this position will retire within the next 2-5 years. Succession planning should be a priority in these departments. Also of concern is whether or not having a single person hold these three vital positions may be contributing to a lack of performance in all three areas. In simple terms – there just may not be enough hours in the day for an individual, no matter how skilled, to perform all of these functions (in addition to overseeing the City’s planning and development functions, see below). We raise this concern in recognition that infrastructure, development review, planning, and economic development are inextricably linked. A successful community must be hitting on “all cylinders” in these areas if it hopes to attract and retain/expand business interests to the community.

SAMPLE

CITY OF PORTAGE JOB DESCRIPTION

DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

REPORTS TO: City Administrator

GENERAL STATEMENT OF DUTIES: This position performs a variety of administrative and professional work in the development and implementation of a comprehensive economic development program for the City.

Under the general direction of the City Administrator, this management-level position plans, organizes, and implements an economic development program to promote the growth and development of the City's economic base, assists in the retention and expansion of existing businesses, and supports efforts to recruit new businesses for the City. The position frequently interacts with all City departments, members of the City Board, City Committees and Commissions, representatives of the business and development communities, and a variety of other public agencies and entities.

The successful Economic Development Director is a self-motivated, innovative leader with excellent communication and presentation skills who is willing to occupy a highly visible position in the community, work closely with business and developmental interests while maintaining excellent relations with the City Council and other members of the municipal team. The Director has managerial competence, maturity of judgment and strong personal leadership skills, as well as an eye for detail while keeping the "big picture" in perspective.

The position is responsible for the overall management and implementation of a wide array of economic development activities and will provide a voice for economic development interests in other municipal areas such as planning, infrastructure, and marketing. The Director assists local businesses and industry to ensure a healthy business climate and job retention in the City. The Director shall be responsible for implementation of short-term, mid-term and long-term economic development strategy in the categories listed below, which reflect the current strategic direction of the City.

Business Retention & Expansion

- Develops relationships with existing businesses to gain understanding of the local economy along with assisting business development as necessary (business expansions, grant/loan applications, networking).
- Is responsible for assisting developers and businesses with local activities and approvals necessary for project completion including, but not limited to, zoning matters, financial incentives, and general coordination activities with City Departments, City Commissions and the City Council.
- Works to promote an efficient approval process for economic development entitlements, zoning, and incentives to facilitate the expansion and retention of existing businesses.
- Creates a systematic process of meeting with business and property owners on an individual and regular basis.
- Establishes and maintains a client relationship management (CRM) database of businesses and property owners, using specialized software to track and summarize contacts with local interests.
- Generates regular reports to the Administrator, City Council and its committees, regarding the status, interests and needs of local businesses.
- Solicits the involvement of the private sector in economic development planning and implementation for the City of Portage.

Business Recruitment

- Prepares and maintains an electronic database on utilities, taxes, zoning, transportation, community services, financing tools, etc.
- Responds to requests for information for economic development purposes; prepares and analyzes demographic information.
- Develops and maintains a comprehensive inventory of available buildings and sites in new developments, and Redevelopment Project Areas for economic development purposes.
- Manages and maintains data on various web-based inventories (e.g., www.InWisconsin.com) and the City's web site.
- Initiates and maintains key strategic partnerships with state and regional level organizations focused on business recruitment. Such organizations include but are not limited to WEDC, WEDA, Thrive, and Columbia County.
- Supports and promotes the City's participation in the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation's "shovel-ready certification" program.
- Drafts and responds to requests for information (RFI) and requests for proposals (RFP) from development prospects and other interested parties
- Is responsible for assisting developers and businesses with local activities and approvals necessary for project completion including, but not limited to, zoning matters, financial incentives, and general coordination activities with City Departments, City Commissions and the City Council.
- Identifies key opportunities in Portage for business recruitment by focusing on the alignment of assets and exploring potential market niches and clusters.
- Meets periodically with developers, site selectors, and commercial real estate brokers, individually or in group settings, to maintain an active reputation for the City.

Redevelopment Projects

- Serves as Staff to the City Community Development Authority.
- Assists with the implementation of the Revolving Loan Fund.
- Assists the City Administrator in activities associated with a regional CDBG fund (if implemented).
- Participates in the development and administration of City Tax Increment Financing projects.
- Assists with environmental remediation processes in support of the economic development goals of the City.
- Fulfills a staff liaison role in efforts to redevelop and enhance key subareas of the City including but not limited to the Downtown Areas, Community Gateways, Highway Commercial Corridors, and residential pocket areas.

Community Engagement & Promotion

- Assists with the development and implementation of strategic marketing, advertising, and promotional programs; implements programs, themes, image branding, logos, marketing brochures displays, visual/electronic demonstrations which promote the City's goals and objectives for recruiting and retaining businesses.
- Meets individually with leaders of local organizations focused on economic development, such as the Chamber of Commerce, other business organizations, or neighboring communities.
- Regularly addresses businesses and civic groups regarding the City's economic development activities.
- Responds to citizen inquiries regarding local economic development activities and opportunities.
- Collaborates with and supports the efforts of organizations sponsoring community celebrations and special events intended to raise the profile of and bring individuals of influence to Portage.

General Administration

- Prepares economic development reports, technical research and statistical studies, provides professional advice and supporting data for drafting or revising local legislation and plans, projecting trends, monitoring socioeconomic data, findings, trends and recommendations to the City Council, City Administrator, Committees and Commissions, Legislators, civic groups and the general public.

- Works with the City Administrator to negotiate redevelopment and development deals on behalf of the City and ensure positive results from the investment of public resources.
- Helps to develop clear standards against which projects will be evaluated by the City Officials and staff with particular attention to how projects will expand the City's tax base and capitalize on existing community assets.
- Using the aforementioned standards, director should be able to articulate the costs/benefits of development proposals to the City Officials.
- Articulates and implements a clear comprehensive economic development strategy for the City – include rigorous stakeholder input and endorsement of the strategy.
- Provides staffing and supports the efforts of the City Council's Economic Development Committee (if so designated).
- Assists the City Administrator and other staff in implementing the City's marketing plan, to include the development and distribution of various print materials, advertisements, trade show exhibits, and the general City web site.
- Serves as the primary administrator for the economic development section of the City's web site.
- Keeps abreast of developments in local, county, state, and federal legislation and programs that could impact economic development activity in Portage.
- Is responsible for establishing, maintaining and coordinating working relationships with federal, state, county, and regional agencies involved in economic development and workforce education and training.
- Actively pursues state and federal grants and loans to support Portage's economic development efforts.
- Works with City Administration to establish policies, which will enhance the rapport with and quality of life for the business community, business retention and City operations.
- Attends regional, state, or national conferences as approved by the City Administrator.
- Perform other duties as may be assigned by the City Administrator.

QUALIFICATIONS: This position requires high-level technical, professional and managerial competency with a proven and verifiable track record of success. A Bachelor's Degree (Master's Degree preferred) from an accredited four-year college or university with a degree in planning, public or business administration, economics, finance, or related field; or five (5) years progressively responsible experience in senior-level economic development activities in a public sector agency or in another equivalent organization that would confer a comparable skills base; or an equivalent combination of education and experience are required. AICP and/or CECD membership is preferred.

The ideal candidate will possess the following attributes and have a record of success in the following:

- A comprehensive understanding of the operation of local and state government as applies to economic development plus sophisticated skills in finance, marketing, communications and problem solving;
- A comprehensive understanding of the principles and practices of economic development and ability to accurately evaluate and effectively communicate complex economic development projects/ programs;
- A rich network of peers and colleagues and a proven record of forming and sustaining collaborative partnerships and positive relationships with, Elected Leaders and Officials, City staff, Key Stakeholders, the Development Community, and Regional Agencies.

SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS: Valid State Driver's License or ability to obtain one.

TOOLS AND EQUIPMENT: Personal computer and standard business software; copy machine; postage machine; fax machine; motor vehicle; phone; and calculator. Experience using a client relationship management (CRM) software package is preferred.

SELECTION GUIDELINES: Formal application, rating of education and experience; oral interview and reference check; job related test may be required.

The duties listed above are intended only as illustrations of the various types of work that may be performed. The omission of the specific statements of duties does not exclude them from the position if the work is similar, related or a logical assignment to the position. The job description does not constitute an employment agreement between the employer and employee and is subject to change by the employer as the needs of the employer and requirements of the job change.