

MEMO

COLIN BAENZIGER & ASSOCIATES

TO: Mayor and Village Council Members
Islamorada, Village of Islands, FL

FROM: Colin Baenziger
(561) 707-3537 (cell)

DATE: April 14, 2021

RE: Village Manager Search Update

As you know, the recruiting period for your Village Manager position closed last Friday. At this point, we presently have materials from 82 applicants representing 30 states. 28% (23 in all) are currently Florida residents. While we do not collect statistics on demographics, it appears we have some diversity in the field. Approximately 12% appear to be female, and we are aware of at least two strong minority candidates. It should be noted that these numbers may change as some candidates will find new work and drop out. Alternatively, if a very strong candidate applies in the next week or so, we will certainly include them.

In terms of quality, we are evaluating the candidates right now and it appears we have 10 to 15 very strong candidates. We have now begun our background work to determine whom we will recommend you consider to be your next Village Manager. The following briefly describes the methodology we utilize.

A. Background

A city/village manager position is unlike any other. The individual works with, in this case, five individuals and each will have their own (sometimes very different) points of view, priorities, and needs. A successful city/village manager will be able to relate to all of you, provide the information you need, and accomplish your priorities as a council. He/she will understand politics (but not get involved) and will accomplish the projects you as a group assign. It is not a job everyone can do. Many brilliant and very well-educated people fail as city managers.

B. Selection Criteria:

Once it is determined the candidate meets the minimum qualifications, we look at the following factors:

- 1) *Experience.* The best way to increase the probability of finding a good city manager is to find someone who has already done the job successfully – that is, has been a city manager. Specifically, we look for someone who has:

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- a. *Reported to a board* – As noted above, the city manager position is unique in that it requires the ability to work for, work with and interact regularly with, in this case, five individuals.
- b. *Breadth of experience* – We are looking for someone who has overseen many, if not all, of the same functions as the position we are recruiting for.
- c. *Achievements* – Achievements demonstrate that the manager has the ability and the will to carry out the elected official’s policies and priorities.
- d. *Longevity* – Tenure demonstrates that not only can a manager accomplish the work, but that he/she understands politics. We are convinced that very few managers like to change jobs every two or three years. With the exception of those who are legitimately attempting to improve their employment situation, it is likely that they are leaving because they have to. We want someone who will stay with our client for at least five years, and hence we shy away from those with a series of short tenures.
- e. *Local Experience*. We have a mild preference for local candidates. Their learning curve is less steep, and they already know what it is like to live in the area. It is important, however, not to put too much emphasis on local experience. Our statistics show the success rate for those changing jobs within a state is very similar to those coming from another state.
- f. *Specialized Experience*. We give extra weight to people who have experience in areas that would be particularly relevant to our client. In this case, that means individuals with strong experience in a city of a similar size, development / redevelopment, and a city with an excellent quality of life.

We do consider assistant city and county managers who have never served as the manager. While an assistant has not had to work with the elected officials the way the manager does, he/she will at least have had the opportunity to study the manager and observe what works and what does not. It is important to remember that city and county managers were generally assistants before they became managers. Many simply need the opportunity. To use a football analogy, one of the greatest professional football coaches of all time, Vince Lombardi, was an assistant head coach with the New York Giants before being hired by the Green Bay Packers. The difficult part is to determine which assistants can make the transition and which cannot. Again, many bright and capable individuals do not succeed as city and county managers.

We occasionally recommend department heads or others, provided they have other, unusually strong credentials.

2) *Personal Observation and Recommendations*

Having recruited nationally, we know many managers and their abilities. We also know which managers we can rely on as judges of talent if they recommend someone to us.

3) *Diversity*

Although it is not always possible, we try to provide a diverse field of candidates in terms of race, ethnicity, gender and experience. For example, some cities and counties will want a very experienced manager who has already dealt with similar issues. Others might want someone who may have less experience but who may be more creative.

4) *Likelihood of Success*

Since we warranty our work, we have to believe that an individual will succeed before we recommend him/her. While it is impossible to quantify, it is what has led to our being recognized as a well-regarded, national local government recruiting firm.

C. Next Steps

We are considering approximately a dozen candidates. At this point, the candidate evaluation process is iterative, and we have just begun. As noted previously, some candidates may withdraw because they will find other employment or decide to stay where they are. In other cases, we may drop candidates from consideration based on what we find in our background work. Further, we may add other candidates. When the evaluation process is complete, we expect to recommend six to ten candidates for your consideration as finalists.

We are on schedule. Thus, we plan to provide semi-finalist candidate materials to you electronically on May 10th. We plan to meet virtually with you on May 20th to discuss the candidates and to select finalists. The reception for and the interviews are scheduled on June 1st and 2nd, ideally with a selection on June 2nd.

We will keep you informed of our progress.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Ali Baerzaji", is written above a horizontal line.