

CMS

Communication and
Management Services, LLC

October 4, 2022

City of Helena Mayor and Commissioners
316 N. Park Avenue
Helena, MT 59601

Dear Mayor Collins and Commissioners Dean, Logan, Reed and Shirtliff:

Communication and Management Services, LLC is pleased to present this summary of findings and recommendations relating to the upcoming City Manager recruitment and selection process. The process involved interviews with Department Heads and Commission Members. Several Department Heads expressed their appreciation to the Commission for taking the time to gather and consider their input through this process.

The following report details our interview findings. The report catalogs issues, concerns, and recommendations regarding the selection criteria and process for the new City Manager including recommendations based on our experience with public sector executive recruitment and employment. The format allows for options and decision points where applicable to allow the City Commission to finalize the process as policy makers engage in conversations with the community.

The findings and recommendations documented herein provide a roadmap for a recruitment strategy and process.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this important process and decision. We hope the Commission finds this report informative and instructive as it embarks on its City Manager selection process.

Sincerely,



Drew Geiger
Managing Consultant



Jim Kerins, SHRM-SCP, SPHR
Managing Consultant

City Manager Selection Process Assessment

Management Team Survey

I. Methodology and Interviews

The assessment process involved in-person interviews with City Department Heads and Commissioners. The interview questions are Attachment A. We interviewed the following individuals during the study:

Commissioners

- Wilmot Collins, Mayor/Commissioner
- Emily Dean, Commissioner
- Melinda Reed, Commissioner
- Sean Logan, Commissioner

Department Heads/Staff

- Becky Dockter, City Attorney
- Brett Petty, Police Chief
- Dannai Clayborn, Clerk of the Commission
- David Knoepke, Transportation Systems Director
- Doug Smith, Parks and Recreation Director
- Jon Campbell, Fire Chief
- Renee McMahon, Human Resources Director
- Ryan Leland, Public Works Director
- Sheila Danielson, Finance Director
- Troy Sampson, Community Facilities Superintendent

The assessment included gathering input from the Human Resources Director and City Attorney. Their input is Attachment B.

II. Findings

Following is a summary of our findings including major themes, concerns, and desired characteristics of a new City Manager.

A. Department Heads

Department Heads indicate the previous recruitment and selection processes were adequate and feel there are opportunities to improve both the process and selection criteria to ensure the next process successfully attracts and employs a qualified candidate that will meet City needs.

Department Heads feel it is important that the City Manager selection process is transparent and provides opportunities for input by City employees and citizens. Participants said it is important that all interested persons can understand the process to improve trust in public service. Others commented it is important to maintain an environment where employees feel proud to work for the city and to emphasize the intrinsic reward of this ethos even in times of tight budget cycles.

The Department Heads involved in the most recent City Manager selection appreciated the opportunity to meet and interview candidates but felt opportunities for interactive conversations would benefit the process and better enable them to provide input on the candidates (i.e., have an informal discussion with topic points and let the conversation organically flow to assess leadership style).

Most Department Heads feel the recruitment should be broad enough to generate a sufficient pool of qualified candidates and satisfy the transparency objective but does not need to be an elaborate or extensive process. Department Heads feel it is important to attract candidates that have leadership experience in communities of a similar nature to Helena (e.g., community size, government budget and staffing, similar operational issues, snow removal, emergency services, infrastructure, etc.). Several emphasized this did not necessarily mean City Manager experience, but leadership experience in a similar community. One Director said an individual with experience in a smaller community may be in a better position to manage Helena, with its limited resources, than a leader coming from a larger community who is accustomed to having more city government resources, including within the City Manager's office.

To varying degrees, several Department Heads said they would like to see the process involve all candidates explaining their vision for management of the city for the next three to five years and beyond (ranges of years differed). They emphasize this does not mean supplanting the policy role of the Commission, but rather, the candidate explaining their vision as it relates to the City's core functions and addressing existing and emerging challenges (i.e., population growth, housing costs and availability, environmental management, workforce availability, impact of increased tourism etc.). Several expressed a strong opinion that while the City Manager must contend with all expressed Commission initiatives, the position should show strong staff leadership in focusing on planning for and executing core functions impacting livability for Helena residents. As part of this, some Department Heads said that as with any planning exercise, such a process should be revisited and revised as conditions on the ground change. Strategic planning process suggestions include giving City Departments clear direction on action items, benchmarks, and timelines. Others commenting on vision and planning for the future feel the candidates should be prepared to discuss the succession planning process for their replacement and/or other subsequent City Manager candidate(s) to ensure a smooth transition and continuity in the implementation of initiatives.

The Department Heads that mentioned planning and succession also see the city in need of a citywide policy and procedures manual to present more uniformity in how constituents interact

with City Departments' services. They discussed presenting all candidates with a candid assessment of longer-term projects and include this in the vision and planning discussion of the interviews.

Several members of the leadership team expressed optimism regarding the current Commission's ability to be cohesive, to define the City's needs and Commission's objectives, and to provide leadership in the hiring and supervision of the City Manager. Participants feel it is important for the Commission to clearly articulate and document its objectives and priorities, to discuss these with candidates, and to ensure the successful candidate has a vision and background that aligns with community needs and Commission objectives. *The leadership team has a clear understanding of the unique nature of this position in reporting to independently elected or appointed Commissioners, and all have a clear professional investment in the next City Manager's success.*

Identified Challenges to City Manager Recruitment and Immediate Tenure

A few Department Heads expressed concern that the media coverage of past City Manager employment could deter candidates from applying. A clear message from the Commission regarding its expectations for the position, the support provided by the Commission and staff, and the measures the Commission is taking to ensure a positive outcome this in recruitment could address candidate reluctance to apply. Several Department Heads stated that stability in the position will establish the Helena City Manager as a desirable role. Several suggested the Commission communicate to candidates and the successful applicant that while a City Manager needs to hit the ground running, they do not expect a moon shot in the first year on every salient issue or challenge in the City.

Many Department Heads expressed concern that if a new City manager attempts to implement change too fast, in an ineffective manner (or if they do not take the time to understand the structure, operations and values of City government and the Helena Community), they will not be successful in the role. Some mentioned the importance of developing an environment where anyone, including the City Manager, can admit to a mistake or identify an unintended detrimental outcome without recrimination, allowing the team refocus resources for the desired outcome.

Some Department Heads discussed the need to assess how a candidate's personality would fit within the organizational culture (the collection of values, expectations, and practices that guide and inform the actions of all team members) of Helena government while acknowledging this can be a difficult assessment for the Commission absent actual psychometric testing as is being done in the corporate sector. They stressed the interview process should objectively assess personality issues to avoid situations such as unchecked contentious confrontations, or a new City Manager misunderstanding the workplace emphasis of the value of a personal relationship versus a professional one in a direct report situation. One said the professional relationship allows for timely communication even in situations when the Department Head receives a decline

for a requested action item. Respondents said that while friendships at work are welcome and interactions should always be friendly, they are looking at the City Manager to do their job in a way that allows them to do theirs.

Regarding a direct report relationship, several Department Heads addressed the issue of professional expertise and autonomy within their departments. While there is not consensus on the right balance of Departmental autonomy (or area of expertise), many commented they feel a new City Manager should show respect for expertise and staff within their area, while recognizing that a Department Head should not be overly protective of their line of authority. They said all Department Heads should understand a good City Manager needs relevant and timely information from the Department to provide context and counsel to Commissioners in any given area.

Lastly, several Department Heads gave insight into the distinct roles of the Commission and the City Manager, and the need for everyone to work at keeping these roles appropriately aligned. Several respondents said it is appropriate for a commissioner to pursue any policy priority of their passion or community engagement. They see the City Manager needing to be dispassionate as they interact with all different constituencies across the Community (i.e., were a conflict to arise between two different Helena-based organizations, the City Manager should treat all parties in an equivalent manner even as the Commission may be debating merits and positions from the diverse groups). Several commented this is also true beyond City limits in inter-governmental matters as many of the residents of the city and surrounding community themselves have public roles in their workaday lives and understand transparency and Montana's Constitution.

Department Heads identified the following priorities and characteristics for a new City Manager:

- **Stability**, including the ability to make a longer-term commitment to the job, provide continuity in executive management, enable new Department Heads to get oriented in their jobs, and enable programs to become fully staffed and attain stable operations. Participants feel the Commission should ask candidates about their plan to provide stability in City operations and continuity in the City Manager role. Department Heads feel achieving stability should be a precursor to any attempts to change programs, operations or organizational structures or implement innovative programs or services.
- **Budget and fiscal management**, including experience with a logical and effective budget development and administration process is critical. Leaders said that at one point, the city attempted a biennial budget process which was unresponsive to City needs and disruptive of operations. They stated that recent efforts to restore or establish a more logical and responsive budget process improved their ability to effectively lead and that they would like to see these efforts to improve the budget process continue and to be a priority.

- **Succession planning**, including prioritizing a succession plan for the City Manager role as well as ensuring Department Heads have succession plans in place. Frequent turnover in the City Manager role is disruptive to operations and it is important the city have a succession or backup plan for its City Manager. In the past, the city relied on Department Heads to step in during the absence of a City Manager, which can be disruptive if the selected Department Head does not have a succession plan or a second in their department to fill their role while they stand in for the City Manager. Developing both backup and succession plans for the City Manager and other key positions will ensure leadership continuity and coverage.
- **Strategic planning**, including ensuring the city has a contemporary strategic plan and that the city follows it. This includes identifying candidates that have a solid history with strategic planning, demonstrated success in integrating plans from multiple work units (e.g., departments or divisions) into a comprehensive overall organizational plan, and experience establishing mechanisms for ensuring achievement of results.
- **Effective change management**. Participants stated that to be successful, a new City Manager should conduct a thoughtful assessment of current operations, organizational structures, programs, and services before initiating changes. Department Heads feel that trying to make too many changes too soon or trying to impose change in an ineffective manner is detrimental to City operations and will hinder the success of a City Manager.

Participants said there is hesitancy among some staff to change. However, the new City Manager must address issues such as changing community needs, aging financial and information technology (IT) systems, and changing public expectations, so change is necessary. The Commission should discuss change management planning with candidates with an emphasis on identifying candidates that have a sound change management philosophy and method, demonstrated success in change management, and a thoughtful approach (i.e., not trying to implement too much change too soon or to implement change in a manner that is contrary to City values).

- **Thoughtful and methodic modernization and business process improvement**. Department heads indicate a need for the city to modernize, improve business processes and to proactively address changing community needs. This includes updating legacy systems such as the Financial Enterprise Resource Planning Software, and improving business processes for project planning and management, communication, data transfer and management, etc. Participants feel the successful candidate should have a successful background in and thoughtful approach to change management.
- **Understanding and respect for City government and community values**. Participants feel a new City Manager must take the time and effort to understand and respect City

government and community values. This understanding of values will support the City Manager in communicating in a way that motivates without offending the team. Once the manager understands and defines organizational values, they can then affect any appropriate change by hiring the right people, establishing policy, modeling behavior, and establishing proper systems for incentives and corrections. It is important for the new City Manager to have a plan for and demonstrated success in learning and documenting organizational values, demonstrating respect for partners and stakeholders, and effectively motivating team members through change.

B. Commissioners

Commissioners identified steps to improve the City Manager recruitment and selection process, attributes of a successful City Manager, and steps the Commission can take to ensure a successful selection process and engagement of a new City Manager.

Most Commissioners recommend that before initiating a search or selecting a candidate, the Commission clearly define what it is looking for in a candidate including the most important attributes and skill set required for success. One commissioner said that during the most recent recruitment, the two top candidates had divergent backgrounds, approaches, and characteristics (two quite different people), which could indicate a lack of understanding or agreement on what the city needs in a City Manager during this process. One Commissioner's recollection of this process is that individual Commissioners thought they knew what the city needed but did not agree on or have a mutual understanding of this need.

One area in which the Commission can gain agreement is leadership style. Several Commissioners feel the city will benefit from a manager with a participatory leadership style. One Commissioner's assessment is that Directors want to be involved in decision-making and want to be heard, and if they do not feel heard will push back.

Commissioners articulated a need for the Commission to discuss its vision for the city and how that translates to selection criteria for a new City Manager. One common theme related to city needs is the need for stability. However, one Commissioner cautioned that the idea of reverting to past operational or management approaches is concerning, and the city should maintain a focus on building the future the Commission would like to create (i.e., articulating a common vision). The city has several new Department Heads that will have to both learn their jobs and adapt to the City Manager's leadership style. Commissioners feel the City will benefit from a City Manager that can focus on enabling department head success while moving the organization forward through gradual and effective change management

Most Commissioners expressed a concern that if the Commission does not have a unified understanding of what they are looking for in a city manager, it will affect not only the selection process but the probability of success for the chosen candidate.

Several Commissioners state that the most recent City Manager recruitment included beneficial public participation and transparency elements. Specifically, the Commission afforded community representatives the opportunity to converse with candidates and the identity of finalists and the particulars of the selection process were public information (each Commissioner picked two or three individuals to sit on the community panel). Two Commissioners felt the degree of public involvement and transparency in the most recent City Manager recruitment was better than previous recruitments and is something the city should repeat.

One Commissioner cited that the current selection process could be improved by gathering information on candidates' specific track records in leadership. Specifically, rather than asking, "how would you describe yourself or your value system," requiring candidates to describe specific experience in helping organizations define and live their values and demonstrating effective leadership. CMS agrees with this recommendation and further recommends verification of these examples through reference checks on candidates.

Another concern is a potential lack of Commission agreement and focus on the appropriate candidate background. Commissioners indicate that familiarity or experience with local government is important, but that an effective, participatory leadership is as or more important. If a new City Manager tries to effect change without first earning the trust of the team, the Manager's efforts will not succeed. While the City needs stability, inertia (a tendency to do nothing or remain unchanged) will not serve the City's needs. One recommendation is to ensure the Commission is looking forward, not looking back, i.e., that the focus of the search is on addressing essential services and the future the city would like to create rather than reacting to or trying to address problems from the past.

One Commissioner felt that while the city is improving the work environment (e.g., the Human Resources Director's efforts to implement better pay scales and benefits and a workplace that better supports inclusion) the "nuts and bolts" of management (e.g., Department Head performance appraisals) could benefit from additional focus. The City should seek a candidate who is adept in core job functions that enable the success of city departments such as acquiring and mobilizing resources, coordinating and documenting strategic plans, implementing Commission policy, ensuring quality service delivery, and providing effective organizational and individual performance monitoring and feedback. One Commissioner said that September 2022 is the first time the city has had all department director positions filled for some time.

Another concern is that defining experience requirements that are too narrow or specialized (e.g., considering only candidates with City Manager experience in a similar community) may limit the applicant pool and screen out good leaders. The Commission should balance this concern with the fact that some background or knowledge of local government operations is necessary for a candidate to be successful in the position. However, a few Commissioners feel there are a range of experiences that could provide candidates with the background and knowledge required of the job. Two Commissioners expressed concern that specific or strict qualification requirements may screen out good candidates who can grow into the job. One Commissioner added that given the current needs and challenges of the city, the Commission may want to prioritize candidates with city management experience, even if it is deputy experience.

Several Commissioners express concern regarding the lack of a protocol or standard operating procedures (SOP) for addressing vacancies in the City Manager position. The Commissioner stated that the city should have a defined process for the steps the Commission will take when a City Manager gives notice or otherwise terminates employment. This can include protocols for identifying an interim manager and hiring a new manager. One Commissioner felt the recent Interim City Manager selection process may be a useful source of ideas for developing these SOPs. This Commissioner feels that the more transparent the processes, the higher the degree of community confidence in the outcome. The SOP can also delineate when candidate identities become public information. While the individual right to privacy of initial applicants may outweigh the public's right to know, the identity of finalists would be public information.

Commissioners said that the City's lack of succession planning and a clearly identified second in command for the City Manager is a significant concern. Most Commissioners feel there should be a succession plan and second for City Manager. Several Commissioners feel there clearly needs to be a senior manager under the City Manager.

Several Commissioners express concern with the City's lack of a comprehensive strategic plan, including a lack of an articulated mission, vision, and values. One Commissioner noted a perceived lack of alignment with the master plans and an overarching strategic plan. The Commissioner suggested a database of all the master plans, how they relate, and the objectives associated with these plans would lend to better executive oversight and leadership. The objective of such a plan would be visionary outcomes that result in citywide results. The Commission feels it is the City Manager's responsibility to ensure the development of a comprehensive strategic plan. The planning effort would be a venue for the Commission and Community and Department Leaders to interact and to have broader conversations that will inform specific operational decisions.

A Commissioner also pointed out the fact that the city's by-laws are outdated (several sections have not been updated since 1985). The Commissioner stated that the bylaws provide little opportunity for the City Attorney to provide independent advice to the City Manager and Commission, particularly if that guidance or advice is contrary to the City Manager's wishes. The Commissioner suggests that the bylaws should include guidance for Commissioners on the City's expectations for ethics and integrity and provisions for the correction or removal of Commissioners in the event of significant breaches.

One commissioner felt there may be two strains of thought among city staff and leaders regarding the City's current needs for a City Manager: 1) individuals who have experience and know the strength in having stability and longevity but are less interested in trying big new things, and 2) individuals who are earlier or mid-career who have the perspective of we don't want chaos, but we want to be moving forward, trying new things and modernizing. The Commissioner felt these objectives are not mutually exclusive, but that hiring a candidate that aligns too closely with one or the other approach may not be what the city needs. The Commissioner feels a significant selection consideration should be the candidate's approach to technological advancement. The Commissioner stated that if an employee hasn't received training on a new system, they are going to be resistant to figuring out a new system and workflow. However, at the same time, the lack of continual technological advancement has resulted in a situation where the city now must spend millions of dollars upgrading legacy systems. The Commissioner would like to see a City Manager actively plan for, budget for, and address issues such as modernization in a way that effectively manages change and improves efficiency without causing undue operational disruption. The Commissioner felt the city could find a manager that can both provide stability and provide appropriate modernization and advancement. The Commissioner suggests that one approach to meeting these City needs could be having a manager that provides stability and a strategic focus on essential services and a Deputy that advocates for and implements progress and modernization in accordance with the strategic plan. This effort could also address public perceptions that city departments are siloed (a commissioner stated a frequent public complaint is that city departments are siloed and there are not good systems for effective internal communication and coordination of services across departments).

Commissioners identified the following priorities and characteristics for a new City Manager:

- An **inclusive, participatory leadership style**. The definition of participatory or democratic leadership is "distributing responsibility among the membership, empowering group members, and aiding the group's decision-making process."¹ A participative leadership style will support effective working relations. The City should

¹ J Gastil · 1994 · A Definition and Illustration of Democratic Leadership. Human Relations, Vol 47, No. 8, 1994

seek a candidate with a participative leadership style who is not averse to sharing authority (which will address needs for succession planning and ensuring continuity in leadership beyond their tenure). One Commissioner emphasized that the city should seek a manager who is able to make decisions with empathy, compassion, and inclusiveness. The Commission can assess these qualities by requiring candidates to cite examples that illustrate their management so the Commission can determine if they are truly participatory (e.g., examples of innovation in staff supervision, which show they let other people lead sometimes, that they are aware of the issues they should listen for, etc.).

- **A proven history of establishing trust, stabilizing operations, and moving organizations forward.** This will include a candidate who articulates a logical plan for gaining a clear understanding of the city, defining the Commission and community vision for the city, creating space, and mobilizing resources for department heads to succeed, and ensuring that policymakers focus on the future rather than reacting or reverting to the past.
- **Demonstrated success in creating and providing a succession plan for their position and their organization** (both backup and replacement planning) including a willingness to share authority and knowledge and to acquire the resources necessary to ensure there is a backup plan for the City's future. As stated in the findings from Department Heads, a candidate with experience and willingness to develop both a backup and replacement plan for the City Manager will ensure leadership continuity and coverage.
- **The ability to serve as an effective "chief of staff" (as opposed to being a content expert).** The Department Heads should serve as the City subject matter experts in their respective areas of responsibility and the City Manager should be an effective liaison between the public, Commission, and subject matter experts. One important attribute of an effective City Manager is the ability to explain complex technical issues to citizens in an understandable manner.
- **Skill in active and thoughtful listening and the ability to identify and overcome resistance to change.** Commissioners feel the successful candidate should be thoughtful about listening to staff while being cognizant of the tendency toward groupthink² or resistance to innovative ideas. One Commissioner stated that while there is room for improvement in city operations, the city doesn't have to disrupt every existing system to realize improvement. Developing a work environment where all can acknowledge a mistake or unintended detrimental outcome is important.

² The practice of thinking or making decisions as a group in a way that discourages creativity or individual responsibility.

Specifically, the Commissioner feels if somebody is within the hierarchy at any level, they can communicate an idea or a concern freely. The Commissioner feels one of the most important roles of a City Manager is to push back a little. If an idea is not sound or is problematic, the Commissioner wants to hear it from the City Manager.

- **A proven approach for providing organizational stability, financial stability, and dealing with the influx of revenue** the city is receiving from the federal government.
- **A proven approach for providing clear, effective, and proactive communication** to the Commission, city staff, and citizens. This includes a strong and transparent communicator who has successful approaches for ensuring equality in access to information (e.g., if one Commissioner asks a question the City Manager will answer it and share the information with other Commissioners, so they too are well-informed coming into conversations).
- **Executive experience.** If the candidate doesn't have experience in a municipality, they should have director-level experience. One Commissioner felt that since the city currently does not have succession planning in place for the City Manager, the city will benefit from a candidate who can make decisions quickly, remain calm, and effectively coordinate the leadership of five policymakers (the Commission and Mayor) who may have different perspectives, levels of engagement, and expertise in the myriad of issues the city faces. An effective manager must balance those interests, guide the commission toward effective policymaking, provide advice and counsel, gather input, and recommend a course of action based on input.
- **A solid understanding of the essential services provided by the City of Helena.** The Commission will need to develop a mutual understanding of what they feel are "essential services." One commissioner suggested essential city services are those not provided by other entities including water, wastewater, sanitation, fire protection and community policing. An effective City Manager need not be a subject matter expert in these areas, but they should understand the operations, how they interrelated and be able to explain these operations and relationships in understandable terms.

III. Recommendations

A. City Manager Recruitment & Selection Recommendations

The subsequent section (III. B.) provides recommendations from CMS based upon this assessment, past recruitment and offers of employment, best human resources practices and local government research. The recruitment process recommendations come from

the leadership assessment and can serve as a starting point for Commission to finalize the recruitment strategy.

- Prior to the screening and selection of candidates, the city should consider a **facilitated discussion among the City Commissioners to clearly articulate what they are looking for in a candidate including the type of leadership style, strategic and succession planning approach, and experience** that will best meet the city's needs and vision. The outcome of the discussion should include a clear and documented agreement on the background and type of experience the Commission feels are priorities for the upcoming hire.

The Commission should develop a narrative version of this agreement for distributions to all interviewees. This should include a candid assessment of all challenges and prioritized projects the City Manager will address.

- Provide **opportunities for interactive conversations between the top candidates and department heads** will benefit the process and better enable department heads to provide input on the candidates (i.e., an informal discussion with topic points to discuss and let the conversation flow and get an idea of their leadership style and where they are coming from with their answers).
- The **recruitment should be broad enough to generate a sufficient pool of qualified candidates and satisfy the transparency objective** but does not need to be an elaborate or extensive process.
- The Commission should clearly **articulate and document its strategic objectives and priorities**, discuss these with candidates, and ensure the successful candidate has a vision and background that aligns with community needs and Commission objectives.
- The **recruitment and employment processes should focus on looking forward not back**. Rather than responding to or "fixing" the past, the Commission should create a blank slate for the new City Manager to inherit. The narrative of the Commission's vision for the next City Manager should include a request for a candidate's vision of strengths and challenges of traditional municipal services in the context of Helena's current size and growth pattern.
- **The Commission should have a clear agreement on the technical aspects of the recruitment process** (proposed geographic scope, advertisement choice and length of the posting). In addition, the Commission should consider the appropriate role of the Human Resources (HR) Department and City Attorney in the recruitment and

employment process in consideration of the fact that the HR Director and City Attorney are direct reports to the City Manager.

- **Develop and publicize a clear recruitment and selection plan and follow the plan.** Several Commissioners feel it is important the Commission is clear with the public about the process the Commission will follow. One Commissioner indicates that if there is a need to change the plan (e.g., changing timelines or reposting if top candidate drops out or there is not a sufficient applicant pool), the commission should make these changes in a public hearing and inform citizens.
- Ensure the process has **opportunities for public participation** while exploring strategies for a streamlined process.

B. City Manager Employment Recommendations

- CMS recommends that prior to hiring a new City Manager, the **city work with legal counsel to develop an employment agreement** that clearly defines the terms of employment and protects the city from unnecessary employment liability. This includes a one-year probation period with the ability to extend up to 18 months. Recent legislative changes (2021) to the Wrongful Discharge from Employment Act specifically provide that “For the purposes of this section, a contract for a specific term may contain a probationary period as provided for in section 1” [MCA 39-2-912(2)]. Most Commissioners feel a 12-month probation period is important. One Commissioner suggested the city consider a three-year rather than two-year contract period.
- The Commission should **develop a performance appraisal form and process for evaluating the new City Manager’s performance**. The process should define how the Commission will collect performance data, when the Commission will conduct the appraisal, and whether the full Commission or a subcommittee will conduct the appraisal. Processes for collecting performance data could include direct observation from the Commission, City Manager self-reporting in relation to established goals, and surveys with staff and other stakeholders. It is important for the Commission to conduct regular performance check-ins with the City Manager and that it conducts a comprehensive formal evaluation before releasing the City Manager from probation. Ideally, the Commission will have a draft of the form in place at the time of hire. The Commission may want to develop draft appraisal criteria, review, and finalize these criteria with the successful candidate, and use the form to evaluate the City Manager’s process during and before the end of the probationary period. CMS recommends that

future annual performance reviews tie to the strategic plan that the City Manager will develop during their initial year(s) of employment (or other period as determined by the Commission).

- CMS recommends the city **define a process (either in the employment agreement or in personnel policy) to provide for the timely and effective resolution of any employment disputes** or disagreements that may arise. The city's current grievance process involves a unique and convoluted process for City Manager grievances. A more effective process will better serve the needs and rights of the city and its manager while mitigating liability for the city.
- **Develop a succession plan for the City Manager and other critical positions.** In a presentation to the 2021 International City/County Management Association (ICMA) Annual Conference on Succession Planning in Local Government and the Impact on Employee's Organizational Commitment, Fredericksburg, Texas City Manager Kent Myers explained that beyond filling critical positions, there are many positives from having a concrete succession plan and communicating this with the entire organization³:
 - Supports the sustainability of the organization by ensuring future staffing needs are addressed.
 - Sends a positive message to employees.
 - Provides better human resource decisions in terms of selection and promotions.
 - Supports ongoing training and personal growth of employees.
 - Reduces hiring and relocation costs.
 - Improves employee morale and productivity.
 - Prepares for the future with a proactive approach rather than reactive approach.
 - Enhances employee commitment to the organization.
- **Develop a strategic plan** to guide the city, prioritize initiatives, and support the Commission in managing the performance of the City Manager and overall city operations and strategic direction. The plan should reference or integrate the City's Work Plan and Departmental Level master plans. The strategic planning effort can also be a venue for the city to articulate its mission, vision, and values.

CMS, LLC remains available to the city to provide any clarification or additional detail regarding the findings and recommendations provided in this report. We are also willing to assist with any of the steps recommended by Department Heads and the Commission including facilitating a discussion or work session among Commissioners to define the priority qualifications and attributes of the successful candidate and the particulars of the recruitment process. We thank

³ <https://icma.org/blog-posts/succession-planning-local-government-and-impact-organizational-commitment>

city leadership for their participation and guidance during this assessment and for the opportunity to submit this report.

**City Manager Selection Process Assessment
Management Team Questions**

1. What is your background both with the city and other public, private, or non-profit sector experience (for context)?
2. To what extent were you involved in any of the previous two recruitments for the City Manager, and if so, what was your general assessment of that process? What was positive or appeared to work in one or both of those recruitments? What was negative or appeared to be detrimental in one or both of those recruitments?
3. In general terms, describe the nature of your interaction with the City Manager? Based on these interactions, what types of discussions would you recommend the Commission include in the recruitment process for the position? (e.g., the Candidate's vision for the city, ability to make a longer-term commitment/provide continuity in leadership, alignment with values, succession planning, relationships with Department Heads, etc.).
4. Departmental Employees:
 - a. What feedback have your employees shared with you regarding their interaction with, or lack thereof, with the City Manager?
 - b. What feedback have your employees provided regarding discussion topics that the Commission should include in the City Manager recruitment process?
5. What type of knowledge, skills and abilities do you anticipate the city needs in a City Manager to assist yourself, your department, and the public in your service areas of responsibility?
6. Are there any types of experience or professional skills you feel should be given special consideration in designing a scoring/rating system to analyze application packages and evaluation of in-person interviews?
7. Are there any other issues or concerns you think the City Commission should be aware of, consider, and/or address during the City Manager recruitment process?
8. What issues are facing the city and what do you think the top priorities for the new City Manager will be?
9. Are there any steps the Commission could take now to facilitate or ensure the success of the next City Manager (e.g., better defining the role, promulgating policy, gaining agreement on anticipated issues, defining Commission priorities, etc.).

For City review 9/22

Input from Human Resources Director Renee McMahon

Thursday, September 29, 2022, 3:11 PM

Good afternoon, Commissioner Logan...

...The department head and Commissioners' comments seem to reflect the actual feedback received to inform the recommendations.

A couple of thoughts about Section III. Recommendations:

Section A. City Manager Recruitment & Selection Recommendations

Looks like the "agreement" of background and type of experience the Commission feels are priorities is an agreement among and between the Commissioners, correct? Instead of providing a narrative to all interviewees, I wonder if the terms of the agreement are better articulated in the position announcement as required qualifications. Candidate responses can be evaluated through assessment of application materials and answers to interview questions. The "... assessment of ~~a~~ *most pressing?/significant?* challenges and prioritized projects the City Manager will address" could also be articulated in the job announcement with candidate responses assessed in application materials and answers to interview questions.

I suggest that the Commission provide mechanisms to for interviewers to provide feedback about the candidates to the Commission. The City HR Office has developed a very simple, one-page, "Interview Report" that could be modified to meet this need if interested.

The HR Office is equipped and willing to support the search process in any way the Commission feels would be appropriate and helpful.

As the HR Director for the City, I would also like an opportunity to review the contract to review adherence to the city's personnel policies, benefit administration compliance, and compatibility with our current payroll system capacity. To accurately administer the City Manager's contract provisions, it will be helpful for me to have a full understanding before finalizing the contract.

I fully support and agree with the rest of City Manager Employment Recommendations.

Thank you for providing me the opportunity to offer my feedback.

Sincerely,
Renee



Renee McMahon
Director of Human Resources, City of Helena
(406) 447-8405 | rmcmahon@helenamt.gov
helenamt.gov
1st Floor, City-County Building



Attachment B: Human Resources Director and City Attorney Input

From: Rebecca Dockter <RDOCKTER@helenamt.gov>
Sent: Wednesday, September 28, 2022 11:14:43 AM
To: Sean Logan <SLOGAN@helenamt.gov>
Subject: RE: CMS Manager Recruitment Assessment

Hi Commissioner,

I have reviewed both versions and I believe they are good representation of the work CMS did. They are helpful for defining the City Manager selection process, as well. In particular, I think the recommendations for determining upfront the Commission's clear expectation of a City Manager are helpful, including an Agreement. Anything we can do to set expectations now could only serve to set someone up for success eventually.

Thanks for the opportunity to review these documents. I look forward to seeing how to proceed from here.

Sincerely,
Becky



Rebecca Dockter
City Attorney
(406) 457-8595 | rdockter@helenamt.gov
316 N. Park Ave., Room 203
Helena, MT 59623

To request an accommodation or alternate information format, please contact the Community Development Department/Planning Division at: Voice: 406-447-8490 | TTY: 1-800-253-4091|Relay: 711 Email: citycommunitydevelopment@helenamt.gov