

May 28, 1993

SELECTING A CITY MANAGER: FACTS AND PROCEDURES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Worcester City Council is about to undertake one of its most important responsibilities: choosing a new chief executive for the City of Worcester. Worcester's Home Rule Charter provides for the City Manager to serve as the City's chief executive officer. This means that he or she has the responsibility to administer all the affairs of the City, including execution of the General Laws and the ordinances of the City Council, tending to all the City's financial needs, managing the City's day-to-day operations, and planning for its future. Given the powers delegated to the City Manager by the Charter, the City Council, with community consensus, should be prepared to hire an individual with strong executive and managerial skills who can lead the City ably for the next five to ten years.

In order to attract a qualified individual to be the City's CEO, the City Council should consider retaining an executive recruitment firm to conduct a nationwide search. In addition to standard interviews, the selection process should include an assessment center, through which finalists for the position participate in exercises resembling the duties of a city manager, and/or a field assessment whereby members of the search firm and City Council visit the candidate's community and observe him in the performance of his duties in his present office. The City Council should be prepared to pay the successful candidate at least \$115,000 plus benefits.

INTRODUCTION

The City Council is responsible for hiring a new City Manager to replace William J. Mulford, who recently announced his resignation effective at the termination of his contract, January 31, 1994. The purpose of this report is to offer some suggestions for defining the qualifications for the position, organizing and conducting a search, and developing an appropriate compensation package. Most of these proposals are based on a telephone survey of thirteen cities with populations ranging from almost 100,000 to almost 1 million, publications of the International City Management Association (ICMA), and telephone interviews with staff of the ICMA and principals of several executive search firms.

DUTIES OF THE CITY MANAGER

According to Worcester's City Charter, the City Manager is the chief executive and administrative officer of the City responsible for all City agencies (except that of city clerk and city auditor). Article III of the Charter calls for the appointment of the City Manager on the basis of his executive and administrative qualifications. He has all the powers, rights and duties, other than legislative, commonly associated with chief executive officers. As the chief executive and administrative officer of the City, the City Manager is responsible to the City Council for the proper administration of all city affairs entrusted to him by the City Council or under the City Charter.

According to the Charter, the powers and duties of the City Manager include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. To act as chief conservator of the peace within the City.
2. To supervise the administration of the affairs of the city.
3. To ensure that, within the City, the General Laws and the ordinances, resolutions, and regulations of the City Council are faithfully executed.
4. To make such recommendations to the City Council concerning the affairs of the City as he may deem necessary and desirable.
5. To make reports to the City Council from time to time upon the affairs of the City.
6. To keep the City Council fully advised of the City's financial condition and its future financial needs.
7. To prepare and submit budgets to the City Council as required by general law and the charter.
8. To appoint (and remove) all officers and employees necessary for the proper administration of the City agencies for whose administration the City Manager is responsible.

QUALIFICATIONS

According to a 1989 article published by the ICMA, a City Manager has three major roles: the managerial role, the policymaking role, and the political leadership role. The management role includes such activities as staffing, budgeting, supervising (including reporting relationships), administering and coordinating day-to-day operations, and providing an environment where employees work hard to carry out the local government's mission. The policy role involves policy initiation and formulation, including planning for the city's future, developing an agenda with the city council, and council-manager relations.

The political leadership role encompasses relationships with non-governmental groups and individuals within the city as well as intergovernmental relations.

Based on a 1988 survey conducted by professors at the University of North Texas, to which 140 council-manager cities responded, city managers do not judge these responsibilities to be of equal importance. In council-manager cities where the mayor is directly elected by the people (as is now true in 65% of all council-manager cities) and the mayor's salary is more than \$10,000, 51.5% of city managers consider the policy role to be paramount and 45.5% consider the management role to be most important. Only 3% of city managers in those cities view the political leadership role as most significant.

According to the City Manager of Dayton, Ohio, the most important skills for a city manager are an ability to bring people together, to work well with people, to communicate goals and expectations, to have good business sense, and to have lots of stamina. This definition is confirmed by the ICMA, which stresses the need for excellent communication skills, sound judgment, self-confidence, and the ability to perform well under stress. Above all, the ICMA concludes, a manager must be dedicated to improving the quality of life for the individual and the community.

In recruiting a new City Manager for Worcester, the City Council should decide which of the City Manager's responsibilities are most important. If the above-mentioned survey is an appropriate guide, then Worcester's City Manager should be equally good at management and policy formulation, leaving political leadership primarily to the Mayor and the City Council.

BACKGROUND AND EXPERIENCE

In a telephone survey of thirteen cities with the city manager form of government (chosen because they are similar in population and/or have a reputation for being well-run), the Research Bureau found that twelve of the city managers had received graduate degrees: nine were Master of Public Administration (MPA) or Master of Business Administration (MBA) degrees, one was a Master of Education, and one a Ph.D. in Economics. The remaining city managers had B.A. degrees only. The Managers' undergraduate majors were primarily in political science, economics and business. The results from this cross-section of city managers in larger cities are confirmed by the ICMA, which indicates that aspiring managers generally obtain degrees in political science, public administration or business. Many local governments require their managers to have graduate degrees in business or public administration.

The Research Bureau survey also found that prior to assuming

their present city manager positions, six of the thirteen managers had served as assistant or deputy city managers, five had been city managers in other communities, one was a former mayor and one a deputy mayor. Six of those thirteen cities promoted their assistant or deputy city managers to the position of city manager.

SELECTION PROCESS

A. Should there be a nationwide search?

The first question to be answered by the City Council is whether to conduct a nationwide search for the next City Manager. It is not uncommon for a corporation to have suitable candidates for CEO within its own organization, and to promote such a candidate to the highest position. If the Worcester City Council believes that there are suitable candidates among the City's municipal employees, then perhaps it should make its selection from among them without conducting a nationwide search. On the other hand, a nationwide search should produce a large pool of acceptable candidates from which the City Council could select the most qualified for the position.

B. Should the City Council engage the services of a search firm?

If the City Council decides to conduct a nationwide search, then an executive recruitment firm should be hired to organize the search and recruit candidates. (See Appendix A for a list of search firms.) This procedure appears to be the prevalent trend. In the Research Bureau's survey of thirteen cities, nine employed search firms in their last selection of a city manager. Of the four that did not, two promoted their assistant city managers.

C. Should there be community participation in the selection process?

None of the thirteen cities surveyed used a community advisory committee to assist in its last selection process primarily because the selection was viewed as the City Council's responsibility. Three cities indicated that if they were to undertake a search now, they would ask for community involvement in developing a job description because community participation in various aspects of government has increased since the last city manager selection.

D. What services should be provided by an executive recruitment firm, if the City chooses to use one?

The aspects of a recruitment process include the following:

1. Identifying the qualifications for a position and preparing the position profile.
 2. Locating candidates reflecting a city's needs and encouraging them to apply.
 3. Appraising candidates and identifying a small group of the most promising ones.
 4. Assisting the city in the selection of a candidate by means of an interview process, an assessment center (described below), a field assessment, or a combination of all three.
- E. What tasks does a search firm perform as a part of each aspect of the recruitment process?

1. Develop a Position Profile

A position profile is a detailed review of the skills, abilities and knowledge that are desired in an executive. A profile tries to identify experiences, skills, and management style that would be helpful to a particular city. The profile serves as a guide for screening job applicants by the search firm and city councilors during the review process.

To develop the profile, the search firm interviews each of the city council members and department heads along with representative members of the community. A draft profile is returned to the city council for review and comments. After the comments are reviewed, the profile is finalized. While the profile is being developed, salary, benefits, and other job-related compensation matters are discussed.

2. Prepare a Brochure

Many search firms prepare a brief brochure which provides a description of the position and the community. In Worcester's case, the brochure should include a discussion of the City's planned development projects, as well as the challenges and opportunities awaiting the successful candidate. Such a brochure is usually mailed to about 500 selected individuals throughout the country who might have some interest in the position.

3. Conduct Independent Search

The search firm makes contact with city managers and other public officials throughout the country with the intent of identifying qualified candidates. For the Worcester search, some emphasis should be given to recruiting candidates who have managerial experience in city manager cities with directly elected mayors since that is the specialized form of government under which we are operating.

4. Develop and Place Advertisements

Advertisements are prepared and placed in professional publications to provide for a broad, open recruitment process.

5. Acknowledge Applications

The consultant notifies candidates of the receipt of applications and provides notice of their status as appropriate.

6. Review Applications

Applications are reviewed and candidates are screened by reviewing their qualifications in relation to the qualifications in the position profile.

7. Screening

Telephone interviews are conducted with the most likely candidates (usually 15 to 20), and with persons who have knowledge of the candidate's professional reputation, job performance and character. The purpose of these questions will be to further evaluate the candidates' management style, insights, and knowledge of the important issues.

8. Preliminary Inquiries

Reference checks are undertaken of the most likely candidates in order to verify employment history and personal achievements. References provided by candidates and other persons who would be knowledgeable about a candidate's background, experiences, and job performance are checked. Educational qualifications, prior employment, and other important information are verified. Some firms request the top candidates for a position to provide written details of their most important achievements, management style, and vision for the city.

9. Developing a list of semi-finalists

Search firms frequently conduct personal interviews with the nine or ten most likely candidates. If this proves too costly, candidates may be interviewed by phone.

10. Prepare Application Report

The search firm presents to the city council information on résumés of the most likely candidates for the position of city manager.

11. Meet with the City Councilors/Selection of Semi-Finalists

The search firm meets with the city council to review the results

of the evaluations and to discuss with officials those persons who are deemed to be the most qualified for the position. The city council may choose to interview all the semi-finalists (as in Worcester's recent school superintendent selection process). An alternative approach is to hire a firm that videotapes interviews, asking the same questions of all candidates at a location near each candidate, and sends them to the city council for review. Each interview costs about \$125. After reviewing the videotapes, the city council usually invites five or six candidates for final interviews.

12. Interview Process

The search firm assists the city in the organization and preparation of interviews. It prepares interview questions and works with councilors through the interview process to ensure that there is consistency from interview to interview. The City Council should give some attention to the location of the interviews, since there were some suggestions during the School Superintendent interview process that the City Council Chambers were not entirely suitable for interviews. The size, layout and acoustics of the room make it difficult for the candidate to have a discussion with the interviewers.

13. Assessment Center Process

Several search firms described an assessment center option as part of the final interview procedure. An assessment center is a process of evaluating management, leadership, and administrative skills of candidates for an executive position. The process utilizes a series of exercises designed to indicate how a candidate would actually perform on the job. The exercises are based on the prepared job description and discussion with city council members. The most useful assessment center seemed to be one that made use of simulations of activities closely resembling the actual duties of a city manager such as a budget presentation or a personnel-management problem. The process and the simulations are described in the appended article on the selection of a police chief.

Usually three assessors are required to administer a two-day assessment center (two current city managers and one member of a firm's staff). Members of the City Council are encouraged to observe this process. The first day and one-half of the assessment center involves observation and evaluation of the candidates, and the last half-day is spent with the assessors arriving at a consensus rating for each candidate on each assessment dimension and a final overall evaluation. Then the top candidates are recommended for further interviews by the city council members.

A detailed final written and oral evaluation on these top candidates is provided for the city council. These reports include a ranking of the candidates in accordance with the assessment job performance dimensions, and narrative descriptions of the relative strengths and weaknesses of each candidate for each dimension assessed. A growing number of cities are utilizing this process. Those cities that have used the assessment center report that the procedure provides a dimension of objectivity missing from traditional interviews.

14. Final Steps

City Council members interview the top candidates and conduct final background and reference checks. They should also conduct a field assessment, along with members of the search firm, by visiting the communities of finalists and observing them in the performance of their duties in their current office.

15. Contract Negotiation

Often the consultant assists the City Council in negotiating an employment contract.

COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS

Table A lists the salary and benefits of city managers in thirteen cities surveyed by the Research Bureau. The salary range for cities about the same size as Worcester seems to be between \$105,000-\$115,000. This estimate conforms roughly with data in the ICMA's 1993 Municipal Yearbook, which reports that the mean salary for city managers in cities with populations ranging from 100,000 to 250,000 is \$105,000. If the City Council is interested in attracting a city manager from a city with a similar population to Worcester's, then the salary offered should be at least \$115,000 in order to make a lateral move attractive. It should be noted that due to the higher cost of living in the Northeast, both Cambridge and Hartford are paying their city managers more than \$115,000. Benefits vary, as indicated on the chart, although deferred compensation seems to be quite common.

COST AND TIME

The cost of hiring a consultant to conduct a nationwide search is about \$12,000-\$15,000. Advertising for the position plus travel expenses for the consultant would cost an additional 40%, or \$6,000. An assessment center costs \$5,000-\$6,000. Travel expenses for candidates average \$1,500 per candidate. Travel expenses for city councilors to visit the communities of the finalists would be additional. Therefore, the total cost for the recruitment effort including the assessment center and council site visits would be about \$35,000-\$40,000. The time needed to conduct such a search is 100-120 days.

TABLE A

CITY MANAGER COMPENSATION SURVEY
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CITY	POPULATION	SALARY	OTHER COMPENSATION	VEHICLE	INSURANCE
ARLINGTON, TX	249,000	\$100,000	5% DEFERRED COMP, 9% 401A PLAN, DISABILITY PLAN 12 MOS. SEVERANCE	CAR	HEALTH INS.
CAMBRIDGE, MA	96,000	\$121,321		CAR	\$120,000 LIFE INS. HEALTH AND DENTAL INS.
DAYTON, OHIO	185,000	\$106,000	\$3,500 DEFERRED COMP	CAR & GAS	HEALTH AND LIFE INS.
FT. LAUDERDALE, FL	149,500	\$110,132	\$1,000 PER MONTH HOUSING ALLOWANCE, MOVING EXPENSES PENSION-\$24,000 PER YEAR	\$5,280 PER YR.	HEALTH INS.
GRAND RAPIDS, MI	189,300	\$100,000	DEFERRED COMP-12% OF BASE SALARY, CLUB MEMBERSHIPS	CAR	HEALTH INS. AND \$100,000 LIFE INS.
GREENSBORO, N.C.	189,000	\$98,748	CLUB MEMBERSHIPS ANNUITY \$5,000 LONGEVITY - 2.5% OF SALARY SRA - 2% OF SALARY	\$7,200 PER YR.	HEALTH, LIFE & DENTAL INS.
HARTFORD, CT	139,739	\$118,000	6 MOS. SEVERANCE PAY	CAR	HEALTH AND LIFE INS.
LOWELL, MA	125,000	\$75,000	PENSION - 8%	CAR	HEALTH INS.
NEWPORT NEWS, VA	170,000	\$116,600	DEFERRED COMP - 30% OF SALARY	CAR & GAS	HEALTH INS.
OXNARD, CA	150,000	\$104,500	1% - DEFERRED COMP RELOCATION EXPENSES 5.5% MANAGEMENT BENEFIT OPTION-CASH OR VACATION	\$4,800 PER YR.	HEALTH AND LIFE INS.
PHOENIX, AZ	983,403	\$119,860	\$7,500 DEFERRED COMP	\$4,680 PER YR.	LIFE INS/2X ANNUAL SALARY
PORTLAND, ME	64,358	\$76,400	DEFERRED COMP	CITY PAYS 10% OF CAR	HEALTH INS.
SPRINGFIELD, MO	136,000	\$98,500	DEFERRED COMP \$7,500		HEALTH INS.
WORCESTER, MA	170,000	\$85,000	1 YEAR SEVERANCE \$7,000 INS. AUGMENTING REGULAR BENEFITS	CAR	HEALTH AND DENTAL INS. DISABILITY, RETIREMENT, LIFE INSURANCE

PREPARED BY: WORCESTER MUNICIPAL RESEARCH BUREAU

CONCLUSION

As the chief executive and administrative officer of Worcester, the City Manager should have both executive and administrative skills. He should be equally strong in management and policymaking, while having the business sense necessary to run a \$200 million corporation. He should be able to communicate well and develop strong working relationships with his departments, the City Council, and the Mayor. These skills would seem to require a master's degree in either public administration, business administration, or a related field, and a number of years of experience as an assistant city manager or city manager. Experience in working with a directly elected mayor would be beneficial. The City Manager should be paid at least \$115,000 plus benefits.

If the City Council determines that there should be a nationwide search, then it should hire an executive recruitment firm to conduct it. The search should include an assessment center and/or a field assessment in order to supplement the interview process, and to judge as objectively as possible each finalist's managerial, policymaking, and political skills.

Appendix A

CITY MANAGER RECRUITMENT FIRMS IN THE NORTHEAST

ADMINISTRATIVE ASSOCIATES
Mr. David West
2119 N. Wanamaker Street
Philadelphia, PA 19131

CARROLL BURACHER & ASSOC., INC.
2070 Chain Bridge Rd., Suite 500
Vienna, VA 22182
(703) 734-9292

HUTCHINSON AND GILLESPIE
Mr. Richard Schmitt
1840 Mintwood Place NW #403
Washington, DC 20009-1937
(202) 423-5566

MMA CONSULTING GROUP, INC.
Mr. Brent Wilkes, President
Sixty Temple Place
Boston, MA 02111
(617) 426-8049

MSL INTERNATIONAL LTD.
Mr. Richard A. Dora
229 South 18th Street
Philadelphia, PA 19103
(215) 875-2300

RICHARD CLARK ASSOCIATES
Mr. Richard Clark
P.O. Box 20275, Cathedral Station
(212) 222-5600

BOYER, BENNETT & SHAW, INC.
1323 Lincoln Street
Boston, MA 02111

COOPERS AND LYBRAND
1800 M Street, NW
Washington, DC 20036
(202) 822-4083

ISAACSON, MILLER, GILVAR & BOULWARE
Mr. Arnold Miller
105 Chauncy Street
Boston, MA 02111
(617) 451-3938

MSL GROUP INTERNATIONAL
Mr. William Spartin, Director
1 Currie Court
Rockville, MD 20850

MUNICIPAL ADVISORS, INC.
P.O. Box 45
Virginia Beach, VA 23458
(804) 422-1711

RUSSELL REYNOLDS, ASSOC., INC.
Mr. John W. Franklin, Jr.
1850 K Street, NW, Suite 365
Washington, DC 20006
(202) 628-2150

CITY MANAGER RECRUITMENT FIRMS IN OTHER PARTS OF THE COUNTRY

BATTEN SEARCH LIMITED

Mr. Gary Olney, President
820 Keo Way
Des Moines, IA 50309

CARTER ASSOCIATES

Mr. Carl D. Rascoe
7675 Daggett Street, Suite 350
San Diego, CA 92111
619) 292-6161

COOPERATIVE PERSONNEL SERVICES

Mr. Gary Loggins
191 Lathrop Way, Suite A
Sacramento, CA 95815
(916) 924-2276

HUGHES, HEISS & ASSOCIATES

675 Mariers Island Blvd, Suite 108
San Mateo, CA 94404
(415) 570-6111

JENSEN-OLDANI & ASSOCIATES, INC.

One Bellevue Center, Suite 570
411 108th Avenue NE
Bellevue, WA 98004
(206) 451-3938

LONG ASSOCIATES

Public Management Systems
1935 Wilton Drive
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33305
(305) 568-9000

MANAGEMENT RECRUITERS

Ms. Judy Beerbaum
P.O. Box 1237
Fond du Lac, WI 54936

MURPHY, SYMONDS & STOWELL

Mr. Paul P. Millius
1001 SW 5th Avenue
Portland, OR 97204-1172

CARROLL FRY & ASSOCIATES

Mr. Carroll J. Fry
808 Glen View Drive
Carbondale, IL 62901
(703) 734-9292

COMMUNITY OPTIONS, INC.

3721 S. Westnedge, Suite 118
Kalamazoo, MI
(616) 388-7563

FIRBY ASSOCIATES

1586 West San Ramon
Fresno, CA 93711

HUNTLEY MANAGEMENT SERVICES

P.O. Box 430
Westminister, CA

LANGTON, McLEAN & KNOX, INC.

Mr. Donald C. Pearson
7819 E. Greenway Road, Suite 3
Scottsdale, AZ 85260
(602) 998-8789

MANAGEMENT CONSULTANTS

Mr. Robert J. Saunders
918 Forest Lane
Liberty, MD 64068

MANAGEMENT SERVICES, INC.

550 West Duarte Road, Suite 6
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NORMAN ROBERTS & ASSOC., INC.

12424 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 850
Los Angeles, CA 90025-1042
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RALPH ANDERSEN & ASSOCIATES

Mr. Clay Brown
1446 Ethan Way, Suite 101
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S. BROOKS AND ASSOCIATES

Mr. Samuel Brooks
3575 NE Broadway
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SHANNON ASSOCIATES

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SLAVIN, NEVINS & ASSOCIATES, INC.

Mr. Robert Slavin
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Norcross, GA 30071
(404) 449-4656

THE MERCER GROUP, INC.

Mr. James L. Mercer
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RESOURCE MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATES

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SATHE AND ASSOCIATES, INC.

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SIGMA GROUP, INC.

Mr. Richard P. Karam
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(303) 292-6720

SPENCER STUART

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WALDRON AND COMPANY

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Seattle, WA 98121
(206) 441-4144

WILLIAM HAMILTON & ASSOCIATES

980 W. 17th Street
Santa Ana, CA 90706
(714) 667-6001

Trying Job Candidates On for Size

Role Plays and Simulations Help Communities Pick Top Management

BY MARK MORSE AND SHELLY KELLMAN

LAST FEBRUARY, SIX CANDIDATES vying to become Winchester's next chief of police spent two days acting as if they were already on the job. While evaluators watched (and played interactive roles), the would-be chiefs fielded questions at a Chamber of Commerce meeting, explained to the Finance Committee how they would cut \$50,000 from the police-department budget, met with their top command staff, and responded to the items in a typical "In" basket.

Winchester thus became one of the first towns in the commonwealth to incorporate a nontraditional assessment process in the traditional civil-service examination. By law, civil-service positions must be filled by one of the three highest-scoring candidates on a standard examination. Normally, scores are based almost entirely on a written, standardized test, with points added for training and experience. In selecting finalists for Winchester's police chief, civil-service

Mark Morse is a vice president of the MMA Consulting Group, which has designed and administered assessment centers for key positions in towns and cities throughout New England. Shelly Kellman is associate editor of the Municipal Advocate.

authorities agreed to base 40 percent of the final score on the written test, 20 percent on training and experience, and 40 percent on the results of the simulation exercises described above.

THE ASSESSMENT CENTER GIVES US A CHANCE TO SEE FIRST-HAND HOW THE APPLICANTS REACT AND HOW THEY DEAL WITH REAL SITUATIONS

The use of these exercises, which are known as an assessment center, is becoming popular around the country for hiring municipal department heads and other highly responsible, multiskilled personnel. Role-playing reveals aspects of a candidate's personality, judgment, and abilities that never show up on a standardized test.

A Slice of Life

A written examination can test a candidate's knowledge, but more often it really tests the person's ability to memorize

written material in preparation for a test. The written exam cannot show how well a person will be able to apply what he or she knows on the job. Oral interviews, while valuable, are heavily influenced by the candidate's appearance, how well the interviewers personally like the candidate and his or her answers, and the nature of the questions asked. Written examinations and interviews cannot test for the administrative, managerial, and leadership qualities that are necessary to be a successful department head.

Winchester officials had previously used an assessment center in the selection of a fire chief, and were delighted with the results. "The assessment center gives us a chance to see first-hand how the applicants react and how they deal with real situations," Town Manager Chad Maurer told the *Municipal Advocate*. "It is completely different than in an interview.

"In one exercise, for example, the candidate has to give a prepared speech to the Chamber of Commerce (role-played by the evaluators). In the middle of the speech, they interrupt and starting shooting questions at him. The questions they ask may be the same questions I would ask in an interview—"What do you plan

to do about situation A, B, or C?—but the candidate is going to answer a lot more naturally. By this time, he's caught up in the role-play; he's forgotten he's in an interview. So you're much less likely to get canned answers. I've seen a lot of people who can present themselves very well in an interview, but can't make a public presentation."

Civil-Service Cooperation

Winchester's police chief is covered by civil-service requirements. (Its fire chief is not.) So when Maurer learned that former police chief John McHugh was about to retire after twenty-nine years on the force (twelve as chief), he contacted the state's Department of Personnel Administration to discuss adding an assessment center to the civil-service examination. The town worked out changes to the civil-service process in one meeting with state officials. The town and the DPA's Bureau of Selection signed a short agreement detailing the hiring process, and the bureau reviewed the credentials of the project's main consultant. Winchester then had the green light. "Bureau of Selection Director John McDonough and Assistant Director Betty Dennis were particularly helpful in ex-

Rating the Candidates

EVALUATORS USED THE FOLLOWING CRITERIA TO RATE THE CANDIDATES FOR Chief of Police in the Town of Winchester's assessment center process.

Communication Skills: The ability to express ideas and to communicate orally and in writing in a clear and understandable manner and in correct grammatical style.

Leadership: The ability to motivate others toward the achievement of goals and to exert a positive influence on the behavior of subordinates.

Judgment and Reasoning: The ability to reach logical conclusions

from incomplete or ambiguous information, to make sound decisions, and to establish reasonable priorities.

Organization and Planning: The ability to organize and assign the work of self and others and to achieve maximum utilization of available time and resources.

Human Relations: The ability to work closely with others and to be sensitive to their feelings.

panding the civil-service examination process," Maurer said.

Civil-service regulations gave Winchester the option of considering only internal candidates for the job, or of interviewing three finalists selected by the Bureau of Selection after statewide administration of the police-chief examination. Given the high quality of the Police Department's command staff, Maurer decided to limit applications to internal candidates. All six of the department's superior officers applied. Maurer used a

written examination, an assessment center, and an in-depth interview-and-evaluation process; his chosen candidate then had to be approved by the Board of Selectmen.

After the written civil-service exam was given, but before its results were available, the six applicants participated in a two-day assessment center incorporating six different simulation exercises that had been designed to reflect the needs and characteristics of the town. Candidates had to handle an "In" basket,

a group problem-solving discussion, the Chamber of Commerce presentation, a staff meeting, a personnel-management problem, and a budget presentation and review. Most of the exercises took twenty minutes. The exercises were developed and administered by Charles Hale of the MMA Consulting Group.

Rating the Applicants

Candidates are typically evaluated by three assessors, who are selected for their experience in the field and are trained in role-playing and evaluation techniques. Some evaluators have themselves gone through the process as job applicants. They may be paid an honorarium or may prefer to contribute their expertise as volunteers. Winchester's police-chief assessors were Robert St. Pierre, Salem's chief of police; Kenneth Mahony, town manager of Andover; and Michael Gardner, personnel director for Cambridge.

The evaluators must come up with a numerical score for each candidate. Participants are not rated on individual exercises, but they are scored on certain qualities, based on what a particular municipality needs in a particular job. Applicants for this job were scored on communications ability, judgment and reasoning, leadership, organization and planning, and human relations (see box).

Instructions To Candidates

THE FOLLOWING SET OF INSTRUCTIONS WAS GIVEN TO CANDIDATES DURING an exercise used by the Town of Winchester in hiring its police chief.

In this exercise, you are to assume the role of the police chief in Winchester. You have been asked by the chairman of the town's Finance Committee to attend a committee meeting scheduled for Friday afternoon. The purpose of this meeting will be to discuss ways in which your proposed police department budget for next year can be reduced by \$50,000.

The town is experiencing some severe short-term financial difficulties, and each department has been asked to make substantial budget cuts. A copy of your proposed FY 90 budget is attached to these instructions.

Your assignment is to study the attached budget documents and devise a proposal to eliminate \$50,000 which will have the least effect on the delivery of police services.

You should be prepared to make specific recommendations regarding how these cuts can be made and to defend them to the Finance Committee. You may expect some opposition from some members of the Finance Committee.

The members of the Finance Committee whom you will be meeting with are as follows:

Malcolm Sloan
John Kimering
Samuel Brady

You will have twenty minutes to make your presentation and to answer any questions.

The three evaluators had to agree on a score for each candidate in each category. These scores were then delivered to the Bureau of Selection, which incorporated them into the final civil-service examination grades.

After these grades were issued, Maurer interviewed each of the three finalists for at least two hours. The interviews let candidates explain their management philosophies and enabled Maurer to see how a working relationship could evolve between him and the police chief. In addition, each finalist responded in writing to a series of questions about the operations of the Winchester Police Department.

As a result of this selection process, the town appointed Joseph Ferritano, a twenty-four-year veteran of the force, as police chief.

Is It Worth It?

Using the assessment center added about \$6,000 to the cost of the search and hiring process. "I think it's a very wise investment," Maurer said. "When you look at what a police chief or a fire chief is to a community, and what their responsibilities are, it's a small investment. The po-

lice chief administers a \$1.8 million budget. And under civil service, this position is tenured. The candidates vying for this job were all in their low- to mid-forties; the person selected will probably be in the position for twenty years.

"When you're hiring any department head, you have to make a strong investment in getting to know the person," Maurer said. "Most important were the observations I made of the candidates during the process. I saw positives and negatives about each person, and I was able to discuss these during the interviews. I had a chance to see beforehand both their strengths and weaknesses.

"These concepts can be applied without hiring an outside firm," Maurer said. "In hiring any department head, I put people through their paces, particularly in terms of written materials and public presentations. But fire chiefs and police chiefs are very sensitive positions in the local community. It's very valuable to have an independent review, and to have a professional review of the highest possible quality.

"Of course, you can still make a mistake and hire the wrong person," he acknowledged, "but this process definitely helps minimize the risks." ❁



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