



TOWN OF STOUGHTON TOWN MANAGER 360 FEEDBACK

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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INTRODUCTION

HR Key Solutions has been engaged to review and consolidate data collected in a 360 Review of the Town Manager, with the goal of assisting with the creation of a guiding document for setting goals and objectives for the upcoming year.

Information will be presented to the Board of Selectmen in summary format appropriate for public disclosure under the Open Meeting Law.

DEFINITIONS

360 FEEDBACK

The practice of assessing performance from more than one stakeholder and analyzing the feedback to accomplish a variety of goals including leadership development, culture change and a roadmap for future success.

ROLE OF THE TOWN MANAGER

The Town Manager is the Chief Executive Officer of the town. The Town Manager is appointed by the Board of Selectmen and is responsible for all day to day operations of the Town under her authority.

Charter Definition. It is the intent of this Charter that the Town Manager be the chief administrative officer in the executive branch of the Stoughton Town government and that he carries out the policies and plans set forth by the Selectmen. The Town Manager shall serve at the will of the Selectmen except that a vote of a majority, plus one, of the full membership of Selectmen shall be required to discharge him. In the event of his discharge, he may request a public hearing at which hearing the Selectmen must set forth their reasons for discharging him and he may respond to these reasons if he desires.

Powers and duties. The powers and duties of the Town Manager shall include the following:

A. In accordance with the provisions of this Charter and except as otherwise expressly prohibited by the General Laws, to organize and reorganize, consolidate or abolish departments, commissions, boards or offices under his direction and supervision, in whole or in part; to establish such new departments, commissions, boards, or offices as he deems necessary, and to transfer the duties, powers and appropriation of one department, commission, board or office to another. All appointments to offices, boards, and commissions not specifically made under the power and the duty of the Selectmen by this Charter and by the School Committee under General Laws shall be made by the Town Manager.

B. To prepare the Selectman's three-year fiscal period and program plan and submit it to them at least ninety days before the town meeting. In preparing the plan, he shall incorporate as directed by the selectmen policies and assumptions adopted by them.



- C. To appoint upon merit and fitness alone and to remove at his will all subordinate officers, employees, and members of boards and commissions under his control and to fix their compensation; except as otherwise provided by civil service rules and procedures, or the General Laws.
- D. To attend such regular or special meetings of the Selectmen as they may require.
- E. To keep full and complete records of the doings of his office, to render reports as often as may be required by the Selectmen, and annually or oftener if required by the Selectmen, to make a synopsis of all reports for publication.
- F. To prepare an estimate in writing of the probable amount required for the expenditures of the Town for the next ensuing fiscal year, stating in detail the amounts of maturing bonds or notes, the amount required for interest or other outstanding indebtedness of the Town, the amount necessary to be provided by each fund and for each department, and the accomplishments expected. He shall keep the Selectmen fully advised as to the needs of the Town within the scope of his duties and furnish them on or before the thirty-first day of December each year a careful, detail budget.
- G. To keep in repair the Town Library and all other Town buildings, except school buildings, which he may repair only upon request in writing of the School Committee.
- H. To purchase all supplies for every department of the Town, except books for the schools or the public library. He may delegate the responsibility to purchase supplies to an authorized representative and may revoke such delegation at his will.
- I. To perform such other duties, consistent with his office, as may be required of him by the bylaws of the Town or by vote of the Selectmen.
- J. To have control over all Town agencies, not specifically allocated by this Charter or applicable state statutes to any elected board or officer.
- K. To examine or cause to be examined, with or without notice, the affairs of any division or department under his control, or the conduct of any officer or employee thereof; and for that purpose, he shall have access to all Town books and papers for the information necessary for the proper performance of his duties.
- L. To administer the public health program of the Town as established by its bylaws and the General Laws. The Town Manager shall appoint a Board of Health of five members who shall be appointed to three-year terms of office as their term of office expires. The Board shall advise him on matters of public health and upon questions bearing upon the public health of the inhabitants of the Town.



ROLE OF THE BOARD OF SELECTMEN

Charter Definition. The Board of Selectmen of the Town shall consist of five members all of whom shall be elected at large for a term of three years. At the first regular April election of Selectmen under this revision to the Charter the two candidates receiving the greatest number of votes shall be in office for a term of three years, the two candidates receiving the next greatest number of votes shall be in office for a term of two years, and the one receiving the fifth highest number of votes shall be in office for a term of one year. Selectmen shall then be elected as the terms of their office expire for a term of three years.

Powers and Duties. The Selectmen be the highest executive authority of the Town and be responsible for all requirements of Selectmen contained in the Constitution and General Laws of the Commonwealth.

The Selectmen be a policy making and planning body and delegate to the Town Manager administrative duties specified in Article 4. In addition to performing such duties as may be required to form general policies and plans, the Selectmen shall:

- A.** Be responsible for the formation of a fiscal and program plan setting forth intended accomplishments of all town departments for a period of three years, by year, and the expenditures estimated to be required to attain these accomplishments. Expenditures shall be classified by those required for department operation and those required for capital outlay. The plan shall also specify the sources from which it is anticipated that funds to meet expenditures will be obtained. This plan shall be published annually in the town report.
- B.** Be responsible for the preparation of the annual Town government budget and, except for schools, submission of that budget on or before the third Tuesday in January to the Town Meeting Committee on Finance and Taxation for approval by Town Meeting Representatives. The Selectmen shall make an annual report, which shall be published as part of the annual Town report, setting forth the matters considered by them during the fiscal year preceding that in which the report is published and making such recommendations as appear to be necessary or appropriate respecting the finances of the Town and the measures to be taken with reference thereto. The Selectmen shall place in the annual report a statement of the past year's accomplishments of each department.
- C.** Appoint a Town Manager who shall be known as a Town Manager, who shall, except as otherwise herein expressly provided, be the administrative head of all departments of the Town, the conduct of which is by the General Laws, the Constitution, or this Charter placed upon the Selectmen. He shall be subject to the direction and supervision and shall hold office at the will of the Selectmen and shall be a person specially fitted by education, training, and experience to perform the duties of said office. He shall be chosen irrespective of his political opinions and must take up residence in the Town within one year of his appointment unless excused from this requirement by the Selectmen. During the time he holds such appointment, he will hold no other elective or appointive office nor will he be engaged in any other business or occupation except that he may accept payment for advice or consultation offered by any legal person or entity, with prior permission by the Selectmen. He shall be responsible for the efficient administration of all departments within the scope of his duties. Before entering upon the duties of his office, he shall be sworn to the faithful and impartial performance thereof by the Chairman of the Selectmen, by the Town Clerk, or by a Justice of the Peace.



D. Appoint six Library Trustees, each of whom shall have a term of three years. Two Library Trustees shall be appointed for a three-year term, two for a two-year term and two for a one-year term by the Selectmen elected at the first regular April election held under this Charter. Subsequent appointments shall be for three-year terms as Trustee's terms of office expire.

E. Appoint three suitable persons as Assessors who shall hold no elective office in the Town of Stoughton and who, upon their appointment and qualifications, shall organize for the proper conduct of their duties. Assessors shall be appointed for three-year terms. One Assessor shall be appointed for a term of three years, one for two years, and one shall be appointed for a term of one year by the Selectmen elected at the first regular April election under this Charter. Assessors shall subsequently be appointed for terms of three years as their appointments expire. If for any reason a vacancy occurs in the membership of the Assessors, the vacancy shall be filled forthwith by appointment of the Selectmen for the unexpired term. The Assessors shall have all the powers and rights and be subject to all the duties and liabilities now or hereafter conferred or imposed by law upon Assessors of towns. Before entering their office, the Assessors shall be sworn to the faithful performance of their duties.

F. Appoint a suitably qualified person to the office of Town Clerk. The Town Clerk shall have all the powers and rights and be subject to all the duties and liabilities now or hereafter conferred or imposed by the law upon Town Clerks. The Town Clerk shall serve at the will of the Selectmen and shall be sworn to the faithful performance of his duties by the Chairman of Selectmen or by a Justice of the Peace. In case of vacancy in the office of the Town Clerk, the Selectmen shall forthwith appoint a person to fill the vacancy. Should the present Town Clerk who was previously granted tenure be holding office at the time this Charter is adopted she will retain the tenure of office previously granted by Town election.

G. Appoint the members of the Zoning Board of Appeals, the members of the Planning Board, the Chief of Police, the Sealer of Weights and Measures, and the Weigher, the Constables, the Registrars of Voters, the members of the Council on Aging, the members of the Industrial Commission, the Veteran's Agent, the Town Counsel and the Town Accountant. The Town Accountant shall be an office separate and distinct from the Town Clerk and shall be filled by a separate person. The Planning Board shall have five members each of whom shall be appointed for a five-year term. One member of the Planning Board shall be appointed for five years, one for four years, one for three years, one for two years, and one for one year by the Selectmen elected at the first regular April election held under this Charter. Members shall subsequently be appointed for five-year terms as their terms of office expire. All other appointees to offices listed in this paragraph shall serve at the will of the Selectmen.

H. Be the Water and Sewer Commissioners of the Town.

I. Be the licensing board for the sale of alcoholic beverages in the Town.

J. Have the right to make the investigations and may authorize the Town Manager to investigate the operations of the Town and the conduct of any Town department, office, or agency, including any doubtful claims against the Town, and for this purpose may subpoena witnesses, administer oaths, take testimony and require the production of evidence.



INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Healthy work environment

- Does the Town Manager present a welcoming work environment?
- Has the Town Manager created a work environment that empowers staff members, allows for an appropriate level of freedom and authority, as well as effectively solicits support for initiatives?

Availability

- The Town Manager is present at work, appears to be doing tasks alongside the employees and is working on the same objectives and goals as the other employees?
- Are there too many or too few staff meetings? Are these productive?
- Are you able to complete your work on time, particularly with those tasks that need input/approval from the Town Manager?

Clarity in task assignments

- Are task assignments given in a fair, achievable, and realistic way? Are they in line with normal or anticipated job duties and expectations? If not, are they beyond the scope of what you anticipate you should be working on or conflict with other priorities?
- Does the Town Manager clearly explain how the task aligns with the ultimate vision, strategy, and/or objective?

Fostering morale

- Does the Town Manager motivate and encourage you in your work, and does she set a positive example?
- Do you feel there is a common cohesiveness and direction amongst Town Hall employees?

Approachable

- If you have an issue, do you feel comfortable approaching the Town Manager and discussing it with her?
- Do you often interact with the Town Manager? If yes, are those generally positive interactions, why/why not? If no, explain further.

Team building

- Do you feel that the Town Manager encourages open communication and collaboration with her and between departments and Town employees?
- Do you feel that Town employees and departments share common goals under the Town Manager's leadership?
- Do you feel that the Town Manager facilitates and/or mediates group discussions effectively?

Conflict resolution

- When conflict arises, do you feel that the Town Manager works to resolve disagreement peacefully and, in a way, that all parties can agree with?
- When conflicts are resolved, do you feel that team cohesion has been damaged or strengthened? Please explain your thoughts.

Leveraging the strengths of others

- Do you feel that your strengths are being recognized by the Town Manager?
- Do you feel that the strengths of departments and Town employees are being recognized?
- Do you feel that those strengths are being used to the advantage of the Town of Stoughton?



Preventing tribalism (factions, divisions, favoritism)

- Do you feel that the departments or Town employees are divided into factions?
- Do you ever feel that certain departments or employees or groups of employees are being treated preferentially by the Town Manager?
- Do you ever feel that your efforts are being undermined, or could potentially be undermined by, other Town employees?

STOUGHTON'S PROCESS

Individual Select Board members conducted interviews with Town Staff. The interviews were conducted in-person and by phone. The interviews took place over the course of several weeks in October 2019. The purpose was to engage in a fair, transparent and confidential review of the Town Manager. This consultant was engaged in mid-January 2020 to review and compile performance survey data; create a summary document and assist in the formulation of the Town Manager's goals and objectives.

SUMMARY OF SURVEY DATA

Healthy Work Environment: Does the Town Manager present a welcoming work environment? Has the Town Manager created a work environment that empowers staff members, allows for an appropriate level of freedom and authority, as well as effectively solicits support for initiatives?

- Town Hall is a comfortable work environment but some feel pressure due to being understaffed.
- Town Manager is a strong leader and accessible to all. Described as professional and pragmatic.
- Town Manager is not a 'micro manager' not interfering in individuals' day to day tasks or work
- The majority of staff feel autonomous and empowered to do their jobs.
- Some staff felt that they were not adequately included in decision making others felt that they were 'listened to' and included in decision making.
- There is a desire for performance reviews and merit based wages. Reduced raises caused some to feel 'disrespected and demoralized'.
- Overall, morale has improved although some are still adjusting to Town Manager's style.

Availability: Is the Town Manager present at work, appears to be doing tasks alongside the employees and is working on the same objectives and goals as the other employees? Are there too many or too few staff meetings? Are these productive? Are you able to complete your work on time, particularly with those tasks that need input/approval from the Town Manager?

- Most noted the Manager always seems busy and present. Is very accessible and always available for a phone call or meeting unavailable.
- Town Manager sometimes unavailable due to the negotiation of union contracts and other meetings. Several feel strongly that an Assistant Town Manager would fill that void.
- Town Manager described as a "worker" or a "work horse".



- Weekly staff meetings were too frequent and that it would be best to scale back to possibly every other week; and that some updates make more sense as emails.
- Town Manager was described as having control over the meeting and reinforcing the concept and word "team" very frequently.
- Manager preferred to resolve conflict or issues in one-on-one settings.
- Would like to see Town Manager have more face time at their offices/facilities, outside of town hall, at all town employee locations.
- Very good at making herself available to constituents.
- Most felt that they did not have issues with the timeliness of their work if the Town Manager was not available, several mentioned a slow turnaround invoice authorizations.

Clarity in task assignments: Are task assignments given in a fair, achievable, and realistic way? Are they in line with normal or anticipated job duties and expectations? If not, are they beyond the scope of what you anticipate you should be working on or conflict with other priorities? Does the Town Manager clearly explain how the task aligns with the ultimate vision, strategy, and/or objective?

- Town Manager is 'absolutely' clear and fair about the assignment of tasks.
- The Town Manager is seen as "working for the whole town".
- She is a "straight shooter", not aggressive but assertive, tasks are understood,
- Town Manager is consistent in her management style and approach (treats everyone the same), and is not "wishy washy".
- Some felt that their departments are not seen as the top priority.
- Would like to receive better direction during the annual budget process and didn't quite understand her goal of establishing performance based budgeting.
- Town Manager does a good job explaining assignments.
- Some do not always understand her vision or the strategic purpose of assignments.
- A few felt that they lacked any clear direction.
- Some respondents felt that assignments did not fall within the scope of their duties

Fostering morale: Does the Town Manager motivate and encourage you in your work, and does she set a positive example? Do you feel there is a common cohesiveness and direction amongst Town Hall employees?

- Reinforcement of Team concept has fostered morale.
- Some negative morale existed at the onset of the new manager; however, they felt that was due to "change".
- Town Manager has been consistent in her approach since taking on the role so once employees realized this; style is straightforward consistent message, feeling of confidence.
- As previously noted, the TM should be seen at all locations where there are Town employees.



- Overall, most report that morale has improved significantly.
- Town Manager has set a clear path and sets a good example.
- Friction seems to be coming from a small population who have difficulty adjusting to change
- Some staff who had difficulty adapting have left the Town.
- Some staff do not feel encouraged or motivated. They report feeling excluded. Some said that morale has never been better, and new employees report a very positive view.

Approachable: If you have an issue, do you feel comfortable approaching the Town Manager and discussing it with her? Do you often interact with the Town Manager? If yes, are those generally positive interactions, why/why not? If no, explain further.

- Some do not have frequent interactions with the Manager directly outside of staff meetings or regularly scheduled meetings; however, if they need something she is there and available
- Many noted a great work ethic, approachable, and gives the staff credit for the work that is done.
- Town Manager is approachable and readily available.
- Staff feels that they can talk to Manager with issues and interactions are generally positive.
- A few felt that their interactions were not always positive.
- Some felt they didn't think the Town Manager seemed disinterested at times.

Team building: Do you feel that the Town Manager encourages open communication and collaboration with her and between departments and Town employees? Do you feel that Town employees and departments share common goals under the Town Manager's leadership? Do you feel that the Town Manager facilitates and/or mediates group discussions effectively?

- The use of the word team was often repeated by all interviewed, the sense of everyone working for the town and to achieve a common goal was noted several times.
- Most felt that the Town Manager encourages open communication, that Town employees and departments share common goals
- Town Manager is an effective facilitator of group discussions, she is open and honest.
- The first Town Manager to really push open communication and teamwork.
- However, the same level of attention may not be trickling beyond the department heads
- Town Manager may benefit by walking around and talking to more non-direct reports.
- Does not interfere with the strong teamwork within Town Hall, there was already a lot of collaboration.
- Despite talk about teamwork, Town Manager does not always practice it, some would like more opportunities to provide input.



Conflict resolution: When conflict arises, do you feel that the Town Manager works to resolve disagreement peacefully and, in a way, that all parties can agree with? When conflicts are resolved, do you feel that team cohesion has been damaged or strengthened? Please explain your thoughts.

- Town Manager reverts to the common message of team, doing your job, and how the employees need to work with the common goal of doing the best for the Town.
- Town Manager has been clear that major issues or a conflict should be sent to her and addressed to be resolved directly with her vs. in a staff meeting or public.
- Several had difficulty identifying a conflict that needed to be resolved.
- One conflict was identified but the employee was unsure if it was resolved due to litigation and requirements around confidentiality.
- Town Manager has a problem when people question her authority, that she loses her temper quickly and has not shown the ability for conflict resolution.
- Most felt that cohesion within Town Hall was stronger after the resolution of conflict.
- Only a few felt that conflict are not being brought out to deal with appropriately, and that some problems are 'swept under the rug'.
- Staff expressed desire for Town Manager to be more empowered, and that the BOS should not micromanage.
- Overall, staff was favorable about Manager's approach to conflict resolution. They felt she was fair and generally very good at resolving conflict, noting a special skill for doing so with Town residents

Leveraging the strengths of others: Do you feel that your strengths are being recognized by the Town Manager? Do you feel that the strengths of departments and Town employees are being recognized? Do you feel that those strengths are being used to the advantage of the Town of Stoughton?

- Many noted the department changes made with the Council on Aging or the Development Services Division.
- Employees that they felt the Manager had confidence in them to do their jobs and that fostered morale.
- There was a sense that the Town Manager trusted the employee to do their job and that was positively received; they also expressed a sense that she knows they are working hard.
- Some felt that she recognized, but did not always utilize people strengths.
- Some felt their strengths were not being recognized or utilized.
- Overall, employees feel that the Town Manager does a good job of recognizing and utilizing the strengths of others.



Preventing tribalism (factions, divisions, favoritism): Do you feel that the departments or Town employees are divided into factions? Do you ever feel that certain departments or employees or groups of employees are being treated preferentially by the Town Manager? Do you ever feel that your efforts are being undermined, or could potentially be undermined by, other Town employees?

- This was not a strong sentiment, do Consensus seems to be that tribalism within Town Hall has a weak presence, however the strong feelings exist.
- A few remarked that though there is some (and that there always has been), it seems to be getting better or that it's gone.
- Open communication is encouraged.
- At least one individual felt that the TM fosters tribalism and would be evidenced through the budgeting process.
- At least one individual expressed frustration with how the union negotiations were conducted and as a department head, being held out of the negotiations was detrimental to them being able to manage their department.
- Several staff members stated that they were "not undermined" no preferential treatment was noted, no favoritism.
- Overall, it appears the Town Manager has made headway reducing tribalism.

Additional Uncensored Comments: These were under the category marked "Other".

- There was almost unanimous expression that the Manager has been consistent since day one. Many noted that they think some employees found her style drastically different from the previous manager which made for a tough transition for some but that she has been consistent and straightforward. They also noted that she seems strong, assertive, and "tells it like it is".
- In addition, there was a sense that there will always be employees who do not agree or get along with a manager or who may serve as "obstructionists" no matter what circumstance or leadership is in place.
- Most interviewed expressed positivity, felt happy to come to work, and one even noted it was the best manager they had ever had in their career. Many noted they appreciated her approach and that she "ran the town like a business".
- There was a common sentiment that she was serious and down to business but a friendly person and could talk to anyone.
- Staff meetings were the least well-received of management.
- There was a sense that the Manager would be inflexible in changing her approach if people did not like it or agree with it – a "if you don't like it, you can leave" mentality. While these staff did not mind this and many even welcomed that approach, this may not be true for all staff in town hall and should be noted as an area for better communication/improvement.



INTERVIEW WITH TOWN MANAGER

The consultant conducted a meeting with the Town Manager on January 13, 2020. We discussed her accomplishments, the impact of the 360 Feedback process and strategic goals for Stoughton's future. The Town Manager is a strong leader who is committed to the Town.

Some Key Accomplishments

- Narrowed \$5 million budget gap to \$1.2 million in the first five weeks of Town Manager role.
- Restructuring of Town Government saving \$200k in salary and benefits.
- Negotiated union contracts with sustainable pay plans.
- Created a social media presence for public outreach and communication as well as open door Thursdays.
- Created Stoughton's first five-year capital budget.
- Works closely with state, county officials on areas of importance to Stoughton community.

360 Feedback

Initially, this process caused some confusion among Department Heads as to why they were being surveyed and what the impact of their responses would be. After discussion with the Town Manager, it appears that the purpose of the 360 Feedback is for information gathering and goal setting. Once the Town Manager had a better sense addressed the concerns with staff.

Strategic Goals

- Strives for a 'one team' mentality with Staff.
- Successful outreach to the community via Town website, Facebook page, and open door policy and Thursday 'open hours'.
- Focus on Downtown Redevelopment while keeping the fabric of the community intact.
- Works closely with the Executive Management Team for ongoing budget priorities, day to day operations, information sharing and strategic planning.
- Continue to seek opportunities for restructuring of organization to achieve optimal productivity.



RECOMMENDATIONS

The Board and the Town Manager should engage in a goal setting meeting prior to the start of the Town Manager's second year. Some concepts that would be beneficial to explore include:

- Determine Town -wide objectives or 360 feedback report results will provide insight and develop a plan.
- Conduct skip-level interviews with non-management staff to gage feedback and open the lines of communication.
- Explore the development of cross-functional teams that utilize the skills of mid-level managers and line employees to foster a feeling of 'belonging' and to develop bench strength for developing future employees.
- It is recommended that Stoughton pursue a future goal of establishing a Human Resources Director position to centralize the Human Resources functions, to ensure the ongoing compliance with policies, procedures, and collective bargaining agreements and to serve as a resource to division managers and employees. This would free up the Town Manager's time to pursue strategic goals.
- Consider ongoing 'Downtown Visioning' sessions with cross functional group of staff, elected/appointed officials, downtown businesses and residents to achieve the ultimate goal of downtown redevelopment with Town Manager as guiding force.
- Consider Town-wide budget workshops to focus on the Town's long-term goals while educating Boards, Committees, Staff and residents on Stoughton's municipal fiscal outlook and challenges.
- Continue to align organizational structure with strategy. Motivate employees, increase employee performance, retain and reward high performing employees.
- Provide on-site training in conflict resolution, respectful workplace to staff to provide the tools to work through conflict.
- Create measurements to track progress and demonstrate success with goal achievement.
- Repeat process in one year to demonstrate improvement and growth in areas of concern.