



**FREEPORT: A HANDS-ON
SUCCESSION CASE STUDY**



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SUCCESSION


noun - \sək-'se-shən\ :
the continuance of corporate
personality



**WHY IS SUCCESSION PLANNING
IMPORTANT FOR TOWNS AND CITIES?**

The common answer is:

“If I were hit by a bus...”



WHY IS SUCCESSION PLANNING
IMPORTANT FOR TOWNS AND CITIES?

The more accurate answer:

Change happens.
People retire.
And occasionally they DO get hit by busses.

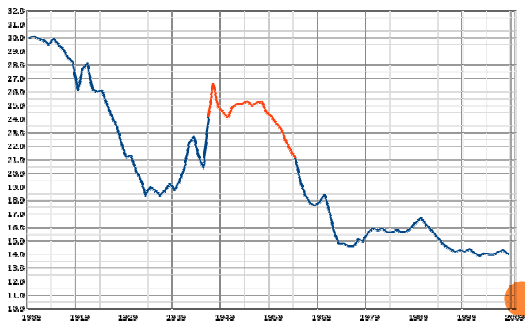


LOCAL OFFICIALS, DEPARTMENT HEADS,
AND THE "BABY BOOM"

- The big (but not only) reason municipalities are facing succession today is the pending retirement of the "Baby Boom" generation.
- Baby boomers are defined as people born between 1946-1964.
- These people are aged 53-71 today, meaning they are entering the prime age for retirement.
- A disproportionate segment of our workforce are "boomers"
- Many have been long-term employees who have amassed extensive experience within our organization and in their positions.
- They are frequently our Town/City Managers, Department Directors and Deputy Department Directors.



US BIRTH RATES PER 1,000 (1909-2009)
"BABY BOOM" SHOWN IN RED



FREEPORT DEPARTMENT DIRECTORS 2015 (YEARS IN POSITION)

○ Assessor	14
○ Codes Officer	29
○ Finance Director	1
○ Fire Chief	16
○ Library Director	8
○ Police Chief	27
○ Town Clerk	1
○ Engineer	13
○ Town Manager	3
○ Town Planner	15
○ Asst. to TM	24
○ GA Director	18
○ CATV Director	29
○ Harbormaster	23
○ Park Director	3

224 years of experience
(in position)

FREEPORT DEPARTMENT DIRECTORS 2017 (YEARS IN POSITION)

○ Assessor	16
○ Codes Officer	0
○ Finance Director	3
○ Fire Chief	0
○ Library Director	1
○ Police Chief	1
○ Town Clerk	3
○ Engineer	0
○ Town Manager	5
○ Town Planner	17
○ Asst. to TM	26
○ GA Director	20
○ CATV Director	31
○ Harbormaster	25
○ Park Director	5

153 years of experience
(in position)

32% decrease
from 2015

OK – WE’VE IDENTIFIED A PROBLEM. WHAT NOW?

- Get buy-in from those who will be “succeeded”
- Identify employees with potential to take on leadership roles in the future
- Develop leadership skills in these employees
 - Provide training opportunities
 - Provide membership in professional associations
 - Provide opportunities for employee to represent their department before general public and elected officials
 - Create supervisory opportunities if appropriate. These can be either full time or “acting” supervisor duties.
- Evaluate & Communicate
 - Let employees know how they handle supervisory duties and public interactions, and what they need to work on
 - Be honest about future prospects

“FORMAL” SUCCESSION PLANNING

- Written documentation through a formal plan, separate employee leadership development reviews, etc.
- Ideal, but many of us (Freeport included) do not take this step
- Open communication with employees in leadership positions. When are they planning to retire or leave employment? Is this info private or public?
- Benefit – your succession plan can survive a change in executive leadership (turnover on Town Council, Selectmen, Town/City Manager, etc.)
- Benefit – you are “ready to go” when something unexpected happens



“INFORMAL” SUCCESSION PLANNING PROCESS

- We all do it, whether or not we realize it
- For example – worrying about what will happen when a key employee leaves your municipality
- This can include discussions with employees during performance reviews about their future in the organization, informal discussions with Department Directors to identify leadership talent within department
- Often times the executive leadership of the municipality may have a succession plan in their head
- Has this been communicated to the employee(s)?
- Drawback - a change in executive leadership can mean a change in succession plans
- This can cause confusion and frustration among employees being “groomed” for succession when plans change due to new leadership



CONSIDERATIONS: PROMOTING FROM WITHIN VS. EXTERNAL SEARCH

- Know your personnel regulations
 - Can you promote exclusively from within?
 - Is external posting required?
 - Are there CBA requirements for promotion?
- Know the political climate
 - Talk with your elected leadership
 - Is there broad satisfaction with the function/department among residents?
 - What is the reputation of a potential internal candidate?
 - Is there a push for “change”?
- Be deliberate! Do not undertake an external search if you are 100% set on hiring from within



FREEPORT'S PROCESS:
INTERNAL PROMOTION -

- Library Director's position
- Assistant Director with 30+ years experience in Department
- Retiring Director provided leadership development opportunities for Assistant Director
- Retiring Director vocally and publicly recommended Assistant Director as replacement.
- Internal posting within department (required by personnel regulations)
- Town Manager offered to meet with any department employee who wished to give feedback on the replacement process



FREEPORT'S PROCESS:
EXTERNAL SEARCH WITH INTERNAL CANDIDATE(S)

- Police & Fire/Rescue Chief positions
- Political leadership and general public both desired a thorough process
- External advertisements notified applicants that there were internal candidates interested in both positions.
- Included department employees in selection process
- High level of public interest and participation
- Provided a very high quality candidate pool
- Done correctly, reassures the public that they are getting the best candidate available
- Done poorly, it can be a waste of time, or even a public perception disaster in some cases!



FREEPORT'S PROCESS:
EXTERNAL SEARCH ONLY

- Engineer and Code Officer positions
- These positions did not have deputies
- No internal candidates had the necessary education or certifications to be considered for these positions
- Little to no interest among current employees to work toward obtaining necessary education or certifications



SUCCESSION PLANNING FOR FIRE/RESCUE
CONSIDERATIONS FOR INTERNAL CANDIDATES

- Budgeting for career development is critical - this is in addition to regular training
- Members who seek advancement must be self-motivated. You need to understand and do your current job, teach someone the position you just left, and acquire the skills necessary for the job you seek. To do it correctly, it is a full plate.
- Care must be taken to properly incentivize an internal candidate to seek a position of leadership. Schedule changes, remuneration and the "risk-benefit" analysis – Is this promotion worth it to me? (monetary incentive, reward v. stress, etc.)
- How have past employees been treated by management? By the public?
- Don't force the acceptance of an internal candidate just because "it is his/her turn".



SUCCESSION PLANNING FOR FIRE/RESCUE
CONSIDERATIONS FOR EXTERNAL CANDIDATES

- What is the municipality's political reputation? Stable v. Unstable
- What is the reputation & history of the particular department? Trending up / down?
- If change is needed, is the municipality willing to commit proper resources?
- Where does the compensation package fit relative to other municipalities? The private sector?
- Is there likely to be support for an external candidate from within? Will there be the proper level of assistance to assure that institutional knowledge is
- Don't overlook internal candidate from further down in the ranks of across departments just to preserve the historic march of the process.
- Remember, external candidates are not a panacea.



QUESTIONS?