

Establishing and Maintaining a Public Works Director

By:

Larry Driscoll

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

EDUCATION

- Graduated from Kirkwood Community College in 1990 with a diploma in water and wastewater.
- Graduated from Kirkwood Community College in 2009 with an AA in business.
- Attending Mt. Mercy University for my BBA (Bachelor of Business Administration) in business. (Less than 28 credit hours left).

WORK EXPERIENCE

- Worked for People Service from 1992-2003.
- Worked for the City of Anamosa from 2003-2012.
- Employed by the City of Fort Madison since 2012.

ANAMOSA, IOWA

- Population is 5,500 with ISP population
- When the City merged all as one, staff was reduced by 1.5 employees.
- At the time I left in 2012, there were 9 full-time and 3 part-time employees in the department.

Departments I resided over:

- Water
- Wastewater
- Streets
- Storm Sewer
- Cemetery

Pro's and Key Items:

- We learned to share equipment and personnel in all departments.
- Within 5 years, the department became very efficient and completed a total of 24 major projects. All equipment was paid for up front.
- Labor force eliminated the union in 2005. With union they averaged 1.5% pay raise; after union averaged 3.5%.

Pro's and Key Items (cont.):

- Money saved went back into streets and equipment.
- Before creating director job, City transferred about \$350,000.00 into general fund. In 2012 average transferred was \$125,000.00.
- From 2003-2012 there was a great working relationship from the Manager down.
- City Administrator had one person to advise and make things work.

Cons:

- If director leaves City, there must be strong leadership in place so they can continue working with this system.
- After 2012, a total of 3.5 employees have been hired and are having a hard time working as a group.
- Since going back to old system, more money has been paid to employees. The cost is \$69,000.00 for every full-time employee added and they have added 5 fulltime in water/ww.

FORT MADISON

- Population is 11,500 with ISP population
- When City merged as one, staff was reduced by 3 employees.
- As of today, public works has employed 41 full-time and 14 part-time employees.

Departments I reside over:

- Water
- Wastewater
- Streets
- Storm Sewer
- Parks
- Cemetery
- Marina
- Landfill
- Solid Waste

Pros and Key Items:

- Reduction in equipment has been major item.
- Departments had major walls between them, still a struggle.
- Two major unions; water and streets. Rest of departments are non-union.
- We are not able to exchange workers from one department to another.
- Seen a reduction of 3 full-time water and 1 full-time street employees.

Pros and Key Items (Cont.):

- Strong supervisors in water, wastewater and streets.
- \$125,000.00 transferred to general fund. We are 80% tax relief and 20% goes toward equipment.
- Previous and current City Managers supportive of process.
- Supportive City staff.
- Public Works Director does not have to be an engineer.
- Having only a Director eliminates work force going around to City Council.

Cons:

- Lack of money
- Bad union Stewards
- Too close to City Manager in salary.

CONCLUSION