Merging City Departments

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Merging City Departments

Presented by:
Elizabeth Hansen, City Administrator
September 28, 2012
Purpose of merging departments

- This is a necessary cost-saving measure that is facing small communities
- We can provide better services for less money
- Great use of resources
- More people to assist; less burnout
- More opportunities for employees
- You’ll have one “go to” person in leadership
- These departments have common goals and priorities
- These departments should naturally forge intergovernmental relationships
More reasons for merging departments

- Consolidating the administrative functions will allow for enhanced coordination, planning and communication in areas including records management, technology improvements, purchasing, budgeting, and personnel functions.
- Common problem solving could help coordinate the departments to enhance capabilities.
- Could potentially be eligible and cognizant of more state and federal funding opportunities.
- Merging the three departments should provide more stability within the departments.
- It is the best decision for the interest of the population being served.

Merging City Departments: Public Works and Public Safety
Concerns for not merging departments

- What we have is working so why change?
- What would a PSD do that a Police Chief and a Fire Chief isn’t doing?
- Add another layer of government
- Do not want to upset the volunteers
- It is going to cost a lot more in the long run
- Have fear of the unknown
  - Staff can not guarantee it would be successful
  - Could not guarantee we would find a qualified candidate
- Employees and volunteers did not want to lose their full-time chief positions in both police and fire departments
Merging City Departments: Public Works and Public Safety

Merging Public Works - Process

- 7 Street Employees, including a mechanic and Street Supervisor
- 3 Water Operators, including Water Supervisor
- 3 Wastewater Operators, including Wastewater Supervisor
- Retirement of Street Supervisor and resignation of Water Supervisor
- Prepared a job description and posted advertisement internally
- Offered the Public Works Director position to Wastewater Supervisor; Water Operator was promoted to Water Supervisor after he became certified
Merging Public Safety

- 9 career police officers, including the Sergeant and Police Chief
- 1 full-time Fire Chief and approximately 40 fire and EMS volunteers
- Resignation of Police Chief, seemed to be the right time
- Council directed City Administrator to prepare a Request for Proposal for a consultant to help the city do their search for a Public Safety Director/Police Chief
- Meanwhile, council had to create the PSD position by Ordinance
Process and Timeline

- October 24th – Council approved hiring HROne Source and Moulder & Associates from Des Moines
- November – Consultants and City Administrator put together organizational chart, job description and process timeline
- December and January – Consultants conducted interviews with thirty elected officials, administrators, law enforcement, Fire/Ems service workers, and community folks
- January 23rd – Council approved first reading to Ordinance creating the PSD
More Process and Timeline

- February – Consultants and City Administrator provided financial and other researched information. Council directed consultants to advertise for the position.
- March – Received 51 applications; narrowed the search to 9 finalists. Consultants reviewed essay tests and background checks and final reading was approved to create the position.
- April 9 – Consultants reduced the finalists to 3
- April 18 – Scheduled interviews all day. Comment cards were provided. Results were tallied and council deliberated that evening. Extended offer of employment.
- May 7 – Council approved the contract
- June 4 – PSD started.
Final Remarks

- Communication, communication, communication
- Get the employees and volunteers involved in the process
- You don’t have to cross-train right away
- Support the position, make calculated changes, allow time for all to adjust
- New position in the state, not much research able to provide
- It is going to take the right person for the position
- Council and staff wanted continuity – Keep people in positions to assist in the transition
Take-always: Samples

- Nevada Public Works Director Job Description
- Nevada Public Safety Director Job Description
- Nevada Public Safety Director Timeline
- Nevada Ordinance 970: Creating the PSD Position
- Nevada Organizational Chart
Merging City Departments: Public Works and Public Safety

Comments/Questions?

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Thank you!
Merging City Departments-Mason City

Merging the Building Official and the Growth Development and Planning Departments in Mason City
Purpose of merging departments

- This is a necessary cost-saving measure that is facing our community
- We can provide better services for less money
- Better use of resources
- More people to assist; less burnout
- More opportunities for employees
- You’ll have one “go to” person in leadership
- These departments have common goals and priorities
- These departments should naturally forge intergovernmental relationships
More reasons for merging departments

- Consolidating the administrative functions will allow for enhanced coordination, planning and communication in areas including records management, technology improvements, purchasing, budgeting, and personnel functions.
- Common problem solving could help coordinate the departments to enhance capabilities.
- It is the best decision for the interest of the population being served.
Concerns for not merging departments

- What we have is not working and we need to change?
- Customer service continues to deteriorate and will lose development in our community.
- Running out of resources to do the functions we currently provide.
Departments Prior to Merger

- 9 Building Official Employees
  - Building Official
  - Permit Clerk/Administrative Assistant
  - Plumbing Inspector
  - Electrical Inspector
  - Rental Housing Inspector
  - Building and Neighborhood Services Division
    - Neighborhood Services Officer
    - 2 Nuisance Code Enforcement Officers
    - Animal Control Officer

- 3 + 1 Growth Development and Planning Department Employees
  - Director
  - Planner II
  - Administrative Assistant
  - Buyout Administrator (Temporary Position)
What Started the Process

- Building Official passed away in October 2011
- About the same time, the Growth Development and Planning Director decided to retire in the spring of 2012
- Council approved combining the two departments in February 2012
- GDP director retired March of 2012
Process and Timeline

- April 2012 Human Resources started advertising for new combined department director
- May 2012 Interviews for new director conducted with an offer accepted in early June
- New Director started August 1, 2012
Expectations

- Streamline the procedures that contractors and developers must follow to build in our community
- Remove the finger-pointing by the two departments for decisions that are in conflict with each other, one director will eliminate the conflict and establish accountability
- Help the North Iowa Corridor Economic Development Corporation find solutions to challenges brought by the new economic development prospects to create jobs
- Develop systems for citizens that show them that City employees are here to serve them
- Save approximately $50,000 in salary and benefits
Final Remarks

- Communication with community and other stakeholders should improve in time
- Apprehension by employees about what this means to them
- Important to have a group meeting and answer their questions up front and also gave written memo describing their primary and secondary responsibilities
- Should create efficiencies in the processes used by the department over time as new processes are developed
Final Remarks

- Make interim appointments to ease time of transition
- Director search process is difficult when you do merger positions as it seemed no applicant had the specific skills to fill all parts of the position so we had to compromise
- Keep people in current positions to assist in the transition but give director guidance to make changes as deemed necessary or desired when ready
Merging City Departments: Building Official and Growth Development and Planning

Comments/Questions?

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Thank you!
Merging City Departments

Presented by:
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September 28, 2012
Merging City Departments: Public Utilities

What Started the Process

- Cost –Savings
  - Retirement
  - Hiring freeze
  - Desire to hold water, sewer & storm water rates
- More staff to assist
- Departments have common goals & priorities
- Consolidating the administrative functions
Timeline

- Waste Water Treatment Plant connects with Water Reclamation Authority (October 2006)
- Storm Water Utility created (September 2010)
- Water Supervisor retires (July 2011)
- Water, Waste Water & Storm Water Departments combined (November 2011)
Departments Prior to the Merger

Merging City Departments: Public Utilities

City Administrator

Community Services Director

Public Utilities Superintendent

Waste Water Supervisor

Water Supervisor

2 FT Waste Water Operators

4 FT Water Operators
How the Department Looks Now

- City Administrator
- Community Services Director
- Public Utilities Superintendent
- Public Utilities Supervisor
- Public Utilities 6 FT Operators
Merging City Departments: Public Works and Public Safety

Expectations & Challenges

- Expectations:
  - Cross-training
  - Shared Equipment
  - Teamwork
  - Keep costs down
  - Storm water utility addition

- Challenges:
  - Supervisor adjustment
  - Cross-training
  - Combined Office Space
  - Teamwork
  - New Union
  - New federal & state regulations
Any Questions?

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Merging City Departments: Public Works and Public Safety

Charles City

Merging Police and Fire to Create a Public Safety Department
Driving Factors For Change Were Financial

- Council wished to improve the financial condition of the General Fund
- They also wanted to avoid any significant increases in the property tax levy
- 411 contributions
- Worker’s Compensation Rates
How Do We Stack Up?

- When compared to other cities of similar size, the obvious difference was the number of full-time firefighters.

Sample Comparisons:

- Charles City (pop 7652) 8 full-time
- Decorah (pop 8127) 3 full-time
- Waverly (pop 9874) 0 full-time
- Knoxville (pop 7313) 1 full-time
An Obvious Solution?

- Reducing full-time staff would:
  - reduce expenditures in the General Fund
  - reduce the levy by lowering pension contributions, health insurance costs, worker’s compensation insurance costs and other misc. expenses
But?

- Leadership had long been aware of the disparity between our number of full-time staff and that of similarly-sized cities.
- They were reluctant to reduce full-time staffing because of concerns that performance might suffer.
The Challenge

- Our goal was to find a way to reduce costs while maintaining or improving service delivery.
Our Solution

- Merge Police and Fire Services into one department
- Training officers to serve as police officers and to respond to fire calls
- “When properly implemented, a police/fire merger can reduce costs & dramatically improve police and fire service delivery.” ICMA Center for Public Safety Mgmt.
Changes Will Be Incremental

- Took advantage of attrition
  - 2 retirements in the Fire Dept (did not fill)
  - 2 vacancies in the Police Dept
  - All new hires will be PSOs
- Offered existing staff a chance to cross train
  - Internal testing for PSO openings for fire personnel
  - Voluntary cross-training for police personnel
Changes to Date

- City Code amended to create Public Safety Dept with Police and Fire as separate divisions
- Public Safety Director named
- Created Public Safety Officer position; union contracts amended as needed
- First Public Safety Officers hired
On the Horizon

- Purchase of vehicle/equipment to allow patrol officers trained as PSOs to respond to fire calls
- Cross-training of personnel to PSO status
- Integration of duties across departments
Comments/Questions?

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Thank you!