



The Mercer Group, Inc.

COCOA, FLORIDA

CITY MANAGER

**Caryn Gardner-Young
Boynton Beach, Florida**

Summary

- **ICMA - CM**
- **Master of Public Administration**
- **Juris Doctorate**
- **Current position: Planning Supervisor FDOT**
- **Salary: Parkland salary \$250,000.00**
- **Cover Letter**
- **Resume**
- **Internet Research**

Various news articles – neutral mention
Linkedin

THE MERCER GROUP, INC.

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May 21, 2020

Dona Higginbotham, Senior Vice President
Mercer Group Florida

Re: Cocoa City Manager position

Dear Dona Higginbotham:

Please consider this correspondence as my application for the City Manager's position for the City of Cocoa. I am interested in this position because I desire to work for a City which has a reputation for being progressive, caring, forward thinking and stable. As I reflect on the experiences I have had in local government and my understanding of the needs of a successful city, I am a natural fit for the position.

First, I exceed the education and experience requirements listed in the recruitment brochure since I have over fifteen years of progressively more responsible local municipal management and I am a Certified City Manager with a master's degree in Public Administration as well as possessing a Juris Doctorate. My career started out as a Zoning Administrator to almost ten years as the City Manager of Parkland which is a smaller municipality like Cocoa. I was one of the Assistant City Managers of Delray Beach which I specifically took for experience with a larger municipality than Parkland and to learn oversight of functions of considerable size and complexity. However, after my tenure in Delray Beach, I determined that I prefer to work for a smaller municipality like Cocoa.

Cocoa needs a strong, passionate leader with executive skills in interpersonal communications, data driven decision making, results driven initiatives and strategic planning. I am that person. I am extremely interested in the City Manager's position and I am committed to making Cocoa the best it can be. First, I understand that there is a need to keep the small town feeling while growth is occurring. While in Parkland, the City increased its population by over 6,000 residents but we maintained our level of service despite the growth impacts. The same was true in the Village of Wellington. We even worked with developers to obtain monies or equipment (fire rescue for assisted living facility) to deal with the impacts of a development.

I am not afraid to handle capital projects. As Acting Public Works and Utilities Director for over six months in Delray Beach, I was responsible for the \$79 million Capital Improvement Budget. This required me to determine which projects to include based upon needs and when monies are available, which funds will pay for the project, assist with solicitations and ensuring that the projects are completed on time and in budget. I excel in capital projects because of my strong intergovernmental skills. In Parkland I was able to convince two County Administrators, two County Elected Bodies, multiple transportation experts, property owners in both Counties and even State Legislators that 1900 acres should be incorporated in Broward County from Palm Beach County. Although it took over two years, as City Manager of Parkland I was able to move the County line which has not happened in Florida for over sixty years. Also, in Broward County I worked to create a countywide communications system and started discussions on a possible northwest Fire District and a northwest health clinic to be shared by four municipalities.

My knowledge and abilities match well with those desired by the City. Although a Planner and attorney in background, I have earned high marks for my financial acumen and I am fiscally conservative. I was the City Manager of Parkland during the economic recession in 2000s. I learned to be lean and mean and to make sure that I monitored the budget carefully so we could live within our means. I was even successful every year in Parkland in reducing or maintaining its mileage rate. I also have experience with grants to pay for infrastructure including obtaining FRDAP and Historic Preservation grants as well as receiving a \$300,000 line item from the State of Florida for modifications to one of our parks along the beach. I have been through at least four hurricanes, so I have experience with disaster experience. As a planner, I have substantial experience with land use and zoning principles as well as experience with Economic Development. While in Delray Beach, I worked closely with the Economic

Development Director on a Cluster Industry Study to determine the businesses we should be focused on as well as successfully obtained an opportunity zone designation.

I do not sit behind a desk. When I am in the office, I have an open-door policy which has allowed me to create a strong relationship with the public and employees in municipalities where I worked. I learned that effectively leveraging relationships with external stakeholders is extremely important. Thus, I am on the Board of Trustees for Northwest Medical Center and work closely with Chambers of Commerce and various not-for-profit organizations. I also connect with the community I work in by being involved in community events. For example, I have painted houses for Habitat for Humanity, sent care packages to soldiers overseas during the holidays, and worked with Office Depot to obtain building and grounds improvements for the Boys and Girls Club and a public school within Delray Beach. Over the years, I have developed strong relationships with County representatives making joint regional projects possible and was actively involved in the Broward County City Managers' Association where I developed strong connections with other City Managers.

In addition, throughout my career I have been successful in building a high-performance customer friendly organization which can only be accomplished by developing and mentoring employees, which are a city's most important asset and by not settling for second best. I believe in creating a culture of servant leadership that will result in talented professionals working collaboratively to create partnerships with community stakeholders. I created working groups including a purchasing group so information can be disseminated within a department rather than through the Purchasing Department as well as created interdepartmental groups such as a Placemaking and Livability Group which included members from Public Works, Development Services, and Economic Development Departments, CRA, and Downtown Development Agency. My style encourages continuous improvements such as procurement changes that I implemented in Delray Beach that reduced our solicitation timeframe by three weeks.

Most of all, I understand the need to establish a strong relationship with the City Council. The City Manager must take policy direction from the Electeds and ensure that their vision is achieved. I know I can accomplish this with Cocoa. By using strategic planning, I have been able to incorporate and implement Parkland's and Delray Beach's City Commission goals and objectives as well as communicate to the residents how successful each city has been. In addition, I create strong lasting relationships with my Electeds. Although I left Parkland over three (3) years ago, I still meet with two of my former Commissioners once a month for lunch and have been invited to several of their family celebrations.

If selected, I will work diligently, tirelessly, and even more importantly work with and uphold the collective vision and direction that the City Council have adopted. I am confident that I possess the managerial, communication and interpersonal skills to proudly serve as Cocoa's next City Manager. As I look ahead to my next chapter in my career, I am open minded about going wherever I need to go in order to find the right opportunity, I want to find a position where I can utilize my extensive experience and do an incredible job. I believe the Cocoa's City Manager position is that job. Thank you for your consideration and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

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QUALIFICATION SUMMARY

A seasoned manager with more than fifteen (15) years of innovative leadership expertise in public administration. Achievement-oriented, outcome focused and accountability driven, with proven communications, organizational and analytical skills. Demonstrated proficiency in successfully managing staff and professionals of all levels. Profound knowledge of government policies pertaining to budgeting, city planning and development, transparency, forecasting and municipal elections. Additional expertise in the following areas:

- Leadership and Organizational Management
- Customer Service
- Strategic Planning and Performance Measures
- Personnel Selection and Team Building
- Planning and Zoning
- Researching complex topics
- Fiscal Analysis and Budgeting
- Community Relations

RELEVANT PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:

Planning Supervisor, FDOT District 4, Ft Lauderdale, Florida March 2020 to Present

Florida Department of Transportation is a state agency responsible for coordinating the planning and development of a safe, viable, and balanced state transportation system serving all regions of the state, and to assure the compatibility of all components, including multimodal facilities. District 4 covers the counties of Broward, Palm Beach, Martin, Indian River and St. Lucie which is approximately 5,000 square miles, with 3,615,400 residents and includes vehicles which travel more than 52.4 million miles daily. I manage a team of three Planners and my responsibilities include mentoring staff, intergovernmental coordination, assist with amendments to the Florida Transportation Plan and SIS Plan, review of Comprehensive Plans for compliance with FDOT goals and objectives, develop and coordinate planning studies such as but not limited to corridor, connectivity, access management, and resiliency studies and review and improve processes and procedures.

Assistant City Manager, City of Delray Beach, Florida March 2017 to Sept. 2019

City of Delray Beach is a municipality located in the southern end of Palm Beach County with a population of over 65,000 residents. It covers approximately sixteen and a half (16.5) square miles which borders are Unincorporated Palm Beach County to the west, the Atlantic Ocean to the east, City of Boynton Beach to the north and the City of Boca Raton to the south. Full service municipal organization comprised of 847 employees with three (3) collective bargaining units. The Adopted Fiscal Year 2018-2019 Budget was over \$293 million including a \$133 million General Fund, \$79 million Capital Improvements Fund and \$56 million in Enterprise

Funds including Water and Sewer, Stormwater Utility, Sanitation, City Marina located on the Intercoastal Waterway, and two (2) Municipal Golf Courses (Executive and 18 hole). During my time with the City, my duties and responsibilities included oversight for almost all the City's Departments including internal support Departments of Finance, Purchasing, and Human Resources Departments, Clerk's Office and Information Technology Department, community engagement Departments of Parks and Recreation and Neighborhood Services as well as Livability and Placemaking Departments of Economic Development, Development Services (Planning and Building Departments, Utilities and Public Works Departments).

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Successfully worked with the City's Lobbyist and obtained \$300,000 grant from the State of Florida for construction of a pavilion along the City's beach front
- Assisted with the reduction of the operating millage rate .1000 each year in order to achieve an overall millage rate reduction of one mill over ten years
- Coordinated the City's funding agreements with not-for profit organizations to ensure all performance measures were being met and created a better working relationship with the not-for profit organizations
- Developed and implemented new lien form and procedures to include electronic filing of liens and retrieval of lien information
- Reduced the time for completion of solicitations by amending the City's Purchasing Manual to address gray areas and inconsistencies and creating and standardizing solicitation templates
- Proactively represented the City on the Board of the Delray Beach Marketing Cooperative by watching expenses resulting in the organization dissolving to avoid duplicate services
- Assisted City Manager in implementation of a Strategic Planning process including hiring Strategic Planner, coordination of day and a half session with City Commission and drafting of final report
- Substantially reduced the fees imposed in the City's ICMA plans to provide savings to the City's employees
- Citywide data was successfully replicated from Delray Beach server room to offsite Disaster Recovery Data Center in Tallahassee to allow continued service in time of emergency
- Assisted in updating of City's Investment Policy to maximize investment returns
- Developed and implemented a City Warehouse Policy to create effective controls and efficient operations
- Successfully implemented a downtown parking program

CITY AWARDS RECEIVED

- The City was awarded the All American City Award
- The City was awarded the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting by the Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada

City Manager, City of Parkland, Florida
Interim City Manager

June 2007 to Nov. 2016
Feb. 2007 to June 2007

City of Parkland is the most northwestern municipality in Broward County with a population of over 28,000 residents. It covers approximately twenty-one (21) square miles which borders are the Everglades to the west, State Road 7 to the east, Palm Beach County line to the north and the Sawgrass Expressway to the south. My duties and responsibilities included operating as the City's Chief Executive Officer with 139 part-time and full-time employees and a \$46 million budget. Oversight responsibility for the following functions: law enforcement, fire/EMS services, parks and recreation, planning and zoning, finance, public works, library, engineering, building, and human resources.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Maintained or decreased the City's millage rate every year as City Manager without impacting resident level of service
- Improved the Fire/Rescue services within Parkland to a level that supported an enhanced ISO insurance rating of Class 3 from a 4/9 rating
- Participated in Annexation effort (successful) to increase the physical size of City by over 1000 acres and lead successful transfer of 1900 acres from Palm Beach County to Broward County
- Represented the City in a successful collaborative effort of four entities (Broward County, MPO, City and FDOT) to form a joint effort in reconstruction of Lox Road
- Received no audit comments for four years in a row from the City's independent auditors (2 different firms) evaluating the City's financial records
- First Broward County municipality to initiate and deploy 65 gallon residential roll-out carts throughout the City for single stream recycling and the first Broward County municipality to have clean burning "CGN" (compressed natural gas) solid waste Collection trucks deployed in their community with Waste Management
- Completed re-write of City of Parkland's Rules and Regulations in-house
- Finalized real estate transactions for purchase of Beaty and 12 acre sites
- Negotiated five (5) year contracts with both Broward County Sheriff's Office and Coral Springs Fire Department to provide law enforcement and fire/EMS services
- Achieved the completion of two Fire Stations (over \$2 million each), the completion of the City's regional park including 2 synthetic fields, 2 playgrounds, a baseball diamond, 4 multi-use fields and 2 bathrooms (over \$7 million), and the completion of a new clay court Tennis Center (over \$4 million)
- Created an employee wellness program including participation in lunch and learns, physical activity and healthy snacks/lunches
- Improved Parkland's web page (www.cityofparkland.org) by a complete makeover four years ago and in the process of completing another one
- Launched a biannual resident survey to measure the effectiveness of city services and integrated this survey into the budget and the performance monitoring process
- Implemented quarterly operational and financial reporting that is tied to the City Commission's strategic objectives
- Implemented for the first time an investment policy for the City's monies

- Guided a complete revamp of organizational performance measures to those that are outcome focused and results oriented
- Instituted control measures during the recession including but not limited to hiring freeze, layoffs, budget reductions to ensure that City financial condition and outlook was good.
- Directed the development of the City's first long term capital replacement fund, infrastructure replacement fund, insurance deductible reserve and 10 year financial forecast to better predict future impacts on revenue streams so there is no need for a huge hike in the millage rate
- Established a comprehensive employee development, training and recognition program Focused on Department heads providing consistent and in-year performance recognition culminating in annual employee recognition awards
- Competitively contracted city services – median maintenance, tree trimming, right of way mowing, planning services, and fleet maintenance permitting the cost-efficient reallocation of employees to more productive assignments
- Completed in three months the transfer of the City's Community Center operations and programming from a private provider
- Implemented an across the board communications program that focused on internal and external resources. Utilized low cost high volume communication measures to inform citizens of city activities and issues. These included effective utilization of the City's Pipeline, E-mail Blasts, E-Newsletters, Facebook, message boards and banners
- Directed implementation of the City's Geographic Information System roll-out including resident access to City maps

CITY AWARDS RECEIVED

- Since 2007, the City was awarded Playful City USA designation by KaBoom!
- Since 2007, the City was awarded the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting by the Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada
- Since 2009, the City has received the lowest or second lowest crime rate in Broward County pursuant to the Florida Department of Law Enforcement
- 2010 – Awarded 5 Stars from Grey House Publishing for America's Top Rated Small Towns and Cities.
- 2012 – One of a limited number of local government organizations to receive Special Performance Measures Recognition from the G.F.O.A. in a budget document
- 2014 – the City was awarded the Florida League of Cities Municipal Achievement Award (City Spirit) for the City's Passport to Parkland event
- 2014 – the City was awarded the Healthy Weight Champion Award from the Florida Department of Health
- 2015 – the City was awarded the one of the top 10 places to Live in Florida from Telegraph Today
- 2015 – the City was awarded the 14th Best City for Young Families in Florida from NerdWallet
- 2015 – the City was awarded a Platinum Permitting City from the Greater Fort Lauderdale Alliance
- 2015 – the City was awarded the 5th Best Small City in the Nation for Families from NerdWallet
- 2016 – the City was awarded the 4th Most Successful City in Florida from Zippia

Assistant City Manager, Parkland Florida**Jan. 2006 to Feb. 2007**

Partnered with the City Manager in administering the day to day operations of the City, in establishing and implementing long range planning, development of goals and objectives, preparation of the proposed budget document, project management, needs analysis, mentoring and development of subordinates. Departmental areas of responsibility included all city departments at various times with continued oversight in Development Services (Building, Engineering and Planning and Zoning) throughout my tenure.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Implemented Code Red system which is an emergency notification system to residents.
- Created a city wide Communities for a Lifetime program which encourages communities to inventory the needs and current services available to its older population and identify needed improvements in the community. Participating communities use existing resources and state technical assistance to make crucial civic improvements in such areas as housing, health care, transportation, accessibility, business partnerships, community education, and efficient use of natural resources, volunteer opportunities, and recreation.
- Implemented an online resident request, report and complaint system that could be used by residents 24/7
- Coordinated with Broward County and all municipalities the implementation of a countywide school concurrency program

Development Services Director, Parkland Florida**Aug. 2005 to Jan. 2006**

Supervised a thirteen (13) employee Department including Building, Planning and Zoning and Engineering Divisions for a municipality that was experiencing accelerated growth. According to Broward County, the City of Parkland, based upon the percentage of average annual growth (17.1%), was ranked number 1 as the fastest growing municipality from 2000 to 2010. My duties and responsibilities included: providing staff support to the Planning and Zoning Board, responding to and resolved difficult and sensitive citizen inquiries and complaints, preparation of agenda items for the City Commission and other committees, commissions and boards involved in planning and zoning, building safety, code compliance and housing and grants activities, directing the evaluation, selection and administration of outside consulting contracts for planning and development related services; representing the City on numerous regional organizations and boards, ensuring the City's interests were represented in a regional context on issues including transportation and emergency management and preparing and presenting the Development Services Department's budget to the City Commission.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Implemented a new Community Bus Services in cooperation with Broward County

Planning and Zoning Director, Parkland Florida**Feb. 2005 to Aug. 2005**

Supervised a two person Planning and Zoning Department for a municipality that had a population of 9,000 in 1990 to a population of 22,000 in 2005. In 2005 calendar year, there were over four hundred dwelling units constructed with an average cost of \$395,900. My duties and

responsibilities included: planning, directing, supervising, and coordinating current and advanced land use planning for the City, supervising and participating in the preparation, revision and implementation of the City's Comprehensive Plan, preparing draft ordinances and resolutions relating to zoning, subdivisions, annexations, environmental review and related planning and zoning matters, including the preparation and presentation of reports and recommendations, conferring with architects, engineers, developers, and the general public on planning and zoning matters, making authoritative interpretations of applicable laws, regulations and policies, supervising and participating in the more complex and technical planning studies, attending meetings to represent the City and make presentations and coordinating planning activities with other City offices and departments and with outside agencies.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Implemented a new Community Bus Services in cooperation with Broward County
- Implemented a new Development Petition Review process to streamline development issues and create a one-stop process for landowners and developers for proposed projects
- Implemented a new Special Events Permit Review process

Additional previous experience

- | | |
|----------------------------|--|
| • Nov. 2004 to Feb. 2005 | Planner Kilday & Assoc West Palm Beach, FL |
| • Aug. 2002 to Nov. 2004 | Planning & Zoning Director Village of Wellington, FL |
| • Jan. 2001 to Aug. 2002 | Planning & Zoning Manager Village of Wellington, FL |
| • Aug. 2000 to Jan. 2001 | Principal Planner Village of Wellington, FL |
| • April 1999 to Aug. 2000 | Zoning Administrator City of Greenacres, FL |
| • April 1998 to April 1999 | Senior Planner, City of Greenacres, FL |
| • Aug. 1992 to Aug. 1998 | Attorney/Bickley, Hart and Gardner |

EDUCATION:

Master of Public Administration Degree,
Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton, Florida 2002

Juris Doctorate

DePaul University, Chicago, Illinois 1985

Bachelor of Arts Degree in Environmental Studies and Geography
SUNY @ Binghamton, Binghamton, New York 1982.

PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATIONS

- International City Management Association (ICMA) Credentialed Manager
- American Planning Association (APA) Certified Planner (AICP)

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

- International City Management Association (ICMA) - member
- Florida City/County Management Association (FCCMA) - member
- Broward City/County Managers Association (BCCMA) - President served two terms; Secretary/Treasurer served one term and two terms as Vice President (2011-2016)

- Palm Beach City/County Managers Association (PBCCMA) - member
- American Planning Association (APA) - member
- American Planning Association Florida Chapter (FAPA) - member
- Florida Recreation and Parks Association (FRPA) – member
- Florida Government Finance Officers Association (FGFOA) - member

COMMUNITY AFFILIATIONS:

- Board of Trustees, Northwest Medical Center since 2015

REFERENCES AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST