



TOWN OF ACTON  
HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION  
472 MAIN STREET  
ACTON, MASSACHUSETTS, 01720  
hdc@acton-ma.gov

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13 May 2015

Board of Selectman  
Town of Acton

Re: Draft Job Description, Land Use/Economic Development Director

Dear Board of Selectman,

At the Historic District Commission's (HDC's) regularly scheduled meeting of May 12, 2015, the memo from the Board of Selectman dated April 30, 2015 regarding the above position was reviewed and discussed. The HDC offers the following comments for your consideration:

#### **REPORTS TO**

We believe the importance and breath of this position is such that the merely reporting to the town manager is insufficient. We would expect to see a more formalized reporting structure, such as producing and delivering quarterly or semi-annual reports in a public forum.

#### **SUMMARY**

We believe the summary contains some obvious oversights such any reference to responding to the concerns of Acton's citizens or any reference to the Acton 2020 Master Plan in which historic preservation issues were ranked among the town's highest priorities. In general, historic preservation issues and "town character" are barely mentioned throughout the memo.

#### **SUPERVISORY RESPONSIBILITY**

We note that all of the Director positions listed here are FTE's who provide extensive support to town boards or committees that have governing/statutory authority. The Historic District has governing/statutory authority under MGL Chapter 40C. It is the **only** governing/statutory authority committee without FTE staff support. We would expect that this new position would find a way to remedy that injustice and inequity.

#### **DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERISTICS OF POSITION**

No comment. The categories and descriptions appear to be typical and perhaps required municipal government requirements.

## **KNOWLEDGE, SKILL AND ABILITY**

### **Knowledge**

Absent from this description is any knowledge or understanding of the dynamics regarding preservation and economic development including a background of understanding the economic value of preservation, familiarity with national standards such as the Secretary of the Interiors Standards for Historic Preservation, state standards such as Chapter 40C, The Historic Districts Act or local standards such as Acton Bylaw Chapter P or similar legislation in another jurisdiction; and proven experience working with and strengthening historic districts and preservation bylaws.

### **Skill**

No comment. This appears to be a pro forma description of the skills required.

### **Ability**

Absent from this description is proven **leadership** and **consensus** building in a prior position(s).

## **MINIMUM ENTRANCE REQUIREMENTS**

We support the Master's level education requirement described. We believe a minimum of 7 years of experience is entirely inadequate for this position and, given the leadership, mediation, negotiation and supervisory skills that undoubtedly will be necessary, suggest that a more seasoned person with a minimum of 15-20 years of post Master's Degree educational experience will be required.

## **PREFERRED QUALIFICATIONS**

Certification as a town planner will limit the number of potential candidates. The town already has a certified town planner(s).

## **JOB DUTIES**

There is no mention here regarding implementing the Acton 2020 Master Plan in which historic preservation was determined to be one of the town's top priorities. The HDC would expect administrative and technical support in implementing time consuming initiatives such as local zoning and bylaw changes, issues involving MGL Chapter 40C, potential expansion of the historic districts and streamlining coordination and application procedures among other town entities such as the town clerk, assessor and building department. We would also expect duties to include understanding local and statewide preservation issues and maintaining productive relationships with the Massachusetts Historical Commission, MAPC, Historic New England and other such organizations.

We note that the Historic District Commission is erroneously referred to as a "non-regulatory" committee. It is unfathomable that the Town Manager is apparently unaware of the HDC's legal responsibilities. Refer to our comments under SUPERVISORY RESPONSIBILITY.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the requirements for this very important position.

Sincerely,

Kathy Acerbo-Bachmann

HDC Chair