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Transition Team 2018

**Summary of Feedback and Recommendations
from City of Annapolis Staff**

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ACKNOWLEGDEMENTS

<h1 style="text-align:center">Transition Team 2018
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Introduction

Transition Team 2018 decided that garnering feedback and recommendations from City of Annapolis staff would be helpful to Mayor Buckley during his transition and planning process.

The City of Annapolis currently has 764 employees on its payroll.[1] Of those, 484 are classified as civil service employees, 26 are classified as exempt/appointed (e.g., managers), 44 are contractual (some have benefits, some do not), and 201 are temporary/seasonal employees who work part-time. These public servants have experience, expertise and field-based knowledge about how the City runs. Many have been City employees for several years and know what has been tried before, what has worked, and what has not.

The Transition Team solicited staff feedback through a brief questionnaire. Only a few team members had access to the completed questionnaires and were responsible for reviewing and managing the raw data and developing this report. This report presents a general overview of questionnaire responses and a sampling of staff recommendations. It also offers some recommendations from the Transition Team.

Approach

Questionnaire Design and Dissemination

The questionnaire posed nine questions,[2] asking staff what they would like to tell the Transition Team about what they do for the City—what works and what could change— their work environment, the top challenge that keeps them from doing their best work and a possible fix for it, and whether there is an immediate action that could be taken to eliminate a recurring difficulty. The questionnaire also asked staff to rate each department or office in terms of how effectively it is doing its job, how effectively it interacts with the public, and how effectively it interacts with their own offices. It requested (but did not require) that respondents identify their departments so as to provide context, as needed. In designing the questionnaire, a few City of Annapolis staff were consulted for feedback on the type and wording of questions. A copy of the questionnaire and cover letter are in *Appendix A*.

The questionnaire was designed to take approximately 15 minutes to complete, and the actual average completion time was 16 minutes.

The questionnaire was launched on February 8, 2018, with a deadline of February 23, 2018, so that staff had roughly two weeks to respond. The Human Resources Office assisted by disseminating the questionnaire via email to all City staff. The email contained a cover letter from the Transition Team, a link to the survey online (so that staff could take the survey using a

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[1] This number includes nine elected officials.

[2] Two questions were merged in the paper version.

computer or smartphone), and a pdf attachment of the questionnaire that staff could print out and complete manually. A locked box was placed in the Human Resources Office to receive completed paper versions of the questionnaire, and only the Transition Team accessed the locked box to retrieve completed questionnaires.

Handling and Presenting the Responses

The transition team members responsible for the questionnaire reviewed the completed questionnaires. Any personal identifiers that were provided by respondents were expunged, and the questionnaire responses were disaggregated and then sorted into the following topic areas:

- Staffing and Budget
- Infrastructure, Fleet, and Physical Environment
- Training and Technical Upgrades
- Management
- Interdepartmental Relations and Communications

General information that respondents provided about their roles and responsibilities was also pulled together, as were examples of good news stories (e.g., "We take pride in what we do.").

The sorted questionnaire responses, which included staff recommendations, were provided to the Mayor and City Manager.

All hard copies of completed questionnaires were destroyed, and all electronically completed questionnaires were deleted.

Caveats

To place the results of the questionnaire in context, some caveats are warranted. First, taking the questionnaire was voluntary and not all staff participated, thus the respondents are a self-selected subset of City employees. Consequently, questionnaire results should not be extrapolated to the entire work force or used to officially evaluate the performance or conduct of any department or employee. Any identified areas of concern should be appropriately followed up in a more systematic manner.

Second, the questionnaire was not designed to be a scientific survey. Rather, it was designed primarily to collect broad-brush, high-level thoughts about how some City employees feel about their jobs, their working environment, their successes, and areas needing improvement. Most of the questions were purposefully general and open-ended, open to interpretation in terms of how to respond. The questionnaires and this report provide anecdotal feedback from a subset of City employees. None of the responses have been followed up on or fact-checked, and no respondent has been contacted.

Third, making the questionnaire available online to staff who may share the same computer allowed the possibility for respondents to submit answers multiple times. There appeared to be no evidence of such a practice.

Fourth, the questionnaire was disseminated electronically, via email. As a result, not all employees—especially those who do not have their own computers or access to a printer—may have been able to easily access and respond to it within the two-week timeframe.

Fifth, because respondents were not asked to identify themselves, no response to a question can or should be attributed to any specific person.

Who Responded?

Of the 106 completed questionnaires received, 100 respondents filled out the questionnaire online, and 6 filled out the questionnaire in hard copy. Not counting the City's 201 seasonal workers and 9 elected officials, this represents a 19% response rate. Of those that responded, over half opted to identify where they worked; the breakdown of those respondents by department is presented in Table 1. This indicates that responses were received from staff in at least 15 of the 18 City departments.

TABLE 1.
Responses to Optional Question, "In which department or office do you work?"

Department or Office	Number of Respondents
Central Purchasing Office	0
City Manager	0
Finance	4
Fire	11
Harbormaster	1
Human Resources	1
Management Information Technology	2
Mayor's Office	1
Office of Communication	0
Office of Emergency Management	3
Office of Environmental Policy	1
Office of Law	2
Office of the City Clerk	0
Planning & Zoning	6
Police	14
Public Works	5
Recreation & Parks	6
Transportation	2
Answered	**61**
Skipped	**45**

"I love the job I do and working for the City."

"I am looking forward to fresh ideas."

"We really do have a great city and we need to help show it."

All respondents seemed intent on providing thoughtful, useful feedback, and many expressed gratitude for being asked to share their perspectives. Many reported a high degree of satisfaction and purpose in working for the City. They seem to love Annapolis and work hard to make the City successful. In many areas, there is a great deal of collegiality and even a sense of family. Many employees appreciate the flexibility that some offices allow.

Staffing and Budget

*"If we had some additional help, we could focus on moving the City forward,
not spending all our time putting out fires or just trying to keep our heads above water."*

The most common concern expressed was understaffing and its rippling effects. Over the years, with "no growth" budgets and budget cuts that have precluded backfilling positions or hiring new staff, many feel that, with their added responsibilities, there are insufficient resources and time to satisfactorily complete their work. As a result, many feel that they may be working beyond their job descriptions and cannot do their jobs effectively. Some feel salaries are not commensurate with education and experience. Respondents also expressed concerns about favoritism, the need for qualified workforce, and transparency in listing jobs and hiring practices. Many employees have specific ideas about new positions needed and how staff time in their areas could be more efficiently allocated.

Sample Staff Recommendations about Staffing

o Hire administrative support staff to help out with daily operational tasks so that other duties can be fulfilled. Hire for the vacant positions, which can also result in advancement.
o Review and update job descriptions to ensure that they meet today's needs and skills sets (e.g., computer literacy), and streamline the hiring process.
o Conduct reviews of employees working above their job descriptions so that appropriate transfers and upgrades can occur with appropriate compensation. Consider the organizational structure of certain departments to see if there are opportunities for advancement.
o Compare Annapolis's benefits and compensations packages to other cities so that the City can retain good people; plan for pay raises after years of "no growth" budgets.
o Reinstate or introduce additional benefits, including: paid maternity leave for 12 weeks, additional paid military leave for Reserve/National Guard employees who work shift work, and parking for employees. Bring back the tuition reimbursement program, which enabled employees to seek training outside of the usual channels and increased employee satisfaction, as it gave them the chance for workplace advancement.
o Follow up on the outcome of a salary survey that was previously done by the City.

Sample Staff Recommendations About Budget

- o Research and consider "outside of the box" sources of funding.
- o Modify the budget procedures to increase the emphasis on input from departments on their changing needs, rather than relying on previous year's expenditures.
- o Since much of the City's oldest infrastructure is funded through enterprise funds, which are "fee for service," review potential opportunities to use these funds more effectively (e.g., possibly reduce debt service through longer financial maturities), and apply the savings toward the needed additional personnel, project management contract services, and other services and efficiency improvements.

Physical Environment, Infrastructure, and Fleet

"All fire stations need remodeling . . . Many firefighters wake up with
sore throats, stuffy noses, and coughs due to the conditions in the bunk rooms."

Many raised concerns about aging infrastructure and buildings in need of repair, redesign, or modernization, such as the Spa Road facility and the fire stations. Some buildings have leaking roofs and mold problems, which can present significant health and safety issues. Others discussed the need to maintain and regularly clean buildings. Some pointed out the need to better accommodate female employees, especially those who serve in facilities or in the fire or police departments, where the buildings were designed for a primarily male workforce. Several responders discussed the poor condition of the vehicle fleet, including buses, police cars, and fire trucks, as well as outdated equipment, such as lifts and firefighting equipment, and insufficient areas to repair them. Such working conditions also challenge morale.

Sample Staff Recommendations

- o Remodel the fire stations. Some of the upgrades/replacements have been slated for years.
- o Repair HVAC issues in many, many buildings.
- o Keep up-to-date on checks and modernization of fire-fighting and facilities equipment.
- o Allow take-home police cars. The fleet would be better cared for and last longer. It would also improve morale and save money in the long run.
- o Consider having the mechanics come to the stations for small repairs, instead of having large equipment drive out to headquarters; this would save the crews a lot of time and the City money on fuel.
- o Do something about the cigar smoke that wafts into the Gorman Street building.

Training and Technical Support

"The age of the software that I and my coworkers use on a daily basis
is the biggest impediment to producing the best work and in a timely manner."

"I would like to see the City invest more in our training so we could be more effective."

Training is a critical issue for many of the respondents. Some stress the need for more internal training in their departments, especially for new hires. Others feel that training people across departments to the same level will help with workflow. Training keeps everyone on the same page, fosters better, more effective, work relationships, and provides for better services. There was also a frequent call for training around issues of sensitivity and diversity.

Moreover, the City has an urgent need for software upgrades. Some offices report still using Microsoft Office 2002, for example. Outdated software makes it difficult to produce professional-quality work, interact with systems outside of the City, and interface with other technologies. Hardware upgrades are also urgently needed to support the newer software. Specific offices have need of other technology upgrades, such as color printers and specialty software.

Sample Staff Recommendations

o   Ensure that new hires are properly trained, and allow current employees to attend the trainings they need.
o   Upgrade basic computer software and hardware.
o   Explore the possibility of all City departments using the same basic software programs so standardized information is available to and useable by all.
o   Ensure that departments can obtain and use software packages specific to their work; avoid standardizing purely for cost savings.
o   Conduct cross-departmental training so that staff knows whom to contact for which services and information.

Management

> *"Our Department is struggling with a lot of issues and needs external assessment,*
> *with one-on-one meetings within specific areas. We need actual change to better us,*
> *and we need the City Manager, Mayor, and City Council to really listen to us,*
> *offer real suggestions, and support and believe in what we do."*

Several respondents provided positive comments on managers who are doing a great job—making their departments feel like family, helping by allowing flexible scheduling, running interference for their employees, and other good management practices.

Top management challenges in the past seem to be lack of direction from the top, a lack of consistency in messaging, and too many meetings. Some expressed frustration that decisions had been made based on the input of a small, vocal group whose opinions may not reflect the majority. Several sensed a hostile environment with upper-level management, in which issues of sensitivity, fairness, and respect were ignored.

A great deal of concern was expressed that City leadership and upper-level management are not held as accountable as is the rest of the City's workforce. These concerns may have led to long-term dysfunction and a lack of trust in some offices. As one respondent put it, "Fairness does not exist."

Some reported that certain departments micromanage or set agendas for other departments; some mentioned that City Council members were overly involved in their work. Other issues raised included: lack of professionalism or competence, exclusion, ignoring various diversity concerns, favoritism, employees being placed in positions based on political connections rather than merit, and the hiring of unqualified staff not vetted through appropriate channels. There were a few allegations of misconduct, corruption, and racism, some of which were coupled with a fear of retaliation for disclosing such behaviors.

Sample Staff Recommendations

o   The Mayor should be clear about his priorities and goals.
o   Provide training for leadership in good management practices.
o   Place an emphasis on fairness and transparency, and ensure equal treatment of employees across the board.
o   Encourage flexibility with work schedules and in other areas when possible.
o   All management should receive training around diversity and unconscious bias issues.
o   Provide support for City employees who are committed to serving outside of the department (e.g., volunteering, community involvement,).

Interdepartmental Relations and Communications

"I would like to see my office work more collaboratively with other departments.
Currently, it seems that we work in opposition of other departments."

"The main thing I feel that could change in the work environment is the communication skills."

"I know that attempts have been made, but I would like to see
more interaction between the City departments and the citizens."

Because many software programs used by the City don't interface well with each other, interdepartmental workflow is impeded. This underscores the need for compatible programs and hardware and training to support their implementation, as mentioned above. The shortage of staff is also seen as a major impediment to better departmental interactions.

Several respondents expressed desire for a better overall picture of the City and where the work of their offices fits in. They would like to have a sense of the Mayor's long-term goals.

Tables 2, 3, and 4 reflect respondents' responses to questions about how effectively the various departments do their jobs, and how well they interact with the public and with other parts of the City workforce. The Fire Department, Management Information Technology Office, and Office of Emergency Management received high ratings for their effectiveness and interactions with other departments. There is a noticeably high level of dissatisfaction in interactions with the Finance Office, which has the most "needs improvement" responses to each of the three questions.

Table 2.
Responses to "How would you rate each department or office in terms of how effectively it is doing its job?" (95 responses)
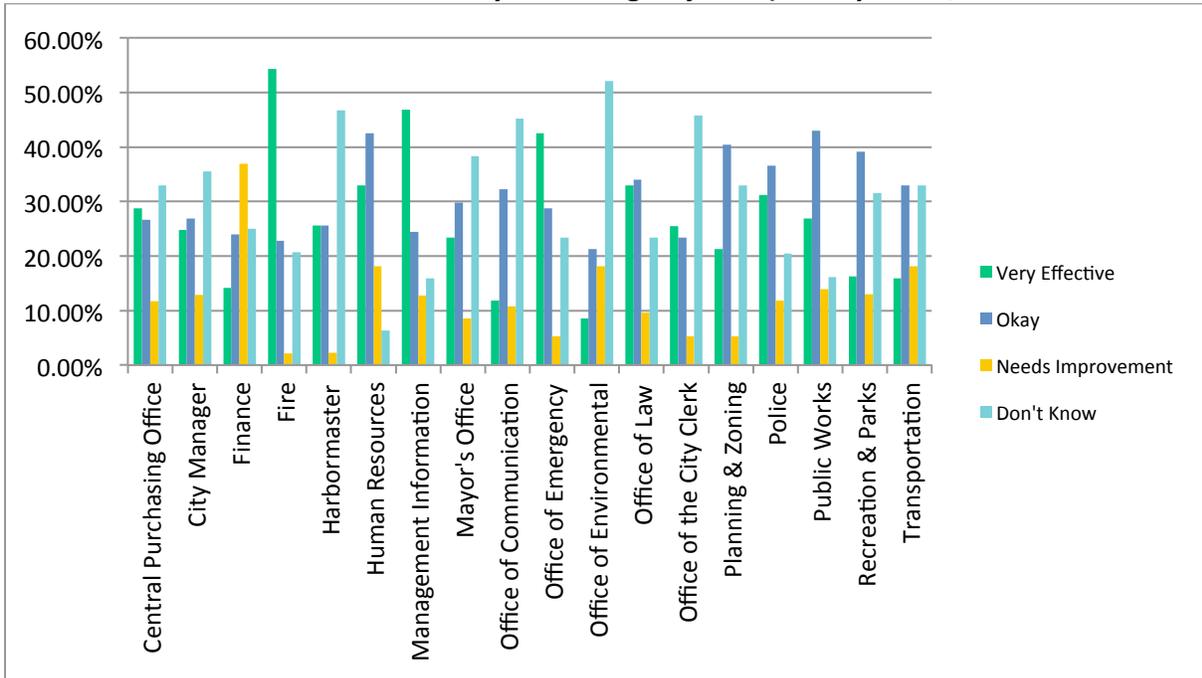

Table 3.
Responses to "How would you rate each department or office in terms of how it interacts with yours?" (89 responses)
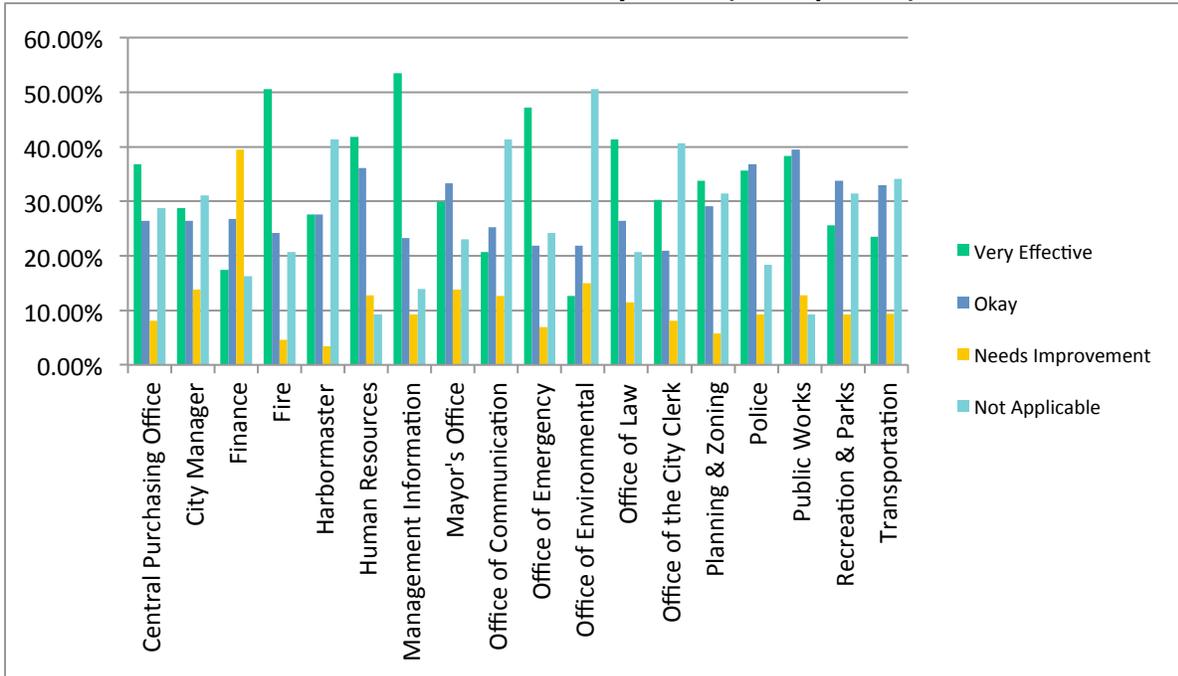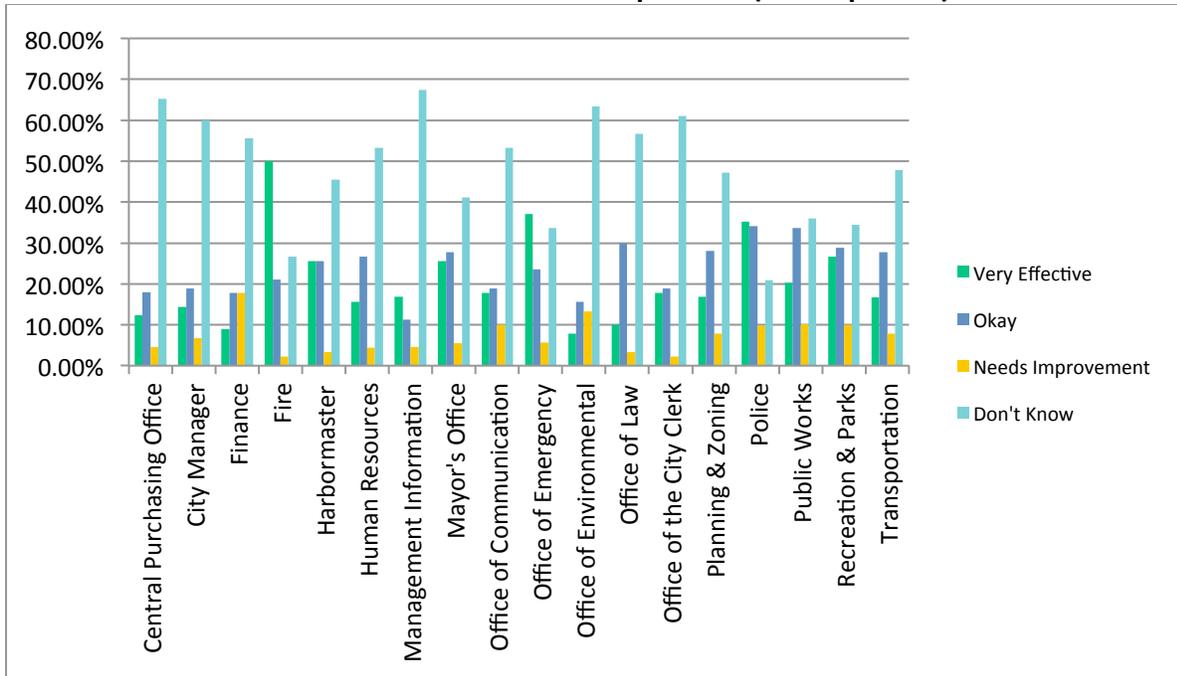
Table 4.
Responses to "How would you rate each department or office in terms of
how it interacts with the public?" (91 Responses)

Sample Staff Recommendations:

o Put out a monthly email or other communication from the Mayor about his vision for City, current goals, accomplishments, and challenges to keep everyone thinking together.
o Have a formal set of priorities or goals from the Mayor and City Council that the departments can refer to when there are disagreements about how projects should be implemented.
o Establish a council of departmental leaders to deal with citywide issues like flooding.
o Make sure that software used by various departments is compatible.

Staff "Do it Now "Recommendations to the Mayor

One of the questions asked of City staff, "Is there an immediate action that could be taken to eliminate a recurring difficulty? If so, what is it?" Below are responses that fit into the category of "Do It Now."

o Create a City staff directory giving names and functions so that everyone knows who and which office should be contacted about a specific issue.
o Create identifiers for City staff for when they are in the field doing work (e.g., staff badges).
o Provide a department credit card to make small needed purchase over weekends or past business hours, as the fire department operates 24 hours a day.
o Provide a backup dispatcher for the Transportation Supervisor when he is called away from his desk.

- Let contracts with a few companies for small jobs so that when contract work is needed, a new bidding process is not required.
- Issue a monthly email or other communications from the Mayor about his vision for the City, current goals, accomplishments, and challenges to keep everyone thinking together.
- Use a single crew to staff multiple pieces of emergency equipment. Cross-staffing with medic units is especially important.
- Start working to introduce an ordinance change making it possible to charge a re-inspection fee for rental inspection appointments that are missed by the property representative.
- Begin efforts to hire a company for annual hose testing, just as ladder testing is subcontracted out.
- Consider a signing bonus or other incentive to hire more paramedics.

Transition Team Recommendations to the Mayor

Based on a review of the staff responses, the Transition Team offers these recommendations to the Mayor. Some underscore suggestions included in the staff recommendations above.

"Do It Now"

- Provide an initial response to the City staff about receiving the questionnaire results and communicate next steps in reviewing the information and recommendations.
- Have regular communications with staff through (a) scheduled quarterly field visits to departments, (b) a monthly newsletter highlighting mayoral and department accomplishments and new initiatives, and (c) routine email updates.
- Research and require management training for the Mayor and executive staff and refresher management and team-building training for all department heads. Place a priority on implicit/unconscious bias training and maintaining a safe workplace.
- Portray City staff respectfully. As one respondent said, "City staff is often poorly portrayed by the community and even elected officials at times. This is degrading and demoralizing, as most staff strive to be effective and efficient in their roles, and often go beyond the call of duty with respect to putting in extra time and effort."

Medium- and Longer Term Recommendations

- Plan and implement responses to the questionnaire in consultation with management. Assess achievable priorities and associated costs. Communicate progress with staff.
- Fill current vacancies to ensure adequate support to overtaxed and understaffed programs.
- Investigate how staff could feel safer airing grievances, especially about specific personnel and concerns about discrimination and bias, and implement it as a new program policy.
- Identify and implement policies for departments to better interact with each other. Considerations should include compatible software systems; compatible timelines; building better awareness of respective authorities and obligations so that expectations are managed and reasonable goals are set, and; cross-training sessions conducted by staff for other departments.
- Plan for and implement a citywide software upgrade so that everyone is working with the same basic programs.

- o Examine and manage the City Council's involvement with the staff; ensure that agendas and timelines are set based on coordination between the Mayor's office and department heads.
- o Identify and address necessary infrastructure and physical plant upgrades, for example, fire station and Spa Road facility renovations and fleet modernization.

APPENDIX A: COPY OF STAFF QUESTIONNAIRE AND COVER EMAIL

Transition Team 2018

QUESTIONNAIRE
City of Annapolis Employees

Greetings!

Change is in the air with the arrival of new leadership, and we are looking for feedback from you, City of Annapolis employees.

Here's an opportunity to bring your ideas to the Mayor. He values your expertise and wants to hear what you have to say. You are the boots on the ground, with knowledge of and experience in how the City runs. You know what has been tried before, what has worked and what has not. We want to hear about the biggest rewards and greatest challenges of your job, along with ideas for improvement.

This questionnaire should take less than 15 minutes to complete.

You are not asked to identify yourself. We request—but do not require—that you identify your department so we can better understand your concerns.

Please complete and return the questionnaire by **Friday, February 23, 2018**, so that we can include employee feedback in the Transition Team's report, which will be presented to the Mayor and City Council.

Completed paper copies should be returned to the locked box in the Human Resources office at 145 Gorman Street, 2nd Floor—do **not** return your questionnaire to your supervisor. If you have a computer or smartphone, you can complete the questionnaire online at this url: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/talktotransition

Thank you for your time and contribution to the Mayor's transition effort!

—Annapolis Transition Team 2018
www.talktotransition.com

1. **What would you like to tell the Transition Team about what you do for the City? Is your role clear—what works, what could change?** (Factors to consider could include purpose, responsibilities and tasks, timelines, and staffing.)

2. **What would you like to tell the Transition Team about your work environment? Are there things you would like to see changed?** (Consider both physical and social surroundings. Factors to consider could include access, tools, working relationships, and training opportunities.)

3. **What is the top challenge or obstacle that keeps you from doing your best work? What might be a fix for it?**

4. **Is there an immediate action that could be taken to eliminate a recurring difficulty? If so, what is it?**

5. **How would you rate each department or office in terms of**
   - **how effectively it is doing its job?**
   - **how effectively it interacts with the public?**

*Note: Responses to this question will **not** be used to evaluate the performance of any individual. Mark two responses per line: one responding to a. and the other responding to b.*

Department/Office	a. DOING ITS JOB				b. INTERACTS WITH THE PUBLIC			
	Rating				Rating			
	Very Effective	Okay	Needs Improve-ment	Don't Know	Very Effective	Okay	Needs Improve-ment	Don't Know
Central Purchasing Office								
City Manager								
Finance								
Fire								
Harbormaster								
Human Resources								
Management Information Technology								
Mayor's Office								
Office of Communication								
Office of Emergency Management								
Office of Environmental Policy								
Office of Law								
Office of the City Clerk								
Planning & Zoning								
Police								
Public Works								
Recreation & Parks								
Transportation								

6. How would you rate other departments' or offices' interactions with yours?

*Note: Responses to this question will **not** be used to evaluate the performance of any individual. If you do not interact with a department/office in the course of your work, check "Not Applicable." One response per line.*

Department/Office	Rating			
	Very Effective	Okay	Needs Improve-ment	Not Applicable
Central Purchasing Office				
City Manager				
Finance				
Fire				
Harbormaster				
Human Resources				
Management Information Technology				
Mayor's Office				
Office of Communication				
Office of Emergency Management				
Office of Environmental Policy				
Office of Law				
Office of the City Clerk				
Planning & Zoning				
Police				
Public Works				
Recreation & Parks				
Transportation				

7. Optional: Is there anything else you would like to share with the Transition Team?

8. Optional: In which department or office do you work? (Check one.)

	Central Purchasing Office		Management Information Technology		Office of the City Clerk
	City Manager		Mayor's Office		Planning & Zoning
	Finance		Office of Communication		Police
	Fire		Office of Emergency Management		Public Works
	Harbormaster		Office of Environmental Policy		Recreation & Parks
	Human Resources		Office of Law		Transportation

Thank you for your participation!

EMAIL COVER LETTER TO STAFF

The following message is from the Annapolis Transition Team 2018. Please share with employees who do not have City email addresses.

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