

James Freas

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July 19, 2019

Melissa Malone
Town Administrator
Natick Town Offices
13 E. Central Street
Natick, MA 01760

Dear Ms Malone,

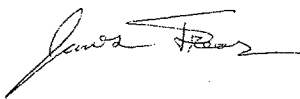
Natick is a community with a strong reputation for successful planning outcomes in economic development, housing, transportation, and open space protection. These attributes drew me to the Town as a resident and now to apply for the Director of Community and Economic Development position. I believe my experience leading the planning department in Newton and knowledge of planning principles and methods would be an asset to the Town in continuing its success, implementing the Natick 2030+ Comprehensive Master Plan, and addressing the ongoing challenges of a community in the growing MetroWest area of Greater Boston.

With nearly 15 years as a professional planner, I have a range of experience that would be of benefit to the Town. I have extensive experience in zoning, including specialized zoning amendments targeting specific issues or areas as well as leading a multi-year effort to rewrite Newton's entire zoning ordinance. In my environmental law degree, I specialized in land use law and from that foundation have written many ordinances as well as directing staff and consultant based teams. I have also worked on economic development and housing strategies and began my career as an environmental planner.

Over the last several years I have worked in various management positions for the City of Newton, initially overseeing a team of three up to my current position as Deputy Director of the Planning Department assisting in the management of the entire 27 member department. In this position I have demonstrated creativity and skill in leading many different high-priority efforts while recognizing and successfully navigating community sensitivities and the concerns and interests of elected officials.

I look forward to the opportunity to talk further about the Director of Community and Economic Development position and how I could serve the Town for the long term benefit of the community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'James Freas', with a stylized flourish at the end.

James Freas, AICP

JAMES N. FREAS, AICP

(757) 816-6343 * jnfreas@gmail.com

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

- For nearly 2 years served as acting director of the Newton Planning Department overseeing all aspects of department management including budget, hiring, and a range of significant and controversial projects. As deputy director continue to be part of the management and decision-making structure of the department.
- Leading team of Planning Department staff and consultants in the rewrite of Newton's Zoning Ordinance.
- Wrote and led the passage of a by-right accessory apartment ordinance for Newton.
- Contributed regional economic analysis to the Boston region *Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy*.
- Secured Federal funding and designed a summit for the City of Gloucester highlighting opportunities to diversify the maritime-based economy in the City's harbor area while maintaining the authentic character of this 400-year old fishing community.
- Organized and led successful symposium in partnership with the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy exploring the concept of Land Pooling (also called Land Readjustment, utilized in parts of Europe and Asia) as an alternative to eminent domain for the purpose of assembling land for redevelopment.
- Coordinated and led planning process for a small downtown urban design plan, managing a consultant team and municipal staff across multiple departments. In 2008, this plan won the Outstanding Plan Award given annually by the Virginia Chapter of the American Planning Association.
- Developed a form-based code for a waterfront neighborhood in Hampton, VA.
- Continually keep abreast of new technologies, ideas in urban planning.
 - Completed National Charrette Institute, NCI Charrette System Training
 - Completed Essential Facilitation training offered by the Interaction Institute for Social Change
 - Completed two courses on implementing Form Based Codes offered by the Form-Based Codes Institute.
 - Member, American Planning Association
 - AICP 2007 to present.
- In 2008, traveled to South Africa to promote sister city relationship with Pietermaritzberg, South Africa and the City of Hampton, VA.

DETAILED EXPERIENCE

City of Newton, MA

July 2012 - Present

Chief Planner for Long Range Planning (July 2012 - July 2014)

Deputy Director, Department of Planning & Development (July 2014 - Present)

Acting Director, Department of Planning & Development (Aug 2014 - June 2016)

Led planning program to develop a more proactive Planning Department with Housing and Transportation Strategies, a Departmental Management Study, and a comprehensive rewrite of the Zoning Ordinance. Have pursued a number of innovations in the Department, including creating and hiring Urban Design and Community Engagement Manager positions to advance a planning program with more robust public engagement centered on design-based approaches to planning issues. Previously led the Long Range Planning Division overseeing a team of three staff in economic development, transportation planning, and environmental planning. As a planner in Newton, have led the development of numerous amendments to the zoning ordinance.

Metropolitan Area Planning Council, Boston, MA

Sept. 2009 - July 2012

Regional Planner (Sept. 2009 - Sept. 2011)

Senior Economic Development Planner (Sept. 2011 - July 2012)

Worked on a wide range of planning projects, which included downtown revitalization planning, zoning amendments, municipal energy efficiency planning, and open space planning. Advocated for the creation of an innovation fund to support staff work exploring new concepts in planning and smart growth for the region. Led on the use of market studies and a range of new tools and approaches to support the work of the organization.

City of Hampton, VA

Jan. 2005 - Aug. 2009

City Planner (January 2005 - October 2006)

Senior City Planner (October 2006 - August 2009)

Areas of responsibility included project planner for area Master Plans leading plan development and implementation activities and working on environmental policy, which included the Chesapeake Bay Act, Hampton's Green Initiative, stormwater regulation, and other issues. Quality work and ability to build effective relationships with community leaders, city staff, businesses and the general public resulted in rapid promotion and increasing responsibilities.

Rhode Island Senate Policy Office, State House

January 2003 - June 2003

Senate Policy Office Fellow

Conducted research on public policy and planning in the state including low-income housing and local economic development.

EDUCATION

Senior Executive in State and Local Government Certification, Harvard Kennedy School Executive Education, July 2016.

Master of Studies in Environment Law, Vermont Law School, August 2004, Magna Cum Laude.

Master of Community Planning, University of Rhode Island, May 2003.

Bachelor of Arts in Psychology, University of Virginia, May 2000.