



michigan municipal league

## MEMO

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<b>to</b>	Gratiot County Board of Commissioners	<b>from</b>	Jerry Richards, Search Facilitator/Consultant Michigan Municipal League
<b>cc</b>	Interim County Administrator Ryan Wood,, Heather Elliott, MML	<b>date</b>	October 1, 2025
		<b>subject</b>	County Administrator Search – Short List

We are now moving into the next step of your selection process: determining which applicants the County Board of Commissioners (BOC) wishes to interview for the open position.

The due date for receipt of applications was September 22. Our various recruitment efforts encouraged nineteen applicants to submit their interest in the advertised position. We are pleased with the overall quality of the applicant pool.

So that you can better prepare for our upcoming meeting on October 7, I have attached some information with this memorandum. You will find a copy of the brochure we produced and used during the recruitment of applicants so you can re-familiarize yourself with the requirements, skills and qualities we told applicants you were seeking. You will also find a copy of the notes I compiled from my meetings with the BOC and staff members. The “*profile*” of the Ideal Candidate will serve as our guide for assessing the qualifications and attributes of applicants.

At our meeting, I will provide details on a recommended short list of potential interviewees who met the minimum qualifications for education and experience. Most of these applicants requested confidentiality. In accordance with Michigan law, the discussion we have will need to occur in a closed session. Your Agenda for that day's meeting should contain an item requesting your vote to move into closed session to discuss potential candidates for interviews who have requested confidentiality, as allowed for under the Michigan Open Meetings Act.

The following information is provided to prepare you for the conduct of that session.

### A. Applicant Information

In the upcoming meeting I will provide you with a matrix that compares some of the desired knowledge, skills and attributes of the applicants. The matrix will identify applicants only by number which assures a distance is maintained between you and non-job related identifying information of the applicants. We find it critical to incorporate, in the process, methods that protect the elected officials from even the appearance of discrimination or favoritism.

Once you have received and reviewed the matrix, information will be share that summarizes details collected during the screening of several applicants who initially appeared to have met many of your basic requirements. Finally, I will also provide information from resumes and cover letters received from applicants that are recommended for potential interviews.

To continue to honor the law's requirement for confidentiality, only the matrix with numbers will remain with Commissioners when returning to open session. Remember, too, that because we are discussing confidential candidates in a closed session, no information about that session can be shared in any way outside the meeting.

Information about all the applications received will be included on the numbered candidate matrix for review in the case members have questions about the matrix and/or other respondents. I will be prepared to answer those questions.

B. Decisions/Actions Anticipated

1. Determine Candidate List

Once you have taken time to review and compare applicant information provided, I anticipate Commissioners will reach a consensus as to whom you wish to interview. Discussion leading to consensus can occur around these confidential matters in closed session but the actual vote to invite certain candidates will not take place until the County Board returns to open/public session.

Once you return to open session a motion will need to be offered to invite applicants to interview. Assuming your desired candidates are those who have requested confidentiality the motion can identify the candidates by number or simply state, ***"Direct the MML Facilitator to contact a short list of candidates to determine their interest in interviewing. The candidates will be identified by name on the agenda for the interview meeting."*** As an alternate the motion could read, ***Direct the MML Facilitator to contact applicant numbers \_\_, \_\_, \_\_, \_\_, to determine their interest in interviewing. The candidates will be identified by name on the agenda for the interview meeting"***.

Applicants do not become candidates nor can the names or resumes of those who have requested confidentiality be released until after an invitation to interview has been accepted. Once this action occurs, each interviewee's resume and cover letter become public documents.

2. Interview Meeting Date



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It is my understanding that the meeting to conduct interviews will take place on either October 15 or October 16, depending on all Commissioners being available for the interviews.

My preference is to meet with the elected officials 15 minutes prior to the first interview to be certain we all understand our responsibilities under the law and to disseminate and adequately discuss any changes to the interview questions as discussed below.

### I. Next Steps

#### A. Interview Process

We will arrange and schedule the interviews with the identified candidates. Depending on the home base of the interviewees, the BOC may want to consider reimbursement for travel expenses related to the interview for those who will be traveling longer distances.

Based on the profile set at our very first meeting, we will produce a series of questions to ask on Interview Day. A draft of those questions will be provided to you in advance of interview day so feedback and suggested changes can be evaluated.

Once all interviews have taken place, it is expected you will engage in **public** discussion with the goal to select one of the candidates for a "conditional offer".

#### B. Conditional Offer

Before the final stage of the hiring process can be executed a motion would be moved to make a "conditional" offer of employment to the candidate who secures majority support from Commissioners.

That the offer is "conditional" is critical to allow other due diligence steps to occur and to enable withdrawal of the offer depending on the results of that research. The motion should approximate, "**On behalf of Gratiot County, the League Facilitator shall extend a conditional offer of employment to \_\_\_\_\_ for the position of County Administrator.**"

The due diligence steps include a background investigation, a physical and drug and alcohol screening (if that is a standard operating procedure used by the County) and additional reference checks. The League will conduct a background investigation of your primary candidate through a third-party professional firm. The investigation will include college transcript verification; criminal history, civil court case history; lien and driving record check, credit/financial record review and social security number trace.



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Because of the invasiveness of the background check and medical screens, only the top candidate moves through this phase.

### C. Contract Negotiation

To save time, negotiations between the individual and the County can commence simultaneously with the background check which would ultimately lead to an agreement and a start date. If, for some reason, the candidate does not successfully complete the final background hurdle, negotiations can be halted, and the conditional offer withdrawn.

We suggest a single point person or sub-committee be appointed to head negotiations with the candidate. (We can certainly assist in those discussions if you like but we do not advocate for either party.) We can provide your lead negotiator/team an employment agreement template which provides multiple options for terms as compiled by the International City Manager Association.

This process can be initiated by a second motion, "**Request \_\_\_\_\_ to begin discussions with \_\_\_\_\_ pursuant to an employment agreement suitable for formal approval by the County Board of Commissioners at an upcoming meeting.**"

Feel free to contact me at [jrichards@mml.org](mailto:jrichards@mml.org) or by calling my cell phone number (517) 719-7807 if you have any questions.