

**LINDA WRIGHT COX**  
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November 29, 2024

Mayor and City Commission of Fort Pierce  
C/O Human Resources Department  
100 N US Highway 1  
Fort Pierce, FL 34950

Dear Mayor and Commissioners:

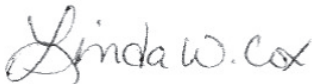
I submit my application to become City Manager for the City of Fort Pierce. I do so with the conviction that I am qualified and with the commitment to serve this city with purpose, integrity and focus. I love Fort Pierce. It is not by accident, but by choice that I have lived in and around this wonderful city for over twenty years.

As my resume demonstrates, I have the good fortune to be well educated and well experienced. In addition to my master's degree in business administration, I have a multitude of certifications in various professional fields of competency. Most recently I have expanded my education to include a graduate certificate in local government management. My experience spans thirty years of public service in various leadership positions, well equipping me to serve as City Manager.

The challenges of local government and public service are not new to me. I believe I bring a unique perspective to the City of Fort Pierce as its City Manager. In my role as City Clerk, I have been fully immersed in what has been happening in the city through participation in all commission meetings, our strategic planning efforts and all items approved by the City Commission. Additionally, serving as the Business Navigator, I have remained very involved in the development of our city and the interworking of our departments. I have been able to remain active and connected to our community. The uniqueness I bring comes as result of my independent status as a charter officer, outside of the chain of command of the City Manager. I have been positioned to observe, learn and understand how our city functions and recognize areas in which we could be performing more efficiently and effectively. As City Manager, I look forward to the opportunity to effectuate opportunities that staff have shared with me over the years in addition to my own observations and vision.

I look forward to discussing my qualifications for the City Manager position and my vision to lead this wonderful team.

Very truly yours,



Linda W. Cox

# LINDA WRIGHT COX

4344 Gator Trace Circle, Fort Pierce, FL 34982

## EDUCATION/CERTIFICATIONS

**Master of Business Administration (MBA).** Salisbury University, Salisbury, Maryland. May, 2002.

**Bachelor of Science (BS), in Technology and Management with a secondary concentration in Business and Management.** University of Maryland University College. May, 1997.

**Community College at St. Mary's,** Leonardtown, Maryland. September, 1988 to December, 1994. General Studies program for transfer to University of Maryland University College.

**Graduate Certificate in Local Government Management.** Florida Gulf Coast University, Fort Myers, FL. Professional master's level certificate attained June, 2020.

**Florida Certified Florida Records Manager,** Professional Certification attained June, 2022 from the Florida Records Management Association,

**Certified Municipal Clerk,** Professional Certification attained April, 2016 from the International Institute of Municipal Clerks,

**Senior Professional in Human Resources (SPHR),** Professional Certification attained December, 2009 from the National Society for Human Resource Management. Certification expired.

## EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

### CITY OF FORT PIERCE, FLORIDA

**City Clerk** – October, 2013 – present

- Preparation and publication of all Commission agenda and meeting minutes.
- Administration of oaths required by City and State Law.
- Preparation, execution and distribution of Proclamations, Resolutions and Ordinances.
- Administers all municipal elections.
- Oversees updating and publishing of the City of Fort Pierce Code of Ordinances.
- Preparation and placement of required legal advertisements.
- Maintain official files of ordinances, resolutions, agreements and deeds.
- Responsible for city-wide retention of official records.
- Issuance and collection of business certificates of use and contractor licensing.
- Manage staff support to Mayor and Commissioners.
- Manage appointments to City boards and committees.
- Serve as the Business Navigator for city planning and building projects.

### ST. LUCIE COUNTY, FLORIDA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

**President/CEO** – February, 2004 through September, 2013

- Develop and implement programs to assist our 700+ members representing a county and two cities.
- Coordinate a Board of Directors consisting of 24 business professionals to insure adequate communication and understanding of programs, activities and future plans.
- Budget preparation, financial reporting and fiscal management of an annual budget of over \$500,000.00.

- Work closely with business leaders and government officials to maintain open communication to insure the impact of policy changes are clearly understood by all parties; particularly with regard to business regulation at all levels.
- Advocate for members and work to identify and address legislative issues critical to the success of our businesses, at the local and state levels.
- Establish, grow and maintain relationships with municipal and county governments, economic development agencies and similar business related organizations.
- Travel to Tallahassee to advocate on behalf of the business community and local governments.
- Oversee the daily operations of the Chamber with an emphasis on efficiency, communication and customer service.
- Direct and oversee committee activities to fulfill the Chamber's Program of Work as established and revised each year.
- Represent the Chamber to local business persons, community leaders and citizens, as well as local, state and national organizations and governmental bodies.
- Coordinate a variety of fundraising activities including golf tournament, fishing tournament, recognition banquets, auction and scholarship drives.
- Facilitate programs of the Chamber's Foundation, a 501(c)3 organization. Programs include Young Floridian, Community Computer Labs, Leadership St. Lucie, and the Chamber/FAU Teacher Scholarship.

## **OCEAN CITY, MARYLAND CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**

### **Executive Director - June, 1998 through February, 2004**

- Developed and implemented programs to assist our approximately 800 members. Increased membership and dues income by 60%.
- Produced the *Ocean City Guide*, an information piece to encourage and foster tourism in Ocean City with a distribution of 225,000. Advertising revenue increased by 35%.
- Managed the Visitor Center which was open 362 days per year to serve the Ocean City visitors. Peak season welcomed more than 10,000 visitors through the center per month.
- Originated the *Greater Ocean City Guide to Business and Community Information*, designed to serve as a membership directory and relocation tool.
- Coordinated construction of a new Chamber of Commerce Visitor and Conference Center, a \$1.3 million dollar project. Oversight included fundraising efforts and securing State, County and City Government funding participation. Fundraising efforts were approximately \$1,000,000.00.
- Worked closely with government officials and associations to insure business and visitor needs were being met.
- Facilitated a partnership with University of Maryland Eastern Shore to develop a Hospitality Training Institute to support the hotel and restaurant industry in various aspects of guest services.
- Developed employee training programs, internship recruitment programs, and Employee Issues Committee to address the needs of businesses and our seasonal workforce.
- Created the Chamber Ambassadors program which successfully improved membership recruitment and membership camaraderie.
- Represented the Chamber to local business persons, community leaders and citizens, as well as local, state and national organizations and governmental bodies.
- Worked directly with the Chamber's lobbyist to identify and address legislative issues critical to the success of our businesses.
- Traveled to the Annapolis, Maryland, the state capitol, to advocate for local business and governments.
- Prepared budgets and financial reports; was responsible for accounting and financial management.
- Recruitment, training, supervision, and evaluation of staff.
- Had reputation as an innovator and "get-it-done" professional.

## **ST. MARY'S COUNTY, MARYLAND CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**

### **Executive Director - December, 1996 through June, 1998**

- Developed and implemented programs to meet the needs of 500 Chamber members.
- Served as the principal management official and was responsible for all business functions including financial, personnel, and public relations activities.
- Created and hosted a weekly cable television program to highlight member businesses.
- Created a new tourism publication in conjunction with the Chamber's Tourism Committee.
- Operated the County Visitor Center.
- Served as chief liaison between the Chamber and local businesses, citizens, local, state and national organizations and governmental bodies.
- Supervision of Chamber staff and office operations.

## **ST. MARY'S COUNTY GOVERNMENT**

### **Legal Assistant & Fiscal Specialist - 1989-1996**

- Served as principal assistant to County Attorney performing extensive legal administrative work for all local government departments including research, document preparation, ordinance drafting, scheduling and public information releases.

## **BRISCOE & BALDWIN, P.A. AND JOHN E. PLEISSE, CHARTERED (ATTORNEYS)**

### **Legal Assistant - 1986-1989**

- Office Manager for private law firm performing extensive legal work including title searches, land use regulation research, accounting activities, scheduling and other administrative functions.

## **STRENGTHS:**

- Organizational development and management
- Innovative strategic thinking skills
- Financial management including budgeting, accounting and reporting
- Detail oriented
- Excellent interpersonal and communication skills
- Consistently praised for exemplary leadership and dedicated commitment to duty and community

## **PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS & COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES**

Development Review Task Force

Florida Association of City Clerks

Florida Association of Records Management Professionals

Economic Development Council of St. Lucie County (ex-officio Board Member)

Fort Pierce Lions Club (Treasurer and Membership Chair)



## Candidate Questionnaire

Candidate Name: Linda W. Cox

Position: City Manager

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1. Please list your previous jobs/positions going back at least 10 years, plus any previous jobs/positions beyond 10 years that is related to the position of City Manager. Please include the following:
  - a. Position start and end dates.
  - b. Position title and organization.
  - c. To whom you directly reported.
  - d. Ending salary.
  - e. Population of community served.
  - f. Total number of employees in the organization.
  - g. Number of employees supervised (directly and indirectly).
  - h. Total budget of the organization.

Since August 19, 2024, I have been serving as Acting City Manager for the City of Fort Pierce, reporting directly to the Mayor and City Commission. In this role, I oversee an organization serving a population estimated at 49,962 which is supported by 387 dedicated employees and an operating budget of \$65 million. While the City Manager is responsible for all employees, I directly supervise 11 Department Heads and Deputy City Managers and an office staff of 12. My current salary in this capacity is \$176,850.

On October 1, 2013, I was appointed to the position of City Clerk, also reporting directly to the Mayor and City Commission. In this position, I supervise of team of 4 employees with an annual salary of \$122,844. My tenure as City Clerk allowed me to gain a deep understanding of the City's operations, establish strong working relationships with staff and leadership, and contribute meaningfully to the City's development and governance.



From February, 2004 to September 30, 2013, I served as the CEO of the St. Lucie County Chamber of Commerce, reporting to a Board of Directors comprised of 24 business professionals from the community. The Chamber of Commerce is unified in representing the cities and unincorporated St. Lucie County, with a 2013 population of 373,000, and approximately 700+ business members. As CEO, I supervised a staff of 10 with an annual budget of \$500,000. In my role as CEO, I worked collaboratively with St. Lucie County elected officials and executive leadership as well as state and federal elected leaders to ensure the needs of the business community were effectively communicated and problems and impediments to success were addressed to promote economic growth and development.

2. Why are you interested in pursuing this position?

Serving as the City Manager of the City of Fort Pierce has been a long-standing aspiration of mine, rooted in my unwavering commitment to public service and this city. Even when accepting the position as City Clerk, I envisioned a future where I could contribute to the growth and success of the organization. Over the years, my desire to serve as City Manager has only deepened. As City Clerk, I gained valuable knowledge and experience working closely with department heads, staff and community stakeholders. I have been actively involved in the City's development process, engaged in a variety of city projects, and enjoyed the opportunity to provide guidance and support to our team. This role has provided me with a comprehensive understanding of the City's operations and a strong foundation for leadership.

I am inspired by the opportunity to serve as City Manager, where I can leverage my experience, knowledge, and passion to make a lasting impact. Fort Pierce is not just where I work; it's the place I call home, and I am deeply committed to fostering its continued growth and success. As City Manager, I will strive to lead with integrity, collaboration, and a vision for a brighter future for our city and its residents.

3. How would you describe your management style?

My management and leadership style can be characterized as collaborative, motivational and inclusive. I believe in working closely with my executive leadership team, seeking innovative ideas, understanding the issues and providing and receiving critical feedback. I believe in empowering employees to make decisions based upon a clear understanding of issues driving decisions as well as learning how to consider unintended consequences. Knowing we have a team of talented professionals, I tend to



be inclusive reaching decisions when appropriate, but I'm not at all afraid to be decisive when circumstances dictate. I will instill throughout the organization a sense of pride, excellence, collaboration and accountability so there is no doubt as to the direction of our team as we strive for excellence.

4. Describe your approach to managing personnel issues such as hiring, discipline, ethical violations, labor relations, and performance evaluations.

I firmly believe in hiring the most qualified candidate for every role. From an executive team perspective, it is important to me that the department heads and the management team are highly skilled subject matter experts. I am committed to fostering an environment where employees are empowered to demonstrate their full potential and free to propose innovative changes and efficiencies. At all levels, my desire is to provide opportunities for employees to develop the skills needed for success. Performance evaluations provide a useful tool in evaluating strengths and weaknesses and should serve as a foundation for keeping employees on a path of skill development and self-improvement.

In terms of discipline, I strive to be fair, but firm. I have extremely high expectations for myself and expect the same from my team. Integrity is non-negotiable; we must always do the right thing and maintain the highest level of ethical standards. A breach of these standards erodes the public's trust in our organization which is something we must work to protect against.

The City is finally enjoying the benefits of a seasoned, highly-skilled and professional Human Resources Department. It is imperative that our organization continues to maintain a high level of performance within this critical department that is responsible for guiding the city in hiring qualified employees, promptly addressing any disciplinary matters, negotiating with the city's bargaining units and securing proper employee development.

5. How would you deal with city budget constraints and identify new revenue sources?

The City has experienced tremendous growth, but our budget has not kept up with the increasing demand for services. This challenge demonstrates the importance of remaining focused on providing core city services at a high standard. In our efforts to expand our services and be responsive to the community's desires, we have stretched our resources too thin and our ability to maintain the desired level of service has suffered.

To address these budgetary challenges, it is imperative that we take a critical look



at existing departmental budgets and their alignment with our strategic plan and funding priorities. Furthermore, we must adopt a more aggressive approach to identify and secure grants to augment our budget and support priority projects; a talented grant writing team partnered with other professional grant writers is essential in securing this potential.

Annexation will continue to serve as a source of additional ad valorem revenue; however it is important that we strategically select properties for annexation while carefully evaluating how the addition of new properties will impact our existing resources. Commercial properties offer significant revenue potential while often placing a lower burden on existing resources, particularly in terms of police services.

6. How will you prioritize competing demands for resources within the city?

Funding beyond the cost of providing basic core services should align directly with our strategic plan. It is essential that we remain realistic and deliberate in selecting projects and activities beyond the basic services which we endeavor to undertake. Furthermore, and even more importantly, we must have a comprehensive plan in place, including funding sources and long-term sustainability, before proceeding with projects.

7. Describe a successful initiative you have led as a City Manager.

As acting city manager, I immediately initiated the rewrite and update of our purchasing code working with outside counsel. We are revising the thresholds, providing additional staff support and updating our RFP templates. Additionally, I have been working to facilitate interaction among departments at all levels in an effort to breakdown the silos which have been created. As part of the departmental interaction, I am evaluating departmental alignment and efficiencies.

Prior to serving as acting city manager, I led the City and its efforts with the Development Review Task Force which evaluates the city's planning, development and building processes on an ongoing basis with the development community and Chamber of Commerce. I also successfully initiated and led the City's Economic Development Team to facilitate a greater understanding among all departments that work in the development process in an effort to build a cohesive team of professionals capable of working directly with potential developers and in reviewing and evaluating development projects.

8. Describe a time when you had to manage a crisis situation in a city setting.

During my time working for the City of Fort Pierce, the most notable crisis



situation which I managed were the effects of the arrest of the City Manager. Following his arrest, a special meeting of the Mayor and Commission was called. At that meeting, I was appointed Acting City Manager and immediately began meeting with the Deputy City Managers and individual department heads to gain a clear understanding of their concerns, needs and the status of existing city projects. Additionally, I instituted staff meetings prior to our Commission meetings to make certain that everyone was effectively working together and communicating, and the needs and feelings of all employees were being addressed.

Working closely with the City Attorney and Risk Management, we brought in crisis counselors for employees and retained outside counsel to secure legal advice and assistance with regard to the City Manager's contract and the issues surrounding the contract and his arrest.

During this time, it has remained my priority that city staff are supported and that the work and functions of all city operations remain constant and uninterrupted.

9. What steps do you take to ensure transparency and accountability in city operations.

As City Clerk, transparency in city operations as been my goal and a true success in setting the standard for public records and access to information. As City Manager, I will continue to instill the desire and demand for transparency and accountability of all employees in what we do. These values must be demonstrated and embraced starting at the top of the organization. Never has it been more important that the City Manager must lead by example.

We have discussed these values at department head meetings; staff members have stepped forward indicating they were uncomfortable with how things were being done, particularly with regard to the purchasing process. As a result, several of our RFPs have been reevaluated and modified to make sure that the process is in accordance with all of our policies and procedures.

The ability to ignore and/or circumvent policies and procedures is no longer being permitted. Employees are being held accountable for their actions and work performance. Working together and removing the silos that existed has led to a greater understanding of all employees as to the expectations and accountability that will be required of each of us.

10. Please describe your experience working with unions.

As Acting City Manager, I worked closely with our negotiating team to



successfully secure union contracts for both Police Officers and Teamsters before their expiration. These negotiations were highly challenging, but I prioritized empowering the team to negotiate in good faith, fostering a collaborative environment to reach mutually satisfactory outcomes. While both sides had to make compromises, this approach ultimately delivered a result that was favorable and sustainable for the City.

11. Please describe your experience managing or overseeing a police department? What do you see as your role in guiding the police department?

The Fort Pierce Police Department is facing many challenges including budget constraints, the city's inability to offer salaries competitive with neighboring jurisdictions, leadership challenges, retention of employees, lack of seasoned officers, expansion of city boundaries and capital funding needs. As City Manager, my role in guiding the Police Department is one of vision, expectations and accountability.

The police department is currently undergoing an assessment conducted by the Center for Public Safety Management which will provide a data driven analysis of staffing levels, workload, organizational structure and community expectations. This report, coupled with capital funding needs which have been identified and input from command staff, should provide a foundation from which to build on the needs, vision and direction of the department. It will be my expectation that the police department rebuild its relationships and partnership opportunities with surrounding law enforcement partners.

12. How will you ensure that the city's services meet the needs of all its citizens?

In order to meet the needs of all citizens, the City Manager must implement effective strategies to foster a responsive and inclusive organization. It is important that we engage with the community using various methods to gather citizen input. Our strategic plan should provide the roadmap for the prioritization and provision of services to meet the community needs where we can be most impactful.

Internally, we can boost quality service delivery by instilling pride and excellence in our work at all levels and in all areas. Leveraging the power of partnerships and collaboration will enhance and expand our ability to meet the needs of the community.

In order to encourage quality and sustainable neighborhoods, we must maintain effective and efficient growth and development strategies along with proper code enforcement efforts to ensure the beauty of our community; creating a sense of community pride.



Establishing an organizational environment and culture of doing the right thing, for the right reasons and holding ourselves and others accountable, will help us balance the diverse needs of our community and insure that the needs of all citizens are recognized.

13. What strategies will you use to build relationships with stakeholders in the community?

I have a proven track record building relationships with stakeholders within the Community. During my position as Chamber of Commerce CEO, I had the opportunity to form and maintain relationships with elected and appointed officials, local, state and national. Business organizations such as Treasure Coast Builders Association, the Economic Development Council, Main Streets, Downtown Business Association, and various networking groups were a key component to my daily activities. Non-profit, service and civic organizations were also important to my success at the chamber to insure community support and participation. I have maintained those relationships after leaving the Chamber. In my role as business navigator for the City, I have been able to enhance many of the relationships formed during my time with the Chamber, particularly with legal and development professionals. I have built a reputation as the one to go to when you need answers; a reputation I nurture and value. I believe in providing accurate and transparent information, even if it isn't always welcomed.

As City Manager, I will continue to expand and grow my relationships within the community. I believe it is important that City leadership be visible and immersed in the community it represents. Additionally, I will encourage my leadership team to build those same relationships and partnerships. We need to work as a community and it takes individuals committed, participating and at the table for our community to be successful and inclusive.

14. What strategies would you implement to promote economic growth and job creation?

Economic growth and job creation are critical aspects of ensuring our community is beautiful and sustainable. The City has been working diligently over the years to create a reputation as a business friendly government, working closely with developers and community partners.

Our efforts with the Chamber and its Development Review Task Force keep us balanced in meeting the needs of the development community while protecting and preserving the quality growth the city desires. Additionally, our partnership with the Economic Development Council provides tremendous support for efforts to attract new



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CITY MANAGER'S OFFICE *Florida*

business to our community and to adequately assist in planning for job creation and growth. All successful economic development projects require qualified and/or willing employees.

Accordingly, another important partner in job creation efforts is our local school district and higher educational institutions. Fostering relationships with our schools allows us to grow our own workforce while providing the knowledge, skills and abilities for our students to become successful, contributing members of our community. Additionally, we must also utilize local non-profit organizations working within the community to provide opportunities for skill development, long-term financial health and other learning opportunities to create a prepared workforce.

15. Have any adverse or critical statements been made about you in print or online media reports, on social media, or any other related form? If an online search of you were completed, what would be found that you yourself would want to know about you if you were looking to hire yourself as a City Manager?

Throughout my career, I have conducted myself with professionalism and integrity; there are no adverse reports in my background. In my role as City Clerk, there have been a few lawsuits and ethics complaints filed against me directly related to my duties surrounding the election process, all of which were dismissed with no findings of improprieties. I continue to pride myself in always doing the right thing regardless of benefit or hardship. My many professional friends and supporters know me as direct and above reproach. I will serve as a City Manager known for integrity, honesty and accountability in keeping with my 35+ years of professional service.