

Gwendolyn Butson



12/09/2024

Dear Sir or Madam,


I am contacting you regarding your City Manager position for the The City of Fort Pierce. I am extremely interested in further particulars regarding this position. I would like to thank you in advance for your time and consideration in reviewing my qualifications for this position.

My relevant qualifications include 20 years of community engagement and non-profit experience, and over 15 years of executive leadership. I have worked as the CEO for United Against Poverty for the last four years, with Gulfstream Goodwill Industries in a number of leadership positions prior to that. In my position as the CEO, I was responsible for the direct management and leadership of a 13-million-dollar multi-unit non-profit covering Central and Southern Florida, which focused on human centered programs to support the communities that we served. I was responsible for the award of multiple grants in excess of over two million dollars annually, direct major donor development, governmental compliance and partnership, program enhancement and growth, volunteerism, and multifaceted operations on a broad level. I worked closely with multiple Board of Directors in developing strategic, financial, and operational plans for our agency's continued development and growth. I am a strong operational manager and have extensive experience in managing diverse aspects of business.

I am passionate about empowering people by giving them the tools and support to change their lives for the better. I am a servant leader with the highest degree of ethics and values. Thank you again for this opportunity and I look forward to hearing from you in the near future.

Sincerely,
Gwendolyn Butson

Contact

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Nonprofit Executive Leader with 15 years of experience in senior leadership in retail, operations, development, loss prevention, and safety with the proven ability to drive revenue and optimize operational logistics to maximize business results. Proven results in project management, event planning, fundraising, grant writing, and contract negotiations. Team player with excellent communication skills, high quality of work, driven and highly self-motivated. Strong negotiating skills and business acumen and able to work independently. Effective and efficient leader.

Experience

2020 – 2024

Chief Executive Officer | United Against Poverty | Florida

Responsible for UAP's fiscal operations, fundraising, marketing, human resources, technology, and programmatic strategies ensuring that they are effectively implemented across all segments of the organization.

- **Financial Oversight:** Plan, manage, and execution of the annual budget of 13 million dollars ensuring that all goals and objectives are met, and teams are controlling expenditures
- **Board Relations:** Collaborate with Advisory Boards and a Corporate Board to refine and implement a long-term strategic plan while ensuring that the budget, staff, and departments are aligned with the organizations mission and values
- **Leadership:** Provide inspiration and motivation to all employees through development, training, and support ensuring support of the mission
- **Mission Programs:** Ensure programmatic excellence through rigorous program evaluation, audits, and quality improvement
- **Development:** Cultivate strong relationships with donors and stakeholders while actively seeking donations; community engagement through marketing, events, and speaking engagements
- **Advocacy:** Representing the organizations mission and vision to external stakeholders
- **Compliance:** Ensuring that the organization operates within the legal and ethical framework and guidelines in all capacities

2013 – 2019

VP Retail and Operations, Senior Director Safety, Risk Management, and Loss Prevention, Senior Director of Retail, Director of Retail Stores | Gulfstream Goodwill Industries | West Palm Beach, Florida

Held multiple positions leading the Retail and Mission Services organization with \$50M+ in annual revenues and 61 locations across five counties

- Redesigned the Health and Safety, and Emergency Preparedness manuals for all locations and employees
- Introduced new Loss Prevention Safety Ambassador program to heighten awareness and enhance training
- Managed a fleet of 98 vehicles including trucks, cars, and 15 passenger vans for our program participants
- Performed regular safety audits, drills, inspections, and trainings for all 61 locations
- Effectively resolved all Workers Compensation and General Liability claims with favorable outcomes

- Served as liaison between insurance adjustors, legal counsel, labor groups, employees, and HR to coordinate all insurance matters and HR issues
- Managed five county transportation routes to ensure efficient route logistics
- Created, monitored, and achieved budgeted goals through financial management
- Increased donations through marketing and promotions which resulted in increased revenues
- Implemented Kaizen Principles at all levels in production at the stores, ADC sites, and the warehouses
- Created and build new E-Commerce Division of GGI and a process to identify unique items that generated interest resulting in the creation of other departments (Good Prints, Good Grub)
- Successfully completed a major project of identifying, planning, designing, and ultimately moving our warehouse operations from one site to a new larger facility
- Expanded vendors and green opportunities to reduce waste footprint
- Opened new store fronts, remodeled outdated store fronts, and closed underperforming stores to meet and achieve budgets and long-term strategic plans
- Worked with HR to implement progressive discipline, benefits enrollments, new hire documentation, workers' compensation claims, and FMLA administration
- Multiunit management of 2 warehouses 152,000+ SQ FT, 28 stores, 21 donations sites, and over 700 employees successfully achieved budgeted goals and objectives

Skills

Microsoft Office Suite • Proficient with project management software • Team player • Excellent time management skills • Conflict management • Public speaking • Data analytics

Education

Masters of Business Administration | University of Phoenix | Phoenix, AZ

Bachelor of Arts | Appalachian State University | Boone, NC

United States Coast Guard Captain, 10 Years Certified Scuba Diver, General Industry OSHA Certification,

CPR & First Aid Trained, Forklift Trained

Activities

Beach Days • Environmental conservation • Animal Rescue • Cooking • Travel



Candidate Questionnaire

Candidate Name: Gwendolyn Butson

Position: City Manager

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.
1. United Against Poverty
 - a. 02/2020-02/2024
 - b. Chief Executive Officer
 - c. Board Of Directors
 - d. \$165,000
 - e. St Lucie County (373,586), Indian River County (169,795), Orange County (3.136 million) with total population of all three counties being almost 3.7 million
 - f. 150
 - g. 13 million
2. Gulfstream Goodwill Industries, Inc.
 - a. 12/2013-07/2019
 - b. District Manager, Senior District Manager, Vice President Retail & Operations, Senior Director of Risk Management, Safety, and Loss Prevention
 - c. Marvin Tanck, CEO



- d. \$110,000
 - e. Covered five counties- St Lucie County (328,063), Okeechobee County (42,141), Indian River County (168,264), Palm Beach County (1.498 million), Martin County (161,212) with a total population of all five counties being almost 2.197 million
 - f. 1150
 - g. 750
 - h. 50 million
2. Why are you interested in pursuing this position? I am interested in pursuing this position because of several reasons. The first reason being that I have always loved Fort Pierce for its historic charm, the rich culture, and the people that make up the community. It was the first place I visited when I moved to Florida back in 2013. It felt like home with its small town coastal community vibe and its "Old Florida" architecture. I have always been drawn to Fort Pierce. I believe that this is a critical position that could positively impact and improve the quality of life for the community. Secondly, I am an operational and visionary leader that could utilize my experience and my skillset to expand essential services and the improve the economic development of Fort Pierce. I have always seen great potential in the city and I would like to be a part of a team that continues to transform "The Sunrise City."
3. How would you describe your management style? I would say that my management style falls somewhere between Visionary and Transformational. I have always been a visionary leader because I focus on the big picture, future growth, and collaboration. I believe that having a well thought out strategic plan with clear long and short term goals provides a roadmap for everyone to follow. As a leader it is important that everyone knows the goals and the team works together to achieve them. It is also important that the leaders each own a piece of the vision and passionately pursue their individual growth while accomplishing strategic milestones. I believe I am transformational in the sense that I encourage and motivate my employees to think outside the box to find solutions. The best part of being on a team is the diversity, creativity, and innovation that each person brings to the table. Every person holds a unique opinion, view, idea, and experience which brings a range of perspectives and approaches to problem-solving and leads to better decision-making.



4. Describe your approach to managing personnel issues such as hiring, discipline, ethical violations, labor relations, and performance evaluations. I am a very transparent leader and I believe that people are inherently good. I am open and honest with employees about issues and address them openly. It has always been important to me to actively listen to the employee and encourage conversation and collaboration in addressing the issue. I am a fair person and I treat all employees with that same respect. I believe that it is important to consistently provide feedback and work with the employee to find a solution and a path forward. I do believe in documenting conversations but primarily to set clear expectations and to put a plan in place to help and support the employee. Life happens to all of us and sometimes we just need support and a little understanding.

5. How would you deal with city budget constraints and identify new revenue sources? I would address budget constraints by prioritizing services and needs that are essential to operations. When I joined UAP the pandemic lockdown went into effect. One of the first priorities that I had as the CEO was to evaluate our budget, forecast revenue, and immediately reduce spending. I also evaluated operational efficiency and made cost effective changes with a number of vendors and long term contracts. I was able to negotiate better pricing structures and streamline some services. My first year I was able to reduce expenses by over 700k. As a community leader I am always looking for new revenue sources through grant and federal funding. Evaluating a new fee structure for services could be explored but ideally would not be the first source I would consider due to community impact. I have always believed where there is a will there is a way. I also would look at the best practices used by other cities and possible new partnerships.

6. How will you prioritize competing demands for resources within the city? A key component for prioritizing demands is data analysis. I think you have to prioritize based off importance, availability, and alignment with strategic goals. All of which are data driven. Critical priorities that are safety related or could cause significant upset and disruption in the community should be analyzed quickly and swiftly. Demands have to be rated in several categories and then prioritized based off importance. My work in nonprofit aligns with the challenges faced by city budget constraints. There will always be emergencies that have to be addressed but it is up to the City Manager to review the data,



evaluate the strategic goals, assess the funding allocated, and make an informed decision on what takes precedence.

7. Describe a successful initiative you have led as a City Manager. I have not led a successful initiative as a City Manager, but I have led many successful initiatives as the CEO of UAP. One initiative was the transition from generic registers to a point-of-sale system that tracked inventory, member information, processed payments, computed transactions, and provided data on customer spending and purchasing trends. It was a challenging process as all of the product barcodes had to be entered into the system and all products had to be inventoried at six locations. Cashiers and managers had to undergo extensive training to utilize the system and complete daily closeouts. The warehouse had to be outfitted with fiber and data lines had to be dropped to accommodate the system and production had to be reset to add inventory to the system. It was a complicated process that had to be rolled out in stages, but the benefits allowed us to see and track the data. We now could make data driven decisions on the type of product that we needed, what we had on hand, and it gave us the ability to offer discounts and change pricing at all locations simultaneously. It was remarkably successful and the teams quickly became dependent on the data output.

8. Describe a time when you had to manage a crisis situation in a city setting. One of the most challenging crisis situations that I have had to manage in a city setting was COVID-19. As a nonprofit we support the community when families are in crisis. While government offices were closing, my team and I were challenged with navigating how we were going to continue to operate and serve the community. Most of our families are among the most vulnerable, which due to health issues or finances were already in crisis before the pandemic hit. Additionally, we had to devise a plan to ensure the safety of our employees in three different counties operating under three different municipalities. I had only been in my new position for three weeks and I had to act quickly and without hesitation. Our crisis numbers rose to the highest numbers the organization had ever seen in its 15-year existence. The emergency response funding that was being distributed to local governments to further distribute down to its citizens was an additional burden on already strained government offices. Many local and state leaders reached out to our organization requesting to partner because we already had an internal structure in place for crisis management funding. We distributed over a million dollars to local citizens in the form of



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rental/utility assistance, medical assistance, and we assisted in referrals to our partner agencies. It was a huge undertaking, but one of the proudest moments of my career. We never closed our buildings and we were able to continue to serve our community members.

9. What steps do you take to ensure transparency and accountability in city operations. I believe that my background in nonprofit work aligns with the work of individuals in public positions. In order to ensure transparency and accountability in nonprofit work or in city operations you must adhere to a number of ethical guidelines and processes. One of the most important steps in city operations is to be open and transparent with all data regardless of the outcomes. The public wants to know how monies are spent and the decisions that the leaders are making with the funding. Be open with the public about the reports and proactive about disclosing information related to the reports. All citizens want accountability and transparency is key to holding leaders accountable. I think communication is another important process that accomplishes a number of steps in achieving true transparency. Communication should go hand in hand with citizen engagement. As a nonprofit leader one of the most challenging things I had to overcome were the barriers to communication with the demographics of those we served. To be successful at communication you have to engage in a variety of platforms and channels. Communicating initiatives, policy changes, safety concerns, emergency preparedness plans, community events, and budget updates, should be relayed to the public through city websites, social media platforms, public in person meetings, community forums, email updates, and in person interactions. It is important to be responsive and accessible to citizen concerns. Another important step in transparency is to have a clear and concise code of ethical guidelines that manage all city employees. Additionally, the City Manager should conduct regular performance audits that identify areas that may need process improvement and to ensure regulation compliance. Those audits should be reported regularly on strategic goal progress reports made available to all citizens.

10. Please describe your experience working with unions. I do not have experience working directly with union representatives but I have extensive experience working with people, employment law, budgeting, negotiating contracts, and mediating grievances, all of which align with the duties a City Manager would engage in with unions.



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11. Please describe your experience managing or overseeing a police department? What do you see as your role in guiding the police department? I do not have experience directly managing a police department but I have worked at a police department and have an extensive knowledge and understanding of criminology. I think my role as the City Manager overseeing and guiding the police department is one that would ensure that the department has the necessary tools and resources it needs to successfully keep the citizens of Fort Pierce safe. I think it is important that the City Manager partners with the Chief of Police and the leaders of the department to identify services and areas of improvement that would benefit the citizens and add to the safety of the community. It is also important to evaluate the departments performance by analyzing the quantitative crime rate statistics data. Crime in Fort Pierce hit close to home for me as the CEO for United Against Poverty when one of my employees lost her son to gun violence. The citizens of Fort Pierce deserve updates on operational efficiency of the department and results on strategic initiatives the department is taking to improve crime rates and trends in violent crimes. Having the community support and partnering with the community will unify the efforts and have a positive outcome.
12. How will you ensure that the city's services meet the needs of all its citizens? In order to ensure that the city's services meet the needs of all of its citizens it is important to understand what the citizens need and want. The City Manager ultimately works for the citizens of Fort Pierce and the only way to understand their needs is to actively listen to them. I think it is important to serve on advisory boards and be engaged with members of the community in all capacities. I think it is extremely important to be accessible to the citizens so you can develop trust and foster a positive relationship. I would conduct surveys, prioritize needs based on the requests of the community, and perform outreach especially to those members in areas that may be less accessible.
13. What strategies will you use to build relationships with stakeholders in the community? As the CEO for United Against Poverty one of the challenges was to engage the community and the city officials to rebuild the name and reputation of the nonprofit. In identifying ways to reengage we created a forum for key stakeholders in the community to meet monthly with religious leaders at our location on Orange Avenue. It is important to communicate regularly, attend community events, volunteer, collaborate with community



members, and be visible and accessible. One of the most effective ways to build relationships is to establish trust and build rapport by being transparent and responsive. I believe in standing by your word. The City Manager's role is not a desk role. While it has a lot of administrative duties the most important role of the job is to actively be connected to the community.

14. What strategies would you implement to promote economic growth and job creation? If I had to focus on a strategy that would promote economic growth and job creation it would be the focus on attracting large businesses with incentives, investing in the infrastructure, promoting tourism, and revitalizing distressed areas of Fort Pierce. In our meetings with the former City Manager and Commissioners one of the primary focuses was on the transportation infrastructure. One of the cities challenges for citizens is the inability to go to locations that can provide the much needed services that they require. As the CEO for UAP one of the initiatives that we focused on was partnering with local organizations to have them at our campus on designated days so that we could offer more services at one site. Hands Clinic was one of those partners along with the Florida Department of Children and Family Services. There are a lot of opportunities to promote growth in the city and focus on creating jobs for the citizens that call it home.

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? No adverse or critical statements have been made about me that I am aware of. I am human just like all leaders and I have made mistakes in the past but I am honest and transparent and I own the decisions that I have made. I have learned throughout my life that everyone is not always going to like the decisions that you make but what type of world would we live in if everyone had the same opinion. I respect that people are different and have different ideas and opinions. That is what makes our freedom so powerful. I can only attest that I will always do the best job within my power and I will always give 100%. I believe that my experience as a community leader in multiple demographics has positioned me to excel in the position as City Manager of Fort Pierce.