

Associate Planner Tompkins County

Department: Department of Planning and Sustainability

Classification: Competitive

Labor Grade: White Collar grade 15

Approved: Position Conversion effective 01/30/2017

Revised: 01/18

By: AG, Commissioner of Personnel

MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS:

- (a) Graduation from a regionally accredited or New York State registered college or university with a Master's Degree in planning **AND** two years of professional experience in municipal, community or regional planning; **OR**
- (b) Graduation from a regionally accredited or New York State registered college or university with a Master's Degree in natural resources, public administration, public policy, landscape architecture or closely related field **AND** four years of professional experience in municipal, community or regional planning; **OR**
- (c) Graduation from a regionally accredited or New York State registered college or university with a Bachelor's Degree in planning, natural resources, public administration, public policy, landscape architecture or closely related field **AND** six years of professional experience in municipal, community or regional planning; **OR**
- (d) Any equivalent combination of training and experience equal to or greater than that defined in (a), (b), and (c) above.

Tompkins County is Committed to Equity and Inclusion. We encourage those with similar values to apply.

SPECIAL REQUIREMENT:

Candidates chosen for employment must possess a valid New York State driver's license within thirty days of appointment and maintain such license for the duration of employment.

DISTINGUISHING FEATURES OF THE CLASS:

This is a senior position responsible for the oversight and administration of multiple complex projects and programs. The position exercises significant independence and decision making in preparing detailed planning reports and studies, including maintaining project budgets and administering grant programs. The position proposes policies, plans and projects, and identifies the probable impacts to the physical development and management of the County that will result from proposals. The position manages long-range plans and short-term studies that require a high degree of coordination within and across County departments and external agencies. The position requires a high level of expertise in intergovernmental relations and public engagement. This senior position is expected to demonstrate knowledge of, and extensive technical expertise in, several complicated planning program areas from broad topics such as sustainability, land use, housing, tourism, energy, climate change, community development, rural development, water resources, land conservation and the environment. The position is responsible for providing professional planning assistance to boards and committees and leading teams on complex studies that require the coordination of efforts by other members of the Department, community agency directors, department heads, legislators and other elected officials, and citizen activists to strategize around specific topic areas, develop plans to address issues, and quantify measurable results. The position prepares grant applications and manages highly intricate grant projects and programs. An example of this type of planning coordination is the Community Housing Development Fund, conceived and developed to help achieve the vision outlined in the County Comprehensive Plan to assist developers in building affordable housing, with its \$600,000 annual budget and two formal advisory committees composed of legislators, senior Cornell staff, city of Ithaca elected officials and department heads. Other examples are the Capital Reserve Fund for Natural, Scenic and Recreational Resource Protection, and the Stream Corridor Restoration and Flood Hazard Mitigation Program. The work will be performed under the general supervision of senior staff with allowances for a high degree of independent judgment and autonomy in executing assigned tasks. The position is responsible for supervising County-hired Research Assistants and volunteers, as well as guiding and coordinating the work of support staff on a project or programmatic basis. The incumbent will perform all related duties as required.

TYPICAL WORK ACTIVITIES:

- Develops and manages County planning-related programs, such as sustainability, land use, housing, transportation tourism, energy, climate change, community development, rural development, water resources, land conservation or environmental protection;
- Provides vision and leadership in the conception and development of policies, plans, projects and programs that fulfill the objectives of the Tompkins County Comprehensive Plan;
- Acts as project leader for specific topic area related planning projects and programs including supervision and direction of county-hired Research Assistants and volunteers and management of contractors and consultants and coordination with State and Federal agencies, municipalities, community organizations and businesses;
- Keeps informed about best practices related to assigned topic areas; develops proposals and recommendations for policies, plans and projects; conveys these to boards, committees, and the County Legislature; and works with partner agencies to implement the recommendations;
- Plans, coordinates and leads the writing of outside grants to support related initiatives in the community on behalf of the Department, local governments and interested agencies;
- Conducts complex analytical reports and planning studies related to specific topic areas as well as comprehensive planning;
- Provides professional support to advisory boards and committees, as well as the County Legislature, and participates in community planning studies and other activities;
- Manages grant funds, including compliance with all reporting requirements, from Federal and State agencies and/or local sources often involving selection and oversight of professional consultants, multiple community partners and substantial budgets;
- Coordinates, administers and manages significant housing, natural resource and other programs and projects to further the goals of the County Comprehensive Plan, including obtaining funding, managing program budgets, contracting for work with outside agencies, and coordinating the efforts of community leaders and experts to effectively address specific community challenges;
- Conducts training sessions to meet the needs and interests of advisory boards and local communities;
- Develops and assists with a wide variety of citizen education programs for public input and participation at the municipal and countywide levels;
- Manages, evaluates and provides recommendations on development projects consistent with local and state policies, including General Municipal Law §239-l and –m and the State Environmental Quality Review Act;
- Responds to requests for information and complaints about problems from the public, community organizations, and local government officials;
- Makes formal and informal presentations to inform and advise citizen advisory boards, legislative bodies, and public officials on planning projects;
- Writes, or assists in writing, a variety of ordinances and regulations relating to a range of community planning issues;
- Understands and provides feedback on formal planning documents including but not limited to easements, surveys, regulations and management plans;
- Prepares a variety of planning statistics, data, plans, designs, charts, maps, records, reports, and graphic materials in support of various planning activities; and
- Updates website content and employs computer skills to enhance other work activities.

KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, ABILITIES, AND PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS:

- Thorough knowledge of the purpose, principles, terminology and practices employed in planning;
- Thorough knowledge of the legal, sociological, economic, environmental, infrastructure, and legislative facets of planning;
- Extensive expertise in one or more planning specialization, such as sustainability, land use, housing, transportation, tourism, energy, climate change, community development, rural development, water resources, land conservation or the environment;
- Good knowledge of current methods for collecting, analyzing and interpreting statistical data;
- Good knowledge of research methods and techniques involved in planning;
- Good knowledge of governmental decision-making processes;
- Ability to prepare and supervise the preparation of complex plans for community development and resource protection;
- Ability to deal with tight deadlines and competing requests and work on several projects or issues simultaneously;
- Ability to work independently or in a team environment, as needed;
- Ability to attend to details while keeping big-picture goals in mind;
- Ability to prepare concise, well-constructed oral and written communications and reports that convey complicated planning topics to the public; Skillful application of spreadsheet, database, desktop publishing, geographic information systems, and word processing software;
- Creative problem-solving skills to gather relevant information to solve vaguely defined practical problems;

- Ability to function on and lead teams of department staff, other County staff, representatives from other agencies, and/or interested citizens;
- Excellent knowledge of group facilitation skills to gather public comment at meetings and communicate with persons representing diverse public interests;
- Ability to manage departmental and grant resources on a project or programmatic basis;
- Ability to understand and to give complex oral and written instructions;
- Initiative, resourcefulness, tact, and good judgment;
- Excellent ability to communicate and deal effectively with department heads, local officials, legislators, business-people and residents and to advise, persuade, or influence them, especially in adverse and tense conditions; and
- Good working knowledge of standard office technology and software, and the willingness and ability to learn new technology and software skills;
- Ability to travel, as required to fulfill the demands of the position in Tompkins County; and
- The employee's physical and mental condition shall be commensurate with the demands of the position, either with or without reasonable accommodations.

PHYSICAL, MENTAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL DEMANDS:

The employee must be able to sit for extended periods of time within a standard eight-hour work day. Other types of physical effort are minimal with the exception of the occasional requirement to lift boxes of office supplies and paper goods up to twenty pounds. The incumbent's visual acuity must be sufficient to enable him or her to see and accurately work with information on a computer screen. The employee's hearing must be sufficiently acute to enable him or her to hear, understand and carry out verbal instructions. The employee must have the physical ability to manipulate a computer keyboard and other types of office equipment. These fine motor skills include adequate hand/eye coordination and the full use of fingers, hands and arms to perform the essential functions of this job. Environmental factors include the ability to work closely and cooperatively in close physical proximity with others. He or she may occasionally be required to work alone. Almost all work is performed indoors in a temperature controlled environment, so excessive heat, cold, humidity, noise, etc., are not factors that are significant to this job. There may be minimal exposure to disagreeable conditions. The employee may at times be asked to drive to get to remote locations, or otherwise demonstrate the ability to meet the limited transportation requirements of this job. If an individual has limitations, the employee has the right to request reasonable accommodations in accordance with the ADA and as amended.

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