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Westfield Department of Public Works

Assessment and Recommendations



1915-2023

108
Years

Project Goals

- The Village hired CGR in 2022 to review DPW operations, including:
 - Internal and external satisfaction levels
 - Compensation & staffing
 - Adequacy of facilities & fleet
- Ensure Westfield residents are receiving service that is:
 - Effective
 - Efficient
 - High Quality

Project Overview

- Interviewed Village/Board leadership, DPW leadership, heads of each department & support staff
- Gathered information on depts/operations
- Surveyed DPW staff
- Surveyed the public/DPW customers
- Conducted high-level overview of each dept budget
- Benchmarked budgets, staffing, wages & operational concerns with three comparison municipalities
- Issued 9 recommendations, ranging from general to specific

Key Findings

- Overall operations are going well
 - Departments are functional and reliable
 - Leadership is working on long-term planning & data gathering
- The public is very happy with the level of service they are receiving
 - Limited individual complaints are about familiar, well-known issues (e.g., variations in water quality, drainage issues, etc.)
- Staff are generally happy with their work and their departments.
 - However, compensation issues have been leading to loss of staff and inter-departmental friction
 - Some issues with communication and leadership emerged

Public Satisfaction Survey

- 380 respondents
- 90+% positive rating of DPW
 - ~40% rate it 10/10 (an exceptional rate)
- 80+% positive for every internal department
 - Negative ratings in single digits
- Positive ratings consistent across all subgroups:
 - Positive across all years of age
 - Positive across years as a customer
 - Positive across customer status:
 - Residents, workers, business owners & leaders of local organizations

Staff Satisfaction Survey

- Proud of the work they do and service delivered to Westfield
- Electric dept and Water/WPCF report positive outlook
 - good morale, satisfaction with management & working conditions
- Street dept more mixed outlook
 - some dissatisfaction with management and working conditions
- Challenges survey identified:
 - High turnover
 - Low pay
 - Leadership and communication issues, particularly with Village administration

Comparative Peer Municipalities

- Benchmarked against three peer villages
 - Similar in size
 - Each with municipal electric, streets, water and sewer departments
- Peers:
 - Hamilton, NY, Madison County, Census '20 pop: 4,107
 - Sherburne, NY, Chenango County, Census '20 pop: 1,360
 - Springville, NY, Erie County, Census '20 pop: 4,225
- Similar issues:
 - Challenges retaining skilled staff; wage differentials
 - Pandemic-related service/equipment challenges
 - Cross-training/working across departments

Comparative Peer Results

- Westfield's staffing and expenditures somewhat higher but not by significant amounts.
- Prior to recent wage adjustment, salary/wage levels lagged peers
 - Now more in line, but towards lower end in some cases
- Leaders at peer DPW emphasize importance of staff solidarity/unified dept culture
 - Depts working in close proximity and supporting each other in tasks helps

Recommendation #1

Increase Staff Compensation

- Recommendation made prior to September MOU
 - May be moot for short-term
- Develop long-term compensation plan
 - Proactively monitor market conditions and competitor wages
- Examine operation of longevity incentive
 - Is it producing desired effect?

Recommendation #2

Reaffirm the Chain of Command and Decision-Making Process

- Some communication issues at different levels
- Some inter-departmental friction
- Board should reiterate that DPW director is in charge of deciding overall direction of work and setting priorities

Recommendation #3

Improve Internal and External Communication

- Internal communication
 - Individual check-ins w/ department heads
 - Weekly group meetings w/ all dept heads together, for coordination
- External communication
 - Village Board
 - Regular updates
 - Yearly strategy session
 - Public
 - Continue quarterly newsletter
 - Keep website updated
 - Communicate short- and long-term goals and status updates

Recommendation #4

Consider Constructing a New Street Facility on English St.

- Current Street dept building is aging, has limited space and facilities and is separated from rest of DPW
- Relocating to available space on English St. could:
 - Improve Street dept facilities
 - Increased DPW cohesion and oversight
 - Return Bourne St. space to private development/tax rolls

Recommendation #5

Consider Offering a Retirement Incentive

- The Village has previously offered retirement incentives
- The right arrangement can be beneficial both for senior workers and staffing and budgets

Recommendation #6

Automate the Water Treatment Plant

- Consider purchase of equipment for increased or full automation of plant

Recommendation #7

Crosstrain Younger Staff for Water/WPCF

- Younger staff may have fewer administrative responsibilities and could grow into roles

Recommendation #8

Fully Institute an Asset Management/Work Order Management System

- Director Thompson is working to implement a combined asset management and work order management system
- This system should be implemented across all depts ASAP

Recommendation #9

Consider a Pavement Management System

- Cornell University's Local Roads Program is part of NYS Local Technical Assistance Program
 - Will assist w/ design & implementation, alternatives, budgeting, etc.