



Conflict Management Design: Village of Pinehurst Government

Melissa Swarbrick

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Problem: Pinehurst Village Government operates under the Council/Manager form of government. The Mayor and Council members are elected to four-year terms. The Village Manager and two Assistant Village Managers are appointed by the Mayor and Council. All department heads report to either the Village Manager or one of the Assistants. Currently, there is no formal dispute resolution or conflict management system in place for staff and department heads to resolve issues they might have with the manager or assistant managers. They are left with the choice of going to Human Resources (who also reports to the managers) or leaving their position if the dispute continues to exist. There is also no system in place to resolve council disputes with each other or with the managers. Sometimes issues get aired in public which causes conflict and embarrassment for everyone involved.

Mission and Values:



VISION

The Village of Pinehurst is a charming, vibrant community which reflects our rich history and traditions.

MISSION

Promote, enhance, and sustain the quality of life for residents, businesses, and visitors.

Source: <http://www.vopnc.org>

Culture of the Council/Manager System: Because the Council/Manager form of government combines the strong political leadership of elected officials with the strong managerial experience of an appointed manager, conflict is natural and expected as ideas, values, and priorities sometimes clash. Usually, the governing body has the authority to terminate the manager at any time. The manager is responsible for recruiting, hiring, terminating, and supervising the staff. The managers and staff are bound by the policy decisions or actions the council takes even though often make policy recommendations to the council.

Pinehurst Government Dispute Management: Typically, Human Resources staff are tasked with handling issues from staff members, but they are not equipped to resolve disputes between the council members and managers or department heads. In most organizations, mediators are brought in to facilitate discussions and provide a framework for the disputants to work through their differences. Pinehurst government has no formal dispute system in place at this time.

The overarching purpose of a conflict management plan is to ensure that a coordinated, consistent, and effective approach is taken to preventing and managing disputes. A conflict management plan will also allow staff and council to avoid matters escalating into formal legal disputes. Specifically, an interest-based conflict management system will address the principles of power, rights, and interests and apply them to this organization.¹



Source: <http://www.vopnc.org>

¹ Cathy A. Costantino and Christina Sickles Merchant. *Designing Conflict Management Systems* (1996). San Francisco, California: Jossey-Bass, 59.

Objectives:

1. Identify and manage complaints early.
2. Foster a culture of active dispute management, where we truly engage with the people in the dispute. Stakeholders have an active role in creating and refining the system.
3. Work on improving policies and practices so that all staff members feel empowered and engaged while acknowledging that conflict is a reality and inevitable in any organization.
4. Adhere to the “satisfaction triangle” which dictates that effective conflict resolution meets the needs and interests of the people involved in three areas: substantive, emotional, and procedural.²

Benefits of a Formal Conflict Management System: Early resolution of disputes and conflicts benefits agencies by reducing expenditures and improving productivity. Effective dispute and conflict management means:

- Early engagement between people involved in the dispute to identify issues and options. Allows for the “works better and costs less” process which encourages partnerships and interest-based conflict management systems.³
- Getting assistance from a third-party mediator to facilitate discussion and resolution when needed.
- Adoption of best practices to save money and increase employee satisfaction in the workplace.
- Annually reviewing existing plans and strategies for handling disputes with stakeholders making revisions and recommendations.
- Promoting early and appropriate conflict resolution and improve access to these services.
- A change in culture from an individual to a team perspective.

Key Stakeholders: Staff, appointed officials, and elected officials will all benefit from a comprehensive conflict management process. Externally, residents and visitors will benefit from more efficient service delivery, lower turnover, and overall general satisfaction with local government.

Proposal: Pinehurst should start developing the following conflict management system for all personnel:

1. Pinehurst’s new Organization Performance Director (OPD is currently Matthew McKirahan a UNC MPA Grad) will oversee the pilot of the new system for staff, managers, and council. His job description and qualifications make him the logical choice (See Appendix).
2. An organizational assessment will be conducted with all stakeholders at the June 2022 retreat. Collecting information and collaborating on identifying the interests, needs, and

² John B. Stephens. “2020 Mediation Manual”. (2020) Chapel Hill, North Carolina: School of Government, UNC-Chapel Hill, 44.

³ Cathy A. Costantino and Christina Sickles Merchant. *Designing Conflict Management Systems* (1996). San Francisco, California: Jossey-Bass, 53.

concerns of the group will take priority. The OPD will then organize a committee to facilitate a conflict management system.

3. Conflict management training will become part of all new hire orientations. This will create a culture of responsiveness to disputes instead of allowing for escalation. All staff, managers, and council will be directed to take disputes to the OPD. These will remain confidential throughout the process.
4. The OPD will work with qualified mediators to oversee all disputes and conflicts and assign disputants for mediation as necessary. Complete confidentiality will always be observed.
5. Two semi-annual meetings for all staff to roll out this new protocol, answer questions, address concerns, ensure privacy, and role play for understanding.
6. All staff that participate in both semi-annual meetings will receive 6 hours of PTO.
7. Human Resources personnel may be brought into any dispute resolution if a violation of employee rights or civil rights is noted.
8. After the initial 12-month roll out, a survey will be conducted of all staff, managers, and council to gauge satisfaction and approval of the new procedures for conflict resolution.

Outcomes and Change We Hope to Achieve: While not everyone will adapt to this new policy, we hope that most will see the benefits to staff, managers, and council that include:

- Clear communication with all departments and personnel
- Building trust and commitment to the organization
- Desire to have a safe and positive workplace with long-term opportunities for personal and professional advancement
- Being able to distinguish between positions and interests for clearer understanding of conflict management solutions

Notes: While this plan does not call for additional staff, it should be noted that a budget item will need to be included for mediator pay, semi-annual meetings, accumulated PTO, and printed materials for staff, managers, and council.

The Organization Performance Director will be required to report out to council and the managers on the successes and challenges of this program. Privacy concerns should be addressed so that disputants all feel confident in the mediation process.

The surveys collected at the 12-month mark will be carefully considered so that changes and adaptations can be made to the system.

Perceived or Expected Challenges:

- Fear of exposure of private information to other personnel
- Time it could take for mediation (versus doing nothing)
- Failure of council to agree to the process
- Fear of repercussions from managers
- Budget concerns

Conclusion: Adopting a conflict management system will allow Pinhurst personnel to identify and manage complaints and to foster a culture of caring and compassion to the needs of their staff and elected officials. Employee retention might increase with this added system and the culture of the workplace should slowly change from one of individualism to one of collaboration and cooperation. Allowing all personnel to be part of the initial development and continued oversight of the new system will create buy-in and compliance.

Appendix

Organization Performance Director Job Description



Village of Pinehurst POSITION DESCRIPTION

Title:	Organizational Performance Director	Reports To:	Assistant Manager for Administration
Department:	Administration	Division:	
Salary Grade:	30	Directly Supervises:	Administrative and Data Coordinator
FLSA Status:	Exempt	Shift:	Primarily Days M-F
Safety Sensitive:		Revision Date:	July 2019; September 2021
Established Date:	February 2018		

GENERAL STATEMENT OF DUTIES

Promotes the effective development and implementation of the Village's organization-wide continuous improvement efforts, annual Strategic Operating Plan, and performance measurement system, ensuring alignment to the Village's Long Range Comprehensive Plan.

DESCRIPTION

An employee in this class leads, advises, and partners with senior leadership to plan, organize, develop, and implement improvements to programs and processes to enhance organizational efficiency and effectiveness. Work includes providing leadership in establishing goals and priorities as part of the strategic planning process; monitoring implementation of the Strategic Operating Plan; monitoring Village-wide performance using the performance measurement system; directing and managing service and process improvement projects; developing policies and programs; and evaluating data and trends. The employee serves as a member of the Village's senior leadership team and works in concert with the Village Managers to develop a climate conducive to organizational excellence. Work requires sensitivity to the needs of the total municipal organization and advising senior leadership on a wide range of issues and programs. Work is performed under the administrative supervision of the Village Manager and is evaluated through periodic conferences, observation of results achieved, success and cost of projects, and review of records, reports, and files.

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- Facilitates, coaches, mentors, develops, and works with Village staff and various teams across the organization in planning, designing, directing, and accomplishing performance reviews and improvement projects to create a culture of continuous improvement.
- Leads the implementation of the Baldrige Excellence Framework; trains Village staff on Baldrige concepts; identifies, develops and implements organizational improvements; works closely with staff in developing performance benchmarks.
- Leads the development of the annual Strategic Operating Plan and works with Village Council and senior leadership to establish outcome goals and define clear strategies for measuring performance results.
- Oversees the development of efficiency and effectiveness performance measures, targets/goal, and scorecards that are aligned to the Village's Strategic Operating Plan to provide meaningful data and information to decision makers.
- Participates in hiring and provides technical guidance, performance coaching and evaluation, training, and work assignment for staff.
- Tracks the results of programs and services, verifies the accuracy of data, and correlates data to support fact-based decision-making and manage day-to-day operations.
- Prepares an annual State of the Village Report and presents to Village Council.
- Researches and identifies national best practices and comparative and competitive data; evaluates findings against current operational processes; and makes recommendations to senior leadership for modifications to improve efficiency, effectiveness and customer service.



Village of Pinehurst
POSITION DESCRIPTION

- Trains and educates the organization on continuous improvement concepts and methodologies.
- Performs related duties as required.

KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND ABILITIES

- Considerable knowledge of effective performance improvement concepts and methodologies.

- Considerable knowledge of performance measurement systems and performance measurement techniques.

- Considerable knowledge of the principles and practices of organization development and organizational psychology including knowledge to create a climate of support, engagement and performance excellence.

- Considerable knowledge of the principles and practices of leadership including collaboration, empowerment, communication, motivation, performance coaching, and conflict resolution.

- Considerable knowledge of the organization's budgeting, personnel and purchasing policies and procedures.

- Considerable knowledge of the application of information technology in the public sector.

- Knowledge of modern and effective supervisory principles and practices including motivation, communication, leadership, performance coaching and evaluation.

- Skill in public speaking, meeting facilitation, change management, consensus building, and problem-solving.

- Ability to build effective teams and lead diverse groups to consensus.

- Ability to help develop long term plans and goals for the Village and provide management with target dates, costs, and implementation strategies.

- Ability to think and plan systematically.

- Ability to articulate the Village's position on matters, and recommend policy at the strategic level.

- Ability to draft policies with appropriate justification and implementation strategies and procedures.

- Ability to innovate.

- Ability to analyze facts, programs, trends, and costs and make recommendations, solve problems, and prepare comprehensive performance reports in oral and written forms.

- Ability to communicate effectively with managers, other government officials, employees, and the general public.

- Ability to maintain the confidentiality of all activities and management discussions.

- Ability to establish and maintain effective work relationships with Council, Managers, department heads, Village staff, and citizens.

SAFETY

This position requires enforcing and following all Village of Pinehurst and OSHA safety regulations.

PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS

- Must be able to physically perform the basic life operational functions of fingering, talking and hearing.
- Must be able to perform sedentary work exerting up to 10 pounds of force occasionally and/or a negligible amount of force frequently or constantly to lift, carry, push, pull, or otherwise move objects.
- Must possess the visual acuity to analyze data and figures, operate a computer terminal, and do extensive reading.

MINIMUM AND PREFERRED EDUCATION AND EXPERIENCE

Completion of a bachelor's degree in public administration, business administration, or related field and considerable successful experience in public sector management; or an equivalent combination of education and experience. Master's degree in public or business administration or related field is strongly preferred.

SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS

Possession of a valid driver's license.



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