

University of California, Riverside

SAWPA Final Report
City Manager Internship

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Acknowledgements

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Executive Summary

My internship is at the City Manager's office of the City of Lake Elsinore. I am a City Manager Intern, and work underneath the Assistant to the City Manager, Nicole Dailey. The internship is run through the Water Resources Institute (WRI) at California State University, San Bernardino. As a result, I also work under the CSU's Water Resources and Policy Initiatives (WRPI). I started on April 1 and will complete my internship at the end of the quarter.

In the WRPI, I report to Marisa Perez-Reyes, a Civic Spark Water Fellow of the Santa Ana Watershed Project Authority. I believe that she wants me to learn more about the water issues in the Santa Ana Watershed through my internship at Lake Elsinore. Nicole Dailey has provided opportunities to do so, but also work on projects or tasks that relate more towards the city and city news. This can vary from social media to basic organizational tasks. One subject has come up, which pertains to Lake Elsinore itself and its classification of an impaired body of water. Nicole has explained to me that this would be beneficial to know for the sake of the WRPI part of the internship. So while I continue to learn more about the Lake for WRPI, I am also mostly working on various projects for Nicole and for the benefit of the City.

Project Objectives and Approach

For the City of Lake Elsinore, my supervisor has explained to me that her goal was to improve the City through various avenues. One of the ways she believed I could help was through our social media page. She wanted me to help create posts for all kinds of events or awareness campaigns to notify the City and its citizens. I would say about half my assignments were creating draft posts for the City's Facebook page. Events included DEA National Takeback Week, May Mental Health Awareness Month, Reality Rally, and other posts about smaller updates and such. Another assignment was more organizational, as I had to file 30 to 40 agreements, contracts, and licenses the City had into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. I honestly enjoyed this clerical task because I consider myself an organized person. I wanted to make the Excel sheet as neat and accessible as possible, making it easy for anyone to search or filter any category of the agreements, from the contract start date to the dollar amount of the contract. I did have an issue at the beginning with setting the whole document up. I have only used Excel in school and usually with math-based problems. So, this was my first time using other tools in Excel. However, I enjoy these small challenges where I learn on my own and by doing. Yes, I could have easily asked for help, but I knew I could always Google any issues as I knew where to find the answers should I need it. This felt like an over arching project where if there was not another assignment to work on, I could always work on this project if Nicole did not have anything for me to do. I fully completed the Excel sheet just last week.

After several weeks into my internship term, Nicole informed me that I would be learning more about the Lake Elsinore Advanced Pump Storage (LEAPS) project. She explained a quick summary to me about the project. She then told me that there was a public City Council meeting help a few days earlier, and that I would watch the webcast of it and take notes. From the

webcast, I learned that the LEAPS Project is a hydroelectric project, which consists of an upper and lower reservoir with a set of tunnels running between them. When electrical energy is in high demand, the water in the upper reservoir is released through tunnels flowing down to turbines at the powerhouse. The upper reservoir becomes, in effect, a source of stored energy. The purpose of this assignment was to write a newsletter updating the City of the City Council's stance against the project. Though writing the newsletter itself would not take long, Nicole believed that it was worth me learning about the project to benefit for the WRPI part of the internship.

Not too long after, Nicole came to me with another water related assignment. This time it was on Lake Elsinore and its classification as an impaired waterbody. She explained to me in detail how the Lake was impaired and how it was to be fixed: through Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs). A TMDL defines how much of a pollutant a waterbody can tolerate and still meet water quality standards. At the City, State, and Federal level, TMDLs are signed into law through the Federal Clean Water Act Section 303(d), which requires that States must develop TMDLs to establish a maximum level of pollutants in which the State, City, and entire watershed must follow in order to meet water quality standards. Again, I read up on the issue through news articles, information from the waterboards California government website, and City Council hearings. Afterwards, I drafted a newsletter for Nicole to review, revise, and then publish.

Project Outcomes

Once I understood both topics, I suddenly was able to put the two together and see the bigger picture. TMDLs were a pressing issue that needed to be revised in order for the Lake to more accurately be restored. One answer, which seemed to be a high-risk high reward solution, was through the LEAPS project. Nevada Hydro, the private company in charge of the project, had the tools to incorporate TMDLs into their project for the betterment of the Lake. Of course, because of its own personal and political agendas, having Nevada Hydro act in good faith with the City was not an easy task. In fact, they could end up damaging the City and its residents, which brings up the high-risk part of the solution. However, Nicole has explained to me that she believes this may be the best and only way the Lake can be fully restored. She believes Nevada Hydro has the resources to help the Lake, should they want to do it. Again, this begins to get political and I am starting to see the issues that City and government are dealing with. While I still only know the surface level stuff of the two topics, I am beginning to understand how City governments work and that the solutions they come up with are as complex as the problems they are trying to fix.

Conclusions

During my first couple days at the office, it felt surreal to finally be working in a professional work space. I have been to my mom's office before, so I have seen the professional setting. However, working in it was quite fascinating. It was definitely professional and serious at times, but I was quite surprised at how relaxed it was when it came to the culture of the City Manager's office. At least with the people I directly worked with, such as Nicole and the two front desk assistants Kathi and Carla, they were very friendly towards each other, towards visiting employees, and towards me.

This internship experience has certainly showed me how an office setting operates, and while I was uncomfortable for the first few weeks, I have gotten used to some of it. And I know that I will get more comfortable when I get a full-time job. From the office atmosphere to the logistics to the work done, my internship at the City of Lake Elsinore gave me a lot to learn and think about. Admittedly, working for government is not really my preference, but I still believe experience is experience, and my goal throughout this internship was to learn and expose myself to as much as possible. I am glad to say that I have accomplished that, and will always be grateful for this opportunity.