

Competency Statement

Portfolio Concentration: Urban Studies – Public Management
Seeking 16 Total Credits

Student
address
phone
email

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Learning Cluster: Negotiation and Conflict Management (Seeking 4 total credits)

Occupational/Vocational/Professional Competencies

As an employee with the City of Norwalk for thirty one years, over twenty of those years were spent in management and administrative positions. As a result, it was necessary to understand and be prepared to plan, prepare and mitigate circumstances during conflicts and negotiations. During the time I held these positions, I completed extensive coursework, seminars and workshops that prepared me to moderate negotiations and conflict.

- As a student of Lorain County Community College, I completed course work in **Human Resource Management** as part of the Public Administration Associate Degree Program. In this course, I studied and learned the importance of establishing preliminary discussions prior to contract negotiations, disciplinary hearings and performance reviews in order to develop ground rules and reinforce the expectations of management with the ultimate goal of reducing negative consequences.
- As the Safety Service Director for the City of Norwalk, I attended The Ohio Business College with a focus on the **Essentials of Human Resource Management**. This coursework prepared me for situational experiences related to hiring, termination, and guaranteeing that the constitutional rights of workers were being met in the workplace.
- As Safety Service Director for The City of Norwalk, I attended the **Workplace Harassment Training Workshop** presented by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, where I learned the importance of understanding, preventing and correcting discrimination in the workplace.
- As the Safety Service Director for The City of Norwalk, I was counseled on an individual level by the City Law Director in the procedures and processes of grievances, and contract negotiations with the labor unions employed by the City. Sessions included numerous conferences with the law firm Downs Fischel Hass Kim LLP in preparation for contract amendments and contract negotiations with the labor unions, with an aim directed at minimizing hostility between management and the unions.
- In my positions as Zoning Administrator and Safety Service Director, I completed extensive training in emergency management for administrative level personnel which taught me the understanding of incident command and how it works to prevent conflict between interdepartmental and jurisdictional agencies.

Interpersonal Competencies

In my position as Zoning Administrator, and then as Safety Service Director for the City of Norwalk, I had broad experiences mitigating conflict and negotiating issues with the general public and City employees. My experience taught me the importance of providing an environment where issues can be aired fairly, and with open communications, and how this approach will promote a constructive mode for resolving problems of conflict.

- As Safety Service Director for the City of Norwalk, I oversaw the management of Police, Fire, Sanitation and Park and Recreation Departments, for which I was responsible for developing harmonious inter-department relationships.

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- My experience as Safety Service Director required me to act as a bridge to mediate between city departments and the general public in cases of conflict between citizens and City employees.
- As Safety Service Director for the City of Norwalk, I learned the importance of maintaining a positive approach when negotiating terms and agreements with businesses for events requiring the coordination of city services, equipment and personnel.
- As the Zoning Administrator for The City of Norwalk, I learned the importance of listening to residents individually in order to negotiate and mitigate issues between them resulting from property disputes, permit denials and building, zoning and property maintenance violations. I also learned the importance of initiating communications with property owners in violation of ordinances to reduce the instances of citations. The purpose of this idea was to reduce the instances of conflict between the City and residents.

Problem Solving Competencies

As the Zoning Administrator for the City of Norwalk, I put into practice Smart Development within the City. This required that I interpret the Zoning Code in a way that was supportive of development, yet respectful of the property rights of surrounding residents and businesses. This approach was beneficial in the prevention of property development causing friction within the community. Similarly, as the Safety Service Director, I found it valuable to develop and maintain administrative policies to prevent dissension amongst employees and the public.

- As Safety Service Director for the City of Norwalk, I implemented a policy manual. The importance of establishing the manual was to create a clear dialogue to employees that a consistent approach to administrative policies was needed in order to be effective. As a result, a reduction in the instances of conflicts due to lack of coordination amongst employees occurred.
- As Safety Service Director for the City of Norwalk, I stressed the importance of adhering to the Personnel Policy Handbook and ensuring that it was followed appropriately. It is critical that all cases of hiring, termination and promotion of employees be carried out in a consistent manner to avoid any indication of favoritism or unfairness. This practice assured a commitment to preventing discord amongst employees.
- As the Zoning Administrator for the City of Norwalk, I developed a commercial permit process. This process provided a routine for city departments in order to coordinate their review times to promote a speedy return to developers. The result was a reduction of two months in the permit review process for the City. The goal of reducing tensions between contractors, developers and City departments was met.

Civic Competencies

As an administrator in the public sector, I realized the importance of communicating with the public. An informed public is less likely to become upset when the city is completing projects within the city. It is also necessary to coordinate efforts with other non-profit organizations and agencies. Coordination, consistency, and cooperation is essential to smooth operations and meeting the needs of the public. I learned that ignorance of those needs can be detrimental and costly to public relations.

- As the Zoning Administrator and as the Safety Service Director for the City of Norwalk, I participated on a yearly basis in an event coordinated by the Norwalk Area Economic Development Corporation for which I was a member of a team that visited every local business in the Norwalk area. The purpose of the visits was to ensure open communication with local

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businesses about city services and discuss problems that may have arisen with the city. The results were typically positive and allowed the city to become aware of where we were coming up short in particular areas. The event was exceptionally useful in heading off conflicts with the local business district within the City.

- As the Safety Service Director for the City of Norwalk, I frequently made presentations to the local organizations such as Kiwanis, Rotary, Jaycees and the Chamber of Commerce to update them on projects the City was working on. These presentations enabled these organizations to prepare and make intelligent decisions about projects that could affect members of their organizations. This method was useful in reducing tensions within the community.
- As the Safety Service Director for the City of Norwalk, I worked closely with the Huron County Humane Society to develop solutions to problems associated with vicious dogs and feral cats, an issue that aggravated residents, fueling the occurrence of conflicts.
- As the Safety Service Director for the City of Norwalk, I promoted an open door policy with employees and the public. This initiative helped to promote an atmosphere committed to resolving issues and preventing conflict.

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Learning Cluster: Management of Urban and Nonprofit Organizations (Seeking 4 total credits)

Occupational/Vocational/Professional Competencies

As the Safety Service Director for the City of Norwalk, I realized the importance of continuing education as one of the principle elements that enabled me to perform my role as an administrative manager. For this purpose, I began attending classes at Lorain County Community College in the Public Administration Program. I completed courses in **Public Budgeting, Human Resources, Urban Studies, Organization Leadership, Fundraising and Grantsmanship, State and Local Government, National Government, and Public Administration**. In addition, I attended workshops that focused on efficiency in the workplace. The objective I achieved was to improve my knowledge and skills in a management position with the City.

- As the Safety Service Director for the City of Norwalk, it was important to ensure that revenues were used effectively. This required that city departments not repeat efforts that were contributing to the wastefulness of revenues and employee time. In this capacity, I developed a strategy based on Six Sigma that assisted city departments in correcting areas where they were crossing into other department responsibilities and doubling work.
- As Safety Service Director and as Zoning Administrator, I implemented programs to streamline city processes and procedures in administrative areas.
- As Safety Service Director for the City of Norwalk, I was responsible for completing annual performance reviews of department heads, and confirm that each department head was completing the yearly performance evaluations in their departments. In this capacity, I learned to embrace performance evaluations as a tool to improve performance, to acknowledge the accomplishments of each employee in order to encourage improvement, and that any negative issues should be addressed at the time they occurred. In addition, performance evaluations should clearly inform employees of the areas that need improvement and ensure that each employee understands what goals they are expected to achieve over the next year.
- As the Safety Service Director for the City of Norwalk, I learned the intricacies of the budgets of every City department in order to understand the challenges of providing services with limited resources. Gaining this knowledge gave me the ability to help each department look “outside the box” for resources they were unaware of such as grants, and county programs such as TANF, that could help pay for or provide additional workers at no cost to the City.

Interpersonal Competencies

In my position as Safety Service Director, it was vital to interact with city employees and the public. In this capacity, I developed interpersonal skills that helped connect me with the public and employees. I learned the necessity of developing balanced supervisor-employee relationships, where respect is expected from both. This attitude carried into my relationships with the public.

- As the Safety Service Director for the City of Norwalk, I was responsible to ensure that the requests from City Council were communicated to the specific individuals who would be responsible for carrying out those tasks, and to ensure by follow up, that those tasks were completed or resolved.
- As Safety Service Director for the City of Norwalk, I learned the importance of entrusting employees to accomplish department goals without interference. Empowerment plays a

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fundamental role in employee performance, and assigning tasks is a way to accomplish that objective.

- As the Safety Service Director for the City of Norwalk, I placed emphasis on the importance of team work. To accomplish this, I spear-headed monthly department head meetings in order to ensure that each department was kept informed about administrative and departmental objectives and projects. Communication between departments is imperative to team work.

Problem Solving Competencies

In my years of service with the City of Norwalk, I acknowledged the differences between the public and private sectors. The purpose of government is to provide services that would otherwise be difficult to provide in a private sector capacity. Because of this difficulty, managers in the public sector are expected to provide solutions that embrace the abilities of the public sector, and apply them in the utmost efficient way to private residents and businesses.

- As the Safety Service Director of the City of Norwalk, I developed a process to effectively handle the complaint process. The existing process was complex, at best. I implemented a procedure that reduced the time that a complaint was resolved from the time it was received at City Hall, from an average time of two months, down to a maximum of two weeks.
- As the Safety Service Director for the City of Norwalk, I worked in combination with the City Law Director to rewrite the job classifications for employees of the City. The existing position descriptions limit the ability of departments to operate effectively. We rewrote descriptions to allow employees to cross over into other departments during shortages and during seasonal slow-downs.
- In my position as Safety Service Director, I was evaluated by the Mayor on a six month basis with the objective of assuring that my performance as a manager of the City was meeting or exceeding expectations. From Mayor Lesch, I learned to empower employees to want to become the very best, and the role empowerment has in improving city services.

Civic Competencies

In local government, it is important for a City to be involved in the community. Cooperation with non-profits and community organizations is of critical importance to economic development and business attraction. In order to assist in this endeavor, I was committed to working with and volunteering for many local organizations throughout the community.

- As Safety Service Director for the City of Norwalk, I comprehended the significance of networking within the communities civic organizations. To accomplish this, I served on numerous boards and spent personal time volunteering for many of them.
- As Safety Service Director for the City of Norwalk, I grasped the significance of maintaining a reputable position as being the representative of the City to the public.

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Learning Cluster: Gender and Leadership (Seeking 4 total credits)

Occupational/Vocational/Professional Competencies

Gender plays an important role in leadership. How women learn to become leaders is not necessarily a result of specific curriculum aimed at bringing women forth to leadership positions in business and public sector occupations. Therefore, it is important to recognize how women are educated to become effective leaders. The foundation of education to prepare women for leadership roles, most likely evolves within the home. Exposure to women leaders during formative years will encourage a sense of equality, as it has for me. Women leaders as role models educate other women to become leaders.

- In my household, my mother and father encouraged a diverse atmosphere where male and female roles were not distinguished. It was important that the males in the family shared household responsibility as I was required to maintain my own car and do the yard work when it was my turn. This concept was critical to embracing equality in the home and I was encouraged to lead as well as or better than my brothers.
- As a student in high school, encouragement to lead was reinforced by teachers in my field of interest, and subsequently in college by professors.
- In the workplace, I was extremely fortunate to work with males and females alike that were capable of realizing my abilities. My career began as an Architectural Designer, a predominantly male field. At no time were my abilities to perform my responsibilities ever questioned. From this experience, I developed the confidence to excel as a female in my field.

Interpersonal Competencies

Developing relationships with women in leadership roles is a way to quickly learn how to acquire attributes that can guide one towards the ability to lead. Women typically need to work harder to gain an equal regard in the workplace.

- Exposure to a gender diverse work environment taught me the ability to tactically deal with the animosity resulting from the resentment of other women towards advancement and promotions during my career with the City of Norwalk.
- As the Zoning Administrator for the City of Norwalk, I worked in a rural community where there are still strong opinions opposing women in authoritative positions. In this setting, I acquired an ability to work with men who were uncomfortable in this situation, and still achieve our goals at a level of equal respect.
- Diversity is important to understanding cultural views of women in leadership roles. As a host family for a Muslim foreign exchange student, I came to appreciate the difficulties people of different cultures have when exposed to women in leadership roles and are not accustomed to them. I learned that it is important to understand their perspective as well as it is for them to understand the perspective of others.
- As a women working in a male environment, I learned to assess situations of inappropriate behaviors and implement diplomatic remedies to prevent further development of similar situations.

Problem Solving Competencies

Women in leadership roles possess many qualities different than those of men. It is essential that those qualities be recognized and used to reinforce the promotion of women in leadership positions.

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- As the Safety Service Director for the City of Norwalk, I expanded the role of women within the work force to promote gender balance and discourage discrimination in hiring practices. I was tasked with developing teams for the hiring and promotion of employees, providing an opportunity for fair assessment of applicants and their qualifications for position openings. From this practice, I created measures to dismantle barriers for women in the work place.
- As the Safety Service Director for the City of Norwalk, I responded to issues of sexual harassment within the police department by taking actions to put in place educational programs and workshops to educate officers and patrolmen of the seriousness and implications of sexual harassment.

Civic Competencies

Throughout my career with the City of Norwalk, I had the opportunity to work with many women in powerful and prominent positions within the community. The examples of leadership they provided to me were influential to my success as the first woman Zoning Administrator, and then first Woman Safety Service Director in the history of the City of Norwalk.

- As a mother, I strive to be a role model to my own daughter as a woman who has been successful in leadership positions.
- In my experience as a woman in leadership positions, I developed the ability to speak at civic engagements and promote the recognition of women in roles of leadership within the community.

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Learning Cluster: Budgeting and Policy Analysis (Seeking 4 total credits)

Occupational/Vocational/Professional Competencies

In the public sector, rarely are employees professionally educated about the workings of an agency budget. Typically, department heads learn as they go, or bring knowledge with them from previous positions of employment. Most newly elected officials will admit that it takes years to understand and comprehend the implementation of a public budget. With this in mind, it should also be realized that public budgets go hand in hand with public policy. It would be difficult to put in place a policy decision that did not have the funds or ability to raise revenue to back the budget for that policy decision. Although it can, and does happen.

- In my first position with the City of Norwalk as a Drafting Technician, I was responsible for tracking my expenses and developing an estimate for the next year's budget based on actual expenses of the current year. I was responsible for creating purchase requests and returning purchase orders for expenses. In this capacity, I learned to understand the basic concepts of developing a budget.
- As the Zoning Administrator for the City of Norwalk, I was responsible for implementation and oversight of a budget for the Zoning Department. I was responsible for accounting and verifying expenses and ensuring that those expenses did not exceed the budget that was approved for my department. In this position, I grasped the complexity of the categories of revenue that funded the budget for the Zoning Department. In addition, I began attending budget hearings.
- In the position of Safety Service Director for the City of Norwalk, I was responsible for the oversight of budgets for the Police, Fire, Sanitation and Park and Recreation Departments. I gained clear knowledge of the revenue sources, the format of a line item budget, the budget hearing process, the legislative approval process, and the political policy decisions of developing a public budget for a city.
- As Safety Service Director for the City of Norwalk, I was a voting member on numerous boards, requiring me to be familiar with other agency budgets.

Interpersonal Competencies

Developing a budget can be difficult, especially during a weak economy. Tempers can easily flare when cuts are made to budgets with different revenue sources, and not to those that have secure funding. It is vital to develop skills to deal with inter-department relations in cases such as these.

- As Safety Service Director for the City of Norwalk, I was responsible for developing policy decisions for City departments regarding expenditures for each budget.
- As Safety Service Director for the City of Norwalk, I was charged with, and gained the aptitude to investigate unnecessary spending and encourage accountability in spending practices.

Problem Solving Competencies

A public budget is exposed to strong and weak economies. Therefore, policy decisions can change easily regarding what services are essential to provide to a City. Sometimes it is necessary to ask employees for concessions, and at other times it may be crucial to cut services.

- As Safety Service Director for the City of Norwalk, I successfully negotiated with the unions to make amendments to the existing contracts in order to prevent lay-offs in the police and Fire departments.

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- In my position as Safety Service Director, I assisted with the formation of an insurance committee formed from each department of the City in order to keep them informed and involved in the decision process regarding insurance and employee benefits.
- As the Safety Service Director, I assisted the Mayor in forming informational meetings with City employees with the intent of ensuring that they were kept informed about the condition of the budget and how it could affect each department.

Civic Competencies

Municipalities need to be intricately involved with the residents, organizations and businesses within the community. Important decisions are needed to determine where declining funds should be spent.

- As Safety Service Director for the City of Norwalk, I developed skills to assess areas of the City that needed funds for projects, and also the ability to assess the needs of manpower within Police and Fire departments.
- As Safety Service Director for the City of Norwalk, I learned to evaluate what services and projects the city implemented that would account for benefiting the most individuals within the City utilizing the budget approved by City Council.
- As Safety Service Director for the City of Norwalk, I grasped the concepts of developing private-public partnerships to accomplish goals defined in the comprehensive plan for the City of Norwalk. From this experience, I gained the knowledge of how these types of cooperation's can relieve some of the strains on a public budget.