



City of North Port

City Commission

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WORD COUNT: 1198

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Florida League of Cities

RE: *City Manager of the Year Nomination*

To Whom It May Concern:

Please let this serve as the nomination of Mr. Steven S. Crowell, Jr., City Manager of North Port, as City Manager of the year. The nomination received the unanimous support of the North Port City Commission. As Mr. Crowell stated, "Anything we have been able to achieve has been through the direction and support of the City Commission and through the dedication and hard work of North Port employees."

Space limitations provide insufficient opportunity to enumerate all the achievements in the designated areas for the given year, so only representative samples are provided. I trust that the attachments will also be considered in the selection process for the nomination categories.

In preparing for Mr. Crowell's annual performance evaluation, I had the opportunity to speak with the Management Team, without Mr. Crowell present. Attached is a summary of that meeting. Also attached is a copy of a **newspaper article covering Mr. Crowell's performance evaluation by the City Commission**. Many of the categories for the City Manager of the Year are represented in the summary.

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When all nomination categories are summarized, the essence is **leadership**. Mr. Crowell's leadership style is to support and develop others to be the best managers and leaders they can be. He has a participatory style of management and works to **develop partnerships among staff** and other organizations. Mr. Crowell accomplished designated outcomes; **hiring and developing excellent staff, establishing operating guidelines** for accomplishment of City goals, and **creating an organizational culture based on community values**. When a mistake or error is made by Mr. Crowell or staff, they acknowledge the error and implement policies, procedures, and discussions to prevent the problem from reoccurring.

Judgment has been consistent with the values of the community and direction of the Commission. There have been numerous occasions during the year when Mr. Crowell did not take the most expedient action, but was **patient in implementing the action which worked to better serve the community**. One such example was developing a process to successfully recruit and hire an Economic Development Manager. When many people were concerned about the time it was taking to fill the vacant position, he felt it was important to first lay the foundation for economic development by developing a strategic plan and expanding the Economic Development Advisory Board. Having this crucial strategy in place made it more likely to hire a successful Economic Development Manager. Mr. Crowell had to find the "right" person, not just "a" person now.

Another example was **early budget adjustments this year** (not waiting until a new

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budget year) in personnel, attempting to mitigate the negative impacts of property value decreases and State revenue limitations. In making early personnel adjustments, future budget and personnel decisions had less negative impact.

In regard to **citizen relations**, Mr. Crowell has challenged staff to provide more opportunities for citizen involvement and input on City projects. This year such opportunities include soliciting input on such projects as: construction of Sumter Boulevard; adoption of an economic development strategic plan; design of a teen/community center; and development of a City web site. He has an "open door policy" and tries to make himself available to citizens, certainly by attending various City events, but also by setting an established time (thirty minutes prior to a Commission meeting) during which Mr. Crowell is present in the Chamber to talk with citizens individually. Mr. Crowell included citizens in interviewing candidates for Economic Development Manager.

Mr. Crowell is very **professional** and expects his staff to exhibit the same professionalism. Mr. Crowell was **recognized by Biz941 magazine as one of the "Best Bosses 2008"**; was **recognized by *Sarasota* magazine as 100 Most Powerful People in Town** (attached); sends letters of welcome to new managers in Florida offering any assistance that he may provide; and often talks of outcomes and focusing (sometimes refocusing) discussions and decisions to be outcome-based.

Mr. Crowell's **integrity** is without question. He certainly adheres to the ICMA Code of

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Ethics and suggests that his staff do so as well. One example included a long term lease on equipment. The lease exceeded the useful life of the equipment. Through a "technical maneuver," the City would have been able to get out of the lease, but Mr. Crowell stated that the City would fulfill the lease obligation and abide by the City's initial commitment.

As with any public service position, there were some items of dispute. One such example occurred this year with two of the **labor unions**. Mr. Crowell directed staff not to make personal attacks or disparaging comments about the Union or individuals, including not doing so in the newspaper; **negotiations were to be based on objective criteria**.

Mr. Crowell supports **innovation** in the organization and challenges employees to do better. Mr. Crowell often asks "why" when told something cannot be accomplished or is not satisfactorily accomplished. An example of an innovative approach to customer service was to have a group of employees and citizens work together to develop a "**Customer Bill of Rights**" (attached) in an attempt not to TELL employees what is good customer service, but to SHOW employees what is good customer service. Other examples include: encouraging the development of a program/process to address abandoned homes in a more immediate time frame; developing an electronic employee suggestion program, to which appropriate staff responds; and authorized a program to share employees, specifically building inspectors, with adjacent entities.

In regard to **commitment**, Mr. Crowell is committed to making North Port a better City.

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Like most public sector employees, Mr. Crowell puts in the necessary amount of time to accomplish City goals. One example involved when Mr. Crowell was in the hospital late at night for an emergency appendectomy. Literally minutes before the operation, he notified staff of upcoming meetings and issues which had to be addressed in his absence. Mr. Crowell periodically spends a day working in other departments with an employee at his or her respective job. If an important Commission-directed objective is not achieved initially, Mr. Crowell has staff attempt another way to achieve the desired outcome.

In regard to **initiative**, Mr. Crowell continues to support Myers Briggs Type Indicator training for all employees to facilitate communication among employees and to improve customer service; required various master plans to help set the direction for the City in regard to various projects; and challenged employees to establish an annual community "signature event" provided by City employees to "make a difference" in the community.

In regard to **involvement with his profession**, Mr. Crowell is a member of the Florida City/County Management Association and the International City/County Management Association (ICMA); was recognized this year by ICMA for 25 years of service; is an ICMA Credentialed Manager; participated in ICMA training opportunities; has served on a committee this year for the Florida League (attached); was involved in the development of a presentation at the ICMA conference annual conference (but was not able to attend due to the aforementioned appendectomy), letter of appreciation attached.

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We appreciate your consideration of Mr. Crowell as City Manager of the Year.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Fred E. Tower III", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Fred E. Tower III
Commission Chair

Attachments