

POSITION PAPER

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE DIRECTOR OF PARKS, MUSEUM, AND GRANTS

CITY OF TONTITOWN, ARKANSAS

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this position paper is to explain and support the proposed establishment of the position of Director of Parks, Museum, and Grants for the City of Tontitown.

The proposal would replace the existing title of Community Development Director with a more accurate and narrowly defined department-head position responsible for three related municipal functions:

1. Parks and recreation administration;
2. Oversight of the City museum and related cultural and historical programs; and
3. Citywide grant identification, application coordination, administration, compliance, and reporting.

The proposed restructuring is intended to clarify authority, establish direct accountability, improve administrative efficiency, and prevent the continued expansion of a broadly titled position into areas that properly belong to other department heads, municipal officers, or the City Council.

II. BACKGROUND

The City currently uses the title Community Development Director. That title is broad and potentially misleading because “community development” may be understood to include planning, zoning, economic development, public works, infrastructure, grants, parks, code enforcement, building administration, or general municipal management.

Over time, the lack of a precise ordinance defining the position has allowed responsibilities to be assigned or assumed without a clear legislative framework. This has created uncertainty regarding the position’s proper role, its relationship to other department heads, and the extent of its authority within Tontitown’s mayor-council form of government.

The existing title may also suggest that the position functions as a city administrator, chief administrative officer, or intermediary between the Mayor and other department heads. Such an arrangement would be inconsistent with the organizational structure the City is attempting to establish through the adoption of individual department-head ordinances.

The City should not allow an employee’s authority to be determined by an informal title, past practice, or administrative assignment. The scope of a department-head position should be clearly established by ordinance, with identifiable duties, reporting relationships, and limitations.

III. IDENTIFIED PROBLEM

The primary concern is not whether the City needs an experienced employee to perform useful work. The concern is that the existing Community Development Director title is so broad that it provides little guidance regarding what the employee is authorized to manage and what responsibilities remain assigned to other departments.

The present arrangement creates several risks:

- Overlapping authority among planning, public works, finance, human resources, utilities, grants, parks, and other municipal functions.
- Confusion among employees regarding who directs their work and to whom they report.
- Development of an unofficial city-administrator role even though the City operates under a mayor-council form of government.
- Weakened accountability because broad assignments may be made without corresponding legislative definitions, performance expectations, or limitations.

- Interference with the independent responsibilities of department heads who are expected to identify, explain, and defend the operational and budgetary needs of their respective departments.

The proposed ordinance addresses these concerns by replacing the broad title with a position whose authority is specific, understandable, and limited.

IV. PROPOSED POSITION

The proposed title is Director of Parks, Museum, and Grants.

This title accurately identifies the three principal areas of responsibility assigned to the position.

The Director would report directly to the Mayor as a municipal department head. The Director would not serve as a city manager, city administrator, assistant mayor, chief administrative officer, or supervisor of unrelated department heads.

The Director would have direct administrative responsibility for Parks and the City Museum. The Director would also serve as the City's primary grant coordinator, assisting all City departments without assuming operational control over them.

This distinction is essential. The Director may help another department identify a grant, prepare an application, maintain deadlines, assemble supporting documentation, administer reimbursements, and complete reporting requirements. However, the department benefiting from the grant must remain responsible for defining its needs, approving technical information, operating the project, and complying with departmental standards.

Grant coordination should support departments, not supersede them.

V. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PARKS AND THE MUSEUM

Combining Parks and the Museum under one department head is a reasonable and efficient organizational decision.

Both functions involve public facilities, visitor services, community programming, special events, educational activities, tourism, volunteer participation, grounds and facility needs, public engagement, and quality-of-life services.

The City may also benefit from cross-training and sharing employees between Parks and the Museum when workloads, public hours, events, seasonal needs, or staffing shortages require additional assistance.

This does not mean that the City Museum and Parks are identical operations. Each function should maintain appropriate records, budgets, programs, and performance information. However, placing both under one department head allows the City to coordinate staff and resources more effectively while reducing unnecessary administrative duplication.

Any sharing of personnel should remain consistent with adopted personnel policies, budget appropriations, job classifications, wage-and-hour requirements, grant restrictions, and the employees' qualifications.

VI. ROLE OF THE MUSEUM'S ADVISORY BODY

The proposed structure should also clarify the relationship between the City Museum, its employees, and any museum commission, board, committee, historical society, volunteer organization, or advisory group.

The City Museum is a municipal operation. Its employees are City employees, and its funds, property, collections, facilities, and programs must remain subject to municipal oversight and accountability.

An advisory museum body can provide valuable assistance regarding historical preservation, collections, exhibits, cultural programming, education, volunteers, and community engagement. However, unless specific authority is granted by ordinance, an advisory body should not independently supervise City employees, expend public funds, execute contracts, accept restricted property on behalf of the City, or otherwise bind the City.

The Director of Parks, Museum, and Grants would provide the administrative link between museum operations, the Mayor, the City Council, employees, volunteers, and any advisory organization.

VII. CITYWIDE GRANT COORDINATION

Grant opportunities can provide significant financial assistance for municipal projects. However, grants also create deadlines, matching requirements, reporting obligations, procurement restrictions, record-retention duties, performance requirements, and potential long-term commitments.

The City would benefit from having one individual maintain a centralized grant calendar and track:

1. Available grant opportunities;
2. Applications under development;
3. Applications submitted;
4. Grants awarded or denied;
5. Matching-fund obligations;
6. Reporting and reimbursement deadlines;
7. Procurement and compliance requirements;
8. Project completion schedules; and
9. Grant closeout documentation.

The Director should assist all departments in preparing and administering grants, but should not possess independent authority to accept a grant, execute an agreement, obligate matching funds, create positions, purchase property, or commit the City to future expenses.

Any grant involving City funds, property, contracts, staffing, indebtedness, continuing obligations, or policy decisions must be submitted to the appropriate municipal authority for approval.

VIII. PRESERVATION OF DEPARTMENTAL AUTHORITY

The proposed restructuring is designed to strengthen, rather than weaken, the City's department-head system.

The Director of Parks, Museum, and Grants should not supervise or direct the operations of Planning, Public Works, Finance, Human Resources, Police, Fire, Water, Sewer, Building Administration, Engineering, or any other separate department or municipal office.

Each department head must remain responsible for:

1. Departmental operations;
2. Employees assigned to the department;
3. Technical and professional decisions;
4. Budget preparation and justification;
5. Compliance with laws and regulations applicable to the department;
6. Recommendations concerning staffing, equipment, facilities, and capital needs; and
7. Reporting directly to the Mayor as provided by the City's organizational structure.

The Director may coordinate a multi-department project when assigned to do so, but coordination must not be interpreted as authority to replace or overrule another department head.

IX. BENEFITS OF THE PROPOSED STRUCTURE

A. Clear Accountability — Employees, elected officials, and the public will be able to identify the exact responsibilities of the position.

B. Elimination of an Overly Broad Title — The proposed title removes the implication that the employee controls planning, economic development, infrastructure, or general municipal administration.

C. Improved Grant Administration — A centralized grant coordinator can reduce missed opportunities, missed deadlines, incomplete applications, reimbursement delays, and compliance problems.

D. Better Coordination of Parks and Museum Services — Related public-service functions can share administrative support, programming, employees, and resources when appropriate.

E. Stronger Budget Preparation — The Director will be responsible for presenting the operational, staffing, maintenance, programming, and capital needs of Parks and the Museum during the budget process.

F. Protection of Other Departments — The ordinance expressly prevents the position from exercising authority over unrelated departments or becoming an unofficial city-administrator position.

G. Improved Council Oversight — The City Council will receive regular information concerning park operations, museum attendance, programs, grants, funding obligations, compliance requirements, and departmental needs.

X. FISCAL AND PERSONNEL IMPACT

The proposed ordinance is intended primarily as an organizational restructuring and clarification of an existing position.

It does not, by itself:

1. Create an additional employee position;
2. Establish or increase compensation;
3. Authorize the hiring of additional personnel;
4. Appropriate additional money;
5. Create a new grant-funded obligation;
6. Authorize the execution of contracts; or
7. Commit the City to future spending.

Any compensation, staffing level, equipment purchase, capital improvement, program expenditure, or grant-matching requirement must remain subject to the City's normal budgetary and approval processes.

The City should separately evaluate the existing staffing levels and workloads of the Parks and Museum functions. The Director should be required to provide measurable information, including facility usage, visitor counts, programming, employee work assignments, maintenance requirements, revenues, expenses, volunteer participation, and upcoming projects.

This information will allow the Mayor and City Council to determine whether staffing and expenditures are justified by actual service demands.

XI. PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS

The Director should be evaluated based on objective and measurable results, including:

1. Successful administration of Parks and Museum operations;
2. Timely and accurate departmental reports;
3. Grant applications submitted and grants awarded;
4. Compliance with grant deadlines and requirements;
5. Timely reimbursement and closeout of grant funds;
6. Park and museum attendance and public usage;
7. Quality and cost-effectiveness of public programs;
8. Maintenance planning and coordination;
9. Staff utilization and cross-training;
10. Budget compliance;

11. Cooperation with other department heads; and
12. Adherence to the position's defined limitations of authority.

The City should not evaluate the Director based on the extent to which the position accumulates authority. The position should instead be evaluated on how effectively it performs its specifically assigned responsibilities.

XII. IMPLEMENTATION

Following adoption of the ordinance, the City should take the following actions:

1. Replace the Community Development Director title with Director of Parks, Museum, and Grants;
2. Adopt Exhibit A as the official job description;
3. Update the organizational chart;
4. Update personnel records, budget documents, payroll records, the City website, and departmental materials;
5. Review all existing references to the Community Development Director;
6. Reassign duties that properly belong to Planning, Public Works, Finance, Human Resources, Utilities, or another department;
7. Establish regular Parks, Museum, and Grants reporting requirements;
8. Develop a citywide grant calendar and grant-tracking system;
9. Clarify the advisory role of any museum board, commission, or committee; and
10. Review Parks and Museum staffing needs during the upcoming budget process.

Existing references to Community Development Director should not automatically transfer to the new position. Each responsibility must be reviewed and assigned to the appropriate department or municipal official.

XIII. CONCLUSION

The proposed Director of Parks, Museum, and Grants position provides the City of Tontitown with a practical and accountable method of organizing several related municipal functions.

The position recognizes the employee's experience in parks and recreation, provides needed citywide grant coordination, and establishes clear administrative oversight of the City Museum.

Equally important, the ordinance limits the position to those functions and prevents it from becoming an undefined city-administrator or general-management position.

The proposal is not intended to criticize the value of any particular employee. It is intended to ensure that municipal authority belongs to the position established by law and ordinance rather than to the individual who happens to occupy it.

The City Council should define positions before allowing authority to be exercised. Clear titles, duties, reporting relationships, and limitations protect employees, elected officials, taxpayers, and the City as an institution.

For these reasons, adoption of the ordinance establishing the Director of Parks, Museum, and Grants is recommended.