

**Succession Planning
in the Libertyville Fire Department**

Executive Leadership

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ABSTRACT

For the first 20 years that the Libertyville Fire Department was staffed by full-time personnel, it was obvious who would replace the village's first full-time fire chief. When the heir-apparent deputy chief was stricken with a heart attack and forced to take a disability pension, the remaining officers' career development and succession potential caused increasing competition and eventual discord. Five years later, when the chief did retire, one of the three internal candidates was successful in succeeding him, but the rancor and disappointment that accompanied the process resulted in the two unsuccessful candidates soon leaving the department. Now with the current chief considering retirement, there is a desire to avoid the previous tumult. Succession planning is a necessary prerequisite. The purpose of this research project was to evaluate the desirability and plausibility of developing a succession plan. The research used both historic and evaluative methodologies, including survey research. Analysis of the literature concerning succession planning was also undertaken. The following research questions were considered:

- 1) What information can succession planning literature or research offer regarding the planning needed by the Libertyville Fire Department?
- 2) Do other area fire chiefs believe in and participate in succession planning, and if so, to what extent?
- 3) Is succession planning the norm among area fire chiefs or are there variables that make such planning more/less desirable?

The procedures included an extensive literature review and the administration of a survey. The results found that succession planning was common despite the variability among

the area departments and their chiefs. The study recommended the involvement of the village board and administration to develop leadership competencies; the involvement of the chief to disseminate the plan as well as for talent pool identification, development, and assessment; and a mentoring program throughout the process.

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INTRODUCTION

For just over 30 years, the fire chief's position in the Libertyville Fire Department has been a full-time position in the Village of Libertyville. The first full-time chief, hired in 1969, had a tenure of 26 years and retired in 1995. At that time, the village appointed one of three internal candidates from the department, all of whom had over 20 years experience with the department. The competition had been strong and the resultant disappointment of the unsuccessful candidates led to both retiring soon thereafter. Less tangible, but of comparable impact to these personnel losses was the bifurcation of interests demonstrated by departmental "camps" supportive of the different candidates, challenges to the legitimacy of the appointment decision, and a successful labor organizing effort. The author believes that some of these issues may have been mitigated if a succession plan had been in place to provide the orderly transition of power based upon shared expectations.

The purpose of this research was to evaluate the desirability and plausibility of developing a succession plan around the current fire chief whose own retirement was likely in less than two years. The research employed both historic and evaluative research methodologies. Literature regarding succession planning was examined as part of this effort to develop the theoretic and analytic basis upon which such a plan would be developed. The fire chiefs of surrounding departments were surveyed regarding their attitudes and behaviors toward succession planning, as well as personal, organizational, and demographics which might make such planning salient.

The following research questions were proposed:

- 1) What information can succession planning literature or research offer regarding

the planning needed by the Libertyville Fire Department?

- 2) Do other area fire chiefs believe in and participate in succession planning, and if so, to what extent?
- 3) Is succession planning the norm among area fire chiefs or are there variables that make such planning more/less desirable?

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

The Village of Libertyville established its first volunteer fire company after a conflagration destroyed much of its downtown in 1895. As the availability of volunteers for daytime responses declined in the 1960s, the village decided it was appropriate to then hire full time personnel to augment the volunteers. Desiring that the first position to be filled was to be that of fire chief, the village first approached the “sitting” volunteer chief officers. When they declined, the village sought candidates from outside the department. Their search quickly focused on a young full time captain from the Monmouth, Illinois, Fire Department. In August 1969, John R. Reitman was appointed as Libertyville’s first full time fire chief. When the volunteer fire chief retired shortly thereafter, it created an opening for an officer’s position within the volunteer ranks. The fire chief then appointed a young volunteer, who had been on the department for over eight years, to the position of lieutenant,. The new chief and new lieutenant soon developed both a personal and professional relationship which would set the tone and expectations for career development and succession for the next 20 years. From the time the village hired its first four full time firefighters until his duty disability in 1990, this new lieutenant was the chief’s strongest supporter, sounding board, confidant, and heir-apparent. He carried over his lieutenant rank when he was hired as one of Libertyville’s first firefighters in

1970, was promoted to captain in 1971, assistant fire chief in 1975, and deputy chief in 1980. In all of these positions, he alone, of all full time personnel, held the highest rank beneath the chief. While even the concept of a formal succession plan was unlikely during the 1970s and 1980s, it was also unnecessary. It was clear to all members of the combination department, the village administration, and elected officials, who was second-in-command of the fire department regardless of his rank at the time. This established a widely acknowledged and unambiguous expectation of who would succeed the chief upon his retirement. Officers and men of the department necessarily adapted their own personal career development plans within this context and either deferred to the status quo or anticipated that aspirations to be a fire chief would have to be met in a department other than Libertyville. Throughout the 1980s, the department's three shifts were each led by an assistant chief who had responsibilities in either administration, operations, or support services, but outside these divisional specialities, they were nearly equal in terms of time-in-service, time-in-rank, and relative stature within the organization. By 1990, with all of the department's chief officers having between 17 and 21 years of experience with the department and each other, the operations of the department could best be characterized by the descriptive terms stability and routinization.

During the end of the 1980s, the chief began working on a plan to abandon the old downtown fire station which the department had occupied for the previous 50 years. Citing a need to improve response time in the quickly growing community, the chief sought to build two new fire stations on the north and south borders of the old central business district. In an effort to advance this station plan, the chief elicited the services of the department's fire marshal; the only daytime uniformed staff member other than himself and his deputy. The fire marshal, who had

joined the department in 1977 and was promoted to the position of lieutenant in 1988, was coincidentally working on his Masters Degree in Public Administration, and he incorporated the chief's station plan into his thesis. The resultant plan was hailed by the chief and resulted in the fire marshal being appointed to a newly created position of administrative assistant to the chief in October 1989. The plan was approved and work soon began on the construction of two new fire stations. Two months later, a sequence of events began that substantially changed the course of the department's succession expectations and shattered its stability.

In January 1990, the deputy chief began experiencing chest pains and soon underwent angioplasty. Two months later, a second angioplasty was performed, and then in May, he suffered a heart attack. By November 1990, the deputy chief, who was heir-apparent to the chief, was granted a duty disability pension. All the while the deputy chief was dealing with his medical maladies, the project management for the station construction program fell totally upon the fire marshal. By the time the two stations were occupied in early 1991, even though the chief had appointed the operations chief to temporarily fill the deputy's position, the fire marshal stature had risen to that of an assistant chief's. While the chief began preparing for a formal testing procedure for filling the deputy chief position, stability within the senior officer ranks decreased and competition increased. The succession expectation that had been established over the previous 20 years was shattered.

While the operations chief was filling the deputy chief position, the fire marshal was working as the chief's administrative assistant. A retired volunteer assistant fire chief was now a village board member and he openly challenged the need for a deputy chief. When the village failed to formally authorize the deputy chief's position in May 1991 during budget hearings,

even though everyone knew of this politically changed situation, a tension began to grow between the chief and the operations chief. The operations chief was being remunerated in the pay range of a deputy chief, occupied the deputy chief's office, and did the work of the deputy chief. He only lacked the formal recognition. When the May 1992 budget hearings failed to resolve the issue, the operations chief quit the assignment and returned to his shift. In response, the chief found it necessary to shift even more to the fire marshal who was working as the chief's administrative assistant.

Empowered by his new stature and tiring of his fire prevention bureau responsibilities, the fire marshal sought to be transferred out of the fire prevention bureau. Like the operations chief, the fire marshal began to resent the chief for being unable to affect this transfer. Eventually, this tension began to reflect in performance, and in March 1993, a businessman charged him with the use of profanity in the execution of his duties. He was immediately transferred out of the fire prevention bureau. Even though he received the transfer he wanted, his future advancement opportunities were adversely affected.

In some ways, the chief was without a close second-in-command for the first time in 24 years. While he began to re-establish ties with his administrative chief, he was more isolated in the department than he had ever been. Soon thereafter, on October 1994, he announced that he was retiring the following spring. Even though he endorsed his administrative chief, and sought to have him appointed early and without contest, the village chose to advertise for the position regionally. In addition to the administrative chief's application, the village also received applications from the operations chief, the fire marshal, and several outside candidates. The fire marshal failed to earn an interview while the two assistant chiefs were finalists. When the

administrative chief was eventually appointed to the chief's position in May 1995, the mayor frequently reiterated how the decision had been difficult and how close the candidates had been ranked. The scene was then set for the tumultuous transition. The operations chief and former fire marshal who held the rank of lieutenant did much to undermine the new chief's administration. Under their supervision, budgets were exceeded and programs, such as a model fitness-wellness initiative, became contentious. When the new chief demanded accountability and increased the oversight of the operations division, the operations chief began submitting resumes to neighboring departments. In September 1997, only two years after the department's transition began, the operations chief took a fire chief position of a volunteer department in a neighboring state. Less than a year later, in May 1998, the former fire marshal also took a fire chief position for a volunteer fire company. Both remained active in the "politics" of the Libertyville Fire Department, and proudly participated at-a-distance in a successful labor organizing effort. The ex-fire marshal even testified against the village in a subsequent unfair labor practice.

From late 1990, the acknowledged succession plan for the department had been shattered; two front-runners for succession had self-destructed, left the department, and helped to unionize its workforce; all in less than eight years. Today, the "new" chief is anticipating his own retirement, having served the village for over 28 years. Because he had witnessed and participated in the tumult of the last decade, the chief wishes to learn from these previous experiences and guide the department through this next transition.

This research project addresses the issue of succession planning as it applies to the Libertyville Fire Department. The failure to successfully plan for such a transition in the past

resulted in organizational dysfunction and ineffectiveness. By developing a succession plan, it is hoped that these maladies can be avoided as the current chief prepares for his retirement. This issue is presented, discussed, and analyzed in the Executive Leadership course given at the National Fire Academy. It is hoped that the information derived from this project will facilitate the development of a succession plan and help to propel the department into a successful transition as it begins the new millennium.

LITERATURE REVIEW

While there is general agreement regarding what constitutes succession and why planning for it is important, there is little agreement about what constitutes a succession plan and who is responsible for it. Succession is defined as the replacement of an incumbent manager by another new manager (Drazin, Rao, 1999). When succession involves the organization's leader, it can be a central event for that organization (Lauterbach, Vu, Weisberg, 1999), and preparation for it can be the CEO's greatest responsibility (Chief Executive, 1999). Succession is about maintaining organizational values and viability (Cheloha, 2000). This is perhaps the final legacy of a leader as (s)he guides the organization into the future (Lynn, 1999). Without a plan for succession, organizations may be vulnerable to both emotional and historic coalitions that can lead to dysfunctional competition and gridlock that can threaten management and leadership systems (Baudoin, Luehlfig, 1997). This can also lead to misconceptions, mistrust, and disruptions due to resignations and departures (Schultz, 1998). On the other hand, a good plan for succession can avoid executive and management "horse races", and actually provide motivation to employees which promotes retention of top talent (Schulz, 1998; Chief Executive, 1999). Succession planning will allow organizations to move forward even as problems arise

(Marshall, 1997). In fact, it is argued that companies which succeed over time have developed a culture of renewal which is shared throughout the organization (Chief Executive, 1999). The importance of succession planning is only exacerbated by disturbing demographic trends. It is reported that 20% of our country's largest firms will lose 40% or more of its top level talent in the next few years (Caudron, 1999; Byham, 1999). Moreover, because of early retirements, reorganization and flattened hierarchies, coupled with a previous decline in birth rates, there is expected to be a 15% decrease in the 35 to 44 year old cohort between 1999 and 2014 (Caudron, 1999; Byham, Beruch, 2000). Similarly, closely-held and family-held enterprises are expected to witness a majority of primary owners either retire or die by 2005, making succession planning crucial in this sector as well (Baudoin, Luehlfig, 1997). Therefore, succession is a critical event that can result in significant implications, either positive or negative, regarding an organization's performance, and possibly even its survival (White, Smith, Barnett, 1997). The question, therefore, is why succession is not planned for more often.

Some of the reasons that organizations fail to plan for succession are based in the psyche of the leader. Sometimes succession planning is viewed as an admission of one's own mortality (Fuller, 2000) or of the leader's vulnerability (Marshall, 1997). The leader may fear being overshadowed by his/her successor who could be perceived as more capable (Cheloha, 2000; Ward, Bishop, Sonnenfield, 1999). His/Her uniqueness and heroic legacy is threatened (Marshall, 1997). If a successor were available, the leader may not only fear becoming a lame duck, but also this could cause the fear that his/her position may be jeopardized by having a replacement available (Drazin, Rao, 1999; Carey, Ogden, 2000). For these and other reasons to be reported later, it is generally perceived that a higher authority than the leader must have the

ultimate responsibility for succession planning. In business, this responsibility generally rests with the board of directors (Marshall, 1997).

Traditional succession planning focuses on the individual (Byham, 1999). Individuals progressed through the organizational chart (Caudron, 1999), and slates of candidates were developed for promotions to the next level (Walker, 1998; Beeson, 1998). The outgoing leader would identify his/her successor from the top candidates, groom him/her for the position, and expect ratification by the board (Rock, 1998). The successor was likely a clone of the leader, at least in terms of values and approaches, and this second-in-command could be counted on to do the leader's day-to-day work (Henricks, 1998). Most successful managers have a strong number two, and together they constitute a leadership team (Clarke, 2000). However, even the best plans can go awry. The number two can die, become ill, retire, or leave the organization (Chief Executive, 1999). Even if number two remains to assume control, there is no guarantee that today's leader clone will do well in tomorrow's changing environment (Henricks, 1998). Indeed, traditional succession planning assumes consistent organizational strategies and structures with fixed jobs and the availability of vertical movement (Byham, 2000). However, times are changing and there are fewer traditional organizational charts and fewer long term stair-step promotional plans (Beeson, 2000; Caudron, 1999). We live in a faster paced environment and the rate of change forces organizations to aim at moving targets to meet customers' needs (Walker, 1998).

Because of the failure of traditional succession planning to meet the changing times, some organizations have emphasized self-initiated development instead of management driven programs (Walker, 1998). However, leaving leadership development solely to the individual

neither guarantees retention (because it engenders no loyalty), nor does it ensure that the competencies acquired will be consistent with organizational needs (Beeson, 1998). Just as an organization needs to develop a clear vision and a strategic plan, so too it must develop a recognition of the leadership competencies needed for the future (Fuller, 2000; Beeson, 2000; Buckner, Slavenski, 2000; Cohen, Jackson, 1998; Caudron, 1999). This process should involve the board or comparable governing body (Rock, 1998; Marshall, 1997). The leader and managers then assess the internal talent, establish talent pools, teach the competencies, and track accomplishments (Cohen, Jackson, 1998; Harris, 2000; Baatz, 1999; Beeson, 2000; Golden, 1998). Without a deep management pool, a modern succession plan will be inadequate (Grossman, 1999; Drury, 1998). In this type of succession planning, the leader develops the candidates, but the board chooses the new leader (Cheloha, 2000). When the process is extended to lower levels in the organization, it is often referred to as leadership development planning (Walker, 1998; Marshall, 1997; Stack, 1998) and is reported to assist in retaining future leaders (Byham, 1999; Beeson, 2000). Tools such as assessment centers and 360-degree reviews are done frequently and career development is fast-tracked (Byham, 2000).

In addition to the aforementioned demographics, there are formidable reasons why an organization should want to develop its internal candidates. Outside recruits often have a difficult time adapting to an organization's culture and their presence can compromise retention (Walker, 1998). The recruitment of an outsider can be more expensive, take more time, and is successful in only one-out-of-three candidates (Stack, 1998; Harris, 2000; Caudron, 1999). While it is not unusual for the organization to look at outside candidates to measure how their internal candidates stack up (Marshall, 1997; Rock, 1998), "going outside" is usually reserved

for situations when the organization is performing poorly (White, Smith, Barnett, 1997), or when the board is particularly worried about infighting, problems with disaffected managers, or avoiding a destructive internal “horse race” (Davis, 1999). Even in these latter situations, it is more advisable for the board to pro-actively set the tone and expectations for internal candidates that make it clear that candidates’ future opportunities depend on proper behavior following a succession event. (Davis, 1999). Simultaneously, they can seek to stroke the “ruffled feathers” of the unsuccessful internal candidates (Provost, 1999), and they can provide mentors to clearly communicate the value of resiliency and what is expected of them (Davis, 1999; Carey, Ogden, 2000).

In brief summary, the literature review uncovered references to the traditional succession planning that prevailed in Libertyville prior to 1990. When the successor was disabled, and the lack of planning led to competition and senior staff resignations, the literature suggests these events were both predictable and preventable. Finally, the description of modern succession planning prescribes avenues that need to be explored as the current chief plans his retirement. Hence, the literature helps to both describe the past and prescribe a future course that can help avoid previous pitfalls.

PROCEDURES

The first stage of the research for this project was a review of the literature on succession planning. The articles for this review were obtained in part from periodicals, books, and Executive Fire Officer (EFO) papers housed at the Learning Resource Center at the National Fire Academy. These resources were searched by this author during May 2000. Additional articles for this review were obtained from the InfoTrac 2000 Database. This is a computer database of

several hundred periodicals, magazines, and newspapers published from 1996 through October 2000. Access to InfoTrac 2000 was made through the internet access and subscription of the Cook Memorial Library in Libertyville, Illinois. At the same time, related books and articles were also obtained through this facility and its interlibrary loan provisions. The books and articles identified during these searches were reviewed for their applicability to the literature search and results section of this research project.

The second stage of the research procedure for this project was the development and administration of a survey to the fire chiefs of Lake County, Illinois. This diverse group constitutes the Libertyville fire chief's peer group and reflects the opinions of those chiefs of comparable organizational and regional culture. To develop the survey, the literature review of the first stage was used to generate important independent variables regarding succession planning. After subsequent survey questions were drafted, a panel of three, non-Lake County fire chiefs were asked to validate the survey. Following minor modifications based upon their comments, a final draft of the survey instrument was then submitted to the Lake County fire chiefs. Since most of the chiefs routinely communicate via e-mail, using Microsoft Word, the survey was sent in this format to 17 of them. These chiefs were directed to print the survey instrument, answer the questions, and fax the results to the Libertyville Fire Department. Since some questions contained personal information regarding an individual chief's retirement and succession plan, the availability of transmitting an anonymous fax was considered preferable to e-mail or post mark identifiers. Those 10 chiefs without e-mail were faxed a copy of the survey, and they were simply asked to fax their response back upon completion. Using this e-mail and fax distribution method, surveys were all transmitted and received by the respondents within less

than a two hour period, which helped to minimize interference with other factors. Additionally, both methods provided confirmation of successful transmission. Finally, it was anticipated that the use of the fax simplified and expedited responses compared to the use of mail. A copy of the survey instrument is provided in Appendix A. The grading form for the survey is provided in Appendix B. And finally, a compilation of all responses is offered in spreadsheet form in Appendix C.

There are several limitations with these procedures. First, while there is a reasonable expectation that e-mail surveys are received by those to whom they are intended, this is not necessarily the case with faxes. Even though e-mail is more likely to be opened by the addressee than regular mail, it is suspected that a fax is less so. Nevertheless, it is assumed that even the surveys faxed to chiefs were responded to by those chiefs. Second, there are problems with analysis that can be attributable to the small sample size. Substantive descriptive statistical measures are suspect. Third, and also related to sample size, the sample is not representative of fire chiefs in general. The sample did not constitute a comprehensive scientific database of fire chiefs, and the results must be interpreted with this in mind. Fourth, the instruments are short and close-ended. This encourages response from busy fire chiefs who see many surveys and must choose which to answer, which to hand-off to others, and which to ignore. However, simple and close-ended does not ensure the richness and diversity of responses which are likely available using different methodologies. Additionally, variables inferred from the literature concern private sector corporation CEOs or leaders of closely held or family run businesses, not public administrators nor fire chiefs. Hence, the measures may not be accurate and the evidence should be considered suggestive, not exhaustive. Indeed, when attempting to evaluate attitudes and

behaviors, multiple measures, and testing for convergence are always preferred to such simple instruments. In any case, it is believed that these procedures will be of value as an initial assessment that will assist the department to develop a succession plan. More rigorous evaluation will likely require a larger database and multi-variate regression techniques.

RESULTS

At the beginning of this research project, three research questions were identified. The results of the research are:

- 1) What information can succession planning literature or research offer regarding the planning needed by the Libertyville Fire Department?

Overwhelmingly, the literature supports the idea that the Libertyville Fire Department needs to engage in succession planning. Not only did the literature delineate the vulnerabilities that occur when there is no planning or insufficient planning, but it is also clear that if these steps are not taken, and not taken soon, some of the dysfunctions which began a decade ago could be revisited.

The literature also makes it clear that whatever it is called, succession planning needs to extend beyond the CEO, leader, or chief. Throughout the department, future leaders should be identified, pooled, and fast-tracked for advancement. This effort will assist in retention of talented employees and transfer the leadership competencies needed for the future.

Perhaps of most salience to the current situation in Libertyville, the literature is clear that more than the chief and chief officers must be involved. It is clear that decision-makers at the village level need to become involved. At the very least, the mayor, village board, and village administration need to be involved in departmental strategic planning. They need to be part of

the process of setting the department's vision and mission statements. It would be even more beneficial if these same people helped to determine the leadership and management competencies needed for the organization, and actively participate in the succession plan.

The literature, therefore, is rich in describing and prescribing what the state of succession planning has been and should be. It provides a valuable blueprint for the future.

- 2) Do other chiefs believe in or participate in succession planning, and if so, to what extent?

Despite the differences in the types and sizes of fire departments in the county, and despite the differences of tenure, their organizational setting and their proximity to retirement, the chiefs unanimously affirmed that such planning is viable and should be continued or at least attempted. In fact, 87.5% of respondents believe that planning to be a "very important" function, while the remaining 12.5% believe that it is "somewhat important". As a result, 83.3% are preparing people to take their position, while 16.7% are not. Of the total respondents, the majority 54% report preparing more than one person to take their place, while 29% are preparing a single candidate for their replacement. Only 17% are not preparing anyone to replace them. 41.66% of the chiefs surveyed utilize educational preparation, professional memberships, acting chief opportunities, and attendance at meetings to prepare their potential successors. Another 29% employ at least three of these activities. Summarily, 70% of all the chiefs surveyed actively participate in the preparation of their personnel that they plan to replace them. An additional 25% of the respondents reported that they would participate in at least three of the aforementioned activities, but the survey could not determine why they are not presently engaged in these activities.

- 3) Is succession planning the norm among area fire chiefs or are there variables that make such planning more/less desirable?

From the previous question, it was determined that while all chiefs in the survey feel that succession planning is important, 83.3% are actively preparing a potential successor. At this level of analysis it is quite apparent that succession planning is indeed the norm among the sample. Nevertheless, an attempt was made to correlate the belief in the importance of preparing a successor to a number of other variables. The results of Pearson's Correlation are offered in Table 1.

Pearson Correlation with #9 – Importance	
#1 – Department Size	-0.16496
#2 – Department Composition	-0.04729
#3 – Department Administration	0.16365
#4 – Chief's Longevity	-0.02143
#5 – Chief's Time to Retirement	0.52636
#6 – Chief's Type of Appointment	0.13456
#7 – Internal/External Candidacy	-0.07274
#8 – Previous Experience	-0.29277

Table 1.

As can be seen from Table 1, the variables cited have no correlation to a respondent's sense of the importance of succession planning. Next an attempt was made to correlate the act of preparing a succession candidate(s) to a number of other variables. The result of Pearson's Correlation is offered in Table 2.

Pearson's Correlation with #10 – Preparing a Successor	
#1 – Department Size	0.00000
#2 – Department Composition	-0.01865
#3 – Department Administration	-0.11547
#4 – Chief's Longevity	0.27896
#5 – Chief's Time to Retirement	-0.23355
#6 – Chief's Type of Appointment	0.05307
#7 – Internal/External Candidacy	0.01274
#8 – Previous Experience	0.0000

Table 2.

Again, it can be seen that the variables cited have no correlations to a respondent's active preparation of a successor.

DISCUSSION

The historical analysis in this research project suggested that the Libertyville Fire Department needed to develop a succession plan for its fire chief. Up until 1990, a traditional model (Byham, 1999) was used wherein the succession candidate, the deputy chief, worked side-by-side with the chief (Henricks, 1998) and together they formed a leadership team (Clark, 2000). When the chief was to retire, his second-in-command was the only choice for his replacement (Rock, 1998). When the deputy chief was stricken with a heart attack and became disabled, this plan went terribly awry (Chief Executive, 1999). For political reasons, the chief was unable to appoint a replacement. Because the chief was planning to retire soon, and the traditional model takes years to effect (Henricks, 1998), this failure to appointment was only

partially responsible for the problems that ensued. A “horse race” scenario developed (Davis, 1999) with the evolution of emotional and shift-oriented coalitions (Baudoin, Luehlfling, 1997), and a growing sense that succession was a zero-sum game. When one internal candidate eventually attained the fire chief position, two other internal candidates retired within a couple of years (Schultz, 1998). Had a plan been in place, it is possible that the “horse race” might have been avoided all together (Chief Executive, 1999), but if not, at least the “ruffled feathers” of the unsuccessful candidates could have been stroked (Provost, 1999).

As the current chief contemplates his own retirement, there is a recognition of the dysfunctional aspects of the previous plan and the subsequent period when no plan was in force. The implications of the literature are clear. The Libertyville Fire Department should develop a modern succession plan at least for the chief’s position. A new plan should be based upon leadership competencies that are locally determined (Beeson, 2000). Input for this determination should involve village administration and elected officials (Rock, 1998; Marshall, 1997), and these competencies should be shared with the chief and chief officers. A talent pool should be established with opportunities for training, mentoring, and increased responsibility (Cohen, Jackson, 1998). Accomplishments of these individuals need to be closely tracked (Baatz, 1999). When the time comes, there should be an adequate pool of candidates for a board appointment (Cheloba, 2000) who will be prepared to continue the mission and vision of the organization (Lynne, 1999).

The study demonstrates that the vast majority of neighboring departments throughout the county are preparing at least one member of their department to succeed their chief. Opportunities in education, professional associations, attendance at meetings, and acting chief

assignments are common. The literature and the neighbors agree; succession planning is an important function that must be addressed (Lynne, 1999).

RECOMMENDATION

Through both the literature search and the evaluative analysis conducted in the project, a number of recommendations can be suggested that could improve the department's ability to draft a succession plan.

First, the chief needs to involve his superiors in the succession process. He needs to stress the importance of this process not only in its generalities, but also in the specifics of his personal retirement plans. The latter point should add the sense of urgency needed to ensure their attention to this process. Since the village board is traditionally involved at the end of the selection process, the chief should prepare a written report that would clearly delineate a program that would outline new responsibilities and the rationale behind them. Much of the information needed for this report is available within this research project.

Second, the chief should meet with his senior officer staff and selected members of his junior officer staff who might feel they would qualify for his position. This meeting should, at least in general terms, outline the chief's plan and the anticipated process that would lead to his replacement. During this meeting, it should be made absolutely clear that "horse race" or coalition-building responses would be dysfunctional and could lead the board to seek an outside candidate. Additionally, the chief should encourage team-building, stress the value of each member to the organization, and encourage each to understand that while only one can be promoted to the retiring chief's position, there are additional opportunities ahead for each of them. It would be helpful if the village administrator reinforced these points either by attending

the chief's meeting with staff, a separate meeting with staff, or via written documentation.

Hopefully, this combined effort would result in less dysfunctional behavior and would promote staff retention. Third, the chief should prepare a written plan which delineates to his staff the leadership competencies which the village believes are important for the successful candidate. Also in this plan should be recommendations for activities which could aid in professional development. These activities should be available to all in the talent pool. Fourth, the chief and village administration should mentor the candidates during the transition period. Even after the new chief is hired, not only the successful candidate, if chosen from the pool, but also the unsuccessful candidates should continue to be mentored to enhance acceptance and support.

In closing, it should be noted that even though the Libertyville Fire Department has had its problems with succession in the past, there is no reason that the same problems should reoccur. Modern succession planning is a process that pro-actively remediates succession dilemmas and promotes organizational stability. It is a process that the department, and the village, should embrace.

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Appendix A

Fire Chief Survey

Directions: Please “print” this survey, complete, and fax to 847-362-8829. Thank you.

- 1) What is the size of your Fire Department?
 - 1) Less than 20
 - 2) 21 - 40
 - 3) 41 - 60
 - 4) More than 60
- 2) Which best describes your Fire Department composition:
 - 1) All Volunteer/POC
 - 2) Combination; more than $\frac{1}{2}$ POC
 - 3) Combination; more than $\frac{1}{2}$ Paid
 - 4) All Paid (sworn) personnel
- 3) Your Department is administered by:
 - 1) Village/Town/City
 - 2) Fire Protection District
 - 3) Federal Agency
 - 4) Other _____
- 4) How many years have you been Chief of your current Fire Department?
 - 1) Less than 5 years
 - 2) 5 to 10 years
 - 3) More than 10 years
- 5) How long do you reasonably expect to remain Chief of your current Department?
 - 1) Less than 1 year
 - 2) 1 to 3 years
 - 3) 4 to 6 years
 - 4) More than 6 years

- 6) When you were selected for your current position, were you:
- 1) Elected by Department Officers
 - 2) Appointed by City Manager/Village Administration
 - 3) Appointed by Elected/Appointed Official
(i.e., Mayor, District Trustee, etc.)
 - _____ Other
- 7) When you were promoted to your current Chief's position, were you an:
- _____ Internal Candidate
 - _____ External Candidate
- 8) Before you became a Chief, did a supervisor of yours have a plan for his/her replacement?
- _____ Yes
 - _____ No
 - _____ Don't Know
- 8a) If you answered "yes" to Question #8, were you personally included in this plan?
- _____ Yes
 - _____ No
 - _____ Don't Know
 - _____ N/A
- 8b) If you answered "yes" to Question #8a, do you feel that this plan played a significant role in your advancement to the position of Chief?
- _____ Yes
 - _____ No
 - _____ N/A
- 9) Do you believe it is important to prepare personnel to take your place when you leave your current position?
- _____ Not Important
 - _____ Somewhat Important
 - _____ Very Important
- 10) Are you preparing any people to take your position?
- _____ Yes
 - _____ No (If no, go to Question #14)

- 11) If you answered “yes” to Question #10, how many? _____
- 12) If you answered “yes” to Question #10, are any of these people from outside your organization?
- _____ Yes
_____ No
- 13) If you answered “yes” to Question #10, have you discussed this plan with:
- a) The person(s) who you plan to succeed you?
- _____ Yes
_____ No
- b) Your supervisor?
- _____ Yes
_____ No
- 14) Which of the following are you currently doing, or would do, to prepare someone to take your place? (Check all that apply)
- | | <u>Current</u> | <u>Would do</u> | <u>Question</u> |
|----|----------------|-----------------|--|
| a) | _____ | _____ | Educational Opportunities
(Incl classes, certifications, symposia, conferences) |
| b) | _____ | _____ | Professional memberships in Chiefs Associations |
| c) | _____ | _____ | Acting Chief Opportunities |
| d) | _____ | _____ | Attendance at meetings with your peers, supervisors,
or elected officials |
| e) | _____ | _____ | There is not a Chief’s plan for developing successors |
| f) | _____ | _____ | Other. Please explain. |

15) This survey is essentially complete. Your participation is deeply appreciated.

Even if you have not given this topic of developing your successor much thought,

a) Do you think such planning is viable?

☐ Yes

☐ No

b) Will you attempt/continue such planning

☐ Yes

☐ No

Thank you for your cooperation.

Appendix B

Fire Chief Survey Score Sheet

Directions: Please “print” this survey, complete, and fax to 847-362-8829. Thank you.

1) What is the size of your Fire Department?

Score:

- 1 ☐ Less than 20
- 2 ☐ 21 - 40
- 3 ☐ 41 - 60
- 4 ☐ More than 60

2) Which best describes your Fire Department composition:

Score:

- 1 ☐ All Volunteer/POC
- 2 ☐ Combination; more than ½ POC
- 3 ☐ Combination; more than ½ Paid
- 4 ☐ All Paid (sworn) personnel

3) Your Department is administered by:

Score:

- 1 ☐ Village/Town/City
- 2 ☐ Fire Protection District
- 3 ☐ Federal Agency
- 4 ☐ Other _____

4) How many years have you been Chief of your current Fire Department?

Score:

- 1 ☐ Less than 5 years
- 2 ☐ 5 to 10 years
- 3 ☐ More than 10 years

5) How long do you reasonably expect to remain Chief of your current Department?

Score:

- 1 ☐ Less than 1 year
- 2 ☐ 1 to 3 years
- 3 ☐ 4 to 6 years
- 4 ☐ More than 6 years

6) When you were selected for your current position, were you:

Score:

- 1 ☐ Elected by Department Officers
- 2 ☐ Appointed by City Manager/Village Administration
- 3 ☐ Appointed by Elected/Appointed Official
(i.e., Mayor, District Trustee, etc.)
- 4 ☐ Other

7) When you were promoted to your current Chief's position, were you an:

Score:

- 1 ☐ Internal Candidate
- 2 ☐ External Candidate

8) Before you became a Chief, did a supervisor of yours have a plan for his/her replacement?

Score:

- 1 ☐ Yes
- 2 ☐ No
- 0 ☐ Don't Know

8a) If you answered "yes" to Question #8, were you personally included in this plan?

Score:

- 1 ☐ Yes
- 2 ☐ No
- 3 ☐ Don't Know
- 0 ☐ N/A

8b) If you answered "yes" to Question #8a, do you feel that this plan played a significant role in your advancement to the position of Chief?

Score:

- 1 ☐ Yes
- 2 ☐ No
- 0 ☐ N/A

9) Do you believe it is important to prepare personnel to take your place when you leave your current position?

Score:

- 1 ☐ Not Important
- 2 ☐ Somewhat Important
- 3 ☐ Very Important

10) Are you preparing any people to take your position?

Score:

1 ☐ Yes

2 ☐ No (If no, go to Question #14)

11) If you answered "yes" to Question #10, how many? _____

12) If you answered "yes" to Question #10, are any of these people from outside your organization?

Score:

1 ☐ Yes

2 ☐ No

13) If you answered "yes" to Question #10, have you discussed this plan with:

a) The person(s) who you plan to succeed you?

Score:

1 ☐ Yes

2 ☐ No

b) Your supervisor?

Score:

1 ☐ Yes

2 ☐ No

14) Which of the following are you currently doing, or would do, to prepare someone to take your place? (Check all that apply)

	<u>Current</u>	<u>Would do</u>	<u>Question</u>
Score:			
a)	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	Educational Opportunities (Incl classes, certifications, symposia, conferences)
b)	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	Professional memberships in Chiefs Associations
c)	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	Acting Chief Opportunities
d)	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	Attendance at meetings with your peers, supervisors, or elected officials
e)	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	There is not a Chief's plan for developing successors
f)	1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	Other. Please explain.

15) This survey is essentially complete. Your participation is deeply appreciated.

Even if you have not given this topic of developing your successor much thought,

a) Do you think such planning is viable?

Score:

1 ☐ Yes

2 ☐ No

b) Will you attempt/continue such planning

Score:

1 ☐ Yes

2 ☐ No

Thank you for your cooperation.

Appendix C

Responses to Succession Survey - Lake County Fire Departments - 2000

Question Number >>

Dept.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	8a	8b	9	10	11	12	13a	13b	14a	14b	14c	14d	14e	14f	15a	15b
1	1	2	4	2	4	4	1	1	0	0	3	1	1	2	1	1	1	2	1	1	0	0	1	1
2	2	4	2	1	4	3	1	2	0	0	3	1	3	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	0	0	1	1
3	3	3	2	2	4	3	1	2	0	0	3	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	2	1	0	0	1	1
4	3	2	2	3	2	3	1	2	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	2	2	1	2	1	0	1	1
5	2	1	1	3	3	3	1	0	0	0	3	2	0	0	0	0	2	2	2	2	0	0	1	1
6	4	4	1	2	1	3	1	2	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1
7	3	1	2	2	2	4	1	1	1	1	3	1	1	2	1	2	2	1	1	1	0	0	1	1
8	4	2	4	2	4	4	1	2	2	2	3	1	3	2	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	1
9	4	2	2	2	4	3	2	2	0	0	3	1	2	2	1	2	1	2	1	1	0	0	1	1
10	3	3	2	3	2	3	1	2	0	0	3	1	3	2	2	2	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1
11	3	1	2	3	3	1	1	2	0	0	3	1	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	1	0	1	1
12	3	4	1	3	4	2	2	2	0	0	3	1	3	2	1	1	1	2	1	1	0	0	1	1
13	2	2	1	1	2	3	1	1	1	1	3	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1
14	3	2	1	2	4	3	2	0	0	0	3	1	4	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1
15	3	3	1	3	3	3	1	2	0	0	3	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1
16	4	3	1	1	4	3	1	1	1	1	3	1	3	2	2	2	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1
17	3	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	0	0	2	1	1	2	2	2	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1
18	4	4	1	3	2	2	2	1	0	0	3	1	2	2	2	2	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1
19	3	3	2	3	4	3	2	2	0	0	3	2	0	0	0	0	1	2	2	2	0	0	1	1
20	2	3	4	3	3	4	1	2	0	0	3	1	2	2	1	1	1	1	2	2	0	0	1	1
21	4	2	1	3	2	3	1	1	1	2	3	1	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1
22	3	1	1	3	2	3	1	2	0	0	3	1	3	2	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	1
23	3	3	2	2	4	3	1	1	1	1	3	1	3	2	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	1
24	3	4	1	1	3	2	1	1	2	0	3	1	1	2	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1