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ERIE COUNTY LEGISLATURE
HON. LYNNE DIXON
LEGISLATOR

R+F

February 7, 2012

Hon. Robert M. Graber
Clerk of the Legislature
Legislative Chambers
92 Franklin Street
Buffalo, New York 14202

RE: Responses regarding Comptroller qualifications

Dear Clerk Graber:

Earlier this month I wrote dozens of accounting and financial professionals, as well as several County Comptroller's in comparable counties, to get their opinion on what qualifications we should be seeking in the eventual appointee to fill the vacancy in our Comptroller's Office.

Attached, please find the responses I have received thus far.

Sincerely,

LYNNE M. DIXON
Erie County Legislator
District 9

3E-10

From: Dan Tirone [dan@manageyourbooks.com]
Sent: Saturday, February 04, 2012 2:10 PM
To: Dixon, Hon. Lynne
Subject: Vacancy in the Office of the Erie County Comptroller

Dear Legislator Dixon:

Thank you for requesting my input as to the attributes for a successful Erie County Comptroller. I am a certified public accountant and have practiced for thirty years in Western New York. I have delivered considerable services to numerous municipalities in Erie County and I also serve on the Erie County Audit Committee.

The Erie County Comptroller must have a strong understanding of financials and the ability to read, interpret and deliver financial information in a knowledgeable informed manner. However, he does not need to understand all of the nuances of the bookkeeping and auditing process. People with that specific mechanical knowledge can be hired or are already employed in the Comptroller's office.

Key to success is the understanding of the data with the ability to convey to the Legislature, the Executive and the public at large a clear and concise understanding of the information. Wikipedia defines politics as "a process where groups of people make collective decisions". A successful Comptroller needs to be more, much more than an accountant and is valueless if their only skills are those of a politician. The individual must be capable of making reasoned, thoughtful, compelling arguments for solid finance; which requires knowledge and skill of both financials and people.

The County needs that perfect blend of politician and serious, capable finance professional. The successful individual should know inherently when to be the politician and when to be the finance professional.

A Comptroller who has all the financial background but cannot make compelling arguments to follow the best path is just as dangerous as the Comptroller who does not understand the financials and only makes the political argument.

Thanks for the opportunity and best of luck with a hard decision.

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Westfield, New York 14787

Fiume, Bryan

From: Dixon, Hon. Lynne
Sent: Tuesday, February 07, 2012 9:56 AM
To: Fiume, Bryan
Subject: FW: qualifications to fill vacancy

From: Campbell, Cassandra [Ccampbel@ci.new-rochelle.ny.us]
Sent: Tuesday, February 07, 2012 9:26 AM
To: Dixon, Hon. Lynne
Subject: qualifications to fill vacancy

Hello Lynne Dixon,

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to comment on this important decision.

Here is what I feel are essential qualifications:
Select the person with the **most** experience in these areas:

- An understanding of municipal government policies that extends to knowledge in development policy; budgeting; assessment/tax collection and self-funded projects, i.e.; railroad, parking and workers compensation funds.
- A temperament that allows for high level of competency and is supportive of adhering to sound, and established fiscal policy. A leadership style that is demonstrated by a patient, even-tempered, analytical presence.
- This person need not be a CPA, but must have a Master's degree, in finance or related; public administration or business.

Good luck in your selection process,

Sincerely,

Cassandra Campbell
BA, MPA, Adv. Graduate Degree Certificate - Public Accounting
Budget Analyst
The City of New Rochelle - Finance Department
914-654-2061
ccampbel@ci.new-rochelle.ny.us

Fiume, Bryan

From: Fiume, Bryan
Sent: Monday, February 06, 2012 1:55 PM
To: Kroll, Scott
Subject: FW: another comptroller reponse

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Bryan Fiume | Chief of Staff - Republican Caucus
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P:(716) 858-4745 | F:(716) 858-8818
Bryan.Fiume@erie.gov

From: Dixon, Hon. Lynne
Sent: Monday, February 06, 2012 1:46 PM
To: Fiume, Bryan
Subject: FW: another comptroller reponse

From: Timpano, Joe [jtimpano@ocgov.net]
Sent: Monday, February 06, 2012 11:45 AM
To: Dixon, Hon. Lynne
Subject:

Dear Ms. Dixon. I received your letter this morning re: the Erie County Comptroller's vacancy. Halfway through the letter, I thought you were recruiting me,,,ha ha. To answer your specific question re: qualifications, the most important attribute is municipal financial experience! Prior to becoming County Comptroller in late 1998, I was the town comptroller of the largest town in Oneida County for over 8 years and a deputy county comptroller for about 2 years. These 10 years of experience greatly facilitated my transition to Comptroller, as I was easily able to discuss issues confidently w/ our county legislators. Since Erie County has an elected comptroller, as Oneida County does, having someone "electable" must be a BIG part of the equation, too! Good luck in your search. I hope my few words of "wisdom" were helpful. All the best. Joe Timpano, Oneida County Comptroller.

Kroll, Scott

From: Dixon, Hon. Lynne
Sent: Friday, February 10, 2012 1:16 PM
To: Kroll, Scott
Subject: FW: comptroller position

Scott,

Here is the latest response...

From: Dixon, Hon. Lynne
Sent: Friday, February 10, 2012 11:27 AM
To: Fiume, Bryan
Subject: comptroller position

Bryan,

The following is a voice mail left to me by Mike Connors, one of the professionals we sent a letter to asking for their input on the comptroller position.

"The most important thing you can have for a comptroller is to have someone with independence. The other things: a natural sense of curiosity, healthy suspicion, someone who understands the process, and has some kind of financial background so they're going to be comfortable with the numbers, someone who is able to stand up under a lot of pressure. You need someone who is going to be a financial umpire for you.

I hope that you will hold tough.....and get somebody good...The worst thing you can have is a puppet comptroller."