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Office of Mayor Miro Weinberger

# MEMORANDUM

TO: City Council

FROM: Mayor Miro Weinberger

DATE: May 28, 2019

RE: Appointment of the Community and Economic Development Office Director

I respectfully submit for your consideration and approval Luke McGowan as the next Director of the Community and Economic Development Office (CEDO) for the City of Burlington. Luke emerged as an outstanding candidate from an extensive national search with more than 30 applicants from Vermont and across the country.

**Overview**

Luke will bring many strengths to the CEDO Director role, including:

* Extensive experience as both a public sector and private sector manager;
* Track record of successfully bringing diverse groups together to accomplish important goals; and
* Background working to help small businesses and entrepreneurs succeed.

**Background**

Luke started his career as a community organizer for the Obama primary campaign in Iowa in 2007. He then served as a Regional Field Director in Northern Virginia during the general election in 2008. After the successful election, he served in the Obama Administration, first as a writer for Vice President Joe Biden and later in a leadership position in the White House Office of Legislative Affairs. In these roles, Luke built coalitions, worked with many partners, and managed large teams. He worked on a diverse set of issues including climate change and energy policy, health care reform, and the repeal of Don’t Ask Don’t Tell.

Luke then moved to the private sector, where he helped to build Thumbtack, a San Francisco-based startup that supports hundreds of thousands of entrepreneurs and small businesses. Luke managed the growth of Thumbtack’s small business customer base, worked with large teams to implement new features, and collaborated with mayors and governors around the country to support small business owners.

When he moved to Vermont, Luke launched his own consulting company, Dirt Road Consulting, which helps businesses and nonprofits grow and reach new potential. During this time, he also served as the U.S.-based venture partner for Mustard Seed, a social and environmental impact venture fund.

Luke moved to Vermont to be closer to family, and currently lives in the Upper Valley with his wife and one-year-old son. He attended Columbia University and holds a Master’s in Public Administration from the Harvard University Kennedy School of Government.

**Search Process for the New CEDO Director**

Before beginning the process, I met with CEDO staff, City staff, and community stakeholders to help determine what was needed in our next CEDO Director. Historically, the CEDO Director has spent considerable time negotiating and managing our large City projects and public-private partnerships, like the Moran redevelopment, CityPlace Burlington, Community Sailing Center, 194 Saint Paul Street, and more.

Going forward, my goal is for the CEDO Director to be more focused on engaging external community partners, and supporting the CEDO Department, its staff, and its wide variety of operational programs. This prioritization guided our search decisions, and, as we have discussed during the CEDO budget session earlier in May, has informed the proposal to create a new Assistant Director of Community Works that we will be working on with the Council in the months ahead.

For this search, we were specifically looking for someone who could support and manage CEDO and its broad set of responsibilities, which include housing policies, economic development and job training initiatives, social service programs and the City’s homelessness initiatives, diversity and equity initiatives, community justice, and several mature federally funded grant programs, including the LEAD program, the City’s AmeriCorps program, and the Community Development Block Grants.

The search began in February 2019. The process included:

* Posting the position locally, state-wide, and nationally, as well as targeting diverse communities and conducting supplemental recruitment efforts through the Mayor’s Office;
* Reviewing resumes that met the minimum requirements and initial interviews of both Vermont and out-of-state candidates by a search committee, which included:
	+ Kim Anderson, Director of Communications at the Community Health Centers of Burlington
	+ Patrick Brown, Director of the Greater Burlington Multicultural Resource Center
	+ Will Clavelle, CEDO Economic Development Specialist
	+ Rachel Jolly, CEDO Assistant Director, Community Justice Center
	+ Neale Lunderville, former Interim Director of CEDO
	+ Deanna Paluba, Director of Human Resources
	+ Brian Pine, Ward 3 City Councilor
	+ Jordan Redell, Mayor’s Chief of Staff
* Interviewing two finalist candidates recommended by the search committee; and
* Inviting Luke for a third round of interviews in Burlington, which included meetings with the CEDO Leadership Team, Department Heads, and representatives from the Greater Burlington YMCA, Family Room, Community Sailing Center, Vermont Housing Finance Agency, AALV, Lake Champlain Regional Chamber of Commerce, and Burlington Business Association.

At the conclusion of the search, Luke’s passion for community organizing, experience with team building, and support for small businesses and economic development demonstrated that he was an excellent fit for this position.

**CEDO Strategic Plan**

Recently, CEDO underwent a strategic planning process and staff wrote a vision statement for the Department: “Our vision is to make Burlington the most livable, just, and connected community in America by empowering individual voices in the life of our city, fostering healthy neighborhoods and housing choice, and advancing people-centered development.”

The plan was developed by current CEDO employees in collaboration with former Interim CEDO Director Neale Lunderville. Before his departure, Neale shared with the Council a potential modest re-organization of the Department and a proposal to add new resources to the Department. Luke’s extensive experience collaborating with and organizing stakeholders and partners makes him well positioned to implement this plan. I am confident that Luke is the right person to reenergize the nimble and entrepreneurial spirit of CEDO’s heyday and support the Department’s talented and hardworking employees.

**Building on Past Success at CEDO**

Luke will lead a department with many recent successes, including:

* Building public-private partnerships, including the new 194 St. Paul Street Champlain College housing, the newly build Community Sailing Center, the Burlington Harbor Marina;
* Rebuilding the Northern Waterfront and Skate Park;
* Expanding our youth programs, including creating the City Hall Internship and the My Brother’s Keeper programs; and
* Administering $500,000 of entrepreneurial support grants funded by the Kauffman Foundation to Mercy Connections, Center for Women and Enterprise, Generator, and the Lake Champlain Regional Chamber of Commerce.

The department also has ambitious future goals, including:

* Implementing its recently developed strategic plan, with the vision of making Burlington the most livable, just, and connected community in America by empowering individual voices in the life of our City, fostering healthy neighborhoods and housing choice, and advancing people-centered development;
* Embedding a comprehensive, citywide civic engagement strategy into all departmental initiatives;
* Boosting the Housing Trust Fund to strengthen low- and middle- income housing efforts;
* Sparking construction of accessory dwelling units through the reduction of regulatory barriers;
* Redeveloping the Moran plant into a public park; and
* Seeking partnerships with organizations and businesses to advance social equity in the community.

**Next Steps**

Further details of Luke’s career can be found in his attached resume. Following the Council’s confirmation, I intend to place Luke at Step 5 of the CEDO Director pay scale for an annual compensation of $109,030. If confirmed by the City Council on June 3, Luke will be able to start on July 8. Luke and his family plan to relocate to Burlington to meet the residency requirement for this position.

Thank you for your consideration.