

## 7-28-2022 Director's Report (Including Planning, RLF, etc.)

As anticipated Alexis has left a decent size whole to fill, but both the housing and planning staff are doing an exceptionally good job covering things and stepping into more prominent roles. All of our projects are moving forward, though some new projects we have given later start dates to the clients than we might normally just to make sure that we are in a good place and not overwhelmed more than we already are. A major step forward happened this week when we hired Ashley Hayes as a new community development specialist. Ashley is going to be a great asset. She comes to us having most recently worked in the mental health field (not bad training for working here) and has also served on the Atlantic city council and previously worked for the Atlantic Chamber of Commerce as well as the Atlantic schools. All good preparatory work for the types of things we do here. We'll get her more integrated into projects in the coming weeks as she gets trained up and you'll begin to see her more and more in the community. I have been asked a lot by folks that with Alexis gone who should they contact if they have a new project and you can always contact me, but Dani, Tammy, and Leslie are all more than capable of taking in that info and we work together to determine who is the best fit to move a project forward.

We are still looking to hire a grants specialist in our housing department. As our lead program builds up and the new construction homes due to the flood start to become a reality, we'll need that extra capacity. As everyone knows hiring is very difficult right now, and we have not found the right person yet. Lately our issue has been getting our own staff together in order to conduct interviews. We've had folks out due to illness and this of course is prime vacation season. It isn't a rushed need, but we need to get it sorted out and filled sooner rather than later.

I mention illness and Covid is again causing staffing issues for us. I am of the mind that we'll see flare ups and then periods of relative inactivity related to Covid for the foreseeable future. As part of our quarantine/isolation policy we do still provide quarantine leave for folks who have to be home and are too ill to work or their jobs can't be done from home. We have two out on that now. I have pegged that leave to the existing public health emergency declaration, which was extended by the US Department of Health and Human Services into October. Should/when that be lifted then Covid would become a normal sick leave situation but for now we do treat it as its own leave, and I don't need folks sick with Covid working in the office or on buses.

CJ's departure from the communications coordinator position to work for a political campaign has also left a void at a very in-opportune time. CJ was doing a lot of good things that I don't want to see falter. He proved the value of the position, and I have reached out to some people that I think would be good fits for the job and expressed interest before but they are not available now. I know it's not something I can keep up with on my own, but it is something that needs to be the right person. Alternatively, I am considering the possibility of contracting the marketing aspect of the position to a firm (no specific firm at this moment). Bottom line is that it's an important role that needs to be filled, but I am evaluating all options at this time.

In line with communications, I'm happy to announce that after more than a year of work and annoying delays, the [www.swita.com](http://www.swita.com) website is now up and live. This is a major improvement over the SWITA pages that were under the [www.swipco.org](http://www.swipco.org) website. The SWIPCO website of course still exists and have info on SWITA, but will be more focuses on community

development/housing—the stuff people think of under the umbrella of “SWIPCO” instead of SWITA. It was always confusing to transit clients to be referred to swipco.org, and the swita.com address is going to be much, much easier to communicate. But, with all things new it is going to take us a little while to get used to the site and on how to edit it as needed. We are promoting it for our school transportation registrations, but aren’t making a big splash about the new site for other transit things until we get more used to it. Once we are good with it, we’ll go back to the swipco.org website and tailor it more to the other services we provide.

Keep in mind that our annual meeting will be in Clarinda this year on September 22. We will start in the morning with a tour of projects around Clarinda at 9am, lunch at noon, and annual report/awards to follow with a short business meeting. Please attend. We work hard on it.

In line with our plan that we put forward after our initial bidding on the building renovation and addition failed to get good bids. We have been soliciting estimates from contractors to do the restroom work and shop office/restroom rehab work as separate, smaller projects. Phil in our office is handling this and we anticipate having estimates ready at the August board meeting to take action on. Also, the architects have reworked the building addition plan and that has gone out to the plan rooms, various contractors, and to the Atlantic paper with bids due August 18, with a public hearing at the August 25 board meeting and hopefully action to award bids. It is extremely important that we have a quorum and good board representation at that meeting.

Finally, a few more very good things to pass along. We have already mentioned that the Governor Ray Center has made us their Iowa “Organization of Character” for 2022. They had a film crew here earlier in the month and tomorrow night several staff, myself, and Todd as board chair will go to Des Moines for a recognition dinner and to be presented with the actual award. The Ray Center is also going to do an event here, and right now that is planned to coincide with our October board meeting. A lot can happen between now and then, but the tentative plan is that Governor Reynolds may give the presentation and Senator Grassley has expressed interest in presenting as well as have Representatives Axne and Feenstra. That’ll be a great recognition for what all we do. Also, I’m not officially allowed to announce this until August 8<sup>th</sup> when there will be a big thing in Des Moines, but we have been designated by the Des Moines Register as an Iowa Top Workplace for 2022. This is a reflection of the results of a survey we did of staff this spring and I think is not only a good thing to be able to pass onto existing employees, but will be included in our recruitment efforts in the future.