



CITY OF NEW HAVEN
JUSTIN ELICKER
MAYOR

CITY HALL

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January 11, 2024

Hon. Tyisha Walker Myers
President, New Haven Board of Alders
City of New Haven
165 Church Street
New Haven, CT 06510

RE: Executive Management Position of Emergency Management Director

Dear Honorable President Walker-Myers:

The retirement of Emergency Management Director Rick Fontana will leave a significant vacancy in a critical position within the city. To address this vacancy, and to address the statutory requirement of appointing a permanent Emergency Management Director (EMD), the Chief Administrator's Office is **requesting the creation of an executive management position as an Emergency Management Director for the City of New Haven.** Then Deputy Director Fontana was appointed to the role of the City's Emergency Management Director, following a stipulated agreement executed between Mayor Harp and AFSCME Local 3144 in 2018. While the labor agreement allowed for Mr. Fontana to perform additional duties beyond the duties of the Deputy Director with some additional compensation, it did not address the state's requirement of the appointing of EMD's to follow the sunset of this labor agreement.

Pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes Section 28-7(b) which outlines the legal authorities and responsibilities of local government in an emergency, the duties and powers of a municipal CEO require the appointing of the local Emergency Management Director.

To fulfill this requirement in the past, **the City of New Haven named the Chief Administrative Officer as the EMD; the day-to-day duties and responsibilities of the role would then be assumed by the Deputy Emergency Management Director.** With the retirement of Deputy Director Fontana effective February 1, 2024, a vacancy arises allowing the City the greater flexibility and expediency in hiring a qualified, professional candidate for the position. The City needs, and is required to have, a dedicated, full-time, professional Emergency Management Director.

Situated along the I-95 corridor, New Haven is a major transportation hub hosting critical infrastructure such as the Union Station and Tweed-New Haven Airport. The city's prominence as

a cultural and academic center, with Yale University at its core, adds to its appeal as a potential target for terrorism. A professional Emergency Management Director would bring specialized expertise to assess these specific risks, formulate tailored response plans, and coordinate with federal, state, and local agencies to enhance our city's security.

Moreover, New Haven's coastal location exposes it to the escalating threats posed by hurricanes, exemplified by the impacts of past storms like Hurricane Irene and Superstorm Sandy. New Haven is no stranger to severe winter blizzards, placing strain on essential services and infrastructure. With climate change intensifying these weather events, a dedicated Director would be instrumental in implementing proactive measures to mitigate the risks associated with extreme weather conditions, safeguarding both lives and infrastructure. A dedicated Emergency Management Director would ensure that our city is well-prepared for these weather challenges, coordinating resources effectively and implementing strategies to mitigate the impact on our residents. Residents and businesses deserve better, and the state requires more than the City has done in the past.

The City is asking for the position as executive management placed in range 8, which carries a maximum salary of \$146,000, although the City will not be advertising the position to the maximum salary level. The salary of \$128,000 has been budgeted, which will be commensurate with the competitive salaries with the emergency management profession and based upon the level of experience expected from any newly hired EMD. The requested salary for the position will be covered by lapse salaries within the Chief Administrator's Officer, Department 132. Upon passage the City will initiate the hiring process and select the most qualified candidate.

With the vacancy in the position as of February 1, 2024, I strongly urge you to prioritize the creation of the Emergency Management Director for the City. This investment is crucial to fortify New Haven's resilience against these multifaceted threats and to demonstrate our commitment to the safety and security of our community.

Sincerely,

Regina Y. Rush-Kittle
Chief Administrative Officer