



# **Executive Search Services Proposal** **Town of Holden Beach, NC**

**Town Manager**



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**TO:** The Honorable Board of Commissioners,  
Town of Holden Beach

**FROM:** Jeff Hale, MA, SHRM-CP, CHRM   
Associate, Mercer Group Associates

**RE:** Town Manager - Executive Search Proposal

**DATE:** January 22, 2025

LocalGov HR Solutions dba **Mercer Group Associates** is pleased to submit a proposal to assist the Town of Holden Beach with a search for a new Town Manager. Mercer Group Associates has extensive experience in conducting management level searches for local governments, authorities, and governing boards in North Carolina, the southeast, and across the country. We are a consortium of professional consultants with specialized government experience, education, and training. We provide executive search and management services nationwide, but with a significant focus on serving the southeast. LocalGov HR Solutions LLC is a member of Mercer Group Associates, and was incorporated in the State of Georgia to conduct executive searches primarily in the southeast.

We will partner with the Town to recruit a Town Manager who has the management and technical qualifications necessary for success, demonstrates a supportive working relationship with all elected officials, departments, and staff; who promotes quality customer service and strong community relationships; and who embraces the values of the Town of Holden Beach and the community.

Mercer Group Associates employs a targeted approach to deliver a selective and diverse applicant pool. We leverage specialized government platforms; Mercer Group's proprietary database of Town/City/County Managers, Administrators, Deputy/Assistant Managers and upper-level local government contacts; professional relationships developed through prior search efforts; a LinkedIn network of over 6,000 local and state government connections; and direct outreach utilizing our sourcing methods.

Mercer Group understands the demands placed upon elected officials to meet the service needs of the community and the need to have a supportive and professional working relationship with the Town Manager in a Board of Commissioners-Manager form of government. As you can see in our biographical information provided below, the Mercer team members assigned to your search have served in upper level local government management positions, or in a large North Carolina association serving local governments of the state. Below is just a partial listing of recent and similar searches Mercer Group has successfully completed:



**Benson, NC** Town Manager; **Cramerton, NC** Town Manager; **Franklinton, NC** Town Manager; **Jacksonville, NC** City Manager; **North Carolina League of Municipalities** Director of Urban Affairs; **Smyrna, TN** Town Manager; **Barrow County, GA** County Manager; **Brunswick, GA** City Manager; **Bryan County, GA** Assistant County Administrator; **Roswell, GA** City Administrator; **Valdosta, GA** City Manager; **Madison, GA** City Manager; **Richmond Hill, GA** Assistant City Manager; **Newnan, GA** Assistant City Manager

Alan Reddish, Lisa Ward, Johanna Reese and I will be the Mercer Group team assigned to your search. I will serve as the Project Manager for your search and be your primary contact. Ms. Reese, will serve as a Project Consultant in support of all phases of the search, while Ms. Ward will serve as the Senior Consultant to ensure all aspects of the engagement meet Mercer Group standards of excellence, and to provide expert guidance to the team. Mr. Reddish will be our Senior Project Advisor, and will ensure delivery of all critical elements of the search, evaluate qualifications of all applicants, interact with elected officials as needed, and assist with coordination of candidate interviews.

The team will be supported by the full Mercer Group Associates consortium of consultants which has assisted communities nationwide with over 2,000 executive level searches. This networking and national experience is an important asset for attracting and encouraging highly qualified candidates to consider the Town of Holden Beach's Town Manager position.

The proposed Professional Services Agreement and Scope of Services for your search is included below as Attachment "A." We look forward to working with the Town of Holden Beach on this important project. If you have any questions concerning our proposal please contact me at 706-371-6126, [jeffhale@localgovhrs.com](mailto:jeffhale@localgovhrs.com) or Lisa Ward at 706-983-9326, [lisaward912@gmail.com](mailto:lisaward912@gmail.com).



# **Meet the Project Team**



## MERCER GROUP ASSOCIATES

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**Alan Reddish** specializes in Executive Search for Mercer Group Associates and will serve as the Senior Project Advisor for this search. He focuses his work on the State of Georgia having completed an average of 12 to 15 local government executive searches per year since 2017.

Mr. Reddish has over 35 years of experience as a local government manager serving as Manager in three communities, most recently retiring as Manager of the Unified Government of Athens-Clarke County after 15 years of service. In that capacity Mr. Reddish was responsible for an operating budget exceeding \$190 million, 1700 employees, and three capital programs totaling over \$500 million. During his tenure as Manager, Mr. Reddish conducted many national searches to recruit and hire a professional team of department directors to ensure efficient delivery of services to the Athens-Clarke County community of 123,000, which is home to the University of Georgia.

Mr. Reddish's professional career also includes three years of service as the Associate Director of the Carl Vinson Institute of Government at the University of Georgia. In that role he was responsible for the management of faculty and support staff that delivered 500 training and professional development programs annually to local and state government officials throughout Georgia.

Mr. Reddish holds a Bachelor's degree in Political Science from the University of Georgia and a Master's degree in Public Administration from Troy State University. He received the first Pillar of the Profession Award from the Georgia City/County Management Association which annually recognizes a person that has demonstrated a sustained commitment to personal and professional development along with mentoring, coaching, and counseling peers and other local government officials.





## MERCER GROUP ASSOCIATES

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**Lisa Ward** is a Senior Associate with Mercer Group Associates and will serve as the Senior Consultant for this project. She has over 30 years of combined government and human resources experience. Ms. Ward worked for many years at the Director level in various functions of local government related to Human Resources.

Prior to becoming a member of the Mercer team, Ms. Ward was responsible for developing, implementing, and administering programs and policies for the nation's second largest Electric Membership Corporation (EMC). Ms. Ward managed all employee benefits administration, recruiting and retention strategies, as well as employee performance management, training, and development. She has been responsible for self-funded insurance programs including health, dental, short-term disability, general liability, and worker's compensation, managing millions of dollars annually.

Ms. Ward retired June 1, 2008, as an officer from United States Air Force with 23 years of active and reserve military service. During her military career she served in three branches of the armed forces: Navy, Army and Air Force which provided her with an in-depth understanding of the importance of diversity, confidentiality, and leadership development.

Ms. Ward has a master's degree in Public Administration (MPA) from the University of North Florida in Jacksonville, Florida, and a Bachelor's Degree in Psychology from the University of Nebraska. In July 2016, Lisa attended the Senior Executive Institute (SEI) at the University of Virginia focusing on high performing organizations. She is a Human Resources professional and holds her PHR and SHRM-CP certifications. Ms. Ward served as the President of the Athens-Area Society for Human Resources Management (AASHRM) from 2016-2018 and recently served on the ICMA Veteran's Task Force.



**Johanna Reese** is a North Carolina native and has spent significant time in the southeastern part of the state, including in Brunswick County and Holden Beach. Her work with state and local governments has given her an understanding of the needs of smaller communities and of those in coastal areas. She spent 30 years in state and local government before retiring mid-2022 and starting her consulting firm. Seven of those years included a strong focus on county government at the NC Association of County Commissioners, where she worked closely with county commissioners, county managers and other executive staff. As Director of Government Relations, she analyzed complex policy issues affecting counties and coordinated extensively with staff and elected officials on substantive and political matters.

Most recently, Ms. Reese was Deputy Secretary for Intergovernmental Affairs at the NC Department of Transportation. She oversaw the department's legislative efforts, lobbied the General Assembly, worked on federal advocacy and communication, and was the lead contact with the Governor's policy office. Previously, she was Deputy Commissioner at the Division of Motor Vehicles, where she oversaw the state's driver license, vehicle services and administrative programs.

Ms. Reese began her career at the NC Department of Environment and Natural Resources. She was Director of Legislative Affairs, worked in communications in DENR's Secretary's Office, and was a public information officer at the Division of Environmental Health, where she worked extensively with local health departments. In those roles, she covered water and sewer (both from a water quality and infrastructure perspective), a multitude of public health issues, drought response, air quality, waste management, and other subjects.

She is a graduate of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill with a bachelor's degree in journalism/public relations and political science. She has also completed the County and Municipal Administration course at UNC-Chapel Hill's School of Government.





## MERCER GROUP ASSOCIATES

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**Jeff Hale** is an Associate with Mercer Group Associates, and will serve as the Project Manager for this project. Mr. Hale has over twenty years of combined government and Human Resources experience. He has sixteen years of local government human resources experience with the last seven at the Director level. His organization-wide responsibilities included recruitment and retention; promotional processes; compensation and classification; benefits administration and strategy; retirement benefits; employee relations; performance management; risk management and human resources policy. His prior employment includes education, regulatory consulting in telemarketing, and systems integration work.

Mr. Hale has worked closely with City Managers, Assistant City Managers, as well as the Mayor and Commission of a consolidated City/County government in Athens, GA, home of the University of Georgia. With over 1,700 employees and 40 functions of local government, he served as a key member of the management team, and developed a strong understanding of the experiences, abilities, and qualities necessary for the success of a Town Manager in effectively carrying out the vision of the elected body.

Mr. Hale has a master's degree in American Government and Public Law from the University of Georgia and a bachelor's degree in political science from Knox College in Galesburg, IL. Since 2009, he has continuously maintained professional certifications to include the SHRM-CP designation with the Society for Human Resource Management, and Certified Human Resources Manager from the University of Georgia's Carl Vinson Institute of Government.



# **Professional Services Agreement**



## **Attachment "A"**

### **Professional Services Agreement**

This AGREEMENT, made as of this \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2025, by and between LocalGov HR Solutions, LLC dba Mercer Group Associates and the Town of Holden Beach, a municipal corporation of the State of North Carolina.

WITNESSETH:

WHEREAS the Town of Holden Beach (hereinafter referred to as "Town") has made a request for a final proposal from LocalGov HR Solutions, dba Mercer Group Associates (hereinafter referred to as "Mercer") to assist the Town in conducting a search for a Town Manager (hereinafter referred to as "Manager"); and

WHEREAS the Town selected Mercer's proposal as the proposal that best meets its needs and the Town desires to hire Mercer to perform the search; and

WHEREAS Mercer desires to provide professional assistance to the Town as it undertakes its responsibility of hiring a Manager.

NOW THEREFORE, in consideration of the following mutual covenants and other good and valuable consideration, the receipt and adequacy of which is hereby acknowledged by all parties hereto, Mercer and the Town hereby agree as follows:

1. Mercer agrees to work with the Town to conduct an effective search process for filling the position of Manager in accordance with the Scope of Services attached and made a part of this agreement.
2. The Town agrees to compensate Mercer for its services with a base fee of \$24,000 (twenty-four thousand dollars). The Town also agrees to reimburse Mercer for direct expenses incurred such as advertising, third-party background checks, consultant travel/lodging, report preparation and other reasonable incidentals. Cost for direct expenses will not exceed \$6,500, (six thousand five hundred dollars) without written approval of the Town. The cost for final candidates to travel to the Town for interviews or other reasons required by the Town is not included in this agreement. The Town may pay those costs directly to the candidates on a reimbursement basis and are difficult to estimate because they are dependent upon the number of candidates the Town selects to interview, and the distance candidates must travel for the interviews.

3. The Town agrees to pay one-third of the base fee (\$8,000) at the time notice to proceed is given to Mercer; one-third of the base fee (\$8,000) when applications are closed and Mercer provides a recommended list of semi-finalists to the Town to be approved for more intensive review by Mercer; and the final one-third of the base fee (\$8,000) when interview packages of the semi-finalists approved by the Town are delivered to the Town and interview dates are established by Mercer in coordination with the Town. All payments for agreed upon services shall be due and payable upon the submittal of an invoice by Mercer describing services completed.

4. The Town and Mercer both agree that this Agreement shall be governed by the laws of the State of North Carolina.

5. The Town and Mercer agree that LocalGov HR Solutions, LLC, dba Mercer Group Associates is an independent contractor to the Town and Mercer acknowledges that it will not be the recipient of any benefits granted to employees by the Town.

6. Mercer warrants that it carries necessary and sufficient General Liability, Worker's Compensation, and P&C coverages to protect its interests and acknowledges that municipalities are most often prevented from indemnifying third party professional services. Mercer will provide Certificate of Insurance and other documentation required to verify contractual insurance requirements.

7. Mercer confirms that the firm presently is a member of the E-Verify program and will apply the E-Verify process during the entire duration of this contract to ensure the firm does not employ or sub-contract with persons who are undocumented immigrants or who otherwise cannot legally work in the United States.

8. Mercer confirms that the firm is an equal opportunity employer and assures equal opportunity based on ability and fitness for all employees, contractors, and applicants regardless of race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, pregnancy, age, marital status, past/present/future military status, national origin, disability, or genetic information. Our equal employment policy is disseminated to all applicants, employees, and contractors. The intent of this policy applies to internal operations, recruitment, and consulting activities conducted by the firm.

9. The Town and Mercer both agree that in the event any dispute arises between the parties, the complaining party shall promptly notify the other of the dispute in writing. Each party shall respond to the other party in writing within ten (10) working days of the receipt of such notice.

10. The parties shall have the right at either party's convenience to terminate this Agreement following ten (10) days written notice to the affected party. Should either party terminate this agreement, the Town shall only be obligated to pay Mercer for those services rendered as of the date of termination.

**LOCALGOV HR SOLUTIONS, LLC**  
**dba MERCER GROUP ASSOCIATES**  
**Jeff Hale, Associate**

**TOWN OF HOLDEN BEACH, NC**

\_\_\_\_\_  
[Print Name, and Title]

**Signature:**\_\_\_\_\_

**Signature:**\_\_\_\_\_

**Date:**\_\_\_\_\_

**Date:**\_\_\_\_\_



# **Scope of Services**





Mercer will conduct a thorough position analysis to include individual interviews with the Board of Commissioners, as well as other stakeholders identified by the Town to determine the goals, future plans, major local issues, desirable qualities, expected leadership styles, minimum training, and experience required for success for the new Town Manager. At the Town's request, Mercer will provide recommendation for competitive compensation consistent with similar positions in comparable municipalities in North Carolina, and the Town's direct competitors where data is readily available.

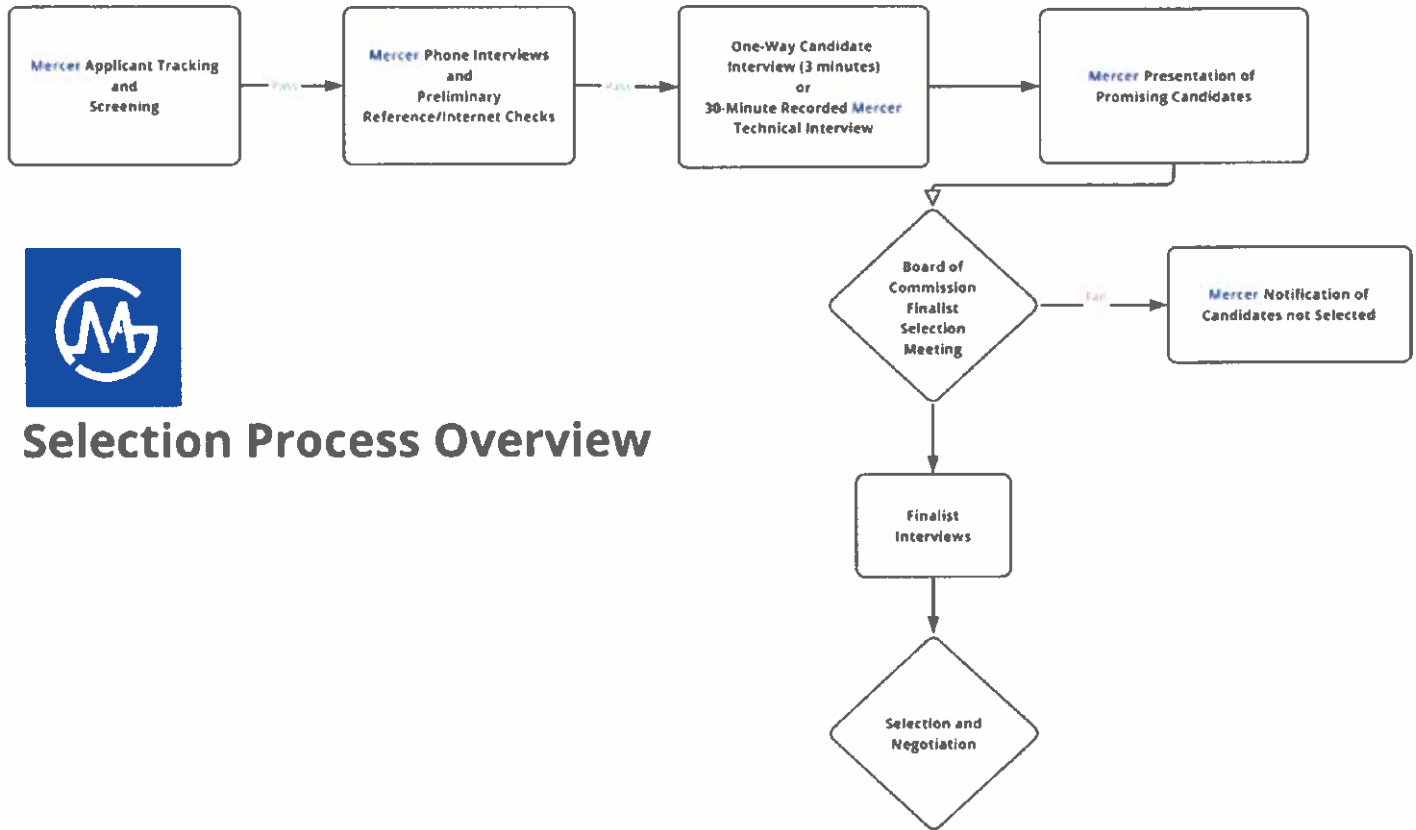
Based on the above information and a review of the job description adopted by the Town, Mercer will prepare a draft position profile in the form of a recruitment brochure designed to attract highly qualified applicants. The brochure will include general information about the Town, services provided, key issues to be addressed, job duties and responsibilities, minimum qualifications, and selection criteria. The final profile will be approved by the Town in order to arrive at a general agreement regarding the specifications for the position. The completed recruitment brochure will be attached to national, regional, and state announcements for the search.



The Town Manager search will be national in scope, but will demonstrate sensitivity to candidates who have local and regional qualifications, especially those who have served a coastal, tourism focused municipality. Mercer will work with the Town to determine which advertising options are most likely to produce quality applicants. These ads will be primarily electronic postings on national and state websites related to professional associations, newsletters, listservs, and job websites typically viewed by public safety and government professionals.

Outreach efforts will include postings specifically focused on creating a diverse candidate pool for the Town's consideration. Mercer will make direct contact with professionals in local government management positions listed in Mercer's database. This includes those serving as Town/City/County Managers, Assistant and Deputy Managers, and other upper-level local government professionals. Mercer will engage in direct outreach to Town, City, and County management professionals in North Carolina and surrounding states to ensure passive job seekers most likely to relocate to the Town are aware of the Holden Beach Town Manager opportunity.

Mercer will also rely heavily on our personal contacts with local government management professionals with whom we have developed relationships during recent searches and who may meet the Town's requirements. The formal recruitment process will be a minimum of 30 days to ensure a large number of qualified candidates are aware of this opportunity with the Town and have adequate time to apply.



## Selection Process Overview



An initial screening of the most promising candidates will be conducted by Mercer through telephone/video interviews, preliminary reference and internet checks to assess educational background, technical knowledge, experience level, management style, and personality traits.

Mercer will select a short list of candidates who appear to be the most qualified, suitable, and most closely match the position profile criteria. Mercer will provide three minute, one-way recorded interviews, or at the Town's request, recorded 30-minute first round interviews via Zoom of those most promising candidates. Mercer will share recordings, resumes summaries, application materials, and background information gathered to date for the Town's selection of candidates to be further evaluated by Mercer. Mercer will conduct preliminary background screening as described below, and coordinate in-person interviews with the Town and the selected candidates who fully complete the Mercer vetting process.

If none of the presented candidates are satisfactory to the Town, Mercer will continue the search process at no additional cost to the Town except for additional direct reimbursable costs.



# Background Screening

Mercer will conduct preliminary background screening of Town approved candidates to verify the accuracy of application information related to academic and certification credentials, employment verification, financial stability, criminal history, and driving record. Additional references will be contacted and a social media/internet review will be conducted to further assess qualifications and suitability.

The results of Mercer's preliminary background screening, reference checks, and social media/internet search, finalist application materials, and written responses to a Mercer administered questionnaire will be shared in a written report. The report will be delivered in advance of the in-person interview process to allow interview panelists the opportunity to fully prepare for Town Manager finalist interviews.





# Interview Process

In coordination with the Town, Mercer will schedule interviews and activities with the finalists consistent with a process approved by the Town. In-person interview panel(s) may include - in addition to the Board of Commissioners - other subject matter experts or stakeholders as requested by the Town.

Mercer will facilitate interviews and participate in the interview process at any appropriate level as directed by the Town. Mercer will provide recommended interview questions to ensure equal opportunity, produce consistency of the information received from each candidate, and to ensure the appropriateness of interview questions.

Mercer employs a competency/behavioral based interview methodology. Questions will be designed to assess a candidate's past behaviors and experiences to gauge their ability to perform the specific job-related skills and competencies of the Town Manager position. Mercer will provide and discuss guidelines for conducting a successful interview to the interview panel before the interview process. Mercer will facilitate discussion and/or provide observations and insights about candidates upon completion of all the interviews.

If the Town wishes to enhance the interview process, Mercer offers the administration of the Clifton Strengths Assessment. This tool comes at an additional but relatively low cost per candidate, and yields robust reporting without being overly demanding of candidates.





**73% of Employers  
Expect Job  
Candidates to  
Negotiate Salaries**

At the Town's request, Mercer will provide advice and support in the Town's negotiation of salary, benefits, and other conditions of employment. Final approval of all aspects of the terms and conditions of employment and the execution of any employment contract rests with the Town.

The selected candidate is subject to the Town's final and official background checks, and other conditional offer requirements of the Town Manager position in accordance with Town ordinance, policy and procedure. All such information should be fully reviewed and approved by the hiring authority prior to a final offer of employment.

In the event an employment agreement cannot be negotiated with the selected candidate, Mercer will work with the Town to select an alternate candidate.



# **Project Management and Guarantees**



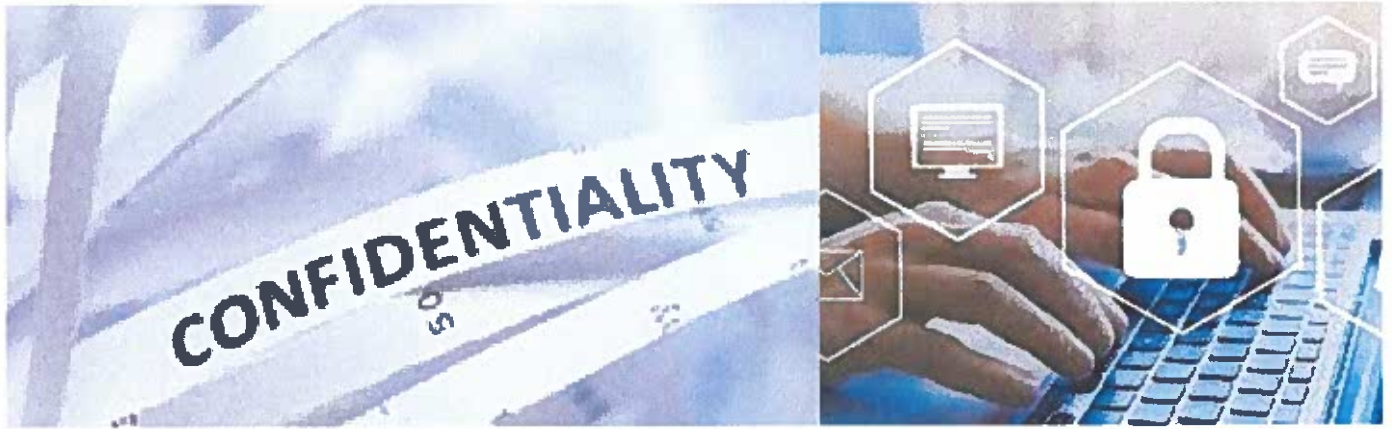
Mercer will provide the Town with timely status reports of the search process. These updates will include the status of recruitment efforts, actions being taken to meet the stated timeline, and a summary of expenses incurred to date.

Mercer will coordinate needed support through the Town's designee for arranging interviews, providing public documents on budgets and employee benefits, gathering information needed for the recruitment brochure, and processing Mercer invoices for payment for services rendered.

Mercer will professionally manage each project to include all media inquiries. Unless otherwise directed, it is our standard practice to advise all media that we are working on behalf of the Town and that any public statements should come directly from the Mayor's Office.

Mercer will not recruit candidates from the Town staff for two years after completion of the search assignment without the full agreement of the Town. We will never recruit a candidate we placed with the Town as long as he/she is employed by the Town without full agreement of the Town.

If the candidate selected, hired, and onboarded by the Town leaves for any reason (including termination) during the 12-month period following the date of placement, Mercer will conduct another candidate search and charge the Town only for out-of-pocket expenses required to make the new placement.



Mercer will maintain confidentiality of candidate information and recommends that the Town do the same to the degree possible under North Carolina law. Mercer will suggest actions and timelines for actions by the Town that we believe will ensure that the Town always remains in compliance with the North Carolina Public Records/Open Meetings requirements. However, all final decisions of such compliance rest with the Town as advised by the Town Attorney.

Mercer will notify candidates who were not selected, or will provide a draft communication for the Town to officially notify those candidates.



**Timeline Commitment**

Mercer will focus its resources and efforts on the goal of having a Town Manager selected within 90 days after receiving notice to proceed. Please note this does not include any waiting time that may be required by the North Carolina Public Records/Open Meetings Acts. Nor does the 90 days include time required for the selected candidate’s required notice to their employer, or time to relocate. Below is a breakdown of Work Plan Items and days needed to complete the critical elements of the search process.

Upon receipt of Notice to Proceed from the Town, Mercer will develop a work plan calendar for the Town’s approval that will identify specific target dates to complete the search within the 90-day schedule. At key junctures, Mercer will depend upon the participation Town officials to meet the agreed upon work plan calendar. Approval of the work plan calendar at the outset of the project will mitigate the risk of scheduling conflicts and delays. Mercer will provide timely responses to informational needs and responsive communications throughout the process, and depends on the same from the Town.

The work plan calendar will remain flexible to meet the needs of the Town and to reduce the number of days needed where possible and prudent. Upon approval of this proposal, Mercer is prepared to negotiate specific dates that meet the needs of the Town and that consider other Mercer commitments already in place.

**Work Plan Items**

1. Position Analysis/Interview Stakeholders:	14 days
2. Recruitment Process:	40 days
3. Resume Review & Candidate Screening:	10 days
4. Candidate Background Screening:	21 days
5. Interview/Selection Process:	3 days
6. Follow-up/Negotiate Employment Agreement:	2 days

**Total: 90 days**



## Executive Search References

Position: City Manager  
City of Jacksonville, NC  
John Carter, Town Attorney (retired)  
910-938-5018

Position: Town Manager  
Town of Cramerton, NC  
Mayor Nelson Wills  
nelson@cramerton.org  
704-905-1944

Position: Assistant City Manager  
City of Newnan, GA  
Cletus Phillips, Town Manager  
CPhillips@newnanga.gov  
678-857-8910

Position: City Manager and Assistant City Manager  
City of Tucker, GA  
Mayor Frank Auman  
fauman@tuckerga.gov

Position: City Manager  
City of Madison, GA  
Mayor Fred Perriman  
fperriman@madisonga.com  
Phone: (706) 752-7959