



## Agenda Abstract

### BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Meeting Date: January 28, 2023  
Department: Administrative Services  
Agenda Section: Regular  
Public hearing: N/A  
Date of public hearing: N/A

#### PRESENTER/INFORMATION CONTACT

Town Manager Eric Peterson

#### ITEM TO BE CONSIDERED

**Subject:** Restarting Intern and Fellowship Program Discussion

**Attachments:**

Email from UNC SOG to Town Manager About LEAD Fellow Program

**Summary:**

**Background, Concept, Opportunities, & Request for Guidance**

Hillsborough has a long history of working with undergraduate and graduate students as interns, fellows, working as teams, and part-time employees to assist with projects and often get things done that staff did not have time to accomplish. During the past several years due to COVID, the significant impact of growth, and perpetually being short-staffed due to vacancies, there have been few students in the organization with internships or related assignments. Everyone has felt so overwhelmed there has not been capacity to add this onto plates. Students require clear direction and regular interaction with an assigned supervisor or coordinator to be successful – this can be a time-consuming task but can yield major benefits if well thought out.

Not having a regular pipeline of interns or fellows has been a missed opportunity, especially when 1) Hillsborough is surrounded by universities with government and public administration focused programs, 2) student, interns, and fellows are the most affordable resource we have to support town operations, 3) staff has been bogged down with work and could have been helped, and 4) fulfilling our obligation to expose the next generation to public service. Having a small overlapping group of interns/fellows provides regular resources to assist departments and be assigned to key tasks that either wouldn't get done and/or derail staff from other priorities. The student cohorts collaborate with each other and help train/familiarize each other with town operations, even if only 2-3 students since we're small. The town has had major tasks handled when students have had prolonged stints with the town.

If the board is supportive of re-starting this prior initiative, the town manager will coordinate with staff to again pursue bringing in student talent as there are several time sensitive opportunities. For example, we are looking at a summer intern, the UNC SOG Lead for North Carolina Fellowship program, and some other opportunities. Information on the Lead Fellowship is below and attached. There are links to quick videos and a website on this program, as well as more specifics about the benefits to the organization and how it would be managed.

**Lead for North Carolina Fellow Summary:**

**New for this year, UNC SOG is targeting up to 12 jurisdictions for a finance-specific track.** Fellows will receive training and ongoing support from UNC School of Government Faculty members Kara Millonzi and Rebecca Badgett on finance-related projects. Fellows will receive a toolkit of best practices and policies to consider implementing in finance offices. These members will also receive support as it relates to compliance with ARP

funding. These Lead for NC Fellows will be trained and ready to specifically address significant needs in finance offices.

- Quick video on the program: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WSw0C55RsAg>
- Website: <https://lfnc.sog.unc.edu/>

### **Timeline:**

- By February 8, 2023, Local government applies to participate in the program
- February 13, 2023, Local governments are notified of their status as a host site and eligible jurisdictions are notified of the final subsidy amount
- By February 24, 2023, Local government commits to the program
- Early-May, Local governments interview fellows
- May/June 2023, Local government assists fellow with identifying housing (if needed)
- July 20 – August 4, 2023, SOG Summer training program
- By August 7, 2023, LFNC Fellow start year of service with host jurisdiction

### **Key opportunities for Hillsborough:**

- This would be the least expensive help we could add to staff. It appears about \$30,000 annually. Assumption is we'd get little to no subsidy being a Tier 3 county.
- ARP compliance and grant support (e.g., record-keeping, tracking, rules/updates, maybe assign specific projects, other). This cohort is receiving specific training in this area and it's one where we need assistance. Budget & Management Analyst Josh Fernandez has been our lead, but it's a big task. Financial Analyst has also played a key role. This is an area that needs significant attention and more internal resources. The new finance director and/or if the vacant assistant finance director position is filled will also have to play a key role in these areas.
- Assist with other areas where there is interaction between budget and finance-related tasks.
- Available for assignment to departments with various needs, opportunities, unexpected issues
- The fellow provides a person to assign to departments when issues arise to assist. Historically, when interns become familiar and integrated with town operations departments start to request their assistance on various needs. In fact, there is usually more request for help than intern time available.
- Opportunity to add diversity to staff (e.g., age, race, gender, etc.).
- Provides proven person the town could end up hiring for vacant positions or they come back in the future.

### **Development Opportunities for Fellow**

Competition for fellows and interns is often high, thus it's important to make these positions appealing. The following are a few points to help make experiences for students interesting and add value as they pursue their careers.

- Attend monthly Agenda/Ops Team meeting. Provides regular interaction/observation with all departments. Makes it more likely Ops Team will involve the fellow or ask for help.
- Attend most board meetings and other advisory boards at least once to observe.
- Monthly meeting(s) with town manager and possibly assistant town manager for general updates, mentor-type interactions
- Allow attendance at key events and training required by program regarding training and to help them excel while working for the Town.

### **Logistics**

- Office location. Lack of space has become a major challenge, but we think we've come up with some options to address this.
- Supervisor/coordinator. Josh Fernandez.

**Financial impacts:**

Not sure of the exact financial impact at this time but we anticipate that it would be somewhere in the low \$30,000s.

**Staff recommendation and comments:**

N/A

**Action requested:**

Receive financial overview update and ask questions.