



COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

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To: City Council
From: Peter Owens, CEDO Director
Date: February 13, 2014
Subject: Background Information in Support of Request for Personal Hardship Determination

As most of you know, due to unexpected changes in my family circumstances, I am requesting a personal hardship determination allowing me an extension on meeting Burlington's residency requirement. I offer the following as background to this request.

The residency requirement for department heads was an explicit and fully understood condition of my hiring as CEDO director in July of 2012. As a family including two school-aged children (James, 11th grade and Amanda, 9th grade), my wife (Carolyn) with a full time business to look after, and myself, we did not make this decision lightly. I accepted the offer knowing I would be moving to Burlington and seeing my family on the weekends.

Upon commencement of work, I relocated from Hanover, NH to Burlington and registered to vote in compliance with the residency requirement. Initially, we actively looked to buy a home in the City, put in several offers and were even under contract to buy a home in the fall of 2012. However, for a variety of reasons we decided that it made more sense to rent rather than buy--at least initially.

Meanwhile, over the course of the year, it became slowly apparent that my being away was having a far greater impact on our family than we anticipated. Our kids have always been well-adjusted and self-reliant. However, the combination of my being away all week and Carolyn being out at evening meetings on a regular basis created a less than ideal environment for the kids--especially our son. Over the last winter, I made conscious adjustments to my work schedule to be more present. Despite these efforts, by late spring my son was cycling downward with a decidedly negative impact on both his school work and personal well-being. With enormous effort and great support from the school and local health care providers, he was able to finish the school year. But it was clearly a place none of us wanted to return to the following year.

After considerable discussion with my family over the summer, I made a commitment to be a more consistent presence in my children's lives over the current school year. While my working week is still based in Burlington, I have been returning to Hanover at least one and sometimes two nights each week to be part of my children's daily lives--sitting down to dinner together, engaging in idle family chatter, and just being a part of their everyday world. After several months, we are convinced this new arrangement is a much better situation for the children's well-being. Finally, I believe this new arrangement has not adversely impacted my ability to perform my duties effectively.

Thank you very much for your consideration.