

# WELCOME TO THE



**Michigan  
Municipal  
Executives**

2024 Winter Institute



# Building Trust and Helping Employees "Stay"

Deborah Stuart, City Manager







**STOP!**

**REALITY**

**CHECK!**

## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT MASON:

Population: Under 9,000

Average Median Home Sale: \$190,000

Bedroom Community: 9% of residents work in Mason

Values: Welcoming, Charming, Safe

View of local government: Essential Services, efficient use of tax dollars

City Employees: 48 FT 10 FTE

Budget: All Funds \$25 M revenues

General Fund \$9 M Revenues

**Where you come to raise your family.**





# Deborah Stuart

City Manager

Passions:

Organizational Development, Family Friendly Workplaces,  
Advocating for Women Leaders in Local Government



2001

Internship  
Jackson DDA

2003

Jackson: Executive  
Director DDA, City  
Economic Development

2009

MEDC

2016

Mason

How would you rate your job  
satisfaction?

1= hate coming to work,  
10= best job ever



# How would you rate your job satisfaction?

*Today, Last Three Months, Last 12 Months*

1= hate coming to work,  
10= best job ever

In order of priority,  
what are three reasons you stay in  
your current job?



In order of priority,  
what are three reasons you would  
leave your current job?



## THE START ...

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2016  
*hired*

MEDC was very focused on culture.

Lots of training and experience on feedback and team building. Identify gap in local government.

Lead by how you want be treated.

2018  
*presenting on  
culture*

Feeling the sweet spot, building trust with results

### SETTING THE VISION

**OUR VISION:** THE CITY OF MASON WILL **EMPOWER** ITS EMPLOYEES TO BE A **MODEL OF EXCELLENCE** IN PROVIDING MUNICIPAL SERVICES.

**OUR MISSION:** WE WILL **ANTICIPATE** THE MUNICIPAL NEEDS OF THE COMMUNITY THROUGH AN ENVIRONMENT OF **INNOVATION** AND **LEADERSHIP**

**OUR VALUES:** WE MUST HAVE **INTEGRITY** TO MAINTAIN THE PUBLIC'S TRUST, MAKING US VALUE MOST: **HONESTY, PROFESSIONALISM, ACCOUNTABILITY, AND EFFICIENCY.**



# ONE CITY



**ALL POSITIONS ARE ESSENTIAL TO SUPPORTING OUR MISSION, VISION, AND VALUES.**

Different perspectives and skills make us stronger and contribute to our success.

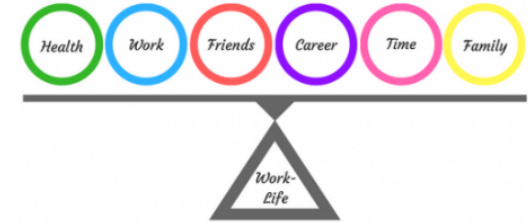
# SOLUTION MINDSET



**ALL LEVELS OF THE ORGANIZATION MUST BE EMPOWERED TO FIND SOLUTIONS TO SERVE OUR CITIZENS EFFECTIVELY.**

Our team is provided the tools and authority to be citizen focused.

# WHOLE PERSON



**BALANCING LIFE OUTSIDE OF WORK AND PRIORITIZING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ARE ESSENTIAL TO PERFORMING OUR JOBS.**

We put family first and provide our team with the resources to be successful at home and work.

### CHALLENGES IN 2016:



**Strengths**

- Great employees: *Let us do our jobs*
- Good about investing/improving some facilities: *Stop plugging favorites and have a strategy*
- Work within our means: *Employees have made all the sacrifices*
- Workforce Size: *We want to make a difference*

**Weaknesses**

- Communication: *No one talks us anything*
- Work Environment: *Management needs to get out of the way*
- Finances: *Cuts show we are not valued*
- Staffing Levels: *Expected to do so much with too little, no training, no one is prepared for promotions*

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### SETTING THE VISION

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### PROVING THE CULTURE: The Trust Jar

**BUILDING TRUST: MANAGEMENT TEAM**

- One City Approach
  - "Leadership" Team
  - Meet at all facilities and work sites
  - No City Council Meetings
  - Supporting vs. Dictating
- Whole Person




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### PROVING THE CULTURE: The Trust Jar

**BUILDING TRUST: FRONT LINE STAFF**

- Open office hours daily for all staff
- Communication- They Hear It First!
- Consulted on any staffing structure changes
- Whole person focus. (including family)
  - Free Rental Of City Hall





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### WHEN YOU KNOW IT IS WORKING

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### INNOVATIONS IMPACTING CUSTOMERS:

**COMMUNICATION:**

- One-Stop, Customer Service
- Transparent Budget
- Kids Vote

**ELIMINATING RED TAPE AND FEES:**

- Free Recycling
- Same Day Permits
- No Burn Permits
- No Overnight Parking Tickets Unless Snow
- No Credit Card Fee for Water Bills

**ENHANCED SERVICES:**

- Monthly Water Billing
- Speakers/ Presentation Group
- Immediate Reporting (See Click Fix)
- New Website Focused On Off Hour Services
- Resident and Business Handbooks



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**Who Enjoys?**

We just did laundry's You Rock! It was and the answer is... **PAF ROCKS!** For taking out the DPW with the water main. The fact that the other... (text continues)

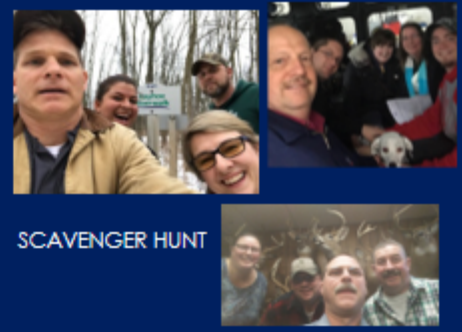
**YOU ROCK!**



11



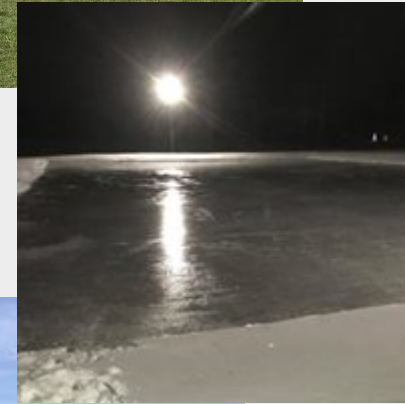
### SCAVENGER HUNT



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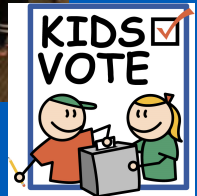


# RESULTS





- RETENTION FUND (Births, Deaths, Acknowledgements)
- POLICIES MATCHING VALUES- MARKED CHANGES
  - Parental Leave Policy (1-6 employer, 7-9 employee, 10-12 employer match)
  - Expanded Bereavement Leave (10, 5, 3)
  - Volunteer Leave (8 hours- includes School Participation)
  - Holiday Time (Off between Christmas/ New Years)
  - Flexibility for Caregiving / Work from Home Policy
- WHOLE PERSON TRAINING
  - Financial Sustainability/ Appreciating Differences / Team Exercises





Year 1



Year 2



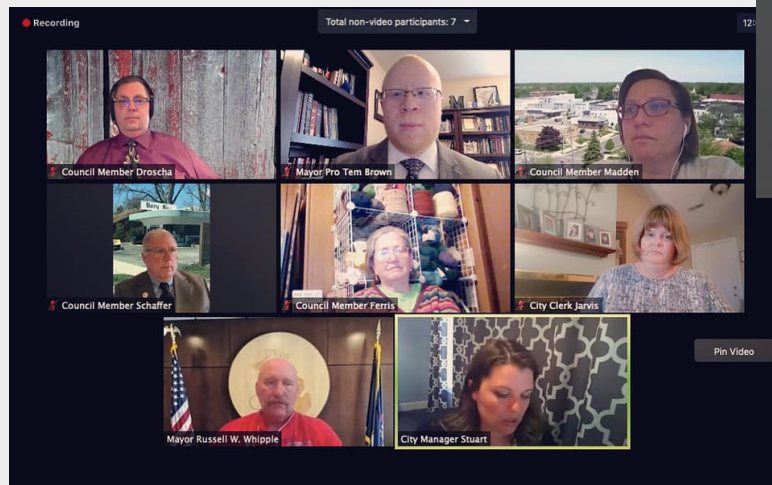
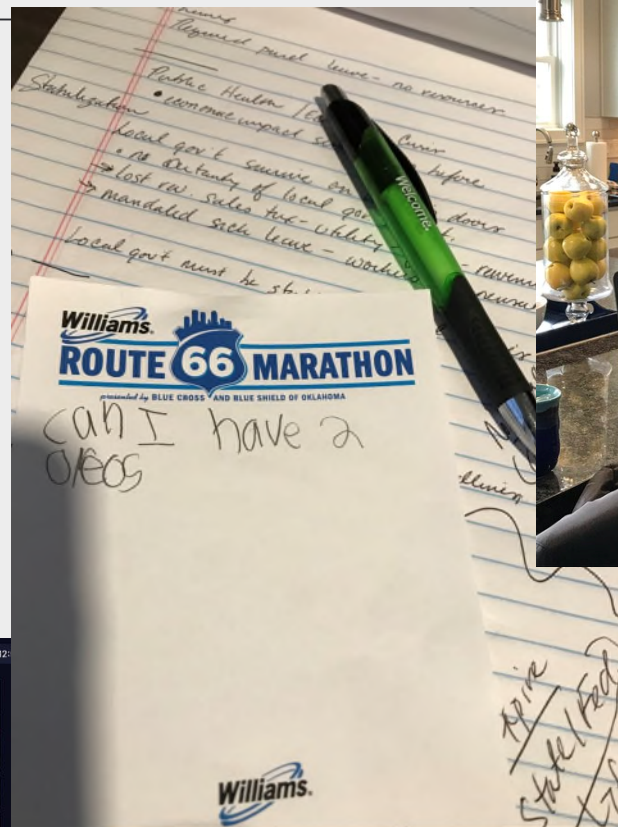
Year 3



# COVID IMPACT

## March 2020 *lockdown*

Seamless transition in one weekend to working from home (already had policies in place), understood essential work (minimum staffing), all employee video calls to keep everyone on track and answer questions, COVID care bags, Workshare balancing time for employees.





How would you rate your job  
work/life balance (whole person)?

1= worst,  
10= best

# COVID IMPACT

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## March 2020 *lockdown*

Seamless transition in one weekend to working from home (already had policies in place), understood essential work (minimum staffing), regular video calls to keep everyone on track and answer questions.

## Winter 2020/21 *the divide*

Not doing enough, doing too much.  
Discipline starts to occur, not all leadership agree, etc.

Losing trust...

## 2021 Fall *resentment/ exhaustion*

We were back to 2016.

**Begin “Stay Interviews”  
for self preservation.**

**I thought I was going to  
lose my entire  
leadership team.**



# RESULTS: LEADERSHIP STAY INTERVIEWS

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Remember why we like our jobs

Acknowledge why we don't like them now

Reset Vision and Values

Need to hear from entire team



# RESULTS



OUR PURPOSE IS BEING:  
**COMMITTED TO  
SERVING OUR NEIGHBORS.**

THE VALUES THAT ARE ESSENTIAL  
TO ACHIEVING OUR PURPOSE ARE:

**One City:** Our employees are essential and different perspectives make us stronger.

**Solution Mindset:** Our team has the confidence to seek solutions.

**Whole Person:** Our culture prioritizes professional development and work-life balance.





## STAFF STAY INTERVIEWS (First Round)

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Over 50 hours of interviews to build trust.

Average job satisfaction: 7

Surprises:

- Everyone thought they were in trouble
- Anger over unknown issues
- Solutions to unknown problems
- Clear vision of who is happy and what they value.

## RESULTS

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### Employees that were most happy appreciated:

- Co-workers, team environment, ability to work with other departments, and feeling respected by others in the organization.
- Flexibility within the workplace (being able to pick up a child on short notice or take a parent to a doctor's visit) and good work life balance. Many referenced previous employers without that flexibility and if that flexibility/ focus on family changed, they would consider another employer for more compensation.
- Proximity to family, friends, and kid's activities/school.
- Focus on entire benefit package and one area had a significant impact on them: time off around holidays, parental leave, compensation, flexibility of hours, and other benefits.
- Size of organization/community and the ability to have a direct impact, feel appreciated/supported by community, ability to problem solve/ make decisions that impact the community.
- Their supervisors, especially those that care about them, are involved in what they do, present, gives real direct feedback but not micromanaging.





## RESULTS

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Employees that were least happy were primarily focused on:

- Wages, independent of other benefits. Other whole person benefits were not as important to them.
- Difficult personalities in their work environment.
- Working alone often and/or they didn't have connections throughout the organization beyond their department.
- Lack of feedback from supervisors or opportunities for growth.

# RESULTS

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## Overall suggested improvements:

- More ways to connect with the community, opportunities to use community service time.
- Better communication with all employees, more opportunities for feedback on big decisions or decisions that impact on employees directly.
- Knowledge of better wrap around services available to citizens- not just police, fire or Comm Dev knowing.
- Better understanding of benefit and contract discussions. Many felt this was a very difficult process that led to morale issues.
- Regular reviews/feedback from their supervisor. More regular supervision, internal training, or direction from their supervisor. Not micro-managing but being given clear direction on what authority they must make decisions.
- More consistent and thorough on-boarding in departments for new hires. Lack of support in this role- thrown in without training.
- Compensation and benefits improvements.
- Incentivizing the additional responsibility if live within City- hard to live and work in same place. (Prior to residency bonus)

# RESULTS

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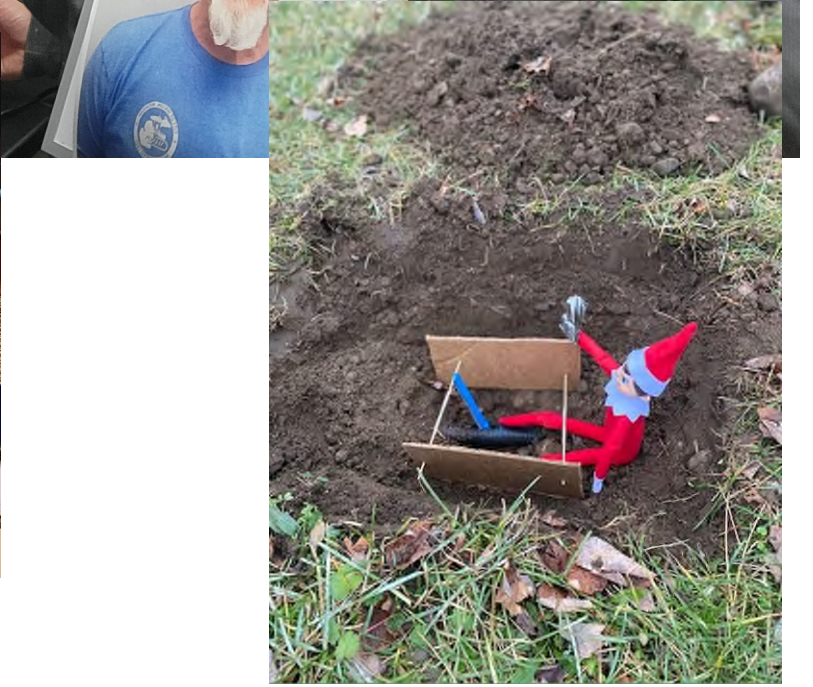
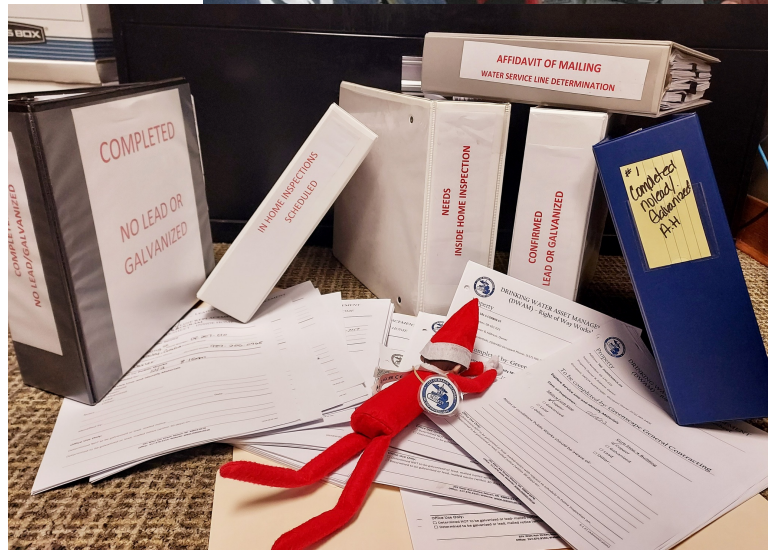


## BIG CHANGES:

- Levels (contract negotiated)
- Sergeant shift
- Part-time benefit increases
- DPW training on work-place harassment
- Unfair policies (bereavement, PT benefits, time off between Christmas/ New Years for police)
- Better marketing of positions/ interview focus
  - People the “fit” best in Mason like to have an impact/meaning in their job, like to connect with people, don’t like to work in a silo/ see the benefit of working with other departments, are in stages of life the require flexibility, want to grow professionally

What are three ways to improve our In-Services/ Monthly Connections to meet the goal of connecting with each other?



















We think so too!  
#LoveMasonMI



**Darrin Rockcole**   
November 27, 2023 ·   
Our Mason SkyCam looks like a Christmas card tonight.



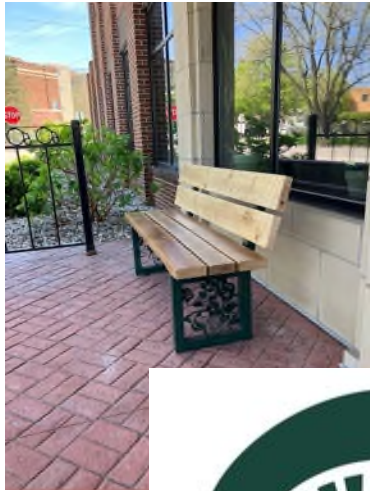
What are three ways to improve our In-Services to meet the goal of education and training?







# RESILIENCE



♥ We still have many difficult days ahead but so proud to be a part of this community that comes together when tested. #MasonStrong



IT'S GAMEDAY!!



**GO MASON  
BULLDOGS!**

**YOUR CITY IS  
ROOTING FOR YOU!**



## TIPS TO IMPLEMENT

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- Supervisors must trust you
- Listen and educate, but don't defend
- Have time and be present- spread out if needed
- Give questions in advance
- Not confidential
- Set expectations for action at end of meeting
- Tweak questions as you go- some will fall flat.

## BEST INVESTMENT OF MY CAREER