

# *City Manager*

## *Fife, WA*

(Permanent Population 8,200 - Daytime Population Exceeds 30,000)

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If you are looking for a diverse, interesting city which has an impact and challenges far beyond what you would expect of a place its size, the City of Fife is where you want to be. Located in the Pacific Northwest and bordering Tacoma, Fife is approximately 30 miles south of Seattle. With the Port of Tacoma on the City's northern boundary, light industry, warehousing, and commerce are key components of the City's identity. As one might expect, rail and road transportation are important to the area, but these also bring issues with them. While the role of agriculture has diminished, it is still an important element of the community. Recent growth has been particularly significant – the City's population has increased by over 50% in the past five years. Further, the entire City lies on the Puyallup Indian Tribe's reservation. Add in the fact that 1,250 businesses are licensed in a community of 8,200 and you begin to understand why Fife is far more complex than it first appears.

The overall quality of life is very good in Fife. The community is close knit, friendly and involved. Over the past ten years the City has built an excellent park and trail system. Area schools are very good and housing is reasonably priced. Interstate 5 divides the City into north and south. The northern section tends to be heavily commercial and closely tied to the Port. The southern side has considerable interaction with the Port but it also has a significant amount of residential housing – including three new major subdivisions. Although the overall crime rate is higher than the City would hope for, much of it occurs in the sector north of I-5 and spills into the Fife city limits.

### HISTORY

The known history of the region begins with the Puyallup Indian Tribe. In their aboriginal language the Tribe was known as the S'Puyalupubsh, meaning "generous and welcoming behavior to all people (friends and strangers) who enter our lands." Tribal members lived off the land for thousands of years and it provided for all their needs.

In 1792, as part of an expedition led by Captain George Vancouver, Lt. Peter Puget explored the area and named many of the local sites. The Hudson Bay Company established a trading post in early 1830s. At the time, approximately 2,000 members of the Puyallup Tribe lived in the area and welcomed new settlers until they realized they were being crowded out. In 1854, the Medicine Creek Treaty was signed. The Tribe ceded most of its territory but reserved certain lands and rights — including fishing rights. Over the next 32 years the boundaries of the reservation were renegotiated and expanded until it eventually included 28.5 square miles.

The Northern Pacific Railroad (NP) was awarded a land grant to construct a rail line from Lake Superior to Puget Sound. In 1873 NP announced its terminus would be on Commencement Bay and named its city "Tacoma", after the Puyallups' mountain Takkobad. This action created further problems because the Puyallup Tribe lost more land and waterfront. The 1877 Dawes Act broke the reservation into allotments. In 1893 any allotments not being used for Indian homes were to be auctioned off. Over the next 10 years, half of the reservation was sold.

In the 1950s members of the Tribe began a series of actions which ultimately led to their claims being settled in 1988. The settlement gave the Tribe compensation in excess of \$75 million. In 1997, the Puyallup Tribe opened the Emerald Queen Casino in Tacoma on a paddlewheel riverboat. This casino was later replaced by a more extensive facility in Tacoma, and a second casino opened in Fife in 2005.

In the meantime Fife was growing into a complex city. As of 1940 it was a tiny community of 135, basically a crossroads. It was characterized by berry and truck farming. It became incorporated in 1957 and grew slowly to a population of 3,900 by 2000. As the Port became more prominent, businesses which served the Port located nearby. In the mid 2000s, the housing boom came to the area, and over 3,400 new residents chose to make Fife their home.

## COMMERCE

Historically, Fife has been very business-oriented, primarily based on its proximity to the Port and its agricultural base. In the last ten years, that has, however, shifted with the influx of residential properties. Still, business plays a large role in the City. It is home to more than 14 million square feet of industrial and commercial space. Some of the larger employers and businesses are: Milguard Windows (three plants / 700 to 800 employees), the Puyallup Tribe (several locations / 500 to 1000 employees), Comcast (call center / 300), Mission Food (tortilla factory / 300 employees) and Genesco (250 employees). Regal Logistics and Mega Blocks are both large importers, primarily of Chinese goods, and each has warehouse facilities exceeding one million square feet. The City is also known for its numerous car dealerships. Taking pride in their appearance, most businesses are well kept and well landscaped.

## GEOGRAPHY, DEMOGRAPHICS AND CLIMATE

Fife is located on a low, flat area with very little room to expand. Annexation opportunities are limited to relatively small areas. However, its location means that a wide variety of cultural, entertainment, and recreational opportunities are within a relatively short drive.

Tacoma is its neighbor to the west. Seattle is a few miles to the north. Mount Rainier is 75 miles to the southeast and the Pacific Ocean is 85 miles west by road. The Canadian cities of Vancouver and Victoria are about four hours to the north.

The City has four distinct but relatively mild seasons. Average summer temperatures range from 55° to 75° Fahrenheit and in the winter range from 36° to 46°. On average it is cloudy 201 days a year and partly cloudy another 93 days. The area's reputation for rainy days comes from the frequency and not the total accumulated rainfall. In fact, its annual average rainfall is approximately 37 inches, less rain than what is received in New York, Atlanta, or Houston.

Due to large numbers of people moving into the community over the last five years reliable demographic data will not be available until the 2010 census is completed.

## **THE GOVERNMENT**

The Fife government supplies most of the standard services cities provide including Community Development, Courts, Police, Public Works, Water, Wastewater, and Parks and Recreation. However, there are some notable exceptions. It purchases its bulk water from Tacoma and sends its wastewater there. Fire services are provided by a special district which contracts with the City of Tacoma. Library services are also offered by a separate district.

The City is governed by a seven member Council. The Mayor and Council are elected at large and serve staggered, four-year terms. During the next election in November 2011, the Mayor and three Council seats will be before the voters. Although the Council Members represent different elements of the community, they all genuinely have the best interests of the City at heart. They work together well and are respectful of one another. Recently the Council felt it could do even better; so they retained a facilitator to help them improve the interaction among members. Further, Council Members understand their role and generally adhere to it. The elected officials also think highly of the City staff and their abilities.

The department directors and staff are very capable and work well together. They are friendly, and many have been with the City over considerable periods of time. They have a sense of community and a passion for their work.

While other cities are in dire financial straits and are reducing budgets and staff, both locally and nationally, Fife is stable and financially sound. In 2006 – 2007 it recognized that an economic downturn was likely and began to prepare for it. The current general fund budget is \$14 million, with a total budget of approximately \$54 million. The City benefits from a strong tax base. It is among the State's top five as measured by sales tax

per capita and assessed value per capita. Two thirds of its property taxes come from commercial or industrial properties, while only one third come from residential properties.

The City conducts labor relations with three unions, and the vast majority of staff (even part-time employees) are represented by one of these. The Teamsters represent the employees at Public Works; the Machinists represent the Court and City Hall employees; and the Independent Police Guild represents the police officers.

Overall, the City has excellent working relationships with many of the neighboring governmental entities. Two that stand out in particular are the Port of Tacoma and the Puyallup Tribe.

### **THE AREA OF FOCUS**

While Fife has many positives, it does have some significant concerns. First, although the City is stable and financially sound, it has not escaped the effects of the economic downturn. Some of its facilities (the community center, the public works building and the court facility) are nearing the time for renovation or replacement. Also, the City would like to create a downtown or community focal point. Further, transportation is an issue. The continuation / completion of SR-167 would be a significant improvement. Its intent was, and remains, to connect the Kent and Puyallup River valleys to the Seattle/Tacoma/Bellevue metropolitan area. Work stopped in the 1980s, however, and the link from Puyallup to Tacoma was not completed. Right of way is presently being acquired to finish the link. As with several other road improvements, it is necessary but the responsibility of other parties and Fife has limited influence. While the City is a commercial hub, its relatively small size does not afford it the clout of a larger city. Given this, it has worked - and must continue to work - with more powerful entities (such as the Port of Tacoma and other regional actors) to leverage its position. The City and Tribe are mutually respectful of one another and recognize that there is much to be gained from working together. Cultural differences exist, but the Tribe has been a helpful and supportive partner to the City and the City wishes to continue building on that relationship.

### **THE IDEAL CANDIDATE**

Fife is seeking a strong professional manager who is thoughtful, open, direct, and responsive. The individual will be progressive, action oriented, and want to get things done. The next manager will have a demonstrated track record of achievement. S/He will see the big picture but understand day-to-day operations as well. Decisions will be made with the future in mind. The selected candidate will not sit in the office and administer but rather will roll up his/her sleeves, pitch in, and get it done. Good financial skills are important and some knowledge of community development a plus. Strength in intergovernmental relations will be very important and experience dealing with other

cultures, ideally an Indian Tribe, would be extremely helpful. The next manager will be a consensus builder and an outstanding communicator. The individual will see the elected officials as partners while acknowledging and accepting the employer-employee relationship. The new manager will share information freely with Council Members even as s/he works diligently to ensure they are not surprised. The next manager will be comfortable with Council Members interacting (but not directing) staff. The individual will not be a micromanager, although s/he will hold staff accountable for their actions and for results. This person will be friendly and outgoing, someone who recognizes the importance of being out in the community as an accessible representative of the City. Willingness to challenge established thinking is critical, and strong negotiation skills will be very important.

The position requires a Bachelors degree, with a Masters preferred. Seven years of senior level management supervising or managing a complex organization is ideal. Although government experience is not necessary, the individual should have more than just a passing interest in and experience with government relations.

### **COMPENSATION**

The starting salary range is \$100,000 to \$150,000. The current manager earns approximately \$126,000. Benefits are very good.

### **RESIDENCY**

Residency in the City is strongly preferred but not mandatory.

### **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Candidate names will not be released without the candidates' permission. However, it is expected that, when the City selects finalists, some form of public participation will be incorporated into the candidate evaluation process.

### **HOW TO APPLY**

E-mail your resume to ***Recruit22@cb-asso.com*** by September 24, 2010. Faxed or hard copy applications will not be considered. Please direct all of your questions to Colin Baenziger at (561) 707-3537.

### **THE PROCESS**

Applicants will be screened between September 25th and November 2nd. Finalists will be selected on November 2<sup>nd</sup>, with the expectation that interviews will be held November 12th and 13th. The final selection will be made on November 16th.

### **OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION**

Fife is an Equal Opportunity Employer and values diversity at all levels of its workforce. It encourages minorities and women to apply.