

Civil Service Form

Extraordinary or Superior Qualifications, Experience, Credentials

Appointing Authority Name: New Orleans City Planning Commission

Appointing Authority Department: City Planning

Appointing Authority Phone Number: X7018 (Bob); X7004 (Chantaé); X7027 (Larry)

Appointing Authority E-mail: rdrivers@nola.gov; chantae.barre@nola.gov, lwmasse@nola.gov

Employee Information

Name: Emily Ramírez Hernández

Current Class: Assistant Planning Administrator

Proposed Class: Planning Administrator

Promotion or New Hire: Promotion

New Job Class: Planning Administrator

Job Posting & Appointment

Duration of job posting: Continuous

How position was advertised: City website

Date of appointment: January 1, 2022

Type of appointment: Probationary

Detailed position description:

This is supervisory city planning work in the area of specialization. Employees in this class direct the work of a major division and are responsible for recommending divisional planning policies and projects. The supervision exercised and the responsible nature of the contacts with individuals and other agencies are significant aspects of the work. Assignments are received from the planning director in outline form or orally and employee determines the methodology to complete these assignments.

<https://www.governmentjobs.com/careers/neworleans/classspecs/1075922?keywords=planning%20administrator&pagetype=classSpecifications>

Qualifications

1. How many applicants were on the eligible list? 2
2. How many of them possessed this extraordinary qualification? No other candidates possessed this.

3. Minimum qualifications exceeded and description of credentials (experience, education, certifications, etc.) that exceed the minimum qualifications:

Minimum Qualifications (from job announcement):

- Five (5) years of professional city planning experience where two (2) years of this experience must have been in a responsible administrative or supervisory capacity and
- **EITHER:** A Bachelor's Degree from an accredited college or university in Architecture, Landscape Architecture or a closely related field.
- **OR:** A Master's degree from an accredited college or university with at least twenty-four (24) semester hours of coursework in Urban and Regional Planning, Urban Design, Urban Studies or related coursework

Employee's qualification that exceeds the minimum:

- Approximately 12 years of relevant experience, including six (6) years of professional, full-time, city planning experience
- 2.75 years of professional city planning experience in a responsible administrative or supervisory capacity
- Master's degree from an accredited university with 36 semester hours of coursework in Urban Studies, including a certificate in Historic Preservation

Details (university, location, relevance, etc.):

Experience:

New Orleans City Planning Commission | Board of Zoning Adjustments City Planner, Senior City Planner, Principal City Planner, Assistant Planning Administrator

Since commencing service with the City Planning Commission almost six (6) years ago, the employee has served in the following job classifications: city planner, senior city planner, principal city planner, and assistant planning administrator. For each classification, the employee specifically served within the Board of Zoning Adjustments (BZA) section of the City Planning Commission department. In this capacity, the employee has facilitated, and still facilitates, the monthly BZA meeting and all processes and procedures that accompany that, including application intake and completeness reviews, making assignments, writing staff reports, producing public hearing notices, agendas, disposition notices, arranging virtual and/or in-person public meetings, board member management, website updates, applicant communications, supervision and training of other staff, certifying the record for Civil District Court appeals, maintaining the BZA's records, etc. Because BZA work is specialized, the employee has acted in a supervisory capacity, which includes delegating BZA tasks to other BZA staff, making assignments, providing guidance to, and answering questions from, other planners, and delegating and reviewing work for office support staff, since at least September 2019, over 2.75 years. Additionally, the employee has been the acting head of the BZA section since August 1, 2020, following the departure of former deputy director Leslie Alley, who also acted as the administrator for the BZA section, and subsequent departure of assistant planning administrator Brooke Perry, who served in a temporary capacity as head of the BZA section from March through July 2020.

Relevance: The employee has valuable institutional knowledge of the innerworkings of the Board of

Zoning Adjustments section of the department having worked across a series of job classifications from city planner to assistant planning administrator. The employee has performed, and has a mastery of, each process and procedure of the BZA, from administrative functions to staff reports and case assignments to full supervision and oversight of the BZA. The employee has served as the acting head of the BZA since August 2020.

In addition to the employee's professional city planning experience with the City Planning Commission, the employee has the following relevant prior experience:

Louisiana Landmarks Society & Pitot House | Office Assistant and Docent

The employee worked one (1) year in a historic house for a non-profit organization focused on historic preservation, a sub-field of urban planning. In this role, the employee conducted research for the Pitot House director, provided tours of the historic house, learned about varying construction styles, building materials and methods, and landscape preservation, and participated in historic preservation advocacy.

Relevance: Historic preservation is a sub-field of the urban planning discipline. As such, the employee expanded her knowledge in this area and developed a working knowledge of local architectural styles and building materials and methods. Further, the employee developed skills working with the organization's board as well as the general public, members, advocates, universities, and other partners. This is particularly relevant for the planning administrator role which requires successful relationships with the Board, the Law Department, the Department of Safety and Permits, applicants, the public, etc.

Bertel Construction | Office Manager

The employee worked as the office manager for a local construction company for a period of six (6) months. During that time, the employee was charged with rental property management (collecting rent, addressing maintenance calls, and collaborating with the Housing Authority of New Orleans for tenants in the Section 8 program); submitting building permit applications to the Department of Safety and Permits, and navigating Historic District Landmarks Commission processes; maintaining relationships with architects, subcontractors, and clients; and handling bookkeeping and financial records for approximately a dozen bank accounts.

Relevance: This role provided the employee firsthand experience with relevant City processes, which is beneficial for the planning administrator role as the Board of Zoning Adjustments often collaborates with the Department of Safety and Permits and Historic Districts. Further, working with architects, contractors, subcontractors, and their clients is also required of the planning administrator role.

Merritt C. Becker, Jr. UNO Transportation Institute | Graduate Worker

As a graduate student, the employee collected observational data for the Pedestrian Bicycle Resource Initiative by recording the number of pedestrians and bicyclists in specific local corridors, usage of helmets and bike lanes, travel direction, and weather conditions. This was a seasonal position each spring for two (2) years.

Relevance: The employee expanded her skills in data collection, which is required for Board of Zoning

Adjustments work, specifically report writing and review.

New Orleans Citizen Diplomacy Council | Program Coordinator, Program Officer, Program Intern

Lastly, the employee has approximately six (6) years of experience in public administration working for the New Orleans Citizen Diplomacy Council, a non-profit member organization of a nationwide network working in partnership with the U.S. Department of State to carry out international exchange programs designed to facilitate public diplomacy and cross-cultural understanding. The employee's broad role with this small organization included programming and grant-writing collaboration with State Department program officers; lobbying at the state and federal levels for funding and support of U.S. Department of State programs both in Washington D.C. and New Orleans; and maintaining extensive partnerships with local professionals, organizations, government agencies, universities, schools, and businesses. In this role the employee also directly organized professional programming for international visitors in the fields of urban planning, sustainability, historic and cultural preservation, citizen participation, and disaster/emergency preparedness.

Relevance: Experience in the field of public administration is vital to successful service and leadership in both the government and non-profit spheres, particularly concerning service to a community and policy implementation. As a civil servant, particularly in the planning administrator role which oversees the Board of Zoning Adjustments, this experience is key.

Education:

The employee possesses a master's degree in Urban Studies from the University of New Orleans, an accredited program, with 36 semester hours of coursework (12 more coursework hours than the minimum requirement for the position). The employee also received a certificate in Historic Preservation as part of the master's degree.

4. Description of how similar qualifications are not readily available in the labor market at minimum entrance rate:

The specific planning administrator position in question provides leadership and oversight for the Board of Zoning Adjustments section of the City Planning Commission. Because this role is so specialized and requires knowledge and mastery of Board of Zoning Adjustments processes, procedures, rules, and precedent, there are no individuals in the labor market, at the minimum entrance rate, who could successfully and seamlessly transition to this role without major interruption to the BZA section's functioning due to insufficient institutional knowledge and training that would be necessary. Further, the employee has served as the acting head of the BZA section since August 2020. Lastly, former deputy director Leslie Alley and former assistant planning administrator Brooke Perry, each of whom previously oversaw the BZA section, would not accept this position at the minimum entrance rate due to their additional years of experience in more senior positions since leaving the City Planning Commission as it would be a demotion.

5. How are the duties of the position relevant to the advanced qualification?

The employee has been the acting head of the BZA section since August 2020. Further, the employee has worked in the Board of Zoning Adjustments section for the past almost six (6) years in every job classification from city planner to assistant planning administrator, gradually developing more

institutional knowledge and responsibility. The employee's experience with the BZA has generated skills and knowledge as to every aspect of this section and forms the backbone of the employee's extraordinary qualifications related to this position.

With regard to specific duties of the position which are relevant to the advanced qualifications, the employee has a wide variety of skills and knowledge, including: the ability to conduct surveys, compile data, and write comprehensive reports on zoning and planning matters (including for variance requests, the primary function of the BZA); evaluate local planning problems and develop solutions; work independently, as part of a team, and with local residents/developers/applicants/city departments/government officials; act as a liaison, present recommendations, and provide information to the department's Board and Commission (specifically presenting information and answering questions for the Board during meetings); and supervision of other staff (including the ability to plan, assign, and supervise the work of other staff). In addition, particularly through the BZA's decision appeals and reasonable accommodations processes, the employee has gained a working knowledge of the law and concepts and procedures basic to planning, including aspects of the federal Fair Housing Amendments Act of 1988.

As noted, the BZA planning administrator position is supervisory in nature in that it oversees a section of the City Planning Commission department. During the employee's time in the principal city planner and assistant planning administrator positions, supervision and administrative functions were a primary responsibility. Specifically, the employee made case assignments, provided training and advice to planners and other BZA staff, maintained working relationships with other city agencies, and oversaw the administrative functions of the section. In the assistant planning administrator role, the employee has acted as the head of the BZA section and fulfilled duties that the BZA planning administrator normally would. One such role is certifying the record for BZA decisions appealed to Civil District Court. In this capacity, the employee has been responsible for reviewing the record and working with the Law Department to certify it, as well as providing clarifications to the Law Department as it relates to appeals.

The employee's experience with the Louisiana Landmarks Society & Pitot House, Bertel Construction, and the Merritt C. Becker, Jr. UNO Transportation Institute provided a broad foundation for both the urban planning field and specialties within that field, as well as insight into City of New Orleans permitting processes. Further, through the employee's six (6) years with the New Orleans Citizen Diplomacy Council, she gained relevant public administration experience through her work with the federal government, including implementing the Department of State's policy directives through specific programs, advocating before state and federal representatives, and helping to run a small office by managing deadlines, maintaining the office's data, supervising interns, and building relationships with government officials, civil servants, local professionals, etc.

6. How will hiring this person at the rate specified below be a financial advantage to the City? Please provide an objective financial analysis.

The City Planning Commission department is instrumental in bringing revenue to Orleans Parish through its involvement in reviewing development proposals, which, if approved, ultimately results in not only increased property tax revenue but also attracts further development. The City then is at a disadvantage when projects, such as variance requests through the Board of Zoning Adjustments, are backlogged, deferred, or cannot otherwise be sufficiently managed due to staffing issues. While the department's employees produce high quality work, it is impossible to perform to the highest possible

standard when operating with a fewer number of employees with ever-diminishing institutional knowledge while simultaneously dedicating substantial time to new employee training. Hiring this employee at a higher rate, citing extraordinary qualifications, will both retain institutional knowledge, including that specific to the Board of Zoning Adjustments, and will allow a seamless transition to planning administrator with no time lost training.

Additionally, the employee is constantly seeking methods of streamlining work for staff and reducing roadblocks for citizens. By eliminating unnecessary tasks, such as those that are duplicated elsewhere, employees have the flexibility to allocate their time in more productive ways, which saves work hours and, ultimately, money. In 2020, the employee restructured the BZA staff report template, which eliminated unnecessary analysis—and staff time—while retaining that which is necessary to inform the Board’s decisions and to justify those decisions to the courts when cases are appealed. Two additional examples that the employee is currently working on, in conjunction with the Department of Safety and Permits’ Becky Houtman, are 1) migrating the department’s application submittals online to the One Stop App portal (rather than email), which will save employee time creating cases and uploading files to the LAMA database and 2) reclassifying variance and design review cases as “sub-permits” in the permitting module of the LAMA database, which will result in less unnecessary, and more streamlined, reviews for both the City Planning Commission and the Department of Safety and Permits.

Lastly, the employee, along with another City Planning Commission employee, Rachael Berg, are collaborating on a side project with the CAO’s Innovation team that would, if approved, raise BZA application fees and result in an increased revenue stream to the City’s general fund.

7. List other departmental employees in this classification. Do they also possess the exceeded qualification and is it job related? Please attach copies of this form for people with the same or equivalent extraordinary qualifications.

- Paul Cramer
- Stephen Kroll

Paul Cramer and Stephen Kroll each possess extraordinary qualifications as it relates to their planning administrator roles in the department’s Comprehensive and Land Use sections, which are separate from the Board of Zoning Adjustments section. While they have significant job-related experience in the Land Use and Comprehensive sections respectively, their extraordinary qualifications do not translate to the Board of Zoning Adjustments section, and they could not perform the same duties as this employee without substantial training and time.

Similarly, no other staff in the department, including the principal city planner and senior city planner in the BZA section, would be able to fill the BZA planning administrator role without significant training and time as these staff members have both less years and less breadth of experience in the BZA section and with the City Planning Commission.

Rate granted (in steps; % must be in increments of 1.25): Step 21

Appointing Authority Signature: _____



Date: _____

