



LETTER TO THE COMMISSION

LTC No: 25-251

TO: Honorable Mayor and Members of the Fort Lauderdale City Commission
FROM: Rickelle Williams, City Manager *RW*
DATE: November 21, 2025
SUBJECT: **Appointment of Deputy City Manager**

The purpose of this Letter to the Commission (LTC) is to advise the City Commission of my intent to appoint, Christopher (Chris) Cooper, Assistant City Manager, to the Deputy City Manager role. This action would be subject to approval by the City Commission at the December 2, 2025 City Commission Regular Meeting.

During my tenure as City Manager, with the support of the City Commission, several steps have been taken to strategically reorganize and realign personnel resources across the organization, including within the City Manager's Office. As part of the reorganization, Executive Team roles and responsibilities have been established based on functional areas including public safety, operations, external services, internal services, and project management with assistant city managers and chiefs assigned to related departmental portfolios. During this time, I have identified the organizational benefits of appointing, via position reclassification, a deputy city manager, including greater clarity regarding the chain of command during my absence.

Pursuant to Section 4.07 of the City of Fort Lauderdale Charter, "upon the recommendation of the city manager, a deputy city manager may be appointed by resolution of the city commission." As such, upon ratification by the City Commission, I am seeking to appoint Chris Cooper as Deputy City Manager. Chris would maintain oversight of his existing external services portfolio (Community Redevelopment Agency, Community Services, Development Services, Fort Lauderdale Executive Airport, and Neighbor Support). In addition, Chris will assume the duties of the City Manager in my absence, provide leadership to cross-departmental initiatives, represent the City and City Manager's Office internally and externally, liaise with Charter Officers, resolve conflicts, and promote an integrated staff response to resident needs and Commission directives. Chris will work alongside the Assistant City Managers and the Fire and Police Chiefs, who will continue to report directly to me.

Chris is a seasoned public administrator who embodies the leadership qualities, temperament, and competencies befitting a deputy city manager. He is well respected by his colleagues and the community and demonstrates an inclusive management style

while promoting accountability and collaborative problem-solving. Chris thinks strategically and executes methodically. His depth of varied experience, knowledge, and commitment have served, and will continue to serve, the City well.

Chris began working for the City of Fort Lauderdale in 2018 as the Deputy Director of the Development Services Department (DSD), then one of the largest departments in the City, and was promoted to Director in 2022. As Director, Chris oversaw a broad portfolio including urban design and planning, building services, land development, zoning and landscape, community enhancement and compliance, business tax, housing and community development, public art and cultural affairs, and administrative services. He led all aspects of development project approvals from planning and design to permitting and completion, as well as code compliance and housing initiatives.

Chris was first appointed as an Acting Assistant City Manager in August 2024 and was later appointed as a permanent Assistant City Manager in July 2025. In addition to his external services portfolio, Chris also leads the City's initiatives to address homelessness. In this role, he has overseen the addition of more than \$1 million in grant funding for homeless services, led significant planning efforts including area-specific master plans, and advanced initiatives related to tree and landscape protection, historic preservation and customer service enhancements, including the FixIt FTL application.

Prior to his employment with the City of Fort Lauderdale, Chris served from 2006 to 2018 with the City of Gainesville, Florida, as Intergovernmental Affairs Coordinator and Code Enforcement Division Manager. He also worked as a Planner with Marion County's Community Development Department.

Chris holds a Bachelor of Science in Political Science from Florida State University and a Master of Arts in Political Science with a focus on Public Affairs from the University of Florida. He is a Credentialed Planning Professional with the American Institute of Certified Planners, and a Credentialed Code Enforcement Professional with the Florida Association of Code Enforcement. Chris is an active member of the International City/County Management Association, the Florida City and County Management Association, and the Broward County City Manager's Association.

Please join me in congratulating Chris on his recommendation for appointment. Thanks in general for your support of staff as we continue to evolve and transition.

Attachment:

1. Chris Cooper Resume

c: D'Wayne M. Spence, Interim City Attorney
David R. Soloman, City Clerk
Patrick Reilly, City Auditor
City Manager's Office
Department Directors

CHRISTOPHER E. COOPER, AICP

Professional Experience

CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE, FLORIDA

2018 - Present

The City of Fort Lauderdale is the largest municipality in Broward County, FL and one of the largest cities in Florida. The City is approximately 36 square miles and has a population of 184,000.

Assistant City Manager

7/2025 – Present

- Executive leadership portfolio of the Community Redevelopment Agency, Community Services Department, Development Services Department, Fort Lauderdale Executive Airport, and Office of Neighbor Support.
- Leadership of the City's homelessness programs to further the City Commission's priority of the City's Homelessness Response.
- Report to the City Manager and serve as Acting City Manger in the absence of the City Manager.

Acting Assistant City Manager

8/2024 – 7/2025

- Responsible for executive leadership of the Development Services Department, the Office of Neighbor Support, and the City's response to homelessness.

Achievements

- Enhanced the City's response to homelessness by coordinating multiple departments and functional areas within the organization to holistically respond to the needs of the community.
- Led efforts to further City Commission priorities through City ordinances related to the City's sidewalk network, affordable housing, historic preservation, mixed-use development, homelessness, and short-term rental properties.
- Successfully worked with Broward County to secure a ten (10)-year extension of the Northwest-Progresso-Flagler Heights Community Redevelopment Area.
- Completed the restructuring Invest Fort Lauderdale to allow for the entity to receive 501(c)(3) status and become fully implemented.

Director – Development Services Department

2022 - 2024

Deputy Director – Development Services Department

2018 - 2022

- Provide executive leadership for Urban Design and Planning, Code Enforcement, Engineering, Building Services, Business Tax, Citywide Customer Support, Zoning and Landscape, and Administration Divisions. Includes the management of six division managers and 291 full-time employees with a total department budget of \$36.5 million.
- Handle a wide variety of special projects and assignments of high complexity and importance and oversee projects to ensure satisfactory and timely completion.
- Serve as an advisor and liaison to city management and the City Commission and provide

strong leadership at both strategic and transactional levels including planning, managing and supervision of day-to-day operations of multiple department functions.

Achievements

- Led the development review team for transformational projects including: 18,000 seat Major League Soccer Stadium, \$900 million / 525,000+ square feet convention center expansion, and more than 1 million square feet of downtown office / retail development.
- Consolidated the City's multiple customer service call centers into a unified group within the Development Services Department. Developed training and standards of operation for customer interaction and response to service requests.
- Implemented a new customer relationship management platform. Included procurement and the configuration of the CRM platform as well as implementation across all City departments.
- Implemented a \$5 million cloud-based land management and electronic plan review software platform.
- Moved forward significant policy directives related to affordable housing, historic preservation, long-range form-based code master plans, transfer of development rights, and downtown high density development standards.

CITY OF GAINESVILLE, FLORIDA

2006 – 2018

City of Gainesville, located in North Central Florida, serves as the host community to the University of Florida and is home to 126,000 residents. The City of Gainesville is a full-service municipality including electric, gas, and water/wastewater utilities.

Code Enforcement Division Manager

2012 – 2018

Interim Code Enforcement Division Manager

2009 - 2012

- Responsible for providing leadership and general supervision to Code Enforcement staff of 17, including two supervisors, four administrative positions, and 11 field officers. Supervision included abiding by a collective bargaining agreement. Duties included assigning and directing work, conducting performance evaluations, strategic planning, and managing a \$1.2 million division budget.
- Provided information and policy recommendations to the Assistant City Manager, City Manager and City Commission. Provided community outreach and responded to inquiries related to the Neighborhood Improvement Department and Code Enforcement.

Achievements

- Created and implemented the first strategic plan for Code Enforcement. The plan has been updated as part of the City's overall strategic planning program.
- Successfully completed a City Commission Strategic Initiative to increase the effectiveness of code enforcement. This included the implementation of a Special Magistrate for code enforcement hearings and enhanced data collection and use of

metrics to improve service delivery.

- Enhanced the internal and external user experience by implementing a new case management tracking system to replace an outdated legacy system, a citizen online and app based 311 citizen service request system that has been expanded to other departments within the organization, and a GPS fleet tracking system.

Intergovernmental Affairs Coordinator

2006 – 2013

- Provided a recommended Federal and State legislative agenda to the City Commission.
- Coordinated legislative priorities with City departments, Alachua County, the University of Florida, Santa Fe College, other outside agencies, and stakeholders.
- Directed the activities of contracted lobbyists at the state and federal level and led the solicitation for lobbyist services and the management of lobbyist services contracts.
- Coordinated the grant process for city departments and serve as a point of contact for granting agencies. Part of capital project management team to ensure grant funded capital projects were complete within parameters set by the granting agency.
- Managed the City Manager’s City Commission agenda item process.

Achievements

- Secured \$9.7 million in grants through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. Included funds for economic development, public safety, public infrastructure, public transit, community services, and energy conservation.
- Served as the Chair of the Alachua County Local Mitigation Strategy Workgroup tasked with ranking projects for disaster recovery grant funds. Secured \$1.3 million to retrofit City facilities and improve public infrastructure.
- Successfully obtained \$500,000 from the State of Florida for an innovative project to improve storm water facilities and create an environmentally sound public recreation amenity.
- Gained approval from the Florida Legislature to allow Santa Fe students access to public transit using student fees. This effort greatly expanded the City’s regional transit program’s service area.
- Led the implementation of initiatives included in the City’s “Streamlining Local Government” study. This included amendments to City Commission rules, administrative procedures, and the code of ordinances.

MARION COUNTY, FLORIDA

2004 – 2006

Marion County is a full-service local government in north central Florida with the City of Ocala serving as the County seat. The County is 1,663 square miles with a population of 339,167.

Planner II

2004 – 2006

- Prepared reports required by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)

and the State of Florida to secure and maintain Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program, HOME Investment Partnership program, and State of Florida State Housing Initiatives Partnership (SHIP) program.

- Managed capital projects to ensure the construction process and completed project was done within guidelines set by federal and state granting agencies.
- Conducted detailed statistical analysis and research related to economic and community development, public facilities, affordable housing, fair housing regulation, and homelessness.

Achievements

- Developed Marion County’s initial Annual Report on Fair Housing.
- Implemented the Community Services Department’s first Geographic Information System (GIS) program focused on community development and affordable housing.

EDUCATION

University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida **2004**
Master of Arts – Major coursework in Political Science with a focus on Public Affairs.

Florida State University, Tallahassee, Florida **2001**
Bachelor of Science, College of Social Sciences and Public Policy – Major coursework in Political Science

PROFESSIONAL ENGAGEMENT AND CREDENTIALS

- Florida City and County Management Association (Member since 2007) – Membership Committee (2015-2019), Awards and Scholarships Committee (2019-2021), and Professional Development Committee (2020-2024).
- International City/County Management Association (Member since 2007) – Successfully completed the Emerging Leaders Development Program (2019) and the High Performance Leadership Academy (2022).
- American Planning Association and the Florida Chapter of the American Planning Association. AICP credentialed planning professional.
- Florida Association of Code Enforcement – Certified Code Enforcement Professional; Legislative and Judicial Review Committee; and Program/Conference Planning Committee.
- National Incident Management System (NIMS) certified with completion of ICS-100, ICS-200, ICS-300, ICS-400, ICS-799 and ICS-800.