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## **Face Time: Lisbon Finance Director Samantha Bryant on the rewards of municipal work**

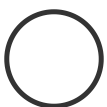
'I love that in municipal government I get to directly help people and can easily see the tangible results of those efforts.'

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**Kendra Caruso**

Sun Journal

LISBON — Starting with daily comic strips, Lisbon Finance Director Samantha Bryant, 36, developed a love for newspapers from a young age, she said. As an adult she considers consuming news her favorite hobby. She studied journalism in college, but ended up making a career out of municipal government work – following in many of her family members' footsteps.



Lisbon Finance Director Samantha Bryant. *Submitted photo*

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“Local government is the family business so to speak, as most of my relatives on my mom’s side of my family work either for a school, town or county – so it’s something I was exposed to my entire life,” she said.

Before she came to Lisbon, she worked for towns in South Carolina, living there for 20 years, and Pennsylvania, living there for 15 years, she said. About a year and a half ago she came to Lisbon.

“I learned a lot from each experience and feel I made positive contributions to all of those communities, which gives me a lot of pride,” she said.

**When you were studying journalism in college, did you intend to become a reporter?** While I first started as a computer science major, after a semester my heart compelled me to switch to journalism. I had a strong interest in being a sports or political reporter. Shortly after graduating though, I decided to try my hand at political public relations work instead.

**How did you make the leap from journalism/public relations to municipal finance?** My first thought was to do work in either elected office or advocacy communications. However, I became uncomfortable with the lack of stability in those positions. To move toward a career in local government management, I attended graduate school at the

University of Pennsylvania, which offered not just the master's in public administration but the option for various specialties including my certificate in municipal finance. I feel that even if you have an idea with tremendous benefit, it's not going to happen without the necessary funding.


**What made you want to stay working in municipal government, and specifically finance?** I love that in municipal government I get to directly help people and can easily see the tangible results of those efforts. I've heard from seniors who rode the bus route I helped create for them; families with children scared of speeders on their road that speed bumps fixed; business owners able to thrive and expand thanks to zoning changes; and public events that get people away from their screens and help build community. And most important to me, I've been proud of doing all that everywhere I've been – mostly without raising property taxes. The ability to do that is what has always drawn me to municipal finance, and why I'm glad I get to focus on it now for the town of Lisbon.

**What attracted you to Lisbon?** I grew up in communities in South Carolina that were of similar character as Lisbon. Places where kids can safely ride their bikes, people look out for each other and there's a lot of community pride and history. Lisbon has all that, with the benefit of summer weather that isn't brutally hot – most of the time. Local government work is much more rewarding when you're genuinely interested in serving and investing in the community, and Lisbon is definitely like that for me. In addition, as a transgender woman, the town office is a place where I'm free to dedicate myself to my work for the residents without distractions related to who I am. Finally, I have so much respect for our town manager, Glenn Michalowski, and our assistant town manager, Sarah Bennett. Having experience in those roles, it was important to me to work under professional municipal leadership. It's amazing to see the work they do on behalf of residents, and the work culture dedicated to public service they are cultivating at Town Hall.

**What are some of the interesting aspects of your job that the public might not know about?** In my work to try to save taxpayer money, you never know what sort of research you have to do. To name a few examples: in Lisbon alone, I've had to learn things such as the most efficient way to dispose of cat litter (to manage disposal costs at

the Transfer Station), the nuances of electricity supply (to manage energy costs), and how our vehicles are used (to determine if leasing or purchasing is more cost effective). While our department heads certainly know far more about how to run their departments than I do, in order to provide the financial advice that town management and the Town Council expect of me, I have to know a little bit about everything in the town.

**Are there other municipal management positions you hope to strive to in the course of your career?** I'm focused on learning and growing in my current role so I can be the best finance director for the town of Lisbon that I can. I'm grateful that I had the opportunity recently to complete the Professional Development Academy (headlined by Colin Powell), and soon will be working on becoming a certified public finance officer. I'm very fulfilled by the opportunity I have in Lisbon to serve its residents and try not to take that for granted each day.

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