

MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF AUGUST 20, 2019

Mayor Patricia Randall called the meeting to order at 4:32 p.m. The following Councilmembers were present: Councilmembers Chris Burns, Richard Ford, Lori Knapp, Claudette Reid, Terry Urban, Mayor Pro Tem Jim Pearson and Mayor Patricia Randall. Also present were City Attorney Randy Brown, Deputy City Manager I/City Clerk Adam Herringa and Mr. Dave Krings and Mr. Robert Slavin of Slavin Management Consultants.

Mr. Slavin reviewed the process used to recruit candidates. He explained that the application window remains open though no applications have been received recently. Mr. Slavin informed City Council that over 40 applications were received and the list was ultimately narrowed to 10. He explained that the candidates have a variety of backgrounds but most are from the Midwest. All candidates, he stated, had requested confidentiality. At the conclusion of this meeting, he continued, the hope is to have a short-list of candidates. Mr. Slavin emphasized that time is important as candidates are being considered for other jobs. He concluded his comments stating that any offer would be contingent upon a background check.

Councilmember Reid inquired what was involved in the background check and Mr. Slavin stated that it involved reference checks and a site visit. He explained that such a check must be authorized by the candidate and takes a couple of weeks.

Mayor Randall shared that City Council would be discussing candidates with the goal of getting a top three identified and interviewed by the end of August. She suggested that, should a second interview be needed, it could be conducted the same day as the first interview. Mr. Slavin stated that most candidates indicated interview availability in August but a candidate would likely not be able to start until 30 days after selection.

With regard to the interview sessions, Mayor Randall commented that the last time a City Manager was hired the process was too lengthy. Mr. Slavin stated that the process used last time was atypical. Mr. Slavin stated that interviews should be held in public and that City Council should consider asking questions in a "round robin" fashion. He then suggested a Friday/Saturday interview process. Mayor Randall suggested that interview options not be limited to Fridays and Saturdays given the proximity of many of the candidates. Councilmember Reid suggested that a decision on number of candidates to be interviewed occur after candidates are ranked and questioned the need to move swiftly to select a City Manager given the significance of the decision. Mayor Randall concurred that City Council should move ahead with ranking of candidates and then make a determination as to how to proceed with interviews.

Motion by Pearson, seconded by Reid, to move into closed session for the purpose of discussing applicants who requested confidentiality. Upon a voice vote, motion carried 7 to 0. City Council went into closed session at 4:48 p.m.

Mayor Randall returned the meeting to open session at 6:22 p.m. Mayor Randall inquired if City Council was ready to rank the candidates or if an alternative method to short-list should be utilized. Councilmember Ford suggested that, rather than ranking all ten candidates, only five be ranked. Once the five are ranked, he continued, City Council can then decide how many to invite for interviews.

Councilmember Urban commented that he would have preferred a larger and stronger

list of candidates and asked Mr. Slavin for his thoughts. Mr. Slavin confirmed that it is not the strongest list but he is concerned about waiting too long as several candidates are under consideration for other jobs. Mr. Slavin continued by stating that the City of Portage has a deadline and there are several candidates worth consideration. Councilmember Urban inquired if there were indications why additional good candidates may not have applied. Mr. Slavin responded and indicated several reasons why candidates were reluctant to apply but assured City Council that a negative connotation about Portage was not cited by a single candidate as a reason he or she did not apply. Mr. Dave Krings commented that the search can continue after the interviews.

Mayor Pro Tem Pearson stated that, in his experience, a focus on recruiting candidates from the Midwest is preferred as candidates from other parts of the country often have differing salary and other expectations. He then stated appreciation that a hard application deadline was not used. Next, he expressed his preference that City Council rank the candidates and then determine how to proceed.

City Council then ranked the candidates according to their preferred choice and the rankings were entered and averaged. Councilmembers Burns, in reviewing the results, indicated that City Council clearly had a preference for one and likely two candidates to bring in for interviews but not a strong indication for a third.

Mayor Randall inquired of Mr. Slavin if it made sense to bring in just one candidate or if more would be preferred. Mr. Slavin commented that only bringing in a single candidate would be limiting and recommended that an additional candidate or candidates be interviewed. City Council then discussed how many candidates to bring in for interviews and Councilmember Reid noted that there is a clear preference for a second candidate. Mayor Pro Tem Pearson agreed with the suggestion of Councilmember Reid that at least two candidates be interviewed. Councilmember Urban questioned if the top two choices according to the ranking sheet accurately reflects the best candidates. Councilmember Ford pointed out the value of meeting someone in-person and suggested two or three candidates be interviewed. Councilmember Burns suggested additional candidates be solicited and Mayor Randall shared her preference that City Council conduct interviews of at least two of the current candidates. Mayor Randall, City Council and Mr. Slavin then reviewed schedules and availability of candidates to schedule interviews.

City Council next discussed the interview process and determined that a full interview by City Council is preferred and Councilmember Ford raised a question as to whether one-on-one interviews between Councilmembers and candidates could be held. Mr. Slavin stated that such a process could work and City Attorney Brown expressed reservations with one-on-one interviews. Mr. Slavin reviewed why a one-on-one interview is sometimes utilized. Councilmembers Ford and Urban expressed support for one-on-one interview opportunities and City Council discussed the length of the interview sessions and potential dates. City Council settled on Wednesday, August 28th as the date for all interviews with 30 minute one-on-one interviews being held in the morning starting at 8:00 a.m. until noon with public interviews held in the evening beginning at 5:00 p.m.

Motion by Urban, seconded by Ford, to invite candidates F and G to the City of Portage

on Wednesday, August 28th to meet with Councilmembers individually one-on-one and that City Council meet for public interviews that evening at 5:00 and 6:30 p.m. to conduct two separate interviews. Upon a voice vote, motion carried 7 to 0.

ADJOURNMENT: Mayor Randall adjourned the meeting at 7:01 p.m.

Adam Herringa, City Clerk