

MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF AUGUST 28, 2019
CITY MANAGER CANDIDATE INTERVIEW SESSIONS

Mayor Randall called the meeting to order at 12:35 p.m. The following Councilmembers were present: Chris Burns, Richard Ford, Lori Knapp, Claudette Reid, Terry Urban, Mayor Pro Tem Jim Pearson and Mayor Patricia Randall. Also present were Deputy City Manager Rob Boulis, City Attorney Randy Brown, City Clerk Adam Herringa and Dave Krings of Slavin Management Consultants.

Mayor Randall reviewed the interview process for the benefit of the audience and Attorney Brown reviewed types of interview questions that would and would not be permissible. Deputy City Manager Rob Boulis and Deputy City Manager I/City Clerk Adam Herringa shared that each candidate had been given tours of the city.

RECESS: 12:45 p.m.

RECONVENE: 1:00 p.m.

City Council interviewed Ms. Lisa Imus for the position of City Manager. Mayor Randall welcomed Ms. Imus and provided a brief review of the interview process and invited Ms. Imus to begin by providing an introductory statement. Ms. Imus reviewed her background, experience, skills and employment history.

Following her statement, Mayor Randall initiated the interview. City Council asked questions and Ms. Imus responded to questions related to economic development in Portage and uncertainty of the retail sector, difficult management decisions and how she handled them, efforts to increase productivity/efficiency via technology, challenges she sees facing the City of Portage, personal strengths and areas for improvement, working with staff and residents of diverse cultural backgrounds, why she feels she is a good fit for Portage and vice versa, communication style with staff, residents and City Council, history with collaborating with other governmental entities, management style, how she responds when City Council disagrees with a recommendation, ability to strike a balance between competing interests, ethical dilemmas she has faced, approach to addressing an underperforming staff member, information related to her separation from a previous employer and exposure to environmental regulations and implementing green initiatives.

Mayor Randall opened the floor to questions that had been submitted by members of the audience. Mr. Dave Krings read the questions and inquired as to whether there is a place for local government to take a position on matters of global concerns such as climate change, when a program or endeavor should be discontinued, how much effort and how many resources should be devoted to innovation and economic growth, role of tax abatements and other incentives in the economic development process and when eminent domain should be utilized.

RECESS: 2:20 p.m.

RECONVENE: 2:43 p.m.

City Council interviewed Mr. Joseph La Margo for the position of City Manager. Mayor Randall welcomed Mr. La Margo and provided a brief review of the interview process and invited Mr. La Margo to begin by providing an introductory statement. Mr. La Margo shared details relating to his background, experience, skills and employment history.

Following his statement, Mayor Randall initiated the interview. City Council asked questions related to economic development in Portage and uncertainty of the retail sector, experience in revitalizing a shopping mall, difficult management decisions and how he handled them, efforts to increase productivity/efficiency via technology, challenges he sees facing the City of Portage, personal strengths and areas for improvement, working with staff and residents of diverse cultural backgrounds, why he feels he is a good fit for Portage and vice versa, communication style with staff, residents and City Council, history of collaborating with other governmental entities, management style and how he responds when City Council disagrees with a recommendation.

Mayor Randall opened the floor to questions received from the audience. Mr. Krings asked the same audience questions of Mr. La Margo that were asked of Ms. Imus. No additional questions were received from the audience.

RECESS: 4:13 p.m.

RECONVENE: 5:00 p.m.

Mayor Randall reconvened the meeting and the interview of Ms. Lisa Imus for the position of City Manager resumed. City Council asked questions related to experience in managing capital projects, engagement in public/private ventures, efforts related to fiscal responsibility, how she would identify organizational strengths and weaknesses, how she might respond to an economic downturn, why she chose to serve on a school board, experience related to crafting a budget and reducing debt, management experience related to public safety departments, efforts related to improving services to the business community, experience in working with unions, how she works to anticipate problems, steps she would take to encourage affordable housing, how she would engage with the community, experiences related to visioning and strategic planning, experiences in dealing with flooding, whether her experience in running a private business has helped her as a government official, how she views the relationship and communication between staff and Councilmembers, how she would work to engage citizens, how she would foster relationships with corporate citizens, her views on the importance of relationships with state lawmakers and how she would work to encourage businesses to remain or relocate to Portage.

Mayor Randall opened the floor to questions received from the audience. Mr. Krings asked Ms. Imus questions on behalf of the audience related to her comfort level in taking risk, how much investment should be made in innovation and growth initiatives and what type of resources should the city be offering to assist mid-size businesses.

There being no further questions, Mayor Randall invited Ms. Imus to ask questions of City Council. She inquired as to citizen feedback on three years of decreasing millage rates.

City Council reviewed how this was accomplished along with the various funding sources of the city. Mayor Pro Tem Pearson commented that the City of Portage has a demanding citizenry with high expectations. The Mayor and Council thanked Ms. Imus for her time and consideration.

RECESS: 6:24 p.m.

RECONVENE: 6:45 p.m.

Mayor Randall reconvened the meeting and the interview of Mr. Joseph La Margo for the position of City Manager resumed. City Council asked questions related to communication between staff and Councilmembers, ability to strike a balance between competing interests, how he might respond to an economic downturn, why he changed from a career path in Illinois state government to a career in local government, experience related to addressing flooding and high water, experience in managing public/private ventures and capital campaigns, experience in addressing issues important to senior citizens, experience related to needing to do more with fewer resources, how he would evaluate strengths and weaknesses of the organization, promoting affordable housing, debt reduction, managing budgets, staffing level differences between Orland Park and Portage and what skillset he may be lacking that could be supported by staff.

Mayor Randall opened the floor to questions received from the audience. Mr. Krings asked the same audience questions of Mr. La Margo that were asked of Ms. Imus following her second interview. No additional questions were received from the audience.

There being no further questions, Mayor Randall invited Mr. La Margo to ask questions of City Council. Mr. La Margo asked City Council for their thoughts and vision as far as what could make the community transition from good to great, City Council expectations for the first 90 days and whether the City Council has engaged in strategic planning or if they are interested in doing so. Councilmembers took turns responding to Mr. La Margo's questions. The Mayor and City Council thanked Mr. La Margo for his time and consideration.

Mayor Randall commented that she was impressed by both candidates but intended to recommend appointment of Mr. La Margo. Mayor Pro Tem Pearson stated he was most impressed by Mr. La Margo and this sentiment was echoed by Councilmembers Burns, Ford and Knapp. Councilmember Reid concurred that Mr. La Margo was a strong candidate but indicated she was uncertain as to whether she was convinced he was the right choice given that City Council had just conducted a lengthy interview session and she had not yet had time to reflect.

Mayor Pro Tem Pearson suggested a potential motion to confirm the recommendation of Mayor Randall. City Attorney Brown opined that this Special Meeting was not noticed to include the confirmation of a candidate but rather to be focused on candidate interviews. Mr. Brown stated that Mayor Randall is welcome to make her recommendation known. City Council, Mr. Brown and Deputy City Manager Boulis reviewed potential next steps in the process and potential motions. Mayor Randall formally stated her recommendation that Mr. Joseph La Margo be appointed as the next City Manager of Portage. Following additional

deliberation as to the best way to proceed, Motion by Pearson, seconded by Knapp, that City Council supports the recommendation of the Mayor that Mr. La Margo be the next City Manager. Attorney Brown assured City Council that the motion and vote were non-binding and that a vote confirming the appointment would be appropriate at the Regular City Council Meeting scheduled for September 3, 2019. Upon a roll call vote, motion carried 7 to 0.

ADJOURNMENT: Mayor Randall adjourned the meeting at 8:48 p.m.

Adam Herringa, City Clerk