

**MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE PORTAGE CITY COUNCIL
REGARDING CITY COUNCIL APPLICANTS
JULY 14, 2020**

Mayor Patricia Randall called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. The meeting was held virtually in accordance with the Governor's Executive Directive 2020-02 in light of COVID-19. The following members were present in Chambers: Councilmember Lori Knapp and Mayor Patricia Randall. The following members were present via the WebEx meeting platform: Councilmembers Chris Burns, Claudette Reid, Terry Urban, and Mayor Pro Tem Jim Pearson. Also in attendance were City Manager Joe La Margo, Deputy City Manager Mike Carroll, Deputy City Manager Adam Herringa, City Attorney Randall Brown (WebEx), Communications Manager Mary Beth Block, and City Clerk Erica Eklov.

Mayor Randall began the discussion by thanking everyone for attending and reminding Councilmembers to relay their preferred mode of attending the upcoming July 21 Candidate Interview Session to the City Clerk.

Mayor Randall then asked for the Council's preference regarding the format of the candidate interviews, suggesting 15-minute sessions for each applicant. Councilmember Reid inquired whether the other applicants can be requested to abstain from attending the interview sessions of another applicant. Mayor Randall and Deputy City Manager Carroll confirmed this could be requested. Mayor Pro Tem Pearson relayed that prior interviews for the director of the Kalamazoo Consolidated Dispatch Authority had the same provision. Attorney Brown opined that the meeting needed to adhere to the Open Meetings Act but confirmed that applicants could be asked to refrain from sitting in on other interviews. Councilmember Urban agreed and noted that if an applicant chose to disregard the Council's request then it could also serve to influence the Council's decision regarding the applicant. Councilmember Burns agreed but noted that 15 minutes could be too short for a full interview.

Mayor Randall then asked for Council's preference regarding the pool of candidates and whether to short-list. Mayor Pro Tem Pearson stated that all of the candidates were great and suggested that Council agree on one to two questions for the interviews ahead of time. Mayor Randall agreed, stating that she would like to interview all of the candidates who applied. Councilmember Knapp and Councilmember Urban also agreed regarding the interview of all applicants.

Mayor Randall next posed a question about the length of the interview sessions. Mayor Pro Tem Pearson noted that this was an important decision and suggested sessions be 20 minutes in length. Mayor Randall, Councilmembers Reid, and Urban agreed.

Mayor Randall then asked the City Administration and the City Attorney to outline ethical procedures for the handling of candidates. Deputy City Manager Carroll responded that when City Council performs the hiring it is more unique than city staff positions that Human Resources would oversee. He recommended that the Council designate either one person on Council or one staff person as the point of contact for candidates. Attorney Brown stated that appointment for a Council vacancy is a legislative decision, which provides for more flexibility in the hiring and due diligence process, however, he stressed the Council maintains propriety and full disclosure. City Council then engaged the City Attorney regarding due diligence measures during the selection process.

Mayor Randall next asked whether Council was comfortable appointing the new candidate during the July 28th Regular Meeting. Councilmembers Knapp and Reid, as well as

Mayor Pro Tem Pearson, expressed a preference to maintain flexibility for a second set of interviews if necessary.

Mayor Randall next inquired if the proposed start time of 6:00 p.m. for interviews on July 21st with sessions each lasting 20 minutes was still preferable. Councilmember Burns recommended between 5:00 and 6:00 p.m. and Mayor Pro Tem Pearson suggested 5:30 p.m.

Mayor Randall then posed the question about the order of interviewing candidates. Deputy City Manager Herringa responded and had City Clerk Eklov randomly pull each candidate's name out of a bag to set the interview order. The candidates were selected as follows: Tim Earl, Fernando Costas, Jonathon Peer, Victor Ledbetter, Michael Slancik, and Peter Strazdas. Mayor Randall asked the City Clerk to contact each candidate to confirm their interview time.

Mayor Randall continued the discussion by asking the Council to select the desired interview questions. City Council then deliberated as to which questions should be posed. Councilmember Burns asked City Attorney Brown regarding questions that should be avoided. Attorney Brown responded and Deputy City Manager Herringa relayed that the City Clerk would be relaying an interview "Do's and Don'ts" handout from the Human Resources Department

Mayor Randall closed the meeting by summarizing the outcomes of the discussion, including starting interviews at 5:30 p.m. with 20-minute sessions and five-minute breaks in between, selection of five basic questions for each candidate, and preference to interview all six applicants without short-listing.

Motion by Reid, seconded by Urban, to proceed with individual interviews of all six applicants for the City Council vacancy. Upon roll call vote, motion passed 6 to 0.

ADJOURN: Mayor Randall adjourned the meeting at 6:49 p.m.

Erica L. Eklov, City Clerk