

City of Keene
New Hampshire

SPECIAL COMMITTEE – RECRUITMENT OF A CITY MANAGER

February 10, 2017 9:00 AM Conference Room, City Hall

Members Present:

Mitchell H. Greenwald
Janis O. Manwaring
Thomas F. Powers
Carl B. Jacobs
George S. Hansel
David C. Richards

Staff Present:

Patricia A. Little, City Clerk
Elizabeth Fox, ACM/Human Resources Director

Mayor Kendall Lane, Ex-officio Chairman

The Mayor called the meeting to order at 9:03 AM.

Minutes

On motion by Councilor Greenwald, voted unanimously to adopt the minutes from the meeting of January 26, 2017.

Recruitment Plan

Beth noted the City Council had accepted the recruitment plan and timeline at their February 2nd meeting. The dates of June 19 and June 20th would be reserved on the City Councilor's calendar for interviews. The meetings would be opened as public meeting and then the Council will go into a non-public session for the actual interviews. The Special Committee would be meeting on April 28th to finalize the interview questions and develop a writing exercise.

Public Input Survey

Beth distributed a memorandum from the Novak Consulting Group that outlined the results from the public input survey. Residents were asked the following questions:

- What are the 5 most important traits or characteristics in the next City Manager
- What should be the top three priorities during the first year
- What advice would you give to the next City Manager

The most important traits that emerged from the 117 discrete responses were (in the order of frequency):

- Fiscally responsible

- A visionary
- Respectful of the community and its heritage
- Strong leader
- Knowledgeable about management best practices
- Innovative
- Honest
- An effective communicator

The top priorities contained in 65 comments were (in the order of frequency):

- Focus on the financial management of the City including the current property tax rate and city spending
- Develop an economic development plan to revitalize the downtown area and bring in new sustainable businesses
- Establish a good working knowledge of the community and its vision by meeting with residents and businesses
- Develop a plan to protect social services and address the ongoing drug problem.

In terms of advice, of the 24 respondents, 16 provided words of advice for the next City Manager:

- Be innovative and open to change, especially in regards to economic development
- Be a strong, but approachable leader
- Be mindful to balance all quality of life factors
- Solicit input from the community
- Work to keep spending down

The committee referred to the responses in the survey of “fiscally responsible” and remarked that this could mean different things to different people – from “slash and burn” to a long term plan to reduce the property tax rate. In the end, the committee acknowledged that it is ultimately the City Council that has the final say on what “fiscally responsible” means.

Recruitment Brochure Text

The Committee turned its attention to the latest draft of the Recruitment Brochure. In terms of the residency requirement, it was noted that the usual timeline for a successful candidate to reside in the community was 12 months. The committee discussed options ranging from 4 months to 12 months. Beth suggested that tightening the timeframe could raise some fiscal issues and that, if necessary, an extension of the timeline could be negotiated. On motion by Tom Powers, voted unanimously to set the timeline for residency at six months from the date of appointment.

The Committee requested that an organization chart not be included in the brochure. They also reviewed the 1st year goals. With reference to goal #9, the Committee suggested the phrase “by the end of the first year” be removed. They also suggested that references to the “Chamber of

Commerce” throughout goals #2, #3, #5, and #7 be removed for a more generic reference to “stakeholders” or “partners.” The Committee also suggested that the document be entitled “First-Year Expectations” rather than “First-year Goals.” Beth indicated she would provide a draft of the edits to the Committee. It was also suggested that an informational memo from the Committee be provided to the City Council for their March 2nd meeting as an update on the Special Committee’s progress.

Next Meeting

The Committee will meet with the Novak Consulting Group on April 28th to finalize the interview questions and develop any writing exercises for the candidates. A work session for the Committee will be scheduled prior to that date. Beth indicated she would attempt to coordinate this meeting with the Standing Committee Chairs that typically meet with the Mayor on Friday mornings.

The meeting concluded at 9:45 AM.

Submitted,

Patricia A. Little
City Clerk