

**OFFICE OF THE CITY COUNCIL**

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**CITY COUNCIL PERSONNEL COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES**

**August 3, 2016**

**3:30 p.m.**

**Location:** City Council Conference Room A, Suite 425, City Hall – St. James Building; 117 West Duval Street

**In attendance:** Council Members Lori Boyer (Chair), Anna Lopez Brosche, John Crescimbeni, Garrett Dennis, Scott Wilson

**Also**: Cheryl Brown – Director/Council Secretary; Peggy Sidman– Office of General Counsel; Jeff Clements – Council Research Division; Kelli O’Leary and Diane Moser – Employee Services Department

See attached attendance sheet for additional attendees

**Meeting Convened**: 3:31 p.m.

Council President Boyer convened the meeting and the attendees introduced themselves for the record. Ms. Boyer said that she would be distributing City Council organizational charts and job descriptions for all positions to the committee members for their review.

Director Cheryl Brown explained that the Council has advertised for the position of Chief of Legislative Services and for the Administrative Assistant II position in the Administrative Services Division. Ms. Brown recused herself from the process and let Laura Dyer, the Council’s personnel officer, and the Employee Services Department handle the advertising and review and ranking of applications after providing them with the basic information about what qualifications were being sought for the positions. Kelli O’Leary reported that Employee Services had received 67 applications for the Chief of Legislative Services position, found 45 to be qualified and 22 not qualified, ranked the 45 qualified applications and produced a list of the recommended top 10 candidates to be considered for interviews. Rankings were made based on education, years of experience (particularly records management experience), amount of direct governmental experience, and amount of office management experience.

The committee asked to see the top 10 list and their qualifications to determine how many should be brought in for interviews, which will be done by the committee as a group. Council Member Dennis requested to see resumés of the candidates, not just the City standard application form, before deciding whom to invite for interviews. He finds personal resumés more informative than an application form. The committee will meet next week to decide how many candidates to interview. Ms. O’Leary reported that 7 of the candidates live in Jacksonville, 3 out of town, and at least one of those is out of state. She will help craft a set of standard questions to be used in the interviews based on instructions to be provided by Cheryl Brown about particular skills, experiences, etc. relevant to the position. The draft questions will be circulated to the committee for comments before finalization. Employee Services will tally the committee’s score sheets and produce a post-interview ranking.

Ms. Brown reported that Employee Services had received 100 applications for the Administrative Assistant II position, of which 54 were deemed to be eligible, 18 of which passed the position test, and only 4 of those were deemed worthy of interviews based on their qualifications. She plans to re-advertise for the position because the applicant pool was fairly poor. Kristi Sikes, Chief of the Administrative Services Division, noted that prior experience with the City’s FAMIS accounting system and JaxPro procurement system would be a tremendous asset, eliminating the need to train a new employee from ground zero on the systems. President Boyer suggested contacting FSCJ to advertise the position to students who may have an AA degree and bookkeeping or accounting experience. Others suggested that all the local colleges be informed of the position and asked to advertise it to their students. Ms. O’Leary said that modern technology allows jobs posted on one or two web sites to be quickly picked up and reposted on numerous job search sites.

The committee discussed other Council personnel matters. Ms. Boyer indicated when the new fiscal year begins the Council will hire a new employee for the Value Adjustment Board using converted part-time hours, and will hire a new Research Assistant in the Research Division using funds repurposed from the Assistant Chief of Legislative Services position that will not be filled. In response to a question from Council Member Dennis the committee discussed succession planning for a number of the council staff positions. A number of the senior employees, including all of the division chiefs, joined the City within a few years of each other and are all approaching eligibility for retirement within the foreseeable future. Ms. Boyer said that cross-training of staff is important so that every job can be done by at least two members of the staff so that there is no loss of capability in the event of vacation, serious illness, sudden retirement, etc. No job can be so specialized that only one employee knows how it works and the Council’s operations would be crippled if that employee suddenly left. Ms. Brown said that cross-training is commonly done, although knowledge of the Access database program on which the boards and commissions records are kept is currently limited to one employee. She advocated for a further discussion of cross-training and succession planning at a future Personnel Committee meeting.

Council Member Wilson requested information on the job duties of all the Council employees, including who is backing up whom on all tasks. He believes the council has a problem with losing some of its best employees to other departments that pay higher salaries. Ms. Boyer lamented the fact that the Government in the Sunshine law compels Council to discuss personnel matters in open meetings, which puts council members and employees in an uncomfortable position with salaries, job performance and other personal matters being discussed in open sessions with co-workers and sometimes the media present.

In response to a question, Laura Dyer stated that no council employees are in the DROP (Deferred Retirement Option) plan, which only applies to police and fire employees. General government employees are eligible for a “backdrop” program under which the employee can announce her/his retirement without advance notice and request that their retirement benefit be recalculated to a prior year (any point past a minimum of 30 years of service), and be paid service in a lump sum the accumulated amount of pension benefits would have been paid out from the backdrop date to the date of actual separation from service. Chairwoman Boyer requested a list of the council employees who have 20+ years of service and will eligible to retire in the next few years. Ms. Brown echoed the earlier comment that the council has lost good employees who could have advanced to senior positons but took higher paying jobs in other departments or with the independent authorities. It is hard to retain those employees if they see that opportunities for advancement are non-existent until long-time employees retire or leave. She cautioned that the council staff is in for major changes in the next 5 to 7 years as senior leadership all reach full retirement eligibility. Ms. Boyer asked that the committee members be provided with copies of all the performance evaluations currently being performed of the council staff.

Ms. Boyer also reported that she had received an anonymous letter alleging that some executive council assistants (ECAs) are not working full 40 hour weeks and are frequently absent from City Hall. She will consult with Employee Services about what, if any, potential liability may accrue to council members who approve timesheets for 40 hours worked if, in fact, ECAs may not be working all the hours claimed. Ms. Brown said that this issue had been raised a year ago and a staff meeting was held at which the policies regarding attendance and completion of timesheets were discussed. All employees should be on notice that accurate reporting is expected and council members need to understand that they are accountable for tracking their ECAs’ hours and attesting to those hours by signing the timesheets. Council Member Dennis suggested that all council members be asked to sign a document indicating that they have been informed of and understand that responsibility, and that they be informed of the several public officials who have been charged with crimes for falsely attesting to hours not actually worked by employees. Council Member Brosche agreed that the regulations in the employee handbook need to be reiterated to all employees and council members so that everyone clearly understands the policies.

**Meeting adjourned:** 4:52 p.m.

Minutes: Jeff Clements, Council Research

8.8.16 Posted 9:30 a.m.

Tapes: Personnel Committee meeting – LSD

8.3.16