

**OFFICE OF THE CITY COUNCIL**

**RESEARCH DIVISION**

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**CITY COUNCIL PERSONNEL COMMITTEE**

**Meeting Minutes**

**January 7, 2022**

**10:00 a.m.**

**Location:** Lynwood Roberts Room, 1st floor, City Hall

**In attendance:** Council Members Sam Newby (Chair), Terrance Freeman, Brenda Priestly Jackson, Ron Salem, Aaron Bowman

**Also**: Kim Taylor – Council Auditor’s Office; Jeff Clements – Council Research Division; Paige Johnston – Office of General Counsel; Diane Moser and Leah Hayes – Employee Services Department; Cheryl Brown – Council Secretary/Director; Bernadette Smith – Legislative Services Division; Steve Cassada, Yvonne Mitchell, Eric Grantham – Information Support Services

**Meeting Convened**: 10:04 a.m.

President Newby convened the meeting and the attendees introduced themselves for the record. Mr. Newby thanked Cheryl Brown, Kristi Sikes and Katrina Fisher for their decades of service to the City Council.

Diane Moser, Director of Employee Services, distributed and explained the City’s hiring procedures. She reviewed the job description and requirements for the Council Secretary position and said the Personnel Committee will only see applications that meet the advertised requirements. In response to a question, Ms. Moser said that her department is very strict in ensuring that candidates meet the mandatory minimum requirements before an applicant can be considered. Council Member Bowman said that he is very interested in having a desk audit done of the Legislative Services Division and suggested that might impact on the timing of the Council Secretary hiring decision. If the group chooses to hire the Council Secretary before such an audit is performed, then the Council should make clear to the selected candidate that it wants such an audit performed as an early task in their tenure.

**Motion** – approve the job description and minimum qualifications as distributed -

**Public Participation**

Carnell Oliver said that Cheryl Brown has been invaluable in explaining to him how city government works and advocated for hiring someone as Council Secretary who has the public’s best interests at heart and who will be open, transparent and unbiased.

**The motion was approved unanimously.**

Council Secretary Cheryl Brown said that she has enjoyed her nearly 32 years of service to the City Council and respects the council members with whom she has worked over all those years who have had the best interests of the citizens of Jacksonville at heart. She has had a great team of fellow employees over the years who have done outstanding work. She wished the committee good luck with its hiring process.

Ms. Moser recommended that the position be advertised both inside and outside city government and that it be advertised for 2 weeks. Should less than 15 qualified applications be received, she recommends extending the window for additional time. The salary range for the position is $136,000 – $222,000; she recommends posting the position at $150,000 - $200,000. Ms. Moser distributed and discussed a candidate evaluation matrix showing a list of sample questions to be posed to applicants. The matrix will generate a list sorted into well qualified, qualified, and minimally qualified candidates. If 10 or fewer qualified candidates are generated, Employee Services will give the committee all applicant information. If more than 10 candidates are ranked, Employee Services will produce a matrix for the committee summarizing their qualifications to simplify the review process.

Ms. Moser asked how many candidates the committee wants to interview – a small group of the top candidates only or a larger pool The committee will vote on how many to interview at the end of the meeting after further discussion. The Employee Services Department will do a social media search for the candidates selected for interviews to look for any potentially troubling items and will inform the committee members privately so they are aware and can ask about it during interviews. Employee Services will develop a set of interview questions for the committee to consider. She recommends that the committee choose 2 top candidates as their finalists so that if the top choice drops out, the second can be negotiated with without the need for the committee to meet again to select the second choice. Employee Services will engage in all communication with the candidates before and after the interviews. Ms. Moser explained that veteran’s preference now applies to department director positions after a recent change in state law, and she explained how the preference is applied to candidates, moving them up one category in the ranking.

Council Member Priestly Jackson asked why a two-week application window was recommended, which seems short to her. Ms. Moser said that she believes there will be tremendous interest in the position and a substantial number of quality applicants will present themselves in that time. Ms. Priestly Jackson recommended a longer window to widely publicize the position and attract the best possible candidates to apply. Mr. Bowman said he is comfortable with two weeks as recommended because of the need to get the position filled as rapidly as possible. Council Member Salem said he leans toward 30 days. In response to a question from Council Member Freeman about whether 2 weeks is sufficient time for Employee Services to compile all of the applicant information into the evaluation matrix, Ms. Moser said that the 2 weeks is just the application window; evaluation and ranking will take more time after the window closes. She said the best-case scenario would see the position filled by the end of February if a good pool of qualified candidates is received in the initial application window and the top candidates are local residents. Mr. Freeman said he is agreeable with a two-week window. Chairman Newby said he leaned toward a 30-day window to attract the best possible candidates for the position that hopefully will be filled by the new hire for many years to come. Ms. Priestly Jackson said this is a very specialized, niche position and she believes that a 30-day application window is justified to get the best possible qualified candidates.

**Motion** – approve a 30-day advertisement posting period

**Public Participation**

None

**The motion was** **approved unanimously**.

Council Member Priestly Jackson asked that the advertisement be published in the *Jacksonville Daily Record* as well as the other venues discussed earlier, which Ms. Moser confirmed.

In response to a question from Council Member Priestly Jackson, Ms. Moser described how she arrived at the recommended salary range for posting, which she believes gives candidates a more realistic idea of what the potential salary would be rather than the absolute top of the range which would be unrealistic except for an exceptionally qualified candidate. Council Member Bowman asked how the existing salary range for the position was set. Ms. Moser explained the various factors that are considered and how they are evaluated within the context of comparison to the responsibilities other similar City jobs and the external job market. Ms. Priestly Jackson said she would prefer that the full salary range be posted. Mr. Bowman said that the posted range does not limit what the Council can offer to a highly qualified candidate.

Council Member Priestly Jackson asked that a matrix of qualifications be prepared for the committee regardless of the number of qualified candidates received, even if less than 10. Council Member Salem recommended that the committee interview between 3 and 5 candidates rather than just a top two.

**Motion** – approve the hiring process and job specifications as distributed with three revisions as discussed previously:

1) A 30-day application period rather than 2 weeks.

2) Employee Services to provide a matrix of candidate qualifications regardless of the number of qualified or well qualified candidates identified (even if 10 or fewer).

3) Employee Services to recommend a list of not less than 3 nor more than 5 top candidates for interviews by the Personnel Committee.

**Public Participation**

None

**The motion was approved unanimously.**

In response to a question from Mr. Bowman, Ms. Moser recommended that Selection Committee members not speak to potential candidates about the position except to direct them to the application web site.

**Chief of Administrative Services**

Ms. Moser distributed and discussed the job specifications for the position, noting that it does not require a bachelor’s degree but does include a requirement for previous managerial or supervisory experience. Chairman Newby thought it was unusual that this position requires managerial experience when the Council Secretary position did not. Mr. Salem said that the committee can ask questions about managerial experience to the Council Secretary applicants to judge that capability. He also said he believes the Chief of Administrative Services position should require a bachelor’s degree. Ms. Moser said that the absence of a degree requirement allows the possibility of hiring an internal candidate who has risen through the ranks and has relevant experience without a degree. In response to a question from Mr. Bowman, Leah Hayes said the salary for the current incumbent is $109,000. Mr. Bowman suggested that, as the Tourist Development Council did earlier in the week, the committee should list a bachelor’s degree as a preferred qualification.

**Motion** – approve the job specifications as distributed with the addition of a bachelor’s degree as a preferred qualification -

**Public Participation**

None

**The motion was approved unanimously.**

Chairman Newby recommended that a Chief of Administrative Services be hired whom he will designate as the Acting Council Secretary while that search is conducted. He nominated Yvonne Mitchell of the Council’s Information Support Services division as the new Chief of Administrative Services.

**Motion** – appoint Yvonne Mitchell as the new Chief of Administrative Services -

Mr. Newby distributed Ms. Mitchell’s resume’ and Ms. Mitchell described her tenure with the City and her previous job experience. Several committee members praised Ms. Mitchell’s can-do attitude and her service to the Council. Council Member Salem asked about who is designated by the Ordinance Code to be the interim Council Secretary in the event of a temporary or permanent vacancy in the position. Ms. Moser said that the Code provides that the Chief of Legislative Services is the interim Council Secretary solely for the purpose of being the official signatory for legislative purposes, otherwise there is no formal provision for a designated replacement.

Mr. Salem said that the Ordinance Code needs to be amended to specifically provide for an interim Council Secretary and the other committee members agreed. Ms. Moser and Paige Johnston of the Office of General Counsel said that the Council President has the authority to designate an interim Council Secretary. In response to a question from Mr. Salem, Ms. Mitchell said that she would continue to provide information support services during her service as Chief if she is appointed to that position. Mr. Freeman recommended that the Personnel Committee take a comprehensive look at the Ordinance Code provisions regarding the Council’s management structure to look for gaps or inconsistencies such as the ones the current discussion has highlighted. Ms. Moser recommended that the committee pay Ms. Mitchell the same salary currently being paid to the Chief of Legislative Services, and noted that Ms. Mitchell’s current salary cannot be increased until the appointment is formally approved by the Council. Ms. Johnston described the legislative process for the appointment, with introduction of the resolution on an addendum to the agenda next Tuesday, Ms. Mitchell being interviewed by the Rules Committee the following week, and final action by the Council on January 25th.

**Public Participation**

None

**The motion was approved unanimously.**

Chairman Newby directed that the appointment resolution be introduced on an addendum to the agenda next Tuesday for one-cycle approval. Ms. Johnston explained the timing of the appointment process and said that that pursuant to the job description of the Council Secretary that position reports to the Council President and, as such, the Council President could designate one of the division chiefs to fill that interim role while the search process is conducted.

**Meeting adjourned:** 11:28 a.m.

Minutes: Jeff Clements, Council Research Division

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