

**OFFICE OF THE CITY COUNCIL**

**RESEARCH DIVISION**

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**CITY COUNCIL PERSONNEL COMMITTEE**

**Meeting Minutes**

**March 16, 2022**

**9:00 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**: Paige Johnston – Office of General Counsel; Diane Moser and Leah Hayes – Employee Services Department; Jeff Clements – Council Research Division; Bernadette Smith and Maritza Sanchez – Legislative Services Division; Eric Grantham – Information Support Services

**Meeting Convened**: 9:06 a.m.

Chairman Newby convened the meeting and the attendees introduced themselves for the record. Council Member Bowman shared with the committee that the Davis College of Business at Jacksonville University has offered to have an MBA summer class perform a study of the City Council’s organizational structure and staff and make recommendations for improvements. Council Member Salem recommended that the students come to the office and directly observe how the staff spend their working day. Council Member Priestly Jackson said she felt that interviews with former council members and staff with institutional knowledge of the council’s operations would be helpful to the students in gaining a full understanding of the work. Council Member Freeman asked if the University of North Florida had been offered the opportunity to participate. Mr. Bowman said he first approached Jacksonville University and, with their agreement, had not gone on to contact UNF.

**Motion**: authorize CM Bowman to finalize discussions with Jacksonville University’s Davis College of Business to facilitate a review of the City Council’s organizational structure and staff by a class in the graduate business program – **approved 5-0**.

**Public comment** – none

**The motion was approved 5-0.**

Diane Moser, Director of Employee Services, said that anything written by the council members during the interviews becomes a public record and should be limited to factual comments only, not personal feelings about candidates. One of the candidates (Jessica Matthews) withdrew her name from consideration, so there will be 5 interviews today. Ms. Moser said she had previously discussed the standard interview question list with each committee member individually and distributed the list to each member with question assignments. The interviews are scheduled for 1 hour each, with a 1-hour lunch break and an hour at the end of the day for discussion and a decision. She said that follow-up or clarification questions are allowed, but cautioned against adding any additional substantive questions to the standard list. She recommended selecting the top candidate at the end of the day and also a second candidate in case an agreement can’t be reached with the top candidate. Once a top candidate is selected, then a salary and starting date can be discussed.

Candidate Interviews

Kimberly Hicks was interviewed with the standard list of questions.

Margaret “Peggy” Sidman was interviewed with the standard list of questions.

Diane Moser notified the committee that Kristy Linster had removed herself from consideration for the position and would not be interviewing.

**The committee was in recess from 11:45 to 1:45.**

Kathleen Collins was interviewed with the standard list of questions.

Chiquita Moore was interviewed with the standard list of questions.

Committee Discussion

Chairman Newby asked each member to rank their top three candidates. The results were as follows:

CP Newby: Ms. Sidman, Ms. Moore, Ms. Collins

CVP Freeman: Ms. Sidman, Ms. Moore, Ms. Collins

CM Priestly Jackson: Ms. Sidman, Ms. Collins/Ms. Moore tied

CM Salem: Ms. Sidman, Ms. Moore, Ms. Collins

CM Bowman: Ms. Sidman, Ms. Collins, Ms. Moore

Ms. Sidman was the committee’s unanimous first choice for the position. If she accepts the offer, the appointment resolution will be drafted as one-cycle emergency legislation. There was a discussion regarding salary and a start date. The members commented on the length and breadth of Ms. Sidman’s service to the City and the value of her institutional knowledge. The position’s salary range is $136,189.80 - $222,350.52 annually.

**Motion** (Salem): offer the Council Secretary/Director position to Margaret Sidman at a starting salary of $200,000

**Public Comment**

None

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

**Motion** (Bowman)**:** should Ms. Sidman decline the offer, the committee opts to not automatically offer the job to the second-ranked candidate and will meet again to determine a future path

**Public Comment**

None

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

Diane Moser left the meeting to extend the offer to Ms. Sidman.

Council Member Priestly Jackson advocated for requiring Ms. Sidman to keep her Florida Bar license active because of the unique nature of her qualifications which was a factor in the committee’s favorable consideration of her candidacy. Council Member Salem advocated for adding that as a requirement in the Council Secretary/Director Expectations document. Council Member Bowman disagreed with making retention of a law license a mandatory requirement. Council Member Freeman said that Ms. Sidman’s institutional knowledge of the Council and its operations was the primary factor in his decision to rank her as the top candidate, not her law degree or Florida Bar membership. Assistant General Counsel Paige Johnston said that the Office of General Counsel currently pays the Bar Association fee for the City’s attorneys. Council Member Bowman echoed Mr. Freeman’s statement that Ms. Sidman’s possession of a law license and Bar Association membership had no bearing on his ranking of her as the top candidate and reiterated his opposition to making that a requirement of her acceptance of the position. President Newby said he felt the same – Ms. Sidman was the top candidate regardless of whether she was a lawyer or not.

Ms. Moser returned to the meeting and said that Ms. Sidman was excited about the offer but wished to discuss the benefits package regarding allowances and associated benefits.

**Motion** (Salem)**:** the committee delegates to President Newby and Ms. Moser the authority to negotiate non-salary benefits with Ms. Sidman (e.g. payment of organization membership fees, communications allowance, etc.)

Council Member Priestly Jackson asked if the offer letter could be tailored to cover these other associated non-salary benefits and the issue of Florida Bar membership; Ms. Moser said it could. Ms. Priestly Jackson requested that the motion be amended to include the development of an offer letter to Ms. Sidman containing the specifics of non-salary benefits (i.e. what specific association memberships will be paid by the City) and that it include a requirement that she maintain any professional licenses she currently holds. President Newby agreed to the inclusion of that amendment in the motion.

**Public Comment**

None

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

The committee agreed to discuss a start date with Ms. Sidman and with General Counsel Jason Teal.

Prior to adjourning, President Newby thanked everyone involved in the process for their hard work and assistance in a successful search. He shared that the Research Division will remain staffed with 3 employees (at one point there were 5), and that pursuant to his direction the internal Information Technology function is now under the direction of the Council’s Chief of Administrative Services.

**Meeting adjourned: 3:42 pm**

Minutes: Jeff Clements, Council Research Division

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