

**OFFICE OF THE CITY COUNCIL**

**RESEARCH DIVISION**

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**CITY COUNCIL PERSONNEL COMMITTEE**

**Meeting Minutes**

**April 19, 2022**

**4:00 p.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– Employee Services Department; Jeff Clements – Council Research Division; Yvonne Mitchell – Administrative Services Division; Steve Cassada – Information Support Services; Peggy Sidman – Council Secretary/Director; Kim Taylor – Council Auditor’s Office

**Meeting Convened**: 4:05 p.m.

Chairman Newby convened the meeting and the attendees introduced themselves for the record.

Discussion of Council Staff Changes

Chairman Newby introduced Council Secretary/Director Peggy Sidman who proposed that Merriane Lahmeur of the Office of General Counsel and formerly of the Legislative Services Division be appointed to the position of Chief of Legislative Services. Ms. Sidman described Ms. Lahmeur’s educational qualifications and history with the City government.

Ms. Lahmeur described her 16-year career with the City, including 7 years in the Council’s Legislative Services Division before her move to the Office of General Counsel in that office’s Legislative Affairs Division supporting the work of the City Council. She highlighted how her previous experience in both offices makes her a highly qualified candidate for the position.

In response to questions from Council Member Bowman, Ms. Lahmeur described her management style and her ideas for mentoring and career management in the office to reduce the staff turnover rate. She said she would like to develop a career path to provide a means for advancement within the office, giving each staff member a sense of their importance to the overall process. In response to a question from Council Member Freeman, Ms. Lahmeur described how she would address some of the agenda production and technology problems the Council has faced in its meetings in recent months.

Council Member Salem asked about whether the job description for this position should say anything about who acts in the role of the Council Secretary/Director when that person is unavailable. Ms. Sidman said that she would be working with the Jacksonville University College of Business team that will be doing an organizational study of the Council staff this summer on developing recommendations for that temporary succession. Until then, the provisions of the Ordinance Code will be followed.

Council Member Priestly Jackson said there is a need for a culture shift in the Legislative Services Division and asked how Ms. Lahmeur would handle that shift. Ms. Lahmeur said that the division needs a fresh start with a new leader who emphasizes teamwork and mutual success, which she will offer. Council Member Priestly Jackson lauded Ms. Lahmeur’s legal knowledge which will be very helpful in the legislative process.

President Newby expressed great confidence in the Council’s staff leadership with the recent hires of a new Council Secretary/Director and two division chiefs in addition to the existing division chiefs and expressed his belief that a strong team is now in place.

**Motion** (Bowman): the Personnel Committee recommends the hiring of Merriane Lahmeur as Chief of Legislative Services

Public Comment

None

**The motion was approved unanimously.**

Paige Johnston of the Office of General Counsel said that she would prepare an appointment resolution for the Personnel Committee’s introduction by the filing deadline tomorrow, with one cycle emergency passage requested.

Ms. Sidman asked for authority to negotiate a salary within the position’s salary range and commensurate with those of the other division chiefs. The committee agreed to that delegation of authority and asked Ms. Sidman to present the offer letter to the Council President for approval before a final offer is made.

Council Member Freeman expressed some concern about the impact to the City Council’s legal representation with its hirings of Ms. Sidman and Ms. Lahmeur away from the Office of General Counsel. That office is losing a great deal of experience and a history of council members’ trust in a crucial office that serves the Council’s legal needs. He is interested in knowing how the General Counsel’s Office plans to fill those vacant positions to ensure that the City Council’s needs continue to be met.

**Meeting adjourned:** 4:28 p.m.

Minutes: Jeff Clements, Council Research Division

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4.20.22 Posted 5:00 p.m.