



**OFFICE OF THE CITY COUNCIL
RESEARCH DIVISION**

117 WEST DUVAL STREET, SUITE 425
4TH FLOOR, CITY HALL
JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA 32202
904-255-5137

CITY COUNCIL PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

Meeting Minutes

**February 24, 2025
2:30 pm**

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

In attendance: Committee Members White (CP), Carrico (CVP), Salem (Finance Chair), Howland (Rules Chair), and Johnson; Council Member Lahnen

Also: Mary Staffopoulos, Office of General Counsel; Yvonne Mitchell, Chief of Administrative Services; Merriane Lahmeur, Chief of Legislative Services; Colleen Hampsey, Council Research; Todd Norman, Employee Services

Meeting Convened: 2:30 pm

Council President White convened the meeting and called for introductions. Council Member Lahnen talked about Ordinance 2025-108, which created a Value Adjustment Board Division within the Office of the Council Secretary. Council Member Lahnen talked about Heather Pelegrin's years of experience managing VAB.

Motion/2nd CMs Johnson/Howland to appoint Heather Pelegrin as Chief of the Value Adjustment Board Division, contingent upon Ord. 2025-108 being approved city council and becoming effective, and direct OGC to file a resolution on behalf of the Personnel Committee as an in-and-out emergency for council confirmation on March 11, 2025.

Public participation: Mr. Nooney

Council Member Salem asked about Ms. Pelegrin's salary increase. Ms. Lahmeur said that there is a nominal salary increase, and she reminded the group that the School Board pays 2/5 of VAB expenses. CM Lahnen talked about how the VAB caseload has grown.

Approved unanimously (5-0) by voice vote.

Beyond Feedback staff survey results

Todd Norman, Employee Services, said the survey had 86% (37 of 43 staff members) participation from staff. He introduced George Taylor, Beyond Feedback, who spoke about the executive summary from the survey. He reviewed the responses to some of the questions related to leadership effectiveness and staff satisfaction. Mr. Taylor said that the engagement score (a composite of favorable responses from 3 questions) was 66.7% below the 81.1% national norm, and leader effectiveness (composite of favorable responses from 7 questions) was scored at 33.5%, below the national norm of 76.3%. Mr. Taylor noted the results from the team morale question, 13.5% compared with the national norm of 71.5%. He discussed the responses to questions about meaningful work, rated at 86.5%, compared to national norm of 94.6%.

Mr. Taylor talked about recommendations for improvement: utilizing documentation, decreasing perceptions of favoritism, listening to staff feedback, changing fear-based leadership style, changing leadership at the director-level, improving morale and communication, and creating a plan for the Chief of Legislative Services to improve collaboration across divisions. Mr. Taylor recommended repeating the survey in 6 months, to assess progress.

Council Member Howland said the survey results confirm the already recognized issues with the office climate. He spoke in opposition to fear-based leadership. Council Member Salem talked about the need and requirement for an annual staff survey. Council Member Johnson asked Ms. Lahmeur about plans for improvement in the Legislative Services Division. She indicated she was surprised by the results and is willing to work toward change. Council Member Johnson recommended an action plan. He said that the full final report will be made available. Council Member Salem asked about some respondents skewing the results with negative responses to all questions. Mr. Taylor said there was variance in the responses, in that no respondent answered completely in the negative or positive direction.

Council Vice President Carrico noted the stark result from the morale question, compared to the national norm. He extended appreciation to Ms. Mitchell and Council President White for taking on added responsibilities in the absence of a council director. Council Vice President Carrico said that staff deserves new leadership.

Motion/2nd CMs Carrico/Salem to appoint Jason Teal as Council Secretary/Director, and to authorize the Council President to negotiate salary within the current range for the position and other benefits with Mr. Teal, direct OGC to file a resolution on behalf of the Personnel Committee as a one-cycle emergency for council confirmation of this appointment.

Council Member Howland provided an update on the status of negotiations with the previous director related to her administrative leave. He extended appreciation to Rita Mairs, OGC, who assisted with the negotiations.

Public participation: Mr. Nooney

Jason Teal, OGC, said the survey results will provide a road map. He spoke about his experience with OGC, and he emphasized the goal of running council staff smoothly and seamlessly. He said he was up for this challenge and he verbally accepted the committee's nomination.

Council Member Johnson indicated that Mr. Teal's nomination is too rushed. He spoke about the valuable work of council staff. Mr. Teal said his role is to support staff and encourage growth, both of which were stifled in recent years. He talked about soft skills, like empathy. Council Member Johnson asked if Mr. Teal would accept the position on an interim basis. Mr. Teal said such circumstances would create too much uncertainty for staff.

Council Member Salem spoke in support of Mr. Teal, and he asked if Mr. Teal may provide guidance in times when council is in disagreement with the General Counsel. Mary Staffopoulos, OGC, explained that legal services for council are provided by OGC, per Charter. There was discussion about the council secretary/director's role, how that will mesh with Mr. Teal's legal background, and what types of guidance are permitted. Council Member Howland indicated his support for Mr. Teal based on his years of invaluable experience.

Approved unanimously (5-0) by voice vote.

Council Member Johnson talked about Ms. Mitchell and her history of stellar service throughout her time with council, particularly recently and a few years back in the absence of a director. He talked about augmenting her salary in compensation for her performance. Ms. Staffopoulos mentioned state statutes that prohibit bonus pay, and she indicated it would be permissible for the council president to work with Ms. Mitchell regarding a salary increase.

Motion/2nd Johnson/Howland to authorize the council president to explore opportunities to compensate Ms. Mitchell for her additional responsibilities in the absence of the council secretary/director.

Approved unanimously (5-0) by voice vote.

Public comment: Mr. Nooney

Ms. Staffopoulos talked about the legislation for Mr. Teal's appointment and how it may have a prospective date since Ms. Sidman's administrative leave is not over and that position is still technically filled. With no further business, Council President White adjourned the meeting.

Meeting adjourned: 3:28 pm

Minutes: Colleen Hampsey, Council Research

CHampsey@coj.net 904-255-5151

2.28.25 Posted 5:00 p.m.