

Governing Body Special Meeting Minutes – January 31, 2017

COUNCIL CHAMBER, Topeka, Kansas, Tuesday, January 31, 2017. The Governing Body members of the City of Topeka met in special meeting session at 6:00 P.M., with the following Councilmembers present: Councilmembers Hiller, Ortiz, Emerson, De La Isla, Jensen, Schwartz, Coen and Harmon -8. Mayor Larry E. Wolgast presided -1. Absent: Councilmember Clear -1.

AFTER THE MEETING was called to order, Mayor Wolgast asked for a moment of silent meditation.

THE PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE was recited by those present in the chamber.

DISCUSSION of the Request for Proposal responses (RFP) received and possible action concerning selection of an Executive Recruitment Firm to recruit for the vacant City Manager position was presented.

Councilmember Schwartz reported on the results of an electronic survey she distributed to her constituents for the purpose of gathering input on the process. She stated the majority of responses received opposed hiring an executive recruitment firm and supported hiring Interim City Manager Doug Gerber as the permanent city manager; therefore, she would suggest offering Mr. Gerber a two-year contract for the permanent city manager position. She also stated she would prefer to defer the item until February 7, 2017 so all Governing Body members would be present to vote on the matter.

Councilmember Schwartz moved to defer action concerning selection of an executive recruitment firm until February 7, 2017. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Coen.

Councilmember De La Isla stated hiring an executive search firm would present the City with the best candidates possible as well as her constituents support the hiring of an executive search firm.

Mayor Wolgast stated Councilmember Clear expressed her support to move forward with the process in her absence.

Councilmember Hiller stated she would support the discussion of the executive search firms who have responded to the RFP, followed by selection of two firms to evaluate further and take action on the selection at the February 7, 2017 Governing Body meeting.

Councilmember Ortiz spoke in support of selecting a firm and moving forward with the current process.

Mayor Wolgast spoke in support of utilizing an executive search firm as it would provide a professional level of service to the recruitment process.

The motion to defer action concerning selection of an executive recruitment firm until February 7, 2017 failed. Councilmembers Hiller, Ortiz, Emerson, De La Isla, Jensen, Harmon and Mayor Wolgast voted “no.” (2-7-0)

Jay Oyler, Contracts and Procurement Division Director, stated it would be appropriate to discuss the proposals in general; however, specifics of each firm could not be discussed in an open meeting setting.

Lisa Robertson, City Attorney, provided an overview of the options available to the Governing Body.

1. Delegate to staff the responsibility to further interview and vet the top two companies for purposes of making a final selection; or
2. Invite the top two companies to a future meeting at which they will make presentations during a public meeting, followed by selection at some point soon thereafter; or
3. Vote, via ballot(s), to proceed with choosing the company with which the Governing Body would like Human Resources staff to negotiate a contract.

Councilmember Harmon moved to direct staff to negotiate a contract with Strategic Government Resources as the executive search firm for recruitment services for the city manager position. The motion was seconded by Councilmember De La Isla.

Councilmember Hiller expressed concern with approving a firm before references are checked and believes there should be at least two firms considered before negotiations. She spoke in support of further review of Strategic Government Resources, Colin Baenziger & Associates and The Novak Consulting Group firms.

Councilmember Schwartz spoke in opposition of hiring an executive search firm because she believes the process is not an efficient way to spend taxpayer money. She spoke in support of The Novak Consulting Group as she believes they would have the most experience in the hiring of a city manager for a city located in the Midwest region.

Jacque Russell, Human Resources Director, spoke in support of selecting Strategic Government Resources.

The motion to direct Staff to negotiate a contract with Strategic Government Resources as the executive search firm for recruitment services for the city manager position carried.

Councilmembers Hiller and Schwartz voted “no.” (7-2-0)

Councilmember Hiller stated she opposed the motion because she would like references checked before negotiations commence.

Jay Oyler stated references would be verified and then a contract would be negotiated within 10-14 days.

Councilmember Harmon requested the Governing Body be notified immediately if there are any issues with the references.

NO FURTHER BUSINESS appearing the meeting was adjourned at 6:48 p.m.

Brenda Younger
City Clerk