

Special City Council Meeting
5:30 p.m., Tuesday, March 5, 2019

A Special City Council Meeting was called to order at 5:30 p.m., Tuesday, March 4, 2019 in Council Chambers of City Hall, 1207 Palm Boulevard, Isle of Palms, South Carolina. Attending the meeting were Councilmembers Bell, Buckhannon, Moye, Rice, Smith and Ward, Mayor Carroll, Interim City Administrator Fragoso, City Attorney Copeland and City Clerk Copeland; a quorum was Council was present to conduct business. Councilmembers Ferencz and Kinghorn were absent.

1. Mayor Carroll called the meeting to order and acknowledged that the press and public were duly notified of the meeting in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act.

2. **Executive Session**

Executive Session in accordance with S.C. Code Section 30-4-70(a)(1) for discussion of personnel and employment matters and in accordance with S.C. Code Section 30-4-70(a)(2) to receive legal advice regarding contractual matters

MOTION: Mayor Carroll moved to go into Executive Session for the reasons stated above at 5:31 p.m.; Councilmember Ward seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Upon returning to open session, Council may take action on matters discussed in Executive Session.

City Council returned to open session at 5:41 p.m., and the Mayor announced that Council did not take a vote or any other action while in Executive Session.

MOTION: Councilmember Moye moved for the City to amicably sever the contract with The Mercer Group for convenience and to collect all of the applications and resumes he has received at which time the City will submit its second and final payment; Councilmember Buckhannon seconded.

AMENDMENT: Councilmember Ward moved to amend the motion the motion adding that the second and final payment is not to exceed \$13,000; Mayor Carroll seconded and the amendment PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

VOTE on Amended Motion: The amended motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Since the City was severing the contract with Mercer, Councilmember Moye stated that the next problem was how to move forward fulfilling the three (3) positions; he thought the City had two (2) options:

1. To seek out another search firm to take over the process or
2. To turn the balance of the process to the expertise of City staff.

He thought that Council should direct staff to conduct a screening for the positions with the Interim Administrator recusing herself from the screening of City Administrator candidates. The HR officer and the Interim Administrator would create the screening process for the applications and resumes received.

Councilmember Moye's next recommendation was that, for the sake of efficiency and speed, the City should move forward with the ten or eleven (10 – 11) candidates sent by Mercer for consideration unless the Public Safety Committee has some reservations about them. Based on the resumes and initial test results, they appear to be strong, high caliber candidates.

Councilmember Bell did have concerns, and one of them was that two or three (2 – 3) of the candidates were prior placements of Jim Mercer. He opined that these were recommendations of convenience and not the most qualified, but the candidates requiring the least amount of work for him. He noticed that a couple of the candidates had dismissals "for reasons that are inexplicable;" there were applications missing that he knew were qualified. He indicated that he was not "hung up" on who made the selection, but he was not comfortable that, of one hundred fifty-one (151) applications, he came up with this particular list. He also thought that consideration should be given to the proximity of the candidate to the Isle of Palms. He requested that someone or the Personnel Committee go through the applications/resumes with the diligence that the City had expected from Mercer.

When Councilmember Moye asked staff what kind of screening process they were thinking of, the Interim Administrator recognized that this was a high priority task and that she and HR Officer DeGroot could arrange their workload accordingly.

When Councilmember Bell commented that reference checks had not been done on the resumes Council received, Councilmember Moye stated that he did not think Mr. Mercer had spoken to the people he submitted, and he said that research has shown that resumes were worthless in terms of showing that someone was qualified or not.

Councilmember Buckhannon noted that several of the candidates had held previous positions for twenty or thirty (20 – 30) years. He did not want the City to hire a new Police Chief only to have him retire in five (5) years and for the City to be in the same situation it was in today. He would be interested in a candidate who has developed a network in law enforcement across the State.

Councilmember Rice agreed with Councilmember Moye that the batch of resumes they have received had some strong candidates that she would have liked to interview but she stressed that she was very concerned that the beach season was close and that the City has not even interviewed a candidate for the Chief of Police position. She asked that Council commit to a timeline to hire someone.

When Councilmember Smith asked about the process for selecting individuals to bring in for interviews for the City Administrator position, Councilmember Moye responded that the Interim Administrator and the HR Officer would agree on the process and the Interim Administrator would recuse herself from any involvement in that process.

Interim Administrator Fragoso thought the process of reviewing resumes and selecting the ones to invite to interview should be handled by the Personnel Committee with the HR Officer assisting only as support.

On the subject of establishing a timeline, Councilmember Moye recommended that it could begin once the City was in receipt of the applications and resumes from Mercer. He thought that a bias-free and objective pre-employment assessment should be used to select the top candidates and the assessment would likely choose the top twenty to twenty-five (20 – 25%) of the candidates. He thought the Personnel Committee could develop an interview-screening guide for HR Officer DeGroot and Interim Administrator Fragoso to begin to reach out to the candidates.

Responding to Councilmember Buckhannon's question, Interim Administrator Fragoso reported that she has reached out to a retired local police chief asking if he would consider being involved in the interview process for the City's new Chief, and he was eager to be involved. She added that this person was no longer involved in law enforcement.

Councilmember Ward asked if consideration had been given to a prospect interviewing with Police Department personnel, and the Interim Administrator replied that when the number of candidates get to the three (3) who will have personal interviews with Council, he/she will also have the opportunity to meet with the Police Department personnel.

Mayor Carroll thought that holding a "meet and greet" at the Rec Center for the island's residents to meet the finalists was important. HR Officer DeGroot commented that, although such a gathering was the plan in the beginning of the process, for the sake of time, the decision was made that holding such a gathering was not as important as once thought. As the elected officials, Council represents the constituents of the City of the Isle of Palms and they have put their faith in you to make decisions like these particularly since the City is down to the wire.

According to Councilmember Moye, Jim Mercer told the people on the short list that he sent to the City that he would be in touch with them today; therefore, he thought that should be contacted tomorrow explaining that the City was continuing to evaluate the candidates.

Interim Administrator said that she would take care of that.

3. Adjournment

MOTION: Councilmember Buckhannon moved to adjourn the meeting at 5:58 p.m.; Councilmember Bell seconded and the motion PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Respectfully submitted:

Marie Copeland
City Clerk