



Special Joint Personnel Committee and Public Safety Committee
10:00am, Tuesday, March 9, 2021
Virtual Meeting via Zoom call due to COVID-19 Pandemic
broadcasted live on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/user/cityofisleofpalms>

MINUTES

1. Call to Order

Present: Council members Moye, Bell, Pounds, Buckhannon, and Ward

Staff Present: Administrator Fragoso, Asst. Administrator Hanna

2. Purpose

Council Member Moye: The purpose of this meeting is to discuss the ongoing hiring process for a new Chief of the Fire Department. Desiree, if you would like to jump in. I would like to just kind of replay the scenario and the situation we find ourselves in, which we are not in a great spot obviously, but I'll kind of replay the scenario and then make a recommendation again unless you had anything prepared that you want to say about where we are.

Administrator Fragoso: Do you want me to fill out any gaps?

Council Member Moye: No, not necessarily. I just did not to cut you off if you had something you needed or wanted to say.

Administrator Fragoso: Do you want me to go through where we are?

Council Member Moye: I will go through it. I am not going to rehash every single detail of the process again. We have done that in several meetings before, but just recapping kind of the, what has happened since we made an initial offer to an external candidate that was not accepted. A majority of Council then recommended an internal candidate and that offer was, prior to being accepted, there were several, first of all, during the discussion several Council members indicated their support for a different internal candidate and in the course of making that offer you know that was widely known and there was concern expressed from the Fire Department that there was not a consensus or unanimity among Council for a single internal candidate. And subsequently given the feedback that, feedback from the Fire Department and from Council that lack of a consensus that internal candidate declined. And so we find ourselves in a position now where we have made two offers that have both been declined because of the manner in which that offer was not accepted and that we did get that feedback from the Fire Department. I would like to make it a recommendation, and **I will make it in the form of a motion that we go back to our finalist list of ten candidates, specifically going to the external candidates only, due to again that feedback that we got that they are looking for a full consensus support from Council behind a single candidate.**

Council Member Bell: Second.

Council Member Moye: Okay, now Desiree, if you have any other gaps you want to fill in, you are obviously welcome to do so, and I will kind of give you the floor first if there are any gaps to fill. Otherwise, I will open the floor for discussion.

Administrator Fragoso: I don't think that there is anything I need to add to your description, I guess, of the events that have led us to this point.

Council Member Moye: Okay.

Council Member Bell: John, I don't know if you can see. Ryan and Jimmy Ward both have their hands up.

Council Member Moye: Okay. Go ahead, Ryan. I don't know who came first. I'm sorry.

Council Member Buckhannon: So this motion was to open up to only external candidates?

Council Member Moye: Correct.

Council Member Buckhannon: Okay so I don't, I mean, we all received a letter this morning, that was received yesterday from a lot of the Fire Department staff voicing their support for a single candidate as well. Why would we not open it to both internal electoral candidates that are in the top ten.

Council Member Moye: Well because, I will just kind of restate what I just said. The discussion that we had previously around internal candidates, it was really between two candidates and you had a majority supporting one and a minority supporting another and subsequent to that discussion. I know Desiree heard from several individuals from the Fire Department that there was concern that there wasn't a unanimous support for one individual candidates from Council, and that is where we are looking for. Jimmy Ward.

Council Member Ward: Who is they?

Council Member Moye: The members of the Fire Department.

Council Member Ward: It looks like to me from their letter now that they are all supporting one internal candidate.

Council Member Moye: Well, Jimmy, you know there is conflicting information between messages that are being received so Desiree, I don't know if you want to speak to the meeting or meetings that you have had with members of the Fire Department but you know the letter to me, it does not change the fact –

Council Member Buckhannon: Just one more thing. Are you indicating that we cannot because there won't be a unanimous consent from Council that we cannot support anybody unless there is unanimous consent? And because there wouldn't have been as consent with the second internal candidates we are just going to bypass them?

Council Member Moye: I am not really going to entertain that discussion. Philip or Randy, do you have any comments?

Council Member Bell: I wouldn't presume that what John is insinuating, I think the simple fact is if we were to focus on an internal candidate, we are not going to have unanimous consent, and nor are we bound to have unanimous consent from Council. I will tell you personally that I have a very difficult time with a letter being circulated under the presumption that everybody willfully signed a letter and some concerns in that letter. This process has evolved into a mess frankly with this, and I think it is our responsibility to still determine who the best candidate is. And to John's point, I tend to agree at this point we should be focusing on an outside candidate.

Administrator Fragoso: John, if I may.

Council Member Moye: Sure.

Administrator Fragoso: You asked me about some of the feedback that we received, and I think we have all heart that there were concerns about sort of the process and whether or not the Fire Department had input in the process. And in order to address that I notified you all that I have engaged the services of HR consultants to conduct one-on-one interviews with the members of the Fire Department to try to identify some issues that I think have percolated during this process that we may or may not have been aware of that need to be addressed and that process is happening next week. So they are going to have an opportunity to provide feedback on the characteristics that they want to see in a fire chief for the department. That is information the Committee and the City will be able to use and to better understand the current state of the department.

Council Member Bell: Hey John, Jimmy Ward has got his hand up. Ryan does, too, actually. You cannot see people on your phone.

Council Member Moye: All right. Go ahead, Jimmy.

Council Member Ward: Why did we hire this outside consultant without talking to Personnel and Public Safety Committees? No matter how this vote goes, I am going to have my own motion. You all might not like it. I might not even get a second, but I do not like the way this is going at all.

Council Member Moye: Okay. Noted. That point is sort of not what we are voting on now, but I noted. I will go ahead and call for the vote.

Council Member Buckhannon: I still have, can you see me, John?

Council Member Moye: Yeah, but I want to go ahead and call for the vote. Nicole, do you want to –

City Clerk DeNeane: If Council Member Moye's second, I have to have a second.

Council Member Moye: Okay.

City Clerk DeNeane: I need a second if we are doing that.

Council Member Buckhannon: So we are done discussing this? You're moving forward?

Council Member Bell: Let's let John comment and then call for the vote.

Administrator Fragoso: So there is no second, so the motion to call for the vote fails.

City Clerk DeNeane: I think Council Member Bell just seconded the motion. Did you not?

Council Member Bell: I did, but I said let's, if procedure allows, let Ryan make his comments.

City Clerk DeNeane: Well, actually it does not. Procedure does not allow. Once you call the question, that mutes the discussion.

Council Member Bell: Call for the vote.

City Clerk DeNeane: Okay, so the motion on the floor, let me reiterate it, is to go back to the finalists list of candidates, that the list of 10 and to re-engage with them, with in the 10, the external candidates on the final list of 10. Is that correct, Council Member Moyes?

Council Member Moye: That is correct.

City Clerk DeNeane: All right. All right. Council Member Bell?

Council Member Bell: Aye.

City Clerk DeNeane: Council Member Ward?

Council Member Ward: Nay.

City Clerk DeNeane: Council Member Buckhannon?

Council Member Buckhannon: Nay.

City Clerk DeNeane: Council Member Pounds?

Council Member Pounds: Aye.

City Clerk DeNeane: Council Member Moye?

Council Member Moye: Aye.

City Clerk DeNeane: The motion passes 3-2.

Council Member Bell: Jimmy Ward has got his hand up.

Council Member Moye: I believe that covers the agenda. I don't think we have anything else on the agenda.

City Clerk DeNeane: Council Member Ward has his hand up, Council Member Moye.

Council Member Moye: Okay, go ahead, Jimmy.

Council Member Ward: I would like to make a motion that the Committee recommend appointing Jason Smith Fire Chief.

Council Member Buckhannon: Second.

Council Member Moye: All right.

Council Member Buckhannon: So here is for discussion then. So what if we are going through this HR survey, what if the internal, we are going to go through and interview all the fire personnel, if it comes through and all the HR and internal information that they are pulling from that recommends an internal candidate and you just made a motion to only pull from external? Would that matter?

Council Member Moye: The process is not going to recommend a singled candidate. That is not the purpose of the study, and frankly the study is not necessarily meant to identify who should or should not be hired. It is merely meant to capture feedback the Hiring Committee can use.

Council Member Buckhannon: But what I am saying is if you go through the study and the study shows that all the candidates, all the fire personnel would like to have an internal candidate, you just avoided that by only hiring from externally.

Council Member Moye: Well, I don't think the question is that they are going to go in and say do you want an internal or an external candidate for the Fire Department. They are rather going to look at issues with the Fire Department is my understanding. Anybody else have any comments?

Council Member Buckhannon: Desiree, can you elaborate on it?

Council Member Pounds: That is where I was headed.

Administrator Fragoso: The purpose of the personnel audit, it is not only to identify feedback from the department on what they want to see in the next fire chief. It is going to be inclusive of a lot of other questions. Actually, we are working through the questions right now with the experts that have done similar work with other fire and police departments. I think ultimately there is a hiring process that was followed, a hiring process that included different steps and I think that including other information should be what drives decision making for the department, for the hiring committee. I do not feel like a final decision should be based solely on the opinions of the members of the Fire Department. They should certainly have input, input that you all should use in decision making. But ultimately has to be sort of a structured hiring process which I think is what the goal was from the very beginning.

Council Member Pounds: Desiree, will these questions be coming, I guess, from the consultant and you guys narrow down a list essentially?

Administrator Fragoso: Yes, and I felt like it was important to have somebody who is independent, who does not know people and hopefully people feel comfortable sharing information one-on-one that would be helpful for me and it would be helpful for the Personnel and Public Safety Committees to identify any other issues that need to be addressed within the department. This is not solely about the hiring process, but a way or an avenue to allow them to provide input, which is the main concern that I heard from the department when the first offer was made.

Council Member Buckhannon: I am just, one more time if I might. Just one more quick question. In any hiring process that everybody has to, we are the ones making the decision on this. We all have to do our due diligence on this. I am just curious if anybody else on the Committee has had the opportunity to go down and walk through the Fire Department recently and talk with the personnel down there, if anybody has made the opportunity to try to meet with or if not, we are just going off paperwork and Zoom interviews.

Council Member Moye: Any other comments?

City Clerk DeNeane: There is a motion still on the floor for the Committee to make a recommendation to appoint Jason Smith as the Fire Chief.

Council Member Pounds: I think so, Nicole.

Council Member Moye: Okay, Nicole.

City Clerk DeNeane: So we are ready to vote on that?

Council Member Buckhannon: Yes, ma'am.

City Clerk DeNeane: Council Member Bell?

Council Member Bell: Nay.

City Clerk DeNeane: Council Member Buckhannon?

Council Member Buckhannon: Aye.

City Clerk DeNeane: Council Member Ward?

Council Member Ward: Aye.

City Clerk DeNeane: Council Member Pounds?

Council Member Pounds: Nay.

City Clerk DeNeane: Council Member Moye?

Council Member Moye: Nay.

City Clerk DeNeane: **Motion fails two to three.**

Council Member Buckhannon: Motion to adjourn.

Council Member Bell: Second.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:16am.

Respectfully submitted,

Nicole DeNeane
City Clerk