

MAYOR
THOMAS F. SLATER

VICE MAYOR
ROBERT F. AUWAERTER

COUNCIL:
JESSE I. "SAM" CARROLL, JR.
BRIAN T. FOLEY
DEBORAH H. PENISTON



TOWN MANAGER
ROBERT H. STABE, JR.

TOWN CLERK
LAURA ALDRICH

TOWN ATTORNEY
CHESTER CLEM

**MINUTES
SPECIAL CALLED MEETING
TOWN MANAGER CANDIDATE REVIEW**

3:30 p.m.

Thursday, November 29, 2018

6001 N. SR A1A, Indian River Shores, FL 32963

1. Call to Order

- a. Invocation
- b. Pledge of Allegiance
- c. Roll Call

The meeting was called to order by the Mayor at 3:30 p.m., followed by the invocation given by Mr. Stabe and the Pledge of Allegiance. The Town Clerk called the roll as follows: ELECTED OFFICIALS: Mayor **Slater**, Vice Mayor **Auwaerter**, Councilmember **Peniston**, Councilman **Foley**, and Councilman **Carroll**; STAFF: Town Manager **Stabe**, Town Clerk **Aldrich**, PSD Chief **Rosell**, Exec. Asst. **Fentress**, RESIDENTS: Bill **Driscoll**, Alfred **Kettell, Jr.** (The Shores), Nancy **Auwaerter** (Ocean Colony); GUESTS: WD **Higginbotham, Jr.** & Dona **Hunt**, The Mercer Group; Janet **Begley** (Press Journal); Lisa **Zahner** (VB 32963)

2. Mercer Group Presentation and Candidate Discussion

WD Higginbotham, Senior Vice President of The Mercer Group, has researched 37 candidates and narrowed it to four (4) finalists to present to the Council for review. A meet and greet for the candidates one day and an interview process for them the following day is recommended. The matrix was sent to the Council on the 26th, and Mr. Higginbotham had invited the Council to call him for private discussion.

Candidates reviewed were **Karie Friling**, **Mike McNees**, **David Stahl**, and **Brian Wilson**. Mr. Higginbotham reviewed Karie Friling's background and qualifications, mentioning her family in Florida and motivation. Council raised the issue of her involvement with travel expenses as reported in one newspaper article, and Mr. Higginbotham said it was not serious enough to cost her job, but seemed to be more of a sensationalistic newspaper reporting issue. If Karie Friling is selected for an interview, Mr. Higginbotham agreed to investigate this further and report back as soon as possible.

Mike McNees (3:54), the current city manager in Melbourne, caused some concern to Mr. Higginbotham in the difference between running a large city versus a small community in a hands-on manner, as well as the salary being much higher than what the Town is offering. The latest news received today is that Mr. McNees was fired this week with a 4-3 vote. He was let go for not being entirely truthful about looking for another job, not for performance, although looking for another job could be a cause for concern that he might not stay. They discussed his background and qualifications. He lives in Grant and this opportunity was very appealing to him, to be part of a small community that offers closer contact with residents. It was noted that he has experience in large and small cities, and may be looking forward to downsizing.

The third candidate discussed was **David Stahl** (4:15), who is interested in leaving the City of O'Fallon, Missouri due to the change in politics. He had 23 years' experience in Illinois and one year in Missouri and has dealt with flooding disasters. The most common concern expressed was the desire to leave his

current position after only one year. Mr. Higginbotham spoke in depth about the background check that would be performed on each candidate.

Brian Wilson (4:26), has been a village administrator of three different villages, each with a small population, over 10 years and would be hired by the village board and mayor, reporting to them all directly. Mr. Higginbotham explained in detail the difference between a manager and administrator. Mr. Wilson acted as a manager, although the mayor had the chief executive officer title. It was disconcerting that the website for the village where he worked did not have a more recent budget than 2015, and minutes from 2013.

Mr. Higginbotham **reviewed the schedule** (4:34) should the Council choose **to interview** any of the candidates. If we don't want to interview any of these candidates, Mr. Higginbotham said he will not stop until we find someone for the job, and we could even start the process over again. He said if that is the choice, he wanted to have individual discussions with the Council about what is wanted in the Town Manager. The Council did not think that would be necessary. Of 37 applications, 15 met the qualifications, and this is the top four of those 15. Full details are being given on a thumb drive to the Town Clerk on all of the candidates with all of the materials received.

3. **Council Recommendation**

a. Candidate Selection for Interview (4:42)

Discussion among the Council brought a consensus of candidates to interview as **Mike McNeese, David Strahl, and Brian Wilson**. Mr. Higginbotham will notify them tomorrow and receive their approval for background checks. They use a firm out of Walnut Creek California, Advanced Research Systems (ARS), which normally takes 10-14 days and an 8-12 page report will be in-hand before the interviews.

Vice Mayor Auwaerter made a **motion to instruct Mr. Higginbotham do background checks on McNeese, Strahl and Wilson before the individual December interviews with Council**, seconded by Councilman Foley, which **passed 5-0**. Mr. Higginbotham assured them he would not bring any of them here that have red flags, he will discuss it individually with each Council member.

b. Interview Dates & Process

He recommended scheduling accommodations for 2 weeks from tomorrow, roughly December 17, for the 2-hour Meet and Greet (special called open meeting) with the candidates and their spouse that evening with finger food, and individual Council interviews on the 18th. Another Special Called meeting would likely be set shortly thereafter for a decision.

c. Travel Reimbursement (*not discussed*)

4. **Invoice for Communication and Project Administration (OWB Road, Cape Canaveral Scientific)**

(Removed from the agenda)

5. **Audience Questions** (4:54)

Vice Mayor Auwaerter said a rate study for Indian River County was done, and an article in the paper showed that the reuse **water rates** will drop 31%, which the Town's franchise with the requires matching the County rates. The formal resolution should be done in January and rates become effective in March 2019. After it is formalized, a reminder letter of our agreement to the City would be appropriate. Large users of potable water will have an increase, and other changes with hook-up fees are also going to be in effect at this time.

Mayor Slater said the PSC voted unanimously to approve the sale of the electric utility from Vero to FPL. It will save the Town about \$2.5 million a year.

6. **Adjournment** (5:02)

Respectfully submitted,

Approved by Town Council at the December 11, 2018 meeting.

/s _____
Laura Aldrich