City of Columbus
Special City Council Meeting

DATE: November 7, 2023

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City of Columbus
Special City Council Meeting
Alternative Meeting Format
MN Statute, Section 13D.021
11.07.2023

The 11.07.23 meeting of the City of Columbus City Council was called to order at 6 p.m. by Mayor Jesse Preiner at City Hall. Present were Councilmembers Rob Busch, Ron Hanegraaf, Janet Hegland and Sue Wagamon; City Administrator Elizabeth Mursko, City Attorney Megan Rogers, Public Communication Coordinator Connor Keith and Public Works Director Jim Windingstad.

Also in attendance: Jack Davis, Deputy Treasurer Cheryl Jenkins (via teleconference), Permit Coordinator Carissa Kranz (via teleconference), Nicole (via teleconference), "Bob Ross" (via teleconference), +1 651-353-7482 and +1 763-267-3205

1. Call to Order – 6 p.m.
2. Pledge of Allegiance
3. Approval of Agenda

Motion by Hegland to approve the agenda as written. Seconded by Wagamon. Roll call vote: Hanegraaf – aye; Wagamon – aye; Hegland – aye; Busch – aye; Preiner – aye. Motion carries.

4. City of Columbus – Interim City Administrator Interview

Davis introduced himself to Council, sharing he's the current City Administrator at the City of East Bethel but will be leaving the position at the end of the year, likely at the end of November. Davis stated one of the reasons he's interested in the interim City Administrator position in Columbus is because he wants to remain in northern Anoka County.

Hanegraaf asked Davis why he is interested in the interim City Administrator position and what motivates him to do this type of work.

Davis: "Now, as I stated in my little brief introduction, I enjoy the work. I enjoy the challenges of it. I enjoy the satisfaction of seeing things accomplished. I think I have a lot to offer in this capacity. As I said before, I've been impressed with this City Council, and it would be one that I would especially like to work for. And I'd also like to demonstrate my abilities to you should I be a candidate for the full-time position."

Wagamon asked Davis what unique qualifications he would bring to the position.

DAVIS: "I think I have a varied background of experiences that have exposed me to a lot of things that have gone on at the city level in all facets of city government, from public works to planning to city administration. I think my track record has proven that I've had a have a good record of performance. I'm a person that has a total commitment to the job. I'm not an 8-4 guy. I come in early and leave late. I think I have the ability to work with people and people skills. I think I'm a good listener and communicate with them, and I think I have a real good understanding too of the way government and functions in northern Anoka County."

Preiner asked Davis where he'd served as an interim city administrator in the past.

DAVIS: “That was in East Bethel.”

Preiner continued, asking Davis what he sees as similarities and differences between Columbus and his role as City Administrator in other cities.

DAVIS: “Let me give you just a little bit of background on how I was the interim administrator in East Bethel. I came to East Bethel from Prescott, Wis., where I was the city administrator. I took a public works manager position in East Bethel in 2006 and was there in that position until the end of 2010. At the end of 2010, there was a City Council change, and another interim city administrator was appointed. That person didn't work out, so I was approached by the Council. To take over that position about the role, which I did in March of 2011, and in May I was promoted to the city administrator. To answer your question about the roles: In those roles, the administrative end of it was identical. The roles were entirely different. When I came into the East Bethel job, the whole City Council and the whole city were in turmoil over a vote to approve a bond project to finance a water and sewer project. So the first year I was there was kind of involved in trying to put the pieces back together, coordinating the project to get it done. There was a movement to try to stop it. They realized that to stop it would be more expensive than going forward with it, so it was a real learning experience to go through that kind of controversy and confrontation the first day you stepped on the job. So I think I learned and benefited quite a bit from that.”

Preiner asked if everyone was happy when the job was done.

DAVIS: “As happy as they could be in that situation. They kept me on the job then, so I guess that was some measure of success.”

Preiner asked what year Davis started in East Bethel.

DAVIS: “2011.”

Hegland asked Davis how he managed growth in his current city and what challenges he faced there, and how he streamlined processes in his current role.

DAVIS: “We typically manage the growth based on our comp plan, which I'm sure that everybody else does too. You know, it's a guide that kind of directs us as to land use activities and implementing it through zoning. We've used that in the past and it's our basic starting point for determining where we want residential and commercial. One thing about East Bethel, and I think that this kind of compares a lot to Columbus, is that we are a rural residential community. We have a four-lane highway, Highway 65, that runs almost through the middle of East Bethel from north to South. We have a corridor that we've designated along that highway 3/4 of a mile each side that's for higher density development, commercial and industrial spaces. The rest of the city, which is another 36 square miles is zoned as rural residential and the vision of the city is to develop that highway corridor but preserve the rural character of that rural residential district. So, in a lot of similarities were almost identical to Columbus. Not only do we share a common boundary and a common lake, but we also share a lot of similarities that we kind of went over the last time. You know, we are the largest city in Anoka County just by a little bit over Columbus in land area. I think we have the same cultures. You know, we, like I said, are a rural residential community. We're a bedroom community where most of the development is higher density, lots and we also, I think, have the same desires in their vision for development. Columbus, as you have your commercial corridor, which is two narrow areas, we have ours, which is an area through the city. Beyond that, the city plans to stay more in the rural development stage. We also, like Columbus, have a large acreage of public lands; not nearly as much as you have, but we have the University of Minnesota Ecosystem and Scientific reserve in the northern part of the city, which is close to 3000 acres, a couple

of wildlife management areas and Coon Lake. So, I figured it out: I think approximately 15 percent of our land is public lands, probably a greater percentage of Columbus's public lands – probably double that. But I think there's a lot of similarities between the two cities. I think we have the same core values and we're looking at the same development policies. Getting back to your question too, Janet, on how we manage growth. We've tried to selectively recruit those types of businesses we think would fit well into the city. We've tried to work with housing developers that offer a product that we think fits well with the vision of the city that provides enough density to support the utility extensions, but yet does not get into where it's the high density that you see in Blaine and some of the other areas. We're having some high-density growth, but we're trying to control it and keep it within that corridor, keep the rest of the area in its real character."

Hegland asked Davis to inform the Council how he has streamlined East Bethel planning processes.

DAVIS: "A lot of that relates to our building department. You know, we've finally gone online with applications for certain permits. We do take credit card payments now, which we haven't for a long time. We also have divided duties up in our department too. So we have better coverage for plan review where we're able to turn plans out quicker. Our Community Development director or planning director is more oversight than supervision over the building department to coordinate those activities with the planning departments. And we've tried to do things at the Planning Commission level to coordinate the pace of government with the pace of business and the pace of residents' needs. For example, we have no compulsion at all for calling special meetings if there's a time sensitive matter that needs to be addressed, which we have one call for next week on the 14th to do a closing so a business can close so they don't have to face a higher interest charge and the buyer can get their money so they can start financing some of the development they're doing on a new building. We recognize this is critical and you can't do things just every 30 days."

Busch asked Davis about his experience with the planning/zoning process.

DAVIS: "In a previous job, I was regional planner for a four-county service authority and my duties there were basically developing concept plans and land use plans. In lieu of areas that didn't have zoning in them, I developed plans and cost estimates for development. I did this for five years and moved on to some roles in public works. Since I've been in East Bethel and my job as city administrator, I've served as the planning director for two terms in the absences. We've had a resignation once in 2012 and once in 2019, and I worked closely with the current planning directors since 2019 on those planning and zoning issues that are time sensitive or critical in nature or a little bit more complicated. I've worked in everything from home occupations to variances, and I'm even though I don't really have a lot of say in those now, I'm still involved in a lot of it. So I do have a pretty good background in planning and I've had a lot of experience in that area."

Hanegraaf asked Davis about his management stye and how he handled conflict between staff members.

DAVIS: "You know, most people when they're asked this question, the standard responses you get 'I'm fair but firm.' Well, I'm a Golden Ruler. I believe "treat others the way you want to be treated," and you'll get much more out of them. I believe that you start out by trusting people. You treat everybody equally and you give them respect. Sometimes, that doesn't always work, but you identify those that can't be. You know who can, and then you know how to deal with those types of people. As far as conflicts between staff members are concerned, that's essentially something that's done, to me, on a case-by-case basis, depending on the issue. It may be something minor that you set two people down and you try to resolve their differences or conflicts, and in some cases it goes beyond that. But I'm a firm

believer in treating people with respect and treating them with the fact that you've got my trust until you lose it."

Wagamon asked Davis about his communication style and solving the biggest communication challenge he's faced in his career.

DAVIS: "I think my communication style is to be open and timely with communications. I think it's essential in this role, especially in communicating with City Council to keep them appraised not on a weekly basis, but, at the very least, on a daily basis on things going in. You'll find, working with me, you'll find you get a lot of emails and little memos forwarded to you so you can be kept abreast. I know all of you get calls in and complaints every day, and sometimes it's always good to get a heads up on that so you'll know what's coming. That's essentially, basically, my communication style is just to be open and timely. As far as the biggest challenge in communications, I was talking with Elizabeth earlier, that's communicating with residents. And I think all of us have that issue. You know, we have a newsletter; we have a cable access TV channel; we have a website; we have a reader board; we have social media sites; we have our e-mail blast list; and still yet, we only reach a fraction of our people. It's always been our goal and our biggest challenge is to try to communicate better and get more information out to our residents because I think that's the key to having an informed citizenry so they can make better decisions and they'll know what's going on too. So, when they do call or when they come in here for discussions, they'll be better up to speed on what's happening. There's no easy answer for that. In talking with Elizabeth, you know, you used to have the Forest Lake paper here. It's like our Anoka County Union Herald that served East Bethel: it went to subscription. Nobody subscribes to it anymore, except a very few people. Very few people read the paper. Their readership is way down. In fact, probably when we go to select our paper of circulation for next year, we may not be able to use those. I don't know if they can meet the circulation requirements. So, communication with residents is always a big challenge and we're always looking for ways to better that, as I'm sure you are too."

Preiner agreed with Davis, sharing that despite there not being an election in Columbus on November 7, 2023, many residents visited City Hall with the intention of voting.

DAVIS: "We had a referendum for our school district. Even though we put it out and advertised it, there's only one polling place, and that's at City Hall. You'd be surprised how many people went to the fire station, which is another polling place, and our Saviors Lutheran Church, which is another one, and the schools. There's a lot of information to get out there, it's just finding the way to do it."

Preiner asked Davis about how he organizes, plans and prioritizes his work.

DAVIS: "I try never to leave work unless I've got some kind of outline for the next day. I do find that that's plan A, but when you get to work the next morning, you better be ready to implement Plan B because there's phone messages that come in late in the evening and night, or e-mail messages that require you to modify that. So, I use that as my basis for the outline and modify that as necessary. We have recurring calendars for events that we have to take care of. That's part of the resources you use to plan your activity, as well as the e-mail calendars that I keep. I do keep – I'm kind of old fashioned – I keep a big paper desk calendar on my desk that I write down everything, so every time I look down I'm reminded oh, there's still yet that to do, or there's this meeting. So, essentially, that's my organizational priorities are that I try to keep everything in list, and make sure that they're checked off and make sure you do your pre-planning before you go home at night so at least you'll have plan A set up and, but be ready to modify that and go to Plan B. An example of that is this morning I got up and I had three or four emails through the night that totally changed my whole morning that I felt I really needed to address

those because they were priorities. We all run into that every day, so I just try to be prepared to be adaptable and be flexible."

Hegland asked Davis to tell the Council about a time he dealt calmly and effectively with a high-stress situation.

DAVIS: "We had an incident at one of our City Council meetings about six months ago. We had a part-time employee who was at the Council meeting doing some work in the background and at the end of the meeting, they're not supposed to come in and interact with the City Council. Where I was sitting, I noticed out of the corner of my eye that this employee came in. I knew something wasn't right, so I got out of my seat and confronted him and asked him what he was doing, and he said he wanted to speak to the mayor, and I knew that it wasn't good. So, I blocked his access discreetly and calmly, and then I turned him around and I escorted him out of the room to the side room and got him calmed down. I told him to stay in that position. I went back in and told another Council member and the city attorney what I was doing. I went back in there and talked to the employee and after about 10 or 15 minutes he was OK and I told him, 'Go home. We're going to discuss this tomorrow. I want you to complete to get this out of your mind. Calm down.' He said, 'Are you going to fire me?' I said, 'That's probably a consideration, I hate to tell you that.' So, when I got to work the next morning, I had his resignation by e-mail, so I called the city attorney to make sure that we were doing everything the right way. It wasn't anything that was coerced. This sounds mild, but at the time, it was kind of unnerving because I think we avoided a verbal altercation and a messy situation in Council chambers."

Busch asked Davis what three skills he thinks are most important for a City Administrator to possess and how he ranks himself on those skills.

DAVIS: "I mentioned one. I don't think it's really a skill, but you know, I think you always have to be adaptable and flexible. I also think you ought to be a person that has ethical conduct. That's not a skill – that's a learned trait. As far as skills go, I think you have to have some public relations knowledge. I think you have some leadership and management skills. And then I think you have to have knowledge, at least the basic knowledge of the function of government and how it's working in the city that you're working for."

Busch asked Davis how he ranked himself in mastery of the skills he listed.

DAVIS: "You know, it's always an embarrassing question when you're asked to rank yourself. Sometimes you're a little biased, but I think I do a fair job at it, and I've had a lot of experience. I'm not perfect. I've made a lot of mistakes too, but I think mistakes are things that we learn from and I think I've profited from that. So overall, I think I've done a fair job at mastering those and implementing those too."

Hanegraaf asked Davis why he thinks the City of Columbus should hire him as interim City Administrator.

DAVIS: "I think I have a demonstrated track record of performance that can be backed up by a variety of sources. As Janet said, I meant to get the few letters of reference, but when I started this I found out that people called and volunteered to actually give me letters without me contacting them. I have the administrative skills needed to perform this work. Also, since I've worked in this area of the county for the past 17 years, I have a great resource of assets established with the county and the cities. I'm constantly dealing and meeting with the Anoka County Highway Department, the Records and Management Division, the county administrator and other county officials and commissioners. So I think I have a leg up on anybody with that as I know who to go to at the County level right from the get go and I don't have to reestablish those connections. And the other thing is that I would be totally committed to

this position. If you want to check any of my references or anything, I think you can get verification with that. I'm an early riser and, if I were selected to this position, you'll probably get some calls saying why were the lights on the City Hall so early in the morning."

Wagamon asked Davis to provide the Council with an example of when he was persistent in the face of multiple obstacles.

DAVIS: "If you recall, I told you about some of our issues when I first started with East Bethel and the city administrator position with our water and sewer project. As part of that, the city bonded for approximately $18 million in debt for basic water lines, sewer lines, water tower and water treatment plant. In addition to that though, we had to enter into a contract with the Met Council for a sewage treatment plant and rapid infiltration basins – those are the discharge points for the treated wastewater – and the force main to serve those. The debt to Met Council was set at $29 million and it was to be paid back from SAC charges. The SAC schedule that was set up for the city was totally unrealistic and totally unattainable. So, in 2014, when we stopped paying just interest on the loan on the bonds, I suggested we tackle trying to renegotiate this loan with Met Council because we felt that there were certain things in there that the city wasn't responsible for. We started this in January of 2014. (inaudible) …meeting we had the people there that kind of irritated the Met Council people. They wouldn't meet with us for five months, but I kept after them to establish a new meeting. After numerous meetings and meeting with their committees on the Environmental Service Committee, in August of 2015 – approximately 18 months later – we were able to cap that loan at $2 million. The original exposure was $29 million. Right now, the maximum exposure to the city would be $19 million. So that was a very good deal that we got out of them. It's not only me, there were others involved in it too. It's because we were persistent and wouldn't essentially take no for an answer. And what we did, we proved to them that there were demonstration benefits derived from this type of treatment facility that we have. It applied region wide, so then they agreed to cap the loan at $2 million. That was in 2015. We'll actually hit that ceiling January 1 of this year, so we'll be restarting to repay that loan back and that eliminates that huge exposure we could have in the long run with this program."

Preiner asked Davis for his greatest strength and weakness or a part of himself he'd like to improve.

DAVIS: "I don't know. I think my greatest strength is being an active listener. I think it's very important that we listen to people. I think it's also the way you treat people. I want to treat everyone with respect. Whether it be a resident or the governor, they all deserve the same consideration. You know, we talk about the residents: residents are our customers, and I keep emphasizing this to my staff that these are the people that generate the biggest part of the revenue that the city receives, and they deserve not only something in return in terms of services, but also in the way they're treated. So I would say that what I feel is my greatest strength is my empathy toward people, the way I treat people and the way I try to communicate with people. As far as my weaknesses, you know, even in our strengths, we always have weaknesses too. In some points, you know, you always try to make them better, but like a lot of other people that are managers or have small staff and do a lot of things, I think probably my biggest weakness is in delegation of duties. I've learned over the years, though, that you have to do that in order to succeed and get your work done. I've made a lot of progress, but sometimes I still fall short, but I'm still a work in progress and something that I continually strive to improve."

Hegland asked Davis how his current employees would describe him as a manager.

DAVIS: "I think they would say I lead by example. I think they would say I have a positive attitude, that I'm energetic, that I'm supportive of their endeavors in public and that I'm encouraging their activities. I'm trying always to get our people to improve themselves. I always take it as a compliment when

somebody is hired away from us. I know that's strange to say, but it shows that we've made good hires and we have good people. I think that's one of the challenges we have nowadays is you need to hire good people and give them instructions and kind of get out of their way unless they need some direction. And it's up to the manager to determine when that is. But I think that's the way that I would be looked at by the current staff that I have. Those would be the adjectives that I would use probably in their evaluation fee."

Busch asked Davis to describe his process for developing a City Council meeting agenda.

DAVIS: "You start with the template of the of the agenda and you go, 'OK, what are the first things we put on there?' Those are the recurring items: the bills, the minutes and the monthly reports if you have those. Then you move on to your presentations and hearings. You make sure you prioritize… [inaudible] I try to look at, too, if we have a lot of presentations on our agenda, I look who's presenting and sometimes it's who lives the farthest away that goes first because I know some people travel great distances, especially some of our consultants and it's rush hour. They want to get home. I try to place preference on residents too, to work them in there. And the other things are, you know, what comes up, what we know is seasonal things, things that we have to do on a monthly basis, but generally just follow the framework of the template that's used for the agenda for Columbus or East Bethel. Whatever it is, they're basically all essentially the same, and that's what dictates it. Plus whatever Council has to add to those agendas and wants to see included on those."

Busch asked Davis if he follows a similar process for other meetings.

DAVIS: "That's correct."

Hanegraaf asked Davis to describe a confidentiality challenge he's faced as City Administrator.

DAVIS: "I was informed recently that there is going to be a change made on the Planning Commission and that there was going to be some members removed. I was requested to keep this confidential. Now, the member that was to be removed was somebody I'd worked with for quite a while and although I felt there was nothing that I could do to change it at that time, I felt they kind of needed a heads up. But, at the same time, I said I would keep the information confidential. So, in order to keep it confidential, I did have some conversations with the… [inaudible] …them to eventually change their mind. Change was made, but that was really difficult. But, to me, when somebody says this is confidential, it's confidential. One of the things I don't know about here, but our City Hall is acoustically terrible. It amplifies sound from one end to the other. There's three forms of communication in East Bethel, and that's telephone, telegraph and say something in City Hall. You have to be extremely careful and I've had people that, you know, have come to me and say 'I need to tell you something confidential,' and I said, 'Well, you know, we need to go somewhere else if you want to keep be kept confidential.'"

Wagamon asked Davis to describe his customer service philosophy.

DAVIS: "As I said before, our residents or customers, and I think the customer resident always has the right to be heard and they need to be heard. I know some people come and they're not too pleasant when they come to City Hall. My goal is when they leave after talking with all of our staff is they leave there at least not as unhappy when they leave as they came. But by the same token, you know, listen to them with courtesy; Listen to them with respect; Treat them like their concerns or your concerns, because they really are. The more things that we can solve with the residents at the City Hall level, I've found out that City Council gets. The less complaints City Council gets, the less complaints the administrator gets. But it's also the right thing to do. Customer service, to me, goes back again to the Golden rule: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. I truly believe and practice that."

Preiner asked Davis to describe the types of written reports, memos and correspondence he's prepared in current or past positions.

DAVIS: "Well, as we all know, city administrator is in charge of preparing the packets for City Council. There's a variety of reports that go in there, some that are paragraphs and some that are more lengthy with all the attachments. For Council packets, I try to prepare reports that are as short as possible, but concise and brief and explain things with the least words used as you can. The economy of words is what I believe in. Sometimes it has to be a little more lengthy, but I try to do that through attachments and things that probably convey messages clear than what the report says. But some of the other reports I've prepared in East Bethel… I've done a water rate study. I've done reports to the Met Council for the reasons for reducing this loan, which was about a 16 page report once it was done. Maybe that's why the… [inaudible] We've done reports to MnDOT and Anoka County Highway Department on traffic studies and the request for lights. Just about everything from the paragraph to the almost the operations manual, we've done it."

Hanegraaf asked how many staff members he's currently in charge of at East Bethel.

DAVIS: "Currently we have 22 full time people counting public works. And with the fire department and the volunteers, it's close to 50."

Hanegraaf asked for clarification regarding the 22 full time positions, asking if Davis' staff included managers or other leadership positions.

DAVIS: "Of the 22 we have the Fire Chief, we have a public works director, we have a planning director, community development director and a finance director as department heads. And then we have support staff below them. One thing I might add is that in my position, and I'm sure in Elizabeth's position too, is city administrators are around for one reason. That's just to bridge gaps between staffing needs of the city. We're all involved in a variety of things to help out as we can. We try to cross train our staff in as many jobs as possible so somebody can fill in if somebody's out. You know, one of the greatest challenges we have, if you got two people off on vacation, all of a sudden you're really short staff. And the other thing is too is, you know, trying to find good people now. And I think we've either we've made some good choices or we've been real lucky as we've got a really good staff. But that's the composition of ours. We have essentially 4 department heads. We have 10 people that work in City Hall. It's the same number that work in City Hall when I took over in 2011. Our workloads increased quite a bit, but we've still managed to do it with the same number of people."

Busch asked Davis of the types of joint boards and partnerships he's gotten to work with in East Bethel.

DAVIS: "Well, you know, we have our JPA agreements with the Upper Rum River WMO. We also have our mutual aid agreements with your fire department in Forest Lake and Linwood. Those are what makes local Volunteer Fire departments functional, really. Nobody seems to have the staff to do it anymore. Unfortunately, it seems like Volunteer Fire departments are [having a] harder and harder [time finding] volunteers. We partnered with Oak Grove for a mutual building inspection service for a while. We do the city of Bethel's building inspection service. We partner with them and we're also looking to maybe trying to take over their fire department duties. I don't know how familiar you are with the city of Bethel, but they're one square mile and 470 people and they're really struggling right now. I always look at these things as that we're all neighbors and one thing that I'm exceptionally proud of is, I think, when I took over the city administrator's job, the city of East Bethel didn't have the most stellar reputation with their neighboring municipalities. I think we've improved that day and night where, you know, we have agreements where we borrow things from Ham Lake or Oak Grove. Our Public Works

Department does exchange equipment. We have some things that they need, and sometimes they have some things that we need. We've worked very closely with Linwood on several things, and also with Lynnwood Township and Athens Township in Isanti County. Probably the only thing that doesn't keep us working or having that same relationship with Columbus is a thing called Carlos Avery. You know, you have that little. Residential area that touches around Coon Lake Beach, but then Carlos Avery separates you from the rest of us. It's almost like it's a barrier, but I left City Hall tonight and in 9 minutes I was in Columbus. We've been, I think, great partners on the Sunrise River WMO. Those are just a few examples that we've done with local partnerships. And I firmly believe in those, because I think you can use that to leverage and maximize what you have."

Davis asked the Council for its expectations for the position.

HEGLAND: "We probably all have different answers for that. I'll start. We were actually just talking about this earlier today: we are still crafting our expectations. We're fortunate to have Elizabeth willing to help with the transition and trying to figure out what the best way to carve up those duties, and it is a challenge. Some of it has to do with, you know, what makes sense for her to continue or to finish. Some of it has to do with the skill set of the person who's going to be in the interim position and what makes most sense for them to take on. So, on a high level, my expectation is that we would be able to do business as usual in Columbus. Maybe not as fast as we are doing now, maybe not as easily as we are doing now, but that we're able to keep our core services intact and, you know, ideally people would not notice the big difference. So that's kind of where we're at with the definition of what we expect, but I think we all probably have different ideas, so I'll pass it on.

BUSCH: "I guess being able to, and you expressed this, but being able to delegate and put trust in your employees until they prove otherwise. I manage anywhere between 20 to 25 people on a daily basis and that's kind of how I operate: until you prove me wrong, I'm going to put trust in you to do the job. Like you had said earlier, you let them run with it until they run out of leash or whatever it is, and you have to have that hard conversation. That's probably the biggest thing is being able to delegate down so that you're not overly bogged down when maybe we have something to bring to you."

DAVIS: "I'd like to say one thing here: If you do select me as the interim, I would not be replacing Elizabeth; I'd just be trying to continue what she's done. I've known Elizabeth since I started this job and she was here. We've had many conversations over the phone and I've come to admire her work, and I think that Columbus is going to miss her very much. I wouldn't replace her, I'd just try to continue what she's doing."

WAGAMON: "Besides what Janet and Rob said, I guess my expectations are mainly at a high level where I am looking for somebody that can come in that has enough experience overall that you're not going to get baffled by something. You can come in and handle a situation that comes up if it's a, you know, challenge or controversial anything, that you would have a calm demeanor, being respectful, being a manager that can manage the employees in a respectful way and just make sure that everything is kind of running smoothly until, you know, we transition to our permanent."

DAVIS: "Let me give you a little bit of an example of what my typical day is, and I'll just go from one extreme to the other. Earlier yesterday morning, we had a resident that came to our window and was complaining that his neighbor shot his dog. O.K., what's the reason here? Well, the dog was chasing the deer. So, we satisfied that by getting them in contact with the Sheriff's Department to see if there's anything. We did determine that the neighbor was not in violation of the discharge of a firearm and it is legal to shoot a dog chasing the deer of a state statute. To going to having the conduit bond

conversation later that afternoon. We do cover a wide range of topics and issues that come up during the day."

Mursko asked Davis how often East Bethel's Planning Commission and City Council meet.

DAVIS: "That's correct. [The Planning Commission meets] once a month. [The City Council meets] twice a month with a work meeting scheduled for one meeting a month."

PREINER: "So I thought… [inaudible] …that's a big thing in Columbus, and I suppose everywhere else, is getting things done as speedily as possible. I've been in her office when she's getting something done by 4:59 so I can get it in the papers so I can get to the meeting so I can get on the agenda so that, at the next meeting, the guy who's waiting to build a *something* gets his things rolling along before the snow flies or something. Is that your line of thinking? And please say yes."

DAVIS: "Absolutely. And you know, I noticed your office hours were posted 8:00 to 4:00. That's just a suggestion. Another example we had is we had a gentleman that was closing on a house that had some septic system issues and had to put in a new drain field. This was 10 days before he was closing, so we got everything approved for him. He got installed and inspected and we made his deadline by three days, mainly because these are things that need to be done. Sometimes you don't have the luxury of saying, 'O.K., it's going to fit this schedule.' Sometimes that schedule doesn't apply because it has to be altered because we want to try to meet the needs of our residents."

PREINER: "O.K., and the flip side of that is, as they're doing developer agreements and working on projects, the guy sitting in your chair is usually lying through his teeth: 'Yeah, don't worry. We'll do that later. Don't worry.' And Elizabeth says, 'It has to be right or it's not going to the courthouse. It's not going to get signed.' I imagine you're able to tell the difference between the two situations. And when she leaves, everything she has done will be in order. It'll be correct. And it's not because the plumber cares about it or the salesman who sold the house cares about it. It's because Elizabeth cared about it. It's been a tremendous, I think, protection for Columbus. Can you do it or will you attempt to do it?"

DAVIS: "My primary objective would be to carry on, like I said, what she does to protect the city and that's the way to do those things. Sometimes that's why you call on the city attorney too, to help you with those items where you're questioning some legal aspects of it. I don't know how often you use [the attorney]. It seems like, in my position, we've started using the city attorney more and more. Maybe it's because we're in such a litigious society, but I firmly believe in keeping everything in order and properly documented, because those are the sources you have to go back to in case you run into problems."

Hegland informed Davis that the Council would have a conversation after his departure from the meeting, no action would be taken until the November 8, 2023, City Council meeting.

Davis left the meeting.

Wagamon felt Davis had the experience and management skills the Council is looking for and that he is a good candidate. Preiner liked that Davis is familiar with Anoka County compared to recruiting someone from outside Minnesota. Hegland appreciated that Davis has been the voice of calm during SRWMO negotiations. Busch said he'd reached out to some of Davis' references, who all spoke highly of him and confirmed that he would stick up for his City's residents. Hanegraaf felt Davis would be able to listen to residents and work with them to find solutions to their problems.

Rogers advised that should the Council wish to hire Davis, the motion at the November 8, 2023, City Council meeting would be to authorize the Personnel Committee to negotiate a Professional Services

Agreement with Davis. Rogers reminded the Council that the Personnel Committee's original intention for the interim city administrator was to serve a six-month term and recommended the Council retain significant flexibility in terms of termination.

The Personnel Committee's current plan is for the interim City Administrator to start in January, working alongside Mursko in-person before she transitions to working remotely through March. Further delegation of duties to the interim administrator and/or existing staff and duties retained by Mursko are to be determined following the completion of Ellen Hinrichs' job description work. The interim City Administrator will assume leadership of City Staff on January 1, 2024. The Personnel Committee hopes to hire a permanent City Administrator in time to start in May or June.

Rogers reminded the Council that Davis provided his current salary (slightly over $150,000 with benefits) and encouraged it to provide the Personnel Committee with a framework for an acceptable offer, including expectations such as meeting attendance, office hours, etc. Hegland felt the interim City Administrator should continue attending the meetings Mursko does, including City Council, Planning Commission, weekly meetings with her and Preiner, Personnel Committee (for matters not concerning hiring the permanent City Administrator) and others. Preiner felt the interim City Administrator should be working on-site unless they are at a meeting or event off-site. Busch agreed with Preiner that the administrator should be on-site during business hours. Rogers suggested delegating payrates to the Personnel Committee.

Hegland said that after Hinrichs drafts the City Administrator job description, the Personnel Committee will draft an RFP for search firms to recruit candidates for the role. That RFP will be submitted to Council to discuss and vote on at the November 20, 2023, City Council meeting.

5. Adjournment

Motion by Busch to adjourn. Seconded by Hanegraaf. Roll call vote: Hanegraaf – aye; Wagamon – aye; Hegland – aye; Busch – aye; Preiner - aye. Motion carries.

Meeting adjourned at 7:31 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Connor Keith

Connor Keith, Public Communications Coordinator