City of Columbus
Regular City Council Meeting
July 10, 2024

ATTENDANCE SHEET

PLEASE PRINT

Name:	Address:
Derek Lind (Derek)	Ramsey MN

City of Columbus
Regular City Council Meeting
Hybrid Interactive Technology Format
MN Statute, Section 13D.021
07.10.2024

The 07.10.2024 meeting of the City of Columbus City Council was called to order at 6:02 p.m. by Mayor Jesse Preiner at City Hall. Present were Councilmembers Rob Busch, Ron Hanegraaf, Janet Hegland and Sue Wagamon; City Administrator Jack Davis, City Attorney Bill Griffith, and Public Works Director Jim Windingstad and City Engineer Kevin Bittner

Also in attendance: Derek Lind of ACEIT and Aaron Berg

A. CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING

1. Call to Order Regular Meeting – 6:02 p.m.
2. Pledge of Allegiance
3. Adoption of Agenda

Motion by Preiner to adopt the July 10, 2024 Agenda as presented with the addition of the Supplemental Payment Summary to item B.3 of the Consent Agenda. Seconded by Wagamon. Roll call vote: Busch – aye; Hanegraaf – aye; Wagamon – aye; Hegland – aye; Preiner – aye. Motion carries.

B. CONSENT AGENDA

1. Approval of the June 12, 2024 City Council Meeting Minutes
~~**2.** Approval of the June 26, 2024 City Council Meeting Minutes~~
3. Approval of Bill Payments as Posted

Motion by Hegland to approve Consent Agenda Items Nos. 1 and 3 with Item No. 2 removed. Seconded by Hanegraaf. Roll call vote: Busch – aye; Hanegraaf – aye; Wagamon – aye; Hegland – aye; Preiner – aye. Motion carries.

C. PRESENTATION

1. Public Open Forum

Derek Lind, Ramsey, provided a handout and updated the Council regarding his organization, the Anoka County Election Integrity Team (ACEIT). He said their Chair, Brenda Miller, who is from Columbus, had just been interviewed by Liz Collin of *Alpha News* and the story would be coming out this week. He said the group has been visiting cities in the County to talk about what authority cities have over their elections. They have been to five cities so far. Two cities in Anoka County, Oak Grove and Ramsey, voted to extend the Post Election Review (PER) which means that they will run the ballots through the machine on election night and ten days later send their election judges to the County to hand count ballots. Oak Grove voted to recount all four of its precincts and Ramsey will do six of nine precincts. He said the group has a list of six things cities can do to ensure election integrity and those two cities have opted to do one, which is the hand count. He asked if the City Council would be interested in having them come out for a presentation. Wagamon asked who pays for the hand count.

Lind said the city pays for the hand count and sends two of their own election judges. The estimated cost for the City of Columbus with one precinct would be $1,489 to $3,384 depending on how many races the City wants to count. Lind said State law has removed authority from the cities in several areas, including the ability to forgo the use of the ballot counting machine and for the public to see the cast vote report.

Davis noted the City of Oak Grove did a hand count in the election two years ago. He asked if Lind had been able to compare the outcome of the hand count with the machine count in that election.

Lind said he doesn't know but the County says it has never had a problem with the hand count matching the machine count. He cited a close school board election where the hand vote was off by one from the machine as the machine recorded one ballot as an overvote and didn't count it because of the way the voter had marked the ballot.

Hegland asked if the hand count is done twice for accuracy.

Lind said the State dictates how it is done and it uses a piling system with a judge from each party. He said the votes are counted 25 at a time by the two individuals and the totals have to match the machine or the pile is counted again. He said he believes that the process is accurate.

Busch mentioned a City Council race in Brooklyn Park that was decided by one vote. He asked how the recount had been done.

Lind said recounts in close races are always done by hand. He left his contact information.

2. Appointment of Election Judges

Davis informed the Council that the State Primary Election will take place at the Columbus City Hall on August 13, 2014. The City Council must appoint election judges who must meet training requirements and certification as prescribed by the Office of the Minnesota Secretary of State. The judges recommended for appointment are named in Resolution 24-05, Exhibit A. The Resolution also gives the City Clerk the ability to appoint additional or replacement judges, as necessary, provided the replacement judges meet all criteria.

Motion by Preiner to adopt Resolution 24-05 appointing election judges as presented. Seconded by Hegland. Roll call vote: Busch – aye; Hanegraaf – aye; Wagamon – aye; Hegland – aye; Preiner – aye. Motion carries.

3. Assistant City Administrator Pay

Davis stated that the Personnel Committee met on July 2, 2024 and received the job scoring report for the Assistant City Administrator position. The scoring was done by the City Administrator and Finance Director. The Minnesota Pay Equity and Job Description Report was used as the basis for the assignment of points to this position.

Davis explained that comparing the job description for the Assistant City Administrator with the equivalent Pay Equity category, this position rated a score of 330 points. This point rating on the City's Pay Scale and Job Category Matrix ranks in the salary range of $83,158 to $107,203. Comparison of the

pay range to surrounding cities of similar population places Columbus in the middle of the range from a low of $58,000 to a high of $142,000. Salary and benefit expenses for this job are provided in the 2024 budget. Pay for this position maintains equity with the current salary scales of the Public Works and Finance Director. Davis stated there would be no changes in existing staff positions with this hire. Staff is recommending approval of this pay scale as determined by the Personnel Committee.

Wagamon stated that the Personnel Committee, which consists of herself, Hegland, and Davis, has done a lot of research and spent a lot of time working on this job description and the City would have high expectations for this position as the individual would have to fill in for the City Administrator in their absence. She said she agrees with the recommendation for the salary range.

Hegland stated that although you can't predict succession planning, this person would be the second in command and the City would be in the position for the first time in 20-some years to "not have all its eggs in one basket". This person would have similar responsibilities to the City Administrator and so warrants this salary range. She said she had questioned how much was in the budget for this position. The amount budgeted for this position and the Public Information Coordinator, which shifts some of this responsibility to this position, was a total of $126,000 and would be enough to cover the salary range.

Busch asked about the salary of the most recent Public Information coordinator.

Davis stated that it was approximately $62,000 per year.

Busch asked if Davis was feeling bogged down.

Davis stated that he was not, but there is a lot more that can be done with this position, in addition to the idea of having someone who can immediately step into the City Administrator position. The position would enable the City to offer more and do more towards the goals of the Council, he said, so it will be a worthwhile position to have. The individual would also be able to help out in the Planning Department.

Busch asked if this person could also be slid into the planning role.

Davis stated that the person in this position, depending on qualifications, could be helpful but would not replace Dean Johnson, the City's planning consultant, although it could reduce some of his time.

Wagamon stated that the City has been down one position for over a year. The Assistant City Administrator position would not be the same as the originally approved job description for the vacant position as the job description has been extensively revised. Wagamon stated that the City is not adding a position.

Davis agreed, saying the new position would be a "jack of all trades" and enable the City to get more done and get it done more quickly and better.

Hegland stated that the person would be supervising administrative staff which will lessen the load for Davis and be the go-to person for HR, which will lessen the need for the HR consultant as well as keep

current with policies and ordinances, which is part of the next agenda item.

Davis stated with the Public Information Coordinator no longer with the City, they have 60 percent of the salary from that position and a budgeted amount from a previous position that would provide the balance of the cost. The recommended salary range would allow the City to attract good candidates.

Busch noted this person would eventually fill two vacant positions, merging the positions held by the Public Information Coordinator and the Assistant City Administrator, so effectively eliminating a position. The City is not creating another position, he said, adding if you bring someone in and if they can't do the job you get rid of them. He asked about the HR aspect.

Hegland stated that the city has been using a consultant for HR matters because the City didn't have that internal resource. Ideally the consultant would fill a role for special surveys and guidance but the day-to-day HR matters would be handled by this position.

Preiner asked if there is enough work for this person. He suggested it would help get things done in the past that hadn't gotten done and pointed out it would be almost cost neutral if a person was found with the necessary abilities and if able to start and work their way up so that in 10 years, if Davis was done with Columbus, they could feel there was someone who knows what's going on. He said he is the cheapest guy they know but there is work to be done and the position could fill that need. He asked if he was thinking the right way.

Davis stated that there was enough work and the Mayor was on the right track with that train of thought. He said the City's workload will not decrease – it will only increase. He estimated this staff change will satisfy the City's needs and would get the City through the next several years, noting it's not like the City is going to be hiring someone every year. Creating written policies and updating ordinances is an area where this position could help because there is real lack of documentation. Consultants are wonderful people, he said, but there are things they could do without relying on them so much, so there would be savings and with that savings this position could be a neutral budget position.

Preiner asked if Davis was willing to take time out of his schedule to get this new person up to speed.

Davis stated that he absolutely would take the time and it's critical to have someone like that on board. He said hopefully someone will be found who doesn't need a lot of training and will be up to speed quickly. He added, if the City doesn't get good candidates it would not make a hire. They want a good candidate that will fit in and need minimal training.

Hegland stated that they would hire the best person for the job and if there isn't a good candidate, they would start the search over.

Wagamon pointed out that the Personnel Committee has hired a number of positions recently and has good experience. she feels like they are clear on what they are looking for. She said she is confident they have the ability to find the right person and are not afraid to say if they don't find what they are looking for, they are not going to hire.

Hegland pointed out that the Personnel Committee has been doing much that should be done by HR staff, at no cost to the City, and with many hours of time that is not what the Personnel Committee is intended to do. Columbus needs to have a staff person who can deal with HR.

Busch asked if the salary range could be lowered to under $100,000.

Davis stated that you get what you pay for and the goal would be to attract a quality person, but pay would depend on qualifications and there are seven steps in the salary range. The less experienced candidates you get, the longer you will spend training them. he said, added this is one of those cases where in order to be competitive, this is what they have to offer to attract qualified candidates. He said again that the City looked at salaries for positions in other cities of similar population and this is the middle of the ranges that are out there.

Hegland stated that the person hired would be started at the step in the range that is commensurate with their experience and this person would be similar in points with the other directors on staff. The City is required by law to follow their own Pay Equity guidelines. The proposed pay range fits in with what other cities similar to Columbus are doing and with our own equity analysis

Hegland stated that you select someone based on their prior experience, their education, and how they do in the interview. They have to convince the Personnel Committee they can meet the requirements of the job description. When you are hiring staff, there is a process you go through. Hegland stated that it's not like bartering for a trinket. That's not what you do with staff. They will go through a rigorous process to say here are the responsibilities this person is going to be handed and will carry out. They rate the job according to those responsibilities and there is a process for doing that and that is how you get your points. The State has come up with a salary range that corresponds with those points. That's what we are obligated to follow, she said. As a municipal employer you start by saying what do you need, what job isn't getting done, what are the requirements, education and experience the person needs to have, you interview and you make sure the person has those things. She noted if you think the salary range is too high, then the way to change that is to look at the job description and lower expectations but she thinks that is a mistake. She said the City could lower the salary range by lowering expectations for what this person is going to do. But that is not what they came up with when they looked at what isn't getting done and what needs to be done.

Preiner stated that over his business career he's had 40 people a year employed. Some have been snoozers, and some have been Triple A's but, they had to prove themselves. He asked how do you start at a reasonable thing and if they do what they are required to do and excel, then the City can reward them.

Hegland state that is part of the process. At the six-month review, if they are meeting expectations they could be eligible for a step increase so you start with that in mind. To be at the top of the range, someone would have to be very experienced. If you have someone with 25 year's experience you are not going to pay them the same as someone with five.

Preiner stated that anyone who has been in the City business knows how to take their coffee breaks and knows how to spread the work out longly. He asked how do they get to a point where they are rewarding people on what they accomplish.

Hegland stated that you can have that sort of compensation system if you want to. It's called merit-based and is one of the things they have put on their list to talk about. The thing that is hard about merit-based compensation, she explained, is that you better budget for it because it's not much of an incentive to do an incredible job if the raise is a half percent or a one percent over the year, and you have to be very clear about whatever bar is to reach those merit increases.

Preiner stated that anyone you hire anywhere the first year is learning, it's continuing education. He did not want to pay $107,000 to educate someone who is supposed to step in the first day and be Superman.

Davis stated that his expectation would be that the person who is hired would be able on the first day to do most everything on that job description. The learning would be the details and processes at the City of Columbus. This position is going to require a special type of person who has a lot of abilities, and a lot of people skills in addition to their technical skills, competencies and experiences. If they are not ready to step in the first day and do the major aspects of the job, they are not someone he would recommend hiring. The other safeguard is the six-month evaluation. If they are not meeting the evaluation, the City could say it is not working out and start the process all over.

Hegland stated that they have also had the experience where if someone isn't meeting expectations at six months, they don't get the next step increase.

Preiner stated that he didn't know about the next step increase; he would want to deep six them. He said the City has Public Works that runs flawlessly, an Administrator they think is doing really well, a top-notch City Attorney, and a Council that is agreeable. Stepping into this position is a dream job, he said.

Hanegraaf stated that he thinks Preiner is thinking negatively. Most people want to do a good job and do it right. Most people are good, honest workers. You have thrown a lot of negativity in about public employees but most are good employees. He said you have to think positive that we are going to hire the right person and it will make this City run better and more efficient, noting the City doesn't have anyone in HR and hasn't added numbers over the years. He stated whether the position is paying $107,000 or $88,000, that's the going price and you have to pay it.

Wagamon stated that there is a good process in place and the City can feel confident it has the best decision makers to pick the right person.

Davis stated that the City is competing against cities in the whole north metro and even farther. He said Columbus doesn't have to be at the top of the scale but they won't want to be able to attract the kind of people they want if they are at the bottom of the scale. He said the City will get more value out of the person they are going to hire from the scale they are offering rather than the lower pay scale.

Hegland stated that alternatively you start removing items from their responsibilities.

Preiner stated that he did not agree with that. He said if they want the job and to progress, they should accept everything with the job including emptying the trash cans. He mentioned he had heard through the grapevine that Lino Lakes had stopped all development for a year. Columbus doesn't want to be

that, he said. Columbus wants to encourage business, encourage progress, and anybody can apply.

Wagamon stated that there is a long list of requirements. Anyone can apply but the City will look at their resume and if they don't qualify, they don't get interviewed.

Busch asked if combining the two open positions into the new Assistant City Administrator position would add $30,000.

Hegland stated that it is a $30,000 a year decrease.

Preiner asked how they start at $83,000 and end up at $107,000 if they turn out to be Superman in one year or two.

Hegland stated that you look at what the requirements are, what their experience is, and choose the salary that is appropriate to the experience.

Wagamon stated that at every performance evaluation, they would have the opportunity to go up a step.

Preiner asked if they can interview them every month. He said they have been through six people, and he can name them, who didn't deserve their job. The City paid them and they were snoozers and eventually they left. How do we get away from that, he asked, noting in the business world, if they don't do their job they are out the door.

Hegland stated that there weren't six but the reason that happens is that the City didn't have a person on staff and no HR policies that let them move forward with disciplinary action and no one who was willing to do that. That is not the case anymore, she said, and that is how things like Preiner is describing get handled. There is a step-wide process. She explained if not meeting expectations after a month, you don't just cut them lose and not try to get them up to snuff. If after time they are not meeting expectations, then you can move to that termination step. She said it's all defined by policy, noting the City hasn't had that in the past.

Preiner asked if Davis was willing and able to do that.

Davis stated that he doesn't want anyone on staff who is not contributing value, making it harder on the rest of the staff, is not pulling their own weight, and not being a good representative of the City. After the six month probation period, if they do not pass they would not be recommended for permanent hire.

Preiner asked if they could back that down to three months, or one month, or every two weeks.

Davis stated that he didn't think so because you have to give an employee a chance. If they are underperforming you have to inform them what it is, work out a way to correct it, and make sure you follow all the steps in the process. Some people will take six months and some will take a year but you will know in short order if they are going to be able to do the job so there are safeguards. He said he will not recommend anyone who is not able to do this job and he will be able to make that

determination when they interview them and look at their references.

Motion by Wagamon to approve a salary range for the Assistant City Administrator position of $83,158 to $107,203 as presented in Item C.3 of the July 10, 2024 of the City Council packet with the hiring step scale depending on qualifications. Seconded by Hegland. Roll call vote: Busch – aye; Hanegraaf – aye; Wagamon – aye; Hegland – aye; Preiner – aye. Motion carries.

4. Workshop Meeting Date Change

Davis stated that the regular workshop meeting date would be August 6, 2014, which conflicts with the annual Nite to Unite. He said the Council may want to reschedule so as to not have both events on the same date. He said staff requests rescheduling to Monday, August 5, 2024, for the regular City Council Workshop meeting.

Hegland asked that the meeting be scheduled for 5:45 p.m. or 6 p.m. rather than 5:30 p.m. due to an existing conflict.

Motion by Wagamon to approve rescheduling the regular City Council Workshop meeting from August 6 2024, to August 5, 2024, at 6 p.m. Seconded by Busch. Roll call vote: Busch – aye; Hanegraaf – aye; Wagamon – aye; Hegland – aye; Preiner – aye. Motion carries.

D. STAFF & CONSULTANT REPORTS

1. Engineer Report

No report.

2. Attorney Report

No report.

3. Mayor & City Council Member's Report

Hanegraaf – No Report

Wagamon – No Report

Hegland—No Report

Busch noted the Hy-Vee site is for sale.

4. Code Enforcement Report

No report.

5. Public Works Report

No report.

6. Public Communications Coordinator Report

No report.

7. EDA

Preiner reported the EDA Business Retention and Expansion Committee had met recently and settled on questions they would like to go out to businesses. Judy Huntosh and Karen Flemming will put the questions together and go door to door to the businesses.

8. City Administrator's Report

Davis asked the Council for some dates in late August or September for ALICE training from the County Sherriff's Department. He said he would see what the trainer has available for dates and times. It was noted that ALICE stands for Alert, Lockdown, Inform, Counter, Evacuate and is essentially an active shooter/hostage training.

9. Organizational Transition Audit/Report

In the Fall of 2023, the previous Columbus City Council sought to get an assessment of the current state of the organization to better envision a stronger future state and build toward it amidst a transition to a new City Administrator. Eleven staff members, five Council members, five board members, three consultants, and one business professional took part in the mostly one-on-one interviews. They provided their personal experiences, perspective, perceived challenges, and ideas as to how to make the transition from a 24-year-long City Administrator to someone else as seamless as possible, and how to improve processes to serve the City.

There was a total of 42 recommended improvements. It was agreed the City Council would first prioritize the recommendations and that process started at the last Workshop Meeting and was finished at the July 10, 2024, meeting. Next, the Personnel Committee will assign a timeframe for completion and a leader to define the cost/benefits, steps to implement, logistics and other relevant information for each suggestion. A few recommendations were identified as requiring further definition by the HR Consultant. The Personnel Committee will then come back to the Council with an updated list and seek approval on those items that require Council approval to move forward.

Wagamon reported on this topic that was continued from the July 2, 2024, Workshop Meeting. She followed up the summary of findings from a report interviewing staff and board members and went over City Council Members' ratings of low, medium, and high for the recommendations from the report.

E. ANNOUNCEMENTS & REMINDERS

- Absentee Voting June 28 through August 12, 2024 – City Hall Offices
- Park Board Meeting July 16, 2024, at 5:30 p.m.
- Planning Commission Meeting July 17, 2024, at 6 p.m.

- City Council Meeting July 24, 2024, at 6 p.m.

F. CLOSED SESSION

Preiner called the City Council into closed session at 7:58 p.m. to consider offers to purchase City-owned real property identified as PID 24-32-22-12-0005andPID 24-32-22-11-0006pursuant to Minnesota Statutes, Section13D.05, Subd. 3(c)(3).

G. ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn was made in Closed Session by Wagamon. Seconded by Hanegraaf. Roll call vote: Busch – aye; Hanegraaf – aye; Wagamon – aye; Hegland – aye; Preiner – aye. Motion carries.

Meeting adjourned at 8:55p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Jack Davis, City Administrator

Drafted by: Carol Shukle
TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.