

MINUTES OF THE CITY OF BRISTOL, TENNESSEE CITY COUNCIL CALLED MEETING

February 13, 2023

CALL TO ORDER:

The City of Bristol, Tennessee City Council called meeting was brought to order by Mayor Vince Turner on Monday, February 13, 2023 at 12:36 P.M. in the conference room of the Ewell Easley Municipal Annex.

ROLL CALL:

Present: Mayor Vince Turner, Vice Mayor Mark Hutton, Councilwoman Margaret Feierabend, Councilman Mahlon Luttrell, and Councilwoman Lea Powers.

Others Present: City Manager William Sorah, City Attorney Danielle Smith, City Recorder Mary Lee Williams, Director of Parks and Recreation Terry Napier, Fire Chief Mike Carrier, Director of Economic Development Tom Anderson, Director of Community Relations Jon Luttrell, Police Major Terry Johnson, and other members of City staff. Kurt Hodgen, Senior Vice President of Executive Recruitment for Strategic Government Resources (SGR), was also in attendance.

CITY COUNCIL DISCUSSION:

Councilwoman Margaret Feierabend requested Kurt Hodgen review the process and where things stand at this point. Mr. Hodgen reminded Council SGR will be receiving feedback forms from the department heads who had opportunity to spend time with the candidates this morning. If Council is not quite ready to make a decision today and would like time to think about the interviews, he will defer to City Attorney Danielle Smith and Director of Administration Mary Lee Williams as to how to proceed.

Mayor Turner asked what would be the appropriate procedure if Council should desire to recess and then reconvene in forty-eight hours, for example. The City Attorney outlined the necessary procedure which was followed by additional discussion.

Vice Mayor Mark Hutton stated he would like the opportunity to review the feedback forms to get a sense of how the department heads feel. Ms. Williams explained the feedback forms were completed anonymously and worded using phrases such as 'agree', 'strongly agree', etc., to provide uniformity. A suggestion was made about speaking with each department head directly, but it was decided they may not be comfortable with that process and the feedback forms should be sufficient.

Vice Mayor Hutton suggested the meeting reconvene either Tuesday or Wednesday in the afternoon instead the morning to give the public an opportunity to attend. After discussion as to the availability of Council, Vice Mayor Hutton made a motion to adjourn and reconvene Tuesday, February 14th, at 5:00 P.M. City Attorney Smith explained that as the meeting will reconvene tomorrow, or continue, there is no need to re-advertise. However, notice of the continuation of the meeting will be posted on the City website and social media pages. Council stated they desired to continue the current discussion so the City Attorney suggested Vice Mayor Hutton withdraw the motion until Council discussion was complete and they were ready to adjourn for the day.

Council stated this candidate search process worked better than anticipated and these are three good, strong candidates. Input from everyone is important, but Council must make the decision and it is a very big decision that everyone will have to live and work with. It is of the utmost importance to make the right decision rather than rush to make a decision today. Council agreed there is a new City Manager amongst these three candidates.

Councilwoman Feierabend asked what the next step would be. After Council makes a selection, then what would be the salary negotiation process? Mr. Hodgen stated with a City Manager position, the Mayor typically makes the phone call informing the candidate they were selected. The City Attorney, Administrative staff, and Mayor / Council work with the candidate to negotiate and draft a contract. All the candidates knew the City benefits and salary range up front so there should not be much back-and-forth to decide the contract terms. In addition, the candidates were given the opportunity to state their salary requirements. The City Attorney commented there is already a draft agreement which began with the agreement with for City Manager Sorah and tweaked for the current situation. This document can be shared with Council as a starting point and will be sent to Council this afternoon.

Councilwoman Feierabend asked if starting dates for the candidates are known. Mr. Hodgen replied Mr. Seth Sumner needs to give a two-week notice to his current employer. The other two candidates would be at least thirty days, but he can confirm with them.

The feedback forms from the department heads were given to Council for their review and consideration. After a quick read through of the forms, Mayor Turner asked if there was anything Council wanted to discuss. Vice Mayor Hutton stated the forms seem to indicate two candidates in particular stood out with staff which is incredibly important to his decision. He is in agreement with their preferred candidates. Councilman Luttrell would prefer to comment when the meeting reconvenes tomorrow. Councilwoman Powers said a lot of questions have been asked over the last two days, several comments have been made, and staff input is now available. She feels it is appropriate to pause and reflect about the things learned through this process before making a decision. Mayor Turner concurred.

Vice Mayor Hutton made a motion to recess and reconvene Tuesday, February 14th, at 5:00 P.M. Councilman Luttrell seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting was recessed at 1:15 P.M.

February 14, 2023

CALL TO ORDER:

The City of Bristol, Tennessee City Council called meeting of Monday, February 13, 2023 reconvened at 5:00 P.M. on Tuesday, February 14, 2023 in the conference room of the Ewell Easley Municipal Annex and was brought to order by Mayor Vince Turner.

ROLL CALL:

Present: Mayor Vince Turner, Vice Mayor Mark Hutton, Councilwoman Margaret Feierabend, Councilman Mahlon Luttrell, and Councilwoman Lea Powers.

Others Present: City Manager William Sorah, City Attorney Danielle Smith, City Recorder Mary Lee Williams, Director of Parks and Recreation Terry Napier, Fire Chief Mike Carrier, Director of Economic Development Tom Anderson, Director of Community Relations Jon Luttrell, Police Major Terry Johnson, and other members of City staff. Kurt Hodgen, Senior Vice President of Executive Recruitment for Strategic Government Resources (SGR), was also in attendance.

CITY COUNCIL DISCUSSION:

Mayor Vince Turner stated that given all the information Council received over the last couple of days and has had time to review, unless there was an objection, he requested each Council member to write the name of their number one candidate on the slip provided and pass it to City Recorder Mary Lee Williams. There were no objections and Council submitted their votes to Ms. Williams. Ms. Williams reported that everyone selected Kelli Bourgeois. Discussion followed as to what happens next. Mr. Kurt Hodgen stated the City has the contract from when Bill Sorah was selected as City Manager to use as the basis which can be updated for the current situation. The document would then be presented to Ms. Bourgeois by either City Attorney Danielle Smith or Ms. Williams as director of Administration. It was determined that City Attorney Smith, Director of Administration Williams, and Mr. Hodgen of SGR will negotiate the contract with Ms. Bourgeois. The contract will be presented to City Council for approval.

All Council members felt there were three good candidates to choose from which made for a difficult decision.

Vice Mayor Mark Hutton motioned to extend the offer to Kelli Bourgeois for the position of City Manager. Councilman Mahlon Luttrell seconded.

Councilwoman Margaret Feierabend feels the candidate selected will be a good fit. Councilwoman Lea Powers agreed and mentioned some of the credentials of Ms. Bourgeois.

The motion to offer the position of City Manager to Kelli Bourgeois passed unanimously by roll call vote. Council recommended City Attorney Smith, Director of Administration Williams call all three candidates this evening to inform them of the Council vote. Discussion followed concerning some specifics of the contract.

Councilwoman Powers made a motion authorizing City Attorney Smith, Director of Administration Williams, and Mr. Hodgen of SGR to negotiate the terms of the contract with Ms. Bourgeois. The contract will then be considered for approval by Council. Councilwoman Feierabend seconded.

Councilwoman Feierabend asked if there would be a called meeting for contract approval or would it be placed on the next meeting agenda. City Manager Bill Sorah stated that it should be done quickly as Ms. Bourgeois will have to give notice to her current employer which probably will not occur until this contract is approved. In addition, the budget process needs to take place soon. The capital budget has been submitted, but has not been finalized and neither has the operational budget. Both of these need to be addressed by the new City Manager and in turn discussed with Council.

The motion authorizing contract negotiations passed unanimously by roll call vote.

Councilwoman Powers asked for clarification as to when the three candidates would be notified of the decision by Council. Mayor Turner said he would call Ms. Bourgeois tonight and Mr. Hodgen said he would call the other two candidates with the information tonight also.

As there was no other items on the agenda, there was no additional discussion.

City Manager Sorah informed Council there would be a called attorney-client meeting Friday morning at 9:00 A.M.

Councilwoman Powers thanked City Manager Sorah for all he has done over the years and also for the wise counsel he has provided.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:17 P.M.


Mary Lee Williams, City Recorder


Vince Turner, Mayor