

**Summary Minutes of the
ISLAMORADA, VILLAGE OF ISLANDS
(HYBRID) VILLAGE COUNCIL WORKSHOP**

Founders Park Community Center

87000 Overseas Highway

Islamorada, FL 33036

Wednesday, February 24, 2021

2:00 PM

Hybrid Meeting to Occur Utilizing Communications Media Technology (CMT)

Pursuant to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), social distancing guidelines established to contain the spread of the COVID-19 virus, the Village Council Workshop was conducted utilizing Communication Media Technology (CMT) via a Zoom video conferencing application. Additional information regarding options for viewing the meeting and participation through public comment were included on the last page of the agenda and on the Village website. The agenda included additional information about Coronavirus-related precautions that addressed meeting attendance.

CALL TO ORDER / ROLL CALL

Mayor Pinder called the meeting to order at 2:04 p.m. Village Clerk Kelly Toth called the roll with the following Councilmembers being present on roll call: Mayor Buddy Pinder, Vice Mayor Pete Bacheler, Councilman Mark Gregg, Councilman David Webb and Councilman Henry Rosenthal. Village Clerk Kelly Toth and Deputy Clerk Stephanie Conde were present. Village Attorney Roget Bryan and Acting Village Manager Maria Bassett, along with other pertinent staff appeared virtually.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Councilman Mark Gregg led the Pledge of Allegiance.

DISCUSSION

Mayor Pinder invited Colin Baenziger with Colin Baenziger and Associates to begin the discussion.

Preferred Candidate Characteristics

Mr. Baenziger reported that he had spoken with each Councilmember individually, the Acting Village Manager and the Village Attorney, collected their input, and summarized the suggested characteristics. The characteristics were as follows:

1. A people person;
2. Needs to take direction from Council and needs to have a good working relationship with the Council, staff and the community;
3. Experience in a water community. Someone who likes the water and whose family likes the water;
4. Someone who will "call people on the carpet" when appropriate;
5. Understands planning and functions of municipal government;
6. Must follow the law;
7. Be comfortable with the chain-of-command;
8. Five to ten years of experience as a manager;
9. A strong communicator that keeps Council members informed;
10. A manager that is willing to "roll up their sleeves";

11. Is willing to be involved with the community, be visible and available;
12. Emergency management experience;
13. A mild preference for someone that has been in Florida or the southeastern United States;
14. Someone that will stay a long time or has a history of longevity;
15. Intergovernmental relations experience;
16. Grant writing experience; and
17. Someone that is good at negotiations.

Mr. Baenziger stated he would be happy to receive input from the public. Councilman David Webb noted that the Village had stormwater and canal restoration projects as well as the impending 2023 BPAS buildout issue and noted experience in some of these areas would be beneficial. Councilman Gregg stated he would like a Village Manager that had experience with wastewater related infrastructure, maintenance and management issues.

TAB 1: Village Manager Salary and Benefits History

Councilman Webb noted the Village Manager turnover rate was approximately two to two and a half years. He suggested it was an opportunity for the Council to examine themselves and their relationships with staff to consider whether there was something they could do to enhance the opportunity to increase the longevity of staff in order to provide the consistency and continuity that leads to more successful outcomes for problem solving. Councilman Webb noted that he mentioned to Mr. Baenziger that staff was now working with an entirely new Council that was elected in November. He stated certain things could not be changed such as the cost of living. Councilman Henry Rosenthal agreed with Councilman Webb regarding the high cost of living in the Florida Keys and wondered whether the initial payment to the manager was competitive with other areas in the country. He recalled his experience with the spouse of some of his past managers. He suggested that when the top candidates came to Islamorada for interviews the spouse should also come in order to get an idea or a feel for where she or he would be living.

Mayor Pinder commented about a comment Mr. Baenziger made about the Village owning a house that would be used for the Village Manager. Councilman Webb noted the cost of housing was a deterrent. He stated he would be more comfortable providing a housing allowance rather than purchasing a house; that the Council would have more control over a housing allowance; and suggested there could be a tax advantage to the Village Manager. Councilman Mark Gregg expressed agreement with Councilman Webb and Councilman Rosenthal. He opined that when a person had family in the area they tended to stay longer. He noted "off duty" concerns explaining that when a manager was not working it was important that the manager and his or her family enjoyed their new life, otherwise they may have reason to leave. Councilman Gregg suggested that enjoyment of the outdoors was important in the Florida Keys. He suggested, with regard to the compensation package, that the Village pay for the best Village Manager it could get suggesting that it reduced turnover. He asked the Council not to "cheap out"; suggested a retention bonus to encourage longevity; and to focus on the personal side of the manager's life. Councilman Webb agreed and stated that with regard to compensation the Council should look at all Village staff with the same eye; that the Council needed to make sure that they conducted their business in an appropriate way so that staff could accomplish what has been asked of them; and that the Council

accepts their responsibility for making decisions. He noted the heaping of blame on staff for actually doing their job; and noted that Council made decisions, instructed staff to carry out their wishes and that staff did so dutifully. If Council was going to make controversial decisions and do things that were going to cause problems within the community then the Council needed to accept the responsibility and not let it be heaped on staff.

The Vice Mayor asked Collin Baenziger to comment regarding his experience with Village Manager compensation. Mr. Baenziger acknowledged that external factors influenced whether a person stayed and noted that part of his job was screening the candidate. He posed a question regarding what could be done by Council to create an environment where people wanted to stay. Mr. Baenziger commented that sometimes there was a tendency to not follow the chain of command. He provided a diagram that identified how a city should function with a Council / Manager form of government. The diagram reflected communication flowing from the Council through the manager then from the manager to staff. He explained that sometimes in local governments the Council provided direction to department heads, bypassing the manager, which caused confusion for staff, left the manager out of the loop and meant that the manager could not really be held accountable. He stated there would be a smooth-running government if the chain of command was followed. Mr. Baenziger referenced public concerns that were expressed directly to Councilmembers. He noted it was important that the Councilmember listen to a person's concerns but that the issue was that sometimes Councilmembers tended to want to fix the problem. He suggested the first thing the Councilmember should ask was whether the person had contacted the Village Manager about their concern. If the response was yes, then the Councilmember should talk with the Village Manager and find out what was going on. Mr. Baenziger commented that the Village had a good staff and noted that every city had members of the public that thought the government was corrupt who often criticized the staff without any facts. He stated it was important that the Council stand up for their staff and have the manager look into any potential staff issues. He stated stability started at the top; that two-year Council terms did not create a stable government and consistent management; recommended four-year staggered Council terms; and setting term limits at twelve years. He opined that this would create stability and would help in obtaining a manager that would stay five or ten years.

Mr. Baenziger stated that the salary range should be between \$150,000 and \$180,000 and that a housing stipend was reasonable due to the high cost of housing. Councilman Webb, Councilman Gregg and Vice Mayor Bacheler expressed agreement with Mr. Baenziger's recommendations. Vice Mayor Pete Bacheler pointed out that the last five Village Managers were paid within the recommended salary range and the importance of finding the right person for the job. Councilman Henry Rosenthal inquired about staff turnover. Human Resources Manager Evie Engelmeyer reported the Village's turnover rate was relatively low and possibly skewed due to the pandemic. Acting Village Manager Maria Bassett reported that aside from Bernie Lapira, all the other managers were let go or encouraged to resign. She opined that the manager turnover was directly related to the change in Village Councilmembers and their preferences. Councilman Rosenthal suggested that the candidates be asked about the turnover rate of the staff that they managed. Councilman Webb noted that many of the past managers had done relatively well regarding managing turnover. He

commented about the wastewater infrastructure mandate, public resistance and the overall high cost to the Village; communicating effectively with the public so that staff is not blamed; and noted that while the managers did a good job managing turnover, the Council's let down the senior executives. Councilman Gregg recalled that there was dissention within the community from the beginning of the Village's incorporation as there were a lot of people with strong opinions; and suggested the Council discuss four-year Council terms in the future.

Discussion ensued regarding the retirement contribution rates and its part in the overall compensation package. Acting Village Manager Maria Bassett reported that staff participated in the Florida Retirement System (FRS), that the Village Attorney and Village Manager were in the Senior Management Class, and that the State determined the contribution rates each year. She provided historical information about the previous retirement plan offered by the Village explaining that prior to FRS, the Village had a 401a plan for all full-time employees whereby 10% was contributed by the Village. During the recession that rate was reduced to zero for one year then reinstated at a 4% contribution by the Village. The Village also paid into a 457 plan for the Village Managers. When the Village entered into the FRS plan the Village Council continued the practice of also paying into a 457 plan regardless of the FRS contribution rate. She noted that not all of the FRS employer contribution rate went into the employees account as a portion of it went to the unfunded liability account. She stated the percentage of the unfunded liability was higher for Senior Management Class members than for Regular Class members. Councilman Webb confirmed that the Council had no control over the FRS contribution rate.

TAB 2: Proposed Schedule

At 2:59 p.m. discussion began. Mr. Baenziger stated the proposed schedule was set in stone unless the Council needed to change it.

Phase 1: Needs Assessment / Information Gathering

- February 24, 2021: CB&A begins meeting with the Mayor and Council Members and any other suggested stake holders to understand the job and its challenges.
- March 2, 2021: CB&A submits the draft of the full recruitment profile to the City for its review.
- March 9, 2021: City provides comments on the proposed recruitment profile.

Phase 2: Recruiting

- March 12, 2021: CB&A posts the full recruitment profile on its website and submits it to the appropriate publications. It is also e-mailed to over 13,800 local government professionals.
- April 9, 2021: Closing date for submission of applications.
- April 14, 2021: CB&A reports on the results of the recruitment.

Phase 3: Screening, Reference Checks and Credential Verification

- May 10, 2021: CB&A forwards its candidate report and materials to the City electronically. These will include the candidates' resumes, the candidate introduction, and the results of ourreference, background and Internet/newspaper archives checks.

- May 20, 2021: City selects candidates for interviews.

Phase 4: Interview Process Coordination and City Manager Selections

- June 1, 2021: City provides a city tour and possibly holds reception for finalists.
- June 2, 2021: One-on-one and full city council interviews and decision.

Phase 5: Negotiation, Warranty & Continuing Assistance

CB&A works with the city representatives and the selected candidate on an employment agreement.

Mr. Baenziger provided the process for the selection of a Village Manager noting the types of information that would be included in creating the recruitment profile; his approach to reviewing applications which included him interviewing candidates; that he would submit candidate information to the Council on approximately eight to ten of the applicants; and suggested the Council choose five candidates to interview in case a candidate drops out. Councilman Rosenthal expressed that he did not just want to qualify individuals with cities that were similar to the Village in population. Mr. Baenziger stated they would not be limiting their recruitment of candidates to those from similar size cities. Councilman Webb asked if the Council should solicit input from the community. Mr. Baenziger stated a reception could be held to allow the public to meet the candidates; or a Zoom town hall meeting could be held for which questions were submitted in advance and a moderator would ask questions of the candidates. He explained that the final stage was interviews in which the Councilmembers would meet one-on-one with each of the candidates; recommended meeting with the candidates in a Council meeting setting so the public could attend. Councilman Webb stated he did not want to do anything to delay the process and spoke in support of a mechanism that would allow the public to provide input. Vice Mayor Bacheler asked if the Village had received any resumes for the position. Human Resources Manager Evie Engelmeyer stated two resumes had been received. She noted one of those individuals would be submitting their information to Mr. Baenziger and that she had not been in contact with the other individual. Councilman Mark Gregg expressed support for soliciting public input and suggested an email blast and posting information on social media and the website inviting the public to send their input to the Village Clerk's email. The Mayor expressed his support for the suggestion. Councilman Webb, with support from Councilman Gregg, suggested the recruitment profile and other appropriate information could be placed on the Village website. Council discussion ensued regarding a page of the website dedicated to the Village Manager search; inviting Chamber of Commerce members to provide their input; and the Village Clerk serving as a central point for receiving and distributing the comments. Mr. Baenziger invited the public to reach out to him directly.

TAB 3: Preparation and Events for Village Manager Interviews

This discussion was heard at 3:30 p.m. Councilman Webb asked for innovative ideas for community engagement. Mr. Baenziger stated he had used community surveys in the past. Vice Mayor Pete Bacheler asked how many members of the public were attending the meeting virtually. The Village Clerk stated there were seven attendees. Councilman Rosenthal opined that the meeting was held at an inopportune time. Councilman Gregg suggested additional time could be provided at the Council meeting the next evening for individuals to provide their comments. The Village Clerk stated two more attendees had just joined.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mayor Pinder opened public comment.

John Kocol agreed that the change in managers was due to changes in Council and Council agendas; commented regarding the negative effects of turnover; suggested long-term commitments and an employment agreement that only allowed termination for cause; a requirement that any initiative by Council that could be interpreted as questionable or unlawful from an ethical standpoint should be disclosed to the public and reviewed by an outside, independent oversight body; the candidate should have a strong moral compass and proven leadership skills.

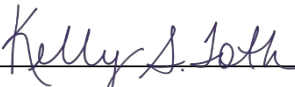
Robert Moser suggested the candidate should also be flexible.

Mayor Pinder closed public comment.

ADJOURNMENT

Vice Mayor Pete Bacheler made a motion to adjourn. Councilman Henry Rosenthal seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 3:38 p.m.

Approved by Council March 18, 2021.



Kelly S. Toth, CMC
Village Clerk