

MINUTES

1. CONVENE CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION MEETING

Mayor Labadie called the meeting to order at 6:04 P.M.

A. Roll Call

Present. Mayor Labadie; Councilmembers Johnson, Siakel, Gorham, and Callies; and City Administrator Lerud

Absent: None

B. Review Agenda

Johnson moved, Siakel seconded, approving the agenda as presented. All in favor, motion passed.

2. INTERVIEW CITY ATTORNEY FIRM – Jared Shepherd – Campbell Knutson

Councilmember Callies clarified that she does not have a conflict of interest in this case. She explained that although she has been an attorney for over 30 years and does know all the applicants, she has professional relationships with them and does not have any financial interest in any of the law firms.

Jared Shepherd, Campbell Knutson, introduced himself and shared some background information on himself, his experience, and the Campbell Knutson firm.

The Council and City Administrator Lerud asked Mr. Shepherd a series of interview questions.

Mayor Labadie thanked Mr. Shepherd for his time and informed him that the City would be in touch once a decision has been made.

Mr. Shepherd left the meeting.

Mayor Labadie stated that her understanding from previous discussions were that the Council had narrowed the candidates down to Campbell Knutson or remaining with City Attorney Keane.

Councilmember Siakel stated that to her, the most important aspect is the day to day interaction the attorney will have with staff, that is not always seen. She stated that she would like to understand what the City needs or wants in legal counsel that it does not already have. She stated that she thinks the Council should define that gap so the right person is selected.

Councilmember Callies stated that she also thinks communication is critical and feels that is currently a large gap. She expressed concern about the lack of preparation and anticipation of

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some issues that will face the Council and gave the example of the recent Zoom issue for public participation.

Mayor Labadie stated that as a new mayor, Mr. Keane has always been available and accessible for her questions. She stated that she does not disagree with some of the other comments and concerns, but noted that he had helped bring her up to speed when she requested assistance or advice.

Councilmember Gorham stated that he was also frustrated with how the Zoom meeting issue was handled because it made it appear as though the Council did not want it. He stated that one of the things that came up during the interview process was preparation of staff and Council prior to meetings and asked if that was really something the City Attorney should be doing.

Councilmember Callies stated that she would expect that they would do this type of preparation and even anticipate issues that may come up, based on what is on the agenda.

Councilmember Siakel stated that she feels that Mr. Keane does well with staff. She stated that her issue has been during the Council meetings with things like, speaking up, diffusing situations, and giving straight answers, which she feels Mr. Keane sometimes struggles with. She stated that she has given him that feedback already. She stated that she does not think it is about staff or competence, but is just a different style.

Councilmember Johnson stated that he feels the City Attorney's job is to protect the City. He stated that as a resident, he also feels that they should go out of their way to make sure that residents are also supported unless it is a situation where they are diametrically opposed, then their job would be to prioritize the City first. He stated that in his interactions with his development, he did not feel that there was a sense of urgency on behalf of Mr. Keane for a development agreement, that he wrote. He stated that it took years and years to resolve that issue which has frustrated him. He stated that he is struggling to separate that situation from the overall job performance. He stated that he would like to hear the opinion of City Administrator Lerud because of the amount of interaction he will have with whoever is chosen.

City Administrator Lerud stated that the staff relationship with Mr. Keane is very positive with a particular emphasis on planning to ensure the legal parts are covered. He stated that he participates in staff meetings which will be his expectation with any City Attorney that is chosen.

Mayor Labadie stated that she is worried about making a change that would mean losing the decades of institutional knowledge that Mr. Keane brings but agrees that there is a lack of communication skills. She shared examples of recent events where she would have liked to feel that the City's lawyer had her back and explained things more clearly and concisely.

Councilmember Callies stated that she thinks having someone look at things differently would be a positive thing because the law is the law.

Callies moved, Gorham seconded to direct staff to work with Jared Shepherd at Campbell Knutson to develop a contract for Council approval for city attorney services to commence no later than January 1, 2022 and look at keeping the existing counsel on some existing cases. Motion passed 4/1 (Siakel opposed).

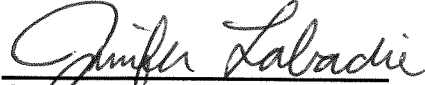
3. ADJOURN

Siakel moved, Johnson seconded, Adjourning the City Council Work Session Meeting of September 27, 2021, at 7:00 P.M. Motion passed 5/0.

ATTEST:



Sandie Thone, City Clerk



Jennifer Labadie, Mayor