



**MINUTES
SPECIAL MEETING
of THE MARY ESTHER CITY COUNCIL
February 19, 2024 - 4:00 PM**

195 Christobal Road – North, Mary Esther, FL 32569

CITY COUNCIL PRESENT

Chris Stein, Mayor
Bernie Oder, Councilmember

Larry Carter, Mayor Pro Tem
April Sutton, Councilmember

CITY STAFF PRESENT

Jared Cobb, City Manager
Hayward Dykes, City Attorney

OTHERS PRESENT

1. INVOCATION

No invocation was given.

2. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Stein at 4:00 PM.

3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mayor Stein led the pledge of allegiance.

4. ROLL CALL

Interim City Clerk Morris called roll as reflected above.

5. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Mayor Stein asked if anyone would like to make any changes to the agenda. Upon hearing none, Mayor Stein asks for a motion to approve the consent agenda. Mayor Pro Tem Carter initiated the motion, seconded by Councilmember Oder. The motion passes 3-0.

RESULT:	(3-0)
MOVER:	Mayor Pro Tem Larry Carter
SECOND:	Councilmember Bernie Oder
AYES:	Larry Carter, Bernie Oder, April Sutton
NAYS:	None

6. NEW BUSINESS

6.1. Virtual Interviews for the Position of City Clerk

Mayor Stein asked if anyone would like to make changes to any of the questions for the interview process. Councilmember Sutton asked if one of the questions can be if the candidate is prepared to relocate. After some deliberation, mayor and council agree to ask a question pertaining to the possibility of relocation as well as how the questions will be divided up among the 4 of them.

The first candidate was Sheila Reitz and Mayor Stein explained the process of how the interview will be conducted to her. Councilmember Sutton asked Ms. Reitz to tell them about herself. Ms. Reitz mentioned she is married, her husband is part of the military, she raised their family while he worked. She as well said that she enjoys her work as a clerk and helping people and her favorite part of the job is elections. Councilmember Sutton asked what qualities she looks for in

coworkers with Ms. Reitz looking for honesty, integrity, and accountability. Mayor Pro Tem Carter asks how familiar she is with technologies. Ms. Reitz answered she knows of but is not familiar with Tyler Technologies but she is willing to learn. Mayor Pro Tem Carter also asked why she is interested in the city clerk position with Ms. Reitz answering that her and her husband love the Gulf Coast but family issues caused them to move to Michigan. She said that with her kids grown they are looking to move back down to the area. Mayor Stein asked her how her experience has prepared her for the position. Ms. Reitz discussed her history with township clerical experience and she loves working with residents. Mayor Stein also asked when she would be available to start. Ms. Reitz mentioned that she has recently left her city and her calendar is open. Councilmember Oder asked Ms. Reitz if she organizes and prioritizes her workload. Ms. Reitz mentioned that she looks at deadlines and work with council and the city manager to see what needs to be done. Councilmember Oder then asked what she knows about the city of Mary Esther. Ms. Reitz mentions how the city got its name, the current projects going on in the city, and how elections work.

Councilmember Oder then asked if she had any questions for mayor and council. Ms. Reitz asked what sets apart successful workers at the city and how the clerk fits into the whole process. Councilmember Oder discussed that the staff is doing very well right now and that the city is moving forward with the town and projects right now. Ms. Reitz then asked what skills are being looked for in the clerk position. Mayor Stein responded that public records are a big part of the job, with the job also working for the council and with the city manager, and understanding the sunshine law. The logging of minutes is mentioned as well as not discussing certain topics with council members privately. Ms. Reitz how success is evaluated in the position. Mayor Pro Tem Carter discussed the collaborative effort and how it pertains to the city, and how when the city succeeds everyone succeeds. Ms. Reitz asked what advice council would give her if given the position to help her succeed. Councilmember Sutton advised to ask questions and take advantage of the resources at her disposal. Mayor Pro Tem Carter added that trust is a very important thing with the position. Councilmember Oder added that working with the local municipalities clerks is a benefit. Mayor Stein discussed the next step of the interview process and Ms. Reitz thanked everyone for the setup of everything.

There was a small lull while waiting for the next candidate.

The second candidate is Dillon Morris. Mayor Stein explained the process of the interview. Councilmember Sutton asked for Mr. Morris to say a little about himself. Mr. Morris talks about his high school, his time in band, his college education, his job at FNBT bank, and how he ended up at Mary Esther. Councilmember Sutton asked Mr. Morris what qualities in his coworkers he appreciates the most, with him responding with trustworthiness, reliability, and having coworkers who help each other just as he would help others. Mayor Pro Tem Carter asked if Mr. Morris is familiar with any technology or software related to the position with Mr. Morris stating he is familiar with Tyler Technologies, the city website, and Civic Clerk. Mayor Pro Tem Carter also asked why Mr. Morris wants the position with him responding that he has seen the work the city staff are doing to help the city and would like to be a further ingrained part of the process and help the city in ways people might not realize is as important as it is for the background. Mayor Stein asked Mr. Morris to describe his current experience and how it has prepared him for the position with Mr. Morris sharing his experience being the interim city clerk, stating that he does not have a lot of experience but he has a drive to learn what is required in the position. Councilmember Oder asked Mr. Morris how he organizes his workload with Mr. Morris talking about his white board he uses to organize all his goals with a project list and a weekly duties list, as well as a desk calendar to keep track of all approaching deadlines and events. Councilmember Oder asked Mr. Morris what he knows about the city of Mary Esther with Mr. Morris speaking that Mary Esther has been around for a while and how much the staff care about the city, remarking that they want Mary Esther to become a special city among North West Florida.

Councilmember Oder asked if Mr. Morris had any questions for mayor and council with Mr. Morris saying he had no further questions. Mayor Stein if anyone else has any questions and no one had any further questions. Mr. Morris thanked everyone for their time.

There is a lull between the next interview. Mayor and council discussed various topics, pertaining to questions that can or can not be asked in an interview, a roundtable event coming up, the library's annual chili cook off, the city manager discussed his leaving for his sister's wedding.

The third candidate is Natasha Peacock. Mayor Stein explained the process of the interview. Councilmember Sutton asked Ms. Peacock to tell a little about herself. Ms. Peacock discussed her living in Crestview, her church, and herself. Councilmember Sutton also asked what qualities in her coworkers she appreciates. Ms. Peacock said she appreciates honesty, willingness to teach and learn, and collaboration. Mayor Pro Tem Carter asked if she is familiar with any software related to the position. Ms. Peacock mentioned she is familiar with NextRequest, Civic Clerk, a software that pushes agendas to a screen, and Laserfiche. Mayor Pro Tem Carter also asked why she wants the position at the city of Mary Esther. Ms. Peacock mentioned that her experience in Crestview has prepared her for this kind of position. Mayor Stein asked her to describe her experience and how it has prepared her for the position. Ms. Peacock spoke about her time with her coworkers has prepared her the position. Mayor Stein also asked her whether she plans to move down for the position or commute to Mary Esther. Ms. Peacock responded that at this present time she would commute. Councilmember Oder asked how she organizes and prioritizes her workload. Ms. Peacock said that she makes list based on timely importance, having proper timeslots, and being able to pivot. Councilmember Oder also asked what she knows about Mary Esther. Ms. Peacock mentioned Mary Esther is a small city and going through changes that she would like to be a part of.

Councilmember Oder asked her if she has any questions for mayor and council. Ms. Peacock asked what are the expectations of the city clerk. Councilmember Oder talked about the public records request and the time requirement pertaining to agendas. He mentioned that the city staff are responsible for running the city. Ms. Peacock asked what the mayor specifically expected for the clerk. Mayor Stein said that his expectations are event organizing and trip planning for mayor and council. Mayor Stein also asked when she can report for the position with Ms. Peacock mentioning that it would be somewhere from assignment 2 weeks to 30 days. Ms. Peacock as well asked how quickly they are looking to fill the position. Councilmember Sutton said that they are looking to get it filled but that they are willing to wait if the right person comes along. Ms Peacock as well asked about how supportive they are pertaining to certification and training. Mayor Pro Tem Carter said that the city is supportive. Ms. Peacock thanked the council for their time.

Mayor and council are asked if they would like to reschedule Kimberly Banning interview. Council said they will discuss after all the current interviews are completed. There is a lull between candidates with council discussing the next candidate, the city manager sharing his opinion of current applicants, ethics training, sidewalks in Springdale, potential city council appointments, technical difficulties with the fourth candidate, pollen in the area, cameras in the council chamber, and dog training.

The fourth candidate was discussed with having trouble joining, and mayor and council were asked if they would like to proceed with the three candidates presented so far. Council asked if the budget would accommodate flying a candidate out with the answer being that the current city clerk salary is not being paid. They discussed when the interviews would be with the answer being as soon as possible. Mayor Stein asked for a motion to interview the selected candidates. Councilmember Sutton initiated the motion, seconded by Councilmember Oder. The motion passed 3-0.

The fourth candidate resolves her technical problems and joins, Ruth Bocchino. Mayor Stein explained the process of the interview. Councilmember Sutton asked for Ms. Bocchino to tell a little about herself. Ms. Bocchino talked about how long she has worked in government and how she loves working with the public. Councilmember Sutton as well asked what qualities she looks for in her coworkers. Ms. Bocchino said she looks for trust and honesty, as well as people that will answer questions. Mayor Pro Tem Carter asked how familiar she is with software related to the position. Ms. Bocchino mentioned she is familiar with Laserfiche and Legistar, as well as

Office 365. Mayor Pro Tem Carter also asked why is she interested in the position. Ms. Bocchino mentioned that she enjoys smaller communities more versus bigger organizations. Mayor Stein asked her to describe her experience and how it has prepared her for the position. Ms. Bocchino discussed how she has applied for the position previously and that she has done everything the job listing is asking for. Mayor Stein asked as well when she can report. Ms. Bocchino discussed that it would be a minimum of 30 days. Ms. Bocchino asked how soon council is looking to fill the position with Mayor Stein having said that currently there is an interim but time would be allocated for relocation. Councilmember Oder asked her how she organizes and prioritizes her workload. Ms. Bocchino said she is familiar with deadlines and postings and how she prioritizes priorities. Councilmember Oder also asked what she knows about Mary Esther. Ms. Bocchino said she is familiar with the population and how agendas are done and posted on the website.

Councilmember Oder asked if she had any questions for mayor and council. Ms. Bocchino asked what qualities they are looking for in a city clerk in the position. Councilmember Oder mentioned that public records are a very important point as well as council trips and organizing everything needed in those trips. Ms. Bocchino asked if there has ever been a deputy city clerk with Mayor Stein stating that there has been one in the past but as of right now there is no deputy. Ms. Bocchino as well asked what are problems that she could solve in 6 months if she got the position. Mayor Stein mentioned that public records being organized and digitized could be done. Ms. Bocchino said she had experience organizing, digitizing, and properly destroying records. Ms. Bocchino asked as well how reviews are handled and metrics to measure the clerk. Councilmember Sutton mentioned that council and staff work together to get feedback throughout the year with an annual feedback every year. Ms. Bocchino asked what the most challenging part of the position is. Mayor Pro Tem Carter said that the difficult thing can sometimes be working as a team and being delegated trust is an important part of the position. Ms. Bocchino thanked mayor and council for the time. Mayor Stein explained the process from that point of narrowing down candidates and if chosen she will be contacted.

City Manager Cobb informed council if they would like to change their selection of candidates they need a new motion. Mayor Pro Tem Carter put fourth the suggestion that if Ms. Reitz can not attend the interview, offering the time slot to Ms. Bocchino instead. Mayor Stein asked for a motion to interview Ms. Peacock, Mr. Morris, and Ms. Reitz with caveat of if she can not attend the interview, offering the interview to Ms. Bocchino. Councilmember Sutton initiated the motion, seconded Councilmember Oder. The motion passed 3-0.

RESULT:	(3-0)
MOVER:	Councilmember April Sutton
SECOND:	Mayor Pro Tem Larry Carter
AYES:	Larry Carter, Bernie Oder, April Sutton
NAYS:	None

7. **ADJOURN**

The council meeting adjourned at 6:08.

Minutes approved at 3/4/2024 meeting.

Interim City Clerk Dillon Morris

