

I. Call to Order

Members Present: Ali Nagle, Kristine Lott, Hal Colston, Sean McMannon, Margaret Bass, Kerubo Webster

City Staff Present: Phoebe Townsend, Ray Coffey, Lt. Justin Huizenga

Guests Present: Scott Barnes

Call to Order by: Kristine Lott

Meeting Start Time: 5:09 PM

Minutes Recorded by: Phoebe Townsend

II. Public Comment

Scott Barnes, reporter with the Winooski news, is listening in for an update on where The Search Committee is at in terms of hiring the City Manager.

III. Approve Previous Meeting Minutes

Kirstine Lott: Any questions or concerns about the content of the minutes? [none]

Motion to approve by Ray Coffey, Hal Colston seconded. Committee approves minutes.

IV. Bias in Hiring Worksheet Review

Mayor Lott: the first thing I wanted to do is revisit the group agreements and use these as a check in at beginning to see if any of these resonate with you, or make comments about our previous meetings. Phoebe and I don't think at the last meeting everyone had chance to weigh in equally, so we may want to do roundtable so even if committee members don't have anything to add, you can still share. We should spend a few minutes to debrief on the worksheet and hear folks thoughts and reactions. Have you experienced these, done any of these behaviors or used any of these interrupters before?

Ray Coffey: One jumped out to me is the culture fit conversation – something in Winooski we are guilty of focusing on a lot. We are a unique place. Important to think about being mindful of this.

Mayor Lott: I think about the phrase: "Is this someone I'd want to have a beer with"? That's a good qualification for finding a friend, not necessarily for a job.

Sean McMannon: We have seen people have deep seated biases, and some people are being strategic and savvy to use these comments to get the end result in a process.

Margaret Bass: Can we talk specifically about the process? I have received multiple telephone calls about the process. We should be really clear about how this process goes. Are we the committee that sees this through the end or preliminary committee, will the players change?

Mayor Lott: The goal of this committee is get to the stage of recommending finalists to the Council. We are going to touch on qualifications and skills. This committee will select who we're going to interview from the candidate pool and conduct those interviews.

Margaret Bass: This group will move finalists forward?

Mayor Lott: The council has final decision per Charter.

Margaret Bass: Do you vote in the final? Trying to foresee anything that someone can ask a question about. I have no objection to that because it's you and Hal. If it were not I would.

Sean McMannon: What is the role of the City leadership team in the process?

Mayor Lott: Ray is here representing the leadership team, Phoebe is here in HR Manager capacity, Lt. Huizenga also. The city staff isn't doing any evaluation of candidates or participating in interviews per se, that is what sits with this committee. They do have opportunities to voice their opinions but not in the decision making role.

Hal Colston: I wanted to say about the bias interrupters - for me it is helpful to have these traits front of mind. I can call them out when it happens, and I can hit pause and say, "what am I doing here"? More aware so I can then act and do something, as opposed to being oblivious.

Mayor Lott: This should be a space where we are allowed to call out - if you hear someone toeknizing, or viewing gaps in someone's resume, whether or not that's comfortable, it's something we should do. When we get to reviewing applicants, Phoebe will de-identify names and identifying details. We will be ranking qualifications and skills. Ali Nagle: This worksheet was interesting to see, I am a little more confused on the tightrope section.

Phoebe Townsend: This is about interpreting resumes through a lens based on the groups identified as "tightrope" groups - women and people of color, class migrants, introverted men. Behavior is seen as different if someone a member of these groups - how are we assessing someone through this lens.

Ali Nagle: This helps in bringing our awareness to how we can phrase things.

V. Job Posting Review/Discussion

Mayor Lott: Based on our last conversation and the things that people identified as qualifications and skills, is this reflective of what we discussed/is there anything that doesn't seem right?

Hal Colston: When looked at major responsibilities and essential functions, would it be helpful to be explicit about how important it is to demonstrate risk management in this position? Being on City Council and engaging with City Manager a lot of opportunities for things to not be done properly. Important one in major responsibilities that prudent decisions are being made in that interest.

Ray Coffey: Under the about section, flip the first sentence - growing economic base and equity and inclusion. We have 7400 people we are responsible for caring for and it's a big difference in terms of how that reads. The last paragraph I liked as a first paragraph - collective community values. Major responsibilities - two things. First bullet point - set and follow strategic plan. Make clear it's not the Manager's role to set - they are stewarding community process and it's their job to follow. Also missing is discussion of regional engagement - Winooski stepped up and would like that to be captured.

Sean McMannon: two bullets that say “ensure” imply risk management but it should be specifically tucked in there -important piece. Partnering with other government folks. Explicit partnering to the school district is helpful in our growth over time. In qualifications - are the seven years or five years even necessary? Can use that in the application review to decide who we're going to interview. About the City of Winooski section -most diverse population – a little more detail and be more explicit about what that means. It is a broad term and we have specific ethnic, linguistic, socioeconomic, diversity. Be more clear about what we're talking about.

Mayor Lott: We could provide a link to more detailed information?

Hal Colston: You could do both. Racially and ethnically diverse population with a link to more information about that?

Mayor Lott: I did appreciate your suggestions about where we can bake in risk management and regional engagement at the school.

Kerubo Webster: I had a thought about equity and inclusion. Bring voices to the table - how would you help this candidate know which groups these are that are excluded and underrepresented?

Mayor Lott: I think we could find something similar if we are going to make a statement about this. We could also specifically call out English language learners, socioeconomic status, newer residents

Phoebe Townsend: That is also a good suggestion to add to the list of interview questions

Mayor Lott: Any other general thoughts?

Margaret: I am just agreeing with what I have heard – essentially it doesn't mean the same thing in Winooski that it means in other places. The demographic of Winooski are different. Forces us to think about equity and inclusion in remarkably different ways. Not just about Black and white Americans. I agree that we need to expand the definition so candidates are quite clear – those terms mean what they mean but they don't mean what they usually mean. Means something very different in Winooski than they do in most other contexts in Vermont.

Mayor Lott: Sounds like we have consensus and we do want to add in these additional details.

Sean McMannon: Wonder about getting Paul Sarne's eyes on this. Public relations perspective - it is very dense. People are clear about the scope of the job. From a marketing perspective, is there a way to grab that really dense document? Emily and Paul have taught me a lot about some of those techniques.

Phoebe Townsend: We could do two separate docs and cut out some of the about position content that way.

Ali Nagle: If someone is very interested they might want to give someone the full scope. That may already weed people out who aren't ready for the full commitment?

Hal Colston: The last paragraph just before qualifications gives you a concise big picture of what it entails – some familiarity that we might want to include in the shorter version.

Ray Coffey: I agree to a point to winnow parts down, especially the about the position section. Think about the ways people interact with this posting. People will see a snippet of it first 2-3 sentences. When I look for jobs it is nice to click through high level description have a lot of

information there. Pare parts of this down but not water it down too much. Automatically get initial touch point through places that we post.. Recommend against adding a step there – may add a step to the process and end up adding work to your plate.

Margaret Bass: I have a question whether or not this is a Vermont thing – a question of residency. Are we assuming that is part of this conversation? Does the City Manager need to live here or is that not relevant to the conversation?

Mayor Lott: Elected folks have to reside here. The City Manager does have to, but the Council can give a waiver if someone is trying to move here while trying to find housing. Requirement could be waived fully as City Council decision.

Margaret Bass: So that is part of assumption that the person who is hired will live here.

Mayor Lott: That is the assumption generally, but is not set in stone.

Margaret Bas: The transition I get, but considering for those who are on council whether it be in residence.

Mayor Lott: We haven't had that conversation, but we can if the committee needs to know sooner.

Margaret: I find it odd that someone would be City Manager and not live in the city where they manage. That is a pretty significant disconnect.

Ray Coffey: I agree but I think that's Council's decision for negotiation. Residency is critical.

Margaret Bass: Can this body make a recommendation to Council? I feel strongly that the person needs to live here and I want City Council to know that.

Ali Nagle: I agree with you and could see an exception if someone owned a business here, candidates that have a strong tie to the city that may help us feel better if they don't live here. Best for candidate to choose to move here if they don't live here already.

Margaret: Certainly there is an argument to be made for that. Still a tough one. Living in and buying in and completely a part of the city with positives and negatives – this is important to me.

Ali Nagle: It is a pretty important thing to keep in mind.

Mayor Lott: Let's assume we want someone who is going to live here but there is some room for negotiation. The last thing we would like to have you all do is rank qualifications and competencies. The Search Committee did an online exercise ranking the Qualifications and Skills/Abilities in order of importance to aid in the application screening process.

VI. Interview Questions and Process

Phoebe Townsend: I have identified from our discussions of the competencies information we will be more likely to get through the interview process that we won't get through resume review – leadership style and certain skills and abilities. There are also other ways to get information such as a written response, sending questions ahead of time, like scenarios or work samples. I will send draft interview questions to the Committee for review.

Hal Colston: Great idea to have candidates respond to a written question. Can go deeper –

complex scenario. Tell us about their leadership style, and a deeper sense of capabilities in terms of their leadership.

Margaret Bass: Is that the same thing as asking that candidates receive questions in advance?

Hal Colston: We would do one question for them to come up with response - unpack a complex issue and how they would handle it.

Margaret Bass: I am of two minds – obviously candidates will prepare. Some of the questions need time and attention. All candidates should be prepared to respond on the fly to all kinds of questions. Much prefer for candidates to come prepared for certain question and respond spontaneously to others.

Ray Coffey: Having been through this once before, these meetings are all public record and all questions are part of meeting minutes in advance. If we are committed to that is there a way to do that without violating open meeting law.

Mayor Lott: It is up to myself and staff to figure out what it looks like.

Margaret Bass: Are all Search Committee meetings open meetings?

Mayor Lott: We deliberate about candidates in executive session.

Ray Coffey: I have mixed feelings about the scenario questions – they can be less illuminating. Direct experience in engaging less represented community members in public process -what has this person done in real time? We all have a role to play there to be clear.

Mayor Lott: We could ask specifically how that's been done as an interview question.

Ray Coffey: Someone may have openness, but may not have experience in communities with resettled populations. That is okay so long as they have experience that equates to that work.

Kerubo Webster: For myself, need help with understanding the questions. Otherwise there is no point in asking a question that I don't understand.

Margaret Bass: how much can you ask about coming in to situation where everyone and everything is in place, with a boat load of personalities, many of whom have been working in place for a long time? How do you approach hiring the Equity Director before the City Manager? This is not this new person's selection – person coming in to situation different into which she was hired. This person's commitment may be different from Jessie's – not only what these things mean, but the vision. both will be new and will need to get a list of priorities - we think we know what it means to the current City Manager but this person walking into someone else's vision. They have to work and collaborate very closely together - important conversation to have. Don't know how I feel about bringing Equity Director into that position of a different person in charge. Clarification in relation to that job.

Ray Coffey: Having been through this a few years back on a different level, diversity equity and inclusion were not words uttered during the hiring process five years ago. I am feeling assured that it's part of the core values that anyone will be bringing in, having a staff person start and having very strong commitment to that work and supporting that work.

Mayor Lott: We can share some of that vision around what that role is meant to be and the connection to that demographic question.

Hal Colston: If the question were framed that way it, an effective answer would be a testament for their collaboration skills which is crucial for the busy vibrant team that they have.

Mayor Lott: Our approach to community policing is different than all of the other communities in Vermont. Is that something we should incorporate into interview process?

Justin Huizenga: Yes, we are totally different – I can't think of another agency that's like ours. I hesitate to make it police specific and leave out other departments, because it's easy for me to talk about needs of police department and want to be inclusive of everyone and leave open for other departments. How deep are we allowed to go in a background investigation?

Phoebe Townsend: We have policies and do a criminal background check but we can talk about this more when we get to that point. Not as thorough as police department background check but can be thorough.

Margaret Bass: There should be very specific questions about policing. Rick is retiring in two years. There will be some new hires. I know as you all do that primary conversations taking place in this nation today, any candidates' should have positions on any pertinent topics that pertain to policing in Winooski and in the nation in general. There is conversation in this country about policing, and anyone who is coming to be the boss we should be interested in his or her position on all of the issues currently being discussed. Especially in relation to police and black people. Funding the police is a real question, varies from city to city. These are conversations we need to have, and who is currently in our PD is irrelevant to the conversation.

Justin Huizenga: Do we want to give a snapshot of what our police department looks like or come in with no knowledge just to hear what their raw take is?

Margaret Bass: We want to know what their positions are on policing in Winooski.

Mayor Lott: We could ask this one in the interview not as a prep one. Housing quality issues have also been a concern. Making improvements to support folks with language barriers - a lot of room to grow.

Hal Colston: We could ask, how do you reimagine public safety?

VII. Check-in About Next Steps

Next meeting will be scheduled for May 10th at 5pm to review interview questions and check in about candidates and application review.

VIII. Adjourn

Meeting end time: 6:36 PM