

COMMON COUNCIL PROCEEDINGS OF THE CITY OF LADYSMITH
Monday, April 6, 2020 5:15 pm Rusk County Government Center

Members present: M. Platteter, B. Morgan, B. Groothousen, J. Fields, B. Stoneberg, A. Hraban, M. Reynolds Others present: D. Parker, S. Kavanagh, K. Gorseger, A. Christianson, Jr., A. Christianson, Sr., L. Klink, C. Schultz, Tom and Brenda Donahue, Jim West, Mindy Dale (via “Go to Meeting”), K. Gibbs.

Callers on the phone lines: Line (1) Brittany Christianson; Line (2) Kyle Jeffress; Line (3) Nancy Christianson, Line (6) Cindy Pohlman.

Call to Order. Acting Mayor A. Hraban called the meeting to order at 5:15 pm.

Pledge of Allegiance. M. Platteter led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Minutes. Motion by B. Morgan, to approve the March 23, 2020 Council minutes, seconded by M. Platteter. Motion carried by voice vote. Motion by A. Hraban, seconded by B. Stoneberg to approve this evening’s agenda. Motion carried by voice vote.

Motion by M. Reynolds to show consideration for those in attendance wearing masks and gloves and in light of the latest findings that COVID-19 is indeed airborne transmittable, move that the vote called for in agenda item 6(b) be moved to the top of this evening’s agenda ahead of all other items.

Mr. Reynolds withdrew his motion following comments made by B. Stoneberg that public comments need to be heard prior to any action being taken.

Public Comment.

Mr. Fields commented that he received a text message from Janet Platteter voicing support for the nomination of Alan Christianson as City Administrator.

Ms. Stoneberg informed the council that she has never been contacted more with comments concerning COVID-19 and the appointment of Alan Brandon Christianson. She reviewed the steps that were taken during the interview process for the City Administrator position and options that were presented by Labor Attorney Mindy Dale in moving forward.

Mr. Morgan stated that he was contacted by a business person who voiced concern that the council is pushing this appointment forward way too fast.

Jim West stated he was asked to appear even though he is considered in the “high risk” category during this pandemic. He would like to see the selection process continue once the obstacles presented during this health crisis subside and travel is safe again; ensuring that the best candidate for the position is selected.

Dr. Tom Donahue stated that he has been watching the newspaper for the past few months and it appears to him and possibly the public that the council is trying to rush something in an “under the table” manner and he is asking that this matter be tabled so there will be no regret.

Mr. Platteter asked Atty. Mindy Dale to explain the selection process and what specifically occurred with 3 of the 4 final candidates withdrawing their applications for the position.

Ms. Dale explained that the process was deliberate by going from 27 applicants to 12, then down to 6 for video interviews and then background information was sought from 4 of those individuals so that a decision could be made whether to bring them in for in person interviews. Of those 4 individuals, one individual withdrew because of the coronavirus and was not willing to travel or relocate at this time. Another individual did not provide sufficient employment background information and then withdrew. Another individual asked for additional information and when he found out there was no employment contract, withdrew for personal reasons that were not explained. So the final 4 candidates were brought down to one remaining candidate- Alan Brandon Christianson.

The options Ms. Dale presented to the committee members at that point were to suspend the interview process and start it back up later in June; to expand the first round of telephonic interviews by deciding whether or not to explore the other 2 candidates out of the pool of 6 top candidates or to further explore the 12 candidates that were originally selected. The other option was to terminate the process and make a recommendation to the acting mayor that Alan Brandon Christianson be appointed as City Administrator.

Kyle Jeffress (via telephone) spoke in favor of the council appointing Alan Christianson and stated he trusts the council explicitly to make informed decisions and to take actions that put our community first.

Cindy Pohlman (via telephone) is in agreement with Kyle Jeffress’s comments and stated she completely supports the appointment of Alan Christianson as City Administrator.

Alan Brandon Christianson offered his appreciation of Ms. Dale’s explanation of the selection process, mentioning that when the committee made the decision to narrow the field down from 6 to the final 4 candidates, he assumed they believed those 4 candidates were more qualified than the other 2. He stated that he certainly is aware of the positives and negatives that come with a

position like this but truly is dedicated to this community and would like the opportunity to move it to a better place. He stated that it is very important during these difficult times that a City Administrator be in place to be “boots on the ground” so we don’t miss out on any economic development opportunities.

Mr. Groothousen shared a statement he heard from someone in the past that the very last statement you make in a job interview is that you may be interviewing more candidates that seem more qualified for this position but in the end you will not find someone who wants this job more than I do. He stated that he sought to find the best candidate for the position and he believes they have found the best one.

A. Hraban called for any additional public comment.

Review of process used to find replacement for City Administrator. Atty. Dale did clarify that she conducted all the interviews and made sure that all questions were uniform.

Motion by A. Hraban, as District 6 Alderman, to appoint Alan Brandon Christianson as City Administrator, seconded by J. Fields. M. Reynolds-no; A. Hraban-yes; B. Stoneberg-yes; J. Fields-yes; B. Groothousen-yes; B. Morgan-no; M. Platteter-yes. Motion carried.

Return of donated funds. K. Gibbs stated that in light of the COVID-19 health crisis and with the mandatory closure of the Ladysmith Family Restaurant, he would like to return the donated funds of \$3,019.00 on behalf of the Ladysmith Fire Department. He also mentioned that the Ladysmith Police Department and Rusk County Ambulance would like to do the same. All council members were in support of that gesture.

A round of applause was offered to recently retired City Administrator Al Christianson for his many years of service to the City of Ladysmith.

Motion by A. Hraban to go into closed session under authority granted in Sec. 19.85(1)(e); specifically to consider amendment of an Offer to Purchase Property, seconded by J. Fields. M. Platteter-yes, B. Morgan-yes; B. Groothousen-yes; J. Fields-yes; B. Stoneberg-yes, A. Hraban-yes, M. Reynolds-yes.

Motion to adjourn by A. Hraban, seconded by B. Morgan, at 6:30 pm.

Respectfully submitted, Shari Kavanagh, City Clerk