

Salisbury, North Carolina
August 30, 2021

SPECIAL MEETING

PRESENT: Mayor Karen K. Alexander, Mayor Pro Tem Al Heggins, Council Members William Brian Miller, David Post, and Tamara Sheffield; City Manager W. Lane Bailey, City Clerk Kelly Baker, and City Attorney Graham Corriher.

ABSENT: None.

In response to the State of Emergency declaration related to the spread of COVID-19 and to limit physical interactions and the potential spread of COVID-19 the Salisbury City Council met electronically.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Thereupon, Councilmember Sheffield made a **motion** to adopt the Agenda as presented. Mayor Alexander voted AYE, Mayor Pro Tem voted AYE, Councilmember Miller voted AYE, Councilmember Post voted AYE, and Councilmember Sheffield voted AYE. (5-0)

CITY MANAGER HIRING PROCESS

Mayor Alexander recognized Mr. Hartwell Wright from the North Carolina League of Municipalities (NCLM) to discuss the hiring process for the City Manager position.

Mr. Wright stated in North Carolina there are over 300 municipalities who have professional managers along with all 100 counties. He noted there are over 50 vacancies in North Carolina and there will be competition as Council begins its recruitment strategies.

Mr. Wright stated the first step for Council is to select a recruiting firm for its search. He noted Council should bring in a firm that best fits the needs of the City. He indicated he can provide a list of firms to City Manager Lane Bailey to be shared with Council.

Mr. Wright explained Council needs to make a decision regarding confidentiality of the recruiting process. He stated he does not recommend bringing in the public when advertising for managers, but citizens could be invited to provide input when developing the advertisement for the position with the firm. He noted once candidates have been identified, if more people outside of Council are involved fewer applicants will be willing to go through the process. He explained if the Board wants to make the name of a candidate public it must notify the candidate in order to provide them an opportunity to agree or withdraw from the process. He reiterated many applicants will not go through the process if their names will not remain confidential.

Mayor Pro Tem Heggins commented she has seen other processes when the names are released when a board is down to one or two candidates. Mr. Wright stated Council will have to give the candidates an opportunity to waive confidentiality for that to happen.

Mr. Wright stated it is important to start the process of selecting a recruiting firm in order to begin the advertising process, but he recommended not going any further until after the election. He noted the process typically takes six months but the time can be reduced by using a recruiting firm.

Mr. Wright stated Council may need to identify an interim manager when Mr. Bailey retires because a new manager will most likely not be hired before the end of the year.

Mayor Pro Tem Heggins asked about the process for hiring an interim manager. Mr. Wright stated it is Council's decision to make, and Council can bring in an external person or designate a staff member to serve in the interim role. He stated if an internal person plans to apply for the manager's job that person should not be placed in the interim position.

Mr. Wright discussed the importance of telling the recruiting firm what Council is look for in a manager. He stated it is better to take the time needed to hire the right person rather than rushing through timeline.

Councilmember Miller noted the City will be going into a budget cycle without Mr. Bailey or the Budget Manager. He asked if there are firms that can help with the budget process if needed. Mr. Wright stated there are firms who provide basic financial services but not necessarily budgeting services. He commented it may be best to find an interim manager who has prepared a budget for another community similar in size to Salisbury.

Mr. Wright stated the NCLM conducts a salary survey each year and for communities in Salisbury's population range the salary will be approximately \$180,000. He stated the salary will be dependent on the requirements Council places on for the new manager as well as the current market.

Mr. Wright discussed the importance of conducting a thorough background investigation including federal background checks once final candidates are identified. He added it is also important that the City Attorney review any offer before it is made.

Mayor Pro Tem Heggins asked about a list of recruiting firms. Mr. Wright indicated he will send a list of firms to Mr. Bailey to share with Council. Mr. Bailey stated he is in discussions with two firms for possible work after his retirement, and he added he will exclude those firms from the list.

Councilmember Post asked about the number of communities with vacancies that perform the recruitment themselves. Mr. Wright stated smaller communities typically recruit and hire themselves while almost all of the municipalities Salisbury's size use a recruiting firm.

Councilmember Sheffield asked if candidates have to apply through the firm once Council selects the firm or if they can apply in other ways. Mr. Wright stated there will most likely be contractual language that applications come through the firm.

Councilmember Sheffield noted Council needs to move quickly to identify an interim manager while looking for a recruiting firm. Mr. Wright stated there are no requirements for recruiting an interim manager. He added Council can use an internal candidate or the NCLM can recommend an external candidate to Council.

Councilmember Sheffield asked about the process for discussing the candidates. City Attorney Graham Corriher stated when identifying candidates the discussion is appropriate for closed session.

Councilmember Miller asked Mr. Wright the average cost for a recruiting firm. Mr. Wright noted in the private sector firms generally charge a percentage of the salary but in the government sector it is often a set fee. He stated he estimates the cost to be approximately \$40,000.

Mayor Alexander asked if Council will receive background information on the recommended firms. Mr. Wright noted the background information can be part of a Request for Proposals. He indicated he has a Request for Proposal template he will share with Mr. Bailey.

Mayor Pro Tem Heggins asked if it is appropriate to share information on the recruiting firm with all of the candidates for City Council to give them an opportunity to provide feedback. Mr. Wright stated it would be more appropriate closer to the election. Councilmember Miller commented he appreciates the spirit of the offer but he does not

think it adds value to the process. He added Council is charged with the responsibility to begin the process and can wait until after the election to execute the contract.

Council discussed the process for hiring an interim manager. Mr. Wright stated he will identify a candidate to present to Council that would best fit the City's needs. He added Council can then interview the candidate to determine if it would like to hire.

Council also discussed the need to set up dates to discuss hiring an interim manager and identifying a recruiting firm. It was decided a range of dates will be sent to Council that includes time during its regular meetings.

Thereupon, Councilmember Post made a **motion** to seek the services of the North Carolina League of Municipalities to identify a potential interim city manager whose service will begin prior to January 1, 2022. Mayor Alexander voted AYE, Mayor Pro Tem voted AYE, Councilmember Miller voted AYE, Councilmember Post voted AYE, and Councilmember Sheffield voted AYE. (5-0)

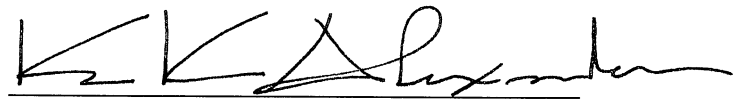
Mayor Pro Tem Heggins asked if Council will consider an internal candidate. Councilmember Miller stated Council needs to make a choice of internal or external. He added when Council meets to discuss the candidates if can decide how it wants to approach the interim position and it will have an external name to discuss as well.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Councilmember Miller. All Council members in attendance agreed unanimously to adjourn. The meeting was adjourned at 6:47 p.m.



Kelly Baker, City Clerk



Karen Alexander, Mayor