

The City Manager Search Subcommittee

Conference Room A
Date: Friday, April 19, 2019

Portsmouth, NH
Time: 8:00 a.m.

I. Call to Order

Mayor Blalock called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m.

II. Attendance

Present: Mayor Blalock, Assistant Mayor Lazenby, Councilors Pearson and Dwyer (via conference call)

III. Acceptance of Minutes – April 12, 2019

Assistant Mayor Lazenby moved to approve and accept the minutes of the April 12, 2019 City Manager Search Subcommittee meeting. Seconded by Councilor Pearson and voted.

IV. Review Request for Proposals for Executive Search Firm

Mayor Blalock advised the Subcommittee that Deputy City Manager Colbert Puff has written the Request for Proposals (RFP).

Deputy City Manager Colbert Puff provided a list of executive search firms available to the City. She informed the Subcommittee when Cambridge, MA released an RFP for a firm they received interest from fifty five firms.

Deputy City Manager Colbert Puff reviewed the RFP which contains advertising background information on the City which is located on page 2 with the government setup. She spoke to the draft scope regarding developing a candidate profile for the City Manager by meeting with City Council, staff, and community members to obtain information regarding specific issues and opportunities facing the City, the desirable education, experience and background of the candidates, and identification of the management skills and style that are appropriate for the position. She informed the Council that cost of services depend, in part, upon how many meetings we want to have the firm run and how many times they would travel here. Councilor Dwyer said you would price the travel separately for search firms from the fee.

Mayor Blalock asked if there were thoughts on the number of meetings that might take place. Deputy City Manager Colbert Puff said at a minimum a meeting with staff, community members and the City Council. Councilor Dwyer said she would think a minimum of three meetings would need to be established. She said we should ask the firm about community assessments and here how they would do that.

Councilor Dwyer said the firm should propose back to the Subcommittee what they would expect for a community engagement process to define the characteristics which could be one way to distinguish the firm. Mayor Blalock asked if we would do that as part of the RFP. Councilor Dwyer said yes and we might get some real innovation. Mayor Blalock indicated that could help narrow down the firms. He said he does not want the process to be too cumbersome.

Deputy City Manager Colbert Puff said she will put in the language that there will be a minimum of three meetings.

Deputy City Manager Colbert Puff stated that Assistant Mayor Lazenby would like the wording adjusted for number four on page 3 because of it is awkwardly worded. She also pointed out number 10 which reads as follows:

Reinitiate additional search and screening activities, at no fee to the City, if the first search effort in unsuccessful or successful candidates leave (via resignation or termination with or without cause) the employment of the City within one (1) year of placement.

Deputy City Manager Colbert Puff said a successful search is someone that is City Manager for a minimum of two years.

Councilor Dwyer said that is something done at a reduced cost. Deputy City Manager said she could eliminate no fee and that could be negotiable. Discussion followed on whether or not charge a fee to City if the first search effort is unsuccessful.

Councilor Pearson said she does not feel the wording should be removed but perhaps that we would insert no fee/reduced.

Assistant Mayor Lazenby said a carved out for expenses is reasonable.

Deputy City Manager Colbert Puff spoke to submittal content requirements which is the most important part of the RFP. She asked what the Subcommittee would like to see from the firm beyond marketing materials. Councilor Dwyer said she wants to make sure that we have pro-active recruitment and perhaps provide a description of candidates firms are currently in discussions with. Mayor Blalock suggested that the three references fit the model of a municipality roughly our size. Assistant Mayor Lazenby said we want to be specific in all areas that are comparable to our City.

Deputy City Manager Colbert Puff said the submittals by firms will not be public information until a firm is selected. She said we would then post those questions and proposals would be due on May 23, 2019. She said she would send out the RFP and the selection would take place swiftly thereafter. She said we would need to create a short list. She said you could interview firms in one evening or afternoon but that depends if people are comfortable with skyping an interview.

Councilor Dwyer said that questions being due six days following responses issued seems kind of tight. She feels there are things that appear that we have picked someone and she would like to clean those things up. She said maybe we want to have questions and proposals due at the end of May. Deputy City Manager Colbert Puff said she could reach out to the firms and feel their pulse to see how they feel about the time line. Assistant Mayor Lazenby said he agrees with Deputy City Manager Colbert Puff. She indicated that in various RFP's this is not an unusual time frame. She said there have been firms that have already reached out to us and are aware of the search for a new City Manager. Mayor Blalock said he is comfortable with the time frame laid out in the RFP on page 5.

Councilor Dwyer would like the paper responses follow the electronic responses. Deputy City Manager Colbert Puff said we could move up the questions due and then they would have eight days for responses discussion followed with Mayor Blalock stating proposals due would remain May 23, 2019. Deputy City Manager Colbert Puff said you want time to review before the first City Council meeting in June. She indicated after proposals are received and reviewed you would come quickly to a consensus and if there is a lead firm you could go with them or if there are multiple firms we could conduct interviews. She is suggesting interviews on June 4th with the entire City Council. Councilor Pearson said she supports the schedule. Deputy City Manager Colbert Puff said interviews could take place on June 3rd or June 4th with a selection made on June 4th.

Councilor Dwyer said we will need decisions on the parameters for costs by the City Council. She said we could have those discussions with the City Council ahead of time. Deputy City Manager Colbert Puff said she will contact firms on their range of costs. Mayor Blalock said at the May 6th City Council meeting we will provide a range of costs for the hiring of a firm.

Councilor Dwyer said the Subcommittee would need to check with references before bringing the firms to the City Council. She would like to request five references and be able to choose three of them to ask questions of.

Councilor Dwyer expressed concern with the language that the award of the contract is subject to appropriation. Deputy City Manager Colbert Puff said she would work on the language. Councilor Dwyer said we should be consistent throughout the RFP to say we are looking for a firm and not a consultant. Councilor Dwyer would like to have a firm that has placed a City Manager in New England. Deputy City Manager Colbert Puff said firms would indicate whether they have placed a City Manager in New England. Councilor Dwyer would like the language changed that states administrative aspects of the search will be coordinated through the City's Deputy City Manager. Deputy City Manager Colbert Puff said she would make the adjustment to the language.

Discussion followed on the advertisement of the position.

Mayor Blalock asked what the next task of the Subcommittee would be. Deputy City Manager Colbert Puff said she will revise the RFP draft, contact firms on range of prices and email that out to the Subcommittee. She indicated she would put the draft RFP, the cost, and schedule on the May 6th City Council meeting.

Assistant Mayor Lazenby moved to recommend the RFP with edits as discussed and anticipated a cost range to the City Council for the May 6, 2019 City Council meeting. Seconded by Councilor Pearson and voted.

Mayor Blalock said we do not need to meet until after the May 6, 2019 City Council meeting.

The Subcommittee agreed to meet on Friday, May 24, 2019 at 8:00 a.m. in Conference Room A.

V. Adjournment

At 8:50 a.m., Assistant Mayor Lazenby moved to adjourn. Seconded by Councilor Pearson and voted.

Respectfully submitted by:

Kelli L. Barnaby, MMC, CMC, CNHMC
City Clerk