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**Town Commission**

**Special Meeting**

**Applicant Interview Results Discussion**

**Wednesday** **• April 28, 2021 • 6:30 pm**

**Minutes Special Meeting**

1.Call to Order: 6:32 pm

2. Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance to Flag

3. Roll Call

*Commissioners Attending:*

* Joseph Aufmuth, Mayor Present
* Timothy Parker, Mayor Pro Tem Present
* Virginia Mance Present
* Troy Blakely Present *(arriving just after roll call)*
* Mike Roberts Present
* Debbie Gonano, Town Administrator Present
* Patty Polk, Deputy Town Clerk Present
* Andrea Parker, Town Attorney Present

4. Agenda Approval

***Motion made and second (Mance/Parker) to approve agenda; Passed 4-0***

5. Town Clerk/Administrator Applicant Interview Results Discussion:

The applicants for the position of Town Clerk/Administrator were Jennifer Cialona, Caden Gillespie, Vance Lipsey, and Sara Owen.

The Town Clerk/Administrator applicants were provided with a list of questions prior to their interviews and were rated on the below questions using an *Interview Questions* worksheet provided to all the Commissioners prior to the actual interviews. The applicants were to be rated by each Commissioner as having *‘Minimal Experience to Meet Requirements,’ Experience Meets Requirements’*, or ‘*Experience Exceeds Requirements’* on each of the 15 below questions. The worksheet also had provided space for added *Comments*.

1) Tell us why you applied for this position and why you think you will be successful. Where do you see yourself professionally in five years?

2) What do you know about Micanopy and historic preservation?

3) Describe a project that you handled from inception to completion that was most satisfying to you.

4) The job of Micanopy Town Clerk/Administrator is a working administrator position. Describe your governmental accounting and budgeting experience and knowledge of reporting requirements.

5) What are key tasks for a Town Clerk/Administrator? Do you believe that it’s important for the Town Clerk/Administrator to participate or be involved in special events within the Town taking place outside of normal business hours?

6) What can a municipal government do in a time of economic downturn, declining revenue, and a desire to provide consistent levels of service?

7) How and when do you delegate responsibility and authority?

8) Communication to Commissioners, staff, and the public is vital to this position. Please share your current communications skills.

9) Do you possess familiarity of Florida Sunshine Laws?

10) How do you resolve conflict?

11) Citizens are very involved in Micanopy and many have different perspectives. While maintaining objectivity and fairness, describe how you would decide which side to take in a position where two people wanted you to take opposite positions on the same subject.

12) What do you believe are the top three skills the Town Clerk/Administrator should possess?

13) What do you do when an individual Commissioner asks you to perform a task that is not approved by the entire Commission?

14) Based on your education, experience, and background, what do you consider to be your strengths in dealing with local government problems and intergovernmental relations? What are your weaknesses?

15) A function of the Town Clerk/Administrator position is code enforcement. What ability do you possess to interpret, apply, and assist in implementing Micanopy codes, land use policies, ordinances, and regulations?

After discussion about the manner in which the results of the Commission’s ratings would be tabulated, it was decided that the best means would be to total the number of ratings in each category *(Minimal Experience to Meet Requirements, Experience Meets Requirements,* and *Experience Exceeds Requirements)* to determine which applicant was overall most qualified to fill the position of Town Clerk/Administrator. Mayor Aufmuth totaled the results as follows:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| ***Applicant*** | ***Minimal Experience to Meet Requirements*** | ***Experience Meets Requirements*** | ***Experience Exceeds Requirements*** |
| Jennifer Cialona |  | 13 | 2 |
| Caden Gillespie | 4 | 11 |  |
| Vance Lipsey | 7 | 8 |  |
| Sara Owen |  | 2 | 13 |

Following the rating process, each Commissioner was given an opportunity to comment. Sara Owen unquestionably was considered the best applicant because of her municipal hands-on experience, strong budgeting skills, education, professionalism, minimum training needed, “the buck stops here” attitude, and ability to hit the ground running. Jennifer Cialona was also mentioned as a strong candidate and was noted for her devotion to the Town. The other candidates were noted as being respectful and educated; but lacking in municipal government experience. Commissioner Roberts stated that some residents would like to see a resident of the Town in the position; but he liked Sara Owen for the position. Commissioner Mance was leaning towards a Town resident, but felt Sara Owen had more experience. Mayor Aufmuth thought that the position can be a burnout job and that it could be difficult for the Town Clerk/Administrator to live in Town.

Bud DesForges *(554 NE Seminary Avenue)*, who is Jennifer Cialona’s stepfather, thought that Sara was a good candidate, but she does not live here and he warned the Commission that if they hired Sara Owen, she would move on in five years; whereas, Jennifer Cialona was a Town resident and would retire from the position. Bud DesForges acknowledged that Jennifer would be ready to take the job when Sara moves on in a few years.

Marian Baron *(108 Whiting Street)* agrees with Bud DesForges, although she thought that Jennifer didn’t have the qualifications. Marian preferred Vance Lipsey because of her perceived view that Mr. Lipsey would have good relations with the community, has a law enforcement background and foundation for success, and he would be a great asset. She acknowledged that Sara Owen had a very strong financial background, but found her reasoning for applying for this position lacking. Marian also stated that Caden Gillespie had shown a lot of education but little substance.

Stoney Slaton *(718 North Division Street)* thought that Sara Owen would use the Town of Micanopy as a stepping stone for her career. He asked if relocation fees would be reimbursed by the Town; the Mayor answered ‘no.’

***Motion made and second (Parker/Blakely) acknowledging Sara Owen as the top candidate and to offer her the position of Town Clerk/Administrator; Passed 5-0***

With additional training, Jennifer Cialona was considered an excellent alternate for Sara Owen. After debate, the Commission decided to offer Jennifer Cialona as an alternate if Sara Owen rejected the Town’s offer.

***Motion made and second (Mance/Roberts) to extend an offer to Jennifer Cialona in the event Sara Owen does not accept the Town’s offer of employment; Passed 5-0***

Karl Tarbox *(201 NE Cholokka Blvd.)* suggested that the Commission consider presenting an employment contract to Ms. Owen; however, the Commission wanted the attorney to present a job offer letter. Town Administrator Gonano would provide employee benefit information to Attorney Parker for purposes of composing such letter.

The Commission debated the beginning salary to offer Ms. Owen based on her current salary at Lake Butler and the advertised salary range of $50,000 - $65,000 annually. The lack of attractive benefits being offered by the Town, mainly lack of a retirement plan, was taken into consideration in extending the offer. The Employee Handbook specifies a six-month probation period.

***Motion made and second (Roberts/Parker) to offer Sara Owen a beginning salary of $60,000; Passed 5-0***

Attorney Parker would check Ms. Owen’s references. Attorney Parker would bring back any counter offers at the May 11th meeting.

6. Adjourn 8:46pm

**MINUTES APPROVED:**

**As submitted \_\_\_\_\_\_ as amended \_\_\_\_\_ at Town Commission Meeting \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

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**Joseph L. Aufmuth, Mayor Debbie Gonano, Town Administrator/Clerk**