

**MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE SESSION OF THE
PERSONNEL COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE
CITY OF COLUMBIA, ILLINOIS HELD MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 2008 IN
THE COUNCIL ROOM OF CITY HALL**

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Niemietz called the Executive Session of the Personnel Committee Meeting of the City of Columbia, Illinois to order at 7:07 p.m.

Upon Roll Call, the following members were:

Present: Chairman Niemietz and Aldermen Ebersohl, Hejna and Stumpf.

Absent: None.

Quorum Present.

Others Present: Mayor Hutchinson and Aldermen Agne, Row and Oberkfell. Alderman Unnerstall arrived at 8:00 p.m.

Administrative Staff Present: Deputy Clerk Donna Mehaffey.

Guests Present: None.

II. EXECUTIVE SESSION – OFFICE OF CITY ADMINISTRATION

Chairman Niemietz stated the City has been without a City Administrator and the City has that form of government. Chairman Niemietz said the City is still able to function because of the policies and procedures that have been put into place and because there has been cross training of employees and filling in of other jobs.

Chairman Niemietz said some of the committee members have been working with the office of City Administration. Chairman Niemietz said most recently; Alderman Unnerstall has worked with the Administrative Assistant, Ms. Theresa Lucas-Stephan on the phone system.

Chairman Niemietz stated Ms. Lucas-Stephan has been keeping the function of the office going.

Chairman Niemietz also reported Ms. Lucas-Stephan would be taking maternity leave under the Family Medical Leave Act in mid February, but has now found out the leave will be taken in mid January.

Chairman Niemietz said there will not be a City Administrator or an assistant during that time. Chairman Niemietz stated this situation makes her very nervous and does not know how the City will be able to handle the work load without anyone in those positions.

Chairman Niemietz said Mayor Hutchinson is already picking up a lot of the work. Chairman Niemietz wanted to bring this to the committee so as to not offend anyone, but said Ms. Lucas-Stephan has moved into the City Administrator's position. Chairman Niemietz said Ms. Lucas-Stephan has a Master's Degree in Public Administration, a degree in criminology, and is very well qualified. Chairman Niemietz added Ms. Lucas-Stephan has served as an assistant with our previous City Administrator and has the experience from working in Collinsville and other administrative roles.

Chairman Niemietz said we aren't paying her as such and pay is a concern. Chairman Niemietz didn't want to bring up, but if someone is taking over the position of City Administrator, then they should be compensated.

Chairman Niemietz also stated in November 2007, there was going to be a change of title and a change of pay for Ms. Lucas-Stephan, but that was voted down. Alderman Niemietz stated again she is very concerned about what the City will do when Ms. Lucas-Stephan is gone in addition to the absence of the City Administrator.

Chairman Niemietz said Human Resources can get very expensive and is extremely important. Chairman Niemietz said the City can get by, but doesn't think the City is doing a service to the citizens of the City of Columbia.

Chairman Niemietz brought up that staff meetings are no longer held and the office of the City Administrator would bring all the information together for those meetings. Chairman Niemietz said Department Heads are very capable and qualified, but thinks the office of City Administrator brings continuity to all the Department Heads. Chairman Niemietz stated it was nice to have the college degree and expertise when the City had a City Administrator.

Chairman Niemietz also said the City Administrator made recommendations and assisted in adopting policies. Chairman Niemietz would like a response from everyone on this issue.

Chairman Niemietz added she would hate to destroy the position of City Administrator, because it has proved to be very efficient. Chairman Niemietz stressed her immediate concern is that the office will be empty in January. Chairman Niemietz also said as Chairman of the Personnel Committee, she doesn't mind doing the time involved on it, but the City really needs an understanding of Human Resources.

Chairman Niemietz again stated the office of City Administrator has worked well and is now worried.

Alderman Row stated he has no problem with the City Administrator position or with Mr. Hank Sinda, but the pay for Mr. Sinda was way too much and the City needs to get someone with cheaper pay. Alderman Row asked the Mayor if he had a problem with it.

Mayor Hutchinson said he wanted to bring in an Interim City Administrator to get things going and was using the interim position to create a transition.

Mayor Hutchinson said the Interim City Administrator would work with the City the same as the range rider did, and it makes sense that the interim administrator is a contract employee. Mayor Hutchinson added you will always pay more for a consultant which was what Mr. Sinda would have been.

Alderman Row again said the City could get someone cheaper. Mayor Hutchinson said in talking to administrators, there were very few candidates interested in the Columbia position. Mayor Hutchinson compared the previous number of City Administrator position applications of over 50 or so, to the recent Assistant City Engineer position with only 17 applicants. Mayor Hutchinson said in choosing Mr. Sinda, there was no formal application process. He was the best qualified person that showed interest in the position. Chairman Niemietz said if the Council majority does not want to have a City Administrator, she doesn't feel we should hire full-time for only six months. Chairman Niemietz added it would not be a sure thing and doesn't know how the election will turn out in the spring. Alderman Row said it is best to get an Interim City Administrator.

Chairman Niemietz said the person for the Interim City Administrator has to be an expert and has to be able to take over the position. Chairman Niemietz added the City cannot bring in a new person to train for the Interim City Administrator position. Chairman Niemietz said Mr. Sinda had previously said to the Council they are so divided, they are dysfunctional. Chairman Niemietz also said that Mr. Sinda said the Council needs to work together. Chairman Niemietz said she believes they have several months to do this. Chairman Niemietz added we are not serving our citizens and doing ourselves a favor either by not having a City Administrator. She also said she used to love coming to the meetings and felt worthwhile, but now doesn't feel worthwhile and dreads Monday nights. Chairman Niemietz felt Mr. Sinda had a strong attitude and thought that is what we needed.

Alderman Row said he thought Mr. Sinda was open and honest. Mayor Hutchinson said Mr. Sinda has an "A" personality, being retired he had nothing to loose and would give us his opinion whether we liked it or not. He would not be a yes man. Mayor Hutchinson said he truly thought Mr. Sinda was the right person for the job and said that is why you pay extra for a consultant with his expertise.

Alderman Hejna stated Ms. Lucas-Stephan had not been here that long and asked how long she would be off for maternity leave. Alderman Hejna asked if it would be six weeks. Chairman Niemietz said the Family Medical Leave Act is governed by statute. Chairman Niemietz said Ms. Lucas-Stephan's leave will be unpaid leave after she exhausts her paid leave, and could be off for three months or 12 weeks with the Family

Medical Leave Act. Alderman Stumpf asked if Ms. Lucas-Stephan was taking off after the birth or before since it was mentioned she might leave early. Alderman Niemietz said the baby's due date may come earlier than mid-February and will probably be one month earlier than what she thought, which now is mid January.

Alderman Row asked if Mayor Hutchinson has spoken to Mr. Sinda. Mayor Hutchinson said Mr. Sinda will not agree to the position without a contract, and this is for legal reasons. Alderman Row asked how the Mayor figured his pay. Mayor Hutchinson said Mr. Sinda was paid well over \$100,000 per year, probably \$110 or \$120 thousand range at his previous job. Mayor Hutchinson said he used the amount of Mr. Traxler's salary including the cost of benefits.

Alderman Row asked what is left in the budget from Mr. Traxler's salary. Mayor Hutchinson said Mr. Traxler's salary and the Assistant City Engineer salary is still in the budget. The amount left is the remainder of Mr. Traxler's salary and the Assistant Engineer's salary up until his hire date minus the \$10,441 that was transferred to the Fire Tax. Alderman Hejna Agreed. Mayor Hutchinson added there are definitely still monies available. Alderman Row said we have to be guaranteed the City will be under budget including Mr. Sinda's expenses. Mayor Hutchinson said Mr. Sinda was only looking to be reimbursed for mileage to meetings in St. Louis, Collinsville, etc. and that there would be little to no reimbursement for just driving around Columbia or to and from work.

Alderman Row asked if there is something in the contract when you get to a certain amount of money for the mileage reimbursement, do we cut it off. Mayor Hutchinson said no and said the mileage reimbursement and other charges would probably cost about a couple \$100 per month or maybe \$2,000 total for the year. Mayor Hutchinson again went over how the salary figures were calculated. Mayor Hutchinson said those numbers were calculated and thought it was approximately \$50,000, but did not remember the exact amount. Mayor Hutchinson also said he didn't know what the figure is today minus the \$10,000 figure because the City still has a couple more months of the Assistant City Engineer Position and another month out of Mr. Traxler's payroll figures. Mayor Hutchinson said he guesses we are still okay, but doesn't know that for sure. Alderman Hejna said the figure for the gross salary was about \$58,114 which was from Ms. Sharp's email.

Alderman Stumpf said he wanted to direct someone to get salary comparisons for Cities comparable to Columbia. Alderman Stumpf mentioned the cities of Glen Carbon, Mascoutah and Fairview Heights. Alderman Stumpf also asked about the City Administrator job description. Chairman Niemietz said the job description is in the Code Master on everyone's computer and was put in when the previous City Administrator was hired. Mayor Hutchinson said it is under 2.17 City Administrator Section under general duties 2.17.040. Alderman Stumpf asked if Mr. Traxler was still working for the City using his vacation hours and Mayor Hutchinson and Chairman Niemietz both said all of Mr. Traxler's vacation has been exhausted. Alderman Stumpf said he would like to be involved with ten and on down applicants and thinks the Personnel Committee needs to get more involved in the narrowing process, pay structure and benefits. Chairman Niemietz again said the City already has this in our City Code.

Alderman Ebersohl said the City needs to decide if we want a part-time interim City Administrator or a full-time City Administrator. Mayor Hutchinson said he totally agrees to appoint a temporary City Administrator until the end of the fiscal year. Then a new City Administrator can be appointed Alderman Stumpf said this needs to be spelled out in black and white.

Alderman Agne said Ms. Lucas-Stephan and Mr. Traxler worked together when Mr. Traxler left to finish things up, but doesn't feel Ms. Lucas-Stephan is quite ready for the City Administrator position. Alderman Agne asked when Ms. Lucas-Stephan would be coming back from the pregnancy leave. Chairman Niemietz said this is a very sensitive issue and cannot really ask about these things.

Alderman Row said there are two issues. The City needs to hire either a full-time City Administrator or an Interim City Administrator and it definitely needs to be an interim position. Alderman Row asked if the City could still get Mr. Sinda, Mr. Sinda made a good impression. Alderman Row would like to get Mr. Sinda as long as the budget would support it.

Alderman Hejna stated we keep saying we have a City Administrator form of government. Alderman Hejna said it isn't in the IML book that way and is not sure that is true. Alderman Hejna stated she is strictly against a full-time or part-time Interim City Administrator and it is a failed experiment. Alderman Hejna said what she saw Mr. Traxler do by going to a department head for information she wanted and said she doesn't just need someone to get answers from department heads. Alderman Hejna said there are other cities that do not have City Administrators. Alderman Hejna said the City just needs an office manager for the City Administration Department and Ms. Lucas-Stephan would be a good office manager.

Chairman Niemietz asked Alderman Hejna if she had any idea of how the City worked five or six years ago. Alderman Niemietz said back then, there was no electronic system. Alderman Niemietz said our whole software system has changed, customer service has changed, there is only one point of entry into City Hall for correspondence, there are less employees at City Hall, have played on employees' strengths, and thinks the morale is good. Alderman Niemietz said we have to move forward and need to run the City professionally, not politically. Alderman Hejna said things were very political at City Hall and said she is here everyday at City Hall.

Alderman Row said he can't say to be with or without a City Administrator. Alderman Row added all employees used to run with a City Administrator and respects everyone's opinion. Alderman Row said in April, the City may or may not go with a City Administrator.

Alderman Oberfell stated he went over the City Administrator duties in Code Master. Alderman Oberfell said a couple things stand out and said the financial duties could be handed over to Accounting Manager Linda Sharp. Alderman Oberfell also said an

Interim City Administrator is needed now and said he saw how the previous City Administrator passed everything on to department heads if on the street. Mayor Hutchinson agreed with Alderman Oberkfell that the administrator's duties should be reorganized once the City has a full-time City Administrator hire. Alderman Oberkfell said he was talking about the day to day operations, and not what Mr. Traxler took care of. Mayor Hutchinson agreed with Alderman Oberkfell.

Alderman Stumpf said all things need to be considered for the City Administrator hire. Alderman Stumpf said this includes pay, time frame, and more than just one applicant. Alderman Stumpf added this is a necessity to move forward on a temporary City Administrator. Alderman Niemietz said the entire City Council hired the previous City Administrator. Alderman Stumpf said the Personnel Committee is the committee to do the hiring and if all of the Aldermen want to sit in on the meeting that is fine. Alderman Stumpf said he'd like to get two other applicants besides Mr. Sinda. Alderman Row said we need to get the advertisement on the City's website. Alderman Stumpf said an attempt to hire an interim City Administrator would be good in the right direction. Alderman Hejna again stated the City Administrator does not work and she is entitled to her opinion.

III. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION:

It was moved by Aldermen Ebersohl seconded by Alderman Hejna to adjourn the Executive Session of the Personnel Committee Meeting of September 22, 2008 at 8:05 p.m. Upon Roll Call Vote, Chairman Niemietz, and Aldermen Ebersohl and Hejna voted yea. Alderman Stumpf voted nay. **MOTION CARRIED.**

Mary Ellen Niemietz

MARY E. NIEMIETZ, Chairman
PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

Minutes taken by:

Donna Meaffey

DONNA MEHAFFEY, Deputy Clerk