

Roll Call

A special meeting of the Kalamazoo City Commission was held on Thursday, December 1, 2022 at 8:33 a.m. in the City Commission Chambers at City Hall. The purpose of the meeting was to interview candidates for the City Attorney position.

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

Mayor David Anderson
Vice Mayor Don Cooney
Qianna Decker
Jeanne Hess
Esteven Juarez
Chris Praedel

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT:

Stephanie Hoffman*

Also present were City Manager Jim Ritsema, City Attorney Clyde Robinson, and City Clerk Scott Borling.

Commissioners Excused

Vice Mayor Cooney, seconded by Commissioner Hess, moved to excuse the absence of Commissioner Hoffman. With a voice vote this motion passed.

Communications

An opportunity was given for communications, but no communications were offered.

Public Comments

Next, an opportunity was given for general public comments, but no comments were offered.

2022-00Interview of City
Attorney Candidates

Jeff Mueller, Search Facilitator from the Michigan Municipal League, distributed packets to Commissioners with information on the interview process, candidate screening report, candidate cover letters and resumes, interview questions, and evaluation forms for each candidate. Mr. Muller suggested the Mayor open each interview, with questions asked by Commissioners in rotation. Mr. Muller recommended that Commissioners ask the prepared questions and noted there were suggested follow-up questions if needed. Mr. Muller stated all candidates should be asked the same questions if Commissioners wanted to add their own questions.

*Commissioner Hoffman arrived at 8:39 a.m.

In response to a question from Vice Mayor Cooney, Mr. Mueller stated he could ask a custom question as long as he asked the same question of all candidates.

Human Resources Director Shelly Dusek provided instructions for completing the *Interviewer's Evaluation of Candidate* form.

In response to a question from Commission Praedel, Mr. Muller stated the evaluation sheets would be public documents. Mr. Muller noted all discussion of the candidates should take place in the open meeting.

Discussion took place regarding the division of interview questions among Commissioners.

The City Commission interviewed candidates for the City Attorney position, with Commissioners asking the following questions in turn:

- Please give us a brief summary of your experience, particularly in regard to municipal law. Tell us why you applied to Kalamazoo and how you think your style and expertise will be the right fit for us.
- I would like to know a little bit more about you as an individual. What occupies your time outside of work?
- From your resume, it appears you have a career filled with accomplishments. Tell us about two you are most proud of.
- If offered the position in Kalamazoo, what do you intend to do to be sure you are a part of the community?
- When we call on the individuals who have worked with you over the years, what will they tell us about you?
- What do your first three months look like in Kalamazoo? What are the most important things you will try to learn?
- What do you see in Kalamazoo that sets us apart from other places you have worked? What particular skills, talents, or experience do you have that will make your tenure here successful?
- From what you have learned about us, what do you think our two biggest challenges will be in the next three years? How would you tackle them and what processes will you follow?
- As an attorney, has there ever been a time when you made a recommendation that you wish you could have changed? Tell us about how you handled it and what you would do differently now, if anything?
- What do you believe is the most important skill a City Attorney can have when it comes to City Attorney/Commission relationship success? Tell us about a time you had to rely on that talent to build or improve relationships.
- What is the most important role the Commission plays in the success of a community's future, and what will you do to assure we are effective in that task? What tools or techniques do you use to insure the Commission is always well-prepared to make the best possible decisions? Do you find it best to provide the Commission with recommendations for actions or merely options from which they choose?
- Are you more of a manager or a leader? Can you describe how you exemplify the best of that quality?
- When hiring a new employee to join your team, what skills and characteristics would they need to possess any why?
- What will be your secret to prioritizing, organizing, managing time and evaluating how effectively we are using our resources?
- How many people have you directly supervised and how would you describe your management style?

2022-00Interview of City
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(cont'd)

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(cont'd)

- What is the most important, long-lasting initiative you developed regarding employee growth and development? How did you know you were successful?
- Getting to a collaborative agreement on contentious or difficult issues can be difficult. Walk us through a time when you faced a particularly divisive problem and tell us how you approached getting the parties to a win-win decision.
- What is your understanding of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and how will you incorporate this into the department's mission?
- Where do you see yourself in three years? And, if you were looking back at your time in Kalamazoo, what do you hope we have accomplished together?
- We have a housing ordinance that says a landlord can't base a lease on source of income. Do you think this ordinance is enforceable?

James Porter Interview

James Porter presented his qualifications for the City Attorney position and answered the questions asked by City Commissioners.

When provided an opportunity to make final remarks, Mr. Porter thanked Commissioners for the opportunity to interview and asked the following questions:

- would the City Attorney have the authority to arrange or rearrange how the City Attorney's Office operates?
- does the City Attorney sit with all the City's boards, commissions, and committees? Would I be able to choose which boards I get involved with?

In response to Mr. Porter's questions, Mayor Anderson stated he would be able to manage the City Attorney's Office as he saw fit, and he would have the latitude to make decisions about his involvement with the City's boards, commissions, and committees.

City Attorney Robinson added that the City Charter designated the City Attorney head of the Department of Law. City Attorney Robinson stated his office currently provided staff support to the Zoning Board of Appeals, the Planning Commission, the Building Board of Appeals, the Civil Rights, Board, and to other boards upon request. City Attorney Robinson noted his office had provided support in the past to the Foundation for Excellence, Downtown Development Authority, Economic Development Corporation, and Brownfield Redevelopment Authority Boards, but these board had either hired their own legal counsel or were in the process of hiring their own counsel.

Mayor Anderson thanked Mr. Porter for interviewing and stated the City Commission would be discussing and determining the next steps in the process.

Commissioner Hoffman, seconded by Commissioner Hess, moved that the meeting go into recess. With a voice vote the motion passed. Mayor Anderson announced the recess would last approximately 30 minutes.

Recess

The meeting recessed at 10:00 a.m.
The meeting reconvened at 10:31 a.m.

William Kim presented his qualifications for the City Attorney position and answered the questions asked by City Commissioners.

When provided an opportunity to make final remarks, Mr. Kim stated his perception from the meet-and-greet event was that Commissioners were concerned about housing issues and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI). Mr. Kim asked Commissioners to indicate any additional priorities for the current term and beyond.

In response to Mr. Kim, Commissioners offered the following priorities:

Mayor Anderson: 1) the negotiation of a regional wastewater service contract; 2) zoning issues related to temporary housing; and 3) the work of providing, as broadly as possible, opportunities to all residents.

Vice Mayor Cooney: 1) dramatically impacting inequality in the City; 2) helping young people succeed, and 3) cleaning up the environment in certain parts of the City.

Commissioner Juarez: addressing gun violence and homelessness

Commissioner Hoffman: looking at ordinances, policies, and procedures with the goal of becoming an anti-racist institution.

Commissioner Praedel: the City Commission's five priorities that were established earlier in the year (housing, youth, safety, infrastructure, and economic development); and addressing the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, especially among young people.

Mr. Kim thanked Commissioners for the opportunity to interview.

Mayor Anderson thanked Mr. Kim for interviewing.

Commissioner Juarez, seconded by Commissioner Hess, moved that the meeting go into recess. With a voice vote the motion passed. Mayor Anderson announced the City Commission would reconvene at 1:00 p.m.

The meeting recessed at 11:30 a.m.
The meeting resumed at 1:00 p.m.

Julianne Pastula presented her qualifications for the City Attorney position and answered the questions asked by City Commissioners.

When provided an opportunity to make final remarks, Ms. Pastula asked that each Commissioner offer one word that captured their vision for the best that Kalamazoo could be.

In response to Ms. Pastula's question, Commissioners provided the following answers:

Mayor Anderson – "opportunityland"

Commissioner Juarez – "extravagant"

2022-00

Interview of City
Attorney Candidates
(cont'd)

William Kim Interview

Recess

Julianne Pastula Interview

2022-00Interview of City
Attorney Candidates
(cont'd)

Commissioner Praedel – “opportunity”

Commissioner Hess – “unified”

Vice Mayor Cooney – “abundant”

Commissioner Decker – “equity”

Commissioner Hoffman – “just-for-all”

Ms. Pastula stated she had done her due diligence on the City of Kalamazoo, and she thanked Commissioners for the opportunity to interview.

Discussion of Next Steps

Discussion of Next Steps

Mayor Anderson reviewed the documents in Commissioners’ possession and the options for moving forward with the process.

Commissioner Praedel requested that the City Commission wait until Monday, December 5th to make a decision on the candidates, as he wanted an opportunity to process the information Commissioners had received. Commissioner Praedel suggested that Commissioners use this time to share their initial thoughts on the candidates.

Commissioners Decker expressed support for Commissioner Praedel’s request.

City Attorney Robinson noted the staff from his office had met with each of the candidates following their interviews. City Attorney Robinson cited his own interview and appointment as precedent for postponing a decision to a future meeting.

Commissioner Hoffman expressed support for waiting, and stated she wanted to get community feedback and input.

By consensus, the City Commission postponed consideration of candidates for the City Attorney position until its Regular Business Meeting on Monday, December 5th.

Discussion of Candidates

Discussion about candidates:

Mayor Anderson thanked Director Dusek, Mr. Mueller and the Michigan Municipal League for their assistance. Mayor Anderson remarked on the candidates’ qualifications and breadth of experience. Mayor Anderson stated it would not be an easy decision.

Vice Mayor Cooney requested feedback from the City Attorney’s Office staff.

Mr. Muller indicated Deputy City Manager Jeff Chamberlain was compiling the comments from staff and would be able to distribute them.

Commissioner Decker stated there was good information in the initial screening report.

In response to questions from Mayor Anderson and Commissioner Decker, Deputy City Manager Chamberlain stated the initial screening report was not in the agenda packet. City Attorney Robison indicated the report was available to the public through the freedom of information request process.

Commissioner Juarez stated each candidate had qualities that could benefit Kalamazoo. Commissioner Juarez remarked on Mr. Porter being a local candidate and Mr. Kim's experience with the Flint water case and his emphasis on trust.

Commissioner Decker expressed concern that two candidates did not have much experience, and Mr. Porter's experience was with a township, not a city. Commissioner Decker stated she liked that all three candidates were leaders and wanted to collaborate. Commissioner Decker observed that Mr. Porter was from the Kalamazoo area, but that fact did not mean someone could not come from the outside and get the job done.

Commissioner Hess noted all the candidates addressed the issue of housing, some more deeply than others. Commissioner Hess stated the City needed someone who deeply understood DEI and was a team player.

Commissioner Praedel offered the following observations about the candidates:

- Ms. Pastula was the most polished, with confident and concise answers. She identified issues that mattered and showed connections between Detroit and Kalamazoo. However, it was difficult to tell if the turbulence surrounding the Michigan Independent Citizens' Redistricting Committee (MICRC) was caused by her, or if she was holding things together for them. It was odd that she did not highlight her work with the MICRC more than she did.
- Mr. Kim did not display as much passion during his interview as during the meet-and-greet event, but he was authentic. His responses were candid and concise, and he identified the key issues for City. He was good at making complex issues understandable.
- Mr. Porter was more impressive during his interview than during the meet-and-greet event. He had a servant-leader mindset and had fought for the residents of the township. However, the negotiation of a water service contract with the townships was not a collaborative process, as he made it out to be, and on multiple occasions he remarked that the township did not have the resources for DEI.

Vice Mayor Cooney stated Mr. Kim's work on the Flint water crisis was important; Mr. Porter had great passion; and Ms. Pastula's homework, communication, and values were impressive.

Commissioner Hoffman cautioned that the City Commission was not going to find the perfect person, and the new City Attorney would need grace to move and grow into the position. Commissioner Hoffman stated she wanted to hear from the City Attorney's Office staff and the community.

Commissioner Hess asked for the community's trust and stated the City Commission was taking this work seriously.

Finally, an opportunity was given for miscellaneous comments and concerns of City Commissioners, but no comments were offered.

Discussion of Candidates
(cont'd)

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 2:15 p.m.

Scott A. Borling
City Clerk

Approved by the City Commission on: _____

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