

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 3RD, 2023
SPECIAL CITY COMMISSION MEETING – 9:00 A.M.

Present: Jesse Nelson, Mayor
Brandon Aldridge, Commissioner
Pat Perno, Commissioner
Jamie Warrick, Commissioner
Vickie Gainer, City Manager
Police Chief Ramie, Sergeant at Arms
Kevin Obos, City Legal Counsel

Item #1. Call to order.

Mayor Nelson called the meeting to order at 9:00 A.M.

Item #2. Invocation and the Pledge of Allegiance.

By Mayor Nelson.

Item #3. Discussion and possible approval to fill vacancy for seat #4.

The Mayor advised that the City Attorney will speak about the matter first. Each of the applicants be invited to say a few words, before allowing public commentary.

The City Attorney explained that the city had Commissioner Tinder from seat #4 resign effective immediately on January 31st. That under Section 15 of the city's charter the "vacancy may be filled until the next regular municipal election by a vote of the remaining members of the commission." The next regular election is coming up on April 18th and qualifying doesn't officially open until noon on Monday 6th until noon Friday 10th, which also happens to be when the 10-day timeframe allowed to appoint a replacement ends. The commission has the option to appoint an interim replacement within this 10-day period and it will only be good until the April election.

Commissioner Warrick queried that the attorney had used the word "may" and he thought the word "shall" is used in the charter. The attorney said it does say "shall" and they were going to change it to "may". The attorney said that if they don't make an appointment the Governor can make the appointment, although whether he will do that or not seeing as there is an election coming up so soon is doubtful, but he could. Commissioner Warrick said he understands the word "shall" in the charter means it is an expectation that it be done. Mayor and Attorney agreed. The Mayor invited the applicants to speak, in alphabetical order.

Ellyne Fields – 3507 Hidden Valley - Said that right now she is the only person who has put in for seat #4 who qualifies. Even if they appoint someone else to this vacancy now, and that person then decides to run in April, and they qualify there will still be the dilemma of favoritism or prejudice of picking them over picking her. She understands the brevity of the decision and doesn't take it lightly. She would like to end the drama and use her administrative skills to help the City by filling in the current vacancy in seat #4 until the election.

Jeff Snyder – 309 Virginia Ave - Appreciates the opportunity and their consideration. It is a big responsibility, and he is not taking it lightly. He served on the planning commission the past 4 years and was elected unanimously to be the Chair and it has been a pleasure to work with the city. He thinks he brings a lot to the table and knows a lot of citizens and knows what it takes to be an effective leader. He feels it is important to appoint someone who isn't necessarily invested in the local establishment.

Mayor said he received an email from Frank Stephens who was unable to be here today. Mayor proceeded to read the email Mr. Stephens submitted. In summary, Mr. Stephens said he would not run for office and would only consider serving as interim for this seat. His experience includes 22

years as Government Affairs Director and Lobbyist for the construction trade in Sacramento California and Washington DC. He currently serves the city as Chaplain of the police department and Chairman of the Infrastructure Surtax Oversight committee. He is a resident of 503 E 2nd Street.

Judy Vandergrift - 3416 Country Club Court – Said she is asking for the appointment to the vacancy created by the resignation of Ms. Tinder. She said she has many years of managerial and budgeting experience, but has never been involved in city government. She has never feared challenge or entering into the unknown. She is eager for this challenge if they will appoint her. She realizes there are several issues facing the city and hopes they will have confidence in her to help them address those issues. She asked them to please consider her for the position.

Gerri Parker – Rett Place – if someone is on a committee are they eligible to fill this vacancy and would they have to get off the committee to do this?

Attorney said yes, they would have to resign their committee or board.

Ryan Scray – 1702 Missouri Ave – Said he had shared his thoughts via an email to all of them. That basically they have 3 options:

- 1) To not appoint anyone;
- 2) To appoint someone who is going to be running for that seat, and all three have expressed an interest in doing so; or
- 3) They have a really qualified candidate in Dr. Frank Stephens who is not interested in running for the seat in April but would like to help out now.

Mr. Scray said he himself would be interested in filling the vacancy now even though he is not interested in running for the seat in April. He stated that the commission has a big decision to make about what is best for the community. He thinks appointing someone who is going to eventually run for the seat is going to persuade the outcome of the election and they will likely win the election, even if the commission doesn't think so now.

Holly Spring – 209 Shoreview – Just wanted to say thank you for all they do. She has the utmost respect for all of them, especially Mrs. Vickie who is a fabulous public servant. She said she had thanked Ms. Tinder for her service too. She thanked the Mayor for his service as it is a true blessing.

Mayor asked the commissioners to refrain from making any motion until they have discussed the matter and have all had an opportunity to express their views.

Commissioner Warrick said he feels they should stay here as long as they need to in order to fill the position because the charter says they “shall” fill the seat within 10 days.

Commissioner Aldridge agreed with Commissioner Warrick, and that they have had some good candidates apply.

Commissioner Perno wanted to personally thank Ms. Tinder for her service. He thanks everyone who contacted him about the position saying he had heartfelt discussions with them all. He appreciates all their willingness. He is looking to fill the position with the best person qualified and who they all agree on today.

Mayor also agreed they need to appoint someone in the position to fill the charter requirements. He said they also have some significant meetings coming up before the election where they will potentially need a person in that position. Mayor asked the commissioners regarding those who have expressed interest, what do they think about them and their qualifications.

Commissioner Aldridge said he feels they are all qualified, and his decision won't be about who wasn't elected, but rather about the one that does get chosen being the most qualified.

Commissioner Warrick agreed and said as everyone knows he is big on active involvement so he is happy there has been so much interest. He apologized for not doing so earlier but wanted to thank Ms. Tinder for her service to the city.

Commissioner Perno said he had conversations with several of the qualified candidates. He too feels who they choose will be the most qualified, but not that the others are not also qualified. He first heard from Jeff Snyder by an email that he replied to and then had a conversation with him on the phone. He feels Mr. Snyder has had a lifetime commitment to the city. He said he also spoke with Frank Stephens who has also exhibited a desire to see the city put first. He received Ms. Fields' email too that he responded to directly with his thoughts on the matter. When he read Mrs. Judy Vandergrift's email and saw her various accomplishments he thought "wow" and has been looking forward to seeing her speak today. Since hearing her he thinks her sincerity matches her qualifications. He has made his decision but wants to hear from everyone else before he makes a motion.

Commissioner Aldridge agreed with Commissioner Perno. After looking at all the applications and just based on experience he feels Mrs. Vandergrift would be the best fit. He doesn't know her personally and they have no prior involvement of the past and this decision will be purely based on her qualifications.

Commissioner Warrick agreed and explained he doesn't personally know Mrs. Vandergrift and has spoken to others who know her, and she is a great candidate. However, Mr. Snyder and he have know each other a long time and he always would like to find his own replacement to mentor someone who would be a good fit for the commission. He has done this with Mr. Snyder who has had great questions about the commission and who has already been a great asset to the city with almost 4 years on the planning board. His time is up in May.

Mayor – Ms. Fields serves/served as president of HOA at the Hammocks so shows she has the experience. Mr. Snyder has his lifelong and generational commitment in Lynn Haven and serves on the planning commission working parallel with the commissioners in accomplishing their vision and growth in the infrastructure and development in the city. Mr. Stephens is always at the meetings and town halls, so it is easy to see he is committed to Lynn Haven. He also serves as chaplain for the police department and there is no pay for that. He trains other chaplains and there is no pay for that too. He continues to move forward with humility. Ms. Judy Vandergrift's experience, especially with budgets, and her background would be important for the city, especially with the stormwater conversations coming up. So each of them brings different aspects to the role. Mayor asked if there was any further discussion.

Motion by Commissioner Warrick: To appoint Jeff Snyder to fill the vacancy in seat #4

Motion died for lack of a second.

Motion by Commissioner Aldridge To appoint Judy Vandergrift to fill the vacancy in seat #4.

Second to the Motion

Commissioner Perno

Commissioner Perno thanked Mr. Snyder for all that he does for the city, especially the work he does on the Planning Board. Commissioner Perno again thanked Ms. Tinder for her service to the city.

On Vote:


Aldridge	aye
Perno	aye
Warrick	aye
Nelson	aye

Motion passed: 4-0

Item # 4. Adjourn.

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 9:31 A.M.

APPROVED THIS 14th DAY OF February 2023.



Jesse Nelson, Mayor

ATTEST:



Vickie Gainer, City Manager

prepared by

Cicelia J. Rushing