

**ST. CLOUD CITY COUNCIL WORKSHOP**  
**Wednesday, May 1, 2019**  
**City Hall, Council Chambers**  
**1300 Ninth Street**  
**6:00 p.m.**  
**Minutes**

**I.** Call to Order By Mayor Nathan Blackwell at 6:06 p.m.

**II.** Roll Call

- Mayor Nathan Blackwell            City Manager William Sturgeon
- Deputy Mayor Linette Matheny    City Attorney Dan Mantzaris
- Council Member Chuck Cooper    Deputy City Clerk Ivy De La Cruz
- Council Member Dave Askew      Executive Administrative Asst Claudia Klockars
- Council Member Keith Trace      Members of the Press

All Council Members present. City Attorney Mantzaris was present by phone.

**III.** Discussion regarding the hiring of a City Manager.

Mayor Blackwell offered City Manager Sturgeon to make a statement regarding his decision.

City Manager Sturgeon stated that he had decided to return to public safety and had applied for a position in Osceola County. He thanked Council for the opportunity and stated he had learned a lot, but felt upcoming challenges for the City required a city manager with at least five years of experience.

He recommended qualifications for consideration:

- ◆ Five (5) years experience with 3-5 years as an Assistant City Manager
- ◆ ICMA certification
- ◆ Leadership skills
- ◆ People skills, communication skills and decision making skills
- ◆ Outstanding budget experience
- ◆ Growth experience
- ◆ Economic Development
- ◆ Ability to balance staff/work well together

City Manager Sturgeon recommended an outside firm be put in place in the event he should leave. He said Strategic and Vision Plans were in place and ready to go, just needed someone who could lead.

Mayor Blackwell stated he had enjoyed his leadership and understood him wanting to get back to what he had done for so many years.

Deputy Mayor Matheny stated she was sorry he was leaving, but felt her recommendation to hire him was a good choice and appreciated all he had done for the City.

Council Member Cooper stated he had recommended Mr. Sturgeon for the Assistant Manager position back when Mr. Helfenberger was here and even though they had gone through some ups and downs things were going smoothly. He said he was dishearted at his leaving, but understood the need to return to a job he felt was his calling.

Council Member Trace stated he had enjoyed the past four or five months and appreciated where the city was going under his direction as City Manager.

Council Member Askew stated he also appreciated the direction Mr. Sturgeon had led the City and how he had brought staff together. He said he supported him in his quest.

Mayor Blackwell requested council from City Attorney Mantzaris on the next step in the process of searching for a new city manager.

City Attorney Mantzaris stated he had been with the City for 20 years and during that time two of the city managers were hired through a National Search firm and both of those city managers' tenure was less than two years. He said he felt the problem stemmed from not being grounded in Florida with their work experience. He advised a National Search firm would be a good route to go, but with defined prior experience as a city or county manager/assistant manager within the state of Florida.

Mr. Mantzaris recommended a potential timeframe from Mr. Sturgeon to coordinate when to begin the search and for ample time for the right person to coordinate the timing to begin as the city manager. Do not need a date tonight, ideally it would be in the best interest of everyone if Mr. Sturgeon stayed through the budget process, but that may not be possible due to the position he was applying for.

Mayor Blackwell stated out of respect for him we want to work with him, but we do need a deadline to eventually move on and I think we can work that out.

Deputy Mayor Mathney asked if we could maybe craft in a way that would set time frames from hire date to start date with possible 6 weeks of extension. Would not care to be without a city manager.

City Attorney Mantzaris stated you certainly could do that and using a good recruiting firm would be able to explain that to a candidate. Mr. Mantzaris said that Mr. Sturgeon had put in a good infrastructure for the city, but he recommended hiring a firm to search out the best candidates for Council to review. They would also inform potential candidates of the requirements prior to their applying.

Council Member Askew said that would be good. He did a search of recruiters in the area and found several.

Maryor Blackwell inquired if Mr. Mantzaris had worked with the range riders and Florida League of Cities.

Mr. Mantzaris stated that for one of the transition periods they brought range riders in to sit for a while; it worked adequately. Due to the short term situation, he suggested appointing someone on staff as an Acting City Manager or someone who knows the area.

Deputy Mayor Matheny said she was just going to state the super obvious that this was Council's utmost important task. She does not want to cut corners to find the best firm for selection of the best candidate. She stated if we were to find ourself without a city manager, could we reach out to the County and have Deputy County Manager Beth Knight come in as an interim. Or someone that lives in the City now and has the local knowledge; was that even a viable option.

Mayor Blackwell said that was something we could consider. If Mr. Sturgeon was offered that job and leaves, he does not have a problem with Beth Knight as Interim City Manager.

City Attorney Mantzaris arrived at 6:28 p.m.

City Manager Sturgeon stated the county was in the middle of their budget cycle. He stated he had approached City Manager Steigerwald about retaining their deputy finance director when we needed to fill the gap for a finance director, but was told no due to their audit.

Deputy Mayor Matheny requested asking for Deputy County Manager, Beth Knight.

City Attorney Mantzaris stated that could put her in a difficult position in the future.

Council discussion followed regarding the timeliness of hiring a new city manager.

City Attorney Mantzaris stated a few years ago the Mercer Group found some good candidates.

Joseph Etter, Human Resource agreed an outside entity would be the way to go. Mr. Etter reminded Council that the Deputy City Manager was more than qualified, well respected by staff and a mistake if overlooked. He said that Human Resource would work with Council's decision.

City Manager Sturgeon stated if he was offered a position, there should be a transition period which could be explained during the interview process; he was thinking August 1<sup>st</sup> as the window. We have staff that could fill in.

Council Member Askew stated he had been here five (5) years and he was not concerned that the City would flounder, Deputy Manager Miller could step up if needed or Ms. Knight, but was open to using the the Mercer Group.

Mayor Blackwell stated we certainly value her, but it would take more than one person to fill the void. The Mayor suggested the next decision would be how to proceed to secure a professional search firm.

City Attorney Mantzaris stated the first step was direction to staff to hire a professional placement company. He advised interviewing at least three (3) firms for consideration.

Council consensus was to hire a professional search firm to search for qualified candidates.

Council Member Trace requested staff to bring to Council some history about firms such as the number of placements, their longevity and successes as city/county managers.

City Attorney Mantzaris stated the firm would advertise position, recruit, and background screen candidates to Council's specifications.

Mayor Blackwell stated he would like staff to bring back 2-3 companies with their recommendations and costs.

Deputy Mayor Matheny stated she would like to see all the candidates to ensure a good candidate was not overlooked.

Council Member Askew stated previously Council received a partial roster and then the candidates were narrowed down until only two candidates left. He said he brought in several staff and directors for the interview process.

The City Attorney stated Council was given information on all the candidates that met the minimal qualifications. He explained that in this day and age there was a pretty significant difference between being a city manager and a county manager that may not be best for St. Cloud.

Council Member Cooper inquired if it would not be better to look within the State of Florida for a hiring firm and a candidate.

The City Attorney agreed that the focus on a candidate should be on someone who knew Florida Municipal government. He stated the value of having municipal experience as a top level manager can not be over stated. Does not need complete knowledge of the community, issues could be very similar. You do find some individuals and then they retire and end up being a short term City Manager.

City Manager Sturgeon asked how we could streamline the process. He stated his goal was to put something together and bring it back on the May 9, 2019 Council meeting.

City Attorney Mantzaris stated it was vitally important that the Council, staff, and City Manager remain consistent and supportive for the future of the city; it was a public process and Council would be interviewed, also.

Deputy City Manager, Veronica Miller, stated she also would be very disappointed to see Mr. Sturgeon leave. She informed Council that at the end of May was the Florida City/County Manager Association conference and would like to see if there were any opportunities to post the position there.

She agreed having Florida experience that would meet the unique challenges was necessary to lead the City forward with the projects started.

IV. Adjournment: 6:49pm

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Mayor Nathan Blackwell

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ATTEST: City Clerk, Linda P. Jaworski

Minutes Approved: \_\_\_\_\_