



Town of Indian Trail
Minutes of Council Special Meeting
June 11, 2009
Civic Building
6:00 P.M.

CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Mayor Quinn called the meeting to order.

PRESENTATIONS

The Mercer Group, Inc. (Jim Mercer)

Jim Mercer with the Mercer Group gave background information regarding The Mercer Group, Inc. The firm has done over 2000 executive searches over a 28 year period that the firm has been in business.

If the Council decides to engage The Mercer Group, he will conduct on-site needs assessment for the new Town Manager by meeting with Council and with department heads to develop a comprehensive position profile to use in developing a recruitment brochure for potential applicants to learn about what is expected in the position.

The Council would look over the information to be included in the brochure for final approval. This final draft will be mailed out to potential candidates along with an invitation letter; although anyone can apply for the position.

After a pool of applicants is received, he will apply the criteria received from Council and apply to the candidates who have applied and return to Council a pool of finalist candidates to a list of those best suited to the criteria to the Council to pick seven to nine names to set up for potential interviews. His company will supply the Council with sample questions, evaluation forms, an interview guide, a report on each one of the candidates and then set up the interviews and help get Council to a point where they are ready to make a decision.

Mr. Mercer stated they offer several guarantees of their work. The most important guarantees are: They will keep working until the placement is made; They will not recruit the placement for other positions without our permission; they will not recruit any of our staff for two years from

the date of the placement, without our permission; and if the selected candidate leaves Town employ within the first two years, they will redo the search for expenses only. Their company can advise Council regarding compensation plans and provide sample employment agreements and they will take care of informing those that weren't selected. They also take follow-up steps during the first year to see if they can alleviate any possible situation that may arise.

Their company can facilitate a session between the finalist and the Council to set up mutual performance criteria for the first year.

Mr. Mercer would be the consultant on this project and the process should take between 90 and 120 days. His fee for this service is reduced some due to other work in the area.

Council questioned Mr. Mercer on pros and cons of using someone from the private sector or from another state. Mr. Mercer questioned Council as to the turnover of Town Managers within the last few years.

Young & Associates (David & Leigh Young)

Mr. Young gave a quick background of his working experience as a county commissioner and his association with the NC Managers Association. Ms. Young stated they are able to recruit well as they have cultivated good contacts over the years; she has a notebook full of people they can contact. They feel that screening criteria should be very specific after meeting with Council and with department heads. They evaluate the potential candidate's writing skills by sending out questions over the internet and having the applicants reply. The two things that set them apart is their vision for process and their wide range of contacts.

Council discussed with them the pros and cons of hiring someone with NC law experience and how they would handle the turnover of Town Managers within the Town.

Developmental Associates (Dr. Steve Straus and Dr. Heather Lee)

Dr. Straus briefly went over the principal's background information. Their firm's focus is on recruiting for non-profit and public sector organizations. They have extensive recruiting contacts across the state and nationally among municipal managers. Input from the Council and staff are critical as well as input from the community to do an intensive and participative job analysis; a process will be designed around the job analysis input received. They make sure all the candidates know the recruiting process. They do not operate on the traditional headhunter approach. Ms. Heather Lee will conduct the first level screen of candidates using a matrix to score. The second level screening relies on telephone interviews to screen the candidates to narrow down the field to about eight or nine.

The hiring process is a unique part of their process. Through research and their own experiences they have learned that interviews can be very misleading; the interviewees know what you want to hear. The process here has an assessment center process design exercises specific to our needs and sees how well they can perform in specific situation. The company designs exercises according to what the challenges are facing the Town; even using real life situations to see how

the candidate reacts. Dr. Straus provided a brief detailed explanation of how the exercises are carried out.

They also perform emotional intelligence test, which has been validated for employment. This test addresses how people feel about themselves, how they interact with people, their problem solving skills, their stress management ability and general mood. The whole selection process was briefly touched upon.

Council held general discussion with the presenter regarding information they presented.

Centralina Council of Governments (Al Sharp)

Al Sharp with Centralina Council of Governments introduced his assistant in the process Venecia Rock, who is the HR Coordinator for COG. They briefly went over the steps they take in the process of new Town Manager search. They assist the Council in developing a "manager profile", which reflect the town's expectations and job requirements; a review of salary range is also useful to ensure the Town remains competitive. They will prepare and place the advertisements. Mr. Sharp would expect to receive 60-80 applications, to which they will respond. The applications are screened using the qualification criteria developed earlier in the process. Interviews will be set up with the candidates that are most appealing to the Council. When the final candidates have been chosen background checks performed. Centralina will work with the Council with negotiations and selection. Centralina will also assist the Town once the new manager is selected with the introduction to the employees and community.

With COG, the Town could use member hours to reduce the actual cost. The entire process would take approximately four months.

Council discussed the process further with Mr. Sharp.

Wilder Consulting (Bill Wilder)

Mr. Bill Wilder introduced himself and relayed his experiences in working with local government. He does all work himself, but does sometimes use associates. He does other types of work including succession planning and organizational studies. Early in the process he will find out what the Council expects from the Town Manager. The proposed candidate should have leadership capacity and the reference and skills to work with the Council, community and staff. He will create an employment profile after consultation with Council and showed an example. He feels valuable input can also come from key town staff and also from citizens, it gives the citizens an opportunity to be a part of the process. An ad will be developed and placed in strategic publications; websites with professional organization should be utilized more so than the classified newspaper ads. A written questionnaire, after approval by Council, would be sent to the potential candidates. He will review the resumes and bring the top potential as compared to the established profile. A telephone interview would be conducted to move toward a small group to be interviewed by Council. Exercises would be conducted to find out how the candidates react in certain situations. He invited Council to contact his references; his expenses would be minimum as he lives nearby.

Council held additional conversation regarding his services.

DISCUSSION

Mayor Quinn left the meeting. The gavel was passed to Councilmember Schallenkamp

Councilmember Goodall conveyed Ms. Howe's regrets for not attending tonight.

Councilmember Schallenkamp suggested discussing the matter tonight, but asked that no decision be made tonight. Councilmember Hullinger suggested that perhaps a decision can be made by consensus e-mail before the next council meeting as to not delay the process, after Ms. Howe and fellow Councilmembers have adequate time to review the material. Councilmember Schallenkamp suggested having the Town Manager find out from the Town Attorney whether this would be acceptable.

Councilmember D'Onofrio thanked Ms. Lowery for putting this nice selection of candidates together. He is uncomfortable deciding on this outside of the regularly scheduled meeting.

Councilmember Goodall believes any one of the five would do a good job for the Town.

Councilmember Schallenkamp informed Council that he had received phone calls from two reporters and gave two interviews with them this afternoon. This was in relation to the resolution that was passed at the last council meeting.

ADJOURN

Jeff Goodall made a motion to adjourn.

Council voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

APPROVED:

John J. Quinn, Mayor

Attest:

Trena Sims, Interim Town Clerk