

**MINUTES**  
**SPECIAL COMMISSION MEETING OF THE STUART CITY COMMISSION**  
**CITY ATTORNEY INTERVIEWS**  
**SEPTEMBER 7, 2023**  
**AT 9:00 AM**  
**COMMISSION CHAMBERS**  
**121 SW FLAGLER AVE.**  
**STUART, FLORIDA 34994**

**CITY COMMISSION**

**Mayor Troy McDonald**  
**Vice Mayor Becky Bruner**  
**Commissioner Eula R. Clarke**  
**Commissioner Christopher Collins**  
**Commissioner Campbell Rich**

**ADMINISTRATIVE**

**City Manager, Michael J. Mortell**  
**Interim City Attorney, Paul J. Nicoletti**  
**City Clerk, Mary R. Kindel**

**ROLL CALL**

9:02 AM

PRESENT: Vice Mayor Bruner, Commissioner Clarke, Commissioner Collins, Commissioner Rich

PRESENT via Zoom, Not Voting: Mayor McDonald

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**PRESENTATIONS**

**1. CITY ATTORNEY SCREENING COMMITTEE REPORT**

Interim City Attorney Nicoletti reviewed the expectations of the meeting and explained that each candidate will come forward to give a brief introduction.

City Manager Mortell commented that Mayor McDonald is joining the meeting via Zoom Telecommunications from out of town.

Commissioner Clarke commented on the interview schedule and requested that no motion be made today for a hiring decision and to wait until the Mayor returns at the September 11th Commission Meeting.

City Manager Mortell reviewed the interview schedule and stated there are three (3) active

candidates.

Commissioner Rich requested up to forty-five (45) minutes per candidate and a consensus was reached to change the individual interviews from thirty (30) minutes to forty-five (45) minutes each.

#### **COMMENTS BY CITY COMMISSIONERS**

Commissioner Collins commented he appreciates the applicants going through the process. He stated that when asking questions of the candidates, it is on behalf of the public.

Commissioner Clarke stated that the procedure today is meeting in public, then interviews in private with no recording,

Interim City Attorney Nicoletti and City Manager Mortell clarified how the interviews will be conducted.

#### **COMMENTS BY CITY MANAGER**

#### **APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

**MOTION: Approve.**

**MOVED BY: Christopher Collins**

**SECONDED BY: Eula Clarke**

**Motion approved unanimously.**

Candidate #1, Zoe Panarites; introduced herself, noted she seeks the jobs that she thinks she is good for. Stated she was employed by City of West Palm Beach for fifteen (15) years doing labor and employment law and was able to learn municipal law, public records and general municipal law. She was interested in pivoting and now works for a federal judge, which includes litigation experience, procurement battles, marinas and real estate. Passionate about what she does and plans to partner with the City to work together resolving issues.

Candidate #2, Thomas Sawyer; Explained three life experiences that have led him to want to work for the City of Stuart. Noted his life experiences regarding 2008 and 2020 and going through a rough time. The housing collapse in 2008 financially devastated him as a real estate attorney, got a divorce and took a job with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) in Tallahassee, then had a stroke. That was the epiphany to come back to Martin County. Happy to work and live in the City of Stuart.

Candidate #3; Lee Baggett; Moved to Stuart in the mid- 90's, plans to continue to work in Stuart. He is invested in this community, wants to remain in Stuart and is experienced in local government. He would love the opportunity to be the City Attorney for Stuart.

#### **COMMISSION ACTION**

##### **2. RECESS MEETING TO ALLOW FOR INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS WITH CANDIDATES**

\*\*\* 9:24 AM Recess \*\*\*

\*\*\* 2:02 PM Reconvened \*\*\*

### **DISCUSSION AND DELIBERATION**

#### **3. DISCUSSION AND DELIBERATION REGARDING CITY ATTORNEY CANDIDATES, AND POSSIBLE MOTION TO MAKE AN OFFER OF EMPLOYMENT**

Commissioners complimented Human Resource Director, Roz Johnson Strong and the staff. Noted Ryanne Cavo, Paralegal, for the work she did for the process. They discussed and briefly shared some thoughts/takeaways from each candidate.

Interim City Attorney Nicoletti commented that Commissioners want to think about this and be ready to vote on Monday.

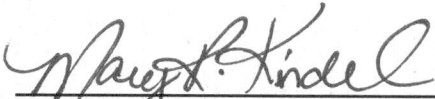
The procedure of the selection was discussed.


Interim City Attorney Nicoletti spoke on the requirement of being board certified.

Commissioners continued discussion about City Attorney candidates.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

3:13 PM

  
Mary R. Kindel, City Clerk

  
Troy McDonald, Mayor

**Minutes to be approved at the Regular Commission Meeting this 25th day of September, 2023.**

