

A workshop meeting of the City Commission was held on August 8, 2011 at 5:30 p.m. in the Commission Chambers at the Municipal Administration Building. The meeting was called to order by Mayor Michael S. Carter.

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Jonathan Thornhill; John Paul Rogers; Betty Wojcik; Terry Y. Howell; Mayor Michael S. Carter.

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT:

CITY REPRESENTATIVES PRESENT: Judith H. Delmar, City Manager; Clara VanBlargan, City Clerk; Sandra Davis, Human Resources Director; Jacquie Hawkins, Deputy City Clerk

Agenda Item 1. Roll Call

All City Commissioners were present.

Each Commissioner selected one of the five groups from the selected questions made available to them, with the understanding that they would not be limited to that one category and similar follow-up questions could be added, though not questions pertaining to age, race, handicap, disability or religious affiliation. The Commissioners discussed which questions from each group they particularly wanted asked.

Ms. Delmar explained that an hour was allotted each candidate giving each Commissioner about 12 minutes for their group of questions, but if they needed more time and the next interview looked like it would be late, the next candidate would be informed. They discussed whether or not the candidate should be called by their first name and they decided to ask the candidate what name they preferred. Ms. Delmar said time would be allotted for discussion at the conclusion of the interviews.

The Commissioners chose the following categories:

1. Work Experience – Commissioner Rogers
2. Organizational Management/Leadership – Mayor Carter
3. Goals/Objectives – Commissioner Thornhill
4. Interpersonal/Community Relationships – Commissioner Wojcik
5. Personal Matters – Commissioner Howell

Agenda Item 2. Phone Interview with Theresa C. Leary for City Manager Position

Ms. Davis phoned the first candidate, each Commissioner was introduced and the format of the interview was explained. Ms. Leary asked that she be called Terry.

Work Experience – Commissioner Rogers

1. Working With Economic Development Councils

- Lake Park Florida – the town being in serious economic decline, Ms. Leary said the Commission went forward with a bond issue, received grant funding, worked with citizens and Historic Preservation groups and did a great deal of restoration, though there was much more to do because of the economic situation of the country. Even so, during her tenure property value increased 40%.
- She partnered a great deal with County Development Councils in Bishopville, South Carolina, sat in on many meetings, learning a great deal about where the County was headed, and during those meetings she pitched her town.

2. Work Experience with Grants

- Ms. Leary said she wrote several grants; historic preservation grants, CDBG grants, and FAA grant for the airport in Hilton Head.

- Some of the grants she wrote herself, some of them she simply reviewed, but mostly it was through teamwork, and in Lake Park she worked with the Community Development Director.
- Ms. Leary said she spent a great deal of time getting the CRA designation, and because she has been to Lake Wales, she knows a lot of work has been done in our downtown through CRA funding.

3. Work Experience with Budget Preparations and Financing

- Ms. Leary said there is no way to get around having to do budgets and she has had a lot of experience with them. They are tricky and there are always tough calls to make, especially with property values. Spending patterns have to be watched carefully with both the departments and with revenues.
- Ms. Leary said she reviewed the City's budget online and saw the ways the dollars have been stretched. She commented on the proposed furlough, which she said was a better option than layoffs.

4. Work Experience with Local Government Services and with Regards to Management

- Ms. Leary said she had a good deal of experience with Police, Fire, Water and Sewer but she learned to ask if she didn't know, and observe.
- Teamwork is important to her so staff knows they are interdependent on each other. Conclusions are made as a team.

Organizational Management/Leadership – Mayor Carter

1. Management Style

- Ms. Leary said she is team-oriented. She tries to get staff to buy into decisions. Problems are identified and staff helps her fix them.
- There are rules and policies that have to be adhered to but she is open to discussion and gets input from staff before coming to a conclusion.

2. Assessing the Strengths and Weaknesses of the Organization and Identifying Opportunities for Improvement

- Ms. Leary said that as Lake Wales is a new town to her, the best thing to do would be to observe because you can't fix something unless you understand it.
- She would depend on department head information and feedback, and direction from the City Commission.
- Together they would decide on the best way to make the changes.

3. Specifics Recommended for a Business Friendly Attitude

- Ms. Leary said that a business friendly attitude is sometimes tough to achieve because there are always code enforcement issues the business community is not happy about, but if they understand where the City is headed, and that the goal is in the best interest of the community, you can get a lot more cooperation.
- Therefore, the first thing she would do is get to know the business community and make the community's goals known to them so they can buy into what the City is trying to accomplish.

4. Pros and Cons on Community Recreation as Quality of Life and as an Economic Engine

- Ms. Leary said recreation is an important quality of life issue because residents want time to enjoy the city's natural resources, children's activities, the arts and music.
- Ms. Leary believes it is an economic generator, though not a revenue generator most of the time.
- Ms. Leary said volunteering was important. She noted that the city's website shows that Lake Wales is a very enthusiastic community with people willing to help.

- Building community is important and should be promoted because there is not enough of that in the country today.

Goals/Objectives – Commissioner Thornhill

1. Approach to the Planning Process and the System She Used in Setting Objectives and Priorities

- Assess the situation
- Understand what the needs and the goals
- Get people on board to make it happen

2. Successful Techniques Used in Assisting Local Government Officials in Establishing and Implementing Long and short-range Goals for the Community

- Develop five and ten-year plans
- Work on funding if needed
- Ms. Leary said she guessed that one of the City's big concerns was keeping the downtown vibrant and she would make that a priority along with other issues that were necessary at this time.

3. Personal Philosophy on Financing: Long-term, Pay-as-you-Go, or Save and Pay

- Save and Pay was her preference and best option though she said there are times that you have to finance. If the save and pay is not an option, then you have to decide the next best thing.
- Ms. Leary said it would be nice if money was put aside for a particular goal. She gave the example of the "Christmas Club" at local banks where people set aside money throughout the year for Christmas gift purchases. Nowadays they just use credit cards.

4. Creative, "Outside-the-Box" Financing

- Ms. Leary said she has used mostly traditional financing for city projects though she used a bond that turned out to be phenomenal because they used it for matching grants. She got the town hall renovated with very little of their own money because it was leveraged with other money.
- Ms. Leary said she worked with a theatre corporation to bring a theatre into town, which worked very well, though there was a great deal of resistance from people in town. They also did a deal with a property owner and the arts league.

Interpersonal/Community Relationships – Commissioner Wojcik

1. Working with Citizens and Business Groups

Ms. Leary said she would love to establish relationships with people like Mimi Hardman, whom she met on several occasions in Tallahassee, because people with that kind of interests and passion are invaluable.

2. Positive ways she Worked with Elected Officials to Solve Problems

- Ms. Leary said she does not believe in giving information to one Commissioner and not the other. She tries to develop trust and works with them as a team.
- Ms. Leary said she has been able to sort through some very difficult times because if the City Manager and the Commission are willing to listen to each other, problems can be solved, though she believes it is up to the City Manager to bring to the table alternative solutions.
- Ms. Leary said she was a consensus builder. Everywhere she has been she has had a wonderful relationship with staff, which made a big difference in the way they react with the Commission. It is important to build a consensus with the Commission as well, which she said is easier with five versus nine or eleven. Five Commissioners and a manager can do wonders by working together.

3. How she would Obtain Community Programs through Public/Private Partnerships

- Set a target and a goal
- Get support through the community
- Negotiate with the private enterprise or organization to meet the goal
- Ms. Leary said she was able to do some wonderful things that way with sports, recreation, and economic development.

Personal Matters – Commissioner Howell

1. Strengths in the past and possibly for Lake Wales

- Her interest and passion for history and preservation, including in Lake Wales
- Ms. Leary came from an Olmsted-planned town in Lake Park and she learned a lot.
- Ms. Leary said because she has been running cities for so long, she has had a lot of successes, though there were many defeats, but she can't think of anything she would rather do.

2. A Weakness She has had though Possibly Corrected

Ms. Leary said when she started years ago she had problems with delegating. She tended to want to do everything herself, which is not possible. She said she is learning and has come a long way toward correcting this over the years.

3. Where She Wants to be Five and Ten Years from Now

- Ms. Leary said she probably will be retired in ten years.
- Ms. Leary said she considered not taking another job and just enjoying life, but there is so much to be done. She decided what she really wants to do is use the knowledge she has gained to help another town grow and prosper.

4. Why She is Interested in Lake Wales

Ms. Leary said she has been to Lake Wales and believes she would find joy in keeping the history of the town going. Lake Wales has its issues but also has day to day normal situations and she believes there is a great staff here. She said she believes she would be a good fit for Lake Wales.

5. Her Compensation Expectation

Ms. Leary said she knows what the posted salary is and she could work within that. It would be negotiable.

6. When She Would be able to Start if the Position is Offered

Ms. Leary said she already sold her house and is planning to move to Florida whether she gets the job or not so she would be able to start in October, though that would be negotiable.

7. Her Type of Personality

Ms. Leary said that when she has something to say, she says it, though she tries not to run her mouth.

Questions Ms. Leary had for the Commission

1. What are the Commission's expectations for her in terms of progress?

- Mayor Carter said he was looking for a city manager who understands the problems in Lake Wales and can say, "I have the background and education needed, I know what needs to be done, and I am the right person to fix it." He added that she demonstrated her passion to them.

- Commissioner Wojcik said she was looking for a person who can say, "Here are the opportunities that exist and the ways we can take advantage of them so we can be stronger."

Ms. Leary said the most significant thing the town has is its history and the way the town has kept it alive. That is important because it gives everyone here a sense of community and is something they can rally around. Residents want to be able to live without extraordinary fees and Lake Wales is affordable and pleasant with a quality of life that makes a lot of difference.

- Commissioner Rogers said he wanted someone who could evaluate the departments to determine what changes need to be made, and someone who can set priorities for what is good for the city and not by what special interest groups want. Ms. Leary said she agreed and that was exactly what needs to happen.
- Commissioner Thornhill said he is looking for someone who can say no to someone wanting money from the treasury instead of stringing them along or passing it off on the Commissioner. Ms. Leary said there is only one pot of money to work with and she will certainly be able to say no unless the need was critical.

2. What is the City's unemployment rate?

- Mayor Carter said some sections of town had 50% unemployment. Ms. Leary asked if we had a lot of foreclosures here and Ms. Delmar said not as much as other cities that had into a lot of new development during the boom.
- Commissioner Howell said the city stopped building just before everything went haywire. Ms. Delmar explained that at the highpoint of the boom, the City did a zoning-in-progress while the new zoning regulations were being rewritten, which effectively was like having a moratorium. That put the City a little behind the curve with all the new development that was inundating the county so we "dodged the bullet." As a result we don't have a lot of new subdivisions with the foreclosures that are seen elsewhere in the county.
- Commissioner Wojcik agreed that there were segments of town with very high unemployment, but overall it is right around 12%. Ms. Leary said that was probably closer to the national average than what is being broadcasted. She said having high unemployment makes it hard because you know people are having trouble dealing with the taxes, fees, water and sewer and it becomes an issue; so you need to try and work with those people. Commissioner Wojcik said the education programs are trying to address the unemployment issue with apprenticeship for those with unskilled labor.

3. What will the Commission's next move be?

Sandra Davis said she would contact her tomorrow to set up an interview for the Commission to meet her personally. Ms. Leary said she has an interview with another Florida city next week.

Mayor Carter commented that Lake Wales is not a bedroom community for Tampa or Orlando and so has had its challenges in finding its own identity, though it basically is a citrus and agriculture community. He shared his hopes that LegoLand, soon to open, will have a positive impact. Ms. Leary said that after taking her grandchildren to Disney World and seeing the amount of money that was being expended, she realized that if you have something people can visually see that attracts them, they will come. She said she thought Lake Wales had personality and something to draw people with the uniqueness of its downtown.

The phone interview ended.

Commission Comments

The consensus was that the interview went very well. Comments were as follows:

- Commissioner Rogers said Ms. Leary was straight forward, intelligent and personable.

- Commissioner Wojcik said Ms. Leary's experience was a good match for Lake Wales. She said she thought Ms. Leary did not understand the question about the economic development council. She suggested trying to get her for the personal interview on the 17th because that date had been established as an alternative day and therefore should be a good day with the other Commissioner's schedules. Ms. Delmar said it would have to be advertised but there was plenty of time to do that.
- Commissioner Thornhill said she was personable, open, and a good fit with the historical importance of the city and her experience with Olmsted.

Agenda Item 3. Phone Interview with Dale Brown for City Manager Position

Ms. Davis phoned the second candidate. Each Commissioner was introduced and the format of the interview was explained. Mr. Brown asked that he be called Dale.

Work Experience – Commissioner Rogers

1. **Experience with Economic Development Councils** – Commissioner Rogers explained what he meant by that.
 - Palestine, Texas: Mr. Brown worked with a separate Economic Development Corporation that was totally under state statute and he explained the differences. He was the City's liaison for two years and then appointed to serve as a member on the Board. Later the City developed its own Economic Development program and so he went off the Board of the corporation and became the city's liaison again.
 - Their corporation developed 100+ acre Industrial Park, giving land away to people based on how many jobs would be created. Ms. Wojcik said it sounds like it operates like a CRA and he said probably so.
2. **Experience with Grants**
 - Huntsville, Texas: During his ten year period in Huntsville, Mr. Brown said he was able to get an average of one million dollars in grants a year.
 - Jersey Village: Because it was a fairly wealthy bedroom community to Houston, Texas with twice the state's average income, it did not qualify for grants.
 - Palestine, Texas: Mr. Brown said he had an employee to help with grant writing in Palestine, a city larger than Lake Wales but closer in many ways with such as racial makeup and number of economically disadvantages.
 - Palestine, as an old city with 75 to 100 year old dilapidated water and sewer structures was in desperate need of an additional water facility. He personally wrote a grant through the US Department of Commerce and Economic Development Administration for two million dollars to help build a one million gallon, elevated water storage tower, which is now under construction.
3. **Experience with Departments in Local Government**
 - Police and Fire departments: His only experience was as supervisor.
 - Mr. Brown said he had hands-on experience during high school and college in Huntsville with most public works operations and financial operations.
 - After College he worked as an office manager for a city engineer and got experience with surveying, drafting, and writing grants.
 - He got a Masters Degree in Urban Planning and worked in Huntsville as Community Development Director over engineering, permitting, surveying, drafting and the airport.

Organizational Management/Leadership – Mayor Carter

1. **Management Style**
 - Team Oriented

- Mr. Brown said he is a "Walk-around" City Manager. He leaves the office to see what is going on, to encourage employees and let them know he is interested in what they do.
- He has an Open Door Policy for employees and citizens.

2. The First Steps he Would take if Chosen to be the City Manager

- Meet with the Commission to find out what they perceive his role to be and to find out how best to communicate with them
- Meet with City employees to find out operations and their expectations
- Meet with Boards and county groups
- Learn more of the community

3. Recreation as a Quality of Life

- Some of the grants he worked on were for parks, recreations, and open spaces
- Mr. Brown believes recreation is a big factor in the creation of a quality environment for the city.

4. How He Would Promote a Business Friendly Attitude

- Look at city operations to find out what the stumbling blocks are, whether real or perceived.
- Work with the Chamber of Commerce because it is a major source for business development. He was on the Board of Directors and multiple committees in Jersey Village.
- Take care of the existing businesses first

Goals/Objectives – Commissioner Thornhill

1. System used in the Planning Process to set Objectives and Priorities

- He said he was an incrementalist, or continuous city planning, constantly reevaluating and changing things as needed
- He would work closely with the Planning and Zoning Commission
- Work closely with the community
- Work closely with the Commission

2. Personal Philosophy on Financing: Long-term, Pay-as-you-Go, or Save and Pay

Mr. Brown said he worked with all three but he started out with the pay-as-you-go. In Palestine it couldn't be done financially and so he adjusted his thinking. He is a conservative and though he had to go with long-term debt, he tries to limit it to 10 to 15 years because no one knows what will happen that far in the future, though he has had to go higher on occasion when they couldn't afford the payments.

Interpersonal/Community Relationships – Commissioner Wojcik

1. Views on the Relationship between the City Administrator and the City Commission.

- Teamwork to define goals, remembering though that he is working for them.
- Assist the Commission to achieve goals
- Making their goals his goals
- Carrying out those goals as a team

2. Views on Customer Service to Citizens

- Service should be High quality.
- Customers should be respected and hopefully they will respect you.
- Go the extra mile to help them. He gave an example of the extent he went to in order to help a customer with a water bill problem.

Personal Matters – Commissioner Howell

1. His Best Strength

Growth Management – water/sewer, subdivision and zoning laws, capital improvement projects, and finance

2. A weakness, even though it may have been corrected

Mr. Brown said one of his problems is trying to do too much. He has trouble telling the Commission “no,” even if it means he is overburdened, and it takes 14 hours a day seven days a week to accomplish.

3. Where he Thinks he will be in Five to 10 Years

- Mr. Brown said if he gets the job he hopes this will be his last one. Though he is 61 he said he is in good health and is not ready to retire so he expects to be still working here in five years.
- In ten years he sees himself as retired.

4. Why Lake Wales

- No family left in Texas
- Family in Venice, Florida
- He enjoys the beauty of Florida
- In Florida people respect the environment

5. How Soon he Can Start if He Gets the Jobs

He will have to find a place to live but could probably work two weeks after settling.

6. Expectations for Compensation

He said he was hoping for \$110,000 but is willing to look at other options such as extra vacation time.

Questions he had for the Commission

- 1. Does the City do a multi-year financial projection? He was told yes. Is that projection bare-bones far into the future?** Mayor Carter said they do long-term capital improvements. Ms. Delmar said the Finance Director has done a five-year revenue forecast which is quite austere for at least the next five years because property value is continuing to fall.
- 2. He asked about the retirement changes they perceive for the next budget and if there was a state retirement or Individual Retirement Program?** Mayor Carter said the changes have not been discussed yet. Sandra Davis said she would talk to him about the 401A for employees with pay-grades 200 or above, which is portable and does not require a vesting period.
- 3. What is the Commission’s Expectations for the City Manager for the Next Five Years?**
 - Mayor Carter said he expects the city manager to have a positive outlook so he can see the problems we have as opportunities; someone qualified who knows they can help the city through this.
 - Commissioner Howell said she expects the city manager to keep the city afloat and running properly so we can prosper even if with only baby steps, as she still wanted people to think of Lake Wales as a good place to move to.

Ms. Davis said she would call Mr. Brown tomorrow to give him the retirement information and to schedule a follow-up interview. He said if he was chosen as a final candidate he could come back to Florida for a personal interview.

The interview ended at 7:27 p.m.

COMMISSION COMMENTS

Comments about the interview were as follows:

- Commissioner Rogers said he thought Mr. Brown could handle the job and knows his business but surely was a talker.
- Commissioner Wojcik said he seemed very nice and had a lot to say that was good. The two candidates had different personalities.
- Mayor Carter said Ms. Leary's answers were more direct, such as her reasons for coming to Lake Wales.
- Commissioner Thornhill said as far as knowledge goes he was capable, He wondered if Mr. Brown was a micro-manager but after listening to his story about helping the customer, he did not get that impression. Ms. Leary had done her homework and was prepared and Mr. Brown obviously had been looking at the budget.
- Commissioner Howell said Ms. Leary looked at the whole picture and Mr. Brown looked at all the intricate details.


The consensus was:

- For Ms. Davis to try to schedule the face-to-face interview with Ms. Leary on August 17th.
- See if Mr. Brown could attend at the same time as they thought he would be in Florida at that time.
- If the Commissioners are pleased with the interview, they would not need to look further but would choose the best candidate of the two.
- If satisfied, start the negotiating process
- If not, schedule phone conferences with other candidates.

The next steps:

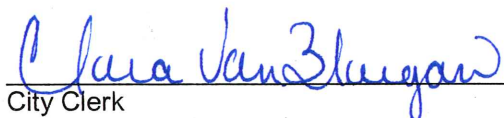
- Sandra will contact both candidates and try to schedule a personal interview for August 17th.
- After the interviews, the Commission will decide whether to look further or choose the best, most qualified candidate from the two.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:41.



Mayor/Commissioner

ATTEST:



City Clerk