

A workshop meeting of the City Commission was held on June 24, 2013 in the lunchroom at the Municipal Administration Building for the purpose of conducting phone interviews with city manager candidates Robert Bartolotta and Kenneth Fields. The meeting was called to order by Mayor Eugene Fultz at 5:30 p.m.

**COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:** Betty Wojcik; Jonathan Thornhill; Christopher Lutton; Eugene Fultz, Mayor

**COMMISSIONERS ABSENT:** Mike Carter

**STAFF PRESENT:** Human Resource Director Sandra Davis; City Clerk Clara VanBlargan; Deputy City Clerk Jacquie Hawkins

**[CANDIDATE: ROBERT BARTOLOTTA]**

**Question #1, Part 2: What will your first steps be upon assuming responsibility for this position?**

- Do Homework before:
  - Budget: Mr. Bartolotta has already viewed the budget in detail.
  - Community: Mr. Bartolotta has already visited the community.
- Meet one-on-one with commissioners, staff, neighborhoods, key business and community leaders:
  - To Listen, Assess and Learn:
    - their top priorities
    - the key issues
- Review things like:
  - The budget
  - City Charter
  - Strategic Plan

**Question #1, Part 2: What do you hope to accomplish in the first year?**

- Build trust with the city commission and staff.
- Tailor his skills to meeting the needs of the community.
- Assess capabilities of staff and the organization
- Tackle the key priorities of the City Commission

**Question #2: Describe your management style and give examples from past employment in Savannah, Sarasota, and Jupiter.**

- Honesty and ethics: which is the basis for any decision he makes and for directions he gives staff.
- Coach and mentor: He said in the past a half dozen of his assistants and people who have worked for him have gone on to become city managers in other communities.
- Accountability: He holds staff accountable.
  - He asks lots of questions of staff because when he brings something to the city commission he wants to anticipate some of the questions they might ask.
  - Informal meetings: He might pop in for a cup of coffee with the Fire Chief etc.
  - He gets out in the field to visit the various facilities and tries to be on the scene to give moral support for things like fires and major water breaks.
- Examples of past management skills:
  - Savannah: Defined Benefit Pension Plan: Because they were not sustainable, they converted many of the defined benefit plans to defined contribution plans and reduced the benefits of the defined benefit plan.
  - Sarasota: Sarasota's budget was going through the same recession as Lake Wales with property value down yet they were able to maintain the millage rate at the same rate and

- maintain service, though they had to reduce staff almost 23% through attrition and layoffs.
- Jupiter: none given

**Question #3: What are your strengths?**

- A strong decisive manager: He is capable of and has tackled head-on the real tough issues such as the Defined Benefit Pension Plan and balancing the budget
- Experience: 35 years in managing communities from all over the country has given him experience in facing just about any problem that may surface.
- Enthusiasm: He enjoys local government administration though it can be frustrating at times. He wants to make a difference and local government is where that can be accomplished.

**Question #4: What are your weaknesses?**

- Impatience:
  - He tends to want to get the job done right away and not waste time, which has gotten him in trouble over the years because sometimes you have to spend more time in consensus and relationship building. He used to think that once you know the right thing to do, you just do it. Now, he realizes that is only half the battle. The other half is to bring people along in the same direction instead of them just following orders.
  - The last few years he had been working on:
    - Trying to make a lasting change, not just change
    - Trying to listen more to find what people's concerns are, getting them on-board even if it takes a while longer
    - Trying not to be a prisoner in his office but actually schedule time to get out in the field among the people he serves

**Would you consider yourself a micromanager, a dictator, or a people person?**

- Mr. Bartolatta said he is not a dictator or micromanager, though at times he has been perceived as a micromanager because he asks so many questions. He said he does not like surprises, and neither does the commission and therefore wants staff to keep him in the loop about major things going on in the organization so he can reap the benefits of their advice. He does not want "yes" people, but those that will disagree with him, pro or con, so they all are on the same page. After a while he said he doesn't have to ask so many questions because staff has learned to anticipate them.
- He said he directs staff on what to do, but not tell them how to do it.
- He said at times he may recommend something that the city commission disagrees with but if after he gives the alternative, both pros and cons, they decide to go in a different direction, his job is follow 100%.

**Question #5: Give us a positive statement about Lake Wales.**

- Natural Resources: lakes
- Community Resources:
  - Bok Tower Gardens, technically not in the city but still in the community.
  - Major Employers: Florida Natural
  - Tourism: a Historic District, Legoland
- Facilities: first class municipal facilities and a fire station that many cities would love to have
- Small Town Feel: the friendliness giving a small town feeling though it isn't a small town. You want to be a big city in terms of economics and tax base but want to keep the ambiance of a small town. He gave an example of a park bench that had written on it to relax and enjoy the view, which said to him that this was a community that valued the quality of life. He said he thought that was more important than how many commercial centers you have because it's what makes a city a city.

**Question #6: Give us a negative statement about Lake Wales, about its problem or difficulty.**

- City Limits: It was hard for him to know if he was in or outside the city limits. He said it would be advantageous to square off the borders by convincing people to annex in.
- Economic Development:
- Millage Rate: that keeps creeping up though he realizes that it is tied to services.
- Code Enforcement: wear and tear on buildings and dilapidated structures that are eye-sores and need immediate action. He said it was more of a cosmetic weakness.

**Commissioner Wojcik ask what, in your view, is a definition of being “business friendly”?**

Mr. Bartolatta said his definition would be that staff would make something happens instead of stopping something from happening.

- Red Tape: Staff willingness to cut through the red tape, though still following the laws and procedures. He mentioned the controversy with the sign ordinance in which some people think it is an intrusion and others think it is a quality of life issue so it is a balancing act.
- Bad Procedures: If it is a bad procedure, one that pushes people away, get it revised.
- If it is good for the community, make it happen.

**Question # 7: Do you have any questions for us?**

- The Next Step: He was told they will do the face-to-face interviews with a shorter list, a tour of the town and city facilities, and will meet key people the week of July 8<sup>th</sup>
- Background Check: Mr. Bartolatta asked if he would have an opportunity to explain the circumstances surrounding things found on the background check and he was told by the Human Resource Director, Sandra Davis, that he would be given that opportunity.
- Salary: Mr. Bartolatta was told that the pay scope was between \$90,000 and \$153,000 and asked if that would be acceptable, which it was.
- Residency Requirement: Mr. Bartolatta was told it was a requirement and he said that would not be a problem.

**This has been the smallest town you have lived in. Why would you want to live in a small town?**

Mr. Bartolatta said he has lived in towns from 5,000 to 25,000 and said there is more to life than big city amenities.

The phone interview with Robert Bartolotta ended at 6:05 p.m.

**[CANDIDATE: KENNETH FIELDS; 6:10 p.m.]**

**Question #1, Part One: What will your first steps be upon assuming responsibility for this position?**

- First 90 days - Meet one-on-one with commissioners and department heads and with their advice reach out to the key people in the community, significant organizations, other employers in town
  - Introduce himself to them
  - Learn staff strengths and weaknesses
  - Get input on:
    - their take on the community
    - the key issues
    - priorities he should set his first year
- Following that time period:
  - Set his direction as that given by the commission and what goals he should concentrate on
  - Set his priorities for staff

**Question #1, Part 2: What do you hope to accomplish in the first year?**

- Know everyone and they will know him

- Goals: Start moving forward to accomplish the determined set of goals

**Question #2: Describe your management style and give examples from past employment in Southwest Ranches.**

- Informal: with both staff and the public
- Accessible at all times: for staff, commission and the public.
  - He will hold staff meetings to get input from directors so departments can coordinate with each other and so staff can know what is happening in the city.
  - He will meet regularly with the Commissioners prior to each commission meeting to go over the agenda and answer their questions.
  - He is available on his cell phone any time they feel it is necessary for them to find out information from him or to give him information that they have gathered from the community.
- Team Builder:
  - He will develop the sense among staff that they are all in it together and are part of a team.
  - He will help all of staff to move toward achieving the same goals
  - He will encourage staff to act professionally, develop a sense of excellence and give recognition for those talents.
- Problem Solver: He said he would rather solve a problem rather than fix the blame.
- Examples of past management skills at Southwest Ranches: He explained that he had been expected to implement things that went against the requirements of a strict ethics code that had been recently put in place. He said that complying with the code did not mesh with the culture of the area. He said he gave it his best shot but he felt more comfortable walking away rather than being asked to do things that he felt crossed the line on a professional basis.

**Commission Question:**

**Commissioner Wojcik added, How would you handle finding out an employee is not doing his job?**

Mr. Fields said he will hold staff accountable, find out what the problem is, why it exists and turn the problem into a learning experience if possible.

- Transfer: If the employee is not up the job he would first try and find another position within the organization where he can succeed.
- Train: If the problem is lack of training then he or she needs to be brought up to speed.
- Termination: The last resort would be to terminate the employee.

**Question #3: What are your strengths?**

- Integrity:
- Professionalism:
- Technical Skills: An engineer for twenty years in government operations; has had experience with infrastructures, budgets and finance, knows Florida's laws, and has worked in older cities that have gone through redevelopment efforts.

**Commission Added Question:**

**Commissioner Thornhill said he was a fan of Team Quality Management (TQM) and asked if Mr. Field thought it was relevant to today's workforce because it is an employee dominated force.**

Mr. Fields said he viewed TQM as more of the mindset, a way of looking for ways to the job better, an approach that incorporates continuous improvement and listening to the employer, who he admitted would have the upper hand. But he said that doesn't mean the manager should stop listening to the employees because they are the ones out there every day and know what the job requires. He is into community policing, understanding that they have to be part of the community. It's something that you should not pay lip service to but live it every day.

**Question #4: What are your weaknesses?**

- Planning and Zoning Matters:
  - He said he was not familiar with all the details of zoning issues.
  - His professionalism and sometimes his confidence are interpreted as being aloof. He said a city manager has to maintain a certain amount of distance because of controversial decisions he might have to make, though he admitted he was not the 'slap on the back' kind of manager.

**Question #5: Give us a positive statement about Lake Wales.**

Mr. Fields said he had not had the chance to visit Lake Wales but he did a lot of research and talked to people who know the community well.

- Amazing Potential: a potential that is poised to take off and is a great place to live.
- Location: near Tampa and Orlando and being at the crossroad of two major highways
- History: having an older downtown section
- Economic Development: the partnership with the chamber is a sign that people are ready to engage the business community and move the community forward economically.
- Culture: Polk State College and the Art Center that supports the art culture and makes the city attractive.

**Question #6: Give us a negative statement about Lake Wales, about its problem or difficulty.**

- Next Step: Mr. Fields said the city has great potential but has not been able to get to that next step, that of putting it out there publically.
- Marketing: The city has not taken advantage of local media to get the positive information out about Lake Wales or social media such as Youtube and Twitter to get the word out so people are talking about the great things that are happening in Lake Wales and get them to participate more in local government.

**Commission Added Questions:**

**Commissioner Lutton said the city is much smaller than he is used to and asked why he would want to live in a small city.**

Mr. Fields said most of his experience has been in big cities but he also worked in the Keys, which was a great place to visit or retire, but living and working there is very isolated. He said he had to carry a cooler in his trunk so he could get his frozen foods home without them defrosting. He said Lake Wales would be a pleasure for him for size isn't relevant and because the issues are the same. He said he has a passion for public service, making people's lives better, so moving to Lake Wales is not an issue.

**Commissioner Wojcik asked for his definition of being "business friendly."**

Mr. Fields said it would be, not to let rules get in the way of common sense. If a rule is unreasonable and makes no sense what does it accomplish? He likes to work with businesses to help them grow, prosper and accomplish their goals. You have to listen to their concerns and make yourself accessible to them. He commented on the snipe sign issue and said most issues are simpler.

**Question #7: Do you have any questions for us?**

**Salary: Between \$90,000 and \$153,000**

Mr. Fields was agreeable to the salary range.

**Residency Requirement**

Mr. Field was told it was a requirement and he said that would not be a problem.

The workshop meeting adjourned at 6:46 p.m.

City Commission Workshop Meeting  
June 24, 2013

  
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Mayor Eugene Fultz

**ATTEST:**

  
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City Clerk Clara VanBlargan