

A workshop meeting of the City Commission was held on July 9, 2013 at 1:30 p.m. in the Commission Chambers at the Municipal Administration Building for the purpose of conducting an in-person interview with city manager candidate Elizabeth Ann Toney-Deal. The meeting was called to order by Mayor Eugene Fultz.

**COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:** Christopher Lutton; Betty Wojcik; Jonathan Thornhill; Michael S. Carter; Mayor Eugene Fultz

Commissioner Lutton left the meeting at 3:19 p.m.

**COMMISSIONERS ABSENT:** None

**CITY REPRESENTATIVES PRESENT:** Clara VanBlargan, City Clerk; Jacquie Hawkins, Deputy City Clerk; Sandra Davis, Human Resources Director

[Meetings are recorded but not transcribed verbatim]

### **CITY MANAGER CANDIDATE IN-PERSON INTERVIEW (ROUND 2) - ELIZABETH ANN TONEY-DEAL**

#### **Prepared Question #1: What particular experience do you have with respect to budget preparation and Finance?**

- **Extensive background:** always very involved in the budget process, not just at 'budget time' but all through the year.
- **Positive track record:** She has been successful in generating revenue through things like grants, programs and capital purchases
- **Fiscally conservative**
- **Top financial manager,** making sure they purchase things that last
- **Local Banks:** Tries to use local banks to secure good loan agreements with better rates

#### **Commissioner Lutton asked how she would bring the millage rate down.**

- Economic Development
- Annexations
- Utility expansion
- Diversification of the tax base

#### **Commissioner Carter said maintenance is in a crises mode and asked for her strategy to correct that.**

- **Philosophy:** Money spent today to maintain something saves threefold if it has to be replaced or repaired tomorrow and she gave an example in Haines City
- **Budget:** She never cuts the budget below adequate maintenance.

#### **Mayor Carter said Lake Wales can benefit from her experience but asked if there was something she would do differently than in the past.**

Ms. Toney-Deal said she learned that every landowner does not think the same and what she thinks is important to them is not necessarily so. She said she has learned to get to know the property owner to find out what is important to him. Commissioner Wojcik said that would be the same with any topic, for example the sign ordinance; not to assume you know what people think is important but find out from them.

#### **Prepared Question #15: Describe your experience with Economic Development and Growth Management and how it was accomplished.**

##### **GROWTH MANAGEMENT**

- **Shared Vision:**

- The Commission shared her vision
- Talked about the vision long before they had the money to pay for it. It didn't happen overnight. Paid for it through things like Polk County grants, DOT grants and CRA funds
- **Dream Big:** They built a civic center, amphitheater, aquatic center, and banquet facility

#### **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

- **Recreation:** to draw people to the community
- **Infrastructure:** put in place before needed
- **Master Plan:** for facilities
- **Zoning and Land Use:** put in place
- **Annexations:**
- **Businesses:** Seek new businesses and help present businesses expand

Commissioner Carter said that the City is partnering with the Chamber of Commerce for economic development, which is unchartered territory and asked what she thought the City's role should be.

- **Partners:** The EDC and City have to be partners. It is crucial that they cooperate with each other and work as a team.
- **Infrastructure:** The City has the infrastructure and services that are needed for the EDC to be successful
- **Confidentiality**

#### **Prepared Questions #7: What is important in establishing effective working relationships with others and how can you assure measurable outcomes?**

- **Vision and a goal:** Staff needs to feel the vision and know what goals are set
- **Team:** Make sure staff and each department feels part of a team and knows they each play a role in the success of the city.
- **Staff Meetings:** She likes to meet with department heads the day after each commission meeting to discuss the meeting and the short and long-term goals
- **Accountability:** Make it clear what goals should be reached and make adjustments if that person is unable to reach them.
- **Facilitator:** bring people together
- **Knowledge:** She knows the jobs of each department
- **Creativity:** Make staff know that she wants them to push the envelope and try new things.

#### **Commissioner Wojcik asked if an informal survey was taken at her last employment would staff say they like her or that they respect her.**

Ms. Toney-Deal said both. She said the majority would say they like her and she would also have their respect because they know she stands beside her staff in public, and if correction is needed she does that in private, behind closed doors.

#### **Commissioner Thornhill asked how important employee morale was to her.**

Ms. Toney-Deal said it was very important, though you can't please everyone. Some things that can be done to improve morale are:

- **Department Luncheons:** once a month for employees to gather, share thoughts and recognize employees who go beyond.
- **Time:** In the beginning she meets with each department head to get to know them and she spends time in each department learning who each employee is. She tries to know them all by name.
- **Family:** Her goal is for employees to be treated like family and feel like a part of one.

**Prepared Question #10: Talk about the most controversial issue you have encountered as a manager or assistant manager.**

Ms. Toney-Deal said the most difficult issue was the installation of red light cameras on US27 in Haines City because it was so controversial and the public was so divided. They ended up doing away with right-turn tickets.

**Prepared Question #12: Have you ever been fired or asked to resign from a job?**

Ms. Toney-Deal explained how she resigned from Haines City after over 19 years before she was fired because of a Commission change with most of the commission not thinking she was right for the job, though she had a huge community following who regretted her leaving.

**Commissioner Carter asked what she would say to her critics.**

Ms. Toney-Deal said she would tell them she loves the community and she did the best she could for 19-1/2 years.

**Prepared Question #5: What techniques or procedures do you use to keep the City Commission informed?**

- Keep the Commission informed so they don't hear about something on the news or read about it in the newspaper.
- Easy to read agenda items that are well thought out, including the pros and cons and options.
- She copies all the commissioners so all of them have the same information
- She treats commissioners as she would like to be treated

**Commissioner Thornhill asked how often she would meet with the commission.**

- In the beginning she wants to spend time individually with each commissioner so she can get to know them, their interests, visions and their dreams for the city.
- After that they will meet on an as needed basis.
- The Commissioners can drop by anytime.

**Commissioner Wojcik asked if she was serious about them meeting at 11 PM.**

Ms. Toney-Deal said her most productive meetings were late night 'vision meetings', often after the close of commission meetings. Many times they had a dinner meeting to discuss future dreams for the city.

**Commissioner Carter said that for them to meet openly to discuss things like she referred to would be a violation of the Sunshine Law.**

Ms. Toney Deal said the press can be invited to join them at the dinner. She said they may even have an all day retreat with the city commission, board members and department heads to talk about things like community goals and invite the press.

**Prepared Question #4: Why are you interested in being our City Manager and if you didn't lose your job would you still want to come to Lake Wales?**

Ms. Toney-Deal admitted that if the Haines City Commission had wanted her to stay and she could continue to move the city forward, she wouldn't have applied. She said she is a Polk County person at heart and did not have any desire to work elsewhere. Lake Wales was the only city she applied for. She explained that when she got on the short list for the job at Haines City, Lake Wales started a search for a city manager and she was going to apply if she didn't get the Haines City job.

**Commissioner Thornhill asked if she thought having an applicant from Polk County was a hindrance or a help.**

Ms. Toney-Deal said the knowledge she gained from working in Polk County and the contacts she has made through working with them, partnering with them, growing up with them and living among them is something that can't be bought or paid for.

**Commissioner Wojcik said she had good references but some people were not so positive.**

Ms. Toney-Deal said she is not surprised because there will always be people who agree with your decisions and others that disagree. In nineteen years she has made a lot of decisions and has had a lot of employees. Many times people have preconceived ideas about people they never actually met but heard something negative from people they know.

**Commissioner Thornhill asked what staff will say about her leadership and direction six months into the job.**

Ms. Toney-Deal said the majority will say we are stable and moving forward.

**Prepared Question #9: What can the Commission do to assist you in becoming a success in your role as City Manager?**

- For them to get along with each and share the vision
- For them to give her clear direction

**Commissioner Carter asked what she thought about not having an Assistant City Manager.**

Ms. Toney-Deal said it is ideal to have an assistant but not having one will give her the opportunity to be involved in every aspect.

**Commissioner Carter asked what her idea of good customer service was.**

- She thought customer service was very important because 'you never get a second chance to make a first impression'.
- You need to be friendly and polite
- See it as a positive experience no matter what happens
- It is important to have a diverse workforce with bilingual employees available
- Always return phone calls

**Commissioner Lutton asked her to talk about the residency issue.**

Ms. Toney-Deal explained that she owns two homes in Haines City and so right now she is 'house poor'. She would ask for a six month window in which to sell them unless she is able to find something in Lake Wales that she can still afford, but it would be open for discussion. She only lives ten miles from the Lake Wales city limits and that would not hinder her from being active in the community.

**Commissioner Thornhill said Ms. Toney-Deal said several times that she hires good people. He asked what if we already have good people.**

Ms. Toney-Deal said if there is already good staff she works with them and taps into their talents. But she can't say that she won't want to do some reorganizing. If they need someone new or someone retires and needs to be replaced, she recruits the best ones she can find.

**Commissioner Wojcik said that some city managers they have had basically led the discussion and ran the show with long presentations and others very rarely said anything and had department heads do it. She asked how she would operate.**

Ms. Toney-Deal said she does a little of both. She said she explains the agenda item but expects the department head to back her up. She said the mayor controls the meeting and if she is asked a question she answers it or has the department head answer it if it needs more detail. She believes in giving the information ahead of time to the commission so a lot of the items can be put on the consent agenda, and the rest will need little discussion.

**Commissioner Carter said staff has not gotten a wage increase in years and asked what she would do until they can get a raise.**

- Encourage new ideas and give a onetime monetary award their idea saves the city money.
- Recognize employees going above and beyond their job description by giving them a onetime \$500 award.

**Commissioner Thornhill asked what she would do to start expanding the tax base and lowering the millage rate.**

- First analyze why the tax base has reduced and where we are losing ad valorem values by going through the tax role.
- See if something should be on the tax role that isn't.
- Reallocate money to accomplish goals


**Commissioner Carter asked what one thing they should know about her.**

- Her dedication. She does not hop from job to job but stays with the community and falls in love with it.
- The best measure is when working under pressure and she spoke of the work done after the three hurricanes in 2004.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:29 p.m.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Mayor/Commissioner

ATTEST:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
City Clerk