

Special City Commission Meeting
December 21, 2023
7:30 a.m.

ELECTED OFFICIALS PRESENT:

Adrian Petrila, Mayor
Mark Grill, Vice Mayor, Commissioner, District 2
Chris Graus, Commissioner, District 1
Ward Friszolowski, Commissioner, District 3
Chris Marone, Commissioner, District 4

STAFF PRESENT:

Andrew Dickman, City Attorney- appeared via Zoom
Wayne Saunders, City Manager
Amber LaRowe, City Clerk
Matthew McConnell, Assistant City Attorney

Mayor Petrila called the meeting to order at 7:30 a.m., followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

1. DISCUSSION OF COMMISSION VACANCIES AND POSSIBLE APPOINTMENTS

Mayor Petrila inquired about the process for the filling of the vacancies that were confirmed at the December 18th meeting, and expressed positivity towards all the applications/letters received from interested residents. He acknowledged several of the individuals were present and opined that interviews could begin today.

Attorney Andrew Dickman stated that it would be best to pick one district and begin the interview and selection process one at a time, continuing each day as scheduled. The individual selected can be sworn in by the Clerk and be seated at the following Commission meeting to participate and vote in the next selection.

Attorney Matthew McConnell stated that one commissioner must resign and step down before interviews and voting; the exiting commissioner cannot be part of the selection process for their seat.

Vice Mayor Grill communicated some conflicting information he read from the Florida Commission on Ethics website regarding interim-appointed officials and the filing of Financial Form 6.

Attorney McConnell read Florida State Statute 112.3144 and the disclosure as identified in subparagraph 10 that states appointed officials filling the remainder of a term are responsible for filing a financial form.

Commissioner Friszolowski requested the Commission delay the selection of District 3 at this time because one applicant is unavailable until next week and Commissioner-elect Rzewnicki is awaiting a response from her employer on holding office as secondary employment. He also opined the City Commission should open the letter of interest submittal deadline for District 2 and/or any non-selected district today to allow more applicants (District 2 received one response).

Attorney Dickman stated that the resigning commissioner may voice opinions and reasons to the Commissioners, once resigned, but cannot interview nor vote; resigning commissioners are no longer subject to the Sunshine Law and Public Records Law.

City Clerk LaRowe informed the Commission that Amy Bonsall, an interested resident who applied for District 4, is available via Zoom if the Commission would like to proceed with interviews for District 4 (the other two residents were seated in the Chambers).

Commissioner Marone resigned effective today and left the Commission meeting at 7:56 a.m.

Mayor Petrila suggested the Commission interview the interested residents in alphabetical order, by last name.

Amy Bonsall appeared via Zoom and introduced herself, touching on her background, education, and experience.

What is prompting your interest and desire to serve as a City Commissioner?

Ms. Bonsall stated that she has seen the growth that is taking place and being considered, which prompted her interest in attending meetings and watching what is going on. Her experience with growth and navigating that in the business environment would translate well into the City and she opined would be of service to the City in the current climate.

Explain your involvement in the City.

Ms. Bonsall stated that she has recently been attending more of the Commission meetings.

How long have you lived in the City?

Ms. Bonsall stated she moved to the City in early November 2022.

Address two to three priorities that you feel the City Commission should be working on.

Ms. Bonsall opined that a top priority is a smoother path for development; she would like to see the process a little less challenging and more streamlined.

Are you a member of any advocacy groups?

Ms. Bonsall stated that she is on the mailing list for Protect St. Pete Beach, but she does not serve on their board or team in any capacity. If selected, she would work with the City Attorney to ensure that she is removed and does what she needs to do to show her independence.

Could you please expand on why you chose to apply?

Ms. Bonsall explained her desire to make an impact and understands the ability to do that at the local level. She feels at home here and would like to take the next step in investing in her community.

How do the experiences you have had help in your role as a Commissioner?

Ms. Bonsall expanded upon her career path as an engineer, strategy consultant, and independent consulting she has done with large companies and their growth plans. She also identified the involvement she has had, recently, in some communities in Maine where she has had to bring people together with varying perspectives.

The Commission interviewed Richard Lorenzen next.

Richard Lorenzen introduced himself and touched on his background in the military and as a pilot.

What is prompting your interest and desire to serve as a City Commissioner?

Mr. Lorenzen commented on his experiences in the Coast Guard and as a pilot and how that has shaped him to be of the mindset to step up and serve and do the right things when necessary. He recognized the vacancies and the need to fill those and wanted to step up and serve the betterment of the City.

Are you a member of Pass-A-Grille, Vina Del Mar?

Mr. Lorenzen said yes, he is and has attended the meetings.

Have you served on any City advisory boards or other boards within the City?

Mr. Lorenzen stated he has not served and does not serve on any boards. He briefly considered running for District 4 this past election; however, when he saw that Mr. Marone was running, he knew that he would do a nice job and decided not to run this time.

What do you feel are the top priorities for the Commission to address and how would your experience help in addressing them?

Mr. Lorenzen identified the conditional use permit process for Sirata and Tradewinds. He also expressed the need for the Commission to focus on the renourishment efforts in conjunction with the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers and the ability of the City to balance the growth of businesses versus the residences. He stated that because he has worked in various levels of government due to his career experiences, he has been exposed to and been a part of listening to all sides and making decisions based on what he learns through that process. Mr. Lorenzen stated that he is a good listener and takes a balanced approach when listening to all sides to form an educated decision. Mr. Lorenzen has a lot of team experience and can make group decisions for the best solution.

Mr. Lorenzen then gave his final remarks and thanked the Commission for the opportunity.

The Commission interviewed Owen "Joe" Moholland for the final candidate.

Mr. Moholland introduced himself and touched on his military background in the Marines, starting his own business and selling that business, to retirement. He communicated his concerns on the filing of Form 6; however, will set those aside to serve as necessary. He mentioned the major upcoming changes and the need to continue the momentum of these decisions.

Please elaborate on your professional background.

Mr. Moholland outlined his service in the military and his movement up the ranks in the Marines. When leaving the military, he started his own business after obtaining a degree, and ran it for several years, before it was sold. He is now retired.

How do you feel your background will help with the two to three issues you see facing the City?

Mr. Moholland mentioned how Form 6 is threatening the City's independence to govern itself, the Comprehensive Plan review and possible changes, and protecting the City's residents. He also mentioned the Sunrunner and beach renourishment.

Since you became a resident in 2007, what has your community involvement been?

Mr. Moholland stated that he had not been involved until recently when he felt that there were some looming issues that he wanted to become more educated on. He attends the Mayoral meetings at the Library and has been attending the City Commission meetings this year. Mr. Moholland has not served on any advisory boards.

Mr. Moholland stated that he has no pending conflicts that would make him unavailable for Commission meetings, he does travel sporadically but will schedule that around City commitments if chosen.

Are you a member of any advocacy groups or any other organizations in the City?

Vice Mayor Grill stated that he found Mr. Moholland had donated to the Mayor's campaign and has donated to the Protect St. Pete Beach group.

Mr. Moholland stated that he had no agendas in mind when approached by canvassers for Mayor Petrila's run for office. He listened to the information they gave to him about Mr. Petrila and followed that up by doing his research. Since he was not a huge fan of the then-current Mayor, he contributed to the campaign. He informed

the Commission that he is an independent thinker and makes decisions based on the information he is given coupled with the research he performs. Regarding Protect St. Pete Beach, he contributed because he felt it was important to be part of the voice in the community with the direction they were taking; he also contributed to assist with Protect St. Pete Beach's hiring of an expert for the pending Sirata Conditional Use Permit. He has never attended any of the Protect St. Pete Beach meetings or functions; he knows a few of their representatives but only as acquaintances. Mr. Moholland acknowledged that he will be representing not only the residents of District 4, but of the entire City and expressed his ability to represent individuals equally even if views disagree. His desire is for the betterment of the City regardless of any affiliations, memberships, and/or donations.

The Commission thanked Mr. Moholland, Mr. Lorenzen, and Ms. Bonsall.

Mayor Petrila recessed the meeting at 8:42 a.m. and reconvened the meeting at 8:49 a.m.

Resident Deborah Schechner expressed her disappointment of the Commissioners possible consideration of reopening the solicitation of interest for the other remaining districts; she acknowledged that it was well advertised, and the deadline was clear and known.

Resident Lisa Robinson expressed her disappointment with the Commissioners considering the reopening of the solicitation for interest as she met the deadline as well as the other individuals for the other two districts.

Resident Claudine Reece of Protect St. Pete Beach clarified that Protect St. Pete Beach is not an anti-development advocacy group. Rather, they are pro checks and balances, fairness, and finding a win/win for both businesses and residents alike.

Mayor Petrila was impressed with all three individuals who submitted their interest in serving the City. He narrowed his choice down between Mr. Lorenzen and Mr. Moholland. Based on the interviews today as well as the resumes received, Mayor Petrila opined Mr. Moholland was the best fit.

Motion: Mayor Petrila moved to nominate Owen "Joe" Moholland for District 4 Commissioner.

Commissioner Friszolowski thanked all three individuals for attending and submitting their interest to help with the vacancy. He opined that Mr. Lorenzen is a better fit at this time for District 4 due to his community involvement.

Vice Mayor Grill complimented each resident on their background and shared appreciation for their willingness to serve.

Commissioner Graus complimented Mr. Lorenzen and Mr. Moholland and is leaning more towards selecting Mr. Lorenzen for District 4 Commissioner. He thanked Ms. Bonsall for attending and for her desire to serve.

Vice Mayor Grill is in favor of Mr. Lorenzen.

Mayor Petrila withdrew the motion on the floor.

Motion: Commissioner Friszolowski moved, Commissioner Graus seconded, and the motion carried 3-1 to appoint Richard Lorenzen as District 4 Commissioner. Mayor Petrila voted no.

Mayor Petrila will be appearing, via Zoom, during next week's special meetings to continue this process.

Mayor Petrila addressed the reopening of the letters of interest as mentioned at the first of this meeting; he opined that the City Commission should not consider this. He compared the submittal period to that of the election qualifying period where it is an established timeframe; if that timeframe is not met, the individuals do not get a second chance.

The other three commissioners disagreed and would like to see everyone have an opportunity to put their name in that may be interested.

Motion: Commissioner Friszolowski moved, Commissioner Graus seconded, and the motion carried 3-1 to reopen the submittal period for the remaining three districts. Mayor Petrila voted no.

City Clerk LaRowe requested deadline clarifications because she does not want to be working on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day fielding these interested individuals.

The Commission decided that District 1 individuals will be interviewed on Tuesday, December 26, 2023, at 2:00 p.m. with a submittal deadline of noon that same day (December 26th).

District 2 individuals will be interviewed on Wednesday, December 27, 2023, at 7:30 a.m. with a submittal deadline of noon on December 26, 2023.

District 3 individuals will be interviewed on Thursday, December 28, 2023, at 7:30 a.m. with a submittal deadline of noon on December 27, 2023.

Mayor Petrila adjourned the meeting at 9:16 a.m.

MINUTES APPROVED: JANUARY 9, 2024



AMBER LAROWE
CITY CLERK



ADRIAN PETRILA
MAYOR