

CHARTER TOWNSHIP OF MERIDIAN
TOWNSHIP BOARD SPECIAL MEETING - **APPROVED** -
5151 Marsh Road, Okemos, MI 48864-1198
853-4000, Town Hall Room
SATURDAY, MARCH 16, 2013 **11:00 A.M.**

PRESENT: Supervisor LeGoff, Clerk Dreyfus, Treasurer Brixie, Trustees Scales, Styka, Veenstra
(11:05 AM), Wilson
ABSENT: None
STAFF: Township Manager Gerald Richards

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Supervisor LeGoff called the meeting to order at 11:04 A.M.

2. PUBLIC REMARKS

Supervisor LeGoff opened Public Remarks.

Leonard Provencher, 5824 Buena Parkway, Haslett, wished the Board members well in their deliberations and voiced concern with transparency in government as the proceedings are not televised. He expressed a desire for the new Township Manager to have a working background and understanding of Policy Governance who will bring transparency to the Township.

Supervisor LeGoff closed Public Remarks.

3. INTERVIEW FINALISTS IN THE TOWNSHIP MANAGER SEARCH PROCESS

Karl Tomion, Michigan Municipal League (MML) Facilitator, gave a brief overview of how the interview process will be conducted.

The four (4) finalists were asked the following questions:

- Summarize your employment experience as a local government administrator
- Why are you applying to become Meridian Township's next Township Manager
- How does your application to become Meridian Township's next Township Manager relate to your long term career goals
- Describe the largest government project you have managed as a local government administrator
- Describe the specific role you played in the largest government project
- Describe your experience in labor negotiations, both at the table and in a Supervisory role
- Describe your prior relationships with the business community as a local government administrator, providing two specific examples of successful local business partnerships
- How do you handle a situation where you clearly made a mistake
- Provide an example of how you dealt with the news media during a controversial issue
- Have you had the opportunity to use different types of media within your community
- Provide the experiences you have had with the Downtown Development Authority
- Provide information on two of your most successful commercial or retail projects/programs you have worked on
- What is your experience and training in motivating employees
- Provide two different examples where you were involved in the discipline of an employee under your direction and describe how you handled those situations
- Provide us with what budgeting experience you have had
- Have you been directly involved with the mechanics of budget preparation
- Were you the designated budget officer that presented the proposed budget to the elected governing Board
- How have you handled citizen complaints regarding employees under your direction
- How does your approach to handling the complaint differ if an employee has made a mistake
- What role should the Township Manager play externally in the community
- Do you believe the Township Manager should be an active member of a service or fraternal organization
- Would you participate in community activities before or after the regular work day

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- Assume that due to declining revenues the Township Board expects you to recommend and achieve cost savings equivalent to the cost of two (2) full time employees. Identify two (2) alternatives to accomplish this based on your experience and training
- Share your experience with any shared services and/or privatization
- Provide your understanding of the Carver Policy Governance Model
- If you become Township Manager, how long of a commitment are you willing to make
- What is the single most effective role a Township Manager can play for the Township Board, and why
- Is there anything else you would like to tell us about your background and skills that may be important for us to know about you as a candidate for Township Manager

A. Darnell Earley (approximately 11:30 A.M.)

Mr. Earley provided responses to Board questions. He was also afforded an opportunity to discuss his background related to environmental issues. Mr. Earley was given an option to provide additional information about his qualifications and potential reasons for Board selection as the next Township Manager.

B. James Creech (approximately 12:30 P.M.)

Mr. Creech provided responses to Board questions. He was also afforded an opportunity to discuss his background related to environmental issues. Mr. Creech was given an option to provide additional information about his qualifications and potential reasons for Board selection as the next Township Manager.

Supervisor LeGoff recessed the meeting at 1:10 P.M.

Supervisor LeGoff reconvened the meeting at 1:45 P.M.

C. Paul Brake (approximately 2:00 P.M.)

Mr. Brake provided responses to Board questions along with an additional question regarding environmental initiatives. He was also given an option to provide additional information about his qualifications and potential reasons for Board selection as the next Township Manager.

Supervisor LeGoff recessed the meeting at 2:46 P.M.

Supervisor LeGoff reconvened the meeting at 2:55 P.M.

D. Frank Walsh (approximately 3:00 P.M.)

Mr. Walsh provided responses to Board questions along with an additional question regarding environmental initiatives. He was also given an option to provide additional information about his qualifications and potential reasons for Board selection as the next Township Manager.

Supervisor LeGoff recessed the meeting at 3:53 P.M.

Supervisor LeGoff reconvened the meeting at 4:06 P.M.

4. DISCUSSION

A. Board deliberation regarding selection of Township Manager Finalist

Board members discussed the following:

- Board member belief requests for video coverage of Special Board Meetings should be made
- Board had four strong candidates on paper from which to select a finalist
- One Board member used 12 criteria and assigned a number from 1 to 10 in each area to select a finalist and two surfaced to the top: Brake and Walsh
- Value of projecting both specificity and generality
- Candidate Brake:
 - Best policy governance experience
 - Edge on management style potential

- Brings 13 years of institutional memory to Meridian Township
- Candidate's theme was one of exploration
- Did not elucidate concrete experience
- Gave an answer to the question that the Board sought, but the answer did not have substance
- Did not use the word leadership until prompted at the end of the interview by a Board member comment
- Good communication skills
- Offered an excellent presentation, was well organized and displayed good eye contact
- In-depth knowledge of Policy Governance
- Concern with his style during Meridian Township's contract negotiations
- Public discontent with the candidate when he was in the role of Executive Director of the Okemos Downtown Development Authority
- Candidate has great ideas, goals and ambitions, but there may be a gap between those and the proactive execution
- Ability to articulate and summarize what the Board was looking for, but did not provide specific examples in his answers
- Did not have as much experience in a management role as other candidates
- Experience with Meridian Township is both a positive and a negative
- Appreciation that the candidate is a certified economic developer

- Candidate Creech:
 - No spark today
 - Management style may not fit Meridian Township with such a diverse Board
 - Not sufficient work with community development
 - Did not come across strongly with regard to problem solving or innovation
 - No experience or knowledge with Policy Governance
 - Had an off day
 - Board member was not able to grasp his "theme"
 - Candidate did not make his case
 - Key components necessary in a Township Manager were not present in his interview (technical side, insufficient case examples, vagueness and too much emphasis on soft skills)
 - Candidate did not verbalize examples that his resume provided
 - Did not offer specificity in his answers to Board questions
 - Qualifications on paper did not translate well during the interview

- Candidate Earley:
 - Strong third
 - Not as much economic development or environmental experience as two other candidates
 - Strongest candidate in team building
 - Strongest candidate in diversity of experience
 - Displayed a high degree of professionalism
 - Wealth of experience in difficult situations
 - Put forth strong themes of passion for his profession and collaboration
 - Profound statement that in pursuit of his career goals, he has gone where nobody else would ever go
 - Looks for a challenge
 - Set a strong tone from the beginning of his interview
 - Good communication skills delivered with extreme confidence
 - Presents a level of diversity not previously experienced by the Township
 - Involved in two economically challenged communities
 - Displays passion and genuine enthusiasm
 - Articulate and polished in his presentation
 - Appreciation that the candidate made a joke and had a light-hearted sense of humor while retaining professionalism
 - Did not address any environmental statements
 - Offered a vague answer in response to the Policy Governance question

- Displayed strong soft skills, but was less certain of his technical skills
- Displayed dynamic, forceful and articulate skills when responding to Board questions
- Articulate in his answer regarding what the Manager's role is in the Township setting
- While stating he would be part of the community, he lacked specific examples of how that would be accomplished
- Board member disclosure of prior acquaintance with candidate

- Candidate Walsh:
 - Stronger personality
 - Did a great deal of homework
 - Displayed strong themes of customer service and team work which were consistently reinforced throughout his answers to Board questions
 - Candidate has traveled throughout the community and met with many people, using the names of those he met during his response to Board questions
 - Many trips to the community demonstrates a deep desire for the job
 - Out of the four candidates, he presented the best case for wanting this job
 - Had positive soft skills (calm confidence, but displayed respectfulness and deference) which were reflected in his comments
 - Only candidate who paused to think before answering
 - Displayed all the qualities of an excellent communicator: non-verbal skills, logic, facts, memory and a tie-in through a personal relationship with each Board member
 - During his responses, he referenced back to previously asked questions
 - Very organized without coming across as being pretentious or egotistical
 - Displayed signs of humility, openness, honesty and vulnerability
 - Openly admitted weakness
 - Candidate presented the most specific examples for almost every question asked
 - Presentation of a personalized notebook to each Board member demonstrated a style he would follow when presenting Board members with information on an issue
 - Appears to be pro-development while being environmentally sensitive
 - Appears to be a team player who values stakeholder input
 - Thorough in his preparation for the interview process
 - Displayed commitment to his community
 - Experience in fundraising, grant funding and developing innovative solutions
 - Thinks "on his feet"

5. ACTION

A. Possible conditional offer of employment to Township Manager Finalist

Board members discussed the following:

- Township Board would do well with an offer to Mr. Brake, Mr. Earley or Mr. Walsh

Trustee Styka moved to offer the position of Township Manager, subject to the reference check, background investigation and the negotiation of acceptable employment, to Mr. Frank Walsh. Seconded by Supervisor LeGoff.

Trustee Scales offered the following amendment:

- **Amend the motion to read: "moved to develop an offer of employment for Mr. Walsh and Mr. Earley."**

Seconded by Trustee Veenstra.

Continued Board and MML facilitator discussion:

- Board should have more discussion regarding this important decision
- After interviews, Board member belief there would be difficulty in selecting the number two candidate
- Suggestion to remove the number 3 and 4 candidates, and have a discussion about the attributes of the top two (2) candidates

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- Amendment was parliamentary in nature, moves away from involvement by the MML facilitator and gives control back to the Supervisor
- Need for consensus on a single candidate in order to negotiate a contract
- Suggestion to take a vote on the top two (2) candidates which would narrow the Board discussion to those candidates

ROLL CALL VOTE: YEAS: Trustees Scales, Styka, Veenstra, Wilson, Supervisor LeGoff,
Treasurer Brixie, Clerk Dreyfus

NAYS: None

Motion carried unanimously.

Continued Board discussion:

- Mr. Earley would fit into the team culture in Meridian Township
- Mr. Earley would translate some of his skills into delivery of economic development strategies through his teamwork approach
- Mr. Earley did not fully present specifics, e.g., environment
- Presentation by Mr. Earley was not as good or as detailed as Mr. Walsh
- Mr. Earley was not asked the question regarding environmental initiatives
- Mr. Earley's resume indicates he was a member of the Natural Resources Commission (a gubernatorial appointment) and an important environmental accomplishment
- Mr. Earley's proven experience working successfully with an elected body in communities which are larger and more complex than Meridian Township
- Mr. Earley is the strongest candidate regarding budget and finance experience, not only with his experience in Ingham County and Flint, but also in working in distressed communities
- Impressed with Mr. Earley's career choice when he recognized he needed to acquire more experience with budgeting in order to proceed and be successful in management
- Mr. Earley's decisiveness in downsizing his organization when under severe fiscal distress
- Mr. Earley's continued reference to leadership/vision throughout the interview
- Mr. Earley was the most experienced candidate interviewed
- Mr. Walsh did extensive "homework", more than the other three (3) candidates
- Mr. Walsh gave each Board member a sense of individual importance
- Mr. Walsh's communication style "pulls you in"
- Reminder to the other Board members to go back to the beginning of the process where certain criteria was used to pare down the field of 21
- Criteria included membership in the International City/County Management Association (ICMA)
- Mr. Earley was past president of ICMA
- Both candidates have extensive environmental history
- Appreciation for one of Mr. Earley's responses: "I have a strong vision to accomplishment."
- Appreciation for Mr. Earley's desire to keep a positive attitude when dealing with the media
- Mr. Earley's budgeting experience includes teaching budgeting at the university level and holding a position as Deputy Controller for Ingham County
- Mr. Earley is a person of responsibility
- Mr. Walsh is locally rooted and loyal
- Mr. Walsh has experience as a Township Board member and spoke about that during the interview
- Appreciation for Mr. Walsh's statement that property values are tied to the business community
- Appreciation for Mr. Walsh's openness and honesty in responding to the question about making mistakes
- Mr. Walsh's exemplary experience with DDAs
- Some concern regarding Mr. Walsh's experience with contract negotiations
- Appreciation for the fact that Mr. Walsh read the Meridian Township budget
- Ability of Mr. Walsh to "think on his feet" by tying in his answers to questions with previous research
- Mr. Walsh was the only candidate to offer a "long term" commitment
- Mr. Walsh is a "nuts and bolts" type of person
- Promoting a candidate to this job v. a candidate who is experienced

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Continued Board discussion:

- Salary range is \$105,000-\$120,000
- Fringe benefits will also need to be negotiated

ROLL CALL VOTE: YEAS: Trustees Scales, Styka, Veenstra, Wilson, Supervisor LeGoff,
Treasurer Brixie, Clerk Dreyfus

NAYS: None

Motion carried unanimously.

6. PUBLIC REMARKS* (None)

7. ADJOURNMENT

Supervisor LeGoff adjourned the meeting at 6:00 P.M.

ELIZABETH LEGOFF
TOWNSHIP SUPERVISOR

BRETT DREYFUS
TOWNSHIP CLERK

Sandra K. Otto, Secretary