

**SPECIAL MEETING OF THE COMMON COUNCIL
June 22, 2021**

The Common Council of the City of Richland Center, Wisconsin, met in person and Webex on Tuesday, June 22, 2021 commencing at 6:30 PM with Mayor Todd Coppernoll presiding. Alderpersons Karin Tepley, Carson Culver, Melony Walters, Susan Fruit, Chelsey Walters, and Ryan Cairns were present. Alderpersons John Collins and Scotty Wallace were absent. Also present was Steve Zach of Boardman Clark law firm.

Mayor Coppernoll ascertained from the Clerk that the meeting was properly noticed.

OPEN DISCUSSION ON THE MERITS OF HIRING AN ADMINISTRATOR:

Mayor Coppernoll stated the administrator position was created and filled in 2005 and when the individual in that position left it remained vacant.

Attorney Steve Zach of Boardman Clark law firm was introduced. He has been involved with the city's labor matters for many years and has much experience dealing with personnel topics as he represents several municipalities.

He worked with former Mayor Kidd and the Utility Commission to create the 2005 administrator position, which was unsuccessful and not a good experience for the city.

He stated almost all municipalities have a "point person" now. For example, many villages have a Clerk/Administrator model but that generally is not workable for larger municipalities. The clerk position has so many duties that need to be done per state statute that when you add administrator duties on top of that it is too much. As such he feels there needs to be separation between the positions. But he does not recommend a city manager position.

He also remarked that many cities the size of Richland Center have both a mayor and an administrator and even those with a full-time mayor may still have an administrator and whether or not there is a full-time mayor or part-time mayor usually depends on finances.

Mr. Zach said government operations are very complex and having the funds available is an issue. But municipalities need to have someone who takes the day to day responsibility of "the buck stops here". Especially when it comes to personnel matters.

He said personnel matters need to have consistency and it can be difficult to handle personnel issues for a clerk if they are at the same level as other department heads. As for having a Personnel committee to handle personnel matters, that can cause issues because of meeting rules and notices. Sometimes personnel matters may need to be handled the same day and that's not possible with a committee.

Administrators come in many different forms:

- The most popular is the municipal clerk who takes on the duties as administrator.
- There is also the administrator model that focuses on zoning/economic development.
- Additionally there is the administrator who has broad management capabilities and who knows how to handle a municipality.

As far as budgeting, that would be under the direction of the administrator but the administrator would work with the department heads and staff instead of a committee. Then, when the budget is ready to be presented, the committee would be involved.

Economic Impact – an administrator can find efficiencies in budgeting. A good administrator can turn a city around. Administrator can coordinate and time out planning of projects and vision and do grant writing to implement vision.

Best way to place an administrator is to hire from within. The other option is an open search where you advertise and interview candidates.

The open search will give you a range of candidates. Will likely get older administrators who are at the end of their career and then will also get “up and comers” who are perhaps deputy administrators from other places. Younger candidates usually use this opportunity as a “stepping stone” before they land where they actually want to be. City should look for someone who wants to settle here.

Aldersperson Culver – the type of candidate will depend on what the city’s strategy/plans are. Mr. Zach agreed and said the city should look at several factors, one of them being whether the city should have an administrator at all. He also said the city needs to figure out what they want out of an administrator and what their expectations are going to be in addition to the criteria they need for the administrator as far as experience/education.

Mayor Coppernoll asked about the impact of an administrator on the alderpersons. Mr. Zach said the Personnel/Insurance committee would become a different entity and they would have more of a reporting role instead of decision making. However, the council would still have to decide what role the administrator would have in terms of personnel and they have to set the boundaries the administrator would have to follow.

Attorney McGough said the city can craft how the relationship would work between the administrator and the council.

Mr. Zach stated a benefit of an administrator is to provide continuity after the election process when new alderpersons and mayors are elected to office instead of having new elected officials trying to learn what they can or cannot do.

Aldersperson Tepley asked if we needed to go with the 2005 job description or if they could start with a clean slate. Mr. Zach said the initial job description was good but could be updated to the current council’s needs.

ED Jason Glasbrenner said there were elements missing to make economic development go efficiently and consistency in leadership would be helpful.

Dan Guideshek (citizen) asked about residency requirements. Said as a citizen he is more concerned about day-to-day activities such as snow plowing, garbage pickup, zoning enforcement, etc. Feels we need to know where the city is going before hiring an administrator.

Attorney McGough pointed out the citizens vote for their alderpersons and those alderpersons speak on behalf of their constituents. Therefore if a citizen has reservations they can speak to their alderperson because it's those alderpersons who will be deciding to hire an administrator.

Alderman Culver expressed concern about the city's future and that we are not growing and are instead moving backwards. He also stated a part-time mayor cannot have the time to deal with important city matters and that's why the city is looking into this.

Dan Miller (citizen) said he was unclear as to what happened back in 2005 with the city administrator but he inquired about the mayor's part-time role and if it needed to be full-time.

Mayor Coppernoll stated "somebody needs to be here full-time".

Mr. Zach said a full-time mayor is an option but most municipalities are going to a full-time administrator instead. He said a primary duty of an administrator is their outreach to the community to connect with them on a day-to-day basis and communicate what is going on.

Mayor Coppernoll asked if there are communities with both a full-time mayor and a full-time administrator. Mr. Zach said the best way to get that information is to contact the League of WI Municipalities.

Mr. Zach will revise the 2005 job description and send it to the council to look at.

Alderman Cairns asked Alderman Culver why the 2005 administrator position didn't work out. Mr. Zach interjected and said he didn't feel that was a question to be discussed in open session because that would be discussing a specific individual. He also said his view was that the person that was hired didn't work out but the structure of the position was good.

Alderman Cairns asked who the administrator reports to. Mr. Zach said the position reports to the mayor and the council always has oversight over that position.

Mr. Zach also stated that the city could not require residency but could require 15 miles for administrator, or even 25. It is whatever the council wants.

Alderman Melony Walters said that since the position has been vacant for so long she feels the duties of the administrator were given to the Clerk's office to handle therefore the job descriptions of the city clerk and deputy will need to be looked at. Mr. Zach said he would have to look at those descriptions but he was not aware of any administrator duties that would have been added to those positions.

ADJOURN: Karin Tepley motioned to adjourn. Chelsey Walters seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously at 7:50 PM.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Aaron Joyce, City Clerk/Treasurer