

**Town of Hertford  
Special Call Session Minutes  
Tuesday, September 21, 2021  
6:00 PM  
ZOOM and Facebook**

The Town of Hertford's Town Council held a Special Call meeting on Tuesday, September 21, 2021.

Mayor Earnell Brown called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm.

**COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT**

Mayor Earnell Brown, Mayor Pro Tem Ashley Hodges, Councilman Frank Norman, Councilman Quentin Jackson, and Councilman Jerry Mimlitsch.

**STAFF PRESENT**

Town Manager Pamela Hurdle.

**QUORUM**

With five (5) members, a quorum was confirmed.

The invocation was offered by Councilman Mimlitsch. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Mayor Brown welcomed guest speaker, Mr. Hartwell Wright from the North Carolina League of Municipalities (NCLM). Mr. Wright will give the Governing Body insight and the process of selecting a new Town Manager and interim Town Manager.

**Mr. Wright**

Mr. Wright brings greetings from the League of Municipalities and shared the "State of the State" message. In NC, there are over 300 towns, cities, or villages that have some form of professional management. In addition to that, all 100 counties have a form of professional management. Mr. Wright stated as of today, there are 60 advertisements for Managers in local government in NC. As the Town starts the process, they compete with other municipalities and counties. It is very important that professionalism is shown throughout this process, and it will benefit the Town in the long run in attracting a candidate.

Mr. Wright went over the handouts with the Governing Board. The role of NCLM is to assist the Town with the process. NCLM does not get involved with the selection of any particular person or candidate for the position. The Town's responsibility is deciding who will conduct the process. A decision will have to be made if the elected officials, committee structure to conduct the hiring process or hire a consulting firm to assist with the hiring process. The Governing Board needs to make a decision early in the process about the confidentiality of the process regardless if the Town does the process or a firm.

Once the position is advertised, every resume, application, or contract; the applicant is protected under the privacy of the Personnel file. If at any time the elected body makes a candidate's name known, other than to the Governing Board or firm hired; it is imperative that the candidate is told prior to the announcement so that the candidate can decide to withdraw. Mr. Wright told the Board in the world of Managers (Manager Association of Managers) is a tight network.

There is a three-step process. First, start the recruitment (advertise as wide as you can). Secondly, assessing the candidates (for qualification, experience, etc.). Thirdly, make a job offer. There are a lot of mini steps between the three steps.

Mr. Wright asked if the Board has talked about if they will be doing the process themselves or hire a firm. Mayor Brown stated the Board has not had the conversation of doing the process themselves or hiring a consulting firm. Mayor Brown asked after receiving the information of the approach if NCLM will assist the Town. Mr. Wright replied he can assist in the process but not in selecting a candidate. Councilman Norman asked in the explanation, can it be explained both ways? Mr. Wright stated he could do this by what the firm will do versus what the Town will do. Mr. Wright told the Board what they will be doing is very important. The Town Manager runs the Town, works for the Board, manages all employees, and is the ambassador to the citizens. The Board will be making a decision that affects everyone. The Board will have many meetings and work sessions to make decisions through the process or hired firm can do most of the work. If the Town does the process, it will take about six months. The firm can do it in much less time. If either the Board or firm does the process, the Board will need a meeting to discuss the profile of the next Town Manager. Mr. Wright suggested that each member of the Board have thoughts of their own and come together collectively of what they want in the next manager. Anytime the Board has a discussion that names will be called, you need to do this in a closed session meeting. Next, the Board needs to take as long as you need. Mr. Wright suggested that if at the end of the process if you do not feel good about the candidates, start the process again.

When developing the profile, you will look at education, experience, and other as listed in the handout. A word of caution, avoid using the words "must require"; "preferred" is a better word to use. Once the profile is delivered, the next step is the advertising process. If you use a consultant, they will do the process. Mr. Wright suggested not to use the State advertising process, but to use the professional publication firms listed in the handout. It is very important to use the local newspaper and media. Councilman Norman asked if the Town should reach out to the outside of North Carolina? Mr. Wright replied yes.

Mr. Wright stated the salary for the Town is based on the size through the NCLM salary survey. This survey is done by population and not by geographic content. According to Hertford's population. the salary range will be \$85,000-\$100,000. Mr. Wright stated he can give a list of firms this is the base salary only.

Mayor Brown asked about the cost of moving the prospective Manager. Mr. Wright replied that the cost of moving can be negotiated during the hiring process. Mr. Wright

suggested if the Town agrees to pay moving expenses, research, and negotiate a competitive moving cost and pay the prospective Manager, not the moving company.

Councilman Norman asked about deferred income. Mr. Wright stated this is the extra items such as 401k, 457, vehicle, cell phone, etc.

In selecting a firm, Mr. Wright stated the Town will do the same as selecting the candidate. The Town can outline its expectation of the firm. Mayor Brown asked if the NCLM can assist with this? Mr. Wright replied he can give a list of firms including NC firms, which may be cheaper.

In the process, whether the Town or firm, you create a profile, create an ad, and create a designated location in the Town for receiving applications/resumes. If a firm is hired, the application/resumes will go to the firm. The Town will need to designate or appoint a trustworthy person to hold the application/resumes with confidentiality. The Board should receive the information at the same time and the same information. Mr. Wright wanted the Board to understand that the Manager works for the entire Board not an individual member of the Board. After the initial screening is done, an assessment is next. This is series of techniques such as projects or scenarios gives to find out the quality and knowledge base of the candidate.

Once a candidate is called to be interviewed, make the candidate aware of everything that will be involved in the interview process. The background check is next. Mayor Brown asked if the firm, in the final stage of elimination, helps with screening to determine the final candidate? Mr. Wright replied yes, they will do that. Once a candidate is identified for hiring, a thorough background check must be done, such as driving, criminal, everywhere the person has lived. It is important that an FBI check be done along with a state background check. The FBI and the State do not communicate with each other. In making an offer, an offer letter should be reviewed by the Town Attorney before the letter is sent. Once the letter of offer has been given to the candidate. they will probably want a contract or employment agreement. Mayor Brown asked if part of the narrative in the offer letter be in the contract? Mr. Wright stated yes but they are two different letters- Items in the offer letter may have additional items in the contract agreement such as vehicle, phone allowance, etc. Councilman Norman asked should the letter of offer be in writing. Mr. Wright stated yes. Reasoning, each Manager belongs to the Manager Association and has taken the ethic oath. Violation of this will be sanctioned and may be detrimental to their career.

Mr. Wright asked about the upcoming election, the makeup of the Board, and if the Mayor elected separately- Mayor Brown stated there is an election in November, there are four Board members, a Mayor Pro Tem and Mayor and there is an election every two years. Councilman Jackson stated the Mayor is elected separately. Mr. Wright stated that having a 3-2 vote, he strongly suggests waiting after the election to start the process but it's okay to advertise. The reasoning for this, candidates are reluctant to apply during an election because they will want to know who their bosses will be.

Councilman Jackson stated that since the last time the Town has gone through the process, the experienced employees have gone also. Mr. Wright asked for clarity. Councilman Jackson stated that four years ago, there was an abundance of experience with staff members and currently the Town does not have the experience, Council Jackson asked if it was a stringent process? Mr. Wright replied that a candidate will be reluctant to apply not knowing who their boss will be. If the Town will start the full pledge tomorrow, the Town will not have a manager by the time Mrs. Hurdle leaves. Mr. Wright stated the Town will hurt itself by setting an artificial deadline unless someone has been lined up to take the job.

Mayor Brown asked will NCLM provide a list of candidates. Mr. Wright replied no and explained the process. In Hertford, there is a Manager form of government. By statute, you have to have a manager. When Mrs. Hurdle leaves, you will have to identify a manager, in this case, an interim manager. The Interim Manager has all the authority as the Manager does even though they are there temporarily. Over the years, there have been managers that have retired and now serve as managers in an interim capacity. These same people are governed by how much money they can make because they retired from the local government retirement system. They are regulated by how many hours but in Hertford's case, the salary cap will matter. NCLM has developed a shortlist of interim managers and the vacancies are long. Many have reached their money capacity until the first of the year. NCLM has agreed with the retired managers that they will not reveal the list of names but will provide a person.

Mayor Brown asked the price range of a consultant. Mr. Wright stated he has no control of the cost, but an international firm will cost \$50,000 but for a local firm the range maybe \$20,000-\$30,000.

Councilman Mimplitsch thanked Mr. Wright for taking the time to explain the process and giving the information. The Town will need to start looking for an interim quickly but need to take their time looking for a manager and not rush. Councilman Mimplitsch thanked Mr. Wright for his time.

Mayor Pro Tem Hodges echoed Councilman Mimplitsch's thanks to Mr. Wright. Mayor Pro Tem Hodges stated with the time pinch, the timeline being mid-November when Manager Hurdle goes on leave, this being around the holidays; any candidate will need the timeline and plan. Mayor Pro Tem asked Mr. Wright if he agreed with this? Mr. Wright replied, yes. Prolonging the recruitment will benefit as well because during the holidays is not productive. Typically, an interim does not have to work a full week

onsite if your department heads are in place. They can work remotely and be accessible to the Board and department head via phone. This will help during the holiday.

Mayor Brown stated, the candidate that will be recommended. Mr. Wright has done the salary and hours and it is a matter of the Board interviewing the candidate. Mr. Wright agreed. Mayor Brown asked given the timeline, how soon would he identify the individual to the Board also, for transition time for the Board and the individual. Mr. Wright replied, he does not have the precise time but should be in place the first week of November so the candidate can work with Mrs. Hurdle. Mr. Wright stated it is helpful for the Board to agree for him to seek an interim.

Mr. Wright thanked the board for the opportunity and hopes the remarks given have been helpful. In his opinion, it will be wise for the Board to go into another session to discuss the thoughts and issues of each board member before you ask him or anyone to assist the Town. It is important that a consensus is obvious because if an interim knows the Board did not reach a consensus, they may be reluctant to come. Councilman Jackson wanted to clear the close session need, the finances, and possibly an in-house candidate. Mayor Brown told Mr. Wright that they appreciate his guidance and the time he put into the effort

Mayor Brown asked for a motion to adjourn. A motion was made by Councilman Mimplitsch and seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Hodges to adjourn the meeting.

The vote:

Mayor Brown	yay
Mayor Pro Tem Hodges	yay
Councilman Jackson	yay
Councilman Norman	yay
Councilman Mimplitsch	yay

5-0.

Motion passed to adjourn the meeting. 7:28 pm