

**Evanston City Council
Closed Session Minutes
Aldermanic Library
Monday, March 1, 2004**

PRESENT: Aldermen Moran, Tisdahl, Rainey, Newman, Jean-Baptiste, Bernstein

NOT PRESENT AT
ROLL CALL: Alderman Feldman and Wynne

ABSENT: Alderman Kent

PRESIDING: Mayor Lorraine H. Morton

START: 6:12 p.m.

Alderman Jean-Baptiste moved that the City Council convene into Closed Session to discuss personnel matters pursuant to 5 Illinois Compiled Statutes 120/2 C (1). Seconded by Alderman Bernstein.

Roll Call. Voting aye – Moran, Tisdahl, Rainey, Newman, Jean-Baptiste, Bernstein. Voting nay – none.
Motion carried. (6-0).

Personnel

City Clerk Mary Morris reported receipt of an advance resume from Craig Malin, City Administrator, Davenport, Iowa and asked what they wished done with it. Alderman Rainey suggested the resume be sent to the recruiting firm.

Mayor Morton stated that the search is being done by the City Council; recalled that Alderman Kent suggested they look internally for candidates and save the fee. They needed to decide whether to look internally only and/or externally. Alderman Moran suggested they hire a search firm which does not exclude looking at internal candidates but expands the universe of the candidate pool. All put a value on promoting from within. They also have an obligation to try and formulate procedurally and strategically what they hope to achieve in hiring a new city manager. In his limited experience these consultants are good and as good as the process. He was sure, if they hire a consultant, that person could be given the understanding that the search does not exclude internal candidates as part of the overall process. Aldermen Rainey, Bernstein, Tisdahl and Jean-Baptiste agreed. Alderman Newman had no problem with that but thought they needed to know in advance what the process would be in screening the final candidates. The last time there was no process and they relied on the written material. If there is an out of town candidate he suggested people could volunteer to visit that community. Mayor Morton pointed out that is what the search firm does. (Alderman Wynne was present at this time.) Alderman Newman said the search firm finds somebody and you never see them again and recalled last time, they had people who were looking for jobs.

Alderman Rainey said those are the things they would put in place once they hire a firm. They have to work through a process they (Council) want. Alderman Newman stated they have to give them a process. The search firm knows all the ways and work through it with them. She thought if they have two or three prime candidates, she suggested some Council members should in some way connect with those communities. They just don't know them from meeting with them here. Alderman Rainey asked who placed Mr. Crum. The Mercer Group. She noted that almost every firm had found people that were hired here. Alderman Rainey wanted to know the firm hired by Mr. Crum that was doing the Fire Chief search. Mayor Morton said the Oldani Group did a recent search for the top job at the Workforce Board; were thorough and very

good. She asked if any had any connection with the other firms. Alderman Rainey recalled working with the Par Group once.

Alderman Moran said the Par Group does a lot of this work; is a respected firm and know this area well. They are based in Lake Bluff. He knows people that have worked with them or are semi-affiliated with them, respected those people and thought they are capable. He recalled that he and Heidi Voorhees served on the SWANCC Board for four years; noted she was profiled in the material and is a vice president of the Par Group. She is a former Wilmette Village manager. He said she was a good attendee, devoted to duty, smart and knows the area well. He said the city managers in the area all talk with each other. She knows Evanston fairly well from conversations with her over the years and is an interesting component to their presentation. The Par Group jumped out at him.

Alderman Rainey suggested they dismiss the Hollis Group; liked the approach of Bennett Yarger but noted said they did not use the words "City Council." She moved that they reject both firms. She liked Oldani who had a broad spectrum of places they have worked. The one thing that worries her about these firms is that they recycle the same resumes. If Oldani is doing it she thought they would have a larger file cabinet. They have done a lot in the Midwest. If there were internal applicants, that would be a good cross section. She had no problem with the Par Group. MGT did not have a lot of business in the Midwest. She was concerned about hiring a firm with Heidi Voorhees. City managers talk to each other. She likes her but was concerned about objectivity just because she was a good city manager. Alderman Newman asked how you can be sure she was a good city manager. Alderman Rainey said she was good because she watched her. Alderman Moran thought it was three or four years ago that Voorhees went off the SWANCC board. Alderman Moran understood what Alderman Rainey was saying but it was not necessarily a detriment. Somebody who knows the field can be a good contributor.

Alderman Wynne said that the Par Group and Oldani both say they were in on city manager hires for Evanston and wondered how recent the hiring was. She asked if they were making a decision that night on who to choose; asked would it be worth it to phone to see how recently people were hired. She suggested they look at the last three city manager searches of communities of similar size (50,000 population or more). Divide up the list among Council members who would call a member of their Council. Alderman Newman did not think it mattered who they pick, unless they know who they are. If they are just going to be a funnel for resumes, they have to know how much experience they have had with this kind of search and the time they can commit to a search for Evanston. They need to be able to find a superior candidate who may not be looking to change jobs. Alderman Newman thought the Mercer Group just provided a funnel the last time. Unless they ask questions about how many searches they are working on and who would work on it – he thought they needed to interview the search firm. Alderman Rainey noted that several told them what they are working on now. Alderman Newman thought they would get more if they interviewed the firm. Alderman Jean-Baptiste asked how the last search was done. Alderman Newman said the last time they did not interview the search firm and in his opinion got a mediocre group of candidates. Alderman Wynne said Mercer had supplied city manager candidates for smaller places since 2000. The hiring for larger municipalities occurred before 2000. Alderman Moran did not remember how they hired the Mercer Group but did not think their process was very rigorous. Alderman Newman thought they might want to pay more to get more effort. Alderman Moran agreed with Newman that they don't want to just funnel resumes in but they need to be talent scouts, good evaluators of candidates or who could be persuaded to come to Evanston, good harvesters of city manager candidates.

Mayor Morton noted that Oldani supplied a city manager and public works director for Evanston but did not know the year. Alderman Wynne said that Mercer gave dates. Alderman Newman said there have been only two public works directors, Dave Barber and Vanessa Burns. Mayor Morton said the list is so large it spans a long time. Alderman Wynne suggested they narrow it down and ask them for the last three city managers that were hired. Alderman Newman suggested they be interviewed and did not think the City would have to pay. Alderman Wynne suggested they should not have pay to fly firms in. Alderman Rainey noted that they all fly through Chicago.

Alderman Newman suggested they eliminate the Mercer Group because it was so mediocre. It was not about whether they got a good product; it was about how the product was represented to Council and

whether that was accurate. He did not think it was a great group. Council probably paid the lowest salary around which was a big mistake. In Mr. Crum's case he had to move and was having problems which he was not saying were his fault. They changed the form of government. Alderman Newman said they had things described to them about what was going on. Alderman Moran said the Mercer Group is well known for city manager searches and thought that Jim Mercer conducted the search. (At this time Alderman Feldman was present.) Alderman Newman thought they should spend 30 minutes with two or three. Alderman Wynn thought an hour was needed for an interview. Alderman Jean-Baptiste asked why not talk to each one. Alderman Newman thought the conversation with Mercer would be about doing things differently. Mayor Morton said it is not easy to get people to expose themselves for another job. Alderman Rainey thought the key to a successful process was the preliminary process and to lay a good foundation there. All that follows depends on that. Alderman Newman said another factor is who is out there at any given time. He thought it was a question of the search firm being able to identify candidates. Alderman Rainey said each of these firms has dealt with thousands of candidates.

Alderman Jean-Baptiste suggested they follow Alderman Wynne's process and find out the last three city manager search firms found that were hired. Mayor Morton said when the Workforce Board was hiring they had different search firms come in and talk to them so that people could raise questions. That was why the Oldani group was selected. Their specific questions were answered satisfactorily and Oldani committed to the timelines. They brought in some good people which is the advantage of having a search firm. She noted sometimes search firms don't send out their top people. Whoever they send should be able to make decisions. Mayor Morton suggested eliminating the Hollins group and asked how many firms they wanted to contact. Alderman Wynne suggested all be asked and find out the last three city manager's hired and that Council speak to Council members in those municipalities. Alderman Wynne thought they should get the answers within a week. Alderman Rainey said they need to get the Council members/mayor's names to contact. Alderman Feldman asked if anybody knows who the top city manager are in the country. Alderman Rainey noted that Eric Anderson has received a top award from ICMC. Alderman Wynne did not know how to quantify a top city manager. Alderman Moran said they would be interested in cities of roughly similar size to Evanston but would not want to be too restrictive. Alderman Feldman asked what about a company that had a record of placing six or seven excellent people and the last three or four placements were mediocre. Alderman Wynne thought the firms read similarly. Her point was not who was hired, but did the Council think that the search firm had done a good job because ultimately it is up to the Council. Alderman Jean-Baptiste said they may want to know how the City is doing. Mayor Morton said they cannot go by who was hired, and usually a search firm submits a number of names, then it is left to the Council to hire.

Alderman Newman was looking at the Mercer Group who say what they said the last time; use their data base, network and advertise. He was trying to get at a more intensive recruitment process and did not think the process worked for them. Alderman Jean-Baptiste asked what he was saying about the candidate they hired. Alderman Newman said one of the things they were looking for last time was a "hands-on" executive and did not think the Mercer Group could answer that question. Alderman Feldman said somebody can walk in, say they want to have space, access to staff and is a "hands on" person who can work with aldermen. Alderman Wynne asked if they called Spokane to find out about that. Alderman Newman said if the Berlin wall fell while a candidate was in office they took credit for it. The materials they got were weak and some on Council raised the question about going beyond the written materials. Alderman Rainey said re-hashing this was getting them nowhere. She moved they contact each firm except Hollins; find the last three city managers the firms placed and in what community and who the legislative contacts (names of Mayor/Aldermen) are. Seconded by Alderman Wynne. Mayor Morton would get a letter out the next day and asked when they want this information back.

Alderman Newman wanted to add to that they ask them to describe in detail how they find qualified candidates. Mayor Morton stated that was in the packet. Alderman Newman said if they relied only on what the Mercer Group said, they would have to eliminate them. Mayor Morton stated the search firm comes to the Council with a proposal and a process is set up with them as to what they want. She said with a top firm they can do that. Alderman Newman said unless they conduct searches that go beyond advertising, they won't get that effort. They will do what they always do. Alderman Rainey said the reason they are doing this is so they can eliminate firms where they don't get a good report from the elected officials. That could

happen. They could find that three of them had a bad relationship with the Council. Mayor Morton said they could eliminate a firm if they don't tell you what they will do. Mayor Morton asked the date they want a reply. Monday, March 8. Alderman Jean-Baptiste asked if they would consider internal candidates through the eyes of the search firm. Alderman Moran said if they hire a search firm they want to make it clear to them that they do not want to exclude internal candidates and that they are welcomed. Internal applicants would have to submit their resumes. Mayor Morton stated the last time a local candidate was recommended. Alderman Feldman noted that Bennett Yarger works to persuade top people. Mayor Morton reminded them that there is a down side to firms because some firms have pets. Alderman Rainey read from Page two, Mercer Group objectives "to encourage top people to apply who otherwise would be reluctant to respond to an advertisement." There were no objections to the motion.

There being no further business, at 7:04 p.m., Mayor Morton adjourned the meeting.

Mary P. Morris,
City Clerk