



MINUTES
Committee on Personnel
Tuesday, September 29, 2020 @ 2:30 p.m.
Via audio/video conference

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 2:31 p.m.

ROLL CALL-Via audio/video conferencing

Council Member Adam Hussain, Chairperson

Council Member Peter Spadafore, Vice Chairperson- arrived at 2:35 p.m.

Council Member Carol Wood, Member

Council Member Jeremy Garza, Member

OTHERS PRESENT- Via audio/video conferencing

Sherrie Boak, Council Staff

Ashley Banks, Hiring Specialist

Lisa Hagen, Assistant City Attorney

Christine Bacon

Courtney Nicholls

Minutes

MOTION BY COUNCIL MEMBER SPADAFORE TO APPROVE THE JULY 7, 2020 MINUTES AS PRESENTED. ROLL CALL VOTE, MOTION CARRIED 4-0.

Discussion

Council Internal Auditor Interview – Christine Bacon

Council Member Hussain briefly outlined the interview process to Ms. Bacon, introduced the Committee Members and staff, and Ms. Bacon introduced herself providing her past and current work experience. The Committee then took turns asking the interview questions.

Council Member Hussain - Tell us about some of your experiences conducting audits within governmental agencies. Ms. Bacon confirmed her limited experience. Council Member Spadafore asked how her experience would fit the role of government auditing. Ms. Bacon outlined her experience with auditing functions and interest in expanding and improving for with municipal finance.

Council Member Spadafore - Please describe how your responsibilities have changed during your career in auditing, and the scope of your current responsibilities in this field. Ms. Bacon provided 6-7 roles in the finance function.

Council Member Garza - Tell us about one or two audits you have coordinated or in which you played a consulting role that resulted in cost savings, streamlined and improved processes and procedures, or policy changes. Ms. Bacon spoke briefly on audits with Texas Railroad Commission and an evaluation to obtain a refund of funds and an opportunity for new procedures.

Council Member Wood - What are some steps you have put in place in your current or previous positions to prevent fraud. Ms. Bacon provided an example of steps her current role took on to create policies for their employees on assets.

Council Member Hussain - Please describe one or two examples where you have used quantitative techniques to analyze samples or populations of data, what kinds of software tools you employed, and how results convinced management to take corrective action. Ms. Bacon outlined processes she uses in pivot tables to look at change and allowed to create a deliverables.

Council Member Spadafore - In your current or most recent auditing work, which Enterprise Resource Planning systems have you used. Ms. Bacon gave an example during her time at DOW where her role in creating an interface on data bases.

Council Member Garza - Please describe how frequently you use ERP systems, and for what purposes. Ms. Bacon acknowledged those programs she has used on a daily basis.

Council Member Wood - Tell us about the audiences receiving your auditing reports in your current position, and discuss your experience in reporting to boards and/or city councils. Ms. Bacon outlined her familiarity with board meetings, closed meetings, presentations with Executive Directors, CEO's and large audiences.

Council Member Hussain - Tell us about your participation in professional associations geared toward the auditing profession. Ms. Bacon acknowledged her roles with the education level for those associations.

Council Member Spadafore - What steps do you take to keep your job knowledge current with ongoing changes in the industry. Ms. Bacon stated there are formal education credits annually, finance sessions, when in financial statutory role had continual education.

Council Member Garza - Discuss approaches that you have used to work harmoniously with people at all levels of an organization while also maintaining independence and objectivity. Ms. Bacon provided examples on her work with other employees and the practices she has used in other jobs.

Council Member Wood - Tell us about a time when you faced challenges in interpersonal communication, conflict, and/or resistance from uncooperative individuals when you were performing auditing and reporting duties, and how you handled that situation. Ms. Bacon's example provided her past experience and where she was able to communicate with them the importance of each of their roles, and explaining financial deadlines to co-workers during her required audits. Council Member Wood asked if she has done any research on this position and how it interacts with the Administration. Council Member Wood explained this role is an employee of City Council, and her work with other departments. Council Member Spadafore

explained her role and staffing. Ms. Bacon asked about setting of the schedule. Council Member Spadafore explained the process of requests from Council Members and the potential for an audit Committee. Council Member Wood explained the role with all 8 Council Members and Committees. Mr. Smiertka spoke briefly on the Charter definition on the Internal Auditor.

Council Member Garza - Tell me about a challenge or conflict you faced at work, and how you dealt with it. Ms. Bacon provided an example.

Council Member Garza - How do you deal with pressure or stressful situations, and Ms. Bacon provided an example.

Council Member Garza - Where do you see yourself in 5 years; Ms. Bacon confirmed she is looking forward to moving back to Michigan.

Council Member Garza - What are your greatest strengths/weakness, and she stated her strength as curiosity and her weakness is that she feels she tends to ask questions and can't be comfortable until she understands everything that is going on.

Council Member Hussain acknowledged her interest and outlook in this position, and asked if there was anything she would like to ask. Ms. Bacon asked the Committee if they had goals or where they saw the City in the future. Council Member Spadafore spoke briefly on the ability the Council has to get things done, and address issues with the ability to spend funds. Their goals are always to make sure funds are spent where things are needed for the residents. The challenges is looking at the funds and look at where things should be better. Ms. Bacon asked if there is a steady or decrease in tax revenue and confirmed she has experience in forecasting. Mr. Spadafore provided examples. Council Member Wood answered the question by stating she believes it is important to Council now, whether ordinances or budgets, is to have the analysis is done when making the decision so the Council has this information. Mr. Smiertka asked her experience in FOIA and confidential information. Ms. Bacon was able to answer the question.

Council Member Hussain stated once the Committee makes a decision they will get back with her.

Ms. Bacon left the meeting and Ms. Nicholls entered the meeting.

Council Internal Auditor Interview – Courtney Nicholls

Council Member Hussain briefly outlined the interview process to Ms. Nicholls, introduced the Committee and staff, and asked Ms. Nicholls to provide a brief introduction. Ms. Nicholls spoke briefly about her past work experience in governmental offices including Deputy Clerk, and her current position as the City of Dexter Manager. During this time she stated she found the interest in accounting aspect, getting her CPA and looked forward to making the transition into the municipal financial role. The Committee took turn asking the interview questions.

Council Member Hussain - Tell us about some of your experiences conducting audits within governmental agencies. Ms. Nicolls acknowledged her minimal experience in the auditing aspect, but referenced her 12 years has experience with municipal financials, budget and coding.

Council Member Spadafore - Please describe how your responsibilities have changed during your career in auditing, and the scope of your current responsibilities in this field. Ms. Nicolls gave examples of past experiences of leadership roles. Ms. Nicolls outlined a process she was involved in with the creation of better practices, and cost savings.

Council Member Garza - Tell us about one or two audits you have coordinated or in which you played a consulting role that resulted in cost savings, streamlined and improved processes and procedures, or policy changes. Ms. Nicolls stated she was able to investigate and audit utilities along with taxes as they are applied.

Council Member Wood - What are some steps you have put in place in your current or previous positions to prevent fraud. Ms. Nicolls was able to provide examples of changes that have helped to uncover things in her current job where things might have been missed. Ms. Nicolls supported the idea of transparency.

Council Member Hussain - Please describe one or two examples where you have used quantitative techniques to analyze samples or populations of data, what kinds of software tools you employed, and how results convinced management to take corrective action. Ms. Nicholls spoke briefly on her minimal experience in her current employment role.

Council Member Spadafore - In your current or most recent auditing work, which Enterprise Resource Planning systems are you using, and Ms. Nicholls noted her experience from educational classes.

Council Member Garza - Please describe how frequently you use ERP systems, and for what purposes. Ms. Nicholls acknowledged in her current employment she does not utilize the ERP systems.

Council Member Wood - Tell us about the audiences receiving your auditing reports in your current position, and discuss your experience in reporting to boards and/or city councils. Ms. Nicholls acknowledged in her current role as Dexter Manager and working with that Council regularly.

Council Member Hussain - Tell us about your participation in professional associations geared toward the auditing profession. Ms. Nicholls informed the Committee she has joined the Government Finance Association, and attending MICA trainings as they occur, taken classes in fraud and classes with MICPA.

Council Member Spadafore - What steps do you take to keep your job knowledge current with ongoing changes in the industry. Ms. Nicholls listed the trainings, government notifications, and publications she utilizes to keep current.

Council Member Garza - Discuss approaches that you have used to work harmoniously with people at all levels of an organization while also maintaining independence and objectivity. Ms. Nicholls outlined the steps taken in employee relations.

Council Member Wood - Tell us about a time when you faced challenges in interpersonal communication, conflict, and/or resistance from uncooperative individuals when you were performing auditing and reporting duties, and how you handled that situation. Ms. Nicholls stated she has worked well with fellow employees on how they want to be treated, and communication methods.

Council Member Garza - Tell me about a challenge or conflict you faced at work, and how you dealt with it. Ms. Nicholls explained challenges with residents and conflict resolutions.

Council Member Garza - How do you deal with pressure or stressful situations, and Ms. Nicholls stated in her opinion the best way is to be prepared for the situations.

Council Member Garza - Where do you see yourself in 5 years. Ms. Nicholls stated she saw herself in the government financial world, and she would be able to commute if necessary until she could move closer to Lansing.

Council Member Garza - What are your greatest strengths/weaknesses, at which Ms. Nicholls noted her attention to detail and a weakness could be taking things to heart.

Mr. Smiertka asked her about her experience with the media and requirements of FOIA and open meetings act. Ms. Nicholls confirmed she has worked with FOIA, open meetings act. Mr. Smiertka asked about her accounting standards that she is familiar with, and she responded GASB. She also pointed out that she does have resources in the industry she is willing to connect with.

Council Member Hussain noted to Ms. Nicholls they will hold discussions and let her know the results.

Ms. Nicholls referenced the Charter role of this position, and asked how this position is accepted in the City. Council Member Hussain confirmed it is a Charter position, reports to Council, reviews the business of the City, and works on projects directly from Council Members. Council Member Spadafore noted the administration is making progress on working with the auditor. By nature of the position there always appears to be conflict, but does not need to be confrontational. Council Member Wood added that when asking for information from departments, when Council needs information sooner than later, some departments might not be on the same timeline. That could require this position to put pressure on the need to get information. Ms. Nicholls asked if there was a finance committee. Council Member Spadafore there could be a discussion on that.

Ms. Nicholls left the meeting.

The Committee held brief discussions on the two interviews. Council Member Wood asked if all testing was done and passed, and Ms. Banks confirmed. Council Member Hussain asked if there were people who tested and did not pass. Ms. Banks informed the Committee that there were 6 candidates who could have tested, 2 withdrew, 1 was a no-show and 1 failed the test. Council Member Wood then provided her opinion on the interviews, listed pros and cons with each and admitted she might have follow up questions. Council Member Spadafore provided his opinion on the interviews and listed the points that stood out to him on both. Council Member Garza provided his opinion on the interviews and their auditing experience. Council Member Hussain outlined the process of the posting, and that the Council leadership had reached out to other applicants that applied for the BWL audit position, the numbers of people who viewed the posting, and noted the interest of working with the position.

Council Member Hussain asked the Committee to forward any additional questions for the applicants, but at this time the two questions to be sent to the applicants by HR would be:
When are your salary expectations?
When would you be able to start if offered the job?

The Committee discussed setting of a meeting the week of October 5, 2020.

Ms. Banks confirmed she can begin the work on the background check, which could take 1 day to 2 weeks. Once the back ground check is complete they will schedule the pre-employment physical.

ADJOURN

The meeting was adjourned 3:45 p.m.

Submitted by, Sherrie Boak, Recording Secretary
Lansing City Council

Approved by the Committee on December 18, 2020