

MILFORD CITY COUNCIL
MINUTES OF MEETING
July 23, 2015

A Special Meeting of Milford City Council was held in the Joseph Ronnie Rogers Council Chambers at Milford City Hall, 201 South Walnut Street, Milford, Delaware on Thursday, July 23, 2015.

PRESIDING: Mayor Bryan W. Shupe

IN ATTENDANCE: Councilpersons Christopher Mergner, James Burk, Douglas Morrow, Sr.,
James Starling, Sr. and Katrina Wilson

City Clerk/Recorder Terri Hudson

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Shupe called the Special Council Meeting to order at 7:08 p.m.

City Manager Search Process/Novak Consulting Group

The mayor introduced Catherine Tuck Parrish, Executive Search Practice Leader for the Novak Consulting Group, who will be handling the recruitment search for the city. Ms. Parrish has already been in touch with the member of council via a recent telephone conversation.

She thanked council for taking time to talk with her over the phone explaining how it really helps to orient herself to Milford and what is important to each council member individually.

Ms. Parrish said there are three major documents she will be putting together. The first is a recruitment plan which includes the format and timeline.

She will also be creating a recruitment brochure and referenced a sample she had brought.

Ms. Parrish said she met with city staff this afternoon and will be speaking with Interim Manager Jeff Portmann tomorrow. She will then put the text together along with the first year goals.

She explained that they primarily use the brochure on line where it can be easily accessed. They print a small amount for the municipality if needed by a candidate. However, not many are printed because the majority of candidates review the position and apply on line. She only wanted to show council a sample so they could have a sense of what she is referring to when she discusses the recruitment brochure.

She also wanted council to know that the advertising and background checks are direct costs and over and above the contract cost.

Ms. Parrish is recommending a national posting be submitted to the International City/County Management Association (ICMA) which is the go-to place for people to look for city manager positions regardless of whether or not you are a member.

They will also publish the ad in the National Forum for Black Public Administrators which she has found to be a very good source for a lot of top management positions. Some of their members also belong to ICMA but because of the different forms of government, many applicants may be at the department head level or assistant levels though very well qualified for a city manager. This ensures we reach all those qualified persons who are not necessarily city managers.

Govtjobs.com is a website where interested persons can search and apply for state and local government jobs for cities, counties, and other governmental jurisdictions.

She emphasized that these three sites are the main sites with a very broad national following.

Ms. Parrish hopes that city officials can help get this out to as many organizations throughout the state as possible, including the Delaware League of Local Government.

She will also provide the information to the Maryland Municipal League. She does not believe they will charge and if they do, it is a very small amount. It will also post through the Virginia Municipal League at a cost of approximately \$25 cost which is well worth the money because it reaches many people.

When asked if there are any other states that should be included, Pennsylvania (\$125 cost) and New Jersey were recommended. Ms. Parrish feels that is important because many municipal officials may not be a member of ICMA though they are typically a member of the state association/league.

Mr. Mergner noted that there are always people from New Jersey considering relocation to Delaware so we may find a good fit in that state.

Ms. Parrish said they will also post the opening on the Novak website. When the brochure is ready, they will send a link to the city clerk to be added to the City of Milford website. Any applicant would then be immediately linked to the Novak website where they can apply.

In addition, Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter and other social media will also be used to generate traffic.

Ms. Parrish then referred to a proposed timeline though she emphasized it is only tentative. She noted the schedule begins on July 23rd with tonight's meeting with council and key staff today. By July 28th, she will have a revised recruitment plan based on the feedback tonight. She will provide a draft on that date. In addition, a list of first year goals will be included. That will not be published anywhere though she feels it is a very important document that helps ensure the city manager starts on agreed-upon goals. That needs a consensus before the interview process, though it does not have to be finalized next week. However, it will help her make the applicants aware of the key issues/projects in the city. It also helps when she reviews resumes to ensure they have experience in those areas.

She recommends that Mayor Shupe be the designated person to take the input from council though he may prefer the city clerk receive those comments. It is helpful to have one person handling those comments and suggestions though she wants council to see the documents in order to provide input.

Ms. Parrish is trying to move the process as quickly as possible because the position needs to be open approximately four to five weeks and she does not want to push it back too far.

Once that is finalized, they will marry the text with the pictures. The brochure will be then posted and the ads submitted for publication by August 7th.

The recommendation is to have a pseudo deadline. All the applications that would be come in by the proposed date of September 17th would be reviewed. Anyone applying by that time frame will most likely get the best consideration. However, there is always someone who just found out about the opening, etc. so she would like for council to agree to the flexibility that if someone who is a real super star comes through after that date, they would receive the same consideration.

However, once we get to the interview stage, any additional applications would no longer be considered. That is why Ms. Parrish will call this 'open until filled'. The first review date would be published which is a fairly common way of handling the process for city managers. The review date would be something we would need to pinpoint, though if something would prevent them from submitting by that date and it comes in a day or so later, it could still be reviewed. In that manner, everyone is treated the same.

Mr. Mergner confirmed that Ms. Parrish is the first screener of the applicants. She explained that she will review every

application along with a colleague.

Mr. Mergner asked how Ms. Parrish whittles down the applicants and what that is based on. She said the brochure would have a list of requirements and preferred qualifications.

She will recommend the city require a bachelor degree of some sort and a master degree would be preferred (not required). Also, experience between seven and ten years in local government of which five would be at a supervisory or management level. After that required cut, she would consider the preferred qualifications. In speaking with council, utility experience, grant experience, ICMA certified and several other qualifications could be added as a preferred qualification.

The first review would be the required qualifications, then the preferred qualifications which are still being considered based on council conversations.

Mr. Mergner said he does not want our qualifications to be so heavy that someone with slightly less qualifications, who may be stronger in other fields, would not apply. He is a little nervous about the screening process to ensure we do not cut ourselves short.

Ms. Parrish agreed adding that if council can decide to make the qualifications looser. However, she would not suggest removing the bachelors' degree as a requirement because most people today have a master's degree. Twenty to thirty years ago that may not have been a priority but today it is a minimum credential.

Council may also want five to ten years of local government experience which could provide some additional flexibility.

Mr. Mergner agrees the degree and experience is important.

Ms. Wilson understands; however, a lot of applicants are heavier on the experienced side and could make up for the degree. For example, if a person has worked in local government and has overseen a municipality with an electric and water/sewer utilities, but does not have a bachelor's degree, she feels they should be considered.

Ms. Parrish told council that if they want her to make it 100% flexible she can. However, certain people will rise to the top. They won't be disqualified because they don't meet the qualifications if the basic requirements are changed.

Mr. Mergner expects a lot of applicants will submit regardless of whether or not they are qualified or not.

Ms. Parrish explained that we will receive a large group of people that qualify, but there will be some that come to the top because they have experience in all these other areas. It could also be because they come from a community that is similar to Milford though there is no formula for that.

Mr. Burk expressed concern that the majority of municipalities in several states including Maryland and New York, for example, have regional electrical. He feels that requirement could disqualify a lot of applicants because they are coming from towns without an electric department.

Ms. Parrish agrees that electric experience should not be a requirement. However, many council members felt that was very important and found it to be an advantage to the city. She feels that overall utility experience will raise applicants to the top. Mr. Burk said that water and sewer utilities are more common than electric and should be a priority.

She said that the next city manager does not necessarily have to know exactly how it is generated, but they need to have the ability to ask questions and learn that utility as they gain experience. She agrees that would be a preferred qualification and not a requirement.

Mayor Shupe talked to her about the search committee consisting of the Mayor, Vice Mayor, Interim City Manager/Finance Director and the Electric Superintendent. They will handle the reviews and first round of interviews.

She will have a session with the committee and anticipates a date around October 6th.

They will review the list of applicants and receive materials for that top group. Ms. Parrish will have a preliminary interview with the top group after which she will provide some additional information to the committee not included in the resumes.

The committee will then select the applicants they want to interview. Ms. Parrish will provide some pros and cons of each candidate. If asked which are the top five in her opinion, she will give them that information based on what council expressed they wanted. However, the ultimate decision will be made by the mayor and city council.

She also feels it is important that in that group, the applicants are not all in the same stage of their career or have the exact same background. She pointed out that city managers can be very successful from a wide variety and her intent is to provide some options.

Ms. Parrish confirmed that her preliminary interviews will be handled over the telephone. The first face-to-face interview will be with the search committee. She added that it is very expensive to have face-to-face interviews not knowing where the applicants are coming from. Handling in this manner keeps the city costs down. She is able to do skype or do something similar though she tries to keep it fair and even with each applicant.

She explained that the number of applicants in the first round of interviews will meet with the search committee and have a panel interview process. That committee will select two or three, or the number they feel is appropriate, to bring before city council.

Ms. Parrish will be doing reference and background checks on the finalists going before council. That process will take between ten days and two weeks.

She also recommends that we include a writing exercise and ask each candidate to provide a work product/sample. The questions council will have them answer will be job-related and help the applicants prepare for the interview. It also gives an example of the topics that are of importance to council in addition to a sample of their work.

The second round of interviews would include a tour of the community. This will be a different type of interaction with one person or maybe two people on the tour.

Ms. Parrish also recommends some sort of informal interaction with key department heads and not an interview panel. She pointed out it is helpful to the candidate to have a chance to meet some of the people they will be working with each day. That can be done during the tour, if there is time, or it works well to have an informal gathering with refreshments where candidates can ask questions of things they would not ask council. It also provides a sense of the work and the city's operations.

The main step will be the interviews with city council which will also occur in executive session. Ms. Parrish verified that the entire selection process would take place in executive session. Her job is to bring council the best candidates as possible. To do that, confidentiality is of the utmost importance. She emphasized that the best candidates are currently happily employed. They will ask Ms. Parrish if their name will be kept confidential. If she says yes, they are more likely to apply; if she says no, the candidate will be weighing a great job versus uncertainty.

She emphasized the confidentiality of the employment process is very important to get the city the best candidates.

Ms. Parris also recommends the city reimburse travel expenses for the candidates for both the first and second round. It will need to be decided if a form should be submitted or if there is a flat per diem rate. For example, if the cost is typically \$400 to fly here and if the cost is more than that, her rule of thumb is to ask why the additional costs.

The perimeters the city agrees to and perhaps a set amount should be established. However, it is a very common expectation when hiring a city manager.

Ms. Parrish said she will be working with the Interim City Manager who will check with the solicitor to ensure we comply with the FOIA laws. She would not want to go afoul of the State Law and would want to prevent any issues for the city.

She added that city staff has already been contacted by potential applicants who have forwarded that information to her. From this point on, they need to be directed to the Novak website which is the place where they can apply. They can call her but she will refer them back to the website to apply for the position.

Once the brochure is published, there will a short form that needs to be completed and not a situation where they need to cut and paste their entire resume. They will then be able to submit their resume and cover letter via e-mail.

Ms. Parrish asked council for questions.

Mr. Morrow stated that from the timeline provided, if an offer is made, it sounds as though it may be Thanksgiving before the candidate actually starts.

Ms. Parrish pointed out that city managers hired in a city the size of Milford will want an employment agreement that should include severance pay. She does not want that to be a surprise to council. There has been some turnover in that position already in addition to the city having elections every year. As a result, the candidate may want more than that the national average for severance which is six to nine months.

Ms. Parrish does not need to know that now but wants council to understand that is a normal part of this process. In addition, some current managers will have thirty or sixty-day notice provision they need to give their elected body.

Ms. Parrish said that thirty days is standard, but she has seen sixty and in some instances ninety days.

She believes that thirty days from the date the new contract is agreed upon would probably be the soonest the person could start. She said that can also depend on their circumstances and if a relocation is needed.

Mr. Mergner asked if there is anything council needs to prepare before they are asked questions from the candidates. He asked if a list of benefits needs to be prepared or if Novak is handling that.

Ms. Parrish advised that she has already received a list of the benefits from the city's highly competent staff that was right on the spot with everything she has asked for. She will send the candidates that list in advance of anyone coming in for an interview.

She feels that council does not need to negotiate things in advance though she wants to give them a heads up without having this broadcast to everyone who ends up applying. She reported it is not unusual for candidates to ask for things that are outside of the regular benefits. Typically, city managers are provided with a vehicle, a cell phone, allowance or a banked amount of leave. They may be leaving a job where they have been for fifteen years and have a high number of sick and vacation leave.

If they are moving, they may want some level of reimbursement for moving expenses.

It was noted that the city does not have a relocation policy and Mr. Mergner suggested considering that in this situation.

Ms. Parrish feels that would be part of a whole compensation conversation. She is only talking about this because she does not want council to be surprised if these things come up. There are other things that could come up that she has not talked about but at least this will give council a heads up.

Ms. Parrish said that is also a way to incentivize having them live in the city which she knows is important to several council and the mayor. Those things typically go hand in hand and is a reasonable thing to request.

Mr. Burk asked how the city benefit package compares to other municipalities the same size; she said it looks pretty good. However, it is really more about how it measures it up to the person who ends up wanting the job. She has not studied it a lot but when she was speaking with the city department heads today, they felt that benefits was one of the top reasons a person would work for the city.

Ms. Wilson asked how she will answer the question about why has there been so much turnover. Ms. Parrish said she has thought about that and she will answer the way it was explained to her. She said she will always tell the truth which is really important. Her understanding is the last city manager resigned. He had been here less than a year. It was his first city manager experience and he was simply not a good fit. Prior to that, the city had a long term manager and a manager for three years prior to that. The long term city manager then came back for several more years.

She reiterated that the city had a long term city manager, a three-year city manager from a neighboring community, then the retired city manager who came back for a number of years. She would also point the longevity of the senior level staff that she spoke with today. In addition, the longevity of many of the council members.

Ms. Wilson asked what Ms. Parrish would say about the city manager that was here for three years and why he left. Ms. Parrish responded by stating her understanding was that he was requested to leave.

Council confirmed that he resigned though it was councils' recommendation.

She explained that a good applicant can find all those answers through Google which is the reason she needs to reflect accuracy and truth but not drama.

Ms. Wilson thanked Ms. Parrish adding that she wanted to see how informed she was of those two situations. Ms. Parrish said applicants will ask her adding that if she is inaccurate, she wants someone to tell her.

The consultant then added that based on experience, she heard loud and clear that while it would be fantastic to have someone who has already been a city manager, though most council members were open to an assistant city manager or someone with department head experience as long as they brought all the other things council was looking for. In other words, not having the city manager title is not a deal breaker. That will also provide the city with a broader base of applicants to include for the interviews.

She stated that while Delaware experience would be great, but council agreed it was not required.

She did not ask for the exiting salary so she will speak with the interim city manager about that. She prefers to put in a salary range though some communities do not like to do that. She likes to keep it as close to what council would be expecting, which in her opinion, must be fairly close to what the existing manager received and higher than the highest department head.

She should have those answers quickly though she is unsure if she asked for that information.

With no further questions from council, Mr. Burk said he is very confident with what Ms. Parrish has put together.

She then stated that she will continue to work with the mayor. She believes he will have Ms. Hudson send the information out to council so they can see it. But she will look to him to tell her it is ok or not. They would also want Ms. Hudson and Mr. Portmann to ensure the information is accurate.

If she picked up something from the website that is not accurate, or anywhere else, she wants to be informed so it can be corrected.

Mayor Shupe said that once the information is sent out to council, Ms. Hudson, Mr. Portmann and himself will review it from different perspectives. For example, it will be looked at from a historical standpoint, an actual standpoint and political standpoint. Any council comments can be sent to Ms. Hudson who will forward to Ms. Parrish; that manner

will ensure everything presented is complete and correct.

Ms. Mergner feels this timeline will actually back us up until after the holidays. He is concerned that someone having to move will need even more time. He encouraged Ms. Parrish to move the time line up if at all possible. Right now, it appears the new city manager would not start until after January.

Ms. Parrish said it is also possible it may need to be left open a little longer than anticipated. Mr. Mergner agreed but asked that anything we can do to move the process up before the ads are placed, he feels would be beneficial.

Ms. Parrish stated that she also purposely wanted it to be open after Labor Day because in general, a lot of people do not pay attention to these matters in August. It is not the greatest time to advertise which is why she added the week in September. That also factors in the timeline.

Mr. Morrow and Mr. Starling said they want it done right and prefer it not be rushed.

Ms. Parrish thanked council for coming to the meeting on an off night and for their comments and questions.

With no further comments or questions, the Council Meeting meeting adjourned at 7:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Terri K. Hudson, MMC
City Clerk/Recorder

Attachment-Brochure

bringing solutions into focus



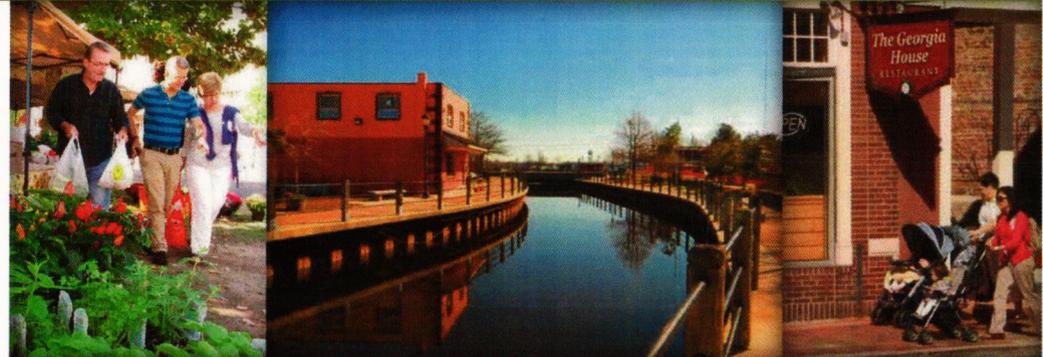
The Community

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Applications are being accepted electronically by The Novak Consulting Group. To apply, go to thenovakconsultinggroup.com/jobs to complete a brief online form and then you will be prompted to submit a cover letter, resume with a list of 3-5 professional references, and 5-year salary history via apply@thenovakconsultinggroup.com. Open until filled; apply immediately but first review of applications will be Month XX, 2015.



recruitment announcement



City Manager

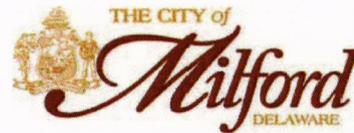
City Manager – Milford, Delaware

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The Position

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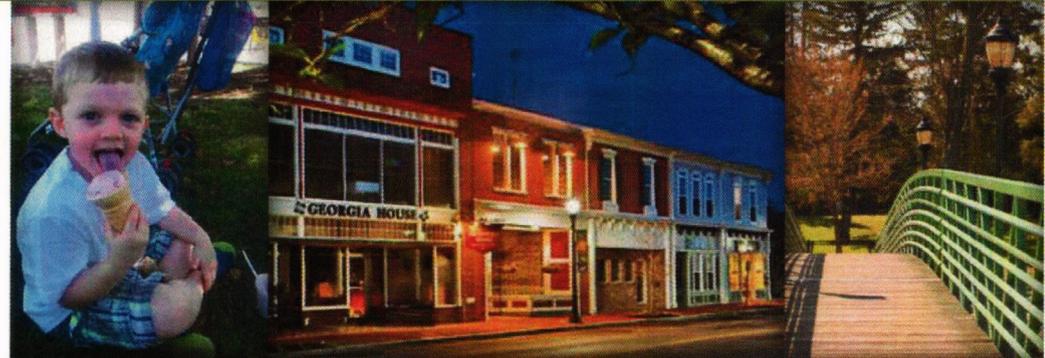
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Requirements and Preferred Qualifications

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The Ideal Candidate

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The salary range is **SXX,000 to SXXX,000 DOQ/DOE, with an excellent benefits package.**

Open until filled; apply immediately but first review of applications will be Month XX, 2015.

Questions should be directed to Catherine Tuck Parrish at 240-832-1778 or the email address at the bottom of the page.

(over, please)

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