

Quality of Life Council Committee

Minutes

Thursday October 20, 2005

7:30 a.m.

City Hall - Media Briefing Room

Members Present: Councilmember Art Hall, Chair, District 8
Councilmember Richard Perez, District 4
Councilmember Elena Guajardo, District 7

Absent: Councilmember Chip Haass, District 10

Staff Present: Melissa Byrne Vossmer, Assistant City Manager; Christopher J. Brady, Assistant City Manager; Michael Bernard, City Attorney; Martha Sepeda, Assistant City Attorney; John Bull, Presiding Municipal Court Judge; Pat Major, City Auditor

Call to Order

Chairman Art Hall called the meeting to order.

1. Orientation on structure of Municipal Court System.

Ms. Vossmer briefed the committee on the restructuring of the Municipal Court Department. She noted that the department has been divided into two divisions being Administrative Services and the Office of the Judiciary, with separate budgets.

Ms. Vossmer detailed several new programs that include a call center, city marshals and a compliance and corrections unit.

Councilmember Guajardo asked if the compliance and collections unit will serve as a checks and balance for the court system and if the City Auditor has reviewed the program to meet the requirements for collection.

Ms. Vossmer stated that the current software does not track ticket data. She added that the City Auditor has not yet been involved in formulating criteria for the program but a team was created that includes a certified public accounting firm.

Judge Bull informed the committee that the collections unit would relieve judges from negotiating payment arrangements after a ruling has been made. He notified the committee of a vacant part-time and full-time position and stated that it would not be necessary to fill the vacant full-time position.

Judge Bull clarified that the presiding judge is not a supervisor but an administrative judge that makes court assignments, docketing decisions and approves leave. He noted that all judges are independently appointed by the City Council. Judge Bull added that in the restructured court system, the court administrator will be responsible for non-judicial hiring and will assist the presiding judge with dockets.

Councilmember Perez stated that a mechanism should be created where the presiding judge serves as manager.

Chairman Hall suggested that Judge Bull make recommendations on the appointment process. He added that action be given to appoint the presiding judge prior to the Municipal Court Judge appointments and be involved in the interview process.

At this time, with a quorum present, the meeting was called to order.

Call to Order

Chairman Hall called the meeting to order.

2. Discussion of and action on interview and appointment process for Municipal Court Judges.

Ms. Martha Sepeda presented information on the Municipal Court Judge interview and appointment process and she stated that City Council developed a stronger role of the presiding judge in the new code provisions. She noted that there is still room to add more strength to the position.

Councilmember Guajardo asked if it was required for City Council direction to the presiding judge be submitted in writing. Ms. Sepeda noted that it is not required but strongly recommended that direction be submitted in writing.

Ms. Sepeda stated that there is no state law or local ordinance defining the Municipal Court Judge appointment process. She explained that other than the basic U.S. citizenship and the 3-year Texas Residency requirements, the City Council can determine the appointment process.

Chairman Hall recessed the meeting into executive session at 8:31 a.m. to address the following items:

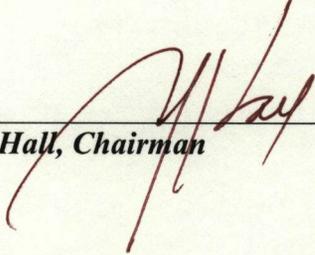
EXECUTIVE SESSIONS:

- A. Discuss legal issues relating to appointment process, pursuant to Texas Government Code Section 551.071 (attorney consultation).
- B. Discuss legal issues related to the Municipal Integrity Investigation related to Municipal Court citations, pursuant to Texas Government Code, Section 551.071 (attorney consultation).

Chairman Hall reconvened the meeting at 8:50 a.m. The committee instructed staff to post the Municipal Court Judge positions for three weeks in the legal section of the Express News and send notice to the Local Bar Associations. The committee would like to complete the appointment process by the end of the year.

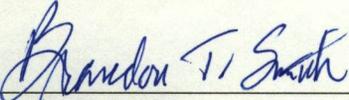
There being no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 8:55 a.m.

Copies of these presentations are made part of the file and are available upon request



Art Hall, Chairman

Respectfully Submitted,



Brandon T. Smith
Administrative Assistant II
Office of the City Clerk

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