

October 7, 2015

City Manager Search –

Interviewed three additional candidates for the City Manager position on October 5th and identified two additional applicants for interviews (one scheduled) for October 12th. The additional interviews have nothing to do with the quality of those interviewed on the 5th – it was clearly stated in council session that we would schedule interviews and continue advertising through the 9th of October, with the position being considered “open” through the process of making a tentative offer for the City Manager position. We had three good interviews on October 5th and one of those candidates, as well as a candidate yet to interviewed, could be extended a provisional offer. People also have suggested that one of the candidates interviewed was voted against when our interim manager (Mr. Bifoss) was selected – **that is not true**. Mr. Bifoss availability, with his extensive experience as City Manager in Manistee and Traverse City was a great opportunity, he was supported by the full City Council and there was never a vote taken on any other candidate.

There will not be a hurried selection until all candidates are interviewed and a public discussion takes place. Few citizens were in attendance for the interviews on October 5th – but I hope people take the time to review the recorded session (about 5 hours total) to see how the candidates responded to questions. Resumes and background information is also available on the City of Manistee website through the City Council Agenda section. It takes little effort to “Google” a candidate with their name, locations listed in their resume – and learn what is public concerning their performance or tenure in past positions. Once a candidate accepts an interview, their resumes are posted on the City of Manistee website and they are no longer entitled to “confidentiality” in the application process. Many of the candidates we have interviewed, or will interview have applied for other positions and have been identified as “finalist” as a result of those interviews. Manistee is in competition with other communities for these talented individuals. I can’t begin to predict how the process will end, or who will be the ultimate selection – but will state I’ll support a good candidate and vote against a candidate (as I’ve already done) who I don’t feel will be a good fit for the City of Manistee. Your opinions and comments are welcome throughout the process and with any other business that comes before the City Council.

Vehicle/Equipment Purchases –

The City of Manistee has a “purchase policy” that outlines the process of purchases for city equipment and supplies (and also salvage of the same). I have those documents in PDF and will gladly forward them to anyone that wishes to see them.

Questions arose over the purchase of trucks and a piece of equipment for the Department of Public Works (DPW) at the October 6th meeting. Most dealt with the issue of competitive bids and soliciting bids from sources that offer the best price to the City of Manistee. Local business are given preference when competitive as those businesses support employment and the local economy. The intent is to make sure public funds are spent in a responsible manner and the citizens get the most value for their tax dollars. Bids were awarded to Manistee Ford for two trucks, even though the costs was about \$500 higher than the Mlbids program (this represented about 1% of the total costs). I would expect all local businesses to be offered an opportunity to bid on equipment and services.

Commission Vacancies –

Debate took place over my application for vacancies on the Harbor Commission and PEG. Both Commissions had three vacancies (long term) and have been advertised for an extended period of time. A council member thought “sitting councilmembers” should be limited in also serving on the various commissions within the city. My intent was to participate in these Commissions that are short of members and through that process gain a better understanding of how they function and what the City of Manistee role should be in supporting their activities. As a retired citizen, I have the time to attend these meetings (most meet during the day). I'd like to see more citizens interested in participating with these functions and city government – but also willing to invest my time and energy in a better Manistee for all of us. The majority of City Council supported my efforts to participate on the Commissions and my appointment was approved. Prior to applying, I spoke with the City Clerk and ask where help was most needed and where my experience would be the best fit. The City Clerk maintains a list of vacancies and requirements (City residence, ownership/interest in the Downtown Development Area, etc.) – drop by and see what is available.

Contact –

The best telephone number to contact me is my Cell Phone – 231-690-3948. If you want to email me, jsmith@manisteemi.gov (City of Manistee Computer) allows me to forward to other council members and city staff more readily as well as providing a public record of the correspondence. My personal email addresses are jws.manistee,mi@gmail.com (comes to my cell phone) or jameswsmith@chartermi.net (to my personal computer) if you wish the correspondence to be personal.

I thank the Citizens of Manistee for the opportunity to serve on City Council. It is a responsibility I take seriously and strive to serve the best interest of our community. It is more time consuming than envisioned, but rewarded. Streets are being repaved and brighter days are ahead. Thank you again for your support - Jim