

**TOURIST DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES**  
**Council President Samuel Newby, TDC Chairman**  
**Wednesday, January 5, 2022 - 1:00 P.M.**  
**Lynwood Roberts Room, City Hall**

**Attendance:** Sam Newby (Chair), Terrance Freeman, Aaron Bowman, Angela Phillips, Steve Grossman, Dennis Thompson, Joe Hindsley

**Also:** Lillian Graning – TDC Executive Director; Phillip Peterson – Council Auditor’s Office; Reece Wilson – Office of General Counsel; Jeff Clements – Council Research Division; Diane Moser and Leah Hayes – Employee Services Department

**Convene** 1:00 p.m.

**Public Comment**

None

Lillian Graning thanked the TDC members for their well wishes on her departure for another job. She recognized Diane Moser, Director of the Employee Services Department, who will guide the body through the hiring process. Ms. Graning said she hopes to be able ease the transition by maintaining basic operations as well as onboard the new Executive Director.

Ms. Moser reviewed the City’s hiring process, indicating the first decision to be made is whether to designate a search committee or not. Chairman Newby appointed TDC members Steve Grossman, Angela Phillips, and Aaron Bowman (Chair) as a Search Committee.

**Job Description**

Ms. Graning said the categorical focuses of the Executive Director position as it is currently constituted are 1) Contract management (including all service providers and grant applicants/recipients) and 2) TDC management (including financial management, research and policy guidance). The board needs to decide if they want the new Executive Director to be primarily a contract manager or continue as a strategic policy advisor.

Aaron Bowman said he wasn’t comfortable voting on a job description, having just seen it. He believes Visit Jax has done a fine job with market research and understanding the tourism industry and travel trends and feels that the new Executive Director should concentrate more on contract management. He regrets that the TDC currently has only one employee and believes that another staff person is warranted for the sake of continuity and succession planning in the office.

Joe Hindsley said he would prefer that the search define the position broadly, cast a wide net, and see what candidates present themselves. The TDC could then refine its focus as the hiring process proceeds and the strengths and weaknesses of various candidates are evaluated.

Steve Grossman reflected the TDC has made great progress over the past several years under the current Executive Director and he believes that experience in the tourism industry would be a valuable asset in a candidate. He thinks the board benefits from skilled grant application evaluation and rating by

the Executive Director, relieving the board members of that burden, and appreciates having more than a pure contract administrator in the position.

Dennis Thompson said the board would do itself a disservice by hiring a primarily contract administrator who doesn't have higher level skills to assist the board in broader thinking.

Council Member Freeman said his brief experience on the board shows the value of a skilled and able Executive Director and he would like to see that continue.

Angela Phillips echoed the previous comments about the value that Ms. Graning has provided to the board to help it be as effective as possible. She likes the idea of an Executive Director with a "big picture" perspective and executive level communication skills assisting the board in its market level strategy and thinks that the second employee discussed earlier could be more of a contract administrator.

Ms. Moser reviewed the hiring timeline from job description development through hiring, which could be completed by the end of February if the selected candidate is local and does not need to relocate from out-of-town. She reviewed the job specifications, which include a bachelor's degree and at least 5 years of relevant experience. Mr. Bowman advocated for including a requirement for experience working with a board of directors, since that is a very particular kind of skill that not everyone possesses. Ms. Moser said that factor could be added in one of two ways – either as a minimum requirement or in the form of added questions during the interview process to evaluate relevant experience. Mr. Grossman suggested adding it as a preferred qualification – not mandatory but desired. Ms. Graning said adding it in the form of additional interview questions allows the board to cast a wide net for candidates but also allow it to quickly screen those candidates for relevant experience. She recommended letting the Employee Services Department do the initial round of screening of applications and developing a list of candidates (perhaps the top 10) for the selection committee to consider.

**Motion:** approve the Executive Director job specifications as distributed at the meeting, including a requirement for a bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university and 5 years of relevant experience, with contract management experience and experience working with a board of directors listed as preferred additional qualifications, to be assessed via application questionnaire – **approved unanimously.**

**Motion:** authorize the appointment by the Chair of a 3-member selection committee – **approved unanimously.**

Ms. Moser recommended a 2-week application window unless 5 or fewer applications are received, in which case the window would be extended to encourage additional responses. Ms. Graning cautioned the board that the City's open records hiring process is daunting to some candidates and discourages them from applying if publicity about their application might jeopardize their current job situation. Ms. Moser described the various venues where the job description will be posted and solicited ideas from the board for additional sites or organizations that might attract candidates with relevant tourism industry experience.

In response to a question Ms. Moser said the salary range for the position is \$75,000 to \$120,000 and recommended that it be posted at \$75,000 to \$105,000. In response to a question from Mr. Bowman, Ms. Moser said that the board could ultimately decide to pay higher than the \$105,000 advertised given

the quality of the candidate. Ms. Graning recommended raising the lower end of the advertised range to ensure that good candidates already making substantially more than that aren't deterred from applying by thinking the position isn't substantive enough given that salary level.

**Motion** – raise the lower end of the advertised salary range to \$90,000 – **approved unanimously.**

Ms. Moser distributed a sample of an evaluation matrix from another recent City job search to give an example of how the department uses numerous questions to evaluate qualifications and winnow the field down to a top ten list of candidates. A social media search will be done of the top finalists to attempt to locate any potentially troublesome issues. The department will develop a set of interview questions for the board's consideration and refinement. She recommends that the selection committee determine two top finalists either of whom could be offered the job rather than selecting only one candidate and then having to re-start the process if that candidate declines the job. Ms. Moser explained the City's veteran's preference criterion and how that applies to the ranking process. Ms. Graning asked for clarification of staff's role in the selection of the finalists for interviews. Chairman Newby said that he wanted the Selection Committee to make the ultimate decision about whom to interview as well as whom to extend an offer. Ms. Graning indicated that most candidates will inquire about the future of the TDC staff (one versus two positions and the duties assigned to each), and requested clarification in an attempt to relay a clear picture of the job responsibilities and how those match their particular skills and interests.

Council Member Bowman asked about the process of meshing the hiring of a new Executive Director with Ms. Graning's departure since the City prohibits two people from filling a position simultaneously. Ms. Moser explained that when the new hire enters the position, Ms. Graning could continue as a part-time employee. Mr. Bowman asked about the possibility of paying relocation expenses; Ms. Moser committed to researching that option and providing it to the hiring committee.

**Motion:** approve the hiring process, timing, job specifications, salary range, candidate evaluation matrix formula, etc. as covered in the meeting – **approved unanimously.**

**Adjourn** 2:05 p.m.

The minutes for this meeting was unanimously approved at the TDC meeting on February 24, 2022.