



Memorandum

Memorandum No: 23-117

Date: September 27, 2023

To: Honorable Mayor, Vice Mayor, and Commissioners

From: Greg Chavarria, City Manager 
Greg Chavarria (Sep 27, 2023 17:33 EDT)

Re: **City Attorney Search Committee – Report to the City Commission**

The following was respectfully submitted by the members of the City Attorney Search Committee: Romney Rogers, Committee Chair, McKillop Erlandson, Committee Vice Chair, Richard Weis, Committee member, Roosevelt Walters, Committee member and Troy Liggett, Committee member.

The City Attorney Search Committee was established by Resolution 23-63 at the March 23, 2023, City Commission Regular Meeting. The committee's charge was listed as follows:

- To advise the City Commission on any and all matters with respect to the hiring of a City Attorney for the City of Fort Lauderdale.
- To review and cull through resumes and applications provided by the City of Fort Lauderdale Human Resources Department, interview candidates, and prepare a short list of candidates for review by the City Commission.
- To perform such duties as may from time to time be requested by the City Commission.

Prior to the first Committee meeting, the City's Human Resources (HR) Department conducted a search for a new City Attorney at the request of the City Commission. The HR staff worked with the Strategic Communications staff to develop an advertisement brochure and posted the position through the City's normal job posting procedures. Additionally, the Interim City Attorney gave recommendations on minimum qualifications and professional websites where the posting should be located for maximum exposure. The position was posted from March 14 through April 17, 2023, and the candidates were screened by the minimum qualifications programmed in the City's applicant tracking system, Neo Gov. The City received 16 applications during this time, six of which were deemed to meet the minimum qualifications.

On April 20, 2023, the City Attorney Search Committee (Committee) met for the first time. A Chair and Vice-Chair were elected, and the members received copies of the applications for the original 16 candidates.

On May 1, 2023, the Committee met to discuss the candidates and rank them in terms of qualifications. The Committee recommended a search firm be engaged to broaden the search.

On May 2, 2023, Human Resources Director, Jerome Post, reported the Committee's recommendation to the City Commission, and the Commission directed City staff to proceed with engaging a search firm. City staff contacted the five search firms that sent proposals the previous January. Only two were willing to take the work, and on May 15, the lowest price firm, Mercer Group Florida, LLC., was granted the work. Dona Higginbotham from Mercer informed staff that she would be unable to begin work on the search until May 30 due to current workload issues.

On May 10, 2023, the Committee met to discuss modifications to the job description, the requirements for the position, the recruitment brochure, and the role of the recruitment firm.

Mercer began work on May 30 and officially posted the position on June 5, which was advertised as "open until filled." The first review of applicants was scheduled on June 30; however, an insufficient number of applicants was received at that time, and City staff decided to extend the job posting until July 28.

The Committee next met on August 8, 2023, when Dona Higginbotham from Mercer was introduced to the committee members. There was discussion of 17 candidates presented by Mercer and the Committee selected four candidates to be interviewed, but one later withdrew.

Prior to the Committee's interviews of the three remaining candidates, the staff at Mercer Group Florida conducted a background screening process that included social media posts. The Committee reviewed Mercer's background material on each candidate prior to interviewing them.

On September 18, 2023, the Committee met to interview the three candidates. A recommendation was made to advance two final candidates for City Commission interviews, subject to checking references. Two Committee members checked references for both candidates and nothing negative was discovered.

The City Attorney Search Committee recommends the City Commission consider Thomas Ansbro or Andrew Dunkiel for the position of City Attorney. The City Attorney Search Committee believes both candidates are well qualified, but Tom Ansbro appears to be a better fit for the City, at this time.

If you have any questions or would like additional information, please contact Jerome Post, Director of Human Resources at JPost@fortlauderdale.gov or 954-828-5307.

C: Anthony G. Fajardo, Assistant City Manager
Susan Grant, Assistant City Manager
D'Wayne M. Spence, Interim City Attorney
David R. Soloman, City Clerk
Patrick Reilly, City Auditor
Department Directors
CMO Managers