

MINUTES OF A CONTINUED MEETING OF THE CITY
COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF COEUR D' ALENE, IDAHO,
HELD AT CITY HALL CONFERENCE ROOM #6

October 7, 2024

The Mayor and Council of the City of Coeur d'Alene met in a continued meeting of said Council at the City Hall Conference Room #6 on October 7, 2024, at 12:00 p.m., there being present the following members:

Woody McEvers, Mayor

Dan English)	Members of Council Present
Christie Wood)	
Dan Gookin)	
Amy Evans)	
Kiki Miller)	Member of Council Absent

CALL TO ORDER: Mayor McEvers called the meeting to order.

COUNCIL INTERVIEWS AND DISCUSSION OF CANDIDATES FOR VACANT COUNCIL SEAT#4:

Mayor McEvers stated that the purpose of the meeting is for Council to interview and discuss candidates for Council Seat #4, in accordance with the Human Resources policies. The following questions were asked by each councilmember as follows: 1-3 Councilmember English; 4-6 Councilmember Evans; 7-8 Councilmember Wood; and 9-10 Councilmember Gookin.

1. How long have you lived in CDA and why do you want to be on the City Council?
2. What is your understanding of the role of a Councilmember?
3. What unique skills or perspectives would you bring to the position of Councilmember?
4. What community/public services or activities in Coeur d'Alene have you been involved in?
5. What leadership roles have you held?
6. All of us may have areas of the city government or public issues, due to our experience or other factors, that are of particular interest to us. How would you separate that special interest from decisions that you need to make on behalf of the whole city, including all citizens, businesses, and city employees?
7. Do you have any experience that gives you a particular understanding of Idaho city governance, finance, and authority? Explain.
8. If you were engaged in strategic planning, what services do you believe the Council and Mayor should be focused on for city residents in the next 5 years?
9. What is your experience with public budgets, public policy, and City, State, and Federal laws that pertain to Municipal Government?
10. Do you have any questions for us or anything else you would like to share with us?

Additional questions include their views on transparency, public safety, reaction to the observation that the City Council don't have its own policy, how they could make the city more business-friendly, and how they would improve the City budgeting process.

KENNETH GABRIEL: Mr. Gabriel stated that he lived in Coeur d'Alene for 43 years and he wants to be on the City Council to continue doing what he loves, which is to serve the community. He narrated that he spent his entire life in public service starting as a volunteer in the Fire Department and did a lot of coaching at the Little League and in church, which morphed into being in the fire service when he became an adult. Before he was promoted to Fire Chief, he was a public information officer for the Fire Department where he was able to build a relationship with the community. He was also a member of several Boards and Committees such as the Salvation Army Kroc Center Board, North Idaho College Vocational Technical Education Advisory Board, Coeur d'Alene American Legion Board, and Idaho Youth Ranch Programs Committee, to name a few. He was a volunteer at St. Vincent de Paul and the Food Bank. He was also a member of the City of Coeur d'Alene Legislative Committee and Chairman of the Idaho State Fire Chief's Association Legislative Committee. Mr. Gabriel expressed that his long-time passion was working on the legislative side to get things done. For him, a Councilmember performs a collaborative role and represents the City in meetings and on different events. He sees himself as a Councilmember working with a cohesive team to ensure what is best for the community. He thinks that while each department has a policy manual, the City, as a whole, should also have a policy manual. Mr. Gabriel stated that, in applying for the Councilmember position, he brings with him his working knowledge of what is required of the position as he has attended and participated in literally hundreds of City Council meetings and budget hearings. He has a good understanding of the State of Idaho's governance, finance, and authority and with 19 years of experience preparing the Fire Department's budget. He also brings with him the desire to build relationships and bring forward what he has done in the past. When asked about the City's budget process, he commented that everyone is doing a great job. In terms of leadership roles, he stated that from being a firefighter, he became the City's Fire Chief. He was President of the Idaho State Fire Chief's Association and served four terms as North Idaho Fire Chief's President. He conveyed that he tried to elevate himself into these leadership roles because it is the best way to represent the City of Coeur d'Alene. Despite these background, Mr. Gabriel expressed that should he be appointed as Councilmember, he would not be a politician nor be a lobbyist for the Fire Department, but instead, he will always look at the bigger picture taking into consideration serving the community and not just one group. If he would be approached with something that concerns the Fire Department, he would respond by saying that they should bring it up with their Fire Chief. Nonetheless, he believes that public safety should be a top priority. He believes that the Mayor and Council should continue to focus on how to continue providing public safety services as the City continues to grow in population as part of its strategic planning for the next five years. He stated that the Council should have a keen understanding of the public budget, public policy, and City, State and Federal laws that pertain to Municipal Government, and he was lucky enough to be immersed in all these and gained a good understanding over the years. He believes that a Councilmember should be an advocate for both staff and the community and also understand the views of the Mayor and the administration. When asked about his thoughts about transparency in government, Mr. Gabriel replied that there should be transparency with the people having an understanding where their money is going. In terms of being pro-business, he said that he cannot think of a situation where the Council was not really pro-business, and he thinks that it has to be pro-business. In closing, Mr. Gabriel stated that he

feels honored to be part of the discussion and appreciated having transparency in the process. He promised to do the best he can, and he brings with him his true love for the community.

JOHN AUSTIN: Mr. Austin stated that he lived in Coeur d'Alene on and off since 1991. When he retired, he moved out to the County for a little while to try raising horses but went back to Coeur d'Alene in 2017. He said he wanted to be on the City Council to be able to serve the community in a way that he was unable to as a staffer back in the 1990's. He mentioned that it was always his intention to give back to the community because it was Coeur d'Alene that really launched him into his career in finance. As a former elected official, having served as Commissioner for the Eastside Highway District, Mr. Austin views that a Councilmember's role is to set the direction and provide guidance to staff. He said that the City's budget process is very difficult, on which he helped create the current budget document 30 years ago. For him, the role of Council is to figure out how the City will be able to cover the next few years with all the constraints imposed by the legislature. With regards to the City Council not having its own policy, Mr. Austin replied that it is hard to have a set policy when things are changing every year with the legislature. For him, it is important for Council to be flexible and not be tied to a particular policy. When asked what unique skills he can bring into the position as Councilmember, Mr. Austin responded that he served as Kootenai County Finance Director for four years, City of Coeur d'Alene Finance Director/ City Treasurer for nine years, and also worked as Spirit Lake City Administrator for one year. And with his background in finance, he was able to build a consulting company. He said that he will bring with him the same skills set as Councilmember. In order to improve the budgeting process, if appointed to the position, he would ask the Mayor to designate him as the lead person to work with qualified staff to deal with the legislature. In terms of community involvement, Mr. Austin stated that he was a board member of the Panhandle Area Council for many years until he became a staff late in his career. He helped create the city bus system and worked on getting the balance of the funding. Additionally, he was also on the Housing Commission that worked on affordable housing, served at the KMPO, and worked on campaigns for several issues. In terms of leadership roles, he stated that aside from being the City Finance Director, he was also elected as Commissioner of the Eastside Highway District, and he briefly served as head of the Panhandle Area Council. With regards to the question of separating special interests from decisions on behalf of the City, Mr. Austin stated that it is important for him to stay true to the mission and vision of the City and to ensure that the needs of the citizens will always go first. He said that it is important to keep an eye on what in the community is influencing the direction of each government. When asked what the City can do to be business friendly, Mr. Austin said that the City has been business friendly over the years. He recalled that in 1991, when Sherman Avenue had 40% vacancy rate, they worked strongly to create a Business Improvement District that paved the improvements on Sherman as well as Lakeside. But as far as attracting businesses, he stated that he brought up the idea of urban renewal district in 1997 and wrote the plan. Mr. Austin stated that he has a great love for people who work in public safety. His stepson was an officer in Coeur d'Alene for a while. He also recalled how he was part of the efforts for the City to have a Police Department building, Fire Station 3, and funding for the firefighters at Fire Station 4. To illustrate his understanding of Idaho city governance, finance, and authority, Mr. Austin shared that he was a member of the Idaho City Clerks Treasurer Finance Association for many years and in the mid-90's he negotiated with legislators to allow the City to have impact fees. He was also a member of the Finance Officers Association. With respect to strategic planning, he suggested that Council should look at having a five-year capital improvement plan as well as the operations and maintenance of the General Fund,

see what the funding will be over the next five years, what the legislature would possibly do, and anticipate those changes. With regards to experience with public budgets, public policy, and City, State, and Federal laws that pertain to Municipal Government, Mr. Austin shared that when he was a Finance Director, he had to be on top of all those things and also now as he does finance consulting with clients. He stated that what he learned over the years is the importance of identifying what the issue is and to be upfront in letting the taxpayers understand why the Council needs to make these decisions. For him, transparency with the people is very important. He stated that a Councilmember is part of a team and while he has ideas on what the Council needs to do over the next five years such as in the budget process, he will still seek to get consensus among the Council. In closing, Mr. Austin stated that he appreciates that the Council brought this process forward.

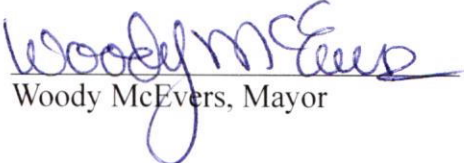
JEFF CONNAWAY: Mr. Connaway stated that he lived in Coeur d'Alene since 1988, and he thinks that he is well suited to the position of Councilmember having served on the City's Sign Board for 27 years and served twice on the Arts Commission. He added that he is an interested citizen that wants to help and serve the community. For him, a City Councilmember's role is to administer the affairs of the City and serve as arbiter for inevitable disputes. With regards to the observation that the City Council does not have its own policy, Mr. Connaway said that it's probably a good thing like being non-partisan. He shared that he thinks he is a reasonable, intelligent, and articulate enough to read materials and understand it, and to hear people express their points of view. He mentioned that he is fair minded and able to analyze situations to get to the bottom of whatever the issue is. When asked about his idea to improve the budget process, Mr. Connaway said that he doesn't know enough to have an opinion on the matter, but he thinks he is financially conservative which is why he had done well on his business. He stated that he has a good understanding of how numbers work and able to analyze the situation. Aside from serving at the Sign Board and Arts Commission, his community service involvement includes serving schools and churches with his sign projects. He stated that he tried to do a good job of decorating the City by making beautiful signs. He also served at the Kootenai County Chaplains Corps in the 1990's to help troubled inmates providing spiritual guidance. He also led and provided guidance to a team of 20 art students to do painting works at the Lake City High School which resulted to 40% savings for their proposed sign. In terms of leadership roles, Mr. Connaway stated that aside from being Chairman on the City Sign Board and Arts Commission, he employed over 20 people in his business directing them on their daily efforts. When asked about how he would separate his special interest from decisions that needs to be made on behalf of the City, Mr. Connaway expressed that he is a non-partisan and non-opinionated person. He does not have any particular interest other than beautification, saying he is not in favor of high-rise buildings and billboards that are out of scale for the environment; however, he respects the ordinances and doesn't have any agenda in general. He thinks that the City is doing a good job of being business friendly but should not overregulate and continue to allow the people to have freedom as long as they are obeying the laws. He also thinks that public safety should be one of the priorities of the Council and it deserves more of the budget. While he feels he is a smart guy, he stated that he doesn't have any experience in relation to having an understanding of Idaho city governance, finance, and authority. If he will be engaged in strategic planning, Mr. Connaway said that the biggest focus should be on the affordable housing issue. With respect to experience with public budgets and public policy, Mr. Connaway shared that he doesn't have a direct experience but when he was at the Sign Board, their role is to administer the existing sign code and revise it when necessary. He

stated that he is good at expressing himself and good at crunching numbers so when presented with a problem, he will get to the bottom of it to figure it out. He also thinks that transparency is important, and the Council has shown a good example when they decided to put forward a process to choose a new Councilmember. For him, a Councilmember is part of a team, and the idea is to bring perspectives together and arrive at a consensus. In closing, Mr. Connaway stated that his track record speaks for itself, he is honest, straightforward and has a servant's heart which are the good reasons why he succeeded in his business.

DISCUSSION: Councilmember Gookin inquired on the next steps with Mr. Adams explaining that after the discussion in this meeting, Mayor McEvers will make a nomination at the October 15 Council meeting. Councilmember Evans stated that they are fortunate to have three great candidates that are familiar with the City to some extent and have been part of the City in some aspect of their history. She asked if there are any concerns or if they left their positions in the City with good standing. Councilmember Wood stated that she is not aware of anything. Councilmember English shared that each of the applicants has their unique takeaways and he does not have a problem with any of them. Councilmember Wood stated that they all did a good job. Mayor McEvers shared that he was pleasantly impressed as well. In response to Councilmember Evans' question, Ms. Tosi said that Mr. Gabriel recently retired and she will check on information about Mr. Austin and Mr. Connaway on what information she can release based on what public records law would allow. Councilmember Gookin replied that he will be uncomfortable looking at any personnel information. Mayor McEvers stated that he will ponder over his notes. Councilmember Wood said that these are good candidates, full of knowledge, and it will be a tough decision to make.

ADJOURNMENT: Motion by Gookin, seconded by Wood that there being no other business, this meeting be adjourned. **Motion carried.**

The meeting adjourned at 1:54 p.m.



Woody McEvers, Mayor

ATTEST:



JoAnne Mateski
Executive Assistant