

CITY OF GARDNER, MASSACHUSETTS
CITY COUNCIL FINANCE COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF MEETING OF AUGUST 6, 2019

The Finance Committee meeting was called to order by President Scott Joseph Graves at 9:00 a.m. in the City Council Chamber, Room 219, City Hall.

Finance Committee Members present were Council President Scott Joseph Graves and Councillor Ronald Cormier. Councillor James Walsh was absent. City Clerk Alan Agnelli also was present.

President Graves announced that due to time changes for applicant interviews for the City Treasurer position and the City Collector of Taxes position, the Committee should recess and reconvene at 10:30 a.m. in the Council Chamber.

On a motion by Councillor Ronald Cormier and seconded by President Scott Graves, it was voted to recess the meeting until 10:30 a.m.

The Finance Committee meeting was called back to order by President Scott Joseph Graves at 10:30 a.m. in the City Council Chamber, Room 219, City Hall.

Finance Committee Members present were Council President Scott Joseph Graves and Councillors Ronald Cormier and James Walsh.

Others participating or in attendance: Mayor Mark Hawke; City Auditor John Richard; Human Resources Director Debra Pond; and, City Clerk Alan Agnelli.

President Graves asked if anyone present planned to record the meeting, in accordance with the requirements of the Open Meeting Law, as follows:

Any person may make a video or audio recording of the open session of this meeting so long as it does not interfere with the conduct of the meeting. All documents and exhibits used or referenced at this meeting shall be submitted in duplicate to the City Clerk, as they become part of the minutes of the meeting. Is there anyone present who will be recording this meeting?

No one responded.

INTERVIEWS

Christopher Grady

- Employed as a Deputy Tax Collector for Kelley & Ryan Associates in Worcester since 2011. Employed by Kelley & Ryan as a CSR beginning in 2007.
- Manages the Worcester Regional Office located the RMV and fills-in at the Boston Office occasionally. Worcester is comprised of 4 staff persons. Handles delinquent Excise, Boat Excise, and Parking tickets for over 200 Massachusetts cities and towns. Gardner contracts with Kelley & Ryan for its deputy collector services.

Mr. Grady stated that his understanding of the positions includes banking services, tax collections, municipal lien certificates, payroll, and contact with the public. He added that he does not have any Tax Title experience, but is familiar with the process and does not have any

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departmental budgeting experience, but reconciles bank statements on a daily basis. He said that he is comfortable stepping into a role of supervisor, adding that he “leads by example,” is able to give direction when necessary, and is reliable and a hard worker.

On inquiry, Mr. Grady stated that he does not have an accounting background, but completed some accounting courses in college. He informed the Committee that he will begin the DOR-sponsored Treasurer/Collector school next week which is a three-year process culminating with a final examination for certification.

Regarding software familiarity, Mr. Grady stated that he is somewhat familiar with the MUNIS Operating system, but that he utilizes the K2 System at City Hall.

On inquiry, Mr. Grady stated that he has no experience with borrowing or cash flow analysis, but that he is “a quick learner” and that he excels at learning new tasks.

Councillor Walsh informed Mr. Grady that the positions of City Treasurer and City Collector of Taxes are elected by the City Council, but that the individual must work cooperatively with the Mayor and department heads.

Mr. Grady stated that he is very confident that he would be able to work with people, as he does with various departments within Kelley and Ryan.

President Graves offered a hypothetical situation whereby the Mayor and City Council differed about “a gray area within the law.” He asked Mr. Grady how he would handle such a dilemma.

Mr. Grady responded, saying that he would proceed with “what is in the best interest of the department.”

President Graves asked Mr. Grady why he plans to attend Treasurer/Collector school.

Mr. Grady said that he enrolled because believes that he would be a great fit for the position.

President Graves remarked that Mr. Grady is sincerely looking to expand his position by seeking certification. Councillor Walsh also noted his ambition.

Jennifer Dymek

- Employed with the City of Gardner since 2003.
- Currently Director of Purchasing and Civil Enforcement since June, 2016.
- Assistant Director of Community Development and Planning from 2008 to 2016 and Financial Manager from 2003 until 2008.
- Private sector financial positions with Dymek Custom Builders and Barre Savings Bank.
- Bachelor of Science in Business Administration, concentration in accounting, from Fitchburg State College.

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Ms. Dymek informed the Committee that she has a keen interest in finance and accounting, represented by the municipal and private sector financial positions that she has held in the past. She said that she has always had an interest in the City Treasurer's position, since it offers opportunities for modernization of systems. She added that she is very good with money management and financial analysis.

On inquiry from Councillor Walsh, Ms. Dymek informed the Committee that she has prepared her department's budget for several years, as well as preparing and administering the Block Grant budget for years.

City Auditor John Richard questioned Ms. Dymek about reconciling bank statements.

Ms. Dymek responded, saying that she reconciled bank statements in her prior private sector positions (Barre Savings and Dymek Custom Builders).

With regard to MUNIS, Ms. Dymek informed the Committee that she uses various modules of the system; however, has not utilized the Treasurer's module, but has no concerns about learning the module.

Councillor Walsh questioned whether she believes that her skill set is transferable to the Treasurer's role.

Ms. Dymek responded, saying that regulations and laws guide departments in what is and isn't allowed. She said that in her current position, she is very familiar with procurement laws as they relate to banking and financial services, as well as Treasurer turnovers.

Councillor Cormier questioned whether she foresees opportunities for change in the Treasurer's Office and any changes that she initiated in the Purchasing Department.

Ms. Dymek stated that she implemented a centralized database listing all municipal contracts for ease in tracking, adding that the database is retrievable from the City's shared file. In addition, she initiated greater enforcement of all municipal contracts in excess of \$1,000.

Mayor Hawke noted that one of the Treasurer's duties includes cash flow projections for not only the municipal receipts, but from many other sources. He asked whether Ms. Dymek has any thoughts about this particular responsibility.

Ms. Dymek responded, saying that she believes that she can meet the challenge, since she performed a similar function as Assistant Director of Community Development, budgeting and forecasting grant funds for "cash on hand" and distribution.

Mayor Hawke questioned Ms. Dymek about her knowledge of the Tax Title process.

Ms. Dymek stated that she her current role in the Tax Title Process involves disposition of property, but that she would need to learn the remainder of the process.

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Councillor Walsh questioned her goal to become DOR-certified if she is named to the positions.

Ms. Dymek stated that DOR offers annual August classes for certification and that she would pursue certification over the three-year period and sit for the exam after the third session. She added that she attended classes and is certified as an MCPPO.

Councillor Walsh informed Ms. Dymek that the positions of City Treasurer and City Collector of Taxes are elected by the City Council, but that the individual must work cooperatively with the Mayor and department heads. He asked for her thoughts about working for both.

Ms. Dymek stated that she has a good working relationship with the Mayor and the department heads and that she regularly appears before the Finance Committee and works well with the City Council. She added that she is able to balance the needs of both parties.

City Auditor John Richard asked about her year-end experience.

Ms. Dymek informed the Committee that she maintains very detailed records for each year and has established protocols in place for everything – procurement and auditing policies. She said that MUNIS is another strength that she brings to the table and would seek to improve internal operations through functions that MUNIS offers, particularly “paperless functions.”

Mayor Hawke noted that in her current position, Ms. Dymek has only one area of focus – purchasing. He asked if she possesses the skill set necessary for the new positions.

Ms. Dymek stated that she possess the necessary skills set and that knows that the staff in the Treasurer/Collector’s office is very experienced and that she would anticipate their support.

President Graves asked whether Ms. Dymek discussed aspects of the position with Treasurer Charline Daigle.

Ms. Dymek replied, saying that her interactions with Ms. Daigle have related to their respective departmental issues. She added that she would welcome the challenge to be more involved with the City’s financial management and noted that she has been a member of the City’s Financial Management group that meets monthly, which includes the Mayor, City Auditor, City Treasurer/Collector of Taxes, and the City Assessor.

Abby Jenkins

- Employed by Johnson Controls as the Finance Supervisor-Centralized Billing.
- Former Branch Manager, GFA Federal Credit Union, Winchendon.
- Former Family Selection Committee Co-Chair, Habitat for Humanity, Worcester.

Ms. Jenkins informed the Committee that her current position is being relocated to Mexico. She is seeking a new career, one that provides a challenging role in finance. She just completed a Masters’ Degree in Accounting. She now holds 2 MBAs.

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Ms. Jenkins noted her varied experience in a number of financial positions, from Anna Maria College, various positions with GFA Federal Credit Union, and three different positions with Johnson Controls (formerly Simplex and TYCO).

Councillor Walsh questioned her experience developing budgets.

Ms. Jenkins stated that she developed and administered her department (Student Activities) budget at Anna Maria College. As a Branch Manager at the GFA, she was responsible for meeting the Branch's budget allocation, as well as forecasting deposit and loan growth sales to meet goals.

President Graves questioned whether she believes that she has the necessary skill set to perform the duties.

Ms. Jenkins stated that she believes that she has the skill set based on her varied experiences in private industry.

Mayor Hawke questioned her role in managing deposits and loan portfolios.

Ms. Jenkins stated that Bank management is required to sell various products lines. She noted that she dealt with the business community for loans, particularly with auto dealerships.

On inquiry concerning MUNIS experience, Ms. Jenkins informed the Committee that she is not familiar with the City's software system, but that she is a quick learner and would learn the various software system. She added that she presently utilizes Oracle software and used Peachtree Accounting software in the past.

Councillor Walsh informed Ms. Jenkins that the positions of City Treasurer and City Collector of Taxes are elected by the City Council, but that the individual must work cooperatively with the Mayor and department heads. He asked for her thoughts about working for both.

Ms. Jenkins responded, saying that she would not anticipate any problems, as she would do the job to meet expectations and by following rules and regulations and guidance from outside auditors. She added that he has always handled conflict in a professional manner and that all parties must find common ground.

The Mayor questioned whether Ms. Jenkins dealt with outside auditors at JCI.

Ms. Jenkins responded, saying that she dealt with physical auditors at GFA and with Ernst and Young at JCI.

On inquiry, Ms. Jenkins stated that she is seeking a long-term position in a new career and noted that in her current position, she implemented a SharePoint process for e-mails.

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The Committee decided to schedule its last interview with Melanie Rajaniemi for Monday, August 12, at 4:00 p.m. and to schedule a Special Meeting at 6:00 p.m. to elect the City Treasurer and City Collector of Taxes.

ADJOURNMENT

On a motion by Councillor Ronald Cormier and seconded by Councillor James Walsh, it was voted to adjourn at 12:37 p.m.