

City of Oronoco  
Special City Council Meeting  
Friday, April 29, 2022  
4:30pm City Hall

- 1) CALL TO ORDER: 4:32pm call to order by Lori Novak
- 2) ROLL CALL Dana Bergner, Jim Phillips, Jim Richards, Lori Novak  
Absent: Ryland Eichorst
- 3) APPROVAL OF AGENDA Motion to approve agenda. Jim Phillips Second Jim Richards
- 4) STATUS OF CITY CLERK EMPLOYEE AND DUTIES

Councilor Lori Novak began the discussion by acknowledging that Oronoco City Clerk Jerilyn Horton submitted a resignation letter on April 18th, 2022 with an employment end date of May 3rd, 2022. Following that submission, withdrawal of her resignation with contingencies was submitted by Ms. Horton on April 21st.

Councilor Novak mentioned that personnel committee members had lengthy discussions with Ms. Horton during the times mentioned above regarding changes the city is working toward to decrease workload. It was also explained to Ms. Horton that the personnel committee alone could not make a decision without council approval on how to proceed. During this time, the personnel committee sought counsel from our labor attorneys. Following conversations with the personnel committee, Ms. Horton submitted another resignation on April 22nd. Councilor Novak explained that Council now needs to make a decision to discuss whether we would negotiate contingencies:

Contingencies requested by Ms. Horton include:

- removal of the administrator and financial advisor duties from the city clerk job description
- reduced schedule to thirty-six (36) hours per workweek
- increase in hourly wage
- hire additional city staff person(s)

Discussion was started by Councilor Phillips who stated that in January the city offered a good olive branch by giving her hours to work from home due to children's school schedules. He recognized that the water and sewer project has added work to her load. Councilor Richards wondered if we were to agree to the contingencies, what would be the next request? Councilor Bergner agreed with Councilor Phillips and stated that what jumped out at her about the contingencies was that Ms. Horton was requesting more money for less hours. Councilor Bergner stated that we have worked hard to accommodate Ms. Horton's schedule by giving her time to work from home and equipment to do so. Councilor Phillips mentioned that computer software was recently installed to allow staff to work within the system at the same time allowing Michelle to help with certain tasks and should decrease workload. Councilor Novak agreed and stated this was just implemented on Wednesday. Councilor Richards agreed with the concern

about Ms. Horton's request for less work but more money and a title change. He doesn't feel that the city council should consider contingencies such as this to avoid setting precedent for future employees. Councilor Novak stated that she does not want to feel like we are being held hostage by an employee or vice versa. An employee should feel they can leave at any time. Sometimes a job may not be a good fit. Councilor Novak has known Ms. Horton for a long time and holds no ill will toward her. Councilor Richards stated that there can be good in everything. He does not want Ms. Horton to leave nor does he want the city to be in this position but Ms. Horton did resign and this can be looked at as pressing a reset button moving forward.

Councilor Bergner made a motion to deny the request by Ms. Horton for continued employment with contingency. Second by Councilor Richards. Motion passes.

Discussion was then had about the plan moving forward. City labor attorneys suggested hiring an interim administrator/clerk to help the city get back on track. Councilor Novak suggested that we discuss if there are other tasks we can hire out such as payroll and billpay. Councilor Novak acknowledged that council members are not here every day and do not understand what goes on each day to make the city run. Personnel committee members Councilor Richards and Novak would like to have a strategy meeting with Ranae and Michele to discuss how to move forward. At this point, Councilor Phillips asked what the staff attitude is. Councilor Novak stated she feels like they are worried and uncertain on who will be doing the work and how. Councilor Richards stated this is part of the reason he is in favor of hiring an interim administrator to help us through this gap and that it is an opportunity for the city. Councilor Novak said that hiring an interim city clerk/administrator was suggested by labor attorneys and that the people who accept these jobs generally have 20-30 years of experience in city government. Councilor Phillips agreed that this is an opportunity and will be needed as we come upon budget season along with the ongoing water and sewer project. He asked how we find such a person to fill this position. Mike Flaherty stated you can post it on the LMC board. Plainview had a similar situation and hired somebody for 3-6 months who did a great job and helped the city out a lot. Mike Flaherty suggested working with labor attorneys to form a job description. Councilor Phillips asked if we should consider posting a full time position instead of the interim position. Councilor Novak stated that is not what the labor attorneys suggested and Mike Flaherty stated he agrees with the labor attorney's recommendation of an interim position. Council acknowledged that the city would work to make this a smooth transition for our city from interim to full time employee.

Councilor Bergner made a motion to direct the personnel committee to collaborate with labor attorneys to work toward hiring an interim city administrator. Second by Councilor Phillips. Motion approved.

Councilor Novak addressed current city tasks and if CEDA and Stantec Planning Services could take on some of these tasks to help take things off the plates of city staff. Councilor Richards would like to review contracts with Stantec to make sure there is a clear understanding of city tasks vs Stantec tasks. Councilor Novak would like approval for our city staff to work with CEDA to come up with a task list of action items. Ranae has started looking

into payroll companies. The city received one quote back stating this service would cost us \$1515 for an entire year for 10 employees. Council agreed that it is imperative that we make sure our staff is paid and that we make a plan for that.

Councilor Bergner made a motion to direct the personnel committee to work with existing staff to handle payroll by any means, including hiring an outside consultant for services between now and the hiring of an interim city administrator, or further action by the council. Second by Councilor Phillips. Motion approved.

This discussion will be brought to the May City Council Meeting.

- 5) ADJOURNMENT Motion to adjourn 5:24pm by Councilor Phillips. Second by Councilor Richards.

Respectfully Submitted:  
Dana Bergner April 29th, 2022