

Cuyahoga Falls City Council
Minutes of the Committee-of-the-Whole
July 12, 2010

Members: Diana Colavecchio, Chair

Mrs. Colavecchio called the meeting to order at 6:41 p.m. Mr. Walters and Mr. Mader were absent.

Discussion

Mrs. Colavecchio stated the purpose of this Committee meeting was to discuss the selection of Paul Janis as the City's next Law Director.

Mayor Robart stated that Virgil Arrington will be retiring on September 1. Virgil has served the community extremely well as Law Director for the past ten years as well as over the whole of his entire 25-year career. We can only wish him well. They began their search for a new Law Director at the end of February/beginning of March. They searched both locally and statewide. Twenty-three candidates applied. They did extensive interviews, narrowed the field to five candidates, and then further narrowed it to two. Paul Janis emerged as an ideal candidate. He was born in Rocky River, went to undergrad at Notre Dame, graduate school at University of So. California and law school at Cleveland Marshall College of Law. His career experience includes being the Assistant Law Director for the City of Cleveland; time spent in the IT field for the City of Los Angeles; private sector experience at Walter Haverfield; and also as Senior Counsel at the Greater Cleveland RTA. He has an outstanding background. There are six weeks left until Virgil's retirement, however, Virgil will be taking his accrued vacation. Therefore, it is important that Mr. Janis be brought on board so there can be some overlap. Mr. Janis has spent a few days in the Law Department last week and he will continue in the position of Advocate Counsel until September 1, at which point he will begin as the City's Law Director. Their goal was to try to find someone as good as Virgil. The City has been lucky to find someone like Mr. Janis, and the Mayor is proud and honored to introduce him to Council.

Mrs. Colavecchio asked Mr. Janis if he had any comment before the questioning began. Mr. Janis stated he is happy to be here and felt honored that the Mayor nominated him as the next Law Director. Stepping into Mr. Arrington's shoes will not be an easy task. Mr. Arrington has assembled an excellent staff and Mr. Janis will be relying on them. He added that the City of Cuyahoga Falls is unique because of all of its available resources and its forward-thinking management. He would be ecstatic to serve as Law Director.

Mrs. Hummel stated Mr. Janis mentioned in his resume that he had some experience with bargaining unit relations but it did not mention whether he had done any negotiations. Mr. Janis stated he has never negotiated a union contract but he has worked with contracts and has done arbitrations so he is familiar with the process. Mrs. Hummel asked him if he would feel comfortable adopting the procedure the City uses from the Law Director. He indicated he would be comfortable handling the process. He added he also has experience with jury trials and mediations.

Mr. Rubino welcomed Mr. Janis and thanked him for considering being the Law Director for the City. Mr. Rubino stated that Mr. Janis has had a chance to become familiar with the staff in the Law Department and asked if he had a vision on how he will lead. Mr. Janis stated he has only been in the Department for five days now but the vision Mr. Arrington has driven over the past ten years has been completely professional. The people on his staff are very competent. The Department staff also has an open door policy. That works quite well, and he would like to carry it forward.

Mrs. Colavecchio asked if Mr. Janis had any conflicts in accepting this position. Mr. Janis stated not any he was aware of. He has no outside employment that would conflict, nor is he a part of any conflicting board or commission. He stated he has never been a union member and, to his knowledge, neither have his parents. Mrs. Colavecchio asked what his philosophic approach would be to negotiating collective bargaining agreements for the City. Mr. Janis stated everyone knows that the economic situation over the past two years has been very challenging. He feels that bargaining representatives will be reasonable if they are presented with honest and responsible facts. He has only been confronted with professionalism in his career and feels that will continue as long as the parties treat each other with respect. Mrs. Colavecchio asked if he had any background and experience that would permit him to handle the legal work that the City contracts out. Mr. Janis stated he has not had a chance to review the City's contract work in the five days he has been on board, however, the only thing he can think of right now is contracting for municipal bond work. That is not something a municipality would want to do in-house. He cannot speak to specifics at this time. Mrs. Colavecchio noted on his resume that he listed a background in utilities. Mr. Janis stated he has experience with municipal utilities. One of the reasons he feels this City is unique is because it has electric, water, and sewer utilities all here. Mrs. Colavecchio asked if he had an opinion on Mayors' courts. There has been a lot of controversy on those in the State. Mr. Janis stated there are pros and cons on Mayors' courts. He has never practiced in one nor has he worked for a municipality that had one. However, he feels a mayor's court is very convenient for residents to resolve their traffic issues locally vs. traveling to an out-of-town court. Mrs. Colavecchio asked about his Masters Degree in Public Administration and how he envisioned that degree being an enhancement. Mr. Janis stated the curriculum in a Public Administration degree covers budgeting, accounting and personnel practice. It is the same as the private sector only applied to the public sector.

Mrs. Colavecchio asked the Mayor if he had given any consideration to promoting from within. Mayor Robart stated he has a strong record of promoting from within, however no one applied from within in this case. He reached out to Hope Jones but she chose not to apply. She is comfortable where she is, and he likes the job she does where she is, but that forced him to look outside. Mrs. Colavecchio asked if there were any applicants from Cuyahoga Falls. Mayor Robart stated there was one and that was Dwayne Jones. They chose not to go that route for personal reasons. They interviewed 23 applicants via phone and chose to personally interview five. Mrs. Colavecchio asked how important it was to the Mayor that the Law Director be from the outside. She asked if it influenced his decision. Mayor Robart stated he always looks inside first. He has always liked to hire deputies who are in the process of preparing themselves towards director. Mrs. Colavecchio asked what strengths and qualities the Mayor saw in Mr. Janis during the intense interview process. Mayor Robart stated Mr. Janis was hard to turn down. His resume was exemplary, and his background lent itself to everything we do in the City. There was not a question asked during his personal interview that he didn't hit a home run on. He came across extremely well from top to bottom. He has no reservations about this choice at all.

Mr. James welcomed Mr. Janis. He stated that Virgil has always been reachable with his open door policy and was responsive to Council members when they called. He especially appreciated Virgil's responsibility, honesty and total neutrality when it came to partisanship. He always gave a straight answer. Mr. James felt Mr. Janis will bring everything Mr. Arrington had to the table. It is a big chair to fill. Mr. James has a lot of respect for Mr. Arrington and hates to see him go. He likes to see someone with Mr. Janis' qualifications come on board and carry on.

Committee recommended bringing out the appointment.

Meeting adjourned at 7:00 p.m.