



## **CITY MANAGER SEARCH ADVISORY TASK FORCE**

### **FEEDBACK REPORT – DISTRICT 9 PUBLIC MEETING**

Saturday, June 24, 2017, 10:00 – 12:00 p.m.

One Texas Center

Room 325

505 Barton Springs Road

Austin, Texas 78701

**Sponsored by Mayor Pro Tem Kathie Tovo**

**Hosted and Facilitated by Task Force Vice Chair, Saundra Kirk,**

**Staff in attendance:**

*Joi Harden, Senior Policy Advisor to Kathie Tovo*

*Ashley Richardson, District 9 Council Office Staff*

#### **1. INTRODUCTIONS**

#### **2. INVITED PUBLIC COMMENT ON IDEAL CANDIDATE QUALIFICATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS AND IDENTIFY KEY COMMUNITY ISSUES FOR CITY MANAGER PROFILE**

*Citizens spoke to the following three questions:*

- a)** What do you see as the most critical challenges to Austin over the next 5-10 years? Our next city manager is going to have to have the professional skills and personal attributes to tackle these issues, so we think it is important to provide this specific feedback to the City Council.
- b)** What are the personal characteristics that are most important for our next city manager to lead our unique community? Please think about the attributes that would be essential for someone to thrive in this environment.
- c)** What skills and abilities are most important for someone to manage our city? This could include previous job experience, education, etc.

### 3. PUBLIC INPUT

#### A. CRITICAL CHALLENGES – The successful candidate must be able to devise and manage effective solutions that positively impact the following problems:

- Cognitive Dissonance between the City’s reputation as successful, economically thriving, livable, and highly desirable against its dysfunctional administration that has not solved long-term, critical problems
- The disconnect between the Imagine Austin Master Plan and Neighborhood Plans, and the CodeNext replacement land development code that should implement them, is a severely divisive crisis that warrants a mid-course correction
- Lack of follow-up implementation of the *Zucker Report* detailed recommendations based on the external consultant’s extensive audit and analysis of problems within City departments
- Imbalance of power between the City Council, the City Manager, and departmental leadership
- Rather than providing facts, information, context, and options to Council, City staff too often pitch policy directions with huge implications and predetermined benefits to insider business and developer interests rather than public interests
- Low accountability of managers back to City Council regarding the failure to implement well-deliberated policies; ordinances drafted by legal department are often parsed to conveniently reflect staff perspectives rather than Council’s original intent
- The City organization is not adequately funded to meet and mitigate the needs of the City
- The internal organization is not connected via clear communication channels; leadership goals are not conveyed to employees throughout the organization
- High turnover, vacant positions, low morale: smart, talented staff input is stifled; female employees are undervalued or not taken seriously in some departments; gender bias is causing the City to lose good employees
- There is increasing loss of public confidence because the City habitually holds public forums seeking input on big out-facing policies and plans, but final outcomes and decisions regularly fail to reflect that feedback
- Need ground-up urban planning solutions to out of control growth and transportation problems
- Complex socio-economic inequities and systemic racism exist in Austin; a declining population of African Americans
- Tourists, new arrivals to Austin, and the development community have become the primary customer bases for the City at the expense of established residents and existing neighborhoods
- Austin is experiencing a wave of demolitions of older houses causing the loss of affordable neighborhoods, displacement of the working poor and people of color, and the loss of families with children.
- Tense relationship between the City and the State of Texas Legislature that overrides local self-rule policies.

**B. PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS – In order to thrive in the job, the next Austin City Manager should:**

- Embrace Austin and the need to preserve its unique character
- Be intelligent, well educated, open-minded, fair, empathetic, analytical, adaptive, and flexible
- Have a reputation for personal integrity, truthfulness, good judgement, and a strong moral compass
- Have a standard of personal conduct that sets the tone and models a high degree of performance accountability within the internal organization and in business relationships with external partners
- Have a strong, outgoing, but humble, gracious personality
- Like and respect people
- Believe in equity and social justice; value cultural, racial, gender, age, and economic diversity
- Be sensitive to issues that have serious consequences to the public and/or City employees
- Be an articulate communicator and a generous listener who willingly and openly engages with the public on controversial and volatile issues
- Be comfortable taking public input and being accessible to staff and citizenry
- Be diplomatic
- Have an evolving learning style with a broad array of resources.

**C. SKILLS – Must be a “Fixer” who has the ability to:**

- Develop and maintain cooperative, constructive, supportive relationships with the Mayor and Austin City Council
- Promote credible implementations of Council policies and resolutions that reflect the full intent of their deliberations and final decisions
- Demonstrate a proactive leadership style; foster and appreciate great ideas; and implement best practices
- Inspire, motivate and develop staff; recruit and retain strong effective teams; deliver succession planning
- Exhibit strong interpersonal, negotiation, and conflict resolution skills
- Create and apply reforming solutions to long-term problems
- Implement adopted master plans
- Conduct and analyze risk assessments
- Make course corrections and improve systemic processes when necessary
- Improve internal communication channels and processes to convey clear goals throughout the organization
- Eliminate silos and create a collaborative environment
- Make tough staffing decisions
- Resist the influence of for profit and not-for-profit influences in order to recognize and bring the best interests of residential constituents into a fair balance with the interests of commercial and development constituents
- Recognize and bring the best interests of established residents into a fairer balance with the interests of new people and entertainment tourists coming to Austin
- Foster understandings and relations between diverse cultures.

D. BACKGROUND – Preferred knowledge of and experience with:

- Austin’s history, its unique character, high priorities, and complex issues
- High-level hybrid leadership expertise from both a large, complex municipal setting and from a large, complex private enterprise, with some perspective into international affairs; or
- High-level leadership expertise and decades of public service from a complex municipal setting
- City management experience must be within a thriving city larger than Austin with a diverse population in excess of two million residents
- Experience with at least one world class, rapid growth city
- Oversight of multi-billion dollar budgets
- Oversight or experience with emergency services, labor unions, affinity groups, and non-profits, legal and energy departments, and an airport.
- Performance-based goal setting, management, and budget experience
- Transparent processes, interactions, and communications with the public and employees