



# City of Grand Island

Tuesday, April 12, 2011

Council Session

## Item G2

**Approving Minutes of March 29, 2011 City Council Special Meeting**

Staff Contact: RaNae Edwards

CITY OF GRAND ISLAND, NEBRASKA

MINUTES OF CITY COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING

March 29, 2011

Pursuant to due call and notice thereof, a Special Meeting of the City Council of the City of Grand Island, Nebraska was conducted in the Council Chambers of City Hall, 100 East First Street, on March 29, 2011. Notice of the meeting was given in the *Grand Island Independent* on March 23, 2011 and March 26, 2011.

Mayor Jay Vavricek called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. The following Councilmember's were present: Chuck Haase, Larry Carney, Bob Niemann, Kirk Ramsey, Peg Gilbert, Mitch Nickerson, Scott Dugan, Randy Gard, and John Gericke. Councilmember Linna Dee Donaldson was absent. The following City Officials were present: Interim City Administrator/Finance Director Mary Lou Brown, City Clerk RaNae Edwards, Interim City Attorney Jason Eley, and Public Works Director John Collins.

INVOCATION was given by Mayor Vavricek followed by the PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE.

OTHER ITEMS:

City Administrator Finalist Interview (Mary Lou Brown). Mayor Vavricek commented on the leadership and abilities of Ms. Brown and the reason for his recommendation. Previous private sector experience in business was mentioned as being very important in his decision. Human Resources Director Brenda Sutherland asked questions to better understand the candidate for the position of City Administrator. Mary Lou Brown answered questions concerning her desire to fill the position of City Administrator.

Interim City Administrator Mary Lou Brown answered the following questions:

How does your past experience qualify you for this position? Ms. Brown stated she has a depth of knowledge in finance and accounting and some history in human resources. She stated she had leadership skills, was flexible, a problem solver, a team builder, and was used to changes.

What do you consider as your strongest abilities as an administrator? What skills are you seeking improvement in? Her strongest abilities were her leadership skills. She stated she could grow in the technical aspects of the job.

Describe the extent of your experience with organized labor relations in terms of union contracts, negotiations, grievances and discipline. She worked in a unionized environment all of her career and had experience in that area. She worked in the human resources area and was familiar with unions.

What is your style of management? She stated her style was one of consensus building, working as a team, values employees, open door policy, mentoring employees, education, and hands-on.

How do you manage your staff? Openness and interactive with employees.

Does it vary with different people or circumstances? Yes, adapting your style to get the best out of people you work with was important. She tries to get the best out of people.

Describe your supervisory experience; include the number of employees supervised, the titles of the employees and the total number of employees managed in the organization. Currently as Interim City Administrator she was managing 500 employees. She mentioned several other companies she worked with and the number of employees and positions she had worked with.

How do you see your role changing when you are fully responsible for all day-to-day operations of Grand Island? Moving into one position she would be able to focus on one job. She plans on touring the city departments. Mentioned was moving into the budget season, sewer extension project on 281, and more exposure within the community.

What three words would others use to describe you and how would that differ from your self-assessment? Thoughtful in decision making, honest, and open, these were the same words she would describe herself.

How do you feel about every decision you make being reported in the headlines of the local media? She stated this was the biggest change she has had to make coming from the private sector. She has felt she has dealt with it well as its part of the job. The longer she has been here the less impact.

What are your thoughts on how Grand Island can be involved in the legislative process and become more proactive in lobbying regarding issues that affect the development of the City? Do you have any specific examples from your work history where you were involved in legislative activities? She stated her experience in lobbying had been in watching other cities work with the legislature. Based on what she had seen at the legislature she felt it was important to have someone from the City at the hearings.

With several key vacancies (including the Finance Director), how do you intend to build your team knowing that many of them could be brand new to the functions of the city as we begin the budget cycle as well as union negotiations? Bring people on board and acclimate them quickly, mentor new employees, talk to the current employees to build the team.

What's the most difficult decision you had to make in your career and what did you learn from it? When she was asked to make the change from the finance world into the human resources world.

The reason she accepted the interim position was because she felt confident that she could do the job. She described herself as being a change agent.

In the organization where you have served, what one problem comes to mind that you encountered that you were especially proud of the outcome and how you solved it. Her most proud moment was becoming a part of the HR organization. Personal awards for the team, when it was built from scratch. She had formed lasting relationships and still keeps in touch with the team today.

Tell us about a situation at work in which someone put pressure on you to do something that you didn't feel was right. Describe the situation, what you did and the results. She stated moving a function here at City Hall into another department. She felt it was not a wise decision and that it wouldn't have the checks and balances needed.

What do you see as the top two or three crucial areas that must be addressed that play a critical role in our future? The first area was an overall vision of the City. Mentioned was strategy. Second was

that we would go through a lot of people changes. Third was managing the budget and keeping the employees on board and understanding the process.

What is your vision for the future of Grand Island? Continue to grow and provide the services that our citizens look to and manage the changes.

In what areas do you differ philosophically from the Mayor? She stated the Mayor is a very energetic Mayor who was always pushing the envelope. There was a limit as to how much an organization could absorb.

You often have to make recommendations to City Council on issues that have strong political implications. Give us an example of one such recommendation, and tell us how you handled it. Last year's budget.

Tell us how you would approach a situation in which you felt the Mayor was misguided in direction. How would you handle the situation if it was the Council you felt was misguided? She believes in conversation and bringing forth her view point for both questions.

What do you feel has been your greatest frustration or disappointment in your present or previous positions, and why do you feel this way? What did you learn from it? Her biggest frustration was there were never enough hours in a day. She tends to be a workaholic.

What process do you follow in making recommendations to the Mayor and Council? Always fact based when making recommendations. Having her ducks in a row, sharing that information in a way they will understand.

How would you feel if the elected officials did not follow your recommendations and instead directed another course of action? She stated that as long as she did her best that was fine. Not all people agree on everything. She didn't anticipate over time that everyone would agree on everything and that was fine too.

This position is tied to the term of the Mayor, why did you decide to apply for the position? She wanted to change the trend and felt it was a detriment to the City to have so many changes in the City Administrator position. She always looks for a challenge and likes the challenge. She likes to have lots of irons in the fire.

The City of Grand Island received 52 applications for the City Administrator position. What personal and professional qualities do you believe you have led you to be the single outstanding candidate for this job? She was a known commodity to the organization. She was the best candidate because of leadership skills and ability to understand the finances of the City. She was a strong supporter of Program Prioritization and felt it was the right tool to move forward with. As we move forward we'll have more information from the Citizens Survey which would roll into the program prioritization. We would be adding the correlation of the program revenue with the programs.

She feels very strong about the employees of the City and would like to start out with employee meetings. Need to bring every employee together and treated fairly.

Ms. Brown commented on net assets conversation with the State Auditor relating to negative balances. She stated we were in compliance. Fiscal policy issues were still there and needed to be

dealt with and updated. She felt Council participation at the overall budget level was important, day-to-day operations should be dealt with at the department level.

Financial reports presented monthly would keep the Council informed. Comments were made about not buying vehicles because of the loss of state aid. Outsourcing was mentioned concerning the City Attorney's position. Talks had been held with the County to see if these could be combined. Community involvement from the citizens in Grand Island was mentioned. Educating the public was important.

Ms. Brown commented on the wide variety of issues from the citizens of Grand Island that had come forth. Many issues could not be dealt with by the City. Communication with the Council was mentioned. The Mayor was strong on chain-of-command. Mentioned was the City Administrator report that was done previously. Chain-of-command was what she would like to use for the time being.

She stated she was a hands on manager and liked to direct, but felt it was very important to have communication with department directors both as a group and individually. She stated the Councilmember's most important role was to bring forward the views of those people who elected them. Interaction with the council needed to be driven by the council with what worked with them and Ms. Brown. One-on-one, e-mails, etc. whatever worked for the Council.

ADJOURN TO EXECUTIVE SESSION: Motion by Gilbert, second by Gard to adjourn to Executive Session at 8:23 p.m. for the purpose of discussion concerning City Administrator applicant negotiation for the protection of the applicant. Upon roll call vote, all voted aye. Motion adopted.

RETURN TO REGULAR SESSION: Motion by Gilbert, second by Dugan to return to Regular Session at 9:55 p.m. Upon roll call vote, all voted aye. Motion adopted.

ADJOURNMENT: The meeting was adjourned at 9:55 p.m.

RaNae Edwards  
City Clerk