

City of Medina
Management Transition Plan

December 9, 2021

Introduction

On December 3, 2021, City Manager Michael Sauerwein delivered his notice of resignation to the Medina City Council. His last day as Medina City Manager will be January 3, 2022. In order to prepare for that event and ensure continuity of City government, the Medina City Council's Personnel Committee, comprised of Mayor Jessica Rossman and Deputy Mayor Cynthia Adkins, have been working with Medina City Attorney Scott Missall to establish a short term plan facilitating the immediate need for the City Council to identify and appoint an Interim City Manager (ICM) who can work with outgoing City Manager Sauerwein in December and assume the ICM role on January 4, 2022, and a longer term plan for the Council to identify, select and engage a new full-time City Manager for Medina.

Purpose and Goal

The purpose and goal of this Management Transition Plan (MTP) is to establish a two-fold process that will: (1) ensure the short term continuity of City management and governmental functions, and the delivery of necessary and appropriate services to Medina residents; and (2) establish a reasonable timeframe for Medina's newly-elected City Council to identify, select and retain a regular full-time City Manager for Medina.

Personnel Committee Interviews with Directors and City Manager

Following receipt of the resignation, the Personnel Committee began conferring with Michael and the City's Directors about the transition. The Committee interviewed each Director individually, focusing on the status and maintenance of City services, and what gaps (if any) would be created by Michael's departure. Each Director advised that their operations and delivery of public services would continue as normal, even with Michael's departure, because the Directors are subject-matter experts for their Department and they are each managing their substantive operations independently of Michael's direct participation.

In its discussions with Michael, the Committee found him personally and organizationally committed to a smooth transition. He is participating in all of the activities needed to ensure a smooth transition process.

Short Term Transition Schedule

Based on the foregoing work, and in recognition of (i) the need to timely appoint an Interim City Manager to overlap with Michael's final 21 days of service and help ensure a smooth transition, (ii) the benefit to be gained by thus allaying some of the concerns identified by the Directors, (iii) the practical fact that the December 13th Council meeting is the last meeting of the year, and (iv) that a new Council will be seated in January after Michael's departure, the Committee proposes that the Council continue and formally implement the following transition schedule to address the City's needs arising from Michael's departure:

12.6--12.9: Committee interviews; work and drafting of MTP and its component parts.

12.8 @ 11:30: Agenda preparation meeting held for the 12.13 Council meeting. Council agenda was streamlined by moving various items to consent or future dates, enabling Council to have adequate time to review, discuss and address the pending management transition.

12.9: Michael and City Clerk Aimee Kellerman to issue a City statement (prepared in concert with the Personnel Committee) regarding Michael's departure and the next steps in the City's management transition.

12.10: Send final MTP to Council with additional comments regarding procedures and options for review prior to Council's 12.13 meeting. Issue and publish regular public Council packet for meeting.

12.13 @ 4:00: Final Council meeting of 2021. Principal actions will include the following, with public discussion (and possible executive session discussion) of the management transition and MTP consuming the majority of the Council's meeting time:

- * Attend to non-transition Agenda action items with due deliberation
- * Public session Council discussion of Michael's departure and transition issues
- * Possible executive session for Council evaluation of MTP with City Attorney
- * Public session MTP action items for Council decision:
 - * Appoint Interim City Manager to serve commencing 1.4.2022
 - * Direct coordination of transition by Michael and ICM for benefit of City
 - * Adopt MTP (as presented or as may be modified) for continuing implementation

12.14.2021 -- 1.3.2022: ICM and Michael work together to facilitate coordinated transition

1.3.2022: Michael's last day as Medina City Manager

1.4.2022: Interim City Manager formal start date

1.2022 ~ 6.2022: Development and implementation of long term MTP as Council determines necessary for appointment of regular City Manager for Medina

Personnel Committee Recommendation for ICM Selection

Based on its work and evaluation of transition issues, the Personnel Committee recommends that Council appoint Police Chief Steve Burns to serve as Medina's Interim City Manager for a duration of six months. The Committee's reasons for its recommendation are these:

The City will be best-served by an ICM who can immediately step in and learn from Michael during his last few weeks in Medina. As a practical matter, especially given the time of year, there is not sufficient time for an outside search to bring in a new person before Michael's departure.

Medina has an excellent team of Directors in place, and retention of that team should be Council's immediate priority. Even apart from the key importance of treating City employees thoughtfully, the bare facts are that the loss of Director-level employees in a small staff impacts the City's ability to function, and that finding replacements is both labor-intensive and expensive. The Committee believes that the goal of retention is best served by respecting the Directors' desire for stability and continuity in the team, and that appointing Chief Burns would best accomplish that under the circumstances. Most Directors told the Committee that they support the appointment of Chief Burns as the ICM.

Chief Burns is actively seeking a different career opportunity with new challenges and has enthusiastically stepped forward and asked to be appointed to the ICM position. Prior to Michael's departure, his plan had been to retire from Medina after 2022 and find a new path outside law enforcement. Now that Michael is leaving, he sees the opportunity to leverage his knowledge of Medina built as Chief and serve in a new position for the benefit of the City and himself. He has told the Committee that he is fully committed to the City Manager role, loves the City staff, and believes he can make a difference here. He also has a realistic understanding of what he doesn't know. He described how he would meet with each staff member to empower and support each one and understand what they do; he is also willing to take classes to increase his knowledge in

new areas. He is aware of ongoing morale issues within City staff and committed to working on improvement. He explained that his past professional experience and his personality will enable him to quickly take on this new role, and that he is really excited to have this opportunity if selected.

Chief Burns has extensive management experience, and has had success joining organizations outside his specific expertise and learning as he leads them. He did this while at the Washington State Patrol with both the Fusion Center and the bomb squad. Obviously his City experience is limited to his role as Medina's Chief for the past 7 years, so Council would need to rely on his expertise as a leader rather than his expertise in City management; Chief Burns readily admits that he is unfamiliar with Development Services and Public Works, in particular, but eager to learn. Given that this is an interim appointment, Council will be able to assess this potential issue in more detail in the new year. The Committee does not believe the learning curve is unreasonable nor that it outweighs the other reasons to appoint Chief Burns as interim city manager immediately.

Although the Committee has obviously not had time to fully vet Chief Burns during the few days since Michael's resignation, Chief Burns has a strong and positive reputation in our community. He also has a calm demeanor, which is something Council and residents have valued in our current City Manager.

The Police Department has an automatic order of succession, so the continuity of police services would not be compromised by re-assigning Chief Burns to act as full time ICM. Jeff Sass would become Acting Chief, and Austin Gidlof would take on Captain Sass's current responsibilities during Chief Burns' reassignment.

Selection of Regular City Manager

Per the framework above, the Personnel Committee recommends that the ICM appointment be for a stated duration of six months unless a regular City Manager is selected and appointed by City Council at any time during that period. During the six-month time period, Council should evaluate the performance of the ICM and contemporaneously determine what process, if any, it chooses to use for identification and selection of a regular City Manager.