

Mayor
John K. Handeland

City Clerk/Treasurer
Dan Grimmer



Nome Common Council
Kohren Green
Scot Henderson
Mark Johnson
Maggie Miller
Adam Martinson
Cameron Piscoya

**NOME COMMON COUNCIL
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
FRIDAY, MARCH 21, 2025 at 5:30 PM
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS IN CITY HALL**

102 Division St. • P.O. Box 281 • Nome, Alaska 99762 • Phone (907) 443-6663 • Fax (907) 443-5345

ROLL CALL AT 5:33p.m.

Members Present: C. Johnson, C. Henderson, C. Piscoya, C. Miller, C. Green
Also Present: City Clerk Dan Grimmer, Mayor John Handeland, Robert Evans-CM
Candidate, Lee Smith-CM Candidate,
In Audience: Ken Hughes, Brad Soske, Angie Nguyen, Cynthia Gray, Celia Jennings,
Jovan Dull, Chris Coffman, Cheryl Thompson, Diana Haecker, Trinh
Johnson, Wali Rana, Rachel Evans, Scot Krim,

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

A motion to approve the agenda was made by C. Johnson and seconded by C. Green.

At the roll call:

Aye: C. Johnson, C. Henderson, C. Piscoya, C. Miller, C. Green

Nay:

THE MOTION CARRIED.

NEW BUSINESS

- A. Review Procedures by Scott Krim from the Executive Search Firm,
It's an absolute pleasure to be here in Nome. He was here in November to meet with the City Council. The council hired their firm in search of the City Manager. Received 26 applicants for the position. Just for your information there was 2 applicants from Alaska. Unfortunately, one applicant withdrew. The firm had 4 applicants in mind; they met with the mayor, human resources, interim city manager and came to an agreement on 2 of the applicants. Robert Evans and Lee Smith are the 2 candidates that are here for the interview.
- B. Interview of Finalist #1 and #2 for the City Manager Position
1. Tell us about yourself, a self-introduction.
 - a. **Robert Evans** – Born and raised in Texas. Went into the military at age 18. Had a lot of experiences in many continents. He has a master in public administration and business administration, agricultural science consumer resources master. I think that I've got what it takes to be a city manager.
 - b. **Lee Smith** – Thanks the council. He came to Alaska last year and enjoyed it. His strengths are preparation for economic development housing utilities. Went to school in UNC, got a business degree. Went back home and back to college.
 2. What is your management style?
 - a. **Lee Smith** – It is really a management style participation and it is extremely important. It covers from bottom to upper management, they have to be involved in the decision process because they've got to buy in. Management by walk in room. Communicate with your staff. Earn their respect and be honest.
 - b. **Robert Evans** – Collaborative approach, build a team; in most cases your workers have the best answers. I think building a team is being a manager and together we come up with the best answers.

3. What would you do during the first six months in our community?
 - a. **Robert Evans** – Assessments to be done and talk to the people who are there. Receive guidance from the council on what to do. Work together and do what is given to him.
 - b. **Lee Smith** – Getting out first and foremost, with the council and your team. What is the communication process, text or email? Need to establish the communication process. At 90 days we are hitting the ground running.
4. What do you believe to be the challenges and opportunities facing our community? How are these likely to change in the future?
 - a. **Lee Smith** – It is the managers responsibility to give some insulation to the board while working with the community. Nome is going to have to make some growing pain decisions. Have the community help you make those decisions.
 - b. **Robert Evans** – Everyone sees the challenges, housing, capital improvement, infrastructure issues. The challenges are always opportunity. The people who are here, the Alaskans, are the ones we can get some answers from.
5. Explain what you believe the role of our City Manager should be.
 - a. **Robert Evans** – The city manager is the executor of plans and policy from the council. The manager is the cushion for the council and employees; between council and the citizens. Gather information and gets the expertise to the people to those who actually make the policies.
 - b. **Lee Smith** – The role of a city manager, first of all following the direction of the board. It's also about the team and building the team. With the board itself it's communication, communication. Once you lose that, you lose the sight of what the board wants. There can always be room for an improvement.
6. How will you go about building a strong relationship with elected officials? How will you maintain it?
 - a. **Lee Smith** – Communicate, communicate, be respectful, be honest, be candid. You have to have that respect. Keep everyone informed. You have to be honest and you have to have respect for your manager.
 - b. **Robert Evans** – Never lie. Always show honesty, show your best face and build good relationships. I build teamwork and to maintain that is communication.
7. How will you keep the elected official informed?
 - a. **Robert Evans** – I keep them informed with the media. Electronic forms are really good. Face to face is the best. Work with staff.
 - b. **Lee Smith** – Face to face is the best, if you can call me or see me, I can see your face and get the truth. As far as keeping the community informed; it's all social media.
8. To what extent do you believe contact with citizens and citizen's groups is important? How do you typically handle this responsibility? How will you build relationships with the community?
 - a. **Lee Smith** – Going back and talking with your citizens. Be out there with your citizens. It's nice to have briefings before meeting. Responsibility is the manager and the team. Need to build those relationships. They are a have to have.
 - b. **Robert Evans** – Building those family type relationships, is a best way to communicate. It's very important. Having an employee appreciation relationship.
9. Have you sat at the bargaining table in contract negotiations? Tell us about the experience and what you learned from it.
 - a. **Robert Evans** – I've had contract negotiations. Has saved millions of dollars. I've got a long history of finding out what they want and what we want.
 - b. **Lee Smith** – Yes, I've done collective bargaining for bus drivers. He's learned a lot from contractors. Having a relationship and to trust. It is not that difficult. What are the needs, what can we afford, what's reasonable?

10. Are you willing to take calculated risks?
 - a. **Lee Smith** – Yes. The ones that would help with these risks is the team. Sometimes you can't calculate the risks. In everything I do there are risks.
 - b. **Robert Evans** – Yes, the best leader is the one who minimizes those risks ahead of time. Not every risk will be taken care of.
11. What particular personal characteristics do you have that will most benefit our resident if you are hired?
 - a. **Robert Evans** – When the citizens can talk to me, always have an open door. Very protective of the staff. The relationship that you built is a family.
 - b. **Lee Smith** – Being open and being honest. The team and community need to see that you care. 36 years of experience. Worked for 70+ elected officials. The experience and the humor are very important. Big thing is to listen to the people.
12. Strong fiscal management skills are central to this position. Please describe the most challenging budgeting situation you have encountered and how you reacted.
 - a. **Lee Smith** – I love budget and finance. You have to know every line item. When you do your capital planning, what does it cost, how many people to hire. Have to put those things out there. 5 years is easy but you can also go on 10 years. Long term management is an expertise he has.
 - b. **Robert Evans** – Has a master's in business. Do not waste anything that is given to us. If you can make your case to those citizens, this relationship that is built will help us.
13. Do you view growth as a positive?
 - a. **Lee Smith** – Establish the money and bring the public in. To watch a business owner, have compassion with an intoxicated individual is key.
 - b. **Robert Evans** – Growth has a positive controlled growth. The challenge is to control it to be beneficial for you. Controlled growth is a challenge but uncontrolled growth is not always the best answer.
14. Please describe your experience working with a business community?
 - a. **Robert Evans** – Walmart wanted to open a business in their community but they had to reject them to save their own businesses. Those that have less employees are treated equally. You can see businesses diminish when you don't treat them as equals. Very passionate with small businesses.
 - b. **Lee Smith** – Both his wife and him have been small business owner. Has helped redo the urban rule policy. He has a lot of good ideas for the council. To help the people that are here, those who want to come in.
15. Describe your experience dealing with federal agencies?
 - a. **Lee Smith** – Has been through FEMA 29 times. FAA, FCC, one of his biggest is CBDG grants. There is real opportunity to have CDBG right now. You have to know the feds or they will pay you no mind. As a council and citizens is to have a script. In dealing with the feds it is getting harder. I love them all. Does not have any issues dealing with feds.
 - b. **Robert Evans** – The feds have a lot of influence on us. Has done a pretty good job navigating those spider webs. He is the way to get to the council. Has dealt with tribes in multiple confidence. Good at balancing.
16. If you accept this position, how long do you expect to stay?
 - a. **Robert Evans** – We talked about this in many different formats. He wants this to be his last job and he will stay as long as the council wants him. They all know that city managers are subject to politics. If you need me 10 years, I'll stay and will make this his last shot.
 - b. **Lee Smith** – As long as you'll have me. I am the author to my own destiny. The 60 is the new 45, he will not say if he'll stay here permanently. Took time off to reevaluate, do I want to stay in local government. Yes, it is my passion.

EXECUTIVE SESSION AT 7:58p.m.

A. Deliberation by the Council of Candidates; The Immediate Knowledge which may have impact upon the Character or Reputation of any person

A motion to go into executive session was made by C. Johnson and seconded by C. Green

At the roll call:

Aye: C. Johnson, C. Henderson, C. Piscoya, C. Miller, C. Green

Nay:

THE MOTION CARRIED.

OUT OF EXECUTIVE SESSION AT 10:13p.m.

A motion for the Mayor to enter into contract negotiations with Lee Smith was made by C. Green and seconded by C. Henderson.

At the roll call:

Aye: C. Johnson, C. Henderson, C. Piscoya, C. Miller, C. Green

Nay:

THE MOTION CARRIED.

ADJOURNMENT AT 10:17p.m.

APPROVED and SIGNED THIS 14th DAY OF April 2025

**JOHN K. HANDELAND
MAYOR**

**DAN GRIMMER
CITY CLERK**