

DRAFT

**CITY OF WAUSAU HUMAN RESOURCES COMMITTEE  
MINUTES OF OPEN SESSION**

DATE/TIME: August 13, 2015 at 6:00 p.m.  
LOCATION: University of Wisconsin – Marathon County, Center for Civic Engagement  
625 Stewart, Avenue, Wausau, WI  
MEMBERS PRESENT: R. Wagner (C), G. Gisselman, L. Rasmussen  
MEMBERS ABSENT: D. Oberbeck, W. Nagle  
Also Present: Mayor Tipple, M. Hite, R. Meilke, K. Winters

**Obtain public feedback on the results of the advisory referendum regarding hiring a City Administrator.**

Human Resources Committee President Wagner opened the meeting by welcoming all those in attendance. Wagner explained that the meeting was an opportunity for the community to give their comments and thought on hiring a full-time City Administrator. The referendum was voted down, however because of it being an advisory referendum, Wager said the HR Committee would like to hear comments from the community of their stance on the issue. Wagner said that anyone wishing to speak will be able to speak in front of the group, however it is for comments only and will not turn into a discussion. Wagner explained that another HR Committee meeting will be scheduled, the committee will go over all information and make a recommendation to the Common Council as to how to proceed with the form of Wausau's city government.

Robert Zimmerman (902 Stark Street): Against hiring a City Administrator unless the position is under the Mayor and an advisor to the Mayor. Mr. Zimmerman said he does not want anyone taking his vote away from him; if he doesn't like the Mayor, he can vote him out. If a City Administrator is hired and he doesn't like what he's doing, he won't be able to vote him out of office.

Earl Stilman (230 North 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue): Believes the Common Council failed the City by not electing an Administrator. Mr. Stilman believes that the current staff is not qualified or equipped to handle the issues facing the City. The City lost money for the Thomas Street project, illegal contracts were out, wanted assessor to lower assessments, among other things. If a City Administrator was hired that the person would be well qualified and know how to handle all issues.

Aaron Kapellusch (President and CEO of Wausau Area Chamber of Commerce): Mr. Kapellusch said he was here to speak on behalf of business community on White Paper that the Chamber created, which he felt was a great opportunity to help the community to understand the pro's and con's of hiring a City Administrator. Mr. Kapellusch said that if you look at the City from a business standpoint, hiring a qualified City Administrator would set the City up for better success. He believes we need to look forward to the future and become an attractive location for global talent. If talent doesn't come to the area, businesses will go where there is talent.

Tom Killian (133 East Thomas Street): Mr. Killian said he has concern about process and believes the will of the people should prevail no matter if from the last referendum or a further referendum. His concern is about Dr. Hintz conducting the study and providing information, feeling that the process completed by Dr. Hintz was not impartial. Mr. Killian said that Dr. Hintz is a well-known advocate for manager/administrator leadership, and that Wausau may wish to receive feedback from a firm or company that is unbiased. Mr. Killain said that the people's voice should decide the people's government.

John Fisher (Trustee of Emmerich Properties Charitable Trust, located at 309 South 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue): Mr. Fisher said as trustee, part of his job is to find his successor if needed. If he used the requirements needed to be elected as Mayor he would be viewed as negligent in his duties. Mr. Fisher sees the duties of the Mayor as similar to a CEO rather than a COO. Mr. Fisher personally feels a City Administrator would be best, but feels his personal opinion is irrelevant. Mr. Fisher went over the statistics of the voter turnout for the referendum vote, believing

that many felt it wasn't a relevant issue. As long as the services they are paying their taxes for are being done, the citizens don't care how the job gets done.

Carolyn Bronsten (817 Becker Drive): Believes the way the referendum question was phrased was confusing, alluding to a part-time Mayor with or without a City Administrator. Ms. Bronsten believes the City needs more administrator expertise, either part-time or full-time, depending on what the City can afford. Ms. Bronsten would like to keep a full-time Mayor position with or without a City Administrator.

Phil Keller (1400 Woodland Ridge Road): Wausau is not a corporation, and should be left to the people. People voted to keep a Mayor, and believe that the City is ignoring the will of the people. Mr. Keller believes we are supposed to be a democracy.

Debra Ryan (702 Elm Street): Ms. Ryan believes that no one at City Hall is qualified to be a City Administrator and that the Mayor is incompetent. She believes that Council does not receive all the information necessary from staff to make informed decisions. Ms. Ryan thinks that Wausau should still have an elected full-time Mayor, but also invest in a City Administrator that would be second in command.

Alderman Wagner said that he would like to keep the comments to the issue at hand and asked that everyone please refrain from making comments about any staff or elected officials.

Nancy Stencil (119 Sunrise Drive): Believes the voice of democracy needs to be heard, and the City of Wausau should vote in its council members and Mayor. Additionally, Ms. Stencil asked where the grant money came from to conduct the study for form of City government.

Rita Pachel (1310 Maple Hill Road): Ms. Pachel said that she has a problem with the use of the consultant, Dr. Hintz and the Chamber of Commerce. She believes that Chamber is unethical and partisan. Ms. Pachel said that if the goal of the City is less government, hiring a City Administrator is not the answer. The citizens of Wausau need their voices to be heard.

Joe Gehin (3400 Springdale): Mr. Gehin believes the referendum was a clear vote against a City Administrator and doesn't understand why this discussion is occurring. As a former City employee, Mr. Gehin said that the City will never see savings by hiring a City Administrator and it will only add another level of bureaucracy. Mr. Gehin asked that the council honor the outcome of the referendum vote.

James Tipple (407 Grant Street): Mayor Tipple said that the consultant gave the Council recommended wording for the referendum, and Council chose to reword the referendum that went to the voters; because the referendum failed, the second-guessing began. Mayor Tipple said that the consultant and the Chamber were charged with informing the citizens about the options available and that the meetings were poorly attended. Almost 7000 (34%) voters went to the polls and answered the referendum question. The referendum failed by a margin of 52% to 48%. Mayor Tipple believes it is the citizens who should make the decision and it shouldn't be rushed.

Robert Mielke (Council President and District 11 Alderman): Mr. Mielke believes that the results should have been discussed immediately following the vote. As Council President, Mr. Mielke brought this issue forward to be discussed and resolved by the end of August. Mr. Mielke said that he supports hiring a City Administrator, but understands the difference between a democracy and a dictatorship, and believes the Council should listen to the people. Mr. Mielke said the reason for the forum is to find out why people were in favor or not in favor of the referendum.

Gary Gisselman (319 Park Avenue, District 5 Alderman): Since the election he believes the people have spoken. Mr. Gisselman said the Mayor, Governor, and President are all elected by popularity and it is the democratic process. All these positions are elected by those who wish to vote on any given day. Mr. Gisselman said he

would also like to have the question answered about how the money for the grant to do the study on form of government was obtained.

Terry VanOrder (611Chellis Street): Ms. VanOrder said that she voted against the City Administrator position and believes it's important that Council honor the voters' decision. She doesn't feel that another layer is needed in City government. Ms. VanOrder said that prior to Mayor Tipple, the Mayor's Office had an assistant that would attend meetings on his behalf, handled employee problems, and kept the Mayor abreast of issues; Ms. VanOrder would be for having someone hired in that capacity in the Mayor's Office who works under the Mayor.

Wagner thanked those who attended and shared their opinions and said that Council will take all the information gathered and discuss it before a decision is made on how to proceed.

**Comments submitted by email.**

Sent: Thursday, August 13, 2015 2:01 PM

To: Romey Wagner

Cc: Keene Winters; Jim Tipple

Subject: Tonight's public hearing

Dear Mr. Wagner,

Thank you for scheduling the public hearing tonight to give Wausau citizens another opportunity to give their voices to how the city government should be run. Unfortunately I will not be able to attend the hearing and respectfully request my comments be included with those who speak tonight.

I believe it is essential to allow the voters of Wausau the chance to choose the head of city government. Therefore this should remain an elected position. Doing otherwise would take away a crucial piece of our democratic process which is the foundation not only of our city but also our country. It would also send a message to Wausau voters that their voices don't matter in city government.

I agree with many others that changes should occur to create more efficient and open processes and procedures in city operations. This can be accomplished in a number of ways, such as encouraging qualified people to run for office, educating citizens about the candidates so their votes are well informed, and ensuring that department heads and other city staff are thoroughly evaluated and highly qualified to do their jobs.

But it is not fair to expect the Mayor, City Council and paid staff to do the whole job of running the city. The city belongs to all of us and citizens need to become more involved. The neighborhood groups developed by Mayor Tipple and others are a good example of such involvement. Perhaps these groups could be expanded to include all neighborhoods, and take on a more responsible role in impacting decision making that affects the whole city. Perhaps each City Council member could hold a monthly gathering to obtain feedback from constituents on key issues.

Increasing ways for community input will help Council members and other city leaders get to know their constituents and thus better serve them. And isn't it human nature that we are more likely to support a decision if we've had a chance to express our opinion beforehand?

Wausau is a wonderful city with many assets. Whatever steps we take for the future of our city may they be taken through a thoughtful process which involves broad community input.

Thank you for your consideration.

Anne S. Jefferson  
3926 Riverview Drive  
715-845-3806

**Date:** August 15, 2015 at 10:03:22 AM CDT

**To:** "[garygisselman@yahoo.com](mailto:garygisselman@yahoo.com)" <[garygisselman@yahoo.com](mailto:garygisselman@yahoo.com)>, Robert Mielke <[Robert.Mielke@ci.wausau.wi.us](mailto:Robert.Mielke@ci.wausau.wi.us)>, "[Karen.Kellback@ci.wausau.wi.us](mailto:Karen.Kellback@ci.wausau.wi.us)" <[Karen.Kellback@ci.wausau.wi.us](mailto:Karen.Kellback@ci.wausau.wi.us)>, Sherry Abitz <[Sherry.Abitz@co.marathon.wi.us](mailto:Sherry.Abitz@co.marathon.wi.us)>, Tom Neal <[Tom.Neal@ci.wausau.wi.us](mailto:Tom.Neal@ci.wausau.wi.us)>, Dave Nutting <[Dave.Nutting@ci.wausau.wi.us](mailto:Dave.Nutting@ci.wausau.wi.us)>, Lisa Rasmussen <[markandlisarasmussen@charter.net](mailto:markandlisarasmussen@charter.net)>, Bill Nagle <[Bill.Nagle@ci.wausau.wi.us](mailto:Bill.Nagle@ci.wausau.wi.us)>, Romey Wagner <[Romey.Wagner@ci.wausau.wi.us](mailto:Romey.Wagner@ci.wausau.wi.us)>, David Oberbeck <[David.Oberbeck@ci.wausau.wi.us](mailto:David.Oberbeck@ci.wausau.wi.us)>, "Keene Winters" <[Keene.Winters@ci.wausau.wi.us](mailto:Keene.Winters@ci.wausau.wi.us)>  
**Cc:** "[ak@wausauchamber.com](mailto:ak@wausauchamber.com)" <[ak@wausauchamber.com](mailto:ak@wausauchamber.com)>

**Subject: Hearing**

Sorry I was unable to attend the public meeting but I was able to attend the committee meeting and ask a couple of questions,

After reading comments in todays paper I have a question for Mr. Kapelleush (who never returns my emails or telephone calls).

I believe the City of Wausau hired a individual recently whose function is attract business, work with the business community and attempt to attract individuals. What really is the role of the Chamber as well as McDevco and what has been the success of your Central Time Marketing, While I waited for the closed meeting I picked up a nice copy of your promotional material and ask you what success has that been in attracting industry?

I would also suggest this competing globally for talent is a farce. When we can't even compete with neighboring states for talent or keep the talent we have in this state. The chamber may want to check the role of the Chamber of Commerce with their role at the state level that has discourages and continues to discourage the brightest and best from staying in Wisconsin let alone Wausau.

I am sure all politicians will be glad to hear that all elections are "popularity contests" Just think all of you won because your popular.

Again I am sorry I could not attend but my comments to the committee should be in the record.

Sincerely  
Ronald Sem

**Adjourn.**

Meeting adjourned by Wagner.

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Romey Wagner  
Human Resources Committee, Chair