

COTTAGE GROVE CITY COUNCIL  
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES  
JANUARY 30, 2023

**CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor Solesbee called the meeting to order at 5:30 pm in the Council Chambers at City Hall.

**ROLL CALL**

City Recorder Mindy Roberts called the roll. The following were

PRESENT IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBERS: Mayor Solesbee, Councilors Dana Merryday, Chalice Savage, Mike Fleck, Jon Stinnett, and Greg Ervin

PRESENT VIA  
GOTOMEETING:

COUNCIL ABSENT:

STAFF PRESENT IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBERS: City Manager Richard Meyers and City Recorder Mindy Roberts

STAFF PRESENT  
VIA GOTOMEETING:

CITY ATTORNEY: None

MEDIA PRESENT: Sentinel, KNND Radio, The Chronicle

**DISCUSSION OF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS AND PREPARE FOR INTERVIEWS**

Council discussed the proposed interview questions. They agreed upon sixteen questions to ask the applicants and decided that they would go around the dais with each member of Council asking a single question at a time.

City Manager Richard Meyers read a statement to Council from applicant Ivan DelSol announcing that he has withdrawn his application.

City Manager excused himself from the Council Chambers during the interview process and remained in the foyer to bring in applicants at their scheduled interview time.

Council interviewed each applicant starting with Garland Burback, followed by Christopher Perry Holloman, Alex Dreher, Donn Rust, Urban Moore and Scott Borgioli.

Mayor Solesbee explained to each applicant that they would be asked a series of questions and that they were allotted approximately one minute to answer each. She added that if they go over the one minute that it is not a problem.

At the conclusion of the last interview, Councilor Fleck pointed out that question number twenty needs to be changed, because none of the applicants realized that it was asking about representation on the Council not representation within the community.

City Manager Richard Meyers joined the meeting after the conclusion of the last interview.

Councilor Savage asked Mayor Solesbee how she would like to move forward. Councilor Savage offered the options of Council discussing each applicant individually or each member of Council naming their top three choices.

Mayor Solesbee asked each Councilor to state the name of the candidates that they were most impressed with and said Council would go from there.

Councilor Merryday said he was impressed by all of the candidates and that Council was blessed to have such a wide spectrum of candidates. He said he was primarily impressed with the three candidates that showed knowledge and understanding of the role of government. He said his choices would be Chris Holloman, Alex Dreher and Donn Rust.

Councilor Savage said that she appreciates all of the candidates taking the time to interview. She said she was impressed by Alex Dreher, Donn Rust and Scott Borgioli.

Councilor Fleck thanked all of the candidates for coming to interview and said that he enjoyed hearing the different thoughts from other community leaders. He said Alex Dreher rose to the top and had a lot of knowledge about what we were doing. He said his second pick would be Garland Burback because of his years of knowledge and Donn Rust would also be in the top three.

Councilor Stinnett thanked the applicants for coming to interview and acknowledged that it takes a lot to commit to this kind of work. He said he was very impressed with Alex Dreher, her breadth of knowledge and she is very solution forward. He said his other top two would be Chris Holloman and Donn Rust.

Councilor Ervin said the candidates had some great ideas and he thought that Council should consider having an advisory committee. He said his top two candidates would be Alex [Dreyer] and Chris [Holloman].

Mayor Solesbee said that she knew this would be a hard process when she read the applications. She said she came into the process thinking that if it was an even playing field for several candidates, she would choose whoever made the effort to run for election. She reminded

Councilor Savage that was also her viewpoint and what took place when Councilor Savage herself was appointed. She recounted that the recent election between Councilor Merryday and Chris Holloman was a close race and she said she has to stand with her viewpoint, even though there were some great applicants.

Audience member called out that Mayor Solesbee only made one choice, and asked if she was naming three.

Mayor Solesbee said no, she is only choosing Chris Holloman.

Councilor Fleck said he is not supporting Chris Holloman. He said he likes Chris and has worked with him in the past. He said Chris chose to run as an adversary and on a platform to get rid of the City Manager and bringing that in at this time would not benefit the Council.

Mayor Solesbee said she never heard Chris say that he wanted to get rid of the City Manager.

Councilor Ervin said that he never heard that either and he is curious about it.

Mayor Solesbee said he never said that.

Chris Holloman spoke up from the audience and said, he never said that.

Councilor Fleck said he apologizes if he is incorrect.

Mayor Solesbee added comments regarding Chris Holloman's campaign slogan.

Councilor Savage said that she wants to break the tension and support someone who has not ruffled feathers.

**IT WAS MOVED BY COUNCILOR SAVAGE AND SECONDED BY COUNCILOR FLECK TO APPOINT ALEX DREHER.**

Councilor Stinnett said Ms. Dreher is the obvious choice, he would be proud to support her and he thinks Council would be doing a great thing for the community.

Councilor Ervin asked Councilor Savage to speak about weighing the value between having community support representation and the ruffling of feathers idea.

Councilor Savage said that Council needs unity. She said that there are so many differences of opinions that there is a perception of weighting the Council. She said that Council needs to appear united and support each other.

Mayor Solesbee said we have great diversity and we need balance. She said she supported Chalice at the time, and that she is the one who nominated her because she ran. She said the person Chalice is supporting did not run this time around and there should be great weight for someone who put themselves out there and ran.

Councilor Savage clarified that she did not say that Chris ruffled feathers.

Mayor Solesbee said there will always be ruffled feathers in our community and on Council and sometimes you have to be willing to do that in order to do the right thing.

Councilor Fleck reiterated that he liked Mr. Holloman when they worked together in the past and he is not saying that he could never work with him. He said this last year has been brutal and contentious. He said Council is on an unstable platform and introducing an element that could downgrade the way Council works together is not worth it at this time. He added that he hopes in the next election cycle that people will run positive campaigns and not be a group of people that are trying to change the direction. He said Council does not have to agree, but Council does need to be cohesive, have a good working relationship and mutual respect.

Mayor Solesbee said that Councilor Fleck and Savage are taking this personally and she stands by her decision.

Councilor Ervin said that his perception, from those who made the motion, is that Council should keep the balance in order to keep things moving in the same direction. He said there does seem to be a tolerance of different opinions as long as it does not switch the vote.

Councilor Stinnett and Fleck asked Councilor Ervin to explain what he means.

Councilor Ervin said what he is hearing, is that Council can have disagreement as long as it does not topple the direction that we are headed, and that we absolutely want to stop course correction.

Councilor Fleck said that he can care less about one vote and it is not about individual votes or course correction. He said it is about people who are going to represent Council from an independent position, based on what is best for our citizens and community. He said he is trying to avoid getting into an adversary role with Council. He said he had hoped that a candidate would rise to the top so that we would not be having this conversation. He said there has been some real missteps this last year and we need people who are going to help build that rapport.

Mayor Solesbee said that the election was such a close race and the citizens of Cottage Grove have spoken. She said it would be a slap in their face if Chris Holloman is not appointed to the seat. She said he got more votes than Chalice this time and she was elected to her seat.

Councilor Savage said that she likes Chris but the comment on the bottom of his application sounded like entitlement.

Mayor Solesbee said she can understand why he would feel entitled. She added that she loves Greg's [Councilor Ervin's] idea of having an advisory committee to the Council with some of these great candidates. She said Chris Holloman has earned this seat under the precedent that Chalice was appointed and she is surprised that Chalice would not feel the same way.

Councilor Stinnett said he has not known Mr. Holloman for a long time and he likes what he

does know. He said Mr. Holloman ran a spirited race in the fall and does not know what he did or didn't intend to do as a Councilor. He added that he was blown away by Alex Dreher, and she is the best candidate regardless.

Councilor Ervin said that he does not have much experience with Chris and no experience with Alex. He said he was very impressed with Alex and that she and Chris would both serve well. He said since he has them fairly equal, he tilts the scale to the one that has put in the work and effort. He questioned why Alex did not run in the last election.

Councilor Stinnett asked if she is in Ward 3.

Councilor Savage said she is in Ward 4.

Councilor Stinnett said if the second place vote recipient in the election was going to be appointed, Council would have done that with Chalice before we went through the interview process and also done the same with Mr. Holloman. He added that Council did not do that, and he questions the need for this process if that is what Council was going to do.

Mayor Solesbee said she went into the process thinking that if the candidates were equal in her viewpoint, the appointment would go to the person who ran.

Councilor Merryday said that he is in a difficult position because he and Chris sought the same Council seat. He said he was very impressed by all of Alex [Dreher] answers, in particular with her ability to understand the grant process and her being privy to grant information as a County employee.

Councilor Fleck asked Mayor Solesbee to call the question.

Mayor Solesbee called the vote.

The vote on the motion was as follows:

VOTE		Councilor Stinnett	Councilor Savage	Councilor Fleck	Councilor Merryday	Councilor Ervin	Mayor Solesbee
AYES		X	X	X	X	X	X
NAYS							
ABSTAIN							

City Manager announced that the motion has passed. He reminded Council of the training meeting on Friday morning at 8:30 am.

## ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Mayor Solesbee adjourned the special meeting of the City Council at 8:00 pm.

The next regular City Council Meeting will be held February 13, 2023, at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers at City Hall.

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Mindy Roberts, City Recorder

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Candace Solesbee, Mayor