

**DRAFT**  
City of Fort Lauderdale  
CITY ATTORNEY SEARCH COMMITTEE  
Monday, September 18, 2023, 8:00 A.M.  
3<sup>rd</sup> Floor Conference Room  
Fire Administration  
528 NW 2<sup>nd</sup> Street, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33311

<b>Members</b>	<b>Attendance</b>	<b>Present</b>	<b>Absent</b>
<b>Romney Rogers, Chair</b>	P	4	1
<b>McKillop Erlandson, Vice Chair</b>	P	5	0
<b>Roosevelt Walters</b>	P	5	0
<b>Troy Liggett (at 8:33 a.m.)</b>	P	5	0
<b>Richard Weiss (via Zoom)</b>	P	4	1

**Staff**

Jerome Post, Director, Human Resources  
Kerry Arthurs, Administrative Supervisor  
Dona Higginbotham, Mercer Group Florida LLC

**I. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 8:30 a.m. by Chair Rogers.

**II. Roll Call**

Roll was called as outlined above. It was noted a quorum was present.

**III. Approval of Minutes from August 8, 2023**

**Motion** was made by Mr. Walters, seconded by Vice Chair Erlandson, to approve the minutes of the August 8, 2023, meeting as presented. In a voice vote, the **motion** passed unanimously.

**IV. City Attorney Candidates Interviews**

Chair Rogers outlined the process to be followed in the interviews and discussion ensued briefly as to the process.

**i. 8:30-10:00 – Ansbro**

Thomas J. Ansbro provided a brief opening statement regarding his experience, most recently as City Attorney for Dania Beach and Special Magistrate.

Vice Chair Erlandson asked questions regarding management experience, philosophy on cost control, factors for settlement of litigation, and navigating pre-emptions from the State, as well as a follow-up question regarding public/private partnerships. Mr. Ansbro responded.

Mr. Weiss asked that Mr. Ansbro comment on the relationship between the City Attorney, City Manager, and elected officials, and followed up with questions regarding differing positions and conflict resolution in that relationship. Mr. Ansbro responded.

Mr. Liggett asked who the City Attorney's client is, and Mr. Ansbro explained ultimately, the client is the City, which is comprised of a number of pieces. Mr. Liggett asked several follow-up questions, and Mr. Ansbro answered each in turn.

Mr. Liggett asked about issues related to allegations of bias in hiring, timely responses and accountability, and provided an opportunity to clarify anything which might come back in a background check. Mr. Ansbro responded.

Mr. Rogers asked Mr. Ansbro questions regarding residency, delegating to and trusting staff while retaining responsibility, diversity in the workplace and the City Attorney's office, working as a consultant versus staff attorney, salary requirements, and what makes him the best candidate for the position. Mr. Ansbro replied.

Chair Rogers inquired as to Mr. Ansbro's position on the leadership role of the City Attorney, leadership style, and transition planning. Mr. Ansbro responded.

Chair Rogers asked about interaction with the City Commission while on the dais, and Mr. Ansbro shared his experience learning his role as advisor on the dais.

Chair Rogers asked questions regarding working with a City Auditor and the role of the City Attorney's office, the hottest issues currently before the City Commission, whether the City Attorney should be reactive or proactive, and how many hours a week he works. Mr. Ansbro replied.

The Committee members thanked Mr. Ansbro for his time.

**ii. 10:00-11:30 – Anastasio**

John J. Anastasio provided a brief opening statement regarding his experience, most recently in private practice, and reasons he would be the person to address existing issues in the City Attorney's office through organizational transformation.

Vice Chair Erlanson asked Mr. Anastasio to discuss his experience making structural change, and to speak on the multi-faceted role of the City Attorney's office, including delegating, working with people, and legal work. Mr. Anastasio replied.

Vice Chair Erlandson asked about the biggest issues facing the City, management

experience, philosophy on cost control, and experience with public/private partnerships. Mr. Anastasio responded.

Mr. Weiss asked Mr. Anastasio to comment on his specific experience representing elected officials. Mr. Anastasio outlined his municipal experience briefly.

Mr. Weiss asked about the relationship between the City Attorney, City Manager, and elected officials, and followed up with questions regarding differing positions, conflict resolution in that relationship, the most recent election, and delivering opinions that disagree with the positions of Commissioners. Mr. Anastasio responded.

Mr. Liggett told Mr. Anastasio he would like to get to know him better and asked him to discuss the Longfellow quote on his letterhead. Mr. Anastasio explained.

Mr. Liggett continued to ask questions regarding Mr. Anastasio's resume, cover letter, and supplied materials, as well as his experience managing a large office. Mr. Anastasio responded and clarified as needed.

Mr. Liggett asked who the City Attorney's client is, and Mr. Anastasio stated the governing body is the client of Charter level officers, as they represent the people.

Mr. Liggett provided an opportunity to clarify anything which might come back in a background check. Mr. Anastasio responded. Mr. Weiss asked for additional clarification. Mr. Anastasio expanded briefly.

Mr. Walters asked questions regarding continuing education, military experience, working as a consultant versus staff attorney, and salary requirements. Mr. Anastasio responded.

Mr. Walters asked Mr. Anastasio to comment on the City's extensive infrastructure projects and bond funding, and asked questions regarding delegating and trusting staff while retaining responsibility, working with and around artificial intelligence, and diversity in the workplace and the City Attorney's office. Mr. Anastasio replied.

Chair Rogers asked for clarification on municipal experience, work in a firm and in solo practice, and management experience. Mr. Anastasio responded.

Chair Rogers asked for additional clarification on past disciplinary actions and suspensions. Mr. Anastasio explained.

Chair Rogers inquired as to Mr. Anastasio's experience on Bar committees and the breakdown of types of law handled by his current practice. Mr. Anastasio responded.

The Committee members thanked Mr. Anastasio for his time. Mr. Anastasio distributed an outline of core values for a performance excellence system for the City Attorney's office.

*Audio abruptly cut off at 11:34 a.m. and again resumed at 12:02 p.m.*

**iii. 11:30-12:30 – Break**

The Committee members discussed Mr. Ansbro and Mr. Anastasio's interviews and how to manage next steps over lunch. Consensus was to remove Mr. Anastasio from consideration for the role.

Discussion ensued regarding checking references. Consensus was for Mr. Weiss and Chair Rogers to reach out to former colleagues who were not listed as references for objective feedback, then for the Committee to meet again on Thursday, September 21 at 3:00 p.m. for a final discussion.

Mr. Weiss suggested drafting a final report outlining the process the Committee had undergone, including the research conducted by Mercer Group. Ms. Higginbotham stated she would assist with creation of the report.

Chair Rogers asked whether the Commission wanted the Committee involved in their interview process. Mr. Post advised that he would inquire and report back.

**iv. 12:30-2:00 – Dunkiel**

Andrew B. Dunkiel distributed a copy of his resume and supporting documents and provided a brief opening statement regarding his experience, most recently as Deputy City Attorney for Coral Springs, and outlined what had driven him to apply for the position with Fort Lauderdale.

Vice Chair Erlandson asked questions regarding interaction with the City Commission, management experience, and relationship building, as well as the intertwining of policy and law. Mr. Dunkiel responded.

Mr. Weiss asked Mr. Dunkiel to explain the format of the City Attorney's office in Coral Springs and to expand on his role. Mr. Dunkiel explained.

Mr. Weiss asked that Mr. Dunkiel comment on the relationship between the City Attorney, City Manager, and elected officials, and followed up with questions regarding who the City Attorney's client is, differing positions, and conflict resolution in that relationship. Mr. Dunkiel responded. Mr. Weiss asked for additional clarification and Mr. Dunkiel expanded on his previous answers.

Mr. Weiss asked Mr. Dunkiel to discuss how he deals with the fact that his job depends on the City Commissioners, but you do sometimes have to tell them no. Mr. Dunkiel responded.

Mr. Liggett asked Mr. Dunkiel to explore more deeply into who the City Attorney's client is and the obligations of the role. Mr. Dunkiel responded. Mr. Liggett asked several follow-

up questions, and Mr. Dunkiel answered each in turn.

Mr. Liggett asked about issues related to allegations of bias in hiring, the City Attorney's role in navigating labor issues with the Police Department and provided an opportunity to clarify anything which might come back in a background check. Mr. Dunkiel responded.

Mr. Walters asked Mr. Dunkiel to comment on how he would work on the issue of affordable housing in Broward County. Mr. Dunkiel discussed the matter briefly.

Mr. Walters asked about working with and around artificial intelligence, delegating and trusting staff while retaining responsibility, diversity in the workplace and the City Attorney's office, understanding of the City districts, diversion and civil citation programs, and the PROMISE program within Broward County Schools. Mr. Dunkiel replied.

Chair Rogers stated the City Attorney has historically been at the forefront of the homelessness issue in Fort Lauderdale, and asked Mr. Dunkiel his experience and position. Mr. Dunkiel responded.

Chair Rogers asked how Mr. Dunkiel manages conflicting direction from the Mayor and Commission and negotiating labor contracts and asked him to identify the largest issues facing the City Attorney's office in Fort Lauderdale. Mr. Dunkiel responded.

Chair Walters asked about interaction with the City Commission while on the dais, years of experience, working with a more experienced staff, and the challenges of creating culture. Mr. Dunkiel answered. As a follow-up, he asked Mr. Dunkiel to outline his top three (3) elements of collaboration in the workplace. Mr. Dunkiel replied.

Mr. Liggett asked for clarification on Mr. Dunkiel's experience with Biscayne Park and whether he intended to continue to operate his private law firm if hired by the City. Mr. Dunkiel responded. Mr. Weiss followed up to ask if Mr. Dunkiel would commit to closing his firm. Mr. Dunkiel confirmed that he would.

Mr. Weiss asked what Mr. Dunkiel saw as the difference in roles between working as an Assistant City Attorney in Coral Springs and the City Attorney in Fort Lauderdale. Mr. Dunkiel explained his view of the roles.

The Committee members thanked Mr. Dunkiel for his time.

## **V. Discussion of Candidates**

Discussion ensued regarding Mr. Dunkiel's interview and the three (3) candidates.

**Motion** was made by Mr. Weiss, seconded by Mr. Walters, that the Committee had determined that Mr. Ansbro and Mr. Dunkiel are both well qualified candidates, and recommend that, due to his experience, Mr. Ansbro would be a better fit for the role at this time. In a voice vote, the **motion** passed unanimously.

## **VI. Next Steps**

Chair Rogers asked whether Mr. Post would be sharing the motion with the Commission at the conference meeting on September 19.

Mr. Weiss expressed concern that references should be checked first, as he did not want the process to result in embarrassing either of the candidates. Discussion continued as to whether to identify that there were two (2) candidates to allow for scheduling interviews.

Consensus was to inform the Commission that there would be a recommendation following the Thursday meeting of the Committee and to ask that they schedule three (3) hours for interviews.

## **VII. Adjournment**

Upon motion duly made and seconded, the meeting adjourned at 2:34 p.m. The next Regular Meeting of the Committee is scheduled for Thursday, September 21 at 3:00 p.m.

[Minutes prepared by C. Parkinson, Prototype, Inc.]