

Council Business Meeting

December 10, 2021

Agenda Item	Appointment of City Manager	
From	Gary Milliman	City Manager Pro Tem
Contact	Gary.milliman@ashland.or.us	

SUMMARY

Mayor Akins is requesting City Council concurrence in the appointment of Joseph Lessard as City Manager effective January 3, 2022.

POLICIES, PLANS & GOALS SUPPORTED

The City Charter provides for the appointment of the City Manager by the Mayor, with the concurrence of the City Council.

BACKGROUND AND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

City Manager Pro Tem Gary Milliman, with the Assistance of the Human Resources Department, conducted a search for Ashland's first, non-interim City Manager. Twenty applications were received and were review by the City Manager Pro Tem, who works part time as an executive recruiter and has selected City Manager successors in the past. Four semi-finalists were interviewed by the Mayor, City Council, a management/employee panel and a citizens/community leaders panel. One finalist, Joseph Lessard, has visited Ashland and met individually with the Mayor and all members of the City Council.

Joseph Lessard has some5 years of experience in local government management and as a consultant to local government. Lessard is a Vision and goal-oriented leader with a strong emphasis on positive team building. He is known for creativity, attention to detail and perseverance in pursuing objectives. Lessard is skilled in change management, negotiation, communication, intergovernmental relations, and problem solving for balanced solutions to community issues.

For the past nine years he has worked as a consultant to local government and private sector clients in the areas of economic development, project management, intergovernmental and community relations, mediation, and land development. Private entity work included soliciting public/private partnerships for affordable housing, marketing services for an electric grid demand response service provider and, negotiating endangered species mitigation for a 4,000-acre land development with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Public entity work has included drafting the Travis County, Texas, conservation development ordinance, conducting the Southwest Travis County Growth Dialog (community planning effort), and a funding plan development for the Hays County Regional Habitat Conservation Plan

He served over nine years as Assistant City Manager for the City of Austin, Texas, where his management responsibilities included over half of designated City departments. His work included oversight of all the City's enterprise (electric, water/wastewater, solid waste, convention center and visitor's bureau, and aviation), public safety (police, fire, and emergency medical service), development (planning, environmental services, economic development, and housing) and infrastructure (public works/real estate) operations. City management issues addressed during this Austin tenure included reorganizing and continuous improvement implementation for customer service and increased efficiency, and to build an open, teamwork culture. Strategic/economic development accomplishments with the City of Austin included a major affordable housing initiative, funding a plan to create 30,428-acre regional multi-species habitat preserve, redevelopment of Bergstrom Air Force Base into Austin-Bergstrom International Airport, negotiation of the City's first collective bargaining agreements, implementation of the City's continuous improvement, Total Quality Management initiative.

Lessard previously served as Assistant to the City Manager for just under four years for the City of Dallas, Texas, where he was responsible for managerial support to the City Manager and Deputy City Manager. Assignments included establishing the City risk management program, conducting the annual city employee survey and City Council agenda process. During this time he also served as Interim General Manager responsible for operation of the only municipally owned commercial radio station in the United States.

Lessard also served as Senior Planning Director for eleven years with Knudson, LP, focusing on providing public sector clients with intergovernmental relations/coordination, economic development, strategic project management and organizational alignment services, and as Senior Vice President for Land Development with Kucera Management, Inc., in Austin., where he was responsible for the management of a diverse set of commercial and residential land development projects. The firm’s land division specialized in entitling and managing properties with unusual or difficult development circumstances. Managed projects totaled \$52 million in estimated entitled raw land value. He also served as Vice President for Folsom Investments, Inc./Sabre Realty, Inc., in Dallas, where he was responsible for financial and business planning functions for a real estate ownership/management business.

Lessard holds a Master of Public Affairs (Public Finance Concentration) from the School of Public and Environmental Affairs at Indiana University, and two Bachelor of Arts degrees from Washington State University, one in Business Administration (with Economics Minor); and in Political Science (Public Administration).

He is a member of the International City/County Management Association, Congress for the New Urbanism, and the Urban Land Institute. He is a Fellow with the Center for Public Policy Dispute Resolution, and received the Peacemaker Award from the Travis County Dispute Resolution Center

FISCAL IMPACTS

Key elements of the compensation package are:

- Starting salary of \$163,477 annually with review in six months. Current top step is \$168,285.
- \$400 allowance for use of his personal vehicle on City business, with additional reimbursement at the IRA mileage rate for use of his vehicle on trips longer than 50 miles.
- Opening balance of 40 hours vacation and sick leave. Accrual of vacation leave at four weeks/year.
- 80 hours of paid administrative leave annually for professional development.
- Reimbursement of actual relocation expense of up to \$20,000.
- Housing assistance not to exceed \$2,500/month for six months or utilization of the City-owned “Hardisty house.”
- 12 months’ severance for the first two years of employment, nine months beginning in year three, six months beginning in year four.
- Other standard employee benefits.

ACTIONS, OPTIONS & POTENTIAL MOTIONS

Motion to confirm the appointment of Joseph Lessard as City Manager effective January 3, 2022 and authorize the Mayor to execute an employment agreement based upon the parameters discussed with the City Council in executive session.

REFERENCES & ATTACHMENTS

Joseph Lessard resume.

October 13, 2021

Mayor & City Council
City of Ashland
20 East Main St.
Ashland, OR 97520

Re: City Manager for the City of Ashland, Oregon

Dear Mayor & Council Members:

I am writing to introduce myself and request your consideration for the position of City Manager for the City of Ashland. I believe you will find my work history, skill set, and collaborative management style match the qualifications you are seeking in this important position with your management team. Throughout my career I've kept my passion for local public service and am used to working in an open and energetic teamwork environment. As a seasoned senior manager, with public and private management experience, I believe I have the following to offer in filling new City Manager's role and responsibilities:

- Ability to remain professional and apolitical providing City Council support and staff oversight, even when community debate is intense;
- Strategic planning and infrastructure development experience and known for being vision driven and persistent in pursuing goals;
- Ability to deftly implement complex or high-profile initiatives with a history of successfully addressing controversial or chaotic circumstances;
- Analytical by nature with a history of creative, interest-based problem solving;
- Collaborative in approach, preferring a team orientation to project implementation or organizational management;
- Extensive background in intergovernmental relations and community outreach;
- Experience leading a municipal initiative for customer service improvement;
- Accomplishments in negotiation and mediation, including labor and intergovernmental funding agreements; and
- A business planning approach to service delivery, financial management, and brand development.

My professional experience has been distinct in that I've often been asked to manage high profile or difficult issues while honoring the policy direction and organizational capabilities of the governmental entity or private client I served. In each effort, I made the effort to learn the underlying issues and interests of the key participants or stakeholder parties and worked to create win-win, consensus solutions. To be effective, this problem-solving approach requires an inclusive and adaptive style of team management, a strategic level of analytic ability and visible adherence to professional standards of conduct. The success of one initiative in Central Texas, mediating a potentially contentious public planning effort, resulted in the General Manager of the Lower Colorado River Authority, a Travis County Commissioner and I sharing a Peacemaker Award from the Travis County Dispute Resolution Center. I learned this interest-based approach to problem solving to lead labor negotiations as an Assistant City Manager for the City of Austin, Texas and have applied it since, including in my subsequent private sector work.

I transitioned from public management several years ago but my private sector work has been closely associated with local government entities, helping to implement strategic community initiatives that called for an appreciation of local community dynamics. I'm known for being proactive and having a fact based yet creative orientation to my work. This work has included intergovernmental negotiations, real estate development, regional transit financial planning, green infrastructure funding, community relations and soliciting public-private partnerships (P3s) to develop workforce housing.

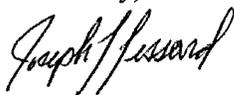
During my almost ten-year tenure with Austin, I held management responsibility, at one time or another, for over half of the designated City departments. This work included oversight of all the City's enterprise/utility, public safety, planning/development, and infrastructure departments. My department associated project assignments included administration and funding plan development for a 30,400-acre regional wildlands preserve, rebranding and management realignment of the City's convention and visitors bureau and, initiation of community policing programming. Organizational issues addressed during this period included reorganizing and Total Quality Management (TQM) continuous improvement implementation for increased efficiency and to build a customer service brand. These efforts also served to build an open, teamwork organizational culture out of one then characterized as splintered and defensive.

Throughout my public and private sector work experience, I believe I have demonstrated the ability to deftly meet the responsibilities of City Manager with an open approach that meets business needs and community expectations. I strive to bring integrity, creativity and perseverance to every undertaking for which I am responsible. Keeping the following thought in mind reminds me to be open and serve with an appreciation for multiple points of view:

"Progress is impossible without change, and those who cannot change their minds cannot change anything. — George Bernard Shaw

I hope you will find my varied background in public and private sector management of value and my application as an indication of my sincere interest in serving the City of Ashland. Thank you for your consideration and I look forward to hearing from you soon. In the meantime, please accept my best wishes.

Sincerely,



Joseph L. Lessard

Attachments: Joseph L. Lessard Resume and Professional References

Joseph L. Lessard

Phone: (512) 636-0154

joseph.lessard@outlook.com

Summary

- Vision and goal-oriented leader with a strong emphasis on positive team building/alignment.
- Known for creativity, attention to detail and perseverance in pursuing objectives.
- Skills in change management, negotiation, communication, intergovernmental relations, and problem solving for balanced solutions to community issues.

Public Sector Experience

Assistant City Manager (9.4 yrs.) City of Austin, Austin, Texas
Leadership responsibilities during tenure included, at one time or another, over half of designated City departments. Work included oversight of all the City's enterprise (electric, water/wastewater, solid waste, convention center and visitors bureau, and aviation), public safety (police, fire, and emergency medical service), development (planning, environmental services, economic development, and housing) and infrastructure (public works/real estate) operations. City management issues addressed during this time included reorganizing and continuous improvement implementation for customer service and increased efficiency, and to build an open, teamwork culture out of one characterized as splintered and defensive. Peak budget responsibilities of up to \$537 million in operating budget expenditures, \$507 million in revenues, \$585 million in capital budget and 2,900 full time employee positions (City population grew from 466,000 to 613,000 during tenure).

Strategic/economic development accomplishments with the City of Austin include:

- Developed street maintenance funding approach, including new Transportation User Fee, negotiation of \$60 million support from the Capital Metropolitan Transportation Authority and a successful street reconstruction bond election
- Established CDBG affordable housing initiative (1,000 units repaired or built annually)
- Austin Convention Center construction & reestablished Austin's visitors bureau
- Administration and funding plan to create 30,428-acre regional multi-species habitat preserve (Balcones Canyonland Conservation Plan under a USFWS 10(a) permit)
- Redevelopment of Bergstrom Air Force Base into Austin-Bergstrom International Airport, including public vote for \$400 million of airport bonds and small/minority business outreach
- Negotiation of City's first Civil Service (Fire and Police) collective bargaining agreements
- Implementation of the City's continuous improvement, Total Quality Management initiative

Assistant to the City Manager (1.7 yrs.) City of Dallas, Dallas, Texas
Responsible for managerial support to the City Manager and Deputy City Manager. Oversight assignments include establishment of the City's new Risk Management Office, conducting the annual city employee survey and City Council agenda process. (City population over 904,000 during tenure)

Management Assistant / Interim General Manager (2 yrs.) City of Dallas, Dallas, Texas
Management Assistant to an Assistant City Manager with temporary assignment as Interim General Manager responsible for operation of the only municipally owned commercial radio station in the United States. (WRR radio staff of approx. 10 FTEs)

Private Sector Experience

Independent Consultant – Strategic Initiatives (Oct. 2019 - Present; 6.3 yrs. career total)
Self Employed, Austin, TX

Consultant practice offers expertise in organizational & strategic project management, governmental/community relations, mediation, land development and community growth/economic development issues. Private entity work experience includes soliciting public-private partnerships (P3s) for affordable housing on half of private equity real estate investors, marketing services for an electric grid demand response service provider and, negotiating endangered species mitigation for a 4,000-acre land development with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Travis County, Texas. Public entity project experience includes conceptual drafting of the Travis County, Texas conservation development ordinance, conducting the Southwest Travis County Growth Dialog (community planning effort), and funding plan development for the Hays County Regional Habitat Conservation Plan.

Senior Planning Director (11.2 yrs.) Knudson, LP, Austin, Texas
Consultancy focuses on providing public sector clients with intergovernmental relations/coordination, economic development, strategic project management and organizational alignment services. List of clients includes the Lone Star Rail District for its 119-mile LSTAR passenger rail line and, the City of Austin for its Urban Rail and Project Connect regional high-capacity transit planning initiatives.

Senior Vice President – Land Development (3.8 yrs.) Kucera Management, Inc., Austin, Texas
Responsible for the management of a diverse set of commercial and residential land development projects. The firm's land division specialized in entitling and managing properties with unusual or difficult development circumstances. Managed projects totaled \$52 million in estimated entitled raw land value.

Vice President (3.8 yrs.) Folsom Investments, Inc./Sabre Realty, Inc., Dallas, Texas
Responsible for financial and business planning functions for real estate ownership/management business covering forty-two apartment and condominium communities (8000+ apartments).

Education

Master of Public Affairs (Public Finance Concentration)

School of Public and Environmental Affairs, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana

Bachelor of Arts: Business Administration (with Economics Minor); and

Bachelor of Arts: Political Science (Public Administration Option)

Washington State University, Pullman, Washington

Affiliations & Awards

- International City Management Association
- Congress for the New Urbanism
- Urban Land Institute
- Fellow, Ctr. for Public Policy Dispute Resolution, UT Law School
- Peacemaker Award, Travis County Dispute Resolution Center