

The City of Titusville City Council met in special session on Saturday, July 12, 2025 at Titusville City Hall, second floor, Council Chamber, 555 South Washington Avenue, Titusville, Florida 32796. Mayor Connors called the City Council meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. Those present in the Council Chamber included Mayor Andrew Connors, Vice-Mayor Herman A. Cole, Jr., Col USAF Retired, and City Council Members Megan Moscoso, Jo Lynn Nelson, and Dr. Sarah Stoeckel.

Also in attendance were Interim City Manager Tom Abbate, Attorney James Stokes, and Assistant City Clerk Jolynn Donhoff, who completed the minutes.

Mayor Connors requested a moment of silence. He then led those present in the *Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag*. Assistant City Clerk Donhoff read the procedures for public participation.

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Interviews – Final Candidates for the City Attorney Position – Interim City Manager Abbate reviewed the purpose of the meeting. He advised that earlier in the morning, City Council Members met individually and separately with the four candidates that had applied for the City Attorney position. This was the public meeting where together the Council could discuss and further interview the candidates.

To begin, the Council brainstormed and discussed how they desired interviewing the candidates (as a group and as the governing body) for the City Attorney's position. This was meant to set the ground rules. The Council agreed they would each ask two questions (the same two questions more or less) of each of the candidates. The other candidates would wait in another room, so they could not hear the interviews of the others. Each candidate would also have a total of 30-minutes to answer all of the Council's questions. Council Members would also ask sub questions, depending on whether a candidate's responses generated additional inquiries, given the candidates had different backgrounds and experiences.

Questions

Member Nelson

- Describe your litigation experience and background.
- How would you decide if a case would stay in-house or be outsourced to outside counsel?

Member Moscoso

- Describe your experience handling high-profile cases and how did you handle communications with the Council and the public?
- Are there any particular cases that you are proud of? If so, please describe.

Vice-Mayor Cole

- The City has used outside counsel in the past. Describe your experience working with outside counsel and how would you measure or rate them (ability/effectiveness)?
- Departments have various needs. Describe how you would address or prioritize tasks across all City departments, even if they were all high in priority.

Member Stoeckel

- Give us an example of an ordinance or legislation that you were involved with that had a substantial or major impact on the community.
- Council attended many briefings involving land use applications and quasi-judicial public hearings. Describe how you would brief and prepare City Council for meetings and hearings, as well as what Council can and cannot do.

Mayor Connors

- Describe how you translate or interpret law into plain language to the public. Example: how would you explain a controversial issue to the public?
- Describe how you balance the law or legal requirements and public opinion or pressure.

Next, Council set a timer for 30-minutes for each of the four (4) candidates, in order to ask their questions and interview the candidates. The order of the interviews was:

1. Andriene Treasure
2. Michael Rodriguez
3. Scott McHenry
4. Jennifer Cockcroft

At 2:00 p.m., Mayor Connors called for a 15-minute recess after the second interview was completed. He called the meeting back to order at 2:15 p.m. and the interviews resumed.

Once the interviews were completed, Council proceeded to their discussion on the next steps.

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Discussion of Next Steps – City Attorney Selection Process –

Prior to Council taking any action, three individuals submitted public speaking cards.

Jessie Wright advised that he was a developer. He commented on prior interactions or conversations with the former City Attorney. Mr. Wright also stated that having the ability to sit down with the City Attorney, Mayor, and City Manager was important and productive to him and his projects. This was something he advised that he had done elsewhere and in large jurisdictions in the U.S. Mr. Wright also felt some of Titusville's procedures were outdated. Mr. Wright stated that the City Attorney should look at the size of a project, how much time must be spent on the project, and the importance of the City Attorney working with outside attorneys, etc.

Toni Shifalo questioned the format used for the City Attorney interviews. She expressed her opinions of the candidates, salary request(s), her opinion that one candidate was looking for advancement, candidates' resumes, concerns for any frequent employment changes, whether one candidate's resume indicated they had represented developers, another candidate's resume that she liked indicated the candidate represented serving the citizens, another candidate appeared upfront, but Ms. Shifalo was concerned that one of the references provided was an elected official, getting more information or clarification on another candidate that indicated having experience working on clean water issues, etc.

Dwight Severs distributed information, which later he indicated no longer needed to be distributed to Council. He read from a prepared statement that commented on him being a longtime resident and a prior City Attorney for Titusville. Mr. Severs stated that the City Attorney position was one of the most important, due to the significant responsibilities the position required in guiding the City. It was Council's decision, only he would share his perspective having served 50 different Council Members, seven City Managers, and he had never been asked to retire or resign during his career.

Mr. Severs also advised that during his career he was an "AV" rated lawyer referring to the Martindale-Hubbell Peer Review Rating scale for highest possible peer review rating for excellence, as well as other accolades, recognitions, keynote speaker appearances, publications, committees, and more where he was recognized, participated, or contributed to the discussion of law.

For the salary range the City had posted for the City Attorney position, Mr. Severs felt this would come with an expectation the City Attorney had experience, expertise, ethical, and legal abilities to handle most all cases and not outsource issues to outside counsel. Mr. Severs indicated a qualified candidate should show competence, independence, and leadership and not live by the motto of "stay under the radar". The City Attorney should also speak up to protect the City Council and the municipal government and should live by the rule of law. The City Attorney should also have the kindness and compassion necessary to communicate with citizens, remain fair, and follow the rules. Mr. Severs further commented on having no agenda and the importance of doing no harm, overcoming oppression, his faith and care for the community, etc.

Council discussion ensued.

During the remainder of the meeting, the Council discussed their top choices amongst the candidates and brainstormed a system to assist them (the Council) to rank and make their selections, in order of preference. Council decided to name and rank their top candidate or two and not include additional candidates in their ranking. Council also complimented all of the candidates that applied for the City Attorney position.

Member Nelson advised that Scott McHenry was her top choice for reasons shared. She liked his formal education that included a financial or tax background, his calm demeanor, AV rating, experience with affordable housing and assisting the City with an affordable housing plan, etc.

Vice-Mayor Cole suggested a system to assist Council with making their selection(s). Vice-Mayor Cole also advised that Michael Rodriguez was his top choice.

Member Stoeckel advised that Michael Rodriguez was her top choice for reasons shared. She commented on the importance of the role, giving sound legal advice, selecting someone that was assertive or confident that could protect taxpayers and the citizens, trusted, had the ability or comfort level to face difficult challenges, someone that could understand varying perspectives and work to find solutions, etc.

Member Moscoso advised that Andriene Treasure and Scott McHenry were her top choices, but her first choice was Scott McHenry. She also liked the fact that Mr. McHenry had a calm demeanor, had indicated that he was not political (along with the other candidates did, too), had substantial knowledge, etc.

Mayor Connors advised that his top choices were Michael Rodriguez and Scott McHenry. He complimented Mr. Rodriguez for having represented a particular jurisdiction. He also felt that all of the candidates were good.

Member Nelson indicated her desire to make a motion on selecting a top candidate. She advised that she make subsequent motions for selecting second and third choices amongst the candidates. Vice-Mayor Cole recommended a system for Council to write down and rank their selections, add them up, and call the results. Mayor Connors and Council further commented on how they might proceed. It was decided that only two choices would be made. The council did not feel it was necessary to make a third and fourth choice.

Motion:

Member Nelson moved to rank and select Scott McHenry as the number one choice for the City Attorney. Member Moscoso seconded the motion and the roll call vote was:

Member Moscoso	Yes
Member Nelson	Yes
Mayor Connors	No
Vice-Mayor Cole	No
Member Stoeckel	No

The motion failed, 3-no and 2-yes.

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Motion:

Member Stoeckel moved to rank and select Michael Rodriguez as the number one choice and Scott McHenry as second choice for the City Attorney. Vice-Mayor Cole seconded the motion.

Member Nelson was not ready to vote when called upon.

Member Stoeckel desired further discussion. She desired to hire a candidate that was not afraid to take on litigation if it became necessary, was prepared, knew and navigated the risks, etc. She commented on a scenario that if Council denied a land use application, a developer might say, “we will see you in court”. Member Stoeckel wanted an attorney that was not afraid of this scenario.

Member Nelson commented on why Scott McHenry was her number one choice. Mr. McHenry was an AV - Preeminent rated lawyer (referring to the Martindale-Hubbell Peer Review Rating scale and highest ranking possible) and she felt he was not afraid to take on litigation. She advised that Mr. McHenry had taken on Universal Studios. This was impressive and indicated that he had nerves of steel.

Mayor Connors commented that at the end of the day, it was Member Nelson’s choice on how she voted. He also felt there was a big difference in the size or level of support provided to Orange County Government Legal Offices as compared to Titusville having a smaller legal team. Orange County was included on Mr. McHenry’s resume.

Member Moscoso commented on why Scott McHenry was her number one choice. She also felt the Council Members were looking for the same qualities in a candidate. She wanted someone that would stand up and speak up, also to her and to the Council. Member Moscoso felt Mr. Rodriguez would do this as well. She also supported Member Nelson’s top choice because Member Nelson was an attorney. This was why she brought Dwight Severs (a former City Attorney) with her to the individual interviews during the morning and she desired their opinions.

Aside from anyone else’s opinions, Member Stoeckel asked Member Moscoso why she liked Scott McHenry, to which Member Moscoso discussed. Member Moscoso liked Mr. McHenry’s AV top rated attorney status, his having a lot of experience, calm presence, her impression of him after going through all of the questions with Mr. McHenry during the morning interviews, he was non-political (as the other candidates indicated, too), desire to serve, etc.

Vice-Mayor Cole commented on having strong candidates for the position; however, his top choice was Michael Rodriguez. He considered the applicants’ personalities and how well he felt he interacted with the candidates.

Member Nelson commented on being familiar with the law firm a particular candidate had worked for and that it was also a reputable law firm. She supported Scott McHenry for the position because he was a tax attorney, which meant he would be even more attuned with financial aspects of the City moving forward. Member Nelson was also super interested in affordable housing, and she believed Scott McHenry could assist the City in this matter. Additionally, she liked Michael Rodriguez, but at the present time, she agreed with Member Moscoso and the desire of hiring an attorney that was calm.

Mayor Connors commented on the importance of affordable housing and what an advantage it would be to set aside money in a trust fund for these goals over a 10-year period (referring to comments made by Scott McHenry during his interview at the special City Council meeting).

Mayor Connors called the vote.

Assistant City Clerk Donhoff clarified the motion on the floor was to “...rank and select Michael Rodriguez as the number one choice and Scott McHenry as second choice for the City Attorney”.

Member Nelson	No
Mayor Connors	Yes
Vice-Mayor Cole	Yes
Member Stoeckel	Yes
Member Moscoso	No

The motion carried, 3-yes and 2-no.

Vice-Mayor Cole praised and felt the City would be ahead if selecting either one of these individuals. He also felt the City Council was provided strong candidates. He thanked the applicants for subjecting themselves to the interviews. Member Nelson also praised all of the candidates.

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Interim City Manager Abbate advised the next steps were to have the Human Resources Director meet with Mr. Rodriguez to discuss the terms of an employment offer, which would be brought back to the Council for their consideration at the regular City Council meeting scheduled for July 22, 2025 at 6:30 p.m.

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Petitions and Requests from the Public Present – None.

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Member Stoeckel commented on whether the Council desired asking or extending an invitation to Michael Rodriguez to participate in the interviews for the next City Manager at the special City Council meeting scheduled for July 19, 2025 at 1:00 p.m.

Brief discussion ensued on whether this was necessary, given the high level of leadership both positions required and expectations that both positions would work well with each other. The City Council hired both of these positions, and one did not work for the other. The invitation could be extended as a professional courtesy.

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Member Nelson commented in response to a citizen’s earlier remarks or concerns on an attorney representing a developer. Member Nelson felt it was important to share that during law school, students were required to argue both sides of a problem. This was the same for criminal attorneys that had to be able to argue for the prosecution or the defense.

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Motion:

Member Nelson moved to adjourn the meeting at 3:31 p.m. Vice-Mayor Cole seconded the motion and it carried unanimously.

ATTEST:

Andrew Connors, Mayor

Wanda F. Wells, City Clerk