

MINUTES  
Plainwell City Council  
April 22, 2023

1. Mayor Keeler called the special meeting to order at 8:57 AM in City Hall Council Chambers.
2. Pledge of Allegiance was given by all present.
3. Roll Call: Present: Mayor Keeler, Mayor Pro Tem Steele, Councilmember Overhuel, Councilmember Keeney and Councilmember Wisnaski. Absent: None.
4. **A motion by Steele, seconded by Overhuel, to approve the Agenda for the April 22, 2023 special meeting as presented. On a voice vote, all voted in favor. Motion passed.**
5. New Business:

- A. Councilmembers interviewed City Manager Candidates Justin Lakamper, Michael Vandenberg and Brandon Mersman, asking each applicant twenty (20) questions about their experience with different aspects of the City Manager position. Questions focused on project management, grant writing, leadership style, human resources and personnel, problem-solving and other desired qualities.

At 11:29am, Mayor Keeler recessed the meeting for a lunch period, noting the last interview would begin at 1:00pm.

At 1:00pm, Mayor Keeler reconvened the meeting and introduced Frank Walsh who reported that Candidate Danielle Tiedeman had accepted a position with the City of Watervliet and withdrew from consideration. As a result, no 1pm interview was conducted.

- B. Mayor Keeler asked for staff input after the interviews. Personnel Coordinator Kersten, DPW Superintendent Nieuwenhuis and Clerk/Finance Director Kelley each reported that Candidate Lakamper was most impressive in interviews. Council then discussed each candidate and their preferences for which candidate would be the best fit for the City. Council took input from the general public in attendance. Frank Walsh of Walsh Municipal Services reminded Council that it could make a motion or take time to continue deliberations.

**A motion by Keeney, seconded by Steele, to make a conditional offer of employment as Plainwell City Manager to Justin Lakamper, contingent on a successful background investigation and successful contract negotiations. On a roll call vote, all voted in favor. Motion passed.**

Frank Walsh noted that he would contact each of the candidates and start the background investigation as soon as possible. He asked if Council wanted to discuss terms, reminding Council that the pay range advertised for the job was \$97,000 to \$110,000. Council discussed the options.

**A motion by Steele, seconded by Overhuel, to offer contract terms to include a salary of \$105,000, a six-month severance package, 120 hours of vacation leave, 40 hours of personal leave and a \$300 monthly car allowance, and to exclude an \$8,000 retention bonus from previous contracts. On a roll call vote, all vote in favor. Motion passed.**

Walsh reported that he would present the contract terms to Lakamper for consideration and was confident a negotiated contract would be considered at the May 8 meeting.

6. Public Comments: None
7. Council Comments:  
Council each thanked staff, former staff and the public for the time and input during this process.
8. Adjournment:  
**A motion by Steele, seconded by Overhuel, to adjourn the meeting at 1:37 PM. On a voice vote, all voted in favor. Motion passed.**

Minutes respectfully  
Submitted by,  
Brian Kelley  
City Clerk

MINUTES APPROVED BY CITY COUNCIL  
May 8, 2023  
  
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Brian Kelley, City Clerk