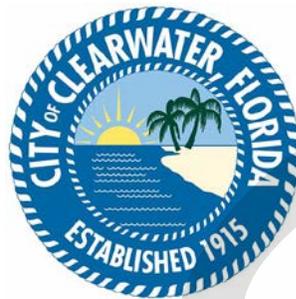


City of Clearwater

*Main Library - Council Chambers
100 N. Osceola Avenue
Clearwater, FL 33755*



Meeting Minutes

Thursday, January 5, 2023

5:00 PM

**Special City Council Meeting - Re Employment Status of City
Manager**

Main Library - Council Chambers

City Council

Roll Call

Present: 5 - Mayor Frank Hibbard, Vice Mayor Kathleen Beckman, Councilmember David Allbritton, Councilmember Mark Bunker and Councilmember Lina Teixeira

Also Present: Michael Delk – Assistant City Manager, Jennifer Poirrier – Acting City Manager, David Margolis – City Attorney, Rosemarie Call – City Clerk and Nicole Sprague – Deputy City Clerk.

To provide continuity for research, items are listed in agenda order although not necessarily discussed in that order.

Draft

1. Call to Order – Mayor Hibbard

The meeting was called to order at 5:00 p.m.

2. Citizens to be heard re items not on the agenda

Jennifer Haithcock expressed concerns with the rising costs of rents and questioned if the City has the authority to cap rents.

It was stated that there are limitations on what the City can do regarding rents and that the City is working on additional affordable housing projects.

Jean Johnston expressed safety concerns for patients and patient escorts at the Bread and Roses Women's Health Center. The angry protestors are paid to harass those entering the building, requiring the Health Center to hire off-duty Clearwater police officers. She said the Health Center would like to see the police officers take a more active role to help control the public safety concerns, which include physical assaults and trespassing.

It was stated that Council will make sure the efforts started by Jon Jennings will continue.

Norm Bild said Ulysses S. Grant was posthumously promoted to "General of the Armies," an honor only given to George Washington and John "Black Jack" Pershing.

The City Clerk read an eComment submitted by Mr. Holuba (See page 6).

3. City Manager Reports – None.

4. City Attorney Reports – None.

5. Other Council Action

5.1 Discuss the employment status of City Manager Jon Jennings.

At the December 15, 2022 council meeting, a motion was made to terminate City Manager Jon Jennings. The motion carried as follows:

Ayes: 3 - Mayor Hibbard, Vice Mayor Beckman, and Councilmember Teixeira

Nays: 2 - Councilmember Allbritton and Councilmember Bunker

Per the Clearwater City Charter, “The council may remove the city manager by an affirmative vote of four council members or a majority of the council members at two separate meetings held at least two weeks apart.”

Council scheduled the second meeting for Thursday, January 5, 2023.

Four individuals spoke in opposition.

One individual spoke in support.

One individual expressed concerns with how terminating the city manager will impact the City's ability to seek good talent.

One individual submitted an eComment concerning the lack of support and improvement the City Manager has shown the community in the CRA (see page 19).

Two individuals submitted eComments in opposition (see pages 18 and 20).

One individual submitted an eComment that Jon Jennings was selected as the city manager because he was an agent of change (see page 18).

Eight individuals submitted emails or letters opposing Item 5.1 (see pages 7 to 16).

Discussion ensued with comments made that discussing the employment of the city manager in public is not an easy process, that Jon Jennings did a lot of good things in the past year, such as improving

neighborhood and employee relations, creating a Public Works Department, addressing the backlog of sidewalk improvements citywide, and revamping Utility Customer Service to be more friendly. It was stated that Mr. Jennings failed to prepare for the ARPA community sessions, that the agreement with Ruth Eckerd Hall for the management of the entertainment venue at Coachman Park took too long, that agenda items were incomplete or delayed, and that Mr. Jennings has not communicated with Council since December 15, 2022. Concerns were expressed issues related to Mr. Jennings' job performance were not raised during his annual review.

Councilmember Teixeira moved to dismiss Jon Jennings from city employment. The motion was duly seconded and carried by the following vote:

Ayes: 3 - Mayor Hibbard, Vice Mayor Beckman and Councilmember Teixeira

Nays: 2 - Councilmember Allbritton and Councilmember Bunker

It was stated that Council now needs to determine an interim city manager, establish a salary, and discuss a city manager search.

Councilmember Allbritton moved to appoint Jennifer Poirrier as the interim city manager during the city manager search. The motion was duly seconded and carried unanimously.

It was stated that when Micah Maxwell was appointed interim city manager, he was provided a significant increase because he was overseeing significant departments and taking the interim city manager position. It was suggested the same formula be followed for Ms. Poirrier.

Staff was directed to provide the interim salary information at the January 9 work session.

It was suggested that Baker Tilly not conduct the new city manager search.

Staff was directed to place the city manager candidate profile and job description on January 9 work session agenda.

6. Closing comments by Councilmembers (limited to 3 minutes) – None.

7. Closing Comments by Mayor – None.

8. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 6:28 p.m.

Attest

Mayor
City of Clearwater

City Clerk

Call, Rosemarie

From: Daniel Holuba <dholuba12@yahoo.com>
Sent: Wednesday, December 28, 2022 9:29 PM
To: ClearwaterCouncil; Call, Rosemarie
Subject: MS Call, please read this into the official record

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the City of Clearwater. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

MS Beckman, (she/her & WTF?)

I do appreciate your return message.

I find expressing your gender preference odd to say the least. I guess in your liberal elitist snob world some subset of your constituents has difficulty determining what sex you "Identify" with? In a new world where not of that is supposed to matter, why add that? Are you sure everyone sees you as Caucasian? Maybe you should add that to your title as well.

How about publishing your financial net worth? How about adding the value of your residence to your identity? Your crusade for the environment, homeless, downtrodden, LGBTQ, or whatever, in your case is just another avenue to enrich yourself as a politician and personally. You come off as very disingenuous, and that is why you have communication issues.

And then you quote Marther Luther King inappropriately? Is there any wonder why you have issues?

Your "honest feedback" as you describe it to me in your email does not facilitate legitimate city business and is the epitome of local government overreach.

My Dear, from my perspective you are abusing your elected position which causes many of the "challenging circumstances" as you describe, due to your lack of focus on city business.

No one, including Mr. Jennings, or his replacement, will display the obsequiousness you demand. That is because your demands are incompatible with running a city and only cater to a subset of the citizenry.

Terminating Mr. Jennings, good job or bad, will not continue the "legend of Bill Horne" as Mr. Hibbard desires. Throwing the city into further turmoil by going through another city manager selection process will not advance your agenda, or that of the city. Kill the messenger ! That will only make you look like a fool. Add that to your title? Kathleen Marie Beckman (Fool). I certainly hope not.

VTY Mr. Holuba

Call, Rosemarie

From: Joana Cleckner <joanacleckner@hotmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, January 5, 2023 12:42 PM
To: ClearwaterCouncil
Subject: City manager

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the City of Clearwater. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Per the meeting tonight, and as a resident of Clearwater, unfortunately I will not be able to attend but I would like to make it known that I prefer to keep the existing city manager.

Kindly,
Joana Cleckner
421 Jasmine away
Clearwater FL 33756

Sent from my 1992 Guess see-through wall phone on a shared line.

Call, Rosemarie

From: Race Ricker <race@rickerbunch.com>
Sent: Tuesday, January 3, 2023 9:59 AM
To: Call, Rosemarie
Subject: Jon Jennings Revaluation

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the City of Clearwater. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Hello,

It has come to my attention by a fellow neighbor that the first steps have been taken in firing Jon Jennings. My family and I would like to express our appreciation for what he has done for the neighborhood. We would like to continue the growth and hate to see him being fired when he has helped our community.

Warm Regards,
The Rickers

Call, Rosemarie

From: Sarah Gauthier <sarahjgauthier@hotmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, January 4, 2023 1:18 PM
To: ClearwaterCouncil
Subject: RE: Employment Status of City Manager Jon Jennings

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the City of Clearwater. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Mayor Hibbard and Council Members:

My name is Sarah Gauthier and I am a mother and community member who resides in Clearwater.

I have been very impressed with the accomplishments of Mr. Jennings over the last year as City Manager. Mr. Jennings has been instrumental in improving our neighborhoods. One of the driving factors in our family moving to Clearwater was the strong community and having a place that my son felt supported and safe. Mr. Jennings has increased the hours and accessibility to the North Greenwood library where my son has taken classes. I homeschool my son and having resources for him through the Clearwater library has made all the difference. He has addressed issues with the sidewalks so that we can enjoy time outside as a family riding bikes or walking and has created a neighborhoods division with additional staff so that we have more resources.

In the last year, Mr. Jennings has been instrumental in the betterment of our city and I sincerely hope that he is given the chance to continue his work in improving our neighborhoods. I urge you to vote no on terminating his employment status as City Manager.

Thank you for your time.

Sarah Gauthier
25 N Belcher Rd #164
Clearwater, FL 33765
480-248-4841

Call, Rosemarie

From: Robert King <robertleeking@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, January 4, 2023 11:52 AM
To: ClearwaterCouncil
Subject: on Jon Jennings

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the City of Clearwater. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Clearwater City Councilors.....

Below is the content of a letter I published. In my letter I avoided any mention of the Clearwater City Council or its impending decision on Jon Jennings.

Whenever we disagree, isn't there always a path open that leads back to mutual agreement... to reconciliation? And ultimately, shouldn't we judge a person by the content of her/his character? In the letter below, I believe Jon Jennings did not override the City of Portland Public works decision. He asked his assistant Gina Tapp to work with Public works for a mutual solution. And the result was an agreement that allowed me to receive the medical treatment that saved my life and to return to my job upon recovery.

The letter.....

When Jon Jennings was Manager for the City of Portland, Maine, he made a decision that demonstrated his selflessness and compassion.

I had been out of work for an extended period with Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma. After two failed regimens of chemotherapy, Oncologist John Winters III (New England Cancer Specialists) wanted me to enter a clinical trial at Dana Farber Cancer Institute, Boston with Dr. Austin Kim. This required temporary residency at Brigham and Women's Hospital, 2 hours south of my Maine home, and paid for 100% by Kite Pharma (developer of cancer immunotherapies). Dr. Winters said it was my only chance. I decided to go.

But Portland Public Works administration felt I had been out long enough, and I was denied further leave. In response, Nick Giampetruzzi (then union rep) said "We're going to see Jon Jennings."

At the meeting, Nick made the intro and I read my appeal, less than one page in length. Then Mr. Jennings turned in his office chair, pointed to the closest picture behind him, and said, "This is my best friend. He died at Dana Farber Cancer Institute". Then he said, "I'll see what I can do."

*In the following week, *management worked together* to reach a "non-precedent-setting agreement". I was allowed to complete the Car T-Cell clinical trial and I returned to my job after recovering.*

Today, I am routinely checked every 6 months, once a year each at New England Cancer and DFCI. We believe my cancer is cured, not in remission.

Without Car-T-Cell therapy I would have died in December 2018. Instead, I got to continue photographing and writing about nature! Yippee!

*Respectfully,
Robert King*

robertleeking@gmail.com

<https://www.instagram.com/itsaboutnaturenet/>

www.itsaboutnature.net

Call, Rosemarie

From: ralph kiosgroupusa.com <ralph@kiosgroupusa.com>
Sent: Wednesday, January 4, 2023 3:07 PM
To: Call, Rosemarie
Subject: Jon Jennings

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the City of Clearwater. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Hello Rosemarie,

I am a downtown Clearwater resident for the past 25 years and pay about \$40,000.00 a year in property taxes alone. I feel that Mr Jennings has done more in his short tenure then most have done before him the entire time they held their position. It is unjust that it has to come down to a vote to keep good people doing their job. It is my opinion that some of the present officials are using their position for personal gain versus the good of our city. I vote mr Jennings remains at his job.

Sent from Ralph Rugo

Call, Rosemarie

From: Robyn Rin <robynrinberger@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, January 4, 2023 9:40 PM
To: Call, Rosemarie
Cc: Lisa Lanza; Joanne Kliesh; Whit Altman; Melissa Stamos; Yort Watson
Subject: Resident comment for city council meeting tomorrow

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the City of Clearwater. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

I'm currently in TN caring for my aging in-laws and cannot attend this council meeting. Please I would appreciate if this following opinion would be entered into the citizen portion of the meeting.

Thank you.

It's very disturbing during these times of global and National upheaval that we cannot even have peace, decency, courtesy, and common sense in our own small piece of the planet

This city council, with the exception of Mark Bunker, is doing everything they can to appear to be nothing more than a group of power-mad bullies determined to have their way, admitting to residents IN WRITING that "it's our decision to make," regardless of, and contrary to, the opinions and suggestions of residents.

I thought we lived in a representative democracy at this local level, where city council members were to LISTEN to the concerns of their constituents and make decisions accordingly. When residents spoke up about health concerns of Jennings, we were ignored because "he had experience" and "he will be a strong manager and speak up." Well, now that he's a strong city manager, and speaking up for residents, suddenly the "health concerns" are a problem NOW? How convenient, maybe Jennings is too strong and too concerned about serving the residents of Clearwater, and not compliant enough for this runaway city council? Maybe that's what's really happening? It sure appears that way. He's in the same health he was when you all hired him, so what's really going on here?

This vote to terminate Jennings also gives the impression that because residents wouldn't agree to a "strong mayor" we're being punished by a city council who is ousting the city manager so that they are enabled to act as strong mayors. YOU are giving that impression!

Furthermore, this vote to terminate him will likely be at tremendous expense? severance? (I frankly hope he sues for ageism because this is shameful), a new "search firm" at tremendous expense?, a new contract with hiring bonus/moving expenses? etc. applicants will likely have us over a barrel because they will see what has happened here. Smart candidates will not even apply. What a disaster. Jennings if they vote you out I hope you sue this city into oblivion - you have done NOTHING to violate your contract that we've been made aware of.

A dark day in the history of Clearwater. We were once a very nice beach community and nice town with community values. Very sad. We're becoming a laughingstock as residents fail to vote and speak up.

Robyn Rinberger
Property owner/resident in the Marymount neighborhood

From my iPhone. Please forgive typos.

January 4, 2023

Clerk of Court
Rosemarie Call
600 Cleveland Street
6th Floor
Clearwater, FL 33755

Dear Ms Call,

I have been a resident of Clearwater for over a decade. I have attended many neighborhood outings and love my neighborhood.

I want to let you know Jon Jennings got all our sidewalks fixed and did a good job.

I would like to have him continue to be our City Manager.

I look forward to more work being done with our neighborhood and more improvements in our City of Clearwater.

Sincerely,



Jill Tucker Waybright
320 Sunburst Court
Clearwater, FL 33755

City of Clearwater needs to focus on
better phone customer service.

January 4, 2023

Clerk of Court
Rosemarie Call
600 Cleveland Street
6th Floor
Clearwater, FL 33755

Dear Ms Call,

I have been a resident of Clearwater for over a decade. I have attended many neighborhood outings and love my neighborhood.

I want to let you know Jon Jennings got all our sidewalks fixed and did a good job.

I would like to have him continue to be our City Manager.

I look forward to more work being done with our neighborhood and more improvements in our City of Clearwater.

Sincerely,

Louie Stempfer

Thank you for fixing our sidewalks!

Good Job

Louie Stempfer
320 Sonborst Ct.
Old Clearwater Bay

City Council on 2023-01-05 5:00 PM - Special City Council Meeting - Re Employment Status of City Manager

Meeting Time: 01-05-23 17:00

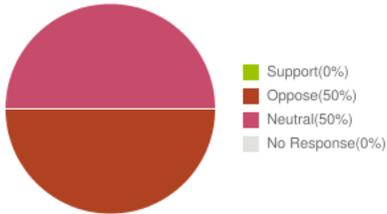
eComments Report

Meetings	Meeting Time	Agenda Items	Comments	Support	Oppose	Neutral
City Council on 2023-01-05 5:00 PM - Special City Council Meeting - Re Employment Status of City Manager	01-05-23 17:00	10	4	0	2	2

Sentiments for All Meetings

The following graphs display sentiments for comments that have location data. Only locations of users who have commented will be shown.

Overall Sentiment



City Council on 2023-01-05 5:00 PM - Special City Council Meeting - Re Employment Status of City Manager

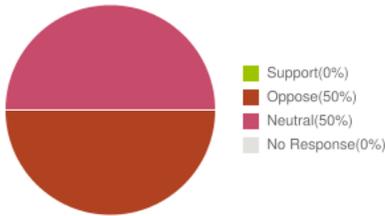
01-05-23 17:00

Agenda Name	Comments	Support	Oppose	Neutral
5.1 ID#22-1417 Discuss the employment status of City Manager Jon Jennings.	4	0	2	2

Sentiments for All Agenda Items

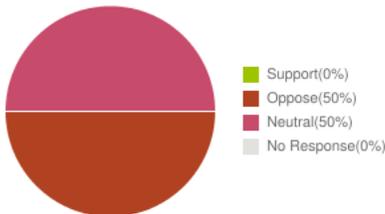
The following graphs display sentiments for comments that have location data. Only locations of users who have commented will be shown.

Overall Sentiment



Agenda Item: eComments for 5.1 ID#22-1417 Discuss the employment status of City Manager Jon Jennings.

Overall Sentiment



Michael Lance

Location:

Submitted At: 3:56pm 01-05-23

Working with a small business that is trying to expand, we have run into issues stemming from the revolving door of city managers. Looking into his background, I can see no reason to fire Jon Jennings. If he makes suggestions you don't agree with, vote against him. Just don't keep searching for more managers until you find one you always agree with. Stick with a manager who can do the job

Dennis McDermott

Location:

Submitted At: 7:49pm 01-03-23

When I watched the Clearwater City Council meeting (12/15/22) on Youtube, my reaction was quite similar to what David Allbritton so eloquently stated.

I truly was disappointed by the action of Mayor Hibbard to recommend termination of Jon Jennings as City

Manager.

Clearly, my comments are limited to public observations, however, my observations do include observing a long history of poor management practices in the City which Jennings inherited, leaving him to manage and resolve a legacy of mediocre, poor, and/or horrible decisions from prior years.

I believe Jennings was selected because of his knowledge and experience, and his reputation as an agent of change.

A true agent of change shares a great deal in common with a High Wire Artist --- he must be a very daring and unconventional individual --- an entrepreneurial politician --- a high-wire performer without a safety net --- a man who thinks stop signs are for other people.

By its nature, an effective agent of change must embrace the notion that 'breaking a few eggs is necessary to make the omelet'. Further, history tells us that those who have effectively challenged the status quo have been self-confident, decisive, willful, and confrontational.

While these are useful attributes to encourage disruptive thought and action, they can also be perceived as contentious and belligerent, leading to potentially adversarial relationships.

Moving fast and breaking things requires the support of an engaged team who are informed, united and on a similar glide path. Most critical is a Board of Directors (i.e. City Council) which is willing and able to stay the course ---- to keep focused on the long term while avoiding arbitrary, personal or emotional conflicts.

The very reasons Jon Jennings was chosen as our new City Manager in 2021 seem to now form the justification Mayor Hibbard (and 2 others) are leaning on to dismiss him after just one year of service.

I believe Jennings accomplishments over the course of this one year are amazing, and certainly on target toward fixing 20+ years of 'laissez faire' leadership in Clearwater.

Further, I am concerned that the current message being sent from the Mayor and the City Council includes: (a) We are micro-managers; (b) We don't communicate well; (c) Our rules of engagement are subject to change on a whim; (d) It's 'our way or the highway'; and (e) Following the termination of Jon Jennings, we understand that our actions will help ensure that no competent candidate(s) will apply for the future City Manager position.

The Urban Land Institute study/report from 2014 helps to paint a clear picture toward a positive way forward for the City of Clearwater. The critical issue continues to be achieving a symbiotic relationship between the City and the FLAG Organization. Jennings made some decent progress on that front.

I will guess that those who represent the interests of the FLAG Organization will be delighted by a change of leadership at City Hall.

Meanwhile, we must hope cooler heads will prevail at the Special City Council Meeting on January 5, 2023, paving a path toward a truce between the City Council and Mr. Jennings, leading toward keeping the City of Clearwater on a solid trajectory toward social, racial, religious and economic independence.

Kathy Flaherty

Location:

Submitted At: 8:44pm 01-02-23

In my opinion, Mr. Jennings serving as the City Manager has not benefited the CRA area where I live. In fact he has diminished my blighted community by taking away planned improvements.

He approved plans to have the Mercado space, a Hispanic Civic Core as intended for 10 plus years, changed to the Festival Core a gathering space as seen at the July CRA meeting and by the August 30 project presentation.

Then at the September City Council meeting, he stated that he never took any official action to change the name or purpose of the Mercado after being asked by the Mayor. Basically he lied to the Council and the Hispanic community.

He also stated the long time planned CRA Stevenson Creek Project, was canceled for lack of interest. My community is very interested and has been waiting for years for this project to be done. It is scheduled in the Downtown Development Plan to be done this year. This project needs to be completed not canceled.

Also he has done nothing to address the multitude of dumpsters on City Easements that sit directly on or next to storm water drains leading to Stevenson Creek.

I had hoped he would improve my community but, he has not helped mitigate blight in my community or support my community. My community needs support and improvement - not marginalization and abandonment.

Valentina Quinn

Location:

Submitted At: 7:08pm 12-29-22

Dear City Council,

i am opposed to the motion of Mr. Jennings being fired. He has helped the neighborhoods, he has fixed the sidewalks making them more safe and more presentable. It sounds like a small thing but this actually makes the city safer for pedestrians and makes the city less liable to lawsuits. i feel that he has accomplished many things in a short amount of time. Besides that, looking for someone new will take time and more taxpayer's money, i think it will destabilize the city. I think he should be given a chance to continue, i don't believe firing him is a solution.

Thank you for your time.

Valentina Quinn