

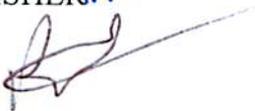
COMMISSIONERS APPROVAL

IMAN 

CHILCOTT

FOSS 

KANENWISHER 

STOLTZ 

PLETTENBERG (Clerk & Recorder)

Members Present.....Commissioner J.R. Iman, Commissioner Suzy Foltz, Commissioner Matt Kanenwisher and Commissioner Ron Stoltz

Date.....February 18, 2011

- ▶ Commissioner Greg Chilcott was in Helena testifying at the legislative hearings.
- ▶ Minutes: Glenda Wiles
- ▶ The Board conducted an interview with Robert Whalen for an open position on the Ravalli County Economic Development Authority Board at 9:00 a.m.
- ▶ The Board met at 9:30 a.m. with Tracy Stone, Outreach Regional Director from Senator Tester’s office, for an update.
- ▶ The Board met at 1:30 p.m. to discuss and decide on the acceptance of the Treasurer’s resignation and a transition plan for the Treasurer’s office. Present was numerous citizens and Human Resource Director Robert Jenni. Commissioner Iman indicated that on February 15th the Commissioners received and read aloud a resignation from the Treasurer. Commissioner Iman noted 72 hours have passed with no recantation. **Commissioner Stoltz made a motion to accept Treasurer Mary Hudson-Smith’s resignation. Commissioner Foss seconded and all voted “aye”.**

Discussion by the Board then followed. Commissioner Kanenwisher asked Chief Deputy Treasurer Marie Keeton numerous questions in regard to statutory obligations for revenues and payments and any other requirements in the office which would include Motor Vehicles. Discussion included appointing an interim Treasurer because the Treasurer’s last day of office is February 28, 2011. Marie indicated she is capable of handling most day to day operations but there are a few areas that she has to look at and she feels she will probably seek assistance.

Commissioner Kanenwisher asked Robert if the Commissioners could appoint an interim Treasurer on or after the 28th of February until a new Treasurer is hired. Robert indicated until the person is hired he would feel comfortable continuing to utilize Marie in those day to day duties. Commissioner Iman relayed that Commissioner Chilcott had suggested to him that the county start soliciting for the position of Treasurer today with a one week time frame with the hopes of hiring on March 3rd. Discussion occurred in regard to having only a 5 day window for the application process.

Commissioner Kanenwisher read the following statement: “The recent actions and circumstances concerning the Treasurer’s Office have been disconcerting and troublesome for citizens, county employees, and local agencies which deal with that office. Our duties, as County Commissioners, include the responsibility to ‘supervise the official conduct of all county officers....charged with managing...public revenue’ (MCA 7-4-2110). Accordingly, this board has chosen to address the current problem directly and openly and my intent is to continue with a deliberate and systematic approach to solving the problems with the management of this department. The problems which exist within the Treasurer’s Office did not begin a few months ago. That is not to say that the previous Treasurer was not competent. But it is my opinion that the Treasurer and the Board of County Commissioners failed to ensure mechanisms were in place to prevent a situation where the requisite knowledge and understanding to run the department resided within one individual. It is my opinion that to simply reappoint the previous Treasurer, with no other consideration, is to avoid this reality and shirk our responsibility. I would like to address all of these issues rather than simply the easiest one and I would like to assure the citizens, employees, and other agencies that we will move quickly to resolve these issues and that all hands are on deck to address the statutory obligations of the office.”

Commissioner Foss agreed with Commissioner Kanenwisher noting the Commissioners need the time and opportunity to obtain a large applicant pool, making sure to appoint the best candidate. Commissioner Stoltz expressed concern that a five day window was too short a time frame to obtain a good pool of applicants. He noted Civil Counsel advised the Commissioners that a short window for the job opening was not good. He has also heard some concerns from the Treasurer’s Office that he feels need to be looked into.

Commissioner Iman asked for discussion in regard to managing another elected official. Commissioner Kanenwisher stated the Commissioners have very little to do with telling another Elected Official what to do, but in this situation the Commissioners have the obligation to manage the office until another Treasurer is appointed.

Commissioner Foss stated the Commissioners have an obligation of fiscal management and the final bosses are the tax payers. Good leadership provides cross training so if a ‘hole’ occurs in personnel a problem won’t occur. Commissioner Stoltz stated it is important to appoint the right person for this job.

Commissioner Iman noted the Commissioners have no supervision over the appointed Treasurer, so the opportunity to manage is very limited. Currently the county has an

immediate problem; by the first of April we will be one third into the year and we will not have December's book reconciled. Thus we need someone in there soon to reconcile the books.

In that regard Marie stated she cannot reconcile December books today because she is still processing the payments, however next week she can start that reconciliation. She believes she can reconcile the books, but has not done that specific task in the past.

Commissioner Foss stated there are aspects to this job other than reconciliation and management of the books, i.e., supervision of employees etc.

Public Comment was then called for.

Kay Probst asked if there are any mentoring and training classes for this job and if there are operating procedures in this department. Commissioner Kanenwisher stated there are a number of firms that audit county governments, but most of those firms do not do any employee training. In regard to the Standard Operating Procedures, Treasurers all across the state balance the books so there are some general procedures. There is also a Montana Association of Treasurers.

Wayne Chilcote asked where the Treasurer's duties are spelled out. Robert Jenni responded it is within Montana Code.

Chris Hockman noted Ron Foltz is the auditor for the county and asked has there been any problems identified. The Board noted nothing has been noted.

Tim Dugan asked why do we need to go to an outside party when we already have a qualified person available?

Elizabeth Chilcote asked if the Treasurer's Office just hired someone that was a Treasurer from another county. Robert stated the person hired was not a Treasurer in another county but worked in another county's Treasurer's Office.

Commissioner Kanenwisher addressed Montana Statute noting that is not a comprehensive list of what a Treasurer does.

Commissioner Iman noted the urgency to this issue addressing three distinct parts to the Treasurer's Office. Those being: motor vehicle, investments/reconciliation and tax collection. He wanted to note that none of this discussion is saying Marie is deficient, just that there is a lot to this job and there are certain issues that Marie was not trained in.

Discussion came back to the time line for advertising, interviewing etc. Robert felt confident he could put the advertising for the position in the paper by Sunday, noting there has been quite a bit of press lately, so anyone following the County would be aware of this job opening. Robert stated he will ask for a letter of intent plus resume and

documents that support that resume (county applications are not geared for this type of job.)

Commissioner Iman again opened the floor for public comment.

Judy Martin asked if there is a law against reinstating the previous county treasurer. Robert responded no there is not, but they have a duty to appoint who will fit the need and they can appoint the previous Treasurer. Commissioner Iman stated there might be other people who qualify for this job.

Earla Johnson asked if someone came in they would need to be trained?

Commissioner Iman suggested they open the application process for a week, letters being postmarked by Feb 25th and begin consideration on March 1st. Robert stated this is not a typical appointment for a department head and it is only until the General Election of November 2012. **Commissioner Kanenwisher made a motion to advertise the job opening starting today and have the closing occur on February 25th. Commissioner Foss seconded the motion and all voted "aye".**

Commissioner Kanenwisher also stated the Commissioners have the capability of starting up a conversation about partisanship of this office as well as combining offices of the Clerk & Recorder and Treasurer. Commissioner Iman reviewed the Montana Statute noting the Commissioners do have the ability to change the Treasurer's position to a non-partisanship position by public hearing, but to combine the office must go before the voters.

After discussion and concurrence **Commissioner Kanenwisher made a motion to open the applications, interview and appointment in a public meeting. Commissioner Stoltz seconded the motion and all voted "aye".**

It was agreed the applicants letters of intent, resumes and supporting documents should be sent to rjenni@ravallcounty.mt.gov and any citizen comments be sent to Glenda at commissioners@ravallcounty.mt.gov

Commissioner Kanenwisher noted the number of support letters for certain applications is not important to him.

Commissioner Iman opened the public comment up again.

Michael Howell asked if the applicant was required to be a Ravalli County resident. Robert indicated he would check that.

Earla Johnson also expressed concern about being a county resident.

Kay Probst suggested they obtain a background check. Robert noted that was part of the process for hiring.

Chris Hockman asked if the party affiliation was required for the job. Robert stated it was not.

Cheryl Walrod asked if they will open it up to people from out of state, noting this is a local position and it should be filled by someone local with ties to the community. Robert will check with civil counsel.

Bonnie Dugan employee at Treasurers Office presented a letter asking the Commissioners to base their decision on the best qualified candidate.

Staff from KECI TV re-confirmed the time frame. It was noted the application period opens today, close on February 25th with postmark, interview process the first week of March and hopefully appoint on the 3rd of March.

Commissioner Kanenwisher asked if the Board should appoint an interim on the 28th of February.

Bill Menager asked if that gives the Commissioners time to set up interviews.

Elizabeth Chilcote expressed that same concern. The Board noted most applicants will make themselves available, but yes that might limit the applicant pool.

Lavonne Miller noted the County had an election in November and anyone could have run last March. She said it is important to look at the applicant's future and make sure they are vested here in this valley.

Darrin Street stated the person should be a resident of Ravalli County.

Commissioner Iman read the letter from First Interstate Bank requiring a resolution for acceptance of resignation and for the county to list those able to sign on the accounts. That issue will be put on Tuesday's agenda.

Marie Keeton noted First Interstate Bank as well as other banks need minutes of the upcoming Tuesday meeting. Glenda will prepare the resolution and take care of letters to banks as well as the minutes.