


Memorandum

To: Honorable Mayor and members of the City Commission

From: Russ Blackburn, City Manager 

Subject: Transition from position of City Manager

Date: November 5, 2015

In September I celebrated my 10th year as Gainesville's City Manager. As I approached this benchmark I took the opportunity to reflect on the progress and accomplishments of the organization during this period. Although Gainesville has experienced many changes during the past 10 years no single event has been more impactful on the organization than the recession which began in 2008. The City of Gainesville lost over \$18,000,000 of general fund revenue during this major economic correction. Your staff rose to the challenge of significantly reduced revenue by following lean government principles, examining every expenditure and revenue source. Many employees took on the workload of two or more employees to ensure that essential services would continue to be provided in a quality manner. Gainesville's organized employee groups made significant pension concessions which have helped to preserve the defined benefit pension system.

Since 2005 the organization has worked to continuously improve the skills of the men and women providing services. The Gainesville Corporate University, Leadership through Innovation and Training and Emerging leaders Program which were initiated in the last 10 years have provided thousands of hours of training to enhance skills and problem solving abilities. Throughout the nation our Department and Division directors are viewed as some of the most progressive and knowledgeable public employees in government.

I am particularly proud that the Gainesville Police Department, Parks Recreation and Culture, Fire and Rescue and Public Works Departments have all been awarded accredited status by their professional associations. To the best of my knowledge Gainesville is the only city in Florida with four major departments awarded accredited status. .

Since day one of my tenure the City Commission has been clear in support of revitalization of our older neighborhoods and City core. As I look around the area between the University and downtown an amazing transformation has occurred; over 3000 residential units have been constructed or are under construction. A new Hampton Inn is thriving in our downtown and technology companies occupy previously empty space. In partnership with the private sector, UF Health and the University, the City has provided an innovative land use and zoning designation which will result in the construction of over 3,000,000 sq. ft. of mixed use development and create thousands of jobs. The eastside of our community has seen UF make a major investment in the East Side Support Center and a successful Walmart has located on Waldo Road.

Gainesville's boundaries have changed significantly. In 2008 the late Clark Butler voluntarily agreed to annex Butler Plaza into the City. I feel a personal connection to Butler Plaza's presence in the City. I met dozens of times with Mr. Butler to help him see the positive aspects of his properties becoming a part of the City. The current expansion of Butler Plaza will greatly contribute to the expansion of the City's tax base. The City now encompasses 65 square miles, an almost 20% expansion since 2005.

Early in my tenure the 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness was adopted by the City and County Commissions. The City staff took the lead in attempting to find a location for a service center and additional housing for the homeless. Although not perfect, the City's acquisition of the former Gainesville Correction Institute and metamorphosis of that facility into the Empowerment Center provides great promise to help the least fortunate in our community to move toward self sufficiency

My look back at the positive changes in our organization and our community has brought me to the realization that now may be an appropriate time for a transition in administrative leadership of the City. With my personal and the City's future in mind I have discussed a transition plan with Mayor Braddy under which I am offering to resign my position as City Manager subject to the City Commission's approval of the resignation following a transition plan.

First the Mayor and I recommend that the City Commission approve the attached amendment to my employment agreement, which provides for me to voluntarily resign from employment with the City as City Manager effective November 6, 2015 at 5:00 p.m. and in consideration for such, 20 weeks of severance pay and payment for all of my unused and accrued PTO and PCLB.

Second, I will continue to serve the City in an advisory capacity for a period of sixty (60) days following my resignation of employment as the City Manager. During this period I will assist the Interim City Manager with the transition in leadership of General Government, provide the Interim City Manager with information and support as needed and complete unfinished City business, such as employee performance evaluation and contract negotiations involving the City's Lot 10. In this advisory position I would be a time limited temporary City employee, receive the same rate of compensation I currently receive as City Manager and telecommute from home but be available for City meetings as needed.

It has been my pleasure to serve the current and past City Commissions. I know that as City Manager, I have led and managed the organization professionally.

If the City Commission is agreeable to the aforementioned terms of resignation and transition I request that the Commission approve a motion to approve the Third Amendment to the Employment Agreement between the City and City Manager Russ Blackburn and (2) support the transition plan as presented.