

COLIN BAENZIGER  ASSOCIATES
EXECUTIVE RECRUITING

Section 10

Odis O. Jones

*Gainesville City Manager
Candidate Report*

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Cover Letter and Resume

Section 10

Odis Jones
117 Cavalier Cove
Hutto, TX 78634
(614) 749-2220

July 14, 2019

Dear Madame or Sir:

I have examined the position of City Manager and have enclosed my resume as the first step in exploring the possibility of employment.

I have several years of City Manager and Economic development experience as well as an excellent public finance and leadership acumen.

Additionally, I have a Master's Degree in Public Administration and I'm a collaborative manager and a seasoned consensus builder with outstanding interpersonal and communication skills with an excellent track record.

Finally, I am excited about this opportunity to serve such a fantastic organization and I look forward to hearing from you with respect to this excellent opportunity.

Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Odis Jones

ODIS JONES

117 Cavalier CV • Hutto, TX 78634 • OdisJones@gmail.com • (614) 749-2220

EDUCATION:

MASTER of PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION DEGREE
Western Michigan University 1997

BACHELOR OF SCIENCE DEGREE
Central Michigan University 1994

PROFILE SUMMARY:

A Collaborative and results oriented executive with over 20 years of experience as a City Manager and Economic Development professional within suburban and urban complex local and state government organizations. Highly skilled in economic development, public utilities, budgeting, public finance and personnel management as well as an open style communication.

WORK EXPERIENCE:

City Manager (CEO) 2016- Present
City of Hutto, TX
Population: 35,000

- Responsible for managing the day to day operations and affairs of this full service City (located Austin, TX metroplex) of which includes providing direction and oversight of all departments and ensuring that the policies of the City Council are implemented
- Established positive organizational relationships and open for business brand between local and regional stakeholders
- Successfully managed and implemented a community participatory process that led to the adoption of a new Comprehensive Strategic Plan that will guide the communities growth and focus
- Successfully negotiated and purchased a water system for the City that will produce enough water to guide the City's health & growth needs for the next 95 yrs.
- Recruited and expanded over 25 companies to the City generating more than \$2 billion dollars of private capital investment and 3,500 jobs
- Led the redevelopment of the Co-Op district into a mixed used lifestyle center of 500k sq. ft. of shops, restaurants and apartments
- Recruited Perfect Game/Major League Baseball recruiting network's National Headquarters to the City a development that will generate a \$200mm annual economic impact to the community along with generating a 150k hotel bid stays to the Austin, TX region
- Led the transformation of our Police Department to adopt the 21 Century Policing modality
- Successfully built and transitioned local government into a new City Hall & Police Headquarters

Chief Executive Officer (CEO) 2013-2016
Public Lighting Authority of Detroit
Population: 700,000

- Responsible for the day to day operations and the implementation of the policies of the Board of Directors including the preparation and management of a \$250mm budget
- Planned, organized and evaluated the work of all departments to ensure that operations and services comply with the policies and direction of the Board of Directors.
- Directed the development of the capital improvement plan budget for approval by the Board as well as monitored the implementation of adopted budgets.
- Facilitated internal and external communication throughout community as well as local, state and federal level of government.
- Performed financial and managerial analyses for the Board of Directors, Mayor, City Council and State Legislatures pertaining to progress and operations of Authority.

Section 10

- Led the development of Affordable Housing projects within the Center City Areas of the City as well as the tax incentive and small business loan portfolio of the City targeting the Center City Area.
- Worked with neighborhood associations and the planning/zoning Board to adopt a Center City redevelopment plan.

Interim City Manager
City of Centralia, IL
Population: 17,000

1/2004-7/2004

- Directed the day to day operations of this full service City and all departments reported to the Mayor and City Council managed a budget of \$38mm and staff of 178.
- Restructured City staff and organization to eliminate City structured deficit including the outsourcing of waste collection and legal services
- Prepared and successfully proposed for adoption of City Council a new City budget
- Negotiated new bargaining contracts with three unions and hired a new Police Chief and Finance Director for the City with community and City Council input.
- Worked with City Council to prepare and adopt a new annexation policy and economic development strategy.

City Manager
City of Obetz, OH
Population: 6,000

2000-2004

- Provided oversight of all day to day operations of this full service City and departments reported directly to the Mayor and City Council while supervising a budget of \$15mm and a total staff of 112.
- Formulated a financial package which was used to plan and construct a New City Hall and Police Headquarters.
- Prepared and successfully proposed to City Council a new water/sewer rate structure that allowed for the implementation of a new service territory expansion and capital improvement plan.
- Worked with City Council to adopt a new comprehensive plan and economic development strategy that lead to the development a new CSX rail intermodal facility and 4 industrial parks.
- Directed the implementation of a new Information Technology system that improved Citywide auditing controls, reporting and customer service to the residence, Mayor and City Council

Special Projects Manager for City Manager
City of Battle Creek, MI
Population: 55,000

1995-2000

- Provided overall direction and management of projects assigned by the City Manager
- Implemented a model workforce development program called Breaking Through the Barriers
- Performed presentations, analysis and reports to City Council and Neighborhood Associations as to progress of summer activity budgets and plans
- Managed budget adoption community participatory program activity

Reference Available Upon Request:

Candidate Introduction

Odin Jones

EDUCATION

Master of Public Administration, Western Michigan University
Bachelor of Science, Central Michigan University
Capital Markets Forum- Harvard University Executive education

EXPERIENCE

City Manager, City of Hutto TX	2016 – present
Chief Executive Officer, Public Lighting Authority of Detroit	2013 – 2016
Executive Director of Economic Development, Cincinnati, OH	2012 – 2014
Director of Real Estate & Economic Development, State of NJ	2008 – 2012
Interim City Administrator, Keokuk, IA	11-07– 2008
President & CEO, Columbus Urban Growth, Columbus, OH	2004 – 2007
Interim City Manager, Centralia IL	1-04 – 7-04
City Manager, Obetz OH	2000 – 2004

BACKGROUND

The City of Hutto is located within the Austin metroplex a 25min drive from downtown Austin and one of the fastest growing Cities in Texas. Just 10 yrs. ago the City had a population of 1,200 people today it is home to more than 36,000 people and growing with an average house hold income of \$93k. It is home to residents that work in the tech industry with Headquarters such as Dell, Apple and Google just within a 15 min drive from its incorporated boundaries.

The City Manager has direct oversight of 7 executives with an overall workforce of 236 employees and an overall budget of \$92mm. The General Fund is \$20mm and its second largest fund is the Capital Projects Fund which makes up \$46mm.

The three most important issues facing the City right now:

1) Managing growth: While the City’s residential & commercial growth has taken off the City’s infrastructure isn’t completely up to the task. Therefore, the City has had to issue bonds to facilitate some of the construction of roads and utilities of which has led to an increase in the City’s overall debt profile. Therefore, we’ve adopted a pay as you go policy to help defray public infrastructure cost including implementing transportation fees, building fees and utility impact fees that previously the City didn’t have in place. Additionally, the City has started to utilize creative public financing tools such as special assessments districts and tax increment financing districts to build public infrastructure and incentive growth.

2) Rebuilding Aging infrastructure: Some parts of the City's public infrastructure in the original core parts of town is decayed and thus needs to be rebuilt. I partnered with the City Council, Community and Chamber of Commerce to develop and successfully led a \$125mm bond campaign to improve and replace infrastructure that will improve our parks, rebuild old town roads and construct new drainage systems.

3)The need for new schools: While this is not my primary function, as City Manager I had the ability to influence a positive outcome. Therefore, I partnered with the City Council to revisit the City's comprehensive plan and the City Council adopted new growth policy that require developers who build master planned communities to set aside land for the use of schools. This policy ensure that the public would have reasonable school sites as well as help to defray the overall cost to the public for new school construction.

GENERAL, MANAGEMENT STYLE AND EXPERIENCE

I am interested in the Gainesville City Manager position as I believe my background education and experience will assist me in meeting the goals of the Gainesville City Commission. Additionally, I am looking for a new challenge and I believe assisting the Gainesville City Commission with driving economic growth and rebuilding its aging infrastructure will be a rewarding challenge.

I have an open, collaborative and results driven approach and/or style to management. My staff would say that I am a result driven mentor and coach that empowers them to get things done. Likewise, my City Council members would say that I am a collaborator and partner with them while assisting them to plan, predict and intercept policy needs for the City. The strength of my management style is that I am data driven and I tend to focus on outcomes that positively impact citizens. However, one of my weakness is that I am terrible at managing my schedule so having an executive assistant is important to me to help me manage my calendar.

Additionally, I am a big believer in the Lean Management philosophy and I utilize Lean management as a tool to drive results within my organization. In fact, the lean management philosophy has helped me achieve my greatest career achievement. That is completely rebuilding the electric grid and streetlighting system within my home down of Detroit 2yrs early and \$12mm under budget. However, one of my biggest failures during my career was because I didn't apply the Lean principals. When I was City Manager in Obetz, OH I was charged with building a new sewer plant. Because I didn't adequately plan for and schedule contingencies I was 6 months late with the project and it almost cost us an economic development project. This was a great lesson for me as I moved on in my career applying Lean Management to assist me in planning for contingencies through continuous process improvement.

Unfortunately, I have had to fire personal before. It never makes you feel good, however in order to meet the goals of my City Council when I came to Hutto TX. I had to retool the organization

Odin Jones

skill set, which meant I had to let some people go. My approach to doing so was as humanistic as possible by offering severance opportunity to personal who had approved levels of longevity within the organization or early retirement for others.

The most important challenge for any new City Manager which is no different here in Gainesville is earning the trust and respect of the City Commission. My first six months on the job will be to focus on developing relationships, understanding the goals of the City Commission, assessing the organizations ability to meet those goals and presenting the City Commission and community with a 120-day plan designed to tackle the opportunities and challenges of the community. I have an outstanding relationship with the media and I will utilize my media relations skills along with social media to help promote and market the City of Gainesville.

When my community finds out that I may be possibly leaving for Gainesville. I am sure some will contact Gainesville. However, I am confident that I will positively be able to address any questions that may arise. Finally, during my leisure time I like to fish and enjoy the outdoors.

SIX ADJECTIVES OR PHRASES YOU WOULD USE TO DESCRIBE YOURSELF

The following six adjectives or phrases best describes me:

- Fair minded
- Collaborative
- Driven
- Open
- Goal Oriented
- Excellent Communicator

REASON FOR WANTING TO LEAVE CURRENT JOB

I am interested in finding a new and rewarding challenge within a diverse community.

CURRENT/MOST RECENT OR RELEVANT SALARY

My current salary is \$275k

CB&A Background Checks

**Background Check Summary for
ODIS O. JONES**

Criminal Records Checks:

Nationwide Criminal Records Search	No Records Found
County	
Williamson County, TX	No Records Found
Pike County, IL	No Records Found
Hamilton County, OH	No Records Found
Butler County, OH	No Records Found
Lee County, IA	No Records Found
Franklin County, OH	No Records Found
Marion County, IL	No Records Found
State	
Texas	No Records Found
Illinois	No Records Found
Ohio	<i>Records Maintained by County. See Above.</i>
Iowa	No Records Found

Civil Records Checks:

County	
Williamson County, TX	No Records Found
Pike County, IL	No Records Found
Hamilton County, OH	No Records Found
Butler County, OH	No Records Found
Lee County, IA	No Records Found
Franklin County, OH	No Records Found
Marion County, IL	No Records Found
Federal	
Texas	No Records Found
Illinois	No Records Found
Ohio	No Records Found
Iowa	No Records Found

Motor Vehicle

Texas	No Records Found
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Credit

Excellent

Bankruptcy

No Records Found

**Background Check Summary for
ODIS O. JONES**

Education

Confirmed

Employment

Confirmed except for
Columbus Urban Growth Corporation
(2004 – 2007)
Business has closed

Under the Fair Credit Reporting Act, 15 U.S.C. 1681-1681Y, credit and bankruptcy information are very sensitive and should not be used in the consideration of hiring. The information is included for each candidate because we do not want you to be surprised if third parties raise what they consider to be a concern.

**Background Check Summary for
ODIS O. JONES
Personal Disclosure**

Personal Disclosure Questionnaire

Name of Applicant: _____

The following questions are designed so that we will be able to make full disclosure to our client concerning your background. Please answer them honestly. Cutting corners or misrepresenting your past will result in you being eliminated from all further searches conducted by this firm. We understand that frivolous charges are sometimes made and that charges do not mean you were guilty. We also understand that you may have been wronged and needed to seek compensation. The bottom line is that we want to be certain that our client is fully informed. If you have any questions, please contact us for clarification.

Please explain any yes answers on a separate sheet of paper.

- 1. Have you ever been charged or convicted of a felony?
Yes No
- 2. Have you ever been accused of or have been involved in a domestic violence or abuse incident?
Yes No
- 3. Have you ever declared bankruptcy or been an owner in a business that did so?
Yes No
- 4. Have you ever been the subject of a civil rights violation complaint that was investigated or resulted in a lawsuit?
Yes No
- 5. Have you ever been the subject of a sexual harassment complaint that was investigated or resulted in a lawsuit?
 Yes No *Case was dismissed by EEOC*
- 6. Have you ever been convicted of driving while intoxicated?
Yes No
- 7. Have you ever sued a current or former employer?
Yes No
- 8. Do you have a personal My Space, Face Book or other type of Web Page?
Yes No
- 9. Do you have a personal Twitter Account?
Yes No
- 10. Is there anything else in your background that, if made public, would cause you, our client or our firm embarrassment if it came to light through the press or any other mechanism?
Yes No
- 11. Please provide a list of any lawsuits in which you are or have been a party either as plaintiff or defendant.

*Sued news station for
defamation*

Attested to: 
Signature of Applicant

Please email this form via PDF DOCUMENT to Lynelle@cb-asso.com or via fax to (888) 539-6531 **no later than 5:00 PM PST 08/05/19.**

(Note: Please be sure to sign the form with your actual signature if you are sending Fax or PDF Document)

CB&A Reference Notes

**Reference Notes
Odis O. Jones**

Eliska Padilla – former Assistant to the City Manager, Hutto, TX 254-722-0786

Ms. Padilla worked with Mr. Jones from 2016 to 2018. Mr. Jones has a scar on the back of his head and Ms. Padilla teases him that that is where he plugs in at night. He never stops working, is dedicated to the City, is an excellent communicator with the Council, and gives the elected officials all the information they need to make decisions.

Mr. Jones is a great leader to work with because he is very visionary and entrepreneurial. When something is not working, he finds another way. For example, when they are short money for a project, he finds another way to fund it. He has an incredible financial mind for making deals which is something the City needed. It was not growing but they needed it to grow. Since his arrival they have opened a new industrial park through his connections. Developers trust him so they came to Hutto, a little known bedroom community. They have a \$250 million co-op district that was partially paid for by the developer with eight tenants already. 7,300 homes are in development and the developers are paying for infrastructure, including sewer installation. None of his predecessors had the business acuity to negotiate such a contract.

Mr. Jones turned the permitting department around and permits are now issued within seven days. The City of Austin takes three months to issue the same permit. Two of the major businesses in the industrial park came to Hutto because they heard how easy Hutto is to work with, which is primarily due to Mr. Jones. He recently finalized an \$800 million dollar deal.

With Mr. Jones at the helm the executive team was harmonious. He does not tolerate any back biting. He explained to them that they are one team and they need to have each other's backs. He drives hard and he works hard. Employees who work with him are committed to making the community better.

A developer was looking for property in Austin and the neighboring cities but did not find anything. While at the airport waiting for his flight out, he picked up the newspaper and read something about Odis Jones in Hutto. He immediately left the airport, missed his flight, and drove to Hutto to meet with Mr. Jones. This interaction led to construction of the industrial park. The developer knew that Mr. Jones would work with him, he negotiates deals where both the community and the developer win.

Mr. Jones makes good decisions. He is definitely innovative while also bringing high performance to Hutto. He had employees measure their change and activity, and look for ways to work smarter so they do not have to work harder. He builds discipline throughout the organization and is definitely not a 'keep things the same' agent.

While Mr. Jones attends key community events like ground breakings, chamber luncheons and essential events, he does not attend every little gathering. He knows what he needs to be at and what the executive team can handle. He focuses more on managing the deals. He is really good with the media, he gives good interviews and has a good relationship with them. He has

Reference Notes
Odis O. Jones

phenomenal support from those who want growth. Those who do not are small in number but very vocal. The last bond, and their biggest bond, passed with a 71% approval rate.

Ms. Padilla was one of the executives at the table with Mr. Jones as part of the executive team. She led seven departments because he believes in training up department heads and he wanted her to learn and grow so she could become the Assistant City Manager. She resigned for personal reasons before attaining the position. She now runs a real estate company and still meets with Mr. Jones regularly on matters related to her current work.

A line burst and the City had to implement a boil water notice after hours. Mr. Jones called Public Works and the executive team in and gave everyone direction. He led employees but was in the hole helping find the break because he worked in streets years ago and knows engineering. Everyone knew their roles, Ms. Padilla worked with the media and sent out alerts to the public. She and Mr. Jones had constant communication through messaging until the issues were resolved. During the emergency he had Human Resource employees provide food for the teams working in the rain all night long and made sure that all their needs were met during the process. He communicated well with Council. It was resolved and he then ensured that their remaining water mains were safe. Once the emergency was over, he recognized employees and the work they did during the emergency.

Mr. Jones is very timely in meeting his deadlines and has never appeared stressed. When something is bothering him, he becomes quiet while he figures out what he wants to do, but he never raises his voice.

The City was either going to file for bankruptcy or have to raise their rates significantly because of their contract with a water asset. Mr. Jones tried to resolve the issues but the asset would not release them from their contract. He then suggested they spend a little more and buy the asset. Council thought it was a crazy idea at first, but once explained it made sense and they purchased the asset. The citizens did not have to face exorbitant increases. He is ingenious and finds a way to accomplish the goals that others may not necessarily see.

Mr. Jones trusts the judgment of his senior staff and allows them to make decisions. Ms. Padilla promoted a part time assistant to full time, then to library supervisor, then library manager and this employee is now the library director. Other managers might have insisted that she give the job to a librarian, but Mr. Jones recognizes that the librarian does not have to be the Director, they just have to be on staff. This employee had the management skills needed to lead the group. He listens to his staff and developed leaders who have gone on to do better things. He supports them and maintains friendship with him, which is beneficial because some of them have become partners on projects later down the road.

Controversy is the nature of the job in government. Employees that Mr. Jones dismissed filed sexual harassment lawsuits but the City prevailed. Ms. Padilla would not have worked with him if there was any risk. Further, she never saw any inkling of inappropriate behavior between him

Reference Notes
Odis O. Jones

and the women on his executive team. The department heads that she knows would agree with the statements in this reference.

Ms. Padilla would absolutely hire Mr. Jones and does not want to lose him. He is a phenomenal Manager.

Words or phrases used to describe Odis Jones:

- Bold,
- Entrepreneurial,
- Never stops,
- Determined,
- Ingenious, and
- Has an amazing ability to know what will happen and is 12 steps ahead in his mind.

Strengths: Surrounds himself with a diverse and powerful group, does not have any biases, creates a harmonious team, energized, never stops working, dedicated to the City, excellent communicator, developers love him.

Weaknesses: He is a workaholic and expects much from staff, which some cannot handle. He does not turn off and sometimes expects staff to stay on, too. Ms. Padilla has had to set boundaries like ‘maybe do not call after 11 pm’, and he adjusted to that. He is just very driven.

Don Wolery – former Village Attorney, Obetz, OH 614-679-9128

Mr. Wolery met Mr. Jones in 2000 when he was hired to manage Obetz which is a suburb of Columbus. Mr. Jones did an excellent job, he was the Economic Development Director as well as the Village Administrator.

It is not ‘my way or the highway’ with Mr. Jones. He listens to others and is a good team leader. He makes good decisions. He is innovative and came up with great ideas. He changed the way things were done and expected everyone to maintain a high degree of professionalism and efficiency. He is effervescent which is an old term but it suits him. He is always positive. He has confidence in the staff and encourages them to work smarter, not harder.

They spoke daily and talked about everything that was happening. Mr. Jones never plays ‘hide the peanut’ with the Council or the Attorney. He clearly states where they are at and where they are going.

As an Administrator Mr. Jones had an open door policy. Anyone could talk to him at any time about anything. He was always out and about. He may not have needed bolts, but he still went

Reference Notes

Odis O. Jones

into the hardware store to buy them to have a chance to talk to residents. He asked if they liked what was happening in the town. Residents appreciated his honesty and positive nature.

Mr. Jones attracted businesses from all over the world including a German optical company. He built the infrastructure up and was instrumental in building the new \$5 million dollar municipal complex when they were working out of an old schoolhouse. He built an amazing team to get it all done. He does not micro manage staff, he hires people to do a job and expects them to do it. He meets with them to set expectations and then lets them work.

Mr. Jones led the team to build the municipal building which included a bond. He oversaw the IT department to design the setup and they completely modernized the whole building. He had the PR person distribute newsletters to share the progress with the public. He met with elected officials, employees, and community members to see what they needed and wanted in the new building. Once he had an idea of what would best suit their organization, he worked with the architectural group to create the plans. He drove the project from the ground up to completion, and it was a state of the art facility when it was finished.

When it comes to any type of municipal financing Mr. Jones is a whiz kid. He knows government finance inside and out. He was able to bring businesses into the community without dipping into the government till or going into the red. Economic development is his strong suit and he knows how to negotiate the deals.

Mr. Jones is frequently ahead of schedule. If he is tasked with overseeing a significant project and they expect it to take five years to complete, he does it in two. He takes pride in getting the job done well and in a timely manner. Even though he works quickly, he makes sure every 'I is dotted' and every 'T is crossed' so there are no issues later.

Mr. Jones laughs in stressful times. He knows he cannot make everyone happy but he was hired to do a job and he does it. What you see is what you get, his public and private personas are the same. He is positive, bubbly, and a cheerleader for the whole group. He gets the best out of everyone because of the way he manages. He has faith in the staff and instills a sense of self confidence and purpose to both his team and those around him.

Mr. Jones brought in much new development and the old powers that be saw their influence being diluted and they began to resent it even though Mr. Jones was only doing the job he was hired to do. A small group of people became really vicious and distributed an anonymous newsletter attacking Mr. Jones. A state Senator actually came to town and asked them to stop, he told residents they were better than this. But this small group did not want to lose their power base and sunk to any low to maintain the status quo.

Controversial issues always exist in government but Mr. Jones does not shy away from it. He addresses controversy head on, and provides facts and information to combat misinformation. He deals with problems when they are minor so that they do not become major problems. He does the best he can with what he is given to work with.

Reference Notes
Odis O. Jones

Allegations were made against Mr. Jones in Michigan but they were unfounded. He is as honest as the day is long. He does not take advantage of others because of his position. If you do a really good job, you will always have people who do not approve of what you do or are jealous of you. His end result was always top notch, which is all that matters.

Mr. Jones left Obetz when a newly elected Mayor decided to bring their own Manager in. You will always be able to find someone with a negative opinion of any Manager, but Mr. Wolery believes that you will not find a better person for the job than Mr. Jones.

No matter how big of a City Mr. Wolery is in he wants Mr. Jones to run it, even for a community as large as Dallas. He has the helm and will steer the ship in the direction it needs to go for the betterment of the City. Mr. Wolery can say with 100% conviction that Obetz is better for Mr. Jones having been there. Mr. Wolery has followed Mr. Jones' career and he has left every community better than when he arrived. An organization would be foolish not to hire him.

In 40 years of practicing law and representing government agencies and entities, Mr. Wolery never worked with a better group of people and a better Manager than Mr. Jones and his team. Mr. Wolery is proud of what they accomplished.

Words or phrases used to describe Odis Jones:

- Strong leader,
- Consensus builder,
- Hard worker,
- Smart,
- Innovative, and
- Goal oriented.

Strengths: Works well with others, team builder, great at trying to reach consensus, very hard worker, good communicator with Council and kept them apprised. They annexed enough land to double its size and became an economic threat to Columbus.

Weaknesses: He is driven to do more and more. He started one project and before that was completed, he started another to keep the momentum going. Government officials are not used to change and so sometimes he had to be reminded to slow down and get one project squared away before starting a new one. Some residents resented that Mr. Jones was doing a big makeover of the village.

Angela An – Reporter, 10TV WBNS, Columbus, OH 614-404-6028

Ms. An has known Mr. Jones since the early 2000s. She worked for a news station in Columbus and covered Obetz during his tenure. What Mr. Jones put in place from a community perspective is why Obetz is where it is today. When he came to Obetz, it was a Village and now it is a City. He attracted businesses that the area is specifically known for.

Reference Notes

Odis O. Jones

From a personal and a professional standpoint Mr. Jones makes good decisions. He was tasked with getting the lights back on in Detroit and he did that. He has a goal mindset and he will see each project through to completion, he does not leave anything hanging.

Mr. Jones is definitely a change agent in the work he did in Obetz and with the Columbus Urban Growth Corporation which was a private / public partnership. He saw places that could be developed into mixed use space that changed the whole landscape of the area for the better. He wanted to do more with what they have and what is around them.

Because Mr. Jones wanted to hear from the people he was quite often out in the community. An area in South Columbus desperately needed revitalization and they had a public meeting. Every politician in the area wanted to be at the podium and have their 10 seconds of fame while Mr. Jones was in the background speaking to residents and business owners. He asked them questions on what they thought about the idea and what was being said. He does so to gain a sense of how the project will work and how the community feels about the announcement. He fulfills his responsibilities but is very interested in what the public thinks.

Constituents trust Mr. Jones, he works very well with them. He says it like it is and can forecast will happen based on the decision made. In an urban community where people are naturally distrusting because politicians put money into something that looks good in the headlines but never amounts to anything, he has earned their trust because he is a people person with an infectious personality, but he is also real and raw. He makes people feel good about themselves while also correcting individuals as gently as he can when they are not doing well.

While most people do not like to talk to the press Mr. Jones was responsive and provided information that was needed. When Ms. An called about tax abatement issues he was willing to talk to her but offered to set up a meeting with someone who could better answer her questions. They had a professional relationship and he returned calls even when he could not yet comment on an issue. He knows that hidden information will eventually come to light so he does not shy away, but he also does what he needs to do to protect the City from a legal standpoint.

One area was a Brownfield site and had many environmental issues. Many years have passed and Ms. An cannot recall the details but from what she remembers, Mr. Jones had a team of people addressing every aspect. Which included working with the EPA, holding public hearings and letting residents know when the site was safe.

During Mr. Jones' time in Obetz all of the communities around them were in debt and their finances were in the red. Obetz was the only part of the County that saw growth from a development and financial perspective. Mr. Jones managed growth with property tax and abatements without having an imbalance in the budget. A story was published on how well Obetz was doing in comparison to other communities around them. Mr. Jones brought in the type of development needed to keep the Village afloat during a difficult time in the country.

Reference Notes Odis O. Jones

When stressful situations occurred, it weighed on Mr. Jones but he carried on and did not deflect the controversy. He did not internalize the stress and understood that it was the way it was, then he stayed up late to find a solution and address the issue. He takes his work to heart and even if his family does not live in the community, he treats it like it was his future.

There was some controversy related to Mr. Jones in Detroit but Ms. An did not follow it and does not know the details. Her feelings, based on what she does know, is that it was political and not performance based. Some in the community may have a negative opinion of Mr. Jones but she does not know anyone personally who does.

Mr. Jones is a family man through and through, you will not find anyone with more integrity than he has. He treats his job like it is the golden egg and would never do anything to tarnish the community he represents or his family. He left Obetz for a bigger and better opportunity. He brought in a training facility for a soccer team that put Obetz on the map. He did wonderful things for Obetz but Columbus was the capital city and by accepting a position with them he had a chance to make a bigger impact.

Ms. An sends job announcements in Ohio to Mr. Jones all the time and would love to see him working in Ohio again. He excels as a Manager because he takes his job to heart and builds generations for the future. He wants to build something better than what he left. When you meet Mr. Jones in person, you will see his talent and ability.

Words or phrases used to describe Odis Jones:

- Honest,
- Driven,
- Forward thinking,
- Determined,
- Smart, and
- Left a mark in every community he has worked in.

Strengths: Go getter, takes initiative, has great vision, works with a steady hand, plans ahead.

Weaknesses: He does not play political games or try to influence the narrative. He stands up for what is in the best interest of the City itself, rather than an individual person or a special interest group. While this trait is admirable it can get him in hot water with the politicians. He tells it like it is.

Drew Hargrove – Chairman, Chamber of Commerce, Hutto, TX 254-228-3564

Mr. Hargrove is the Chairman of the Chamber of Commerce and he owns businesses in Hutto as well. He met Mr. Jones in 2016. Mr. Jones is one of the most incredible people Mr. Hargrove has ever met.

Reference Notes Odis O. Jones

Mr. Jones has hired excellent employees and he makes good decisions generally. He manages in whatever style the community needs. Hutto would have exploded population wise with or without Mr. Jones, but he recognized that the development needed to be done properly so that economic growth could happen in a very positive way and he has made that happen.

The community has too many meetings and events for him to be at every one, but Mr. Jones is definitely visible and he attends the ones he should. Mr. Hargrove sees him at several meetings every week. He interacts well with business owners who are proactive about building the community. He tries to interact with everyone but there are always opposing sides at any table when it comes to growth and those opposed to growth will not work with him.

The previous administration overspent on a building and the rent was three times more expensive than it should have been. Mr. Jones has been championing a decrease on the property tax so that developers and small businesses do not have to carry the burden of the over expense of the building. Without his efforts the building would have no future.

Mr. Jones definitely has good financial skills. He is always responsive to the Chamber and business owners. Mr. Jones has been threatened and has endured personal attacks and slurs, but it bounces off of him and he does not retaliate. He just keeps on serving the community. Mr. Jones keeps Mr. Hargrove informed on items related to his work.

When controversy strikes and the old way hits the new way of working, people do not always agree with what you are doing which can make you look ineffective as a leader and Mr. Jones is in the middle of that. He did not do anything wrong but the speed he works and the speed the City is moving are radically different. Mr. Hargrove has a great deal of respect for what Mr. Jones is trying to do. He absolutely does the right thing and his motives are good. No one is classier inside controversy than he is.

Mr. Hargrove did much research on Mr. Jones and has had the opportunity to discuss situations in his past. Knowing the individuals involved and the situation first hand, Mr. Hargrove believes that the media has really tried to make Mr. Jones look incompetent or selfish when that has not been the case. Mr. Hargrove has never seen anything from Mr. Jones that has caused him any concern in the slightest.

A small group of people in the community would disagree with the statements in this reference but they thrive on controversy instead of facts. Anyone can see their posts on the City's Facebook page and can research them to get a good idea of who they are.

Mr. Hargrove would hire Mr. Jones if he could afford to. They have discussed working together in the future. Mr. Jones has a great mind for business. He can sit down with a business developer and in 5 to 10 minutes can tell them how to turn their ailing business around. He is absolutely a good Manager. He has done a great job developing the community and is worth significantly more than his salary.

Reference Notes
Odis O. Jones

Words or phrases used to describe Odis Jones:

- Go getter,
- Motivator,
- Integrity,
- Man of faith,
- Community developer, and
- Visionary.

Strengths: Business and economic development capabilities are unlike anyone else, phenomenal vision on what needs to happen for a city or business to get to a certain point, forecasts like no other, very unique person.

Weaknesses: In his mind he has the whole plan laid out and sometimes he talks about the end result before all the pieces have connected. If one of the dominoes does not fall properly, the end result will change. However, 90% of the time everything falls into place the way he says it will.

Milton Dohoney – former City Manager, Cincinnati, OH 513-720-8155

Mr. Dohoney was the City Manager in Cincinnati and he hired Mr. Jones to be the Economic Development Director in 2012.

Mr. Jones was really fantastic and he excelled in his role. He knew how to build relationships and put deals together, and did a phenomenal job in Cincinnati. He was responsible for hiring staff in his department and he knows how to spot and cultivate talent. He did a great job in the realm that he had responsibility for.

When Mr. Jones talked about doing something his follow through was always good. He established a clear vision on the project or opportunity with the staff and developed a great rapport with the Mayor. They trusted him because what he said proved to be true.

Mr. Jones is innovative and creative in problem solving. He performs at a high level and models exemplary behavior. He understands the development of metrics so that you have a yard stick to measure the organization by.

Mr. Jones is not a ‘sit in the office’ manager, he is out in the community constantly and engages people across local government. He was good with the media and engaged others both internally and externally. He was a top performer for Cincinnati.

Reference Notes
Odis O. Jones

Given the nature of Mr. Jones' work, they were in constant communication about opportunities and negotiations. He keeps his supervisor informed and has good listening skills. He does what he is asked to do.

They were trying to be aggressive about growth in Cincinnati. Tracts of land were vacant but by the end of Mr. Jones' tenure, projects were in place. People saw results in his work which enhanced his credibility and made later negotiations easier. He was also creative and innovative. He thought through various ways of making something happen, which is one thing the Council really liked about working with him. He developed a reputation of someone who could make things happen.

There was never an issue of Mr. Jones going over budget. He developed a strong rapport with the CFO and Budget Director, and frequently communicated with the finance and budget department to make sure he was on track.

Stress never really bothers Mr. Jones and he handles pressure well. He was a college athlete and has a certain mental toughness that comes from participating in athletics so nothing really put him off. He saw a difficult situation and kept working until he found a solution.

Mr. Dohoney is not aware of any controversy involving Mr. Jones, though on any project in the municipal arena you have support of some in the community but not of others. The lack of support by some is just the nature of the business and not attributable to him. He is a good family man and was always very balanced between work and his family.

The people Mr. Jones worked for, and with, liked him. He was a person who produced results. He left Cincinnati for an opportunity to work in Detroit, his home. The position paid more and gave him the opportunity to live close to his family.

Mr. Dohoney would hire Mr. Jones and encourages anyone looking at him to give him consideration. While Mr. Jones was not a municipal manager when they worked together, they have stayed in communication and he seems comfortable in the role now. He likes the work and has proven he can do it. He knows how to move needles and make things happen.

Words or phrases used to describe Odis Jones:

- Energetic,
- Creative,
- Dependable,
- Reliable,
- Honest,
- Communicator, and
- Analytical.

Reference Notes
Odis O. Jones

Strengths: Communicator, explains complex issues in a way regular people can understand, good grasp of quantitative matters, good on the fiscal side, works very well with elected officials.

Weaknesses: It has been some time since they worked together so this may not be relevant but perhaps technology. He knows how to read a spreadsheet but Mr. Dohoney does not know how adept Mr. Jones is with current technology like social media.

Tim Jordan – Executive Director, Chamber of Commerce, Hutto, TX 512-696-6121

Mr. Jordan was elected to the Council a month after Mr. Jones was hired. They worked together in this capacity for three years.

Mr. Jones has been a fantastic asset to the City. Hutto was a stale, no growth community. They asked him to bring 3,000 ft of commercial space to the community. He brought 700,000 in the first year. He is phenomenal with economic development and city management. He runs a tight and lean facility, and it is amazing to watch him work.

Mr. Jones makes great decisions but sometimes a decision fails through no fault of our own. He empowers the executive team to run their department and lets them hire their staff. His decisions in general are good. He is very innovative and he maintains operations at a high level. Originally they had a 3% annual cost of living increase for employees, but he transitioned the organization to a pay for performance plan.

When it comes to the community Mr. Jones is very visible. He does a great job with the public because he is informative and a man of his word. He always gives an answer even when it is not the desired answer. He is honest, upfront, and to the point.

Mr. Jordan and Mr. Jones have a great working relationship, Mr. Jordan always has the information that he needs. Mr. Jones' financial skillset is phenomenal and he did things that they did not know was possible. They have learned much from him about finance. 99.9% of the time he is timely in meeting tasks and the rest of the time, he is ahead of schedule. He is very performance driven and expects the same of his staff.

Hutto does not have a notification system. A water main broke and they went on a boil alert. Mr. Jones led the staff through the process of notifying residents through the radio and television. He and the staff knocked on doors and were out in the community to make sure that it was handled professionally. He did a great job.

Hutto experienced much growth and has become more diverse with the growth, which has created some stress. Mr. Jones handles it remarkably well. He has moved the growth in the right direction for the community.

Reference Notes
Odis O. Jones

Mr. Jones has not been involved in anything controversial or embarrassing. The anti-growth section of the community might have a negative opinion of Mr. Jones but outside of this group, everyone would agree with the statements in this reference.

Mr. Jordan would hire Mr. Jones. Working with him as an elected official was an honor and a pleasure, it was a fabulous experience. He is a great teacher and mentor.

Words or phrases used to describe Odis Jones:

- Very honest,
- Trustworthy,
- Loyal,
- Committed,
- Very dedicated to the community and his elected officials, and
- Dedicated to the task that he was hired to do.

Strengths: His economic development skillset is out of this world, phenomenal manager, prides himself on building the perfect executive team and allows them to run their department as long as they stay within budget.

Weaknesses: He empowers his executive team and does not want to be involved in the day to day operations. Some find it a positive but others consider it a negative. Mr. Jordan believes it is a positive, the City has run very smoothly with Mr. Jones at the helm.

Shawna Willis – former Human Resources Director, City of Hutto, TX 614-329-7286

Mr. Jones hired Ms. Willis a few months after he became the city Manager. They worked together for a little over a year before she moved to another new position.

Mr. Jones is a very dynamic leader who did much of what he set out to do. One of the first objectives he gave Ms. Willis was to develop leadership training for both long term and new employees. He recognizes that all members of his executive team are at different stages. He adapts his style to communicate, give assignments, and guide them to further advance their progress. He has championed this style not just in Hutto but throughout his career. He also brought many businesses to the community, which fulfilled the commitment he made to the Council.

Leaders can drive but they cannot grow a community without involving the citizens. Many residents and developers came to City Hall to talk to Mr. Jones. He cares about them. He can find creative solutions. The staff was functioning in a very small and antiquated building in dire need of repair. Not only did he bring developers into the community but he negotiated, as part of the deal, a \$6 million dollar brand new City Hall with a library and a city council area. The tax payers

Reference Notes
Odis O. Jones

did not see a tax increase to fund the building because of his creativity. He is ethical and found an alternative way to pay for City Hall rather than increasing taxes.

Long term employees left shortly after Mr. Jones came in. He set standards and some could not meet them. He rebuilt his team, taking counsel from the hiring panel and then making the final decision. He had a few not so great hires but most of them were really good or exceptional. His decisions in general are good. He treated Ms. Willis as a partner and not just a subordinate to manage personnel and payroll. Also, he is very humble. They had a misunderstanding and he became frustrated which was not her intent. A little while after the interaction he came to her office because he had realized what she meant. She confirmed and he explained that he misunderstood and apologized. He was always very aware.

While Mr. Jones is not from Texas, he understands what is important to Hutto residents. Koke is their local country radio station. One program he brought to the City was Kokefest, He not only attended but he purchased boots and a cowboy hat to wear to the event. He embraces the culture of the people he is serving.

Hutto is a very small country community and Mr. Jones was asked to bring business in to increase revenue and reduce taxes. Politics aside, some residents do not want business in their town. He had to balance the demographics of the Council while making sure they are being transparent enough so residents realize they will not have to give up what they love about their town. A woman in the community was very much against Mr. Jones and growth. When he was first hired, she felt he was going to ruin their town. She came to City Hall to speak with him while he was meeting with Ms. Willis. He never turns a citizen away so he interrupted the meeting. She came in and, in front of Ms. Willis, explained how she had received her reduced water and tax bill, and then thanked him for his efforts to reduce taxes and fees. The buildings are not complete and the town is not receiving all of the benefits that they will in the future but she saw enough to realize that he had changed her life in a positive way.

Ms. Willis was hired because of her strengths and her disciplines but entering into the public sector was challenging and she did not want to be involved in politics. Mr. Jones assured her that she would not have to get into the politics, he does not get into them either but he understands them and would manage them. He kept his word and not once during her tenure did a Director get into a political situation because of their role.

The executive team had a weekly meeting where they brought items to the table to resolve. Mr. Jones not only kept Ms. Willis informed on current events, he was also good about telling her what was coming down the pipeline. He was very transparent with his team, which was extremely beneficial. When she approached an employee about an issue she knew what, if anything, Mr. Jones had promised them which enabled her to be more successful in her role.

The Planning and Zoning Director really wanted to become a City Manager. Mr. Jones asked Ms. Willis to mentor, coach, and support her. A situation occurred that Mr. Jones could have fixed in five minutes flat but he decided to give this Director the experience. They coached her ahead of

Reference Notes Odis O. Jones

time on the dynamics and gave suggestions on how to approach the issue. It was a collaboration of citizens and construction workers, and she knocked it out of the park. She is now a Deputy City Manager which Ms. Willis feels is directly attributable to Mr. Jones. He is a good mentor who wants his staff to succeed.

Hutto was under contract for water and the renewal was not due for three or four years, but they needed an immediately solution. Mr. Jones decided to buy the water authority which addressed concerns about rate increases. He is very driven and if a problem exists, he will address it.

Mr. Jones talked out his stress in executive meetings, he does not compartmentalize stress and hide it. However, he is calm and collected while doing so. He believes in transparency, within reason, so the staff knows when something is urgent. He wants to know what people think. He can explain anything but when he has subject matter experts who can better present the information, he allows them to do so which is a mark of a good leader.

The church that Ms. Willis attends was subject to eminent domain. Mr. Jones listened to the church members and connected them to someone who was selling a building that fit their needs. He did not broker the deal but he helped them make the right connections.

During the year that they worked together Mr. Jones initiated seven major projects that were community, business, or citizen driven. One was an overhaul of a park so that citizens had better resources. He is a very goal oriented person.

Housekeeping had to be done when Mr. Jones was hired because some of the staff he inherited were not performing. When you change leaders who have been in place for a while it can become controversial. Ms. Willis has never seen Mr. Jones treat anyone unprofessionally or inappropriately, and as an HR professional her standards are very high. He is ethical.

Ms. Willis would hire Mr. Jones and would work for him again if she decided to go back into government but she prefers corporate America. However, they worked very hard and she is proud of what they accomplished. Mr. Jones is a great Manager. He led the teams well, he served the community, he put money back in the tax payers' pockets.

Words or phrases used to describe Odis Jones:

- Hard worker,
- Driven,
- Very loyal and values loyalty in the staff,
- Not a game player,
- Extrovert, and
- Collaborative.

Reference Notes
Odis O. Jones

Strengths: Adaptability, very loyal, very strong in driving results while caring about the person, balances his professional and personal life, creative negotiator, thinks outside the box, never compromises his ethics.

Weaknesses: Very driven but has learned how to manage it so he does not burn out the staff.

Kelsey Hartung – Communications Director, Public Lighting Authority, Detroit, MI
313-799-0201

Ms. Hartung was working for a public relations firm and one of her clients was the Public Lighting Authority. She was not on the Board but worked closely with them to facilitate many projects. They met when Mr. Jones was hired in 2013. He later hired her to work inhouse as their Communications Director.

Mr. Jones' job performance is always top notch, he is a high performer and he thrives on big challenges. He always pushes his team in a good and productive way. He sets high goals and always accomplishes them. He lights up the entire room when he walks in and has an energy about him. He engages with others and is larger than life. He is honest and great at his job. He keeps everyone informed. He makes good decisions both when hiring and in general. He is definitely an innovator.

The Public Lighting Authority was created because half of the street lights in Detroit were non-functioning and had been for several decades because the City kept removing it from the budget. To fund the project, Mr. Jones went to the bond market and raised a few million dollars. He received more money than they expected and installed even more street lights than anticipated. The electric company told them it would take ten years to complete the project, Mr. Jones said two while explaining how urgent the situation was. They came back with five years and he did it in three. He pushed and drove the project because of his concern for children in the community. Lights are so symbolic, and it is hard to have hope when the lights are not on and the garbage is not being picked up. They had to gut the system and install new infrastructure, but he put his heart into the project. Because of Mr. Jones the lights are on in Detroit. He is unstoppable and it is so fun to work with someone like him. He is determined and is an incredible man.

The City filed for bankruptcy right about the time Mr. Jones was hired. He went before the Judge to ensure the money raised by the Authority was not touched by the City. While he attended every staff and construction meeting, he was not a micro manager. He just wanted to be informed and engaged, and he encouraged the staff. He pushed back with contractors and helped them realize what could be done. He worked through challenges and issues every single day.

Mr. Jones attended hundreds, if not thousands, of community meetings. He was always out and about because he wanted to listen to residents and hear what they had to say. He always gave them an honest answer while being very compassionate. He understands different perspectives and knows how to navigate them.

Reference Notes
Odis O. Jones

When it comes to financial skills, Mr. Jones does well. In stressful situations he becomes very quiet and listens to what is going on around him. He then calmly makes the right decision.

Though Mr. Jones has been involved in controversy through his work, he has always been ethical. He follows the law, does his due diligence, and receives clearance from legal or the appropriate entity before moving forward. Nothing in his conduct would concern a reasonable person. He worked himself out of a job in Detroit, the lights were on. Everyone Ms. Hartung has met likes Mr. Jones. He is engrained in the culture of his community and will be successful anywhere he goes because he is so determined.

Ms. Hartung would absolutely work for Mr. Jones again, and she would hire him. She recommends him for a Manager position. Any organization would be lucky to have him.

Words or phrases used to describe Odis Jones:

- Intelligent,
- Driven,
- Determined,
- Fair,
- Honest,
- Humble,
- Kind,
- Very likeable, and
- Very friendly.

Strengths: Sees the big picture but can get into the details when needed, loves people, very outgoing, smart, strong leader, very down to earth, likeable by everyone.

Weaknesses: He is honest which can be difficult for those who do not want to hear the truth. However, his method of delivery has improved over the years.

Scott Stiles – former Assistant City Manager, Cincinnati, OH 714-741-5100 714-719-1810

Mr. Stiles was the Assistant City Manager while Mr. Jones was the Economic Development Director. They met in 2012.

Mr. Jones' job performance in Cincinnati was good and he was very well liked. The employees hired by Mr. Jones did well. His decisions in general were good. He is a change agent.

Because of Mr. Jones' position he was out and about in the community, primarily working with the business and development community. He worked very well with the public.

Reference Notes
Odis O. Jones

While Mr. Jones did not report to Mr. Stiles, they worked on some projects together and Mr. Jones always kept him informed. Mr. Jones is a leader who rallies employees around the organization's vision as long as he has good direction and an idea of what the vision is.

Mr. Jones was involved in helping implement a parking managing system and he kept it moving forward. He has good financial skills and met work deadlines. In stressful situations he made sure everyone was engaged and involved. He was good at gathering information from others before coming to a decision, particularly hard decisions.

Mr. Stiles is not aware of anything in Mr. Jones' background or conduct that would concern a reasonable person. He left Cincinnati for a better position in Detroit.

Mr. Stiles would hire Mr. Jones for the right position. While he was not the Manager in Cincinnati he has been in that role since and seems to be doing well.

Words or phrases used to describe Odis Jones:

- Assertive,
- Change agent,
- 'Get things done' attitude,
- Collaborative, and
- Non nonsense.

Strengths: Assertive, wants to keep things moving along, high energy, very positive, good strategic thinker.

Weaknesses: He could be impatient but in economic development you have to keep moving the needle to make sure things are moving along.

Prepared by: Lynelle Klein
Colin Baenziger & Associates

CB&A Internet Research

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches

Odis Jones

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Detroit News
January 18, 2019

Judge tosses ex-Public Lighting Authority CEO's defamation suit

Author: Robert Snell

Detroit — A federal judge Friday dismissed a defamation lawsuit filed by the former CEO of the Public Lighting Authority against the owner of WXYZ-TV (Channel 7). The lawsuit filed by **Odis Jones** failed because he was a public figure and the station did not act with actual malice while airing a series on suspicious severance payments involving **Jones**, according to an order filed Friday by U.S. District Judge Matthew Leitman.

The order ends a nearly three-year legal ordeal and represents a First Amendment victory as the media face increasing claims of "fake news." "Now more than ever, we depend upon the 'free press' to 'awaken public interest in governmental affairs' and to 'expos[e] corruption among public officers and employees,'" Leitman wrote, citing federal case law. "Indeed, '[t]he press plays a unique role as a check on government abuse' and serves 'as a watchdog of government activity.'"

Jones' lawyer could not be reached for comment Friday. "Judge Leitman's thoughtful decision has important implications beyond this dispute," Scripps lawyer James Stewart wrote in an email to The News. "His decision reaffirms the core values that the First Amendment and a robust media serve in our society."

Jones sued Channel 7 owner Scripps Media three years ago after the station aired a series revealing that the public utility made more than \$500,000 worth of severance payments to departing employees, including **Jones**. **Jones** signed agreements authorizing some of the payments and received one when he left the Public Lighting Authority in 2016. The payments raised concern because some employees who received the previously undisclosed payments had accused **Jones** of misconduct and because the payments included nondisclosure agreements. Public Lighting Authority officials also had refused to discuss the payments.

One of the TV reports included a mistake, however. The report inadvertently misquoted a labor lawyer saying **Jones** had broken the law. **Jones** and one of his companies cited the mistake and other alleged false statements in filing the lawsuit. Leitman ruled that the misquote was not published with actual malice and attributed the mistake to "an accidental editing error." "But 'mere negligence does not suffice to show actual malice,'" Leitman wrote.

**Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Odis Jones**

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Austin American-Statesman: Web Edition Articles [TCA] (TX)
July 21, 2018

City Manager Odis Jones staying in Hutto

Author: Claire Osborn

July 21--Hutto City Manager **Odis Jones** is staying with the city after being named one of the four finalists for the city manager job in Aurora, Colo. The Hutto City Council announced after an executive session Thursday night that it had renegotiated **Jones'** contract. Mayor Doug Gaul declined to discuss the terms of the contract Friday, but said it included an increase in the city manager's salary. "We are happy with his performance and want to keep him here in Hutto to finish what we got started," said Gaul. "We've got a lot of good things going on and we want to continue with the development."

RELATED: Hutto City Manager **Odis Jones** a finalist for position in Colorado **Jones**, who was hired by the city in November 2016, has negotiated at least two large development deals for Hutto -- the Innovation Business Park and the mixed-use Co-Op District that will include a movie theater and restaurants as well as a new City Hall.

"I am not seeking to leave Hutto but was honored to be recruited as a finalist and felt privileged to be a part of the interview process for the Aurora city manager position," **Jones** said in a news release issued Friday. "My work in Hutto is not yet done," he said in the release. There's much to be accomplished before achieving the council's vision in building out the Co-Op and Innovation Business Park, not to mention the Landing development that is to come and another hotel."

Jones said his family "had made Hutto our home and we look forward to raising our children here, taking them to eat at Southside BBQ, catching a movie at Flix, and experiencing the results of our hard work." The city of Aurora has not selected its new city manager, a city spokeswoman said Friday.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches

Odis Jones

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Austin American-Statesman (TX)

February 9, 2018

City manager cleared of bias, harassment claims

Workforce commission sees no violations in firing of three women.

Author: Claire Osborn

WILLIAMSON COUNTY - The Hutto city manager and the city have been cleared of allegations of discrimination and sexual harassment, the city's lawyer, Michael Shaunessy, said Thursday. The Texas Workforce Commission's office of civil rights and discrimination has dismissed the allegations, Shaunessy said. The dismissal said the agency "was unable to conclude that the information obtained establishes any violations of the statutes," he said in a news release. The commission Thursday said it could not confirm the ruling or even the existence of such a complaint because all information provided to it through a civil rights complaint is confidential, agency spokeswoman Lisa Givens said. Claims of discrimination and harassment were made against Hutto City Manager **Odis Jones** in March after he fired three female city employees, saying they did not have the right skills for their jobs.

Jones said in the release Thursday that "the most important thing is the truth prevailed and we can remain focused on growing and enhancing the local economy here in Hutto." The attorney representing the three fired employees, Millicent Lundburg, did not respond to a reporter's requests for comment Thursday. She said in March that the three women did have the right skills for their jobs. One of the employees who was fired had made a complaint about harassment, Lundburg said. Lundburg also said in March that the other two employees were fired after they told the mayor about a sexual harassment and discrimination complaint against **Jones**. The employees who were fired were the city's former human resources director, Amy McGlothlin; the former assistant city manager, Melanie Melancon; and a former senior planner for Hutto, Wallis Meshier.

Mayor Doug Gaul stated in the release issued Thursday that the city "has always remained confident in the city manager." "He is doing the job we hired him to do," Gaul said, "and since his arrival economic development in Hutto has boomed with development taking place on all fronts." A confidential report from a lawyer last year said **Jones** probably engaged in unlawful sexual harassment.

The report, by Austin attorney Judy Osborn, was submitted anonymously to the American-Statesman in April. It said **Jones** violated Hutto's policy on "sexual and other unlawful harassment." "The policy prohibits 'sexual jokes and innuendo' and 'touching,'" the report by the attorney said. The Hutto City Council in April said Osborn's initial administrative investigation was later completed by the law firm McGinnis Lochridge and that the city manager's decisions were found to be just and proper, and that **Jones** did nothing wrong, according to a release. The city said in April that it was hiring an outside agency to investigate the leaking of the document.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches

Odis Jones

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Austin American-Statesman (TX)

October 21, 2017

Ousted economic officials face probe

Hutto city manager says 'The current EDC office is a crime scene.'

Author: Claire Osborn

HUTTO - Police are investigating spending by former members of the Hutto Economic Development Corporation after the Hutto City Council said an initial audit showed questionable expenditures. The expenses in question include trips to New Jersey to see the Dallas Cowboys play the New York Giants and for conferences in Alaska and New Orleans.

City Manager **Odis Jones** announced the investigation Thursday night during a City Council meeting, saying, "The current EDC office is a crime scene." **Jones** said he has told the police chief "if you find someone stealing money" to throw the person in jail.

Council Member Nate Killough said at the meeting that the former corporation board members had spent almost \$15,000 on trips to conferences in Alaska, New Jersey and New Orleans that included paying for a suite at MetLife Stadium. The trips did not bring any jobs or businesses to Hutto, Killough said. He also said there had been many food purchases from a business owned by a former board member of the corporation.

Other expenses "that were not illegal but not in the best interests of citizens" included expensive dinners, golf games and Formula One races, City Council Member Tom Hines said. The council replaced the board members in July after allegations came up about lavish spending on travel.

Hines and Killough also said at the meeting that another "questionable transaction" involved the board selling for \$10 its options to be the first in line to buy privately owned land worth \$8 million, against the wishes of the city manager and the council. The corporation already had spent \$80,000 for the options as well as a land-use study, Hines said. He said the city has paid \$275,000 to buy back the options.

The corporation's current president and a city spokeswoman on Friday would not say whether the land deal was part of the criminal investigation. Tim Chase, who was the corporation's president until July, said he could not comment Friday on the accusations because of a separation agreement he had with the corporation.

Officials from other economic development organizations on Friday defended the trips the Hutto group took to the conferences. Carlton Schwab, president of the Texas Economic Development Council, said Friday the Hutto corporation did not pay for the suite at the football stadium in New Jersey. "The suite was purchased by a marketing group put together by our members," Schwab said. He said several economic development officials, including Chase, were entertaining corporate site consultants at the suite.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches

Odis Jones

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Jeffrey Finkle, president of the International Economic Development Council in Washington, D.C., called the accusations "trumped-up charges." He said Friday that members of the Hutto corporation came to annual conferences held by the council in Alaska in 2015 and New Orleans in 2016. The conferences offered continuing education.

Finkle said going to the conferences is considered "highly legitimate uses of local money everywhere else in the country, but maybe not in Hutto." He said the point of attending the conferences was not to bring business back to a community. "That is a standard that is unheard of," Finkle said.

The City Council voted Thursday to hire a forensics auditor to help Police Chief Byron Frankland with the inquiry. Frankland said Thursday the investigation would involve "volumes" of information. Frankland also told the council he could not say how many years back he would take the investigation.

Scott Martinez, who was president of the Hutto Economic Development Corporation from 2007 to 2012, said it was one of the best of its kind when he was president because, among other projects, it invested in infrastructure that helped bring the East Williamson County Higher Education Center to town. He said he didn't agree with the accusations officials have made against the corporation "I think it's disgusting the way they are painting this thing," Martinez said. "The city manager is putting out a lot of misinformation."

Council Member Hines defended **Jones** at the meeting Thursday night, saying he had "utmost confidence" in the city manager. Hutto's Economic Development Corporation Here are five things to know about the Hutto Economic Development Corporation, the city's designated economic development entity:

1. It was formed through an election of Hutto voters in 1997.
2. It is funded by a half-cent economic development sales tax collected in the city. It currently brings in more than \$860,000 annually.
3. It is made up of a seven-member board of volunteers selected by the City Council.
4. The president and vice president of the corporation, who are both paid, are selected by the board members.
5. The corporation's purpose is "to facilitate quality employment opportunities and capital investment in the city."

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches

Odis Jones

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Austin American-Statesman (TX)

June 30, 2017

Hutto files 2 suits after denying record requests

Author: Claire Osborn

The city of Hutto is suing the Texas attorney general over the state's ruling that the town has to release some documents concerning its city manager, **Odis Jones**. The records were requested by or related to one of three fired female city employees who made discrimination allegations against **Jones** in March, said the city's attorney, Michael Shaunessy. The city has defended **Jones** against the allegations.

A spokesman for the attorney general's office declined to comment Wednesday, citing the pending litigation. The two lawsuits filed by Hutto don't say what information the attorney general's office requires the city to release. According to the lawsuits, the information requested is exempt from disclosure because it contains addresses and phone numbers of personal and professional references or contains emails and discussions about potential job applicants. The information also shouldn't be released, the suits say, because it relates to litigation in which an employee of a government body might become involved.

The first open records request, made March 1, asked for all memos, letters and correspondence prepared by Brionne McDonald, Jill Cloud and **Jones** on Feb. 23 and Feb. 24, according to one of the lawsuits. McDonald is **Jones'** executive assistant. Cloud was a public information officer at the time but has since left the job. The second open records request, made March 2, asked for a copy of **Jones'** application for employment to the city of Hutto, the lawsuit said. It also requested all emails to the mayor and council members from **Jones** about complaints against current and former council members, the mayor and city employees, according to one of the lawsuits filed. "We've got people who have indicated they intend to sue the city," Shaunessy said. "The law is pretty clear if you are going to do that you have to seek documents through the discovery process; you don't get to use the public information act."

Millicent Lundburg, the attorney representing the three fired women, said Wednesday that one of them made one of the open records requests referred to in the lawsuits while she was still employed by the city. "There was no lawsuit that had been filed and still no lawsuit has been filed," she said. Lundburg said her clients, who filed claims with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and the Texas Workforce Commission, are still involved in "exhausting" their administrative requirements. Both of the commissions can conduct investigations and decide whether the people have a right to sue.

According to a report made by an attorney hired by the city, **Jones** is accused of touching female employees, using inappropriate language, being a bully and being a poor manager. The city has challenged the report, saying it was "limited and inaccurate."

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches

Odis Jones

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Austin American-Statesman (TX)

April 14, 2017

Hutto council defends city manager's actions

It seeks probe into leak of report about sexual harassment allegations.

Author: Claire Osborn

The city of Hutto has asked an outside agency to investigate the leaking of a confidential report from a lawyer that said Hutto City Manager **Odis Jones** probably engaged in unlawful sexual harassment. The report, done by Austin attorney Judy Osborn, was "limited and inaccurate," the Hutto mayor and City Council said in a news release issued Wednesday night. "The initial administrative investigation performed by Osborn was later completed by the law firm McGinnis Lochridge, and upon the completion of investigation by McGinnis Lochridge, the City Council determined that the city manager's decisions were just and proper, and that the city manager did nothing wrong," the release said.

A lawyer for three fired female city employees, Millicent Lundburg, said in March they lost their jobs due to discrimination, sexual harassment or retaliation by **Jones**. Reached by phone Thursday, Osborn declined to comment. The city's attorney, Michael Shaunessy, also declined to comment about what was in Osborn's report. "Any client who retains a lawyer is entitled to keep the communication private and that's not any different for a governmental entity," he said. Lundburg didn't reply to a request for comment.

The first page of the report made by Osborn to the council and the mayor on March 6, was submitted anonymously to the American-Statesman. It said **Jones** violated the city of Hutto's policy on "sexual and other unlawful harassment." "The policy prohibits 'sexual jokes and innuendo' and 'touching,'" the report by the attorney said.

The report said that **Jones** "probably" engaged in unlawful sexual harassment: "Although the law doesn't prohibit simple teasing, offhand comments or isolated incidents that are not very serious, harassment is illegal when it is so frequent or severe that it creates a hostile or offensive work environment or when it results in an adverse employment decision (such as the victim being fired or demoted)."

It also said the city manager's "impromptu firing of three employees in the last two weeks was not preceded by either oral coaching or thoughtful written documentation and warnings that their jobs were in jeopardy, nor did he seek legal counsel or consult his Human Resources director for advice prior to acting on his decision."

The first page of the report didn't provide further details about any of the city manager's actions. A release earlier Wednesday from Hutto officials said the city has asked an outside agency to investigate former employees who disclosed the document. Shaunessy declined to say which agency was conducting the investigation.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches

Odis Jones

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

"In particular, these employees appear to have taken information they had access to only because of their positions as employees of the City of Hutto and disclosed that information for some form of personal gain," the city's release said.

"It is unfortunate that disgruntled employees have behaved in this manner," said the second release issued by Mayor Doug Gaul and the City Council. It said that "in final analysis, the City Council determined that the employment decisions made by the City Manager were legitimate and based on job performance issues with former employees."

The punishment for misuse of official information can range from a Class C misdemeanor to a third-degree felony, according to the Texas Penal code. A Class C misdemeanor is punishable by up to a year in jail. A third-degree felony is punishable by up to 10 years in prison.

The city has seen much turmoil recently. Along with the firings of the city's human resources director, an assistant city manager and a senior planner, two City Council members - Michael Smith and Bettina Jordan - resigned last month, and Police Chief Earl Morrison resigned March 24 after a two-year stint. **Jones** was hired as city manager in November.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches

Odis Jones

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Austin American-Statesman (TX)

March 18, 2017

Finger-pointing roils Hutto City Hall

City manager, former employees level claims of incompetence, bias.

Author: Claire Osborn

HUTTO - Hutto City Manager **Odis Jones** reacted to allegations of discrimination by announcing he fired the city's human resources director, an assistant city manager and a senior planner because all three lacked the skills for the job.

When he began his job in December 2016, **Jones** said at a press conference late Thursday, "the city had not reconciled its checkbooks in over eight months, the city's pension obligations had not been reconciled in approximately two years and the City Council had not approved a financial statement in almost a year. "Clearly this meant to me we did not have the skill set to get that done," **Jones** said. "I have taken actions to ensure we do."

But the lawyer for the fired female employees, Millicent Lundburg, said before the press conference that they lost their jobs due to discrimination, harassment and retaliation. Lundburg said the city's former director of human resources, Amy McGlothlin, and the former assistant city manager, Melanie Melancon, were fired in retaliation for reporting a complaint of sexual harassment and discrimination against **Jones** to the city's mayor.

A former senior planner for Hutto, Wallis Meshier, was fired after she made a complaint about harassment, said Lundburg. Lundburg declined to say who Meshier said harassed her. The three women sat silently with Lundburg at the press conference Thursday. The former employees haven't made formal complaints to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission but plan to do so, Lundburg said.

Lawsuits against the city could follow, she said. Lundburg said she sent a letter Thursday to the EEOC giving a summary of the complaints. The employees were fired in February and March. McGlothlin had worked for the city for 13 years, Melancon had eight years of experience with the city, and Meshier had worked for the city for at least a year, Lundburg said. Tension began to build during the press conference, which was held after a Hutto City Council meeting, when Lundburg said that city officials had refused to meet with her last week for a mediation conference about the claims.

Mike Shaunessy, the attorney representing the city of Hutto, yelled out, "The claims are unfounded" and "We are not going to settle unfounded claims." Shaunessy also said the city manager's actions were "proper and legitimate" and accused Lundburg of trying to create a news story "when there wasn't any news." Lundburg said she wasn't responsible for calling the press conference.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches

Odis Jones

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Hutto Mayor Doug Gaul also said during the press conference the decisions the city manager had made were "appropriate and just." "We stand by him in light of all these allegations," Gaul said. Three Hutto City Council members issued a press release Friday saying they supported **Jones'** actions. "After hearing the findings from the independent, third-party investigation, performed by McGinnis Lochridge, demonstrated that the city manager's personnel decisions were appropriate and just, I stand firmly behind our city manager," said Council Member Tom Hines.

Council Members Anne Cano and Nate Killough also voiced their support. But former Hutto Mayor Debbie Holland, speaking during the City Council meeting Thursday, said "the actions of our city manager are embarrassing and disturbing." Terminations and resignations from the city since Jan. 1 have made citizens question what is happening, she said. Information about how many people have been fired or resigned from the city wasn't available Friday.

Jones' most recent previous job was as director of the Public Lighting Authority in Detroit. His other jobs have included city administrator in Obetz, Ohio; executive director of economic development for Cincinnati; chief executive officer for the redevelopment agency in Columbus, Ohio; and the director of real estate and development for the state of New Jersey. He replaced Hutto's former city manager, Karen Daly, who resigned in January 2016 after being accused of having broken relationships with the Hutto school district, fire department and county officials.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches**Odis Jones***(Articles are in reverse chronological order)*

Austin American-Statesman: Web Edition Articles [TCA] (TX)
December 27, 2016

New city manager wants to help bring development to Hutto

Author: Claire Osborn

Dec. 27--HUTTO -- **Odis Jones**, Hutto's new city manager, wears a big gold ring on his right hand. The former linebacker for the Central Michigan University Chippewas earned it when the team won the Mid-American Conference championship in 1994. **Jones**, 44, said he is ready to tackle managing growth in Hutto by using the extensive experience he's gained from his other jobs, including his most recent one as director of the Public Lighting Authority in Detroit. "I helped Detroit restructure its way out of bankruptcy with regards to street lights," **Jones** said during a recent interview. His previous jobs also include city administrator in Obetz, Ohio; executive director of economic development for the city of Cincinnati, chief executive officer for the redevelopment agency for the city of Columbus, Ohio, and the director of real estate and development for the state of New Jersey. **Jones** said he helped build four industrial parks that attracted big companies to Obetz including Continental Tire, **Jones** said. He also helped develop a sports and entertainment district in Cincinnati.

So why did he come to Hutto, with its estimated population of just under 25,000? "The question is why not?," said **Jones**. "If you are a city manager in our field and if you enjoy helping a community grow, there's no hotter marketplace in the U.S. than this marketplace in Central Texas, and Hutto is a mainstay of that," he said. "I feel like a kid in a candy shop." Hutto has great schools, an educated population and good infrastructure, he said. **Jones**, who will make \$170,000 a year as city manager, said he also brought his wife and two of his four children to Hutto because he has relatives in the area and likes small-town life. He said his eldest two children benefited from growing up in the village of Obetz, which has a population of about 4,000. His 21-year-old son plays football for the University of Michigan, and his 23-year-old daughter is a medical student at the University of Nevada.

Jones said he also finds Hutto very appealing personally. "What I really appreciate is how friendly the people are," he said. One of his goals as Hutto city manager is to attract more commercial, industrial and office development to town, he said. **Jones** said he thinks he can use his experience as a private real estate developer to help Hutto. He said he had his own company, MVP Capital Ventures, that did business mostly in the southeastern United States. "I'm a minority partner now," **Jones** said. His other top goals as city manager include hiring more police officers and building a second fire station, he said. **Jones**, who was raised in Detroit, said he got his commitment to public service from his mother, who he said worked to get prostitutes off the streets by connecting them with social service agencies. "That sense of giving and service means a lot to me," **Jones** said. He said he didn't know anything about the problems of Hutto's past city manager, Karen Daly, who resigned in January after being accused of having "broken" relationships with the Hutto school district, firefighters and county officials. **Jones** said he plans to collaborate with officials at other agencies. "At the end of the day, the taxpayers rightfully require that," he said.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches

Odis Jones

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Detroit News, The: Web Edition Articles (MI)
February 3, 2016

CEO of Detroit's Public Lighting Authority resigns

Author: The Detroit News

Detroit - The CEO of the Public Lighting Authority, which aims to fix the city's longstanding street lighting problem, has resigned, officials announced Wednesday. In a Public Lighting Authority release, **Odis Jones** lays out successes during his tenure, which began in 2013, and writes "it is time to pursue other opportunities that have come up."

"When I returned to my hometown to take over the Public Lighting Authority, I took on the challenge because I wanted to make a contribution to Detroit's rebirth," he said. "At that time, more than 40 percent of the city's lights were inoperable and repairs to broken lights could take months or even years." **Jones** said more than 60,000 energy efficient LED lights have been installed in neighborhoods and main thoroughfares. "What's more, once we install the new lights, we are keeping those lights on," he said. "With the job of relighting the city 98 percent complete, I have decided it is time to pursue other opportunities that have come up."

In November, **Jones'** contract was extended indefinitely and he was awarded a bonus totaling \$20,000 for outstanding achievement. Calls to the Public Lighting Authority were not returned Wednesday afternoon. A telephone call and text message to Mayor Mike Duggan's Office also were not returned Wednesday. In the statement, Duggan and lighting authority board Chairwoman Lorna Thomas acknowledged **Jones'** efforts in tackling lighting issues.

"Under **Odis Jones'** leadership, the PLA has installed new lights in every neighborhood in the city, and they're twice as bright as the old ones. The new lights also will last longer and are far more energy-efficient," Duggan said. "That means the city will realize substantial savings in operating costs well into the future. He has served Detroit well and we wish him well as he moves to other challenges."

Thomas added that **Jones** "has brought order out of chaos with the city's streetlights and has created an effective solution to an issue that has plagued the city for decades. As a board, we are proud of **Odis'** tremendous accomplishments and we wish him well as he moves to new challenges." The installation of streetlights citywide, which began in February 2014, is ahead of schedule. Work on the eight major thoroughfares will be completed by the end of this year. Before the PLA started its work, approximately 40 percent of the streetlights in Detroit didn't work.

The Public Lighting Authority is a state-created organization. It is a separate legal entity from the city of Detroit. The authority is overseen by a five-member board appointed by the mayor and the City Council. All five board members are residents of Detroit. **Jones**, a native Detroiter, was economic development director in Cincinnati before taking the Detroit post. He had been responsible for leading efforts to attract investment to the Ohio city as well as leading the

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Odis Jones

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

development and implementation of a bond program projected to attract \$120 million in new investment in neighborhoods.

Before that, he was director of Urban & Site Development for the New Jersey Economic Development Authority; president of the Columbus, Ohio, Urban Growth Corp.; and city manager for several Midwest cities. He grew up on Detroit's east side, graduated from Osborn High School then earned a bachelor's degree from Central Michigan University and a master's degree in public administration from Western Michigan University.

When **Jones** was tapped to lead the Public Lighting Authority in 2013, members cited his local ties. "We had some wonderful candidates from around the country, (but) we needed a Detroiter," Maureen Stapleton, then the authority's chair, told The Detroit News at the time. Detroit News Staff Writers Louis Aguilar and Christine Ferretti contributed.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches**Odis Jones***(Articles are in reverse chronological order)*

Dbusiness (Detroit, MI)

May 1, 2014

Detroit Completes First Phase of Street Lighting Program

DETROIT — The Public Lighting Authority of Detroit has completed ahead of schedule its installation of new Light Emitting Diode street lights within the two pilot areas' neighborhoods, city and Lighting Authority officials announced today. Installing the new lights in the two pilot areas was the latest step in the PLA's mission to relight Detroit. Workers installed the last light with overhead wiring in the demonstration area on the 15700 block of Plainview, on the city's west side. The installation brought the total LED lights installed thus far to approximately 5,000. "The completion of this phase in these pilot areas ahead of schedule is a great example of how our city is delivering real change for Detroit residents," said Mayor Mike Duggan, who was present at the installation. "As we continue to move across the city, Detroiters will be able to count on having their streets lit to the same standards of illumination as any other city." The PLA had set a May 1 deadline for completing this phase of its street light upgrades. Officials reported that the PLA's work on major thoroughfares and collector streets, which use underground wiring, is on schedule to meet the goal of completing installation by July 31.

Authority CEO, **Odis Jones** said the installation of the last LED lights with overhead wiring shows that the PLA board is fulfilling the mission it was created to accomplish. "There is no question about the rapid progress that is being made in the area of public street lighting since the beginning of the year," **Jones** said. "Detroit is now on par with other major cities by meeting the national engineering illumination standards. Clearly we are on our way to reversing decades of disinvestment in the city's street lights."

In January, Detroit City Council unanimously appointed the new PLA Board, which quickly voted to install all LED lamps. Installation of the LED lights began in February. The light that completed installation today, is in one of two demonstration areas that the PLA designated last year to begin the relighting of the City. The east side demonstration area has boundaries of Eight Mile, Kelly Rd., Hoover and Houston Whittier. The west side demonstration project has boundaries of McNichols on the north, Southfield Rd. on the east, Fenkell on the south and the City boundary on the west. The PLA has taken over responsibility for maintaining the lights it has installed the demonstration areas, with a goal of fixing any broken light within five days of it being reported. If residents need to report any damages, outages or issues of the lights installed by the PLA, they should call 313-324-8290 or visit pladetroit.org. An engineering survey of the two pilot areas that was completed last year showed that nearly one third of the lights in both areas are not working. The survey collected specific information about the condition of every single street light in both project areas. The survey work is now being continued into other parts of the city so that the relighting will continue without interruption. Beginning Thursday, work will start in the following ZIP codes, with a deadline to complete installation of LED lights with overhead wiring by the end of 2014: 48205, 48215, 48219, 48223, 48224, and 48235.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches

Odis Jones

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Michigan Chronicle, The (Detroit, MI)
September 25, 2013

Public Lighting Authority of Detroit Names Odis Jones Executive Director

Author: Michigan Chronicle Staff

The Public Lighting Authority of Detroit (PLA) has named Detroit native **Odis Jones**, formerly Economic Development Director for the City of Cincinnati, as executive director. **Jones** comes to Detroit with extensive experience in managing urban initiatives. Prior to his work in Cincinnati, he served as director of Urban & Site Development for the New Jersey Economic Development Authority (EDA) and before that was president of the Columbus, Ohio Urban Growth Corporation. **Jones** also has served as city manager for several cities in the Midwest.

“We’re extremely fortunate to have someone with **Odis’** scope of experience to take on the task of restoring reliable public lighting within the city of Detroit,” said PLA Chair Maureen Stapleton. “The fact that he is a native of Detroit who wants to come back and contribute to the rebuilding of his home town speaks to the depth of commitment he brings to this assignment.”

Jones said he welcomed the opportunity to play a role in the revitalization of the city of Detroit. “This is my home town and my dream has always been to come back here and play a role in rebuilding Detroit,” he said. “Clearly, a reliable public lighting system is a key component in that rebuilding and I welcome the challenge of turning this system around.”

As economic development director in Cincinnati, **Jones** has been responsible for leading efforts to attract new investment to the city as well as leading the development and implementation of a bond program that is projected to attract \$120 million in new investment in the city’s neighborhoods.

As executive director of the Public Lighting Authority, he will lead the design and implementation of a three-year plan to rebuild Detroit’s public lighting system. It’s estimated that half of Detroit’s 88,000 lights are inoperable because of coil theft, bulb outages, vandalism and maintenance issues.

The Authority will begin the process by holding seven public meetings throughout Detroit in the next four weeks to engage and gather input from the community on the city’s public lighting needs. “Community input and involvement is going to be a critical part of improving Detroit’s chronic lighting problem,” said **Jones**. “Our efforts will only be successful if they reflect the needs, interests and opinions of Detroiters. As a native of Detroit, I know how important community involvement has always been in any steps forward by the city.”

Jones grew up on Detroit’s east side, attending Lillibridge Elementary School, Joy Middle School and Osborn High School. He holds a Master of Public Administration degree from Western Michigan University and a Bachelor of Science degree from Central Michigan University.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches

Odis Jones

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

In addition to his work in Cincinnati and New Jersey, **Jones** has served as the city administrator for Keokuk, Iowa; president of the Columbus, Ohio Urban Growth Corporation; and city administrator of the city of Obetz, Ohio. He is a member of the International City/County Management Association, the American Planning Association and the International Economic Development Council

The PLA was authorized by Michigan Legislature in December, 2012 and approved by Detroit City Council earlier this year to design and implement a three-year plan to improve Detroit's public lighting system. The PLA is governed by a five-member board appointed by the mayor and the city council.

PLA of Detroit to hold vendor fair

The Public Lighting Authority (PLA) of Detroit will hold a vendor fair October 10 to outline opportunities for qualified businesses to become involved in the PLA's initiative to update Detroit's street lighting system. The fair will be held at Fellowship Chapel, 7707 W. Outer Drive, from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

"The Public Lighting Authority is committed to utilizing Detroit-based businesses wherever possible and this vendor fair is being held to assure that these businesses are aware of the opportunities available to them," said **Odis Jones**, executive director of the PLA. "Business owners who attend the fair will learn about opportunities in and requirements for engineering, construction and material supply as well as learning about the requirements for vendor qualifications." **Jones** said those attending the event will learn of the PLA's long-term plan for improvement of the public lighting system and the needs of the supply base in order to execute the plan. They also will be able to meet with the subject matter experts from the PLA's project manager, DTE Energy, to discuss possible ways to connect with other businesses and organizations that share an interest in building relationships and partnerships. In addition, **Jones** said the PLA will be discussing a Request for Proposal it will soon issue seeking qualified contractors to work on the lighting project. The RFP will be for a variety of services needed in the reconstruction city of Detroit street lights, including but not limited to:

Luminaire replacement, including replacement of luminaire, and installation of a new lamp, fixture wire, and/or photocell and or PC adaptor. Replace existing street light fixture wire as necessary to restore equipment to normal operation. Trench, excavate and backfill as needed for installation of underground streetlight cable/conduit/pipe. Removal and disposal of existing post, breakdown old foundation and remove exposed rods 30" below grade, hauling and install new post, transfer or install new luminaire, new fixture wire, terminations in post. PLA Chair Maureen Stapleton said the PLA is committed to utilizing Detroit-based businesses where possible and that the contractor will be expected to pursue local sourcing of work and utilize Detroit-based businesses in support of this effort. "The PLA board is committed to assuring that Detroit-based firms and Detroit workers are fully involved in this project as we begin to relight the city of Detroit," she said.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches

Odis Jones

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Cincinnati Herald, The (OH)
July 4, 2013

Odis Jones is second Cincinnati official leaving for Detroit

Following the exit June 22 of former Cincinnati Police Chief James E. Craig who has become the new police chief of the City of Detroit, City Manager Milton Dohoney, Jr. announced June 26 that **Odis Jones**, director of Economic Development, has accepted a position with the Detroit Public Lighting Authority and will be leaving City service July 12.

“I want to thank **Odis** for his tireless commitment to growing our city and our tax base. His vision, energy and perseverance have helped further the City’s goal of growing the local economy through jobs and investment. When presented with a great opportunity, it is understandable that it’s hard to say ‘no’. I also support my staff in doing what is best for their families, “ said Dohoney.

Because of his personal involvement with a number of projects, **Jones** will be retained as a consultant for the next few months to help Cincinnati move them forward, Dohoney said. Jeff McElravy, who currently serves as downtown development manager, will serve as interim director of the Department of Trade & Development while City officials conduct a national search for a new department director.

Mayor Mark Mallory said of **Jones’s** decision, "I hate to lose him. He's a great development professional. I'm sure he'll do a great job in Detroit. He did great for us in Cincinnati. We made a lot of progress because of his hard work."

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches

Odis Jones

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

FOX - 2 WJBK (Detroit, MI)

June 27, 2013

Odis Jones to lead Detroit's new Public Lighting Authority

Author: Amy Lange

DETROIT (WJBK)

James Taylor lives on Detroit's east side taking care of his elderly parents. He said there hasn't been working streetlights near his home since his arrival a year ago. It is a huge issue, one of the biggest complaints of Detroiters. Half of the city's 88,000 streetlights don't work, but now the Public Lighting Authority has hired Detroit native **Odis Jones** to get them turned back on.

"We've got to get the lights on, but two, we've got to modernize our system so that it fits the needs of the residents that are here today, as well as those in the future," **Jones** said.

Jones will start July 15. He is coming to Detroit from Cincinnati where he was the economic development director. So what neighborhoods will be given priority? Where are the streetlights most needed? **Jones** said they are looking to the public for help with all of that, and are asking for everyone to attend a series of meetings. "We've got a list of public meetings that we're having, so I encourage and invite others to get out to those," **Jones** said. "We want to hear from the residents and be able to translate that drumbeat we hear from them into a plan that we execute."

It will be a three year plan with annual goals. The price tag could be anywhere from \$160 million to \$300-500 million. Kevyn Orr's office announced Thursday that Detroit's Public Lighting Department will cease operations in the coming months and years. DTE Energy will be taking over those customers, including Wayne State University, Detroit Public Schools, Cobo Hall and the Detroit Institute of Arts. Orr's spokesperson said PLD has been a significant financial burden for Detroit operating at an annual loss of approximately \$150 million over the last five years.

**Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Odis Jones**

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Cincinnati Herald, The (OH)
December 29, 2012

13 projects recommended for neighborhood business district funding

The City of Cincinnati Economic Development Division and Cincinnati Neighborhood Business Districts United (CNBDU) are endorsing 13 proposals for Neighborhood Business District Improvement Program (NBDIP) funding awards in 2013:

Neighborhood Project Title	Request Amount
Walnut Hills Park-Kemper Streetscape Design	\$30,000
West Price Hill Covedale Center Marquee/Community Message Board	\$79,145
Roselawn Business District Feasibility Study	\$30,000
Clifton Ludlow Avenue Storefront Improvement Program	\$77,500
Westwood Parking Lot Renovation	\$30,000
Northside Hoffner St. Garden	\$80,000
Northside Dhonau Garden	\$30,000
Corryville Façade Improvement Program (Continuation)	\$236,397
Bond Hill Bond Hill Identity Project	\$30,000
East Price Hill St. Lawrence Corner Public Square	\$107,500
Pleasant Ridge 6025 Montgomery Acquisition & Redevelopment	\$150,000
Avondale Reading, Rockdale & Forest Streetscape	\$400,000
Mt. Adams Streetscape Completion	\$375,000

"Thriving neighborhood business districts will not only provide a high quality of life for current residents -- they're also key to attracting new residents," said **Odis Jones**, Economic Development Director. "The NBDIP process reaffirms our commitment to strategically investing in neighborhoods to grow the city." Awarded annually, funds from the NBDIP can be used for a variety of capital improvements and other uses to promote economic development in officially recognized neighborhood business districts. The projects are implemented in partnerships between City staff and community volunteers.

At the end of an intensive peer-review process, member communities of Cincinnati Neighborhood Business Districts United submitted rankings of their fellow members' proposals. In this year's competitive funding round, Economic Development Division received 29 applications requesting a total of \$3.1 million. The Economic Development Division is anticipating having a total of roughly \$1.65 million in federal Community Development Block Grant funds and Capital Investment Program funds available in 2013, which would allow the top 13 applications to be funded. This funding is in addition to the Administration's recommendation for the Focus 52 program, which will create a pool of \$54 million for neighborhood projects throughout the city. Cincinnati City Council will make the final decisions when it sets the Consolidated Plan and Capital Investment Program budgets for the 2013 fiscal year.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches

Odis Jones

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Cincinnati Herald, The (OH)
November 10, 2012

Odis Jones featured in Regional Chamber’s Profiles of Success

Profiles of Success features highly successful minority business leaders sharing their personal stories: How they got started, their experiences and their advice for other business leaders.

Odis Jones, Director of Economic Development, City of Cincinnati, will be featured Nov. 8 during a luncheon from 11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. at Cincinnati USA Regional Chamber, 300 Carew Tower, 441 Vine St. The cost is \$35 for members of Cincinnati USA Regional Chamber and African American Chamber, \$50 for nonmembers. Regina Russo, Director of Marketing & Communications, Cincinnati Art Museum, is the moderator. Register at cincinnati-chamber.com or call 513.579.3111

Odis Jones joined the Administration as the City of Cincinnati’s new Director of Economic Development on April 22, 2012. As Director, he is responsible for leading the City's mission and method of economic development and serving as the primary contact for employers, investors, small business, and developers. His objective is to stimulate investment in Cincinnati by providing businesses and community development organizations with the financial and technical tools they need to grow and revitalize neighborhoods. **Jones** is the former Director of Urban & Site Development for the New Jersey Economic Development Authority (EDA). He also oversaw two Urban Fund opportunities in excess of \$200 million as well as other incentive platforms such as the State Brownfield reimbursement grant, Economic Recover Grant (ERG), NJ Access Food Initiative, and the Urban Transit Hub Tax Credit program.

Jones has been honored as the “Public Sector Developer of the Year” by the Mid Ohio Development Exchange, which represents the Columbus metropolitan area. He also was recognized as a “Leading Executive” with the Columbus, Ohio Region by Business First, a Columbus business publication, and with a “40 and Under Executive of the Year” award for the Columbus metropolitan area.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches

Odis Jones

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Cincinnati Herald, The (OH)
September 29, 2012

Economic Investment Brings Hundreds of Jobs to Cincinnati

Rough Brothers, Inc., a greenhouse design and manufacturing firm, will bring 120 new jobs to the City of Cincinnati when it relocates its headquarters to the Bond Hill neighborhood. Rough Brothers has agreed to purchase 20.5 acres of vacant land at the southwest corner of Paddock Road and Regina Graeter Way from the City for \$1.3 million.

With the construction of the new headquarters, Rough Brothers is expected to create 120 jobs inside the city within three years, creating \$1.2 million in new net tax revenue. The company has committed to remaining in Cincinnati for 10 years. "The Rough Brothers relocation is a perfect example of Cincinnati's GO Cincinnati initiative being put to work," said City of Cincinnati Economic Development Director **Odis Jones**. "The site the company chose is located in an area that we have been working to grow for advanced manufacturing and research-oriented businesses. Rough Brothers is this type of business and will complement well with this already strong job-generating area of the City."

The company's new headquarters will include a 150,000-square-foot office and manufacturing facility that will be built to LEED standards. Construction of the new facility is estimated to cost \$4 million, while the project as a whole will cost \$13.3 million. High-Tech Manufacturer To Invest \$2M In Camp Washington

Project to Create 50 New Jobs

CINCINNATI -- Meyer Tool, Inc., as a result of increasing demand, is making plans to construct a new manufacturing facility and expand at its current location, investing \$2 million in Camp Washington. A new 30,000-square-foot facility at 3154 Spring Grove Ave. and an expansion at 3055 Colerain Ave. will create 50 new jobs, as well as allow the company to retain 586 current employees within the city. The project is made possible through tax incentives from the City of Cincinnati.

"This project represents new investment in the Camp Washington community. The property tax incentive will help the company create new jobs," said **Odis Jones**, City of Cincinnati Economic Development Director. "The City's incentive programs lower the cost of doing business in Cincinnati for Meyer Tool, Inc. and allow the City to retain a major employer in the business community." Meyer Tool, Inc. manufactures turbine engine components for aircraft engine manufacturers. Its customers include GE Aviation and Rolls Royce. Construction on the project is expected to be completed by next spring.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches

Odis Jones

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Atlanticville (Long Branch, NJ)
October 27, 2011

FMERA solicits buyers for first of fort parcels
Business plan for Fort Monmouth reuse still incomplete
Author: MIKE DAVIS

TINTON FALLS - The Fort Monmouth Economic Revitalization Authority (FMERA) voted on Oct. 19 to begin the process of selling off specific land parcels of the fort's 1,129 acres. One parcel of land located within Tinton Falls, designated as Parcel E, has already been opened up through a request for offers to purchase (ROTP). "The authority staff has recommended proceeding with the offer to purchase for Parcel E because there is specific interest," FMERA Executive Director Bruce Steadman said at the Oct. 19 meeting. "It will be a key milestone in the redevelopment of Fort Monmouth, serving as a catalyst for economic activity and promoting job growth invested in the area."

Steadman described Parcel E as a 55- acre parcel containing green space and some housing. It is located in the northeast corner of the Tinton Falls section of the Charles Wood area and is bounded by Tinton Avenue and Hope Road. Fort Monmouth closed Sept. 15, and the property remains under U.S. Army ownership. Negotiations under way between FMERA and the Army involve the transfer or sale of the property.

The authority also voted at the meeting to allow FMERA staff to begin drawing up an ROTP for two other parcels of land, designated C and C1, in addition to Howard Commons housing and the Suneagles Golf Course. "It doesn't mean the [ROTP] has been developed or will be developed soon. It just begins the process for staff," Steadman said. "It is believed that the parcels, based on the interest received so far, will help refuel creation of jobs, housing projects and interest in fort property."

Parcel C is located to the west of Parcel E, bounded by Tinton Avenue and the Tinton Falls Municipal Center. Parcel C1 is a smaller parcel due south of Parcel E. FMERA's Real Estate Committee Chairman Michael Pane said the decision to open up these parcels for offers to purchase resulted from long negotiations with Army representatives. "Now that the Army is effectively done with the real estate, they are actually looking to dispose of those portions which they can," Pane said at the meeting.

Various FMERA members said details behind the transfer of fort property could not be revealed until negotiations with the Army on specific issues are concluded. FMERAReal Estate Director **Odis Jones** said real estate discussions with the Army have centered around the flexibility of the authority's business and land use strategy, as well as certainty of business and investment interest in the property, in addition to the speed at which property will be transferred. "The pace of how property is going to be transferred will dictate our success and ability to actually have job creation take place," **Jones** said.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches

Odis Jones

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Steadman estimated that the process of creating the overall zoning map of the property was about 80 percent complete. "Our planner has visited with the professionals in each of the three boroughs [Tinton Falls, Oceanport and Eatontown] at least once and exchanged information," Steadman said. "We are now at a point where it makes sense to integrate some legal counsel with respect to the type of zoning. We don't have a definite plan today, but it's being worked on every day by ourselves and two other groups of professionals, and it seems to be moving along very well."

Tinton Falls resident Linda Zucaro asked how the business plan, which Steadman estimated would be completed in November, could be part of the discussions with the Army if it still hasn't been completed. "It would be great if we saw it in November, or if we saw it sometime," Zucaro said.

Steadman explained that different parts of the plan are complete and were part of Army discussions. "That's all part of the negotiations. Portions of the business plan can be completed, and they wait until other pieces can be plugged in," Steadman said. "It's like being pregnant for 13 months. It's time to deliver the baby," he said. FMERA is next scheduled to meet Nov. 16 at the Eatontown Municipal Building.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches**Odis Jones***(Articles are in reverse chronological order)*

Press of Atlantic City, The (NJ)
July 22, 2009

N.J. cities in line for supermarket funding aid

Author: DONALD WITTKOWSKI

The CRDA will contribute \$7 million for a program to build urban grocery stores. But a proposed supermarket in Atlantic City is too far along in the process and will stay on a separate track. In recent years, new supermarkets have been crowding the wealthier suburbs while poor, inner-city neighborhoods have been starving for grocery stores. But New Jersey is starting a program that combines private investment with public funding to encourage food companies to build new supermarkets or renovate deteriorated ones in distressed communities.

The Casino Reinvestment Development Authority gave the program preliminary approval Tuesday, the first step in what will be a \$7 million contribution from the state agency funded by Atlantic City's gaming industry. Of the CRDA's funding, \$5 million will go for supermarkets in northern New Jersey and \$2 million for the southern half of the state. CRDA's contribution will be combined with \$4 million from the New Jersey Economic Development Authority and \$7 million in private funding from TRF, a Philadelphia-based investment group.

Supermarkets generate jobs, serve as a catalyst for economic development and provide access to food at affordable prices, said **Odis Jones**, director of urban development for the Economic Development Authority.

Donald Hinkle-Brown, president of lending and community investment at TRF, said New Jersey will be the second state behind Pennsylvania to have such a supermarket program. TRF has leveraged \$30 million in state funding from Pennsylvania for \$116 million of total investment for 70 grocery stores in the Keystone State. New Jersey's program will offer low-interest loans to supermarket operators.

Although no sites have been selected yet, the cities of Camden, Newark, Paterson, East Orange, New Brunswick and Deptford Township are high-priority areas for new food markets to serve the poor, Hinkle-Brown said. A proposed supermarket in Atlantic City will move on a separate track, outside of the state program, because it is further along. "That horse has been let out of the barn already, so to speak," Atlantic City Mayor Lorenzo Langford said. "We're so far ahead that they wouldn't be able to catch up to us with our project."

Atlantic City and the CRDA are negotiating an agreement with A&P to bring one of the chain's Food Basics stores to a vacant building once occupied by an IGA supermarket. IGA closed its doors in 2006 at the Renaissance Plaza shopping center at Kentucky and Atlantic avenues. The city is discussing tax abatements as a financial incentive for A&P, the mayor said. As an extra incentive, the CRDA may offer A&P a mortgage abatement of up to \$100,000, said Thomas D. Carver, the authority's executive director.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches**Odis Jones***(Articles are in reverse chronological order)*

Separate from the A&P deal, Langford's administration is talking to would-be developers for another supermarket at the former Abbott's Dairy Co. site at Route 30 and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard. For now, Atlantic City residents are forced to shop at small food stores in town or at supermarkets in surrounding communities. Atlantic City isn't alone in not having a supermarket. Camden is another New Jersey city that lacks a major food market, Hinkle-Brown said.

Supermarket operators have been expanding to the suburbs in recent years to take advantage of wealthier customers, he explained. "There is the assumption that poor people pay less, so supermarket companies go to the suburbs," he said. He blamed the exodus of supermarket chains from urban areas on certain risk factors, including crime, poverty and the high insurance costs to operate an inner-city business. He said some of the risks are exaggerated. "These perceptions are just that, perceptions," he said. "They're not true."

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches

Odis Jones

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Daily Democrat (Fort Madison, IA)
February 8, 2008

New Keokuk administrator resigns

Author: Steve Dunn

KEOKUK - In the end, the State of New Jersey's job offer was too good for Keokuk City Administrator **Odis Jones** to pass up. **Jones** has accepted the New Jersey Economic Development Authority's offer to direct and lead the implementation of Gov. Corzine's Urban Development Fund and Portfields Initiative. **Jones** will be responsible for advancing a strategy in New Jersey to stimulate investment in its communities by identifying development opportunities and attracting business investment to New Jersey as well as the New Jersey and New York ports. The position will have a targeted focus on urban communities.

More than 1,400 multinational businesses representing more than 40 countries have sites in New Jersey, according to the New Jersey Economic Development Authority Web site. The Portfields Initiative is designed to transform underutilized sites within a 25-mile radius of the Statue of Liberty into productive uses in terms of port-related warehousing and distribution functions and creation of related jobs.

Jones will start his new job March 3. He had been employed by the City of Keokuk since Oct. 24, 2007. "The New Jersey job will be monumental and I believe I'm prepared for it," **Jones** told the city council during Thursday night's workshop. **Jones** said he'll miss the team atmosphere and the overwhelming welcome he's received since coming to Keokuk. "Out of all the councils I've worked with, you usually have one or two members set in their ways. This group reaches a consensus," he added. "I'll also miss the staff. You have an excellent group of employees here who look out for the public."

Although **Jones** was not his first choice for the city administrator's job council member Bill Olmsted said **Jones** has earned his pay during his relatively short time in Keokuk. Mayor David Gudgel sounded a cautionary note during the discussion about **Jones'** departure. "I hope **Odis'** announcement will not shape your decision on whether we should have the city administrator position," Gudgel said. "His leaving should not detract from your decision to keep this train rolling. I am absolutely certain this city needs a city administrator." The mayor also credited **Jones** with "pulling rabbits out of a hat" concerning the formulation of a budget for 2008-09. Before leaving his post in Keokuk **Jones** will work with Gudgel to complete several projects and help the city through the transition. The local projects include the city budget, a development agreement with Hendricks Holdings and the proposed RDA ethanol plant development agreement. Under an employment agreement signed by **Jones** and Gudgel on Nov. 5, 2007 either **Jones** or the city could terminate the agreement for just cause upon 30-days written notice to the other party unless both parties agreed otherwise. The employment agreement also says that if the employee voluntarily resigns his or her position with the city the employee shall not receive the severance allowance provided in the agreement.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches

Odis Jones

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Hawk Eye, The (Burlington, IA)
January 30, 2008

Administrator brings ideas to Keokuk

Author: Nick Bergin

KEOKUK -- The saying goes, "Two heads are better than one."

The Keokuk City Council has put the saying to the test and grown the city a second head by hiring City Administrator **Odis Jones**. "Immediately, within the first day he (**Jones**) was here, you could feel change," Mayor Dave Gudgel said. **Jones** has been working with the city for about two months. But considering time for transition, he has a solid month of experience with the city under his belt, **Odis** said in an interview Tuesday.

In that month, **Jones** said, he has begun to size up the city's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. **Jones** already has begun to make changes within the operations of the city to make sure people are "working smarter, not harder." "You try to move and position your talent and capacity from a human perspective and also from a capital perspective, in the right positions to take the best advantage of those strengths, opportunities and threats," **Jones** said.

However, those changes have made a few ripples among city employees, Mayor Dave Gudgel said. "Many of the changes **Odis** has recommended have caused some employees to say 'we've never done it this way before,'" Gudgel said. However, the council hired **Jones** to make changes, and he has the education, experience and proven ability to do so, Gudgel said. Gudgel said he will wait until **Jones** has been with the city at least six months before trying to judge the effect of the changes.

Jones has worked in city administration and economic development for 15 years in three Ohio cities: Obetz, Columbus and Battle Creek. He holds a master's degree in public administration from Western Michigan University. **Jones'** first major challenge and change in city policy has been the city's budget process. In past years, the council wrote the budget line-by-line.

Now, for the first time, the city administrator has worked with department heads to come up with a complete balanced budget. **Jones** presented it to the council Monday. The proposed \$31 million 2008-09 budget represents a \$700,000 increase over the current fiscal year's budget, **Jones** said. **Jones** said he and the council will work together as a team to hash out the final budget. "It's a partnership that exists between me and the council. We're a team," **Jones** said.

However, the final decision-making power still rests with council members, and they each have their own idea of what priorities the budget should reflect. "The council controls the purse strings. So, they are always going to be very active in managing that purse string and managing how it's applied. And that is great because essentially what it does is it lays down policies and directives for me," **Jones** said.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches

Odis Jones

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Jones said the next fiscal year's budget represents an emphasis on safety, community development, economic development and quality of life. To accomplish those goals **Jones** has proposed hiring several new employees, including a public works director, a finance director, a police detective and a patrolman.

The city has been without a public works director since previous director Bill Richards retired in June. Public works is the second largest department in the city with about 25 employees. "This council is very visionary. They intend to work to redevelop our road systems in our city and they have made that a priority," **Jones** said. "Having someone (a public works director) with a civil engineering degree in house ... is going to be a great value to the city long term."

In addition to the streets expansion program, the public works director will oversee programs such as the separation of the city's combined storm and sanitary sewers as mandated by the federal Environmental Protection Agency. Also, **Jones** said, the city's budget is big enough and complex enough to warrant a finance director to provide oversight.

To support economic development, **Jones'** budget proposes giving \$30,000 to the Keokuk Economic Development Group. Previous budgets have not allocated funds directly to the KEDG, **Jones** said. To help tourism, the budget proposes to increase the Keokuk Area Convention and Tourism Bureau funding by \$15,000, **Jones** said.

With **Jones** running the day-to-day operations of the city, Gudgel has been spending more time focusing on economic development, vision and strategy. However, Gudgel said, if the city administrator position works out, citizens may one day decide they don't need a full-time mayor. **Jones** receives an annual salary of \$93,000 with a total compensation package of about \$110,000. Gudgel's yearly salary is \$48,000. To go from a full-time mayor to a part-time mayor would require a majority vote from residents.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches

Odis Jones

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Daily Gate City (Keokuk, IA)
December 21, 2007

The city has a CEO

Author: Steve Dunn

The City of Keokuk's new chief executive officer, city administrator **Odis Jones**, has been touched by the reception he's received during his first three weeks on the job. "It's been insightful and I've learned a tremendous amount in terms of the goodness of the people here," said **Jones** during an interview in his new office at City Hall. "It's been delightful to not only get to meet the employees, but also to understand what they do and their commitment to this organization and the citizens here. You don't often find a staff that is so willing to serve and think outside the box. That's heartwarming."

Under an employment agreement with the city, **Jones'** base salary is \$93,000. His total compensation package is about \$110,000, he said. **Jones** already has assembled a leadership team comprised of Police Chief Tom Crew, Fire Chief Mark Wessel, Community Development Director Pam Broomhall and himself. If the city council decides to hire a public works director, that person also would serve on the team. "I've had an opportunity to look at the operation (of the city) and get input from other colleagues," **Jones** said. "There are areas where we can work smarter and not harder. "We'll map out a process with a plan of how we're going to get there with some benchmarks," he added. "I feel good about what I see. This community has some real committed volunteers who are a very valuable asset."

In fact, the level of volunteerism Keokuk has surprised him. "It's been an overwhelming level of commitment," he said. "That is shocking but nice to know. This town is excited and committed to change for the better. There is an air of excitement, which translates into volunteerism. It makes the city administrator's job a lot more amenable."

During his first year on the job, **Jones** hopes to get to know the people, understand the issues better and get the staff organized so that the right people do the right thing at the right time. "The (Keokuk Area) Vision Plan lays out expectations and the role it would like the city to play," he said. "I'd like to begin to accomplish those tasks, but mostly get to know the people so we can take advantage of those opportunities."

For the time being, **Jones** will serve as city clerk as well as public administrator since Donna Eilers has retired after four years in the city clerk's post. According to **Jones**, the council meetings will be taped and administrative clerk Barb Barnes will transcribe them into minutes. **Jones** will record individual votes during council meetings by hand. "I'll also start to provide a monthly report to the council on how the operations are going and what are the 'hot button' issues," he said.

Jones has recommended that the city council hire a finance manager, which actually is provided for in the city code. "The (city) budget is at a level of sophistication that having somebody with a

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches

Odis Jones

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

finance background would be helpful," he said. Fort Madison's finance manager earns about \$45,000 to \$50,000 a year, according to **Jones**.

The new city administrator also has suggested hiring a public works director, which Bill Richards filled until he retired on June 30. After Richards retired, it appeared the position would not be filled and a project manager might be hired to oversee individual public works projects such as streets and sewers. "The public works department is the second largest department in the city with about 25 employees and it's without a head," **Jones** replied when asked to justify his request. "It's important to have a head for that department."

In line with his proposal to hire a public works director, **Jones** noted the city has embarked on an aggressive street improvement program. The city also has to separate its combined storm and sanitary sewers as mandated by the federal Environmental Protection Agency. "There's a new excitement in the air of growth, which involves issues with roads, utilities, etc.," he said.

Those issues plus the ongoing day-to-day management issues in the public works department make having a public works director a necessity, **Jones** believes. He pointed out the city already has two licensed and certified inspectors in the public works department with more than a combined 50 years of experience. **Jones** said the city will try to hire a public works director with an engineering degree for about the same amount that was budgeted in the current fiscal year, or \$56,000. Although a couple of council members recently raised questions about **Jones'** reorganization plan for city government, he said, "I have a very good relationship with the council." "It was a work session where people show up with ideas for discussion," he said in reference to the session where he presented his proposal.

The budget preparation process, which already has begun for 2007-08, apparently will change in that few, if any, Saturday morning meetings will be held next month. "I've met with department heads. Now we're tabulating it (requests presented by department heads)," he explained. "We'll sit down with the Finance Subcommittee during the second week of January and review those numbers. Then we'll make the necessary changes and present the (proposed) budget to the full council by the end of January." By state law, the final budget must be certified and sent to the state by -----.

When **Jones** is not working at City Hall, he likes to go fishing and read. Preferring to read novels, he lists his favorite authors as novelist Richard Wright and the Rev. Joel Osteen, a pastor in Texas who has written such books as "Your Best Life Now." He also likes to spend time with his family, which includes his wife, Susan, and two children, Damario, 13, and Ashlynn, 1. The rest of his family is expected to move from Pickering, Ohio, to Keokuk after the current school year ends. "It is also understood that **Odis Jones** acting in his role as city administrator will also assume the duties of city clerk and shall have the powers and authority vested in such position pursuant to Iowa law until such time that the mayor and city council deem it appropriate to appoint another individual."

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches

Odis Jones

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

ThisWeek Community Newspapers (Columbus, OH)
August 1, 2004

VILLAGE OFFICIAL SUES OBETZ IN U.S. COURT

Lawsuit filed seeking damages to compensate for reductions in Warner's work hours

Author: MARK A. CLAFFEY

The Village of Obetz, Mayor E. Rod Davisson and Administrator Doug Browell have been named defendants in a lawsuit filed July 14 by Mayor's Court Clerk Catherine A. Warner in U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Ohio. The lawsuit alleges deprivation of civil rights without due process and retaliation against Warner for exercising her rights of free speech.

Warner is seeking compensation resulting from reduced hours since March 8, 2004, including back pay. "In the last six months, since the new administration has taken office, my client's (Warner) hours have been reduced and have been offered to other employees for no reason at all," said Warner's Columbus-based attorney Michael Moses. "She was given no reason at all for the reduction of hours, though the reasons appear to be political."

Warner, a Hamilton Township graduate, is a member of the Republican Party and supported other candidates for elective office, according to a copy of the suit. She was hired by the village to fill the position of mayor's court clerk in 1996. She was formerly a candidate for the village clerk-treasurer position, won by Donna Hubner last fall.

Moses released the following statement from his client on Tuesday: "The village of Obetz reduced Mrs. Warner's hours without cause, and effectively terminated her employment because of politics and because she spoke her mind and asserted the interests of the taxpayers. She was required to work overtime without adequate compensation, and a trial will show that the village took advantage of her the same way it has taken advantage of the residents of Obetz."

Village Solicitor Eugene Hollins said the lawsuit came as a surprise and described village officials as dumbfounded by Warner's claim. "This was a complete surprise," Hollins said. "We received no prior telephone calls to the suit being filed nothing, it just appeared on our desks. We are reviewing all items concerned and will file the necessary response within the next 60 days."

Davisson expressed disappointment that another village official has chosen to file a federal lawsuit. "I am frustrated that Obetz has been sued once again by one of its own officials," Davisson said. "In November, the citizens of Obetz decided that they were finished with the silliness that had gone unchecked here for quite some time. We have overcome many adversities, including a nearly \$2-million budget shortfall left by the prior administration, and I will not be dissuaded from continuing our efforts to improve the quality of life for our Obetz residents by lawsuits brought by our own elected officials and employees."

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches

Odis Jones

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Last September, Hubner and council member Patricia Altevogt filed a suit against the village and former Obetz Mayor Louise Crabtree. In the suit, Altevogt, Hubner and Zucchinifest Inc. President Mark Rinehart are seeking damages from village officials for harassment and defamation. The September 2003 lawsuit stems from a theft complaint village officials filed with the Franklin County sheriff's office on Sept. 16, 2002, alleging that \$10,000 worth of village equipment had been stolen following the Zucchinifest in August of that year. The county prosecutor's office declined to prosecute and was unable to determine whether the equipment, which included a fryer, gas grill, refrigerator, table and chairs, belonged to the village or to the festival.

Altevogt, Hubner and Rinehart's suit seeks damages from former Mayor Louise Crabtree, former village administrator **Odis Jones**, current council member Jim Triplett and Obetz Community Center administrator Chris Dean. It hasn't been resolved. Without addressing the merits of the case filed by Warner, both Davisson and Browell said they have confidence in the village's ultimate success and that the matter will be vigorously defended by village attorneys. support their vision by making -- and standing behind -- the difficult decisions that are in the village's best interest," Davisson said.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches

Odis Jones

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

State Journal-Register, The (Springfield, IL)
March 21, 2004

Riverboat casino idea never docked in Sherman

SHERMAN was not in the running for the state's 10th riverboat casino license, which was tentatively awarded to the suburban Chicago community of Rosemont last week. But there was a time in the early days of riverboat gambling when the idea of a floating casino on the Sangamon River at the south edge of the community was taken seriously. Well, mostly seriously. In the spring of 1993, the Illinois Gaming Board was looking to award the 10th and final license approved as part of the state's then-new riverboat gaming law. But there was a political catch in that early legislation.

Chicago was excluded, but Mayor Richard Daley wanted a boat. In return for expanding gambling to the Windy City, downstate legislators - including the Springfield delegation - wanted a chance at riverboat licenses for their towns.

Enter Springfield developer Leonard Sapp, with plans for a riverboat casino tied to The Rail Golf Course, and a convention center-resort, at the south edge of Sherman. Former state Sens. Karen Hasara (later Mayor Hasara), and John "Doc" Davidson of Springfield, the late state Sen. Stan Weaver of Urbana, and former state Rep. Mike Curran got onboard, so to speak.

The idea was to float a boat up and down the Sangamon near Riverside Park and Business 55, though as one local historian pointed out at the time, "There are some years when you'd be lucky to get a canoe around the Sangamon."

Ward 8 Ald. Irv Smith, who was on the city council at the time, said he only has vague recollections of Springfield's run at a riverboat. "I do remember there was talk about the Hilton, and that they'd dig a moat around the Hilton," Smith said, tongue-in-cheek.

Sherman Mayor Frank Meredith said he had no strong feelings one way or the other about riverboat gambling on the Sangamon, other than to make sure Sherman received some of the benefits if it happened. He even went so far as to check out potential docking locations on the north - Sherman - side of the river. "I know I wore out a pair of shoes walking through those sites," he said. The city of Chicago, by the way, still doesn't have a casino, either.

BACK IN TIME INC., a specialty floral and gift shop targeted primarily to women, will move to 104 W. Allen St. effective March 29. The new location is near the existing location at 1129 S. Second St.

Owners Bernadette Arvin and Patty Taylor, who have been in business two years, purchased a Victorian-style home at the new address. "It will allow us to expand. We also wanted to own our own location," Arvin said. The pair had leased the existing property.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches

Odis Jones

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Plans are to operate at the current location through Wednesday, close Thursday, Friday and Saturday for the move, and to reopen the following Monday. Hours at the new location remain the same, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday and 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday.

The phone number is 544-6505.

AUTOZONE has begun renovation of the former CVS pharmacy at 2035 S. MacArthur Blvd. CVS Corp., which acquired the site from Revco in 1997, closed the outlet in early January and shifted pharmacy records to a store at 2001 W. Washington St. AutoZone, which has three other Springfield outlets, has not announced an opening date for the new store. Bill and Kris Henton of Rochester have opened a SEATTLE SUTTON'S HEALTHY EATING outlet in Springfield.

The nationwide franchise, which has been available in Chicago for several years, specializes in prepared meals as part of a nutritional and health-related program. The 21 meals a week can be picked up from 2 to 7 p.m. Monday and Thursday at the Springfield outlet, 920 S. Spring St., or delivery is available. Additional information is available at 494-3936 or online at www.sshe.com.

Centralia is going after a larger central Illinois market with plans for a 100,000-square-foot RURAL KING center announced last week. City officials said the Mattoon-based farm and home retailer, which has 27 stores in Illinois, Kentucky, Indiana and Tennessee, has purchased a former Kmart building for the project and expects to open the store in early fall. "This is the beginning of a redevelopment process the city of Centralia is undertaking to expand our trade area," city manager **Odis Jones** said in a statement. The community of 14,000 is about 90 miles south of Springfield.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches

Odis Jones

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

ThisWeek Community Newspapers (Columbus, OH)
December 25, 2003

JONES, WOLERY TO LEAVE THEIR POSTS

Author: CHRIS BOURNEA

The village of Obetz will not only have a new mayor and council member in January, but a new administrator and solicitor as well. Village administrator **Odis Jones** and solicitor Don Wolery announced their resignations at the Dec. 15 Obetz Village Council meeting, the last one of the year. **Jones** and Wolery, in addition to outgoing mayor Louise Crabtree (who lost to Rod Davisson in the Nov. 4 election) and council member Harold Stewart (who lost his seat to Bonnie Holbrook Wiley), will be leaving the village administration at the end of the year.

While addressing council and residents after announcing his resignation, Wolery said he was proud of the accomplishments of the administration in recent years, but noted that the publication called the "Odisville Gazette" has damaged the village's reputation. "Many people find this rag appropriate and funny, but it's not," Wolery said. He said the publishers and distributors of the Gazette "hide behind anonymity. They are worse than the people who used to hide in white sheets. At least they'd show up and face you."

Wolery said he was dismayed that more residents did not speak out against the "Odisville Gazette." "The citizens of this village should have stood up en masse and denounced this rag," he said. Wolery condemned the sexist attacks against Crabtree and racist epithets against **Jones** contained in the publication. "This 'Gazette' slammed women," Wolery said. "It was misogynist, it was racist. It catered to the lowest common denominator. (The publishers and distributors) don't have the courage of their convictions. They hide like cockroaches."

Wolery said Police Chief Rick Miner and officers were also unfairly attacked in the "Gazette" and complimented the professionalism of the department. "Although they've recently been maligned and called clowns, they're anything but," he said. Wolery, who said he has no immediate employment plans outside of his law practice, cited the creation of hundreds of jobs within the village and the opening of the new municipal building in September 2002 as the accomplishments of Crabtree's administration of which he is most proud. "This next administration has its work cut out for it," Wolery said. "This (current) mayor and this administration has put this village on the right course and I hope it continues."

Jones, who said he is leaving to become the city manager of a suburb of St. Louis with a population of 30,000, said Wolery's statements reflect his feelings about the negative influence that the "Odisville Gazette" has had on the village. "I stand by Don's sentiments," he said. "I think it's a shame that in 2003, you have that type of bigotry."

Jones has filed lawsuits against individuals he alleges are involved in printing and distributing the "Odisville Gazette." His attorneys say the suits will go forward, even though **Jones** is leaving Obetz. "As far as I know, it's still going on. I haven't heard otherwise from him," said Steven E.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches**Odis Jones**

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Hillman, who is representing **Jones** in a suit filed Oct. 27 in Franklin County Common Pleas Court against former Obetz council member Steven Borders, former Obetz police sergeant Gary Pulley and K&M Market proprietor Joseph Groom.

Attorney Greg Haught said a separate complaint **Jones** filed with the Ohio Elections Commission will also go forward. The complaint alleges that Borders, Pulley, Groom and Zucchinifest Inc. President Mark Rinehart have formed a political action committee for the purpose of affecting the outcome of elections. Davisson said the departure of **Jones** and Wolery will be a loss to the village. "I'm sorry to lose ... both of them," he said. "There were issues with them and council that I couldn't fully understand. I don't know what the issues were. "My focus is to put quality people in place," Davisson said. "I appreciate their service and wish them the best in whichever endeavors they choose."

Davisson said he has had discussions with council about seeking replacements for **Jones** and Wolery. "We'd be remiss if we weren't looking, and we are," he said. "It needs to be a joint effort to look for the best candidates." Davisson said the search for a new administrator and a new solicitor is being conducted within as well as outside the village. "I expect by Jan. 1 or shortly thereafter we'll have those people in place and be ready to go," he said. Davisson said he is hopeful that with the change of administration at the beginning of the year, the publication of the "Odisville Gazette" will cease. "I've long been an advocate against the 'Gazette,'" he said. "It's been an embarrassing chapter in Obetz's history. Hopefully, it's behind us and we can move forward."

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Odis Jones

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

ThisWeek Community Newspapers (Columbus, OH)
November 2, 2003

JONES SUES ALLEGED DISTRIBUTORS OF 'GAZETTE'

Author: CHRIS BOURNEA

Village of Obetz Administrator **Odis Jones** has filed suit against individuals he alleges are involved in publishing and distributing "The Odisville Gazette," a flier criticizing the village administration and containing racist, sexist and other incendiary rhetoric.

Jones' attorney, Steven E. Hillman, filed suit in Franklin County Common Pleas Court last week, naming former Obetz councilman Steven Borders, former Obetz police sergeant Gary Pulley and K&M Market proprietor Joseph Groom as defendants. The suit accuses the defendants of libel and seeks "an amount in excess of \$25,000" in compensatory and punitive damages as well as attorneys' fees from each of the defendants.

In a separate complaint filed with the Ohio Elections Commission, **Jones** alleges that the defendants have formed a political action committee for the purpose of affecting the outcome of elections and have received contributions and made expenditures for this purpose.

Jones said he decided to file the lawsuits after experiencing harassing phone calls and letters related to "The Odisville Gazette." "All it takes for hate to prevail is for good people to do nothing ... There's a lot of people who have decided (the flier is) hate in its purest form and it needs to be stopped," **Jones** said. "They crossed the line when I started getting calls at my home. They crossed the line when they started picking with my family."

In the libel suit, "we named people that we knew were either distributing or published these various documents, 'The Odisville Gazette,'" Hillman said. "At various times, people have told (**Jones**) who was doing it and where (the fliers) were being distributed from. One time they would say, 'Yes, I did it,' and the next day they would say, 'No, I didn't.' The ones that we put down (in the libel suit) were ones we had reasonable belief that they had done it."

The libel suit also names "John Doe" and "Jane Doe" as defendants in anticipation of naming additional parties to the suit, Hillman said. "People always have suspicions, but I don't sue a suspicion," he said. "We believe there are other people, but it's only a guess as to who they are. If we find out, through (legal) discovery, who they are, then we will add additional names."

Hillman said the purpose of the libel suit is to stop the circulation of "The Odisville Gazette." "The goal is to stop the lies. If there were truths in these things, that's fine, but the goal is to not let go unfettered a hate manual like this," he said.

The suit alleges that Groom allowed "The Odisville Gazette" to be distributed from his establishment, a longstanding Obetz business and community gathering place. Groom denies

**Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches
Odis Jones**

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

being involved in publishing or distributing "The Odisville Gazette" and said he is misidentified in the lawsuit.

"The day ('The Odisville Gazette') comes out, there is one laying at my doorstep. That's all I know about 'The Odisville Gazette.' How he can say I'm tied to it ... He's completely lost touch with reality," Groom said of **Jones**. "He's suing my son, my part-time worker son. He's got the address wrong, the name wrong. If you're going to sue someone, at least get the address right and the name right."

Groom said **Jones** never came to him personally and asked if he were involved in "The Odisville Gazette." "Mr. **Jones** is a man of supposedly importance here in Obetz. Just because the people who come in my store, like 'Mayberry RFD,' and hang around, (the fact that) he's suing me for that is very strange," Groom said. "If he had a problem, you think he would come in face to face and talk to me about it."

Groom said he believes **Jones** named him in the lawsuits in retaliation for a citizen petition Groom helped initiate against the Obetz Junction Center, a construction project that **Jones** helped develop. "We helped organize the petition against his downtown project, and that's why he's (angry) at us. Some people down here are up in arms about it ... because they don't want their town torn up for two straight years. It's a two-year project," Groom said. "Mr. **Jones** seems to think there's a traffic problem down here (in the Groveport Road area). The death trap is Alum Creek traffic."

Groom said people in the community have expressed displeasure with how the lawsuits have been handled. "I'm a just a store owner and an awful lot of people down here like me," he said. "Everybody in this store knows **Odis** is suing me, because I have a big sign up. People are very upset about it." **Jones** said he has spoken with Groom. "The (state) statute says when you allow your place of business to be a distribution hub for false information, you serve as a publisher," **Jones** said.

Greg Haught, **Jones'** attorney in the complaint before the Ohio Elections Commission, said the commission ruled on Oct. 30 that there is probable cause to proceed with **Jones'** complaint. "The Elections Commission found probable cause that the complaint was founded, so we're waiting on a hearing date," Haught said. The complaint alleges, among other things, that the defendants have engaged in disseminating false statements about candidates and violated Ohio Revised Code Section 3517.13(E) by their actions.

Although Groom is named as "Joseph Grooms" (sic) in the libel suit, a "Kevin Groom" is named in the Ohio Elections Commission complaint. "The facts in Mr. **Jones'** complaint speak for themselves, and (the defendants) will be given the chance to respond to any factual errors at the hearing under oath," Haught said. Gary Pulley did not return an Oct. 30 call seeking comment. Two attempts to reach Borders by phone were also unsuccessful.

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Odis Jones

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

ThisWeek Community Newspapers (Columbus, OH)
October 26, 2003

JONES RESPONDS TO CONCERNS ABOUT PLANS

Author: CHRIS BOURNEA

Construction recently began on the new \$4.8-million Obetz Junction Center, a retail and office development in the village's downtown. Village Administrator **Odis Jones** said citizens have been expressing concerns about the Junction Center project based on misconceptions, including that the project will turn Groveport Road into a four-lane highway that will connect state Route 104 to I-270. "This notion that there's going to be a four-lane connector from 104 to 270 through our downtown is ridiculous," **Jones** said. "It's not a four-lane road, it's a two-lane road with traffic moving northbound and southbound."

Jones said the project is a reconstruction of the existing lanes on Groveport Road and will add curbs, gutters and sidewalks to increase safety and manage traffic flow in the area. "This project is designed so it will alleviate traffic congestion that's there," he said. The reconstruction project will also add a roundabout to help trucks turn around and avoid getting stuck under the overpass just before the intersection of Groveport Road and Chillicothe Street, **Jones** added.

The Groveport Road reconstruction project also includes replacing water lines. "The water lines are leaking and have to be replaced," he said. "Part of this project is a looping project to replace those water lines and ensure that those residents have an efficient water system. "The reason we have so many water-main breaks is that the system is old and it needs to be replaced," he said.

Jones said 90 percent of the reconstruction project will occur within existing public rights of way. "We are not taking any residential dwellings as part of this project -- zero," **Jones** said. The project is designed to have the least amount of impact on Groveport Road businesses, he added. "At no time will any business' entrance or exit be shut down. We do not anticipate any businesses being closed during construction," **Jones** said.

Jones noted that eight public meetings were held to gather citizen input on the Junction Center plans, in addition to the regular monthly Planning and Zoning Commission meetings, which are open to the public. "Over 300 citizens participated on this planning process since 2002. This has been a very extensive and involved process," he said.

Jones said the Junction Center is designed to preserve the history of the village as a railroad junction and is endorsed by the Obetz Historical Society. "We are proud to support the Obetz Junction Center Project," Pete Carman, president of the Obetz Historical Society, said in a statement. "This project combines the charm of the past with the possibilities of the future. It proves that our community can move forward without sacrificing our rich historical past." The Junction Center is scheduled for completion in November 2005.

Internet – Newspaper Archives Searches

Odis Jones

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Columbus Dispatch, The (OH)
September 19, 2003

ZUCCHINIFEST ORGANIZERS SUE OBETZ OVER THEFT ACCUSATION
Village officials deny claim they conspired to harass planners of annual festival

Author: Steve Stephens

Obetz officials squashed the rights of Zucchini-fest organizers, lawsuits filed this week in U.S. District Court claim. Mark Rinehart, president of Zucchini-fest Inc., and festival volunteers Patricia Altevogt and Donna Hubner are seeking unspecified damages from Mayor Louise Crabtree, Village Administrator **Odis Jones** and other village officials.

Altevogt also is a village councilwoman and outspoken critic of the Obetz administration. Hubner is clerk-treasurer for Obetz. The suits charge that the defendants conspired to harass and defame the Zucchini-festers. Benson Wolman, the plaintiffs' attorney, said the trouble began when village officials filed a theft complaint against the festival workers, claiming that \$10,000 worth of village equipment was stolen.

The county prosecutor's office couldn't determine whether the property in question -- including a fryer, gas grill, refrigerator, tables and chairs -- belonged to the village or the festival. But a prosecutor noted that the property was all in storage anyway. The county declined to prosecute. The theft complaint "clearly was in bad faith," Wolman said.

The plaintiffs were singled out because of their criticism of the village administration, he said. Crabtree said she could not comment on the lawsuit. But Village Solicitor Don Wolery said the defendants "are going to contest this vigorously." "These charges are baseless," Wolery said. He said that there was nothing improper about the investigation of the Zucchini-fest workers. "Allegations were made, and the village requested that they be investigated by a neutral law-enforcement agency, the (Franklin County) sheriff's office," Wolery said. "That request is just part of their job as officials of the village."

Wolman said the lawsuit could have been avoided if the village officials had issued an apology and officially requested that the charges be dropped. "An apology was mentioned," Wolery said. "But if the village officials involved took the appropriate actions, which they did, they felt there was nothing to apologize for."

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Odis Jones

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

ThisWeek Community Newspapers (Columbus, OH)
November 10, 2002

JONES RECEIVES REGIONAL HONOR

Author: CHRIS BOURNEA

Odis Jones, director of economic development and administrator for the village of Obetz, has been named the 2002 Public Sector Economic Developer of the Year by the Mid-Ohio Development Exchange. **Jones** accepted the award at MODE's seventh annual meeting, held recently at the Hilton Columbus. "I was humbled. Any time you are recognized by your colleagues, that's a humbling experience," he said. "I thank those folks for recognizing not only **Odis**, but Obetz."

A native of Detroit, **Jones** graduated from Central Michigan University and played for the Tampa Bay Buccaneers. Prior to joining the village of Obetz, **Jones** served as special projects director for the city of Battle Creek, Mich. He and his wife, Susan, and 9-year-old daughter, Markita, live in Pickerington.

Jones said being recognized by MODE, which is comprised of organizations which work together to promote development throughout central Ohio, is a major honor. "Everybody that is somebody here in central Ohio is part of this group -- folks who understand and who truly do holistic development," he said.

The winner of the Private Sector Economic Developer of the Year was the Pizzuti Cos., a firm which the village of Obetz has worked with to develop the Optical Village complex. **Jones** said the village just closed a deal to bring a company called Red Envelope to Optical Village; it which will employ 450 people.

In the three years that **Jones** has been with the village of Obetz, the area has undergone major growth and development. "The biggest growth is the maturity of the community," **Jones** said. "It's becoming a community more and more that's demanding higher standards in the way we do business."

The village's new municipal office complex at 4175 Alum Creek Drive, which celebrated its grand opening on Sept. 29, is a major aspect of helping the village present a professional, progressive image, **Jones** said. Situated in Lancaster Park next to the Columbus Crew practice facility, the office complex is surrounded by trees, walking paths and a pond. "Really, it's not a building, it's a whole development project in itself," he said. "You see so many children out here playing. You see seniors walking in the park. You get an opportunity to talk to them and it reminds us that we're on the right track."

Residents have given a lot of positive feedback about the new building, **Jones** said. "I really appreciate the comments of the residents," he said. "The beauty of being in this building is to see how receptive the community is. It's a good jewel for the community and it sets the stage for

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Odis Jones

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

what kind of development we want to attract here." The new zoning code ordinance, which Obetz Village Council adopted on Oct. 21, will help the village attract more residential and retail developments to the area, **Jones** said. "Now that the code has been adopted by council and the planning and zoning committee, that gives the private sector confidence to invest in the community," he said.

Jones said the zoning code ordinance will assist the village in implementing its \$13-million Triangle Area Land Use Plan, which is comprised of 14 projects ranging from downtown development to repaving and adding streetlights to historic Obetz streets. "We've been very successful as far as industrial development," he said. "We want to be a place where people can live, play and eat. Our Triangle Land Use Plan capitalizes that."

Jones said long-term development goals include increasing the population density of the village by attracting more home construction. "Coming from the city of Battle Creek, where you have a population of 60,000 and coming to Obetz where you don't have that population density, the opportunity (for growth and development) is greater," he said. A deal the village just completed to bring a new industrial complex to Toy Road will help attract more high-end housing to the area, **Jones** said. "This will finally break the threshold and get us in the level of \$180,000 to \$200,000 homes," he said.

Jones said he is also focusing on addressing issues that affect senior citizens, who comprise more than 20 percent of the village population. Bringing more doctors' offices, pharmacies and assisted-living facilities as well as creating more areas for walking, biking and other recreational activities is crucial to the future of the village, he said. "We have a strong local economy and the industry, but to sustain us, we've got to do the things to raise the quality of life," he said

Citizen involvement is key to continued growth, **Jones** said. "A great example is the steering committee with the Triangle Land Use Plan and having citizens lead that process," he noted. The creation of a charter commission to draft a local-governance document, which voters approved on Nov. 5, will move the village toward its goal becoming a city, **Jones** said. "Long-term, we've got a bright future ahead of us in terms of development."

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Odis Jones

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Columbus Dispatch, The (OH)
October 16, 2001

OBETZ CALLS CENTER HARBINGER OF GROWTH

Author: Ray Crumbley

Obetz officials expect a village government center that is opening this summer will anchor a major retail corridor along Alum Creek Drive north of the I-270 interchange. The village offices, including the police department, and a street-department maintenance building will be constructed at a cost of \$4.5 million.

The government long ago ran out of space in the village hall at 1611 Chillicothe St., which was built in 1923 as a school and is surrounded by homes. The village population grew from 3,095 in 1980 to just under 4,000 in the 2000 census. Obetz officials think it's now even closer to the 5,000 mark that will make it Franklin County's next city.

Incorporated in 1928 as a country town of 500 people, Obetz has no traditional downtown business center and no major stores. Motels, fast-food restaurants and five industrial parks now line Alum Creek Drive, a main route to Rickenbacker Air Industrial Park. "This is the first step in developing a retail corridor along the heavily traveled main entry into the village," said **Odis Jones**, economic- development director. "New businesses like Continental Tire and the Wal-Mart Optical Labs are bringing hundreds of good jobs to the community. We need conveniently located stores and professional offices to serve the people they're bringing in."

The village staff and the police department are squeezed into a building with 2,000 square feet next to the village recreation and senior- citizen center. It was built in the 1970s and is three times larger than the village hall. "Right now we don't even have a place to hold a staff meeting," said Mayor Louise Crabtree. "The police don't have a locker room or a place to hold suspects. The Mayor's Court is in council chambers. Our police detective has to interrupt court to get into his office."

The 26,650-square-foot Obetz Government Center will be on the eastern edge of the 80-acre Memorial Park and will be surrounded by 20 acres of green space with two ponds. "This is the first improvement to the park since the Columbus Crew practice facility opened in 1997," **Jones** said. "Someday the park will link east and west Obetz with walking and biking trails. We'll have softball fields for the first time and other new recreation opportunities."

A 9,400-square-foot Street Department Maintenance Center will be built at the western edge of the park and will include offices, a service bay and salt sheds. The buildings will be owned by Big Walnut Community Improvement Corp. -- formed in 1996 to acquire land for industrial parks and other projects -- and leased to the village for about \$13,000 a month. Fifth Third bank will finance the project, and the rent will cover the cost of paying off the debt, **Jones** said.

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Odis Jones

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

The advantage of the arrangement is that the village's ability to issue bonds for other projects is not affected. The Big Walnut corporation works in a similar way to get land for private companies' industrial parks -- usually at lower interest rates than on the open market. Lusk & Harkin Architects and Planners designed the red-brick center, and Daimler Group will manage the construction.

Creative Land Concepts is to develop a 26-acre site between Maureen Boulevard and Lindsay Road south of the center with stores and apartments. "There's absolutely no retail there now," said Ray Massa, owner of the Columbus company. "We'd like to see a large grocery store, bank, professional offices, dry cleaner, video store and some sit- down restaurants. A couple of hospitals have expressed interest in doctor's offices -- industrial physical-therapy services because of the nearby distribution and warehouse buildings -- and possibly an urgent- care center."

Alum Creek Drive, Williams Road to the north and Groveport Road to the south will be widened and improved, **Jones** said. Landscaping and lanes will be improved at the I-270 exit ramps from Alum Creek Drive. A ground-breaking ceremony for the government center is scheduled for 10 a.m. Wednesday at 4153 Alum Creek Dr. near the Columbus Crew practice facility.

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Odis Jones

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Daily Reporter, The (Columbus, OH)

February 4, 2000

New Obetz development director ready to face challenges

Author: TARA STUBBS-FIGURSKI

On the job only two weeks, **Odis Jones** says he is ready to face the challenges as the village of Obetz's new development director. For his first order of business, **Jones** said he wants to familiarize himself with his new territory. "I will probably get to know the lay of the land so to speak," **Jones** said. "I know one of my direct moves is to try to look at how we can develop in such a fashion to improve the quality of life for residents, while at the same time attract different businesses to the community."

Jones said he has determined Obetz may be missing amenities that residents in a small town need. "One area I'm interested in trying to develop is a bank, a grocery store, the sort of amenities we need that we don't have right now. That's the direction we're really hitting right now," he said. "I want to focus on development that will improve the quality of life in Obetz. The residents here want to keep this small town feeling, however, they deserve and want small amenities like having a bank, a grocery store or a sit-down restaurant."

Jones said he will work with Obetz's City Council and the mayor to define what economic development means to Obetz. "We will develop long- and short-term plans," he said. Another focus will be developing high tech jobs within the community, **Jones** said. "We need to be able to recruit companies to come here and explore our Creekside and other industrial parks, in terms of wanting to make this their home."

Before accepting the position as development director for Obetz, **Jones** was the special projects director for the city of Battlecreek, Mich. "I developed recruitment and retention programs for the city, recruited business to the city and developed relationships within the community with the Kellogg Co. and other corporations to maintain stability in the community," **Jones** said.

"Through dealing with those sorts of experiences I can certainly relate to what I'm doing now. I was primarily doing economic development."

Jones has not yet determined where a commercial strip center, bank or sit-down restaurant would work best in the community. "We have several sites that I think would be viable sites for those sorts of things. We're in the process of sorting through those options and trying to see how they fit," he said.

Jones said Obetz City Council is open to total development of the community. "We have a very good vision in terms of where we want to go three, five years from now. We're just in the process of getting ourselves there." The biggest challenge **Jones** said he believes he will encounter is managing growth. "We face the same challenge any place in America faces: building capacity from within and managing growth," he said. "How do you get where you want to be in three years? How do you manage growth while moving in that direction?"

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Odis Jones

(Articles are in reverse chronological order)

Jones said he accepted the position as development director because it was a unique opportunity to be in the development process from the start of the process and see it all of the way through. "Anytime you have the opportunity it is always good to experience that. I also felt that the people here are good people. I had a good feeling about the village manager and the council. We talked and saw eye to eye. It seemed to be a good match," **Jones** said.

Jones said he believes development is never ending. "You never put an end to development. Certainly the city of Columbus has been here forever and they continue to strive towards better development. Obetz will continue to do the same." While **Jones** and Obetz will set goals about where the community should be in three to four years, it is important to continue the process of improving, he said. "If you do the same thing today, tomorrow, you will have the same results. Certainly we're interested in constantly improving our way of life."

While working to develop the new, **Jones** said he will keep the old in mind. In his two weeks as development director he has met or spoken with several business owners, and plans to meet with more. "I think it is important that businesses here not only feel as though they have a stake, but feel as though this place is chosen for them. I believe businesses here want a brighter future in Obetz. They have something invested here," **Jones** said.

Research Compiled by: Cara Slade
 Colin Baenziger & Associates