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ALERT

FEATURED

Interim city manager likely to be confirmed Tuesday

By Mack Burke | Transcript News Editor 6 hrs ago



Cody Giles / The Transcript

City Manager Steve Lewis (center) takes notes during the July 24 city council meeting at city hall. An interim city manager is expected to be approved Tuesday. Lewis' last day as city manager will be Sept. 28.



The Norman City Council interviewed an interim city manager candidate Tuesday that will likely be confirmed when the council meets next week.

"We're going to make a recommendation on the lady that we interviewed," Mayor Lynne Miller said following Tuesday's special executive session. "We can't make a final decision until we can have it on the agenda on Sept. 25. But our plan right now is to move her name forward with a contract for us to vote on Tuesday night."

Miller said she cannot yet reveal the name of the candidate under consideration to take over for city manager Steve Lewis' whose final day is Sept. 28. However, Miller did share some details about the yet unnamed "experienced former city manager."

"This is an interim person from the outside," she said. "This is somebody who is only interested in doing interim. She is retired from city management and is willing to do interim jobs but doesn't want a full-time job."

"This is not somebody we hired to be city manager. This is somebody we hired in the interim to help us out until we get a new city manager and she can help us out with that."

Miller said the city is currently understaffed, and, with so many major projects and priorities in play, it's crucial that the city have someone who can fill the gap and help with the long-term transition to the next city manager.

She said Oklahoma Municipal Management Services played a major role in the process.

"The people on the staff are former city managers," she said. "They also do training and we had one of their members do some training with us [Tuesday night] on the roles and responsibilities of council members, open meetings, open records and that kind of thing."

The process to find Lewis' permanent replacement will likely take a while, Miller said.

"We haven't even gotten started yet," she said. "We will, in the next few weeks, have some council discussions about how we want to move forward."

While securing an interim city manager may allow the council to breathe a little easier, at least one council member -- Robert Castleberry -- believes the way Lewis' departure was handled could have a chilling effect on Norman's appeal to potential city manager candidates.

In June, The Transcript reported the city council had grown impatient with Lewis over staffing decisions and systemic issues. After serving as Norman city manager for over 11 years, Lewis officially submitted his 30-day notice on Aug. 29 after coming to an agreement with the city council.

Lewis previously served as the city manager for Joplin, Missouri for 10 years. Prior to coming to Norman, he served as a city administrator in Lee's Summit, Missouri.

Lewis announced last month that he has accepted a job with the city of Lockhart, Texas.

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