

**STAFF SUMMARY
CITY OF MINNETONKA
CITY COUNCIL SPECIAL STUDY SESSION
MONDAY, JANUARY 26, 2004
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Council Present: Jan Callison, Bob Ellingson, Terry Schneider, Al Thomas, Tony Wagner, Brad Wiersum and Mayor Karen Anderson

Staff: GERALYN BARONE, JOHN GUNYOU and KATHY MAGREW

Anderson called the special study session to order at 6:17 p.m.

1. Boards and Commissions Interviews.

Mayor Anderson welcomed the boards and commissions applicants and explained the process for the interviews. All candidates listed the planning commission as their first and only choice.

The first candidate to be interviewed was Michele Periolat. Periolat described her background and attributes. She was a commercial real estate broker in the 1980's. She then entered the field of corporate communications and soft-skills training. She partnered with a friend for six years and then went on her own. The training she provides is directed at the executive level and touches on topics such as conflict management and customer service. She still also does some real estate work. Periolat said she understands business, budgets and emotions. She has lived in Minnetonka since she was 12, and appreciates the benefits and pains of growth.

Thomas asked Periolat how she would respond to concerns regarding the changes to the character of neighborhoods. Periolat said she has owned a home in Minnetonka for 20 years, and understands the desire to keep things the same, but also understands the reasons for change.

Thomas asked her which Minnetonka developments were not her favorite. Pierolat said she did not like the way development has occurred along Highway 7, particularly in the area of Sidney's. She noted the difficulty selling that property when Shakey's closed because of the difficult access.

In response to Anderson's question, Pierolat said she could be available on Thursday nights.

Callison asked Periolat what she would use to guide her decisions. Pierolat said she is grounded in real estate law. She understands that property owners have the

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right to use their property. She also understands the need to balance those rights with the impact on others. She would look at the sensibility of the proposal. She has watched the planning commission struggle with lakeshore properties, and finds the process interesting to watch. Periolat said she knows there is a need to improve properties within reason, and to help neighbors accept those changes.

In response to Callison's question, Periolat said she would have enough time to devote to the planning commission. She carefully considered the time commitment prior to applying.

Schneider noted that Pierolat had lived in Minnetonka through a period where there had been a lot of change, and asked for her thoughts. Pierolat said that change is the heart of the beast. Personally, she would rather things didn't change, but she understands that the city needs growth and progress.

The second candidate was John Powers. Powers and his family moved to Minnetonka in 1995. He is a resource teacher for Groveland Elementary and is also a co-coach for basketball and soccer. Powers grew up in Minneapolis, but likes Minnetonka. He said that a planning staff person suggested that he apply for the planning commission. A former councilmember suggested that he speak on the Sanctuary project, which is close to his home. He noted that an interaction with Mayor Anderson at the grocery store gave him the confidence to want to do more.

When the Sanctuary project came up, Powers said he offered to help those neighbors not represented by an organized group. He attended the meetings and shared the information with the neighbors. Powers said his motive for wanting to join the planning commission was that he recognized the need to be a good citizen and to be involved in the community. Powers said he has the following attributes: He is a good listener, can think and act decisively and responsibly, and has a strong sense of fairness. He has a sense of duty, and a sense of safety. He is trustworthy, fair, and respectful, and has an overriding sense of justice.

Callison asked for Powers' observations about the Sanctuary process. Powers said he initially thought that the project was a foregone conclusion. When he heard Schneider make suggestions for the project, he realized that the process was amazing. He said that the city's time commitment to the process was impressive. He noted that the developer had once said that if he could not build 30 units, he would not do the project. The council disregarded that statement and kept listening, and the project ended up better.

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Callison asked Powers how he would respond to a roomful of angry people at a planning commission meeting. Powers said he would need to be grounded in the facts and know the boundaries. He said everything visible in Minnetonka was non-existent at one time, and change could not be avoided. Change always creates tension between those who want change, and those who don't.

Wiersum was impressed with Powers' sense of fairness and listening skills. He said those characteristics would be valuable in situations where the decisions would affect people's lives.

David Rey was the third applicant. Rey moved to Minnetonka last summer. He is from St. Cloud, and graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Madison with a Bachelor of Science in civil and environmental engineering. He likes his neighborhood and is excited to be part of the community. He is employed by an architectural firm that works primarily on school projects. He started as a draft person, and is now a project manager. He has made numerous presentations to planning commissions and city councils. Rey said he understands zoning, engineering codes, and the need to work with watershed districts. He is skilled in looking at plans objectively.

In response to Thomas' question, Rey said he was not personally involved in the Minnetonka High School dome project, although his firm worked on the project. Thomas noted that the neighbors opposed the project due to the mass and the location. Thomas asked Rey how he would communicate with residents to help them visualize a similar type of project. Rey said he would look for other examples in the metropolitan area.

Callison asked Rey to describe the characteristics of a good planning commission. Rey replied that fairness was the most important characteristic. He said other characteristics include the ability to determine how the project would affect the other properties, and how the project would fit with the greater scheme of the city.

Wagner, noting Rey's technical background, asked Rey how he would respond to a project where he thought some tweaking would improve it. Rey said he would let his fellow commissioners know his ideas and see how they felt. He said that good communication between commissioners was important.

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The final applicant was Ken Steeno. Steeno was originally from the Green Bay area. He attended the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh, and holds a degree in political science, history and French. He worked for Social Security, and then became a claims adjuster and supervisor. He has been involved in Toastmasters for 28 years. He has some experience with the planning commission from his involvement in the Glen Lake project task force. He also worked with the neighborhood on the Xcel Energy substation issue. Steeno said that he opposed the Glen Lake Shores project 20 years ago, but has come to like the people who live there and is now glad that the project was built.

Callison asked Steeno how he would make his decisions on a planning project. Steeno said that he would use a sense of fairness, and make sure that the rights of others were not infringed upon. He would look at the impact of the project, and do his best to be fair to all.

2. Adjournment.

The special study session adjourned at 6:58 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Telega
Administrative Assistant