

**Birmingham City Commission Minutes**  
**February 8, 2023**  
**Department of Public Service Building, 851 S. Eton St**  
**4:30 p.m.**  
**Vimeo Link: <https://vimeo.com/797132791>**

**I. CALL TO ORDER AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Therese Longe, Mayor, opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance.

**II. ROLL CALL**

City Clerk Bingham called the roll.

Present: Mayor Longe  
Mayor Pro Tem McLain  
Commissioner Baller  
Commissioner Boutros  
Commissioner Haig  
Commissioner Host  
Commissioner Schafer

Absent: None

Staff: City Manager Markus; City Clerk Bingham, Assistant City Manager Ecker, Human Resources Manager Lambert, City Attorney Kucharek

**III. PUBLIC COMMENT**

**IV. DISCUSSION ITEMS**

Mayor Longe provided introductory comments. She noted that Mr. Lahanas accepted a position in Northville, Michigan and that Mr. Tungate reconsidered his interest in the position.

A. Interview Candidate Jana Ecker

In reply to Commissioner questions, ACM Ecker explained:

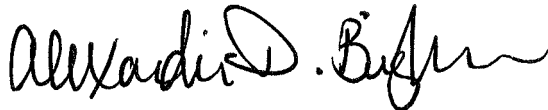
- Her general career experience has been in urban planning and working as an attorney. Since becoming Assistant City Manager, she has attended at least one meeting of every City board and commission, and spent more time engaging with the City's various departments in order to learn more;
- Her priorities in the first six to 12 months would be:
  - Establishing a senior leadership team in order to promote institutional memory, collaboration, and training;
  - Meeting with each Commissioner one-on-one to open a direct line of communication;
  - Meeting with different neighborhood groups;
  - Working with MDOT to improve safety on Woodward, including the upcoming improvements to the intersection of Woodward, Brown, and Forest;
  - Incorporating multi-modal impacts into more of the City's decisions and providing the Multi-Modal Transportation Board with a tool to conduct that analysis;
  - Developing a plan for Birmingham's seniors and for NEXT;

- Developing a sustainability plan, purchasing the City's first electric vehicle, and installing electric vehicle charging stations;
  - A succession plan for the Finance Department; and,
  - An RFP for a digital budgeting platform to increase transparency;
- A City Manager within a council-manager municipal government format is expected to hire and manage Staff, to implement policy as directed by the City Commission, and to represent the City's interests in working with outside groups;
- Some challenges the next City Manager could encounter include: budgetary constraints, handling the impacts of severe weather, and differing opinions in the community about Birmingham's rate of growth and development;
- She would ensure that department heads are meeting their City-wide goals and objectives by:
  - Continuing weekly Staff meetings;
  - Having an open-door policy;
  - Encouraging collaboration among department heads;
  - Holding meetings that focus on projects that would benefit from interdepartmental and inter-board perspectives; and,
  - Having monthly one-on-one meetings with department heads to ensure that progress is being made towards the yearly goals;
- When she implemented a new contract tracking system so that all departments were following the same process, some Staff initially found it confusing and did not understand the need for a new process. She developed checklists with the City Attorney for Staff to make sure the processes were followed, and communicated with Staff to explain the necessity of the change;
- She has extensive experience in preparing budgets, requests for proposals, and service contracts from both her years in Planning and her years as an attorney;
- The Museum helps people create and maintain their connections with Birmingham, helps strengthen the social fabric of the community, and helps members of the public see how people in the past helped shape Birmingham;
- The Library also helps strengthen the social fabric of the community by providing people with a place to congregate and learn;
- A strength of hers is finding a way to organize a complex situation;
- For weaknesses, she sometimes finds it challenging to maintain a work-life balance, and sometimes finds that some people can be frustrated with the persistence she brings to accomplishing important tasks;
- In order to communicate effectively about potentially difficult municipal events, she would begin by demonstrating empathy and compassion for the challenges people may be experiencing. She would then listen to those impacted, inform them about the available resources and options, and then would provide advocacy and services for dealing with those issues. She would communicate both one-on-one and to the community as a whole using the City's various means of communication to do so;
- Her philosophies and approaches to the City Manager position would include openness, optimism, encouragement of collaboration, inclusivity, supportiveness, being solution-oriented, being enthusiastic about working with others, listening, and playing to people's strengths;
- Her philosophies and approaches in terms of project management would include looking at the overall picture, breaking it down into manageable steps, coming up with a plan, engaging stakeholders;
- She is skilled at organizing people, delegating tasks, organizing priorities and organizing how her time is spent;
- She has extensive knowledge of: the community, municipal government, the City's Staff, Birmingham's standards, and how to implement them;
- She has strong relationships within the community;

- Working in municipal government during the Covid-19 pandemic emphasized the importance of being open, creative, flexible, and willing to try different approaches to meet residents' needs. It also emphasized the importance of remembering that people may be facing challenges in their personal lives, and paying attention to the human and social aspects should remain a priority;
- She learned that trialing certain solutions for a short period of time is the best ways to see if the solution would work;
- She has an immense passion for public service and intends to spend the rest of her career in the field. She has high ethical standards and high integrity standards both for herself and for her Staff;
- She would offer an excellent transition from CM Markus because she worked extensively with him and because she understands the City's relationships, culture, people and issues;
- Even though she sometimes struggles with work-life balance, she is always able to accomplish the tasks in her work life that she sets out to accomplish;
- She has many years before she wishes to retire and would be happy to spend the rest of her career in Birmingham; and,
- Working in Birmingham has been fulfilling and a pleasure despite the challenges, because she enjoys the challenges public service brings.

**XI. ADJOURN**

Mayor Longe adjourned the meeting at 5:24 p.m.



Alexandria Bingham, City Clerk



Laura Eichenhorn, City Transcriptionist