

**Birmingham City Commission  
Special Meeting Minutes - Workshop  
Monday, May 8, 2023  
6:45 p.m.**

**Vimeo Link: <https://vimeo.com/822337549>**

**This will be considered a workshop session of the City Commission. No formal actions will be taken. The purpose of this workshop is to participate in a discussion of the Process for Selecting a Mayor and Mayor Pro Tem.**

**I. Call to Order**

Therese Longe, Mayor

**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, City Attorney Kucharek

**III. Presentation & Discussion**

Mayor Longe introduced the topic.

Commission discussion was as follows:

- Commissioner Boutros served two consecutive terms as Mayor during the Covid-19 pandemic, which allowed for continuity;
- Mayor Longe served as Mayor Pro Tem during Commissioner Boutros' mayorship, and is now serving a second consecutive term as Mayor;
- It may be helpful for Mayoral terms to be two years, since there is a significant learning curve;
- It would be appropriate to have a workshop before the first meeting in November to determine how the Commission wants to handle Mayoral terms;
- The Commission deliberation regarding this topic would take place in public meetings;
- It may not be appropriate to expect that every Commissioner would serve as Mayor at some point;
- Mayoral qualifications should include being hardworking, having ample time to devote to the position, having deep and broad knowledge of City government gained through years of experience, having the confidence of

fellow Commissioners, City administration, and other City boards, being able to run a meeting efficiently without fear or favor, and should be willing and able to serve;

- In certain circumstances it might be permissible for a Mayor to serve longer than two consecutive years;
- Emphasizing succession planning as part of the Mayoral terms would be appropriate;
- A Mayoral candidate should be prepared for, and committed to, the position;
- One former Mayor expressed in a personal conversation to Mayor Longe that allowing Commissioner Boutros to serve two consecutive years during the Covid-19 pandemic benefitted the City. Another former Mayor expressed to Mayor Longe in a personal conversation that they only served as Mayor because it was both customary and an honor, and that they felt in retrospect that they should not have served and that merit-based service was more appropriate;
- No other positions in the City are filled solely based on seniority;
- A Mayoral term should not be limited to a certain number of years, and rather should be based on desire, merit, and context as opposed to seniority;
- Mayors who serve more than one year in a row are able to better build and facilitate relationships, create more collaborations within the community and between communities, and learn more skills to benefit the community;
- Birmingham Mayors attend the monthly South Oakland Council of Mayors dinner, and many other municipalities' Mayors have commented that they did not interact much with the Birmingham Mayors in the past since they changed annually;
- Birmingham is a resource-rich community and could have more impact in southeast Michigan with a different Mayoral structure;
- Being a Mayor is an incredible amount of work;
- The Mayor Pro Tem role should be treated as an opportunity to train for the Mayoral position. The Mayor should keep the Mayor Pro Tem informed of the Mayoral processes and work, the Mayor Pro Tem should attend trainings and meetings relevant to the position, and the Mayor Pro Tem should solicit feedback, insight, and concerns from the community with the intent of relaying it to the Commission and Staff;
- A Mayor Pro Tem should not necessarily always become the next Mayor, as a Mayor Pro Tem or other parties may determine the Mayor Pro Tem does not have the temperament, patience, or other qualifications to serve as Mayor;
- A Mayor represents the City at events, ceremonies, and with visitors, determines how best to represent the City, aims to benefit the City's interests in a variety of contexts, leverages contacts for the benefit of the City, officiates weddings, writes and gives speeches, meets members of the community, spends a significant amount of time weekly reviewing the Commission agenda in order to know how to conduct the meeting, has at least one conversation per Commission agenda with either the City Manager or the City Attorney to clarify information, has regular conversations with the City Manager to discuss directions, priority, and approaches, provides civic education to members of the public, and regularly receives comments from members of the public and has to be mindful to engage according to the rules and norms that govern a City official;
- The Mayoral role requires approximately five to six hours during Commission meeting weeks and two to three hours during non-meeting weeks;
- The council-manager form of government is similar to an organization with a CEO and a Board. The City Manager is akin to the CEO, the Commission is akin to the Board, and the Mayor is akin to the Board Chair;
- The recording of this workshop should be made available to Birmingham schools as a civics lesson; and,
- The person serving as Mayor should strive to do so without self-interest, to the best of their ability, and to do so fairly.

The Mayor suggested that during the regular meeting a Commissioner propose that Staff draft changes to the Rules of Procedure to incorporate the workshop idea, which could be returned to the Commission for later review.

Commissioner Boutros said the Commission was undertaking these efforts to enhance the present system.

Commissioner Baller said the workshops are very beneficial and that there should be a December workshop on a

substantive topic.

Commissioner Schafer recommended that mentorship of the Mayor Pro Tem by the Mayor be one of the priorities of the role.

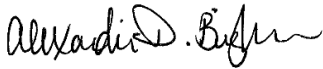
**IV. Public Comment**

David Bloom recommended that the Commission maintain its previous method of appointing the Mayor Pro Tem and Mayor while increasing transparency, that the Commissioners not discuss the topic individually before the November workshop, and that the Mayor Pro Tem attend more meetings with the Mayor to promote continuity.

Mr. Bloom also recommended the Commission discuss, at a future point, how public comment should be conducted for Commission items such as the City Manager report.

**V. Adjourn**

Mayor Longe adjourned the meeting at 7:25 p.m.



Alexandria Bingham, City Clerk



Laura Eichenhorn, City Transcriptionist