

**Special
City Council
Meeting Minutes
June 6, 2002**

A meeting of the Special Meeting of the Fayetteville City Council was held on June 6, 2002 at 7:00 p.m. in Room 219 of the City Administration Building located at 113 West Mountain Street, Fayetteville, Arkansas.

A meeting to select a Ward 3 Alderman to replace Trent Trumbo.

PRESENT: Alderman Santos, Jordan, Reynolds, Thiel, Young, Marr, Davis, Mayor Coody, City Attorney Kit Williams, City Clerk Heather Woodruff, Staff, Press, and Audience

Mayor Coody called the meeting to order.

Mayor Coody introduced the applicants:

**Tom Bechard
Betty Martin
Robert Rhoads
Jana Britton
Ken Myers
Chet Caldwell**

Mayor Coody: We are going to draw numbers, you will pick a number 1 – 6, you will sit in order and that is how you will answer the questions. You will be asked to come to the podium to answer each question. We will start with Alderman Santos asking the first question, the first question will be answered by applicant number 1, followed by applicant number two until all applicants have had a chance to respond. Alderman Brenda Thiel will then ask her question which will be answered first by applicant number two until all applicants have had a chance to respond. There will be seven questions and a final opportunity to make a statement so everyone will go first at least once and applicant's number one and two will go first twice. Each answer by an applicant is limited to not more than two minutes. City Clerk Heather Woodruff will operate a device in which an amber light will go on when you have 30 seconds remaining and a red light will be activated when your time is up. You may finish your sentence when the red light goes on but you must stop at the end of your sentence. The Mayor may also hold up a stop sign if you fail to notice the red light. Following all of the applicants final statements the City Council may discuss the applicants, but further questioning is not anticipated. The City Council may then vote to select the new Alderman for Ward 3.

The applicants began answering the questions in the following order:

**Jana Britton
Betty Martin
Robert Rhoads
Chet Caldwell
Ken Meyers
Tom Bechard**

The applicants gave their closing statements.

Mayor Coody: I would like to say this has been a good experience for all of us; I am going to speak for the City Council. I would have to say in my experience we have not seen such a high quality cast of candidates. Every one of you would be excellent up here. You are well reasoned, thoughtful, your ideas are clear and your speech is succinct. We appreciate all of your involvement and I hope you won't mind, the five of you that don't get up here, if we call on your expertise in the future. We would ask you to stay involved in the local government here. There will be other elections coming up this November and other elections every two years following that, plus other opportunities for involvement. I think you have shown yourselves to be such good quality candidates. We would welcome working with each and every one of you and every one of you would bring something really wonderful to the table. I wish we could appoint all of you. Thank you for applying for this position.

We have two options, we can discuss the applicants in public or someone can make a motion if they so desire to go into executive session, this would take a second and a majority vote of four to approve going into executive session or we could discuss them here in public. What is the wish of the Council?

Alderman Reynolds moved to go into executive session. Alderman Young seconded. Upon roll call the motion to go into executive session failed 3-4. Alderman Reynolds, Young and Davis voting yes. Alderman Santos, Jordan, Thiel and Marr voting no.

Alderman Santos: We are all really feeling like we are in a tight spot here. This is one of the hardest decisions we are going to have to make. We are replacing Trent Trumbo and I have seen examples of his intelligence, wit and compassion. I wish you could all serve a month each. This is really hard for me.

I have worked with Jana Britton through the years when I worked on the Planning staff, through her campaigns and I read an endorsement for her that she has collected votes in Ward 3 before that makes me lean towards her. All of you have been so impressive; I sure want to see more of all of you. Just in the hour and a half that we have spent here tonight I feel like I have gotten to know you all a lot better which makes it even more difficult to make a decision.

Alderman Reynolds: We have six good candidates. I think they are all great and I know them well. Trent Trumbo was a well loved fellow and I know that he had a lot of love for his fellow Alderman Bob Davis, he thought a lot of him and I said after his passing that I would support

Bob Davis on who he recommended for this job to be his running mate. I hope that everyone else here tonight if you are not selected, I hope in the fall you will get involved and we will see you in the spring. Thanks to all of you.

Mayor Coody: When we start voting do we start with Mr. Santos?

Heather Woodruff: He would be the first in the roll call.

Alderman Thiel: I certainly agree that all the people here are wonderful and they certainly should take the opportunity to run in the fall if they are interested in this position. I think there are two things that are really critical. One fact is that being on the City Council takes an incredible amount of time, I had no idea. I know some of the others that are newly elected had no idea. I think Mayor Coody has had a lot of new ideas, good ideas and we have been doing a lot on the Council, it takes a lot of time. I am concerned that whoever we consider has the time. That is really in my opinion the number one thing. One of the greatest assets that Alderman Trumbo gave to this Council was his financial expertise and we need that. That is one area that whoever is chosen here is going to deal with very quickly. I think it is important that we find someone that has very good financial expertise. I think we need someone that loves Fayetteville and is willing to work with others in the community as well as the Alderman. I think all of you answered a lot of things very much alike in that respect. It will be hard to pick one person above another in regard to that.

I probably know Jana better than anyone that has applied and she has the time. I guess I have to look toward a couple of the other candidates for their financial expertise. Some of the statements that Mr. Rhoads said, he has the financial back ground that I think we really need. He really emphasized listening to Ward 3 and the Council, he would be prepared and he has the time. I think that is the real key to it, he has the time and the financial expertise. Based on that criteria, I feel like he is probably the strongest in my opinion.

Alderman Marr: I agree with Alderman Reynolds that it is important that we hear from Bob and hear some of the things that he thinks are important for representation of a person for Ward 3. The reason I think that is important is that we are not here to change the dynamic of the Council.

I thought I knew Trent very well; Trent was someone that advocated me applying for the Planning Commission. I don't think we ever know exactly every thing that a person thinks and the process that they go through. I would like to here from Bob's prospective. When I think of Trent, I think of financial expertise, I think of the ability to sell ideas and to not only have his vote but to try to convince others of a vote, so salesmanship I think is important and leadership, I certainly think he was probably seen as leader within this Council, so that is something else that is important. I certainly have thoughts on candidates. My expertise is in the human resource field and I interview all day that is my job. I have opinions but I would like to hear from Bob as a Ward 3 representative who knocked on all the doors and some of the things that he sees are important and to see if what I think are the qualifications are in line.

Alderman Davis: Don, I appreciate that and I will but I would like to give everyone else an opportunity first to make their comments and then at that point I will follow up.

Alderman Jordan: This is one of the more difficult things I have done as a Councilman. There are several things I look for in a Councilperson. I look at experience, the number of years they have lived in the City and do they have a real love for the City. Their ability to handle finances, leadership ability, courage and compassion. It takes all of those to sit in this chair. I can tell you from experience that you are going to make decisions that people are not going to like. It is a tough job. It takes heart and courage to do this job. It is always the people first and you are always second and you have to have a servant's heart. When I make my selection that is the way I will vote.

Alderman Young: This is very difficult all of you are good candidates and you answered the questions correctly. It's difficult to decide. I don't know how I am going to decide in the end. It has been mentioned about financial and that is important, I think that balancing a check book is just as important as million dollar budgets. Congress deals in trillion dollar budgets and they can't balance a check book. We are mandated by the State Constitution to a balanced budget, we don't have the luxury of spending money we don't have.

Alderman Davis: As a Ward 3 Alderman Representative I have had a lot of phone calls and they have told me who they would like for us to consider. There were three names that continually came up and after listening to the candidates tonight I agree they all three deserve merit. I believe they all showed the ability to listen, compassion, financial support and have a business presence. We need to go ahead with the same perspective that Trent had. No offense to the three that I leave out when I mention the three. These are in no particular order, but since people began to apply I have had calls, emails and people have talked to my family. Those three that have been suggested are Tom Bechard, Robert Rhoads and Chet Caldwell. Those are the three candidates that I have had calls on because those are the ones that would fill Trent's dreams and thoughts the best. This evening I am going to have to sit here and think a little and review all the questions and answers but I can assure you that one of those three will be where I will go.

Alderman Marr: We have heard a lot of answers to questions that have been published; my experience in an interview process is typically that leads you to other questions or things that you think about. Did anything generate a question in anyone's mind that might help them differentiate between someone that we didn't get an opportunity to ask.

Alderman Young: Normally I would generate those kinds of questions but these questions pretty well covered it for me.

Alderman Thiel: I think each person had at least one thing that I thought that they said was good. I keep coming back to Mr. Rhoads; he said one thing that no one else said that I know has been mentioned several times during meetings and by constituents. He specifically said he would not make a decision before he entered this room, in other words he would not come in with a predetermined idea of how he was going to vote, he would come in and listen. I felt that was something that made him stand out. Tom Bechard also said some things that stood out, they all did.

Alderman Reynolds: Mr. Bechard said all he wanted to do was complete the term and he will not run in the fall. The people that I talked to thought the fair thing to do would be to appoint Mr. Bechard and let all the other applicants run in the fall and no one would be an incumbent and no one would have an advantage in the election.

Alderman Davis: I also received a lot of calls from prominent people in the community. The name they kept throwing out, it is hard, I don't mean to hurt anyone's feelings but the one they kept pointing out was Tom Bechard. I think a lot of that went back to Tom coming in and trying to put people together that had different views inside the city and pulling them to a common connection. He tried to find a way to get the schools, Chamber of Commerce and the businesses all to communicate. He tried to make the web sites better so when someone goes to the Chambers web site they see that Fayetteville has one of the prominent school systems and all the merit scholars.

Alderman Thiel: I received probably the same calls you did and they did highly recommend Mr. Bechard. To me it does not matter whether a person is going to run or not in November. To some extent it lends a certain amount of accountability if they were to run. We didn't ask the other candidates whether or not they were going to run. I still have reservations because I realize he is a very busy person. He has a very important job, my concerns still go back to him having time to spend on this Council and the budget meetings we are going to have, hopefully we are going to have a retreat and we have committees that each one of us is required to serve a certain amount of time on. This is still my biggest reservation.

Alderman Davis: Brenda I have no problem with that, when you talk about busy I understand. Having your own business, having to go out and sell every day to make a living I understand what busy is. I understand Mr. Trumbo was busy but yet he found time. I don't think that is a draw back for Tom. If it is something he wants to do I think he is quite capable of handling it. He has probably talked to people to find out what the time requirements are. I think if he couldn't handle the time requirements he wouldn't have put in an application. A lot of us are busy and if it is something we want to do make a commitment to we find a way to bring the City in and take care of it. I am one of the first ones and I'm like Trent in this aspect when it comes to family they are going to take precedence.

Alderman Young: As far as running in November the other candidates, if one of those is appointed they may have second thoughts and may decide not to run.

Alderman Marr: I actually received calls on three people, Ms. Martin, Mr. Rhoads and Mr. Bechard. I came into this looking at the qualifications of all of them, luckily I didn't really know any of them, I look at that as a positive for me because it gave me a very objective view. While I will say I have had experiences with a couple, one moderated a forum for me and I am familiar with two that are in the business community. I have had some exposure but personally and professionally not on a direct basis. I came into this thinking how would I look at the qualifications of this job, not only having had to go through that decision myself recently but then putting on top of that the Ward 3 characteristics of it. If we were asked who do we represent, we represent our Ward and the view of our Ward otherwise we wouldn't be sitting up

here today. I do think Trent brought a financial expertise; his business was in a financial arena, I think that is extremely important in his replacement. I think people elect people off of their professional back ground as one criteria I think people elect people because of salesmanship, their ability to sell an idea because the reality is as much as we want to stroke our own ego we are only one vote and we have to convince three or four other people to vote with us. So I think that is extremely important in a characteristic. We heard a lot about passion, someone who has a love of Fayetteville and the quality of life of Fayetteville and a length of time in Fayetteville. I actually did feel like for me not running again did make somewhat of a difference. It made a difference because I am not sure that I feel comfortable that there should be any competitive advantage in November from any candidate and yet how I dealt with that is just because you serve doesn't mean you necessarily get a competitive advantage if there happens to be really tough issues that you vote. Having been a Planning Commissioner I saw that that wasn't always seen as an advantage. As I look at these I really believe that the people with the strongest business experience of managing million dollar budgets and I do think there is a difference between managing a check book personally in a family and managing a hundred million dollar business. There have been times I would much rather be managing my check book. I think leadership is important. One of the things that stood out for me on Mr. Bechard was his comments about a mutual respect for people that may have different views. I think that is extremely important on this Council, we are not always going to agree. I think we have to have someone that comes in with a very cooperative spirit. I don't want someone having a personal conflict with me as a Council member simply because we believe something different. I am looking for that in style even though idealistically we may be different relative to representing our Wards. When I look at that criteria I come down to Mr. Bechard probably as my first choice and Mr. Rhoads as my second based on their business back ground, their experience in finance and their leadership within their own organizations. I think they both have had major experience in having to sell ideas within their own company. I would encourage everyone who truly thought that they wanted to be an alderman to run. I think that is the best way, as much as we want to try to do what is right the people have the ultimate choice. I think that we will find out who should be the alderman in November we are just trying to do a temporary assignment.

Mayor Coody: Is there any other discussion? We can go ahead and vote. I would like to reiterate that any of you applying for this position if you had been appointed tonight you would have elevated the dialogue and you would have elevated the personality of the Council. We appreciate all your applications and your sincere efforts to make Fayetteville even a better place to live. We sincerely hope that you will take this vast experience you have gotten tonight and apply it in the next November's election. We really appreciate your involvement.

Kit Williams: Mr. Mayor just for the audience we probably should read our Rules of Procedure on how this works.

All positions shall be decided by a majority vote of the City Council. In an instance where there is more than one nominee for a position each Council member shall vote by naming his or her choice for that position.

The Council member's will simply state a name and that will be their vote for that particular person.

Alderman Santos: Tom Bechard
Alderman Jordan: Betty Martin
Alderman Reynolds: Tom Bechard
Alderman Thiel: Robert Rhoads
Alderman Young: Robert Rhoads
Alderman Marr: Tom Bechard
Alderman Davis: Tom Bechard

Kit Williams: According to the statute four votes is what is required to be elected. Tom Bechard has been selected and will be appointed to the City Council.

Meeting adjourned.