

Town of Melbourne Beach

SPECIAL TOWN COMMISSION MEETING

August 4, 2025 at 5:00 p.m.

COMMUNITY CENTER – 509 OCEAN AVENUE

MINUTES

Commission Members:

Mayor Alison Dennington
Vice Mayor Dawn Barlow
Commissioner Robert Baldwin
Commissioner Anna Butler
Commissioner Tim Reed

Staff Members:

Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro
Town Attorney Ryan Knight
Town Clerk Amber Brown

The video of this meeting has 2 parts. Part 1 is 10 minutes and 41 seconds long. Part 2 is 2 hours, 58 minutes, and 9 seconds.

1. Call to Order

Vice Mayor Dawn Barlow called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

2. Roll Call

Town Clerk Amber Brown conducted roll call

Commission Members Present

Mayor Alison Dennington
Vice Mayor Dawn Barlow
Commissioner Robert Baldwin
Commissioner Anna Butler
Commissioner Tim Reed

Staff Members Present

Town Attorney Ryan Knight
Finance Manager Jennifer Kerr
Town Clerk Amber Brown

3. Pledge of Allegiance and Moment of Silence

Mayor Alison Dennington led the Pledge of Allegiance.

4. Public Comments

After being acknowledged by the Mayor, members of the public should state their name and address for the record. The Commission encourages citizens to prepare their comments in advance. Each individual will have three (3) minutes to address the Commission on any topic(s) related to Town business, not on the Agenda.

The Commission discussed reading a public comment submitted from a resident, but decided to read it later in the meeting as it pertains to the agenda item being discussed.

Mayor Alison Dennington received confirmation from the Town Attorney that the position of Town Manager is vacant after the 60th day, when the contract expires.

Town Attorney Ryan Knight said the RFP has the scoring criteria, and the Commission requested hard copies of that from the Finance Manager.

5. Public Hearings/Special Orders

A. Presentations and consideration of the proposals from the RFP for Executive Search Services

James Dinneen from MGT presented their proposal for Executive Recruitment Services. Spoke about his experience being a manager. Spoke about his company, team, and how they have recruited in 45 of the 50 states. Went over the process, said it is normally a 90-120 day process, they would advertise out of state, and he would conduct video interviews. Went over recruitment costs and said the candidate they're looking for is not necessarily looking for a job, and they need to take advantage of the fact that people would not be afraid to work for this stable Town and relocate here.

Commissioner Tim Reed asked if MGT reaches out to other local municipalities that have gone through the process recently for their pool of applicants.

James Dinneen said not necessarily because you only need one candidate.

Commissioner Robert Baldwin asked if there are any assessments, such as personality.

James Dinneen spoke about how they can, but they do not generally need to do that.

Mayor Alison Dennington spoke about being concerned about the timeline and asked if MGT would be able to do a condensed timeline. - 36:10

James Dinneen spoke about how fast is not good if it does not result in the best person. Yes, it can be done faster than 120 days. The process can be done quicker, but if you are looking for people who are employed, it can take a little longer because good managers will give proper notice to their current employer. To speed up the timeline, the approvals would need to be done quickly. Approve the job description, approve the brochure, etc.

Vice Mayor Dawn Barlow asked for some best practices for how MGT has done information gathering for other similar small municipalities.

James Dinneen spoke about how the Commission was elected to make decisions, so it is up to the Commission on the process. One municipality set up an email for citizen input.

Commissioner Anna Butler asked about the different recruiting platforms mentioned and if those are industry-specific.

James Dinneen said yes, but they also have their own network. All the recruiters talk to each other. Suggested that if a candidate needs to travel, when they are interviewing, set the spouse up with a realtor or someone who can answer their questions about the area.

Commissioner Tim Reed asked about the optional background and screenings. - 48:35

James Dinneen spoke about how that all comes with the package.

Commissioner Robert Baldwin asked to what extent negative things on social media would affect the process.

James Dinneen spoke about the individuals who are familiar with the job know there will be negative things out there. If something comes up, he will ask for the details.

Mayor Alison Dennington asked how you narrow it down when you have 100 applicants.

James Dinneen said it is an art, not a science. By law, he cannot influence the decision. He can only present a list to the Commission. He is trying to find the best candidates possible.

Mayor Alison Dennington asked about the process for notifying the Commission of applications that have been received.

James Dinneen spoke about how MGT will send something to the candidate to let them know that their resume was received. At the end, MGT will provide a book that includes a list of all of the candidates, but will not include all of the applications and resumes.

Mayor Alison Dennington asked about the process and confirmed that they first cut people who do not meet the minimum qualifications, then they cut down more based on experience/qualifications to determine who gets interviewed.

James Dinneen spoke about how they will receive the list of anyone who has been interviewed. Said there are people that clearly don't meet the requirements, people that clearly do, and then people in the middle that are not as clear.

Mayor Alison Dennington asked if MGT will send a weekly update.

James Dinneen spoke about how they can provide an update that only includes numbers.

Vice Mayor Dawn Barlow had no further questions.

Commissioner Anna Butler spoke about the Town having a small budget and asked about keeping the budget in mind. - 59:45

James Dinneen spoke about needing to find the right candidate, being very sensitive to budgets, and that the Commission can decide what processes to do and not do.

Commissioner Tim Reed and Commissioner Robert Baldwin had no further questions.

Mayor Alison Dennington asked how MGT handles candidates applying for multiple places.

James Dinneen spoke about not wanting the Town to get burned or ruin his reputation, so he would not recommend those individuals.

Mayor Alison Dennington asked about the process.

James Dinneen spoke about how the Commission decides how they want things done.

Mayor Alison Dennington asked about the one-year guarantee.

James Dinneen spoke about how they have a one-year guarantee that would not cost anything additional other than advertising.

Mayor Alison Dennington asked if they could into merging positions.

James Dinneen spoke about how they can do that as a special service.

Mayor Alison Dennington asked how many city contracts he is currently working on.

James Dinneen said he chooses his schedule and is only in the middle of one contract.

Recess 6:20 pm – 6:24 pm

Commissioner Anna Butler asked about the process after the presentation and questions.

Town Attorney Ryan Knight said there would be discussion, time to fill out the forms, tally the points, and then a motion to enter into an agreement or go a different route.

Town Clerk Amber Brown conducted roll call

Commission Members Present

Mayor Alison Dennington
Vice Mayor Dawn Barlow
Commissioner Robert Baldwin
Commissioner Anna Butler
Commissioner Tim Reed

Staff Members Present

Town Attorney Ryan Knight
Finance Manager Jennifer Kerr
Town Clerk Amber Brown

Anne Lewis from Raftelis presented the proposal and process for Executive Search Services. Said she is a Senior Manager with Raftelis, spoke about the company having over 30 years in local government consulting practice, and 15 years in executive search. Spoke about her own experience with local government. Said they have a team of 10 that supports the executive search recruitment practice, and she would serve as lead recruiter for the search. Spoke about their processes, timeline, and getting the community involved. Touched on their fee structure, which is in 3 parts. - 1:15:30

Commissioner Tim Reed asked if Raftelis reaches out to the local municipalities that have recently gone through the manager hiring process to get their pool of candidates? 1:33:30

Anne Lewis spoke about doing outreach through the Florida City/County Management Association, Florida League of Cities, and the International City/County Management Association, as well as through existing relationships and cold calls/emails.

Commissioner Robert Baldwin asked how drama on social media impacts the search.

Anne Lewis spoke about dealing with it up front and not wanting surprises. The last thing she wants is turnover in 6 months. There needs to be clear transparency from both sides.

Mayor Alison Dennington spoke about having a large west and midwest presence, and asked about their presence in Florida.

Anne Lewis spoke about it being typical of search firms to have groupings around their office locations. Raftelis has an office in Florida, but it mainly focuses on financial searches. Has worked with several municipalities in Florida, and understands it is truly a Sunshine State. Said her team meets weekly to discuss their searches, and they help each other.

Mayor Alison Dennington asked if Raftelis does recruiting for private and public entities.

Anne Lewis spoke about how Raftelis only does searches for public entities.

Mayor Alison Dennington asked if they ever get hired for specific things, such as advising on stormwater projects and financing possibilities, to which Anne Lewis said yes.

Vice Mayor Dawn Barlow asked Attorney Ryan Knight about the Mayor asking questions that are different from the first company.

Town Attorney Ryan Knight spoke about trying to ask questions that are as similar as possible, but they might differ due to the presentations. - 1:45:26

Vice Mayor Dawn Barlow asked for clarification on what information she would be looking for when meeting with the Commissioners.

Anne Lewis said she wants to know what is going well, what needs attention, what characteristics they are looking for, etc. From there, the questions might go down a rabbit hole. Talking to staff can bring a different perspective, as well as talking to the community.

Commissioner Anna Butler spoke about being a small Town, asked about keeping in mind that the Town has a tight budget, the salary is small but reasonable, property values are high, how would you handle that obstacle?

Anne Lewis spoke about being very clear in the brochure, providing clear salary, benefits, and quality of life. If a candidate lives in Florida, but not in Brevard County, some places have extended the residency requirement timeline. Having in-depth conversations with the candidates to understand their motivation and why they want to be here.

Commissioner Tim Reed asked about the background checks, screening, and verification process.

Anne Lewis spoke about using a company to get a background check and employment verification, but that is typically only for the top candidate or the top two. That is in addition to the internet search report, which is done and updated throughout the process.

Commissioner Robert Baldwin asked about a service guarantee and when it was used.

Anne Lewis spoke about how it rarely happens; however, she is currently working on one right now that is leaving employment after 11 months. Virginia is different because you cannot request details from a personnel file, so she does not have all the information, but believes it was not a good fit. Said this was a situation without cause, and the guarantee was different, so that would not apply in the situation for Melbourne Beach.

Mayor Alison Dennington asked if the guarantee only applies to termination with cause, and if it applies when the candidate resigns.

Anne Lewis said yes, it only applies to termination with cause, and it does apply if the candidate resigns.

Mayor Alison Dennington asked if Raftelis is able to condense the timeline.

Anne Lewis spoke about how the brochure is very important because it is the springboard for everything that comes after that. Generally, between 7-10 days, the brochure can be done. However, she would not want to shorten the 30-day outreach. At the beginning, she will lay out the timeline and try to keep to it. As more planning they can do ahead of time, the better.

Mayor Alison Dennington asked about getting updates weekly.

Anne Lewis spoke about sending updates, but not to get nervous if there are not a lot of responses right away, because people are doing their due diligence.

Mayor Alison Dennington asked what company they use for the background and if it checks everything.

Anne Lewis spoke about how it checks everything, and the only time it did not was when a court system was down for weeks.

Mayor Alison Dennington asked about inclusive language, does it differentiate between mandatory and preferred? - 2:04:04

Anne Lewis said yes, for example, if a college degree is required and a person does not have one, they would not be moved forward. Said what is mandatory versus preferred. It would be very clear in the recruitment brochure.

Vice Mayor Dawn Barlow and Commissioner Anna Butler had no further questions.

Mayor Alison Dennington asked if Raftelis would ask candidates if they were applying for other positions.

Anne Lewis spoke about how she would know if candidates are applying to other places. Spoke about how she already has ideas of candidates.

Mayor Alison Dennington asked what qualities Anne thinks the candidates should have.

Anne Lewis spoke about having a seasoned manager, preferred someone familiar with coastal, diplomatic, fiscal responsibility, sustainability, resiliency, willing to be transparent, and being able to engage with others. Part of the process is getting familiar with the candidates' knowledge.

The Commission had no further questions.

Town Attorney Ryan Knight said the first thing to do is decide if you will utilize an Executive Search Firm.

Mayor Alison Dennington asked the Town Attorney if the Town can post for the position in order to collect applications that get sent to the Town.

Town Attorney Ryan Knight said it would not make legal sense.

Mayor Alison Dennington spoke about the job description approved by the Commission; the Commission could change it if they wanted to, but until then, this is it. Asked if they could post it and collect resumes. It would not mean there is a decision on a date to hire them.

Town Attorney Ryan Knight said theoretically yes, but the question is who is reviewing those resumes. Does not understand the point if you are using an Executive Search Firm.

Finance Manager Jennifer Kerr said they keep all received resumes on file for one year, but for this, they would have to apply through the Executive Search Firm process.

Commissioner Robert Baldwin made a motion that we engage and employ an Executive Search Firm for the replacement of the Town Manager; Vice Mayor Dawn Barlow seconded;

Sherri Quarrie – 701 Pine St – Spoke about being on the Commission when they used a search firm previously, and it ended up being a bad fit. There is no recourse for the cost of the search. Thinks there is a problem with only having 2 companies to choose from, and said there is a requirement for 3. Said this will be \$34,000-\$41000+. Suggests using our own resources to do this cheaper.

Mayor Alison Dennington spoke about how this was not a CCNA, so it did not require 3 responses, and the Town Attorney agreed.

Town Clerk Amber Brown said she asked the Vice Mayor to read the public comments that are emailed in, so she can take the minutes more efficiently. Said the Mayor runs the meetings, so she asked the Vice Mayor who is next in line.

Vice Mayor Dawn Barlow read a public comment sent in from **Joyce Barton - 322 Third Ave** – *The public comment asked for clarification on the procedure, where it was posted, and for how long, does a minimum of 3 quotes need to be received, is this legal, or should this item be dismissed?* - 2:23:40

Town Attorney Ryan Knight said yes, it is legal, if you send out an RFP and you get 2 responses, it does not mean you have to wait for 3 to proceed. Reiterated this is not a CCNA.

Motion carried 4-1 with Commissioner Anna Butler dissenting.

Commissioner Anna Butler spoke about dissenting because she would like to have included the Florida City and County Manager Association to see if it was a viable search option, because of the cost.

Mayor Alison Dennington spoke about what Commissioner Anna Butler is referring to. It is a free process, takes 6 months, and would be more burdensome on the staff. If anyone wants information on it, there is a memo from the Town Attorney on that.

Mayor Alison Dennington explained how the Commissioners will rate the companies and that they will be public record.

Mayor Alison Dennington verified with the Town Attorney that she could put a note explaining why next to the score. She also verified the last part did not need to be scored because it is not applicable.

Each Commissioner awarded points based on the provided criteria. - 2:27:50-2:40:30

Town Attorney Ryan Knight said the next step would be to determine the highest score and a motion to enter into a contractual agreement with that firm. Said he would email them today or tomorrow and get an agreement drafted as soon as possible.

Commissioner Robert Baldwin brought up Commissioner Tim Reed's email that discussed various assumptions baked into the budget, a couple of things that need to be added, and asked if Commissioner Tim Reed would bring them as an item for the August meeting.

Commissioner Tim Reed said he would prefer to go the Special Meeting route, but believes it does need to be talked about this month so it could be at the RTCM.

Mayor Alison Dennington spoke about the email that Commissioner Tim Reed and Commissioner Robert Baldwin are referring to. Spoke about how any Commissioner can call for a Special Meeting.

The results for the grading criteria are as follows:

MGT – 417 total

Raftelis – 397 total

Vice Mayor Dawn Barlow said that as this Commission works with the Executive Search Firm to hire the position of Town Manager, she wanted to emphasize the need for professionalism and discipline throughout the process. This is one of the most important decisions the Commission will make. Requests that all Commissioners refrain from excessive emails or behaviors that might be considered micromanaging or unprofessional. Asked that Commissioners come prepared and stay engaged through this transition.

Commissioner Robert Baldwin made a motion that we enter into a contract to engage MGT for the Executive Search Services of hiring the next Town Manager;

Mayor Alison Dennington asked if they should put requirements or suggestions for a time frame in the motion?

Town Attorney Ryan Knight said it is driven by so many variables that it is impossible to put a timeframe on it.

Vice Mayor Dawn Barlow seconded; Motion carried 3-2 with Commissioner Anna Butler and Commissioner Tim Reed dissenting.

The Commissioners scheduled a Special Town Commission Meeting for Tuesday, August 19th at 5:30 pm.

Town Clerk Amber Brown said if the agenda item is generic, it does not need a cover page. If you want it limited to one topic, then she would need a cover page. Landed on it being a Special Town Commission Meeting for the budget, so anything that comes up that needs voting on, the Commission can do so. The packet would be the budget. Confirmed it should also be on the RTCM agenda.

6. Adjournment

Commissioner Robert Baldwin moved to adjourn; Commissioner Anna Butler seconded; Motion carried 5-0.

Meeting adjourned at 8:09 pm.


Alison Dennington
Mayor

ATTEST:


Rachel Pembroke (Aug 19, 2025 09:40:00 EDT)
Rachel Pembroke
Transcriptionist

