



November 16, 2016

## AWOL: Absent Without Leadership

**"Insanity: doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results."**

***Attributed to Albert Einstein***

The City Council's inability to select a city manager last week for the second time this year left the business community befuddled, city staff snickering and many people puzzled.

After 75 minutes of deliberation in executive session to consider the three candidates for city manager, councilmembers decided to instruct the search firm to return to the field a third time to hunt for more candidates. In the first round of applicants last June, 55 people applied for the job. After the Council requested once again that the search firm expand its quest for candidates, 89 people applied for the job. Five finalists were selected. Two dropped out. So, like the first round, the Council ended up interviewing only three candidates.

The Council has failed to find a city manager from a field of 144 candidates.

When it comes to selecting a new city manager, it's starting to look like there's a fine line between picky and procrastinating. Whatever the case, our community is losing patience with the process.

FACT: During the past four years, we've only had a real city manager for one and a half years and two different "acting" city managers for two and a half years.

*"How many years do you want to be in a holding pattern while everyone else (other cities) is moving forward?" Barrett-Jackson CEO Craig Jackson said after the Council continued their search last week. "There's no plan and there's nobody managing anything. It's just kicking the can down the road."*

The Council decided to kick their decision down the road until sometime in December.

Meanwhile, many city employees, who already don't hold councilmembers in high esteem because of what they believe to be the decision makers' ineptitude, weren't surprised about the Council's choice to return to the field to find more candidates. Employee responses are best summed up as "I told you so!"

However, the City Council's indecisiveness is taking the greatest toll on the public. They find the situation puzzling, to say the least. Like it or not, the City Council is earning the title AWOL: Absent Without Leadership.

To make matters worse, an obviously divided Council is doing nothing to build confidence in government or close the gap between political factions throughout the city. Some say the Council is merely a microcosm of the community.

In a feeble attempt to shield themselves from public embarrassment and political humiliation, the Council insists they didn't reject the three most recent finalists for the job, they just wanted to increase the number of applicants from which they had to choose. *"We were concerned about the size of the pool of candidates,"* Mayor Lane said. *"But I think in fairness we wanted to make sure we had a good group of people to choose from."*

The three candidates recently considered but not hired for city manager will be allowed to keep their names in the next round of competition.

The City Council says their decision to hit the reset button and resume the search for additional candidates wasn't about the three who they declined to offer the job - it was about the process.

Councilmembers are now repeating the process and hoping for a different outcome. So they would be crazy not to change the process by either switching search firms or becoming more directly involved in selecting the next batch of candidates.



## **BITE ME!**

This week's best sound bite comes from South Scottsdale's Lisa Haskell. After record-setting fundraising by local candidates for the November 9th election, Haskell remarks:

**"The reality is that money talks. If you don't have the financing it is difficult to get your message out and fight the half-truths stuffed into mailers financed by developers, bar owners, realtors and the usual suspects. AKA - non-residents.**

**Next time, we need a deeper pool of qualified candidates who really have residents' best interests at heart."**

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