

Bobbie Walthall

Subject: RE: comments for regular agenda

To: Mayor, Vice-Mayor, and members of the Lawrence City Commission

From: Patricia Sinclair

Re: City Commission Candidates and Process – Regular Agenda Items 1-3

Date: Oct. 6, 2015

My comments are regarding the election of a new City Commissioner, including an expressed preference, the actual process, a bogus poll by the LJW, and those chosen to select the candidates.

First, let me express a strong NO vote for Scott Morgan, based on his experience and on his performance on the School Board. Neither seem to have prepared him for a role as a city commissioner, where the commission has expressed an interest in more public input and attendance at meetings and access to and communication with the public.

Mr. Morgan was on the School Board, I believe as President, during a very angry and divisive time in Lawrence. A consulting company, DLR Group, was hired, at great expense, to plan and supervise the closing, upgrading, and new construction of schools. At the Board meeting at which this was on the agenda, the large group of citizens attending were made to sit through the entire meeting, including a presentation by the consultants which showed that they were not familiar with the schools or city, and finally citizens were either given an extremely limited opportunity to speak, or none at all, as my memory fails me. The bond issue was framed so that citizens living in the older neighborhoods could not oppose new construction to the west without opposing the small improvements offered for the older schools. There was much talk about busing students across town to fill schools.

I found a chat from the Lawrence Journal World from which has an interview with Scott Morgan when he was a candidate for the school board from on Feb. 11, 2003, from which I will quote.

On Diversity:

Jill: Should the school board more reflect the ethnic, economic and educational diversity of Lawrence?

Scott Morgan: It is always good to have a diverse set of opinions on a board representing a diverse community. However, I do not believe physical make-up is as important as people's philosophy

I do not mean any disrespect to Lisa Larsen, and have not had the chance to review her opinions and credentials. In either case, a lack of experience as a city commissioner will be a difficult thing to overcome at this point in time.

I am sorry that David Schauner did not advance. I remember his time on the City Commission. While I certainly did not agree with all of his votes, I did recognize in him a desire to correct problems when they arose; for example, when something was done in error or a piece of code needed changing, he tried to get that fixed at that time so that the situation would not happen again. He also had experience in choosing a new city manager, unfortunately with the same firm that the city has chosen again. I have followed up on the sad endings for the other two city manager candidates, and wish that we had chosen a different firm.

This selection process has been confusing, changing at the last minute, and flawed from the beginning, in my opinion. We had a meeting where there was talk of large public involvement and much scrutiny. We wound up with people narrowing the field of candidates, and yet not all of these people even voted in the relevant recent city elections. For example, two of Commissioner Herbert's nominees, although they may be nice people and good teachers, are both relatively new to Lawrence and voted in only some of the relevant city commission and education elections since arriving. One even missed the first meeting of the group. Dustin Rimmey moved from Shawnee County after voting in the Kansas General Election in 2008. He first voted in Douglas County in the Kansas General Election in 2010. He failed to vote in any City/School primary or general election until 2015, and did not vote in the 2015 USD 497 Mail Ballot allowing certain state funding for schools. Mark Preut voted in the Jefferson County general election in 2010 and the Douglas County general election in 2012. He did then vote in the City/School General in 2013 and 2015, the primary in 2015, and the USD 497 Mail Ballot. My point is not to pick on these two gentleman, but to point out that they are both new to town and one did not seem very interested in city commission or school matters until this year.. Why were these people chosen to vote for all of us?

We had a form the candidates signed which resembled an affidavit, although was not complete as one, and it was not even notarized. So much for thorough vetting by the city, something that was said would be done after the fiasco with Jeremy Farmer.

After the first meeting when the selection was first discussed, apparently our new Mayor Amyx sent an email to all commissioners, and then came up with a matrix. Since the minutes of the meetings are no longer being transcribed, I was unable to follow the meetings since the one I attended.

We certainly could have done a better job of encouraging candidates if the Labor Day holiday had not intervened.

Finally, the Lawrence Journal World did an online Google poll, which I found to be a totally unreliable poll, but one which might exert influence on this election. Supposedly, a sample of online viewers were given the opportunity to express their favorite candidate. It is not clear whether they merely looked at the LJW online by answering a question or two, or whether or not they had to be registered with the LJW. Anyone wanting to influence this poll merely had to contact other like-minded people and get them to go online at the same time.