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New Chiefland city commissioner appointed



At the start of the meeting Monday night (April 8), the Chiefland City Commission was comprised of (from left) Vice Mayor Tim West, City Commissioner Rollin Hudson, Mayor Chris Jones and City Commissioner Donald Lawrence.



After the appointment of the newest member, the Chiefland City Commission was comprised of (from left) Vice Mayor Tim West, City Commissioner Rollin Hudson, Mayor Chris Jones and city commissioners Donald Lawrence and Norman Weaver. Lawrence and Weaver are both retired educators and school sports coaches.

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Story and Photos

By Jeff M. Hardison © April 9, 2019 at 12:19 p.m.

CHIEFLAND -- As mandated by the city charter, the four remaining members of the Chiefland City Commission on Monday night (April 8) chose a person to fill the empty post left after Mayor Betty Walker died.



Norman Weaver, a native of Zephyrhills, candidate for appointment as a city commissioner, says he wants to learn about the duties of a city commissioner. He has lived in Chiefland for 13 years.

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Cheryl Langston Barron, a native of Chiefland, candidate for appointment as a city commissioner, says she would like to see the city grow to give more employment opportunities. Barron would like the city to succeed, she said. Former City Commissioner Teresa Barron (no relation), candidate for appointment as a city commissioner, was absent from the meeting on Monday night.

Norman Weaver, a retired educator who taught primarily in Pasco and Pinellas counties, was selected by a 4-0 vote after a motion by Vice Mayor Tim West was seconded by City Commissioner Donald Lawrence.

Mayor Chris Jones and City Commissioner Rollin Hudson voted in favor of West-Lawrence motion as well.

Commissioner Hudson asked if the sitting members of the City Commission had to appoint a person, because the city's election for that position is only a couple of months away.

Hudson complained that whoever would be appointed might enjoy an advantage over anyone else in an upcoming election.

"Whoever we place in now," Hudson said, "seems to me will have a little bit of an advantage."

City Attorney Norm Fugate had explained to Hudson that the city code of ordinances requires the City Commission to perform this duty, although attorney Fugate did say that if the City Commission wanted to violate the code, it has free will to go against the law.

Mayor Chris Jones chimed in with Hudson, complaining that he felt it was awkward for the four sitting members of the Commission to have to make a choice that should be left up to the entire set of qualified voters in the city.

Mayor Jones added that he had spoken with "quite a few" members of the general

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public of Chiefland as well as city employees before the meeting, so that he could help select a person that he felt the people would want.

Records show that only five of the 46 full-time or part-time city employees are qualified voters in Chiefland municipal elections.

City Manager Mary Ellzey read the applicable part of the law regulating municipal government in Chiefland, in the event that a person leaves office before his or her term ends. In this instance, Mayor Walker had died. The last time the law was exercised, Mayor Teal Pomeroy had died.

“The Code of Ordinances says ‘The vacancy shall be filled by the majority vote of the remaining members of the City Commission, who shall choose a successor to serve until the duly-elected person shall qualify,’” City Manager Ellzey said.

The definition of the verb “shall” is not debated, even by politicians who may not want to do their mandatory jobs, because they disagree with the code of ordinances.

Vice Mayor West said he believes it will benefit the people of Chiefland to see how the appointee works in his or her position before qualifying for the city election, when this seat will be on the ballot.

Qualified voters in Chiefland will choose from among whichever candidates are on the ballot, which may include City Commissioner Weaver if he chooses to seek election.

Qualifying for the Chiefland City election is tentatively set for June 10 through June 13, with the election currently slated for Sept. 9, according to what City Manager Ellzey said. As city manager in Chiefland, Ellzey is also the ex-officio clerk, and is therefore the supervisor of elections within this municipality.

Hudson, West, Lawrence and Jones all said they felt the three candidates, including former City Commissioner Teresa Barron and Cheryl Langston Barron were all very well qualified to hold the position.

Cheryl Langston Barron, by the way, is not related to Teresa Barron even as an in-law. Cheryl Langston Barron said her name is from the Barrons who live in Trenton, although she is a lifelong Chiefland resident with generations of the Langston family being from Chiefland.

Cheryl Langston Barron said she would like to see Chiefland grow to give more employment opportunities. She would like the city to succeed, she said.

Weaver said he wants to learn about being a city commissioner, and while he is part of the commission, he said he does have his own ideas. He was nominated and approved 5-0 to be the City Commission liaison to the city’s Recreation Committee, which includes representation from the Chiefland Area Athletic Association.

Weaver is involved in at least one adult sport.

During the conversation Monday night, it was mentioned that Weaver and Lawrence play golf together at Chiefland Golf and Country Club.

The new member of the City Commission is bound to learn about certain topics that are out of bounds when those two guys are playing golf.

If any two members of any board, council or commission, etc., speak outside of the public view about matters upon which they may vote, then they are violating Florida law – which provides for the people to see the process by which leaders debate or discuss with one another before they vote.

Like the Florida law that opens public records to the public, this part of state law is among the “Sunshine Laws.”

During the meeting, Mayor Jones apparently felt compelled to answer a question that

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no one asked.

If there had been a motion and a second to appoint Teresa Barron, Jones said he would have voted for her. Teresa Barron was not present at the meeting Monday night. Jones said his conversations with employees and the general public are what led him in that direction.

Since the motion and second was for Weaver, Jones went with the other three City Commission members on that vote.

Weaver took his post instantly after the unanimous 4-0 vote to appoint him. On each of the few matters on the agenda where the City Commission voted on Monday night, it was a 5-0 vote – with no dissention by Weaver or any of the other four men on the commission.

Levy County Court Judge J.T. "Tim" Browning is scheduled to administer the oath of office to Chiefland City Commissioner Weaver at the next regular Chiefland City Commission meeting, but Weaver is active as a commissioner already – complete with the power and requirement to vote on issues where the City Commission votes.