

# MIAMIBEACH

## City Commission Interviews

City Hall, Commission Chambers, 3rd Floor, 1700 Convention Center Drive  
June 4, 2012

Mayor Matti Herrera Bower  
Vice-Mayor Jerry Libbin  
Commissioner Jorge R. Exposito  
Commissioner Michael Góngora  
Commissioner Edward L. Tobin  
Commissioner Deede Weithorn  
Commissioner Jonah Wolfson

City Manager Jorge M. Gonzalez  
City Attorney Jose Smith  
City Clerk Rafael E. Granado

## CITY COMMISSION INTERVIEWS FOR TOP CANDIDATES FOR INTERIM CITY MANAGER POSITION

**Note:** *Commission Interview Session I and II were videotaped, but not aired on the same day, for fairness and equality to all candidates.*

Meeting started at approximately 9:40 a.m.

Mayor Bower explained that each candidate will be interviewed for approximately one hour, in two Sessions, one from 9 to Noon, the second from 1 to 4 PM. She added that there will be no public input or comments. Mayor Bower asked Jose Smith, City Attorney, to give the Commission some guidelines to proceed.

Jose Smith, City Attorney, provided the City Commission with guidelines as to certain inquiries and fair questions to ask, and distributed a proposal summary of 21 questions gathered from various municipalities that the Commission can select from, if they so wish. In the alternative, the Commission may ask questions not on the list. However, Mr. Smith suggested that every candidate be asked the same questions.

### 9:50 a.m.

#### **FIRST CANDIDATE – H. C. EADS, Jr.**

Mayor Bower welcomed Mr. Eads, and explained that each candidate will have a ten-minute opening statement, followed by a question and answer session from the Mayor and each Commissioner, and a ten-minute closing statement by the candidate at the end of the interview.

Mr. Eads spoke about his experience in City government.

Commissioner Góngora asked Mr. Eads about his life after retirement, what his priorities would be if selected, his position on diversity and why he feels he is the best candidate.

Mr. Eads explained his involvement with not-for-profit organizations and his investments in Georgia. He stated his priorities if selected would be to continue with the Convention Center

process, to hire critical vacant positions in the City, and continue to manage the City until a permanent City Manager is selected. Regarding diversity, he stated having had experience bringing diversity into the hiring process of City employees. In answer as to why he feels he is the best candidate, he responded that is his experience, he feels he can serve the City well and move forward until a permanent replacement has been made.

Commissioner Weithorn asked about crisis management skills, successful outcomes; how does he measure success, and to mention his achievements and expectations from this Commission.

Mr. Eads explained that during a crisis, he would approach the issue professionally, focus and present alternatives to the City Commission, and move forward. He added that inactivity is worse when dealing with crisis issues. He stated the importance of creating a work plan and added that communication with the Commission collectively or at times individually is essential.

Vice-Mayor Libbin asked Mr. Eads the steps he would take to restore confidence, about past leadership skills, what he would change if he had to do it all over again (low point in his career); what his biggest challenge is and about budget experience.

Mr. Eads stated that the City Commission has taken the first step by admitting that there is a problem. He would look at all departments, and if there is a problem, it needs to be dealt with, in a proactive way. The City has many good employees that work well. He cited his experience in Coral Gables, his involvement with the development of a large shopping center (Merrick Park) and negotiating contracts. As far as what he would change (low point in his career), he stated that the City of Coral Gables at a time was anxious to build an annex to City Hall, and it became a campaign issue and was never done; and looking back it would have been a good thing for the City. His biggest challenge he feels would be the Convention Center process and building confidence back to residents. He added his experience in regards to bargaining union negotiations and budget restrictions.

Commissioner Tobin asked about Mr. Eads's strengths and weaknesses.

Mr. Eads explained that while being the City Manager in Coral Gables, he made every effort possible to maintain the Mayor and City Commission informed, and believes communication is his strength. His weakness is impatience, and at the same time, impatience is an asset, because he will get the job done or die trying.

Commissioner Exposito inquired about handling critical positions in the City if selected, how he would handle change of management causing staff instability, and also asked about his competency as a good business leader.

Mr. Eads stated that vacancies give opportunity to internal employees capable of doing the job and grow professionally, and he would enlist every department director to assist in engaging growth within the City. Mr. Eads, in answering Commissioner Exposito's question about change of management causing instability, explained that he listens to people, he hears what they have to say, he encourages participation and engaging staff. As far as competency and leadership, he gave a brief summary of his experience and background in the City Manager's Office as a budget analyst and his growth within the City.

Commissioner Wolfson inquired as to his experience during the last ten years and his Miami Beach community involvement.

Mr. Eads explained his involvement with a cable TV service company to military base in Japan, and explained how the signal has to be brought down to Cutler Ridge and transmitted fiber optically to Japan. He also trades in Melbourne, Florida, providing service to major electric companies, and is in the real-estate investment business.

Mayor Bower inquired what he would do if the job was offered to him on a permanent basis.

Mr. Eads replied that he is not applying for a City Manager position, only for Interim City Manager.

Vice-Mayor Libbin's asked about his strengths, and Mr. Eads stated that enforcement is not a revenue generator, but it helps maintains the quality of life and affects property values.

Mayor Bower inquired about his historic preservation, affordable housing, arts and education knowledge, to which Mr. Eads responded that his wife was a high school principal so to him education is critical and he shared his experience in affordable housing as well as the arts.

During his closing statements, Mr. Eads gave a summary of his qualifications, accomplishments and goals if selected to the position, which included ability, stability, compatibility and transferability.

**DISCUSSION SESSION** - The City Commission discussed the applicant's municipal experience and the answers to his questions.

#### **SECOND CANDIDATE – BARTON S. GOLDBERG**

Mayor Bower welcomed Mr. Goldberg, and explained that each candidate will have a ten-minute opening statement, followed by a question and answer session from the Mayor and each Commissioner, and a ten-minute closing statement by the candidate at the end of the interview.

Mr. Goldberg spoke about his experience in the private sector, as President and CEO of a major bank in Florida and the skills he can bring to the City as Interim Manager.

Commissioner Wolfson asked Mr. Goldberg about historic preservation, and to give the Commission his perspective coming from a private sector background.

Mr. Goldberg explained that when Barbara Capitman explained to him what they wanted to do in South Beach, he was skeptical, but he listened to her and Nancy Liebman, and he was able to help funding her efforts, in addition, he was also involved in the Loews Hotel project and has knowledge of historic preservation first hand. He added that people are essential to accomplish things, and teamwork is necessary. He is interested in engaging people.

Commissioner Weithorn commented on his impressive resume, and asked, if selected, what would be the first thing he would do; and secondly, what will he bring to the table, taking into account that he is coming from a private sector background.

Mr. Goldberg stated that he would carefully select a calendar of events for a certain period of time, to address the budget process, continue with the Convention Center process, and to get to know the feeling of employees to see if they are really carrying out the City's Mission Statement; he brings to the table his long background and experience in finances.

Vice-Mayor Libbin asked about his management style and leadership and what steps he would take to restore public confidence.

Mr. Goldberg explained that his style is hands-on with a great deal of interaction with people at all levels; weekly meetings with some staff; and bi-weekly meetings with other staff at different levels. In regards to restoring public confidence, he would like to see an improved relationship with the media, print media, press, TV and radio press and keep open lines of communications. Mr. Goldberg added that he has limited experience in dealing with Union and labor relations, this would be his biggest challenge, but he is a great listener and has a high degree level of service to the public.

Commissioner Exposito inquired about his competency as a good business leader, about how he would alleviate staff uncertainty with change of management, how he would maintain the City Commission informed, and what would be one of his primary goals to achieve.

Mr. Goldberg stated that he has over 45 years of experience of high quality work and transparency. He is a good listener; he also believes that employees should feel comfortable speaking to their supervisors on a one to one basis. He stated that he would continue what was started, and look at other areas of the City where there are problems and discuss with the City Commission. He feels that citizens are the stakeholders; in regards to what the mission statement reads, everyone should be treated that way; the City should be well managed, as the Commission continues the search for a permanent replacement. He is in favor of holding employee meetings.

Commissioner Góngora asked about diversity and Mr. Goldberg stated that his was one of the first financial institutions to hire Hispanics and African-Americans, and as to why he feels he is the best candidate, he responded that he has the desire to serve, he has a love for the City, and he has private sector experience.

Mayor Bower inquired about his knowledge of the demographics of Miami Beach and affordable housing.

Mr. Goldberg replied that the demographics have changed; the median age of 68 is now that of 30's and the Hispanic community has grown. He added that probably a large percentage of residents are below poverty level, socioeconomically, as well as those that are wealthy.

**DISCUSSION SESSION** - The City Commission discussed the applicant's experience in the private sector, and the lack of municipal experience, as well as the answers to his questions.

**THIRD CANDIDATE – W.D. HIGGINBOTHAM, JR.**

Mayor Bower welcomed Mr. Higginbotham, Jr., and explained that each candidate will have a ten-minute opening statement, followed by a question and answer session from the Mayor and each Commissioner, and a ten-minute closing statement by the candidate at the end of the interview.

Mr. Higginbotham gave a brief summary of his experience in City government.

Commissioner Weithorn asked about transparency in government, how he measures success, and in terms of team stabilization in the City, what his approach on the issue is. She also asked about what he would tell employees.

Mr. Higginbotham stated that budget is priority, stabilizing the organization the City must move forward, he would work with budget and finance directors, and have a work plan for the community and a financial plan. As far as reaching out to employees, he would explain that he is

joining them and will do things together and move forward.

Vice-Mayor Libbin inquired as to his biggest challenges in the community, his accomplishments, experience with budgets and Unions and the steps he would take to restore public confidence.

Mr. Higginbotham stated that his biggest challenge would be to stabilize personnel, and make sure that there is no fear. His successes are mostly in the private sector, customer service, attitude service to the community. He gave a brief summary of his experience during Union negotiations in every City he has worked, and he provides leadership through the City Commission's direction. As far as restoring the public confidence, the wrongdoing of some employees, is reflected in the entire organization, and there should be visibility, transparency and communication to the community on those issues. He has an open-door policy management style.

Commissioner Tobin asked about strengths and weaknesses.

Mr. Higginbotham stated when politics change or there is a change in direction, it is time to move on.

Commissioner Exposito inquired about accomplishments that he is proud of, and if selected Interim Manager, what he would do with some critical vacant positions, also what message would he sent to residents.

Mr. Higginbotham responded that customer service attitude is first and foremost, and his involvement in redevelopment projects in different municipalities and infrastructure processes that are still pending. He has the needed leadership and he will do whatever is to be done to reestablish trust and move forward.

Mayor Bower asked about his knowledge of demographics in the City, about preservation, affordable housing, education and arts.

Mr. Higginbotham stated that he knows the demographics of the City include a large Hispanic and Jewish community, with diverse ethnicities including African-Americans and a strong gay presence. He works with everyone. He added that he is not too familiar the City's with historic districts, but he is familiar with historic preservation on a smaller level. As far as affordable housing, he has been involved in assisting with various programs for needy neighborhoods with success. He also knows that Miami Beach is diverse as far as residents that are very wealthy to those less fortunate, including somewhere in between.

Commissioner Góngora asked about promoting tourism and sustainability/green issues. He also asked why he feels he is the best candidate.

Mr. Higginbotham stated the North Beach tourism needs improvement, but that the City is well represented in promoting tourism. He has had experience in depth of a number of cities, he has a close relationship with ICMA, he has a good energy level, no connections to Miami Beach, he has financial background and experience in management.

Mr. Higginbotham made his closing remarks.

Discussion held.

**DISCUSSION SESSION** - The City Commission discussed the applicant's municipal and private

sector experience and the answers to his questions.

There was a brief discussion regarding salary and bonus, selected applicant undergoing background check and signing of waiver. **City Attorney's Office to handle.**

**11:50 a.m.**

Mayor Bower suggested selecting the top two candidates to make the final selection at the June 6, 2012 Commission meeting and there was consensus.

**AFTERNOON SESSION**

**1:45 p.m.**

**FOURTH CANDIDATE – JULIO E. MAGRISSO**

Mayor Bower welcomed Mr. Magrisso, and explained that each candidate will have a ten-minute opening statement, followed by a question and answer session from the Mayor and each Commissioner, and a ten-minute closing statement by the candidate at the end of the interview.

Mr. Magrisso stated that he has nothing to gain, but he can do much good; he spoke about his experience in the private sector and as a City employee as Assistant Director in the Parks and Recreation Department.

Vice-Mayor Libbin asked how he would address the problems that the City has identified, restoring public confidence and the pinnacle of his professional career.

Mr. Magrisso explained that the Administration spends a tremendous amount of effort and time in writing Commission memorandums to give to the City Commission and perhaps a lot of this is unnecessary and should be streamlined. As far as restoring public confidence, it is a slow process. An Interim City Manager needs to meet with the City Commission to restore trust in the Administration and the confidence of the people. He gave a brief overview of his accomplishments in the private sector and abilities.

Commissioner Tobin asked about strengths and weaknesses, to which Mr. Magrisso explained that his goal is to get answers and gain the trust of the Commission.

Commissioner Exposito inquired about his "hands-on" approach of management style.

Mr. Magrisso stated that the interaction between the Administration and the City Commission is important, as well as it is between Administration and staff at lower levels. He would work with the City Commission to find out what is required of them to make decisions and thereby streamlining the work at Administration level.

Commissioner Góngora asked about demographics, diversity, communication and handling different directives from the Mayor and Commissioners, and what is he the best choice as candidate.

Mr. Magrisso stated that the demographics have changed from past decades, and the City has created a great partnership, of which he is proud to be a participant. Regarding communications, he thinks the Letter to Commission process works well. In response to dealing with different directives from elected officials, he stated that he would have to do the right thing. His experience and background in the private sector and his understanding of 10 years with the City are the reasons he feels he is the best candidate for the position.

Commissioner Wolfson asked if he is prepared for such a leadership position, and Mr. Magrisso stated that in the private and public sector he has dealt with shareholders, with diverse people and stakeholders.

Commissioner Weithorn asked Mr. Magrisso to go over his bulleted points in reference to resume submitted and to speak on his management style.

Mr. Magrisso stated that his priorities and/or goals are budget-related, millage and capital improvements, enhancements and reductions, to continue the Convention Center RFQ process, the Union bargaining negotiations (he has been involved in contract negotiations), and review those recommendations made by the Budget Advisory Committee, as well as administrative orders, and regaining the City Commission's trust in the Administration. On his management style, he added that he analyses, understands and feels the pain of the employees below.

Mayor Bower inquired as to his position on historic preservation.

Mr. Magrisso explained that the City has done great improvements with structural preservation, but stated that the natural resources are important and a passion to him.

**DISCUSSION SESSION** - The City Commission discussed the applicant's experience in the private sector, his commitment to the City, and the answers to his questions.

#### **FIFTH CANDIDATE – JOSE GARCIA-PEDROSA**

Mayor Bower welcomed Mr. Garcia-Pedrosa, and explained that each candidate will have a ten-minute opening statement, followed by a question and answer session from the Mayor and each Commissioner, and a ten-minute closing statement by the candidate at the end of the interview.

Mr. Garcia-Pedrosa made his opening statements by giving an overview of his background and accomplishments in municipal government, law firm practice and experience as past City Manager in the City of Miami Beach, which he stated was the best job he ever had.

Commissioner Exposito asked about core values and uncertainty by staff during the transition, and how he would ensure an institutionalized organization; and what he would do different if he had to do it all over again, referring to his being City Manager for Miami Beach.

Mr. Garcia-Pedrosa explained that he would retain and/or attract talented individuals, preferably residents of the beach with knowledge and expertise in their fields. He added that he should have never left the City when he was City Manager; that is something he would do different if he had to do it all over again.

Commissioner Góngora asked why he is interested in the Interim position, what is the most critical issue facing Miami Beach, and how would he handle conflicting requests from the City Commission.

Mr. Garcia-Pedrosa explained that during the summer business is slower, the City Commission is in recess in August, and this an Interim position, so he has made accommodations so as to not abandon his business completely. The critical issues facing the City are in retaining expected levels of services for residents during the challenging revenue period faced by the City, the budget deadline is September 30, the Convention Center process and improving the quality of life. In addition to conflicting directives from the City Commission, he explained that with good faith

and goodwill, those things can be remedied.

Commissioner Wolfson stated that during his tenure there was some conflictive issues internally and asked him to explain.

Mr. Garcia-Pedrosa stated that he clashed with the Police Union and felt that there is a lack of discipline with the FOP President at the time, but he feels he managed a difficult situation well.

Commissioner Weithorn asked him what he would do different if he had to do it over again, what are his priorities and goals and what impact has he made in any municipality.

Mr. Garcia-Pedrosa answered that he would have intense group meetings with each Commissioner to find out their expectations, and meet with staff. His goals would be to have financial order in the City, a well run City; in terms of development move the Convention Center Project forward and institutionalizing values that make the difference. He explained that in the City of Miami, upon his arrival was fragmentation, a lack of leadership and tax improvement district were very problematic, and he made a difference and a positive impact at the time.

Vice-Mayor Libbin asked about restoring public confidence and crisis management style.

Mr. Garcia-Pedrosa stated that at least two departments need to be looked at, and corruption goes beyond the issue itself, institutionalized values must drop from the top to the bottom of any organization. Mr. Garcia-Pedrosa cited the example that when he was City Manager in Miami, there was a financial crisis in the City, and conflicts between the Mayor and the Oversight Board, and he succeeded in reaching an approved budget, earning the trust of those involved and continuing into the future.

Commissioner Tobin asked his thoughts about where he thinks the City of Miami Beach may have gone wrong, about privatization and moving forward with hiring and firing staff. He also asked that if an Assistant City Manager position was offered, would he accept it?

Mr. Garcia-Pedrosa stated that he really didn't know, perhaps the institutionalized values began to diminish, because there are talented individuals in staff, there is a need for a constant leader, earning their pay every day and operating at higher levels, but something happened along the line, a diminishment of those values and the opportunity to do wrong by some employees. About privatization, he stated he did not like it himself, and hiring and firing, he feels it's something that needs to be done. In regards to accepting an ACM position, he would be flattered but would not accept and explained why.

Mayor Bower asked questions regarding demographics, socioeconomic statistics, preservation and accepting (or not) a permanent position as City Manager.

Mr. Garcia-Pedrosa stated that the City has the entire spectrum from very wealthy to very poor in the socioeconomic area. He added that the job of the City Manager is not to make policy on preservation, but as a citizen, that he concurs that preservation has to be done in terms of Historic preservation and continuance. In answering the question about accepting a permanent position, he stated that again, he would be flattered, but he is not sure how he would feel, he simply does not know. Closing statements were made.

**DISCUSSION SESSION** - The City Commission discussed the applicant's private and public sector experience and the answers to his questions.

**SIXTH CANDIDATE – KATHIE G. BROOKS**

Mayor Bower welcomed Ms. Brooks, and explained that each candidate will have a ten-minute opening statement, followed by a question and answer session from the Mayor and each Commissioner, and a ten-minute closing statement by the candidate at the end of the interview.

Ms. Brooks spoke about her experience in City government during her opening statement, emphasizing the encouragement and support received from her peers, which was a determining factor in her submitting her application. She stated that changes need to be made and gave an overview of her experience in the City and enumerated the priorities and goals at hand.

Commissioner Tobin asked Ms. Brooks about her strengths and weaknesses and how she would manage staff not performing well.

Ms. Brooks explained that she has a broad overview of City departments; she understands the issues at department director levels and has the respect of key personnel, organizational staff and talented people. Her weaknesses, which she considers her challenges, would be to let go of the Budget responsibility areas and her impatience for change. In answering Commissioner Tobin's questions about handling staff not performing well, she stated that at time City personnel do not have a "definite sense of urgency," a mindset that must be changed, and she has no problem in dismissing personnel if their performance is not to part.

Commissioner Exposito asked Ms. Brooks if she had names of people interested in covering her position in Budget, how she would go about satisfying consensus and since the City is facing huge projects, what would be her role as Interim Manager.

Ms. Brooks stated the she would delineate a balance; the Interim Manager does not take away flexibility from a permanent manager, and she would look for potential staff internally in the interim; there are other vacancies, such as the Procurement Director that needs to be addressed. Her priorities as Interim Manager would be the budget, moving forward with the Convention Center process, labor negotiations and pension reform.

Commissioner Góngora asked Ms. Brooks for her recommendations as how to proceed; would she accept a permanent position, and how she would handle conflictive City Commission requests. He also asked why she feels she is the best candidate.

Ms. Brooks explained that first the City needs to focus on ethics and corruption education, internal control, priority on policies and follow up on leads, sending a message from the Administration on ethics and discuss pension reforms, labor negotiations and recommendations from the Budget Advisory Committee. She explained that she would like to return to her position in Budget, and in regards to handling conflictive requests from the City Commission, she stated she would get as much information about the issue at hand, and find out why there are different views and make the best recommendation and take appropriate action. She feels she is the best candidate because she has organizational knowledge of department and issues, she has the respect of the organization and wants to help during the transition; and she will not be leaving when the new Manager comes aboard.

Commissioner Wolfson asked about her plan for restoring trust in Administration and her views on the critical vacant positions.

Ms. Brooks stated that the City Commission is responsible of the community and are empowered

to make policy. The City Manager carries out the policies established, and this need to be reinforced by staff. She feels that some contractual projects need to move forward; and one of her first priorities would be to meet with each one of the City Commission members to discuss their priorities.

Commissioner Weithorn asked her views on the restructuring of departments, elimination of positions and how she would ensure success.

Ms. Brooks stated that restructuring departments and eliminating jobs is to be done with much sensitivity and she hope to change the culture of the City by sending a message about urgency and responsibilities to constituents in certain departments; she would want the City Commission to lay out performance goals, and that would give a roadmap to success.

Vice-Mayor Libbin asked that in providing professional due diligence, what steps did she take, or what did she do? He asked for an example of something she would do different than done previously, and asked that if she is not selected as Interim Manager, would she consider the position of Assistant City Manager.

Ms. Brooks stated that she is familiar with projects, but she would talk to experts to get their perspective, and take recommendation from selective committees and staff, then make recommendations. She wants to make a difference by having more of a sense of urgency in responding to certain issues, and explained that she applied for the Interim City Manager position, so she would decline an ACM position at this time.

Discussion was held and clarification was made regarding communicating to the City Commission rather than to each individual elected official. Ms. Brook made her closing statements.

**DISCUSSION SESSION** - The City Commission discussed the applicant's municipal experience and the answers to her questions.

**5:08 p.m.**

Commissioner Tobin stated that his choice for Interim Manager would be Ms. Kathie G. Brooks.

Discussion held.

Commissioner Góngora agreed with Commissioner Tobin that Ms. Brooks can "definitely steer the ship" and ranked her as Candidate No. 2.

Commissioner Wolfson suggested that the Commission agree on the top two candidates. His choice is 1) Higginbotham and 2) Kathie Brooks.

Discussion continued.

Vice-Mayor Libbin suggested making the final recommendation today and bring for final vote to the June 6 Commission Meeting.

Mayor Bower had originally ranked Garcia-Pedrosa as No. 1 and Kathie Brooks as No. 2, but had changed her mind as a result of the interview process. She ranked Mr. Goldberg as No. 2.

Discussion ensued. The Mayor and Commissioner stated who their top choices were.

**5:43 p.m.**

Consensus was reached, unanimously, selecting Kathie Brooks as the choice for the position of Interim City Manager. It was suggested by Commissioner Góngora that Mayor Bower meet with Ms. Brooks on June 5. There was consensus that a background must be conducted on Ms. Brooks, and that confirmation of the selection should be brought to the June 6, 2012 Commission Meeting at a 5:00 p.m. (time certain).

Meeting adjourned at 5:45 p.m.

## Handout or Reference Materials:

1. The Miami Herald Neighbors Section Ad #706
2. Guidelines for Interviewing Applicants submitted by Jose Smith, City Attorney
3. Candidates resumes and documentation
3. Sign-in sheet
4. City Commission ranking votes