

12 July 2013

To: ICRC Hiring Subcommittee

CC: ICRC Commissioners; Citizens of the City of Austin

Dear ICRC Commissioners,

I enjoyed our meeting this week and feel that once again we made some significant, positive steps forward in this process. I am thrilled that Cathy Cocco will be able to be sworn in and that we as a Commission are utilizing new technology to create a more open, accessible process for all involved. I am so proud of my fellow Commissioners for their hard work, critical thinking, and ability to collaborate to find such credible, well-considered solutions.

In this letter, I wanted to specifically address the question of how we can go about hiring an Executive Director. My first point is more general, while the last two topics are recommendations on how we could receive resumes and how we can better assess those resumes.

In my professional life, I have been fortunate to have the opportunity to help start and build upon two successful businesses. While the businesses in their nature are relatively different, the cycle of growth that I went through as an employee and a human being has been similar in both. I can tell you that it is never easy. The first several months were challenging, exhausting, bewildering, and emotional. However, those first months are so incredibly important as you start to lay the foundation for the path upon which you, and others, will eventually walk. The process of laying that foundation can be backbreaking, but trust that the work you are doing now will eventually make your time much easier.

The primary lesson I have learned through these experiences is that when you are creating something that has previously never existed, the questions that you may have once asked someone else become questions that you not only must ask yourself but also answer, deliberate, decide upon, and execute. This is no easy task! However, a helpful adjustment is to identify the paradigm shift between *wondering* how we will accomplish something to *proposing and deciding* how. Of course, we must work within specific legal limits set out by the Charter, the City of Austin, and the State of Texas. However, outside of those boundaries, it is up to us to determine how we want to move forward. We can request input from outside sources to hear about best practices and to gain additional perspective, but ultimately we must decide what will work best for the Commission to stay committed to our mission and goals as set out by the

Charter.

Regarding the hiring of the Executive Director, I would like to offer two suggestions to the brave Hiring Subcommittee. The first is that should you choose not to utilize the City of Austin's job application portal, I would recommend you consider using Jobscore (<http://www.jobscore.com>). This service has a free plan which could fulfill our needs, including the ability to post the job, receive resumes via the portal, and for each member of the Commission to have their own log-in with which they can log in and view the resumes that have been submitted. We could link to the posting on the Jobscore site from the City of Austin website as well. There are many other free features which I would be happy to discuss more in-depth with the Subcommittee or other Commissioners if needed.

My other recommendation is that in addition to requesting a cover letter and a resume from our potential Executive Director candidates, we also have candidates submit a written application. This application can be similar in format to the ICRC applications we all completed, with targeted questions that will help the hiring subcommittee in screening resumes. From my experience in hiring, while resumes are a good indicator of someone's relevant experience, a written application can give the resume screener additional information on a candidate's level of commitment to the role, his or her critical thinking skills, and his or her ability to communicate. In the spirit of asking, answering, and executing on the questions we are currently faced with, I'm including a draft written application with questions that I think might help us further qualify candidates. I am happy to further discuss my reasoning behind the questions as well. However, I will leave it in the capable hands of the Hiring Subcommittee to take the application from here and improve upon it, if so desired.

Thank you all for your insights, hard work, and mutual respect. It is an honor to serve with you.

Best regards,



Rachel Farris

Enclosure: ICRC Executive Director - Written Application Questions



ICRC Executive Director - Written Application Questions

Candidate Name:

Company Name (if applicable):

Submission Date:

1. Tell us about yourself and why you are interested in the Executive Director position.
2. The ICRC is looking for an Executive Director who can assist with hiring needs, including legal counsel, redistricting consultants, and administrative assistants. Please describe your hiring philosophy and experience.
3. Describe a time when you helped build consensus among team members on a difficult topic.
4. What does "independence" mean to you?
5. The ICRC is working on a tight timeline, and building from the ground up. If chosen, what assets do you bring to the table (in terms of staff, prior experience, resources, etc.) that will help you hit the ground running?
6. What do you see as the biggest challenge to this role? How do you plan to overcome it?
7. What are your salary expectations?
8. If selected, approximately how many hours per week do you have to dedicate to this role?
9. Do you have any major life events/vacations planned in the next 6-9 months that might require your absence from the City of Austin or might require time off lasting more than 5 days in duration? Please list below if so.
10. Describe a time when you successfully de-escalated a conflict between two individuals/parties.