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City Ponders Job Analysis Plan

By KEN WEAVER
 Managing Editor
 Birmingham city commissioners came close Monday night to rejecting the administration's request for a job analysis and salary study plan which called the city manager to report back next week with more information.

City Manager L. S. Kenning, in charge of the City personnel department, recommended the hiring of a consulting firm to do the study, at an estimated cost of \$10,000. City personnel assisted with the work involved — bringing job descriptions and salary classification up to date.

STRONGEST OPPOSITION to the plan was Commissioner Charles Renfrew. He felt the City should not "undertake a commitment like this exclusive of our budget" and questioned "the advisability of the job at all."

Mayor Florence H. Willett said it was discussed at budget time but that it was her understanding the administration was to investigate the matter more fully.

Renfrew said he had been "expelled" to the kind of work such consulting firms do, Renfrew declared: "I'm unconvinced that there's anything they could contribute."

"Objectivity" was the answer from Commissioner Robert Page. "The results would be more readily acceptable to the people affected by the study."

"I think we want some subjectivity," countered Renfrew. "I'm not so sure objectivity is what we want."

COMMISSIONER William E. Roberts said he was "definitely opposed to doing anything at this time."

He contended that the commissioners "dip into our reserves too often and too deep."

"Our fingers are sticky from the honey bucket," Commissioner Carl Inerham chimed in.

"Do you want it brought back to the Birmingham Eccestrate?"

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another time, at the next budget time (May, 1962)." Mayor Willett inquired.

PAGE RESPONDED with "the salary study should be done, I think we should do it. I think outside consultants will be of the greatest help. I think it ought to be done."

City Manager L. R. Gero asked the commissioners to reach a decision. "If you determine not to do this, if you're not going to take it up at the next budget time, it is no more than fair to let us know tonight. We should have a concrete answer right now."

Saying that he was "not too sympathetic" to the idea of a consulting firm, Commissioner William H. Burgham expressed confidence in Kenning directing the study.

"IT MIGHT take longer" might not be in as attractive a package, but I would be satisfied with the results he would come up with."

"I'm not inclined to spend the money at this time," Burgham stated. Inerham suggested that the administration attempt to straighten out existing inequities in job status and bring up the study plan again at budget time.

Roberts replied that it would be "difficult to change the inequities; they're all down the line."

And Gero added, "If we change just one, we have a problem all down the line. Really, I don't want to wait until next May or June. I want to act now."

KENNING SAID that he had been aware of the problem for some time, that "it is a large one, one the (personnel) department has tried to solve, but has not found time; and I don't see how in the future the department can find time to do the detail work that is necessary to solve it."

It is up to the personnel department to evaluate the various jobs, I doubt if we can do it in the next year or the year following, due to more pressing business."

ROBERTS MOVED that the administration be directed to undertake the study with City personnel performing the work. He was supported by Renfrew.

Inerham said there would be no sense in directing the administration to make the study if it wasn't in a position to do so and moved to table Roberts' motion, drawing support from Page.

The tabling motion lost, 4-3, with Inerham and Page casting the only yes votes.

Then Roberts' motion to have the City do the work failed in a tie vote—Renfrew, Roberts and Burgham voting yes; Mayor Willett, Inerham and Page voting no.

WHEREUPON PAGE moved to adopt the administration's recommendation to hire a consultant. Mayor Willett supported him.

But this motion lost 4-3, with Page and the mayor casting the only yes votes.

Inerham then suggested that the administration report back next week with a recommendation on how it could do the work. Renfrew suggested that the number of job descriptions involved also be included.

"That's all of them," said Gero. Renfrew said he wants "more information on why this is such a critical problem."

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