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**Palm Coast City Manager Search Sabotaged
by Council Dysfunction, Lack of Salary Transparency**
Local media mistakenly believes “size matters” when evaluating executives

WICHITA, Kansas – Years of council chaos, poor treatment of previous executives, and below market compensation have hindered the Palm Coast city manager search as local reports lament the “lack of top-flight candidates.”

“Many qualified executives with experience in communities of comparable size do not want to sign up for this dumpster fire,” stated Joe Turner, CEO of the American Association of Municipal Executives. “Palm Coast is where city manager careers go to die.”

This is reinforced by the fact that neither the acting city manager nor any other internal applicants have applied for the position and the dearth of Florida candidates. Furthermore, the two previous city managers exited public service after lengthy local government careers.

Recently, the city council has been tight-fisted on salary. They brought Matthew Morton in at a rate significantly lower than his predecessor and Denise Bevan was paid below market.

Then you have multiple state laws that discourage the best candidates from applying.

Throughout the country, city managers in cities with a population greater than 100,000 people customarily get 12 months of severance when terminated without cause. In Florida, where college football coaches and university deans can walk away with millions when fired, state law limits municipal chief executive officers who can be fired on a whim to just 20-weeks of severance protection.

State open record laws expose candidates to risk back home with their current governing body. Executives are routinely run out of town by jealous and vindictive councils when they find out their manager is applying for other jobs. Why would a candidate risk that relationship for a job that will most assuredly pay below market?

“Executives hate it when a salary range is not listed and will refuse to apply for the position because they don’t want to waste their time,” Turner said.

Throw in the cost of swapping out a sub-three percent interest rate on your \$450,000 mortgage for a seven percent rate and you are looking at needing to make an extra \$20,000 a year just to break even. And this is in a market where home prices have dropped nearly 9% over the last year according to RedFin, which will likely continue trending down, and where the cost of insuring that home is rapidly increasing.

All for the privilege of working for a city council that has a history of undermining the executive and interfering with personnel.

To give you an idea of where the market is trending nationally, Springfield, Missouri is offering a starting salary of \$350,000 and it will most assuredly come with a lower cost of living and a severance package greater than 20-weeks.

Finally, many local elected officials, journalists, and citizens mistakenly believe that executives leading much smaller communities in terms of population are somehow less qualified than “big city” managers. Small town managers are often more engaged with community stakeholders and hands-on when it comes to operations. This is because executives in larger communities are often deluged with meetings and tend to focus on managing the demands of the governing body.

“Population size is a very simplistic measuring stick and fails to take into account a myriad of factors that should be used to evaluate the competency of an executive,” Turner said.

The American Association of Municipal Executives is a newly formed professional organization that advocates on behalf of city managers and other public sector executives. It was founded by Joe Turner and other public sector leaders. Turner is also the host of the City Manager Unfiltered podcast – widely regarded as the most influential local government podcast in the nation.