

COLIN BAENZIGER  ASSOCIATES

EXECUTIVE RECRUITING

Susan Stanton

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Resume



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Dynamic, results-driven City Manager with demonstrated executive success providing strong, visionary and innovative management to drive performance in challenging economies. An authentic manager, who offers commitment to valuing people, creativity, integrity, diversity, openness, respect, and teamwork and who attracts talented people and inspires them to succeed.

AREAS OF EXPERTISE

- Leadership & Supervision
 - Finance and Budget
 - Vision & Mission Planning
 - Labor Relations
 - Economic Development
 - Project Administration
 - Organization Development
 - Staff Development
 - Contract Administration
 - Crisis Management
 - Staff Development
 - Recruitment & Staffing
 - Strategic Problem Solving
 - Team Building and Leadership
-

RELEVANT LOCAL GOVERNMENT EXPERIENCE

Special Assistant to the City Manager, City of Fort Lauderdale, FL

2012 - Present

Encompassing nearly 36 square miles with a population of 182,521, Fort Lauderdale is the largest of Broward County's 31 municipalities and the state's seventh largest city. With a FY 2012 budget of \$632 million, the City employs 1,850 staff members.

Duties and Responsibilities

- Conduct management efficiency studies of city operations, management systems and implement findings to improve productivity and reduce cost.
- Provide management oversight of the City's utilization of \$1.9 million in CDBG funds and \$970,000 in Home Investment Partnerships Funds used to promote affordable housing in the City.
- Assist the City improve the administration of a \$9.3 million program design to provide transitional and emergency housing opportunities for persons with HIV/AIDS.

City Manager, City of Lake Worth, FL

2009-2011

Lake Worth is a diverse city with population of 35,800 and is located on the east coast in Palm Beach County, Florida. Since 2007, the City lost 50% of its total assessed land value and is challenged by substantial foreclosure of residential properties, slum and blight and a history of high turnover of its executive and management staff.

Duties and Responsibilities as City Manager:

- Chief executive officer of a municipal government with 318 full time staff with an FY 2012 Budget of \$172 million. Oversight responsibilities for the following functions: electric and water utility system, police, streets, stormwater drainage, sewer, parks, recreation, planning, zoning, building, community development, finance, library services, beach development and solid waste management.
- Administered the City during a State of Financial Urgency and restored fiscal solvency and financial discipline.

Achievements:

- Privatized and outsourced costly and ineffectively managed public service functions and reduced FY 2012 personnel expense by \$1.2 million without any reduction in service levels to the public.
 - Implemented critical cost saving modifications to City's Pension program which saved \$1.3 million in FY 2012.
 - Reduced the annual cost of police protection by \$2.3 million by collaboratively renegotiating a multi-year Law Enforcement Service Agreement without reducing levels of service.
 - Reduced the cost of Fire and EMS service by \$11.8 million by renegotiating a ten year Fire and EMS Merger Agreement and removing excessive supplemental fire payments previously agreed to by the City.
 - Declared a State of Financial Urgency which allowed the City to dramatically reduce personnel cost and expedite the resolution of a collective bargaining impasse with the City's three labor unions.
 - Instituted the use of Financial Forecasting to identify and address projected long range deficits and accurately aligning projected expenditures with available revenues which empowered elected officials to make difficult economic decisions based on accurate financial data and reports.
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RELEVANT LOCAL GOVERNMENT EXPERIENCE

City Manager, City of Lake Worth, FL (continued)

- Renegotiated an agreement to secure a \$5 million grant from the Palm Beach County Cultural Facilities Bond for the redesign and redevelopment of the beach and averted the forfeiture of these funds due to inaction and indecision.
- Established a Utility Conservation Program to provide free residential and commercial utility audits and grants to qualified residents to reduce wasteful consumption of electric and water.
- Designed and financed the construction of a \$17 million Reverse Osmosis Water Treatment and \$10 million Deep Well Injection system to improve the City's long term water system
- Developed a long-range Electric Improvement Plan that could be accomplished with in house staff and a city created apprentice program.
- Implemented the "Energized Lake Worth" plan which included GHG Emission Inventory of the City and Communities energy consumption patterns

City Manager, City of Largo, FL

1992-2007

Assistant City Manager, City of Largo, FL

1990-1992

The City of Largo is a city with a population of 77,600 residents covering approximately 17 square miles. It is located in the State's most densely populated region in central Pinellas County, Florida. The City is known for being family friendly and dedicated to providing superior services to promote pride and enhance the quality of life to its residents.

Duties and Responsibilities as City Manager:

- Chief executive officer of a municipal government with 875 full time staff with a FY 2012 Budget of \$156 million. Oversight responsibilities for the following functions: police, fire, EMS, advanced waste water treatment, solid waste, housing, streets, stormwater drainage, sewer, reclaimed water, parks, recreation, planning, zoning, building, community development, finance, library services, cultural arts and golf.
- Develop, implement, and evaluate redevelopment strategies to attract businesses by successfully adopting Community Redevelopment Districts which addressed conditions of slum and blight and supported private investment through plans, policies and programs that afforded maximum rehabilitation and redevelopment.
- Foster positive employer-employee relationships which promoted high employee morale.

Achievements:

- Demonstrated open and transparent communications with the Mayor, City Commission, employees, and community and exemplified the best principles and practices of the council-manager form of government.
- Prepared and shared information equally with all members of the City Commission; provided the Commission with alternatives, fiscal impact analysis and recommendations on all matters affecting the community.
- Planned, organized, and managed redevelopment projects to provide incentives and remove barriers for community redevelopment and reinvestment.
- Responsible for negotiating a private/public partnership that created a downtown mixed-use development which entailed retail and professional office construction with townhomes and apartments
- Expanded the City's economic and property tax value by \$330 million dollars by the establishment of a multi-year Annexation Management Program which started in 1997.
- Supervised the financing and construction of a \$22 million dollar library and the renovation of an \$11 million dollar city complex. Coordinated the purchase, acquisition, and financing of commercial and residential property for the construction of a regional park to stimulate reinvestment in the downtown.
- Instituted a comprehensive evaluation system of all employee positions, classifications and job structure and design to ensure personnel system was fair to employees and meeting current and future needs of the organization. The process included job restructuring, manpower forecasting and organization realignment.
- Created an innovative program to increase productivity, reduce absenteeism and control preventable healthcare costs. The program consisted of voluntary seminars throughout the year, an annual employee health screening event, employee assistance programs and the creation of participant wellness plans with specific goals to address health related risks and to promote healthy behavior and lifestyle choices.
- Established an innovative succession planning program designed to ensure stability and continuity in leadership and management functions in all work programs, divisions and departments. Program included the creations of leadership workshops for executives, supervisors and employees to prepare managers for future promotion and responsibility.

OTHER PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

City Administrator, City of Berea, KY

1986-1990

The City of Berea, located in the Kentucky Bluegrass, is a college community with a population of 12,000 residents and an FY 1990 budget of \$7.2 million. In FY 1990, the City employed 85 employees in the departments of Administration, Finance, Police, Fire, Planning, Public Works, Solid Waste, Land Fill Management, Recreation, and Industrial Development. Developed a comprehensive economic development program in the creation of a large Industrial Park which resulted in four international manufacturing firms locating in the City.

Administrative Assistant to the City Manager, City of Champaign, IL

1984-1986

The City of Champaign, home of the University of Illinois with a population of 60,000 residents and an FY 1986 budget of \$26 million. In FY 1986, the City employed 380 employees. Major accomplishments included coordinating a \$4 million renovation project of City Hall and conducted and prepared policy analyses and recommendations for City Council consideration on issues relating to the operations, responsibilities and functions of city departments.

Administrative Assistant to the Borough Manager, Ketchikan, AK

1983-1984

The Ketchikan Gateway Borough consists of several islands in Southeast Alaska's Inside Passage and the Tongass Narrows with a population of 14,000 residents and an FY 1984 budget of \$4.3 million. Accomplishments included acting as the Boroughs' primary representative for negotiating labor contracts with International Organization of Masters, Mates and Pilots (MMP) and the Inland Boatmen's Union (IBU) which reduced operating costs and strengthened management rights and conducted performance analysis of Borough operations and made recommendations for the reorganization of staff and management control systems.

EDUCATION

University of Florida, Graduate School, Public Administration
 University of Florida, College of Political Science
 Harvard University, John F. Kennedy School of Government
 Senior Executive in State and Local Government
 University of Oklahoma, Economic Development Institute
 University of Virginia, Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service
 Leading, Educating and Developing

Masters in Public Administration
 Bachelor of Arts
 Continuing Education
 Certificate of Completion
 Continuing Education

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT TRAINING

- US. Dept of Homeland Security, WMD Radiological/Nuclear Course, Bechtel Nevada; 2005.
- US Dept of Homeland Security, WMD Training and Incident Command (COBRA), 2004
- New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology, Incident Response to Terrorist Bombing, Energetic Materials Research and Testing Center, 2003.
- Emergency Management Institute, Disaster Preparation, Hurricane Recovery and Mitigation, 1992, 1994
- Emergency Management Institute Integrated Emergency Management for Hurricanes, Consequences of Terrorism, National Emergency Training Center, 1998, and 2000,

PERSONAL

Completed the New York City, Chicago, and Marine Corp. Marathons. Certified as an Advanced SCUBA Diver and a licensed Lay Eucharistic Minister with the Episcopal Diocese of Southeast Florida

References Provided Upon Request

CB&A Interview

Susan A. Stanton

Education

MPA, University of Florida
BA, University of Florida
Continuing Education, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA

Experience

Special Assistant to the City Manager, City of Fort Lauderdale, FL	2012 – Present
City Manager, Lake Worth, FL	2009 – 2011
City Manager, City of Largo, FL	1992 – 2007
Assistant City Manager, City of Largo, FL	1990 – 1992
City Administrator, City of Berea, KY	1986 – 1990
Administrative Assistant to City Manager, City of Champaign, IL	1984 – 1986
Administrative Assistant to Borough Manager, Ketchikan Gateway Borough, AK	1983 – 1984

Background

The City of Lake Worth lies in Palm Beach County on the east coast of Florida, with a diverse population of about 36,000. The City employs about 320 staff, down from 400 employees. Ms. Stanton directly supervised 10 department heads. The general fund is \$33 million and the total budget is \$190 million. The three most important issues facing the City of Lake Worth are:

- Financial management and solvency: The City lost almost 55% of its taxable property base in three years. The City needs to ensure it can pay for the services it wants;
- Electric Utility: Seen as a valued asset by Ms. Stanton and the Utility Director, the property was mismanaged for several years. As a quick solution, the City may choose to sell its utility to FPL or a small utility company; and
- Redevelopment of the beachfront: For many years Lake Worth's beachfront building was in disrepair and deteriorating. Before Ms. Stanton was hired in 2008 the City had signed an agreement with a private company to redevelop the beachfront at the company's expense. The City terminated the developer's contract citing non-performance. A \$40 million lawsuit for unlawful breach of the contract was filed and is currently unresolved.

Interview Comments

Ms. Stanton wishes to stay in Florida to remain close to her son who hopes to become a police officer. She loves Southern Florida. Many communities do not have a sense of place and you do not know when you have arrived or left. Key West not only has an international reputation but is a unique community with a strong sense of place. It is also the perfect size - small enough to

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know every employee personally but large enough to do best practices. Being the manager of such a community would be a wonderful achievement.

Ms. Stanton is an informal manager who empowers her staff. Her three best physical tools are her conference table, a white board, and a large jar of jellybeans. Ms. Stanton gathers her people together to collaboratively discuss issues and make decisions. She surrounds herself with smart people who are passionate, who will speak up and say what they think, and who are prepared to disagree and provide reasons why. She invests time and energy identifying the services of the City and understanding what the employees do. In the City of Largo, she picked up trash, cleaned sewer lines, went into burning buildings, and answered telephones. Rather than simply watch her employees engaged in their work, she learns more by actually performing their jobs.

Ms. Stanton's staff would say she is knowledgeable about local government. She is passionate and sincerely cares about doing the right thing. She holds many meetings and sets high standards for herself and her employees. She establishes an environment that enables them to do their jobs and do them well. She brings out the best in her employees, encouraging them to learn from their mistakes and move forward.

Almost all of her elected officials in Lake Worth would say they are always surprised by the amount of energy Ms. Stanton brought to the job. They valued the relationship she had with them, individually and collectively. She provided all necessary information to them and explained issues in ways they could appreciate, and in a different manner than had ever been followed in Lake Worth prior to her arrival. Her understanding of local government operations is far superior to anyone they had interviewed for the position or who had worked for the City previously. The Commissioners would say they made a mistake when they decided to let Ms. Stanton go because the politics involved in the hiring of a City Manager and staff now makes it difficult for them to hire and retain good staff.

Ms. Stanton is a strategic thinker. She can operationalize abstract concepts to achieve desired outcomes. She sees beyond the horizon and knows how to get there. She sets specific goals and objectives in an operating plan to achieve very specific outcomes. Ms. Stanton recruits, empowers, and retains bright, professional people. She established and sustained nationally accredited Police, Fire, and Parks Departments. Prior to her departure from the City of Largo, she initiated an accreditation process for the Public Works Department, which has now been completed. Furthermore, the person she recommended to succeed her has been chosen as the City Manager, and most management personnel have remained. Additionally, Ms. Stanton has good municipal financial management and budgeting skills. She connects budgets to the Strategic Plan, which are then used to evaluate her and her staff. Every city where she has been employed has always received a Certificate of Achievement for Financial Reporting and Budgeting.

One of Ms. Stanton's weaknesses is that she tends to be shy and introverted in unstructured settings. She has no difficulty speaking on national television or to large groups, such as commission meetings, but she just does not feel comfortable in social business gatherings.

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Furthermore, she recognizes the need to improve on developing her personal relationships in her private life.

As part of its strategic plan, the City of Largo developed goals, objectives, and benchmarks which were incorporated into its budget. Ms. Stanton evaluated the staff, annually, based on the goals and objectives the City established. New goals, objectives, and benchmarks were then set for the upcoming year. These had to be specific, relevant, measurable, and achievable. She met with her department directors quarterly to examine how well they were achieving those goals.

Ms. Stanton's biggest achievement was transforming the City of Largo. The City was once called 'Larghetto' and, prior to her employment, it had poor services. The City was a place people drove through to get to the surrounding cities, and it had a reputation for being cheap. She changed that perception. She helped redevelop Largo. She oversaw the financing and construction of a \$22 million dollar library. She successfully built a new municipal facility, which includes the City's Town Hall and the Commission Chamber where their meetings are broadcast. She spearheaded the redevelopment of 80 acres of the downtown, now known as Largo Central Park, which includes a performing arts center. She initiated a marketing campaign to demonstrate the community's renaissance. She changed the culture of the City, how the residents live and how they perceive it. The City of Largo now prides itself on the quality of its services, and this pride is articulated by its citizens.

Ms. Stanton's biggest mistake involved a water reclamation system initiated in Lake Worth prior to her tenure. The City wished to expand its customer base in a more economical fashion. For six months she met with her staff and the Commission to develop a business model that would allow for the expansion of the service. However, after the project was completed people did not connect to the system. Too much effort had been put into the project. There were many variables involved, some of which had not been thoroughly explored. Ms. Stanton learned that she needs to be cautious, even when someone proposes what looks like a very good idea. The outcome of consumer driven public works projects can be difficult to anticipate, especially when attempting to predict customer consumption and patterns.

When asked, Ms. Stanton noted that firing people is never pleasant. Whenever one has to fire an employee it points to both a failure of the municipal organization and the individual. Opportunities for improvement were provided when appropriate. In some cases the person chose not to perform, in others they simply did not have the required skill set.

Ms. Stanton feels the challenges facing the next City Manager in Key West are:

- Helping employees work smarter, cheaper and better;
- Finding ways to diversify the revenues and economic base. Diversification is very important for the health of the community. The new manager needs to ensure they do not focus on just one sector of the community;
- The city many need to lay off employees, a task which requires a city manager that has a sense of innovation and a good understanding of performance indicators. Ms. Stanton

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can assist the city staff in re-engineering the process of providing services and raising revenues;

- People that are not from Key West can find it difficult to bond with the community. The new manager will need to have a certain amount of authenticity that they might not need in places that have less sense of community;
- Adjusting to the location. Key West is as far south as one can go;
- Infrastructure maintenance; and
- Re-engineering the budget process and handling typical city management issues.

If chosen as the next Key West City Manager, in her first six months Ms. Stanton would:

- Gain a really good understanding of how the city does business. She would take every opportunity to work with employees to get a feeling of how they do their work, what tools they have and how the government actually operates. She prides herself in evaluating staff to ensure that the right employee with the right skills has the right tools and is in the right position;
- Meet with those who think the city is doing a very good job and those who are less satisfied to get a general temperature of the community. She would conduct an analysis to assess strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities;
- Develop a personal relationship with the City Commissioners. Gain an understanding of why they ran for office and what they want to achieve. Determine if their districts have any special needs that may or may not be met by the city;
- Sit with the department directors and learn of their strengths. Determine where they see opportunities for improvement and what they want to accomplish but have not been able to. Understand their vision for the future and what areas need to be focused on. Develop a sense of team work;
- Establish her management style, which is collegiate. Developing good working relationships with the staff is critical in the first six months;
- Assess the way the city does business, budgets, personnel processes and evaluate how they account for resources. Gain a general feeling of how the organization works; and
- Cultivate friendships in Key West. She loves to be part of the community.

Ms. Stanton has experience with the media and has established an excellent relationship with them. In Lake Worth she regularly met with the Palm Beach Post. However, some in the City perceived that she was meeting with them too frequently. Her approach is to be proactive with the media and develop a good working relationship with them. She has consistently received good press.

In her leisure time, Ms. Stanton reads books. She prefers autobiographies. She is also very active in her church.

Ms. Stanton's most embarrassing incident occurred while she was recently employed as the City Manager in Lake Worth, and it involved alleged harassment against a gay bar. The City had a

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noise ordinance, and the bar was known for playing loud music. Residents filed complaints. The bar's owner alleged that Ms. Stanton singled out this establishment because its clients were gay. In fact, this bar was not the only one being cited for noise infractions. However, because of this situation, some people wrote damaging comments about her in their internet blogs.

Reason for Leaving the Recent Position:

Ms. Stanton loved working in Lake Worth. Her experience there was a good one. However, after an election when some new commissioners were elected, in a three to two vote, her contract was terminated. She accepted the assignment in Fort Lauderdale with the understanding that she is searching for a permanent city manager position. She enjoys being a city manager, the chief cheerleader of an organization. She enjoys setting the vision for the organization and gathering the troops and strategizing. She really wants to return to city management.

Most Recent Base Salary

\$150,000

Words or phrases Ms. Stanton uses to describe herself:

- Extremely passionate about government,
- Highly spiritual about life,
- Willing to question how things have been done in the past,
- Willing to take the road less traveled,
- Professional, and
- Highly committed to her integrity and ethics.

Interviewer's Impressions

Honest, loves life, and respects herself and others. Proud of her municipal accomplishments and knowledge. Has a passion for local government and the communities she serves.

Interviewed by: Diane Wainwright and Lynelle Klein
Colin Baenziger & Associates

Candidate Response to Requested Questions

Questions for the Candidates

Describe your experience in finance, budgeting, cost control, infrastructure and maintaining an efficient organization. As part of your answer, describe the approach you would take to evaluating our organization to insure it is operating as efficiently and effectively as possible. I have extensive experience in finance, budgeting, cost control and maintaining an efficient organization. During my tenures as City Manager in both Largo Florida and Lake Worth Florida I established an Office of Budget and Management to coordinate the preparation of the City's Annual Operating and Capital Improvement Budgets to improve organizational effectiveness, establish long term financial planning and link departmental spending to performance indicators which focused on the accomplishments of strategic objectives approved by the City Commission. In both the City of Lake Worth and in Largo I developed comprehensive processes for projecting city expenditures, revenues, capital needs and projected fund balances for a five year planning period. Both communities received awards for excellence in financial reporting and municipal budgeting.

If selected as Key West's City Manager the approach I would use to evaluate the City's operation would be similar to what I did in Lake Worth in 2009. The first step would be to meet individually and collectively with the Mayor and City Commissioners to obtain their prospective of the City's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities for improvements and future threats they feel I need to address within the first 90 days. I would have similar discussions with the executive staff regarding their goals, objectives, operational concerns and their plans for the future. I would ask for their individual assessment of the operating efficiencies of their respective departments and the City in general. During my first 30 days, I would want to have a personal conversation with the external auditor from Keefe, McCullough & Co., LLP regarding their 2011 Comprehensive Financial Report and any management findings not included in the most recent management letter. I would also have a very detailed discussion with Finance Director Roger Wittenberg regarding City finances and internal controls regarding purchasing and future spending. During this initial 90 day period I would begin meeting with small groups of employees to discuss city operations and introduce my management style. I tend to be a very hands-on City Manager and enjoy doing work days along side city employees. This provides me a good opportunity to assess whether employees have the right tools to do their jobs and whether they are empowered to make good decisions in the field to maximize productivity and efficiency.

Given the City's current recruitment schedule, the new City Manager will begin the job in the middle of the budgetary process. This will create an excellent opportunity to observe the management capacity of city staff and determine if best practices are used in decisions regarding capital finance, the selection of personnel, the procurement of goods and services, negotiating contracts, justifying staff recommendations and whether the City has good performance measures to assess effectiveness.

In Largo, the process I describe was internalized with all executive management and we were a very high performance organization. As detailed in my resume, I am a strong believer of inviting independent assessors into an organization and asking them if City operations are well managed. In Largo, we received national accreditation of our Police, Fire, Recreation, and Public Works Departments. Each of the national accreditations received by City departments involved a comprehensive review of the department's organization, management, operations, and administration. Achieving national accreditation provided validation that a City department was professionally managed, improved customer service, identified areas for future improvement and created a culture of continuous self-assessment and improvement. I would very much want to engage in a similar internal review process in my first six months as Key West's new City manager.

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Describe your experience with sustainable communities and a tourism based economy. During my career in local government, I have worked in diverse communities which were committed to sustainability and smart growth, had university/college based economies and were heavily dependent on tourism. The community that is most similar to the tourist based economy of Key West Florida is, interestingly, the City of Ketchikan Alaska.

Like Key West, Ketchikan is also a popular major port of call for cruise ships making 420 stops at the Port of Ketchikan in 2010. When I worked for Ketchikan Gateway Borough I coordinated operations at the International Airport, negotiated terminal leases, supervised Ferry Boat Operations and was responsible for labor relations. When the cruise ships were in port, the entire downtown came alive with excitement and activity which sustained jobs and commerce with hundreds of people. I very much enjoyed making sure our Borough operations were a positive reflection of the community and were welcoming to our visitors. Ketchikan, very much like Key West, was located in a remote region of the nation and also had a strong sense of community.

Both the Cities of Champagne (University of Illinois) and City of Berea (Berea College) had economies that were heavily influenced with the seasonal demand of schools, students and commercial activities associated with education. Being a city manager in each of these communities required developing active partnerships with multiple interests in town that were heavily dependent on the university/college while also offering cost effective services to residents who lived full time in the community.

My best experience regarding sustainability was obtained in Lake Worth Florida which was a full service community that operated its own water treatment and distribution service, electric generation and distribution system and solid waste collection. As outlined in my resume, during my tenure as City Manager, we completed the construction of a Reverse Osmosis water treatment plant to ensure local control of our water system and improve the quality of drinking water, created a residential and commercial utility conservation program to reduce the cost of electricity and water, adopted a new electric rate tariff that rewarded customers for using electric during off peak times and conserving energy, conducted a GHG Emission Inventory of the community designed to meet the goals and targets for greenhouse gas reductions (including a 7% reduction of GHG emissions by 2012, a 28% reduction by 2025 and a 43% reduction by 2035 for City Facilities and Operations) and began the implementation of a program in Solid Waste to give customers a credit for recycling based on the volume collected in their neighborhood. In Largo Florida the City operated an advanced Waste Water Reclamation Plant that produced 13 MGD of reclaimed water for residential and commercial customers. In Largo, we operated a state of the art bio-solids facility which uses advanced heat-drying technology to produce 16 tons of Class AA marketable pelletized domestic waste residuals.

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Significant weather events occur from time to time in Key West. Describe your experience preparing for and dealing with the aftermath of storm events and /or natural disasters. As a City Manager in Florida for twenty years, I have extensive experience in Integrated Emergency Management, developing emergency operating plans, preparing a community for the arrival of large storm events, staging employees prior to landfall of hurricanes and, unfortunately, in responding to the devastation effectives of localized emergencies. In Largo, staff received extensive training from the Emergency Management Institute regarding the creation of city policy to effectively deal with the proper declaration of an emergency, the need to maintain communication with the general public, procurement guidelines and the establishment of recovery and mitigation priorities in response to local emergencies.

During my tenure in Largo, we had a very advanced Emergency Management process and I have logged many hours over the years directing the operations of the City from our EOC and managing resources during the preparedness and response phase responding to four hurricanes which threatened the Tampa Bay Area. Our preparation, response, recovery and mitigation in each event was a total team effort that involved all city departments reorganizing into different functional units to coordinate our emergency activities. Employees were provided extensive training throughout the year regarding their responsibilities during the event, the need to provide for the care and sheltering of their own family at City operated employee/family shelters and the staging of our first responders *prior* to the landfall of a hurricane. During my tenure in Largo, we activated our city EOC dozens of times and closely partnered with Pinellas County before, during and after large storm events. During the local emergency, the City was able to ensure public safety because we had done extensive preparation in the areas of mass care and community sheltering, situation and damage assessment, debris management and the planned restoration of city service.

As discussed in every training session I have taken at FEMA's Emergency Management Institute and in the numerous classes I have attended by the Department of Homeland Security, the key to effective management of localized disasters involving hurricanes, hazmat incidents and terrorism is extensive preparation and training of city employees and elected officials throughout the year on an ongoing and consistent basis. In Largo, we had many local events which resulted in massive destruction of homes and mobile home communities which were always devastating to both city residents and first responders. During these events, the entire city organization focused its collective energy providing shelters to employees and residents, transporting persons with special needs, securing resources, supplies and meals to city staff during the long hours of operations and restoring city services based on our defined and exercised emergency operations plan. Because we were so well trained and prepared prior to the event, our city response and recovery always went well and was a very coordinated effort.

I believe my extensive training and experience in the area will be of great importance to Key West given the city's very unique vulnerabilities.

Susan Stanton

Describe your experience building effective teams, facilitating consensus, and bargaining with unions. As a successful and effective manager, I have extensive experience building effective teams, facilitating consensus and bargaining with Unions in five cities in diverse areas of the nation. My success as a City Manager is a result of the teams I established in each of the cities I managed. In Largo the establishment of an effective management team was built on the creation of a common mission to provide superior city services to our residents that enhanced the quality of life and community pride. This common purpose was shared by everyone in the City and was communicated in our actions and reinforced in our personnel evaluation systems and compensation program. We involved all of our employees in every decision that effected the terms and conditions of employment and used task forces and committees to empower people to make good decisions. When we came to the table to discuss issues of importance to our community, we all came as equal participants encouraged to collaborate and share ideas. My teams in Largo shared a strong sense of **P**ride, **P**assion and **P**rofessionalism that achieved national accreditation of our Police, Fire, Recreation and Public Works Departments.

I feel the secret to effective teams and the facilitation of consensus is good communication where everyone is free to express their opinion, is provided with the right resources to accomplish their jobs and recognized for the commitment they give to the community. I believe in weekly staff meeting with department directors, employees and elected officials to share information and seek input before decisions are finalized. Good facilitation for consensus comes only when all parties feel their voice is being heard and their opinions are important. In Largo, my skills in developing effective teams and facilitating consensus was instrumental in the adoption of a community strategic plan, a downtown redevelopment program and the creation of an effective annexation policy which expanded the City's tax base. In Lake Worth, I used my experience developing effective teams in my effort to restore financial stability to the City, institute contract management reform, privatize select city services to reduce government spending and begin the renovation of our beach front property after twenty years of policy paralysis and inaction.

Throughout my career I have directed the process of collective bargaining with many unions involving every class of employee. In Alaska, I negotiated contracts with the Inland Boatman's Union (IBU), Master Mates Pilots (MMP) and the American Federation of State and County Municipal Employees, (AFSCME); in Largo the Fraternal Order of Police, (FOP), the Police Benevolent Association (PBO), Communication Workers of America (CWA) and International Association of Fire Fighters (IAAF); and in Lake Worth with the International Brotherhood Electrical Workers (IBEW) and Professional Employees Union (PEU). In Largo, we had a monthly labor management breakfast in which department directors, union shop stewards and Labor leaders met for breakfast to discuss issues of common concern throughout the year which greatly facilitated the collective bargaining process. In Largo, the important component in effective bargaining was a shared interest in balancing the legitimate financial interests of the employees with the community's ability to pay. During my tenure, we were always successful in negotiating agreements before they expired or having to declare impasse. Unfortunately, my experience in Lake Worth was more reflective of the same tensions most cities and unions are confronting after years of reducing employee wages and benefits. In order to obtain an agreement with the IBEW in 2011, I assumed the role of chief negotiator in order to develop a consensus and resolve a two year labor dispute.

Susan Stanton

Key West prides itself on its diversity and its accepting attitude toward all groups. Describe your experience in encouraging diversity within your organization and working with diverse community groups. What role do you intend to play in the Key West community? As City Manager in Largo Florida, I worked very closely with the GLBT community in the adoption of a Human Rights Ordinance which prohibited discrimination in employment based on sexual orientation and the establishment of a city policy extending the prohibition of employment based on gender identity and expression. The adoption of both the ordinance and administrative policy was preceded by a two year mandatory Cultural Sensitivity Training program for all city employees which addressed our employment non-discrimination commitment, procedures to report harassment in the work place and a city-wide dialog on the value and benefits of diversity. While the City partnered with a consultant to conduct the actual work shops, I attended each session and spoke personally about the need to respect our diversity in the work place and the reasons why the City was requiring all employees and managers to receive the training. During the year, the City sponsored other events which celebrated the rich diversity of our employees such as quarterly lunches in which employees shared ethnic foods. In Largo I also was very active in my support for an inclusive annual Mayor's Prayer Breakfast where leaders of every religious faith came together and celebrated the richness of their respective traditions and the power of living in a community with faith, acceptance and understanding.

I have a very unique experience regarding diversity in the work place and obviously know the pain of employment discrimination. The passage of both the Human Rights Ordinance and the adoption of an Administrative Policy prohibiting employment discrimination in City employment were controversial, unpleasant and divisive. I have seen, *up close and personal*, the negative impacts on one's career, family, friends and relationships when a community does not understand or value diversity. Since my departure from Largo, I have focused much of my time and energy on reestablishing my career and my life and quietly demonstrating that a transgender woman can be a successful and effective leader ...as well as a good city manager. As a city manager, I have had to step back from public advocacy regarding the value of diversity because, in many places around the country, it can be divisive and uncomfortable to some groups. While I have purposefully kept a low public profile regarding my personal life journey I am very excited about the potential of leading an organization and becoming a part of a community which would allow me more freedom to discuss the complex topic of diversity and living in a community with our differences.

If selected as City Manager in Key West, I would like to become much more involved in all community organizations and non-profit groups that embrace and celebrate the power of diversity. In particular, I would very much like to increase my personal and professional involvement with faith based organizations and non-profit groups to promote the understanding, acceptance and value of diversity and show by my own actions how diversity can contribute to the quality of life in all communities.

Susan Stanton

From your research and knowledge of Key West, what do you believe are the four biggest challenges facing the community in the next four years? Have you faced similar challenges your prior employment experience, and how might they assist you in developing strategies to successfully respond to those challenges?

Based on my own personal knowledge of Key West and some preliminary research prior to my interest in applying for this position, I feel the biggest challenges facing the community in the next four years are mitigating the impact of transportation improvement, controlling the cost of government, improving the fiscal and economic health of the community and continuing to prepare and respond to Natural Disaster.

The long planned reconstruction of North Roosevelt Boulevard, the seawall and the installation of new drainage, water main and sewer by the de Moya Group by July 2014 will require a close partnership between FDOT, the City and the hundreds of merchants that will be impacted by this project. It is imperative that delays not occur as a result of bad intergovernmental coordination and communication. Additionally, the public needs to have meaningful input on the final design of the project, especially concerning the *potential* installation of an ugly 10,000-foot-long aluminum railing on the seawall. In Largo, I worked with FDOT on the reconstruction of two large roads (East Bay Drive and Ulmerton Road) and am very knowledgeable on what staff needs to do to maintain this partnership and ensure the de Moya Group succeeds in getting their coveted bonus for finishing the project prior to July 2014.

In reading the City's 2011 Comprehensive Financial Report, it is clear that Key West is making progress in controlling expense but the net cost of government in FY 2011 increased to \$25,940,000 compared to \$24,990,000 in FY 2010. It was also noted that General Fund revenue fell short of budgetary projects in three categories and six other major revenue sources were less than projected in 2011. Finally, the increased net cost in the City's General Fund in FY 2010 to FY 2011 was very large which, combined with declining property tax values of 13.2% and a 2.1% decline in revenue in 2011, shows that the City must continue its focus on improved productivity and controlling of expense. In Largo and in Lake Worth I worked very closely with staff to closely monitor the financial health of the city, control the growth of government and develop performance indicators that avoided year end financial disappointments.

In reading information by the Chamber of Commerce and Monroe County, it certainly appears that Key West is seeing some good economic recovery in 2012. I noted the increased revenue from hotel bed tax and increased passengers from the airport and cruise ships. However, the City is extremely dependent on the revenue related to tourism and these trends need to be closely monitored. Given the fact that disembarkments from cruise ship arrivals decreased 4.0% when compared to the first three months on 2011, the City needs to closely monitor the this local economic recovery. As outlined in my resume, I have extensive experience in community and economic development and will be a strong partner with the business community to make sure Key West is a good place to do business and visit.

Key West, like all of Florida, is exceptionally vulnerable to natural disaster and has not had to respond to a major event since Wilma in 2005. Given the City's dependence on Tourism and limited reserves in the event of disruption of tourism related revenue it is imperative the City finalize the adoption of its CEMP and Hurricane Annex, exercise its EOP and continue its state of readiness to ensure that if the community is faced with another Wilma in 2013, it can quickly respond and restore services. I have extensive experience in this area as outlined in my resume and discussed in this questionnaire

Susan Stanton

Assume for the moment that you are the City Manager of Key West and you are doing next year's budget. Your preliminary numbers project a significant budget deficit. What departments would you look at in terms of cutting expenses? Would you consider layoffs and benefit reductions?

In responding to this question, most managers would probably say they would begin cutting "non-essential" departments unrelated to public safety such as the Recreation, Library Services, and Park Maintenance etc. And, after a lot of discussion about community priorities, I might recommend that cuts be made here as well. However, I have come to realize that most of the services provide by these "non-essential" departments is as important to the health and welfare of the community as police officers patrolling the streets and fire fighters making EMS calls. Each department provides critical service to the community which meets important needs of residents. I know this because I have cut staff in each of these "non-essential departments in Largo and in Lake Worth and have witnessed the negative impact when single working parents can't afford afterschool care for their children or a neighborhood park is closed and children seek the open space of a street to play baseball after school. Cutting government service today after three years of cut back management is unpleasant and difficult.

So, before I make any decision about what services to cut, I would want to work with staff, city residents and the general public and solicit their input and engage in a very collaborative problem solving process. This would involve town meetings in which I would provide very detailed information about the budget shortfall, the long and short term financial impact of the problem and identify programmatic changes that could be achieved in the entire organization that might reduce operating cost yet have minimal impact on services provided to the community. This would be an important first step.

One of the most important things I would want to explore before making deep cuts in any department is whether the City has the **right people, doing the right job...with the right tools**. Government inefficiency is often the result of managers and supervisors not taking the time to critically look at the way they are doing business and determining if their business model is working properly. Typically, the people who are the most qualified subject matter experts in the improvement of process and performance are the employees themselves who do the job each day...and are often told by upper management what the fix will be once the decision is made at City Hall. In Fort Lauderdale, our entire city staff has been challenged "to work smarter, faster and cheaper" by reengineering internal processes and increasing efficiency. The entire budget is being redesigned to include very specific performance indicators that are directly related to five key critical core goals of the city which will enable the City Commission to better assess the value of their investment and assess the effectiveness of city programs.

Before discussing employee lay-offs I would also want to assess what operating cost could be reduced without negatively impacting services to the community and what services should be discontinued based on user information. In Lake Worth, we reduced our annual contracts for law enforcement by \$2 million and fire service by \$10 million (over ten years) by renegotiating contracts, modifying operations and reducing cost without negatively impacting the number of officers patrolling the community or paramedics providing EMS. These discussions were not easy but were possible when everyone in the city was committed to a positive outcome and working as a team.

For the past three years in Lake Worth, I was fully engaged in cut back management which included lay-offs, reduction in health benefits, pension costs, the deletion of positions as well as the adoption of new revenue sources to pay for services that the city was providing. The most important element in this process is good communication with elected officials, executive staff, employees and the general public.

Background Checks

Susan Ashley Stanton, ICMA-CM

susanstanton58@yahoo.com
P.O Box 3463, Palm Beach, FL 33480-9991

March 14, 2012

Kathryn Knutson, Vice President for Operations
Colin Baenziger & Associates

Dear Ms. Knutson:

Please see the following information regarding outstanding litigation that appeared in the American Databank report.

City of Lake Worth V. Charlotte Taylor (August, 2007): Along with each of the member of the Lake Worth City Commission, the Palm Beach County Tax Collector, PBSO Sheriff, Governor Rick Scott, FL Attorney General, and numerous judges and lawyers have been named in a law suit filed by Ms. Taylor, acting as her own legal counsel, concerning the non-payment of taxes on her property and a City foreclosure action in 2011. *I am involved in this case in my official capacity as City Manager for the City of Lake Worth.*

Donna B. Stanton V. Susan Stanton (December 2011): This case is in regard to my uncontested divorce in 2007. While I have made alimony payments directly to my former partner, the Pinellas County Clerk of the Circuit Court assumed they were not being made since the payments were not received and distributed by the State. This issue was addressed in 2010 and resolved however the same action was flagged in 2011. The attached letter, dated January 3, 2012 from the Clerk's Office, dismissed the action again for 2012. I have been assured by their Office that this default status will not occur in future years.

Muller et al V. The City Of Lake Worth et al (January, 2012): This is active litigation concerning the operation of a downtown bar in the Lake Worth. I have been named in the suit, both as the City Manager of Lake Worth and as an individual. The City is appealing this matter. *I am involved in this case in my official capacity as City Manager for the City of Lake Worth.*

Dunleavy V. Largo Police Department (February 1999): This case involved a Largo Police Department K9 biting Mr. Dunleavy during a service call and a demand of \$6,000 due to injury and medical expense. *I was named in the case in my capacity as City Manager for the City of Largo and had no direct involvement in the incident.*

Lang V. City of Largo (May 2005): This case involved an alleged wrongful arrest involving a minor child. *I was named in the case in my capacity as City Manager for the City of Largo and had no direct involvement in the incident.*

Please let me know if I can provide you with additional information.

Sincerely,



Susan A. Stanton, ICMA-CM

Personal Information Questionnaire

Name of Applicant: Susan Ashley Stanton

The following questions are designed so that we will be able to make full disclosure to our client concerning your background. Please answer them honestly. Cutting corners or misrepresenting your past will result in you being eliminated from all further searches conducted by this firm. We understand that frivolous charges are sometimes made and that charges do not mean you were guilty. We also understand that you may have been wronged and needed to seek compensation. The bottom line is that we want to be certain that our client is fully informed. If you have any questions, please contact us for clarification.

Please explain any yes answers on a separate sheet of paper.

1. Have you ever been charged or convicted of a felony?
Yes No
2. Have you even been involved in a domestic abuse incident that resulted in you being arrested or that was covered by the media?
Yes No
3. Have you ever declared bankruptcy?
Yes No
4. Have you ever been the subject of a civil rights violation complaint that was investigated or resulted in a lawsuit?
Yes No
5. Have you ever been the subject of a sexual harassment complaint that was investigated or resulted in a lawsuit?
Yes No
6. Have you ever been convicted of driving while intoxicated?
Yes No
7. Have you ever sued a current or former employer?
Yes No
8. Do you have a personal My Space, Face Book or other type of Web Page?
Yes No
9. Do you have a personal Twitter Account?
Yes No
10. Is there anything else in your background that might cause a reasonable person concern if he/she became aware of it through the press or any other mechanism?
Yes No

Attested to: 
Signature of Applicant

Please email this form via WORD or PDF DOCUMENT to kknutson@cb-asso.com or via fax to (888) 539-6531 no later than 9:00 AM 02/09/2012.
(Note: Please be sure to sign the form with your actual signature if you are sending Fax or PDF Document)

Reference Notes

Susan Stanton Reference Notes

Jo-Ann Golden – Commissioner, City of Lake Worth, FL 561-628-7592

Ms. Golden has known Ms. Stanton since April of 2009. She was a Commissioner for the City of Lake Worth when Ms. Stanton was first interviewed and hired. The Board of Commissioners voted 4 to 1 to hire her as the City Manager. They liked what she had done for the City of Largo. However, she did not get a fair introduction to the City. One Commissioner who did not vote for her was very much against Ms. Stanton from the beginning.

Ms. Stanton is a great City Manager. She is well versed in local government and knows how to run a City. She is knowledgeable, reads everything, and is a hard worker. In the City of Lake Worth she gained respect and would regularly put in 80-hour workweeks.

Ms. Stanton is an effective City Manager who understands the vision of council and encourages the employees to achieve it. She negotiated a contract with the Sheriff's department and the union which saved money for the City. She successfully restored the Beachfront Casino. She gained the consensus of the Board of Commissioners and managed her staff to move the project forward. She led a team through the budget process. It was a large undertaking because of the economic downturn. She saw it through and did a good job.

Ms. Stanton's ability to be an effective City Manager was affected by the political and economic environment. The times were tumultuous. Commissioner Maxwell did not like her for who she was, and during her tenure the City lost tax revenue due to a 50% reduction in property values. With changes in property values, changes in ownership ensued. Ms. Golden and others lost the election in November 2011. Some new officials were difficult to deal with, and Ms. Stanton was a little too sure of herself. The newly elected Board terminated her contract in a 3 to 2 vote.

Ms. Stanton will perform well in a City which is open-minded and trusting. She is a good City Manager, and Ms. Golden would hire her. She knows how to do her job and her priorities are to protect the City and its assets. Ms. Stanton is intelligent with the knowledge and experience one needs to operate well in municipal management. She should be hired and judged based on her ability and performance.

Words or phrases used to describe Ms. Stanton:

- Tenacious,
- Diligent,
- Intelligent,
- Delightful, with a good sense of humor,
- Good person, great heart,
- Excellent writer, a good verbal communicator, and
- Honest, does not cheat, steal, or rob.

Strengths: Analytical. Looks outside the box to find solutions to problems. Hard working. Has exceptional experience in the field of municipal management.

Susan Stanton Reference Notes

Weaknesses: Is not as political as she should be at times.

Rick Tourville – Chairman, Palms West Chamber of Commerce, Loxahatchee, FL 561-207-2329

Mr. Tourville has known Ms. Stanton through the Palms West Chamber of Commerce since she was hired as the City Manager for Lake Worth in April 2009. Although he indicated that he had nothing bad to say about Ms. Stanton, he declined to volunteer his comments due to what he described as ‘politics’. He only commented further by saying he appreciated her listing him as a reference.

Lyn Anderson - Community Activist and Blogger, Lake Worth, FL 561-881-8682

Ms. Anderson is a resident of the City of Lake Worth. She joined a political action committee in 2006 and has been involved with the City’s affairs ever since. She has known Ms. Stanton since April of 2009. Ms. Anderson was present when the City of Lake Worth interviewed Ms. Stanton for the City Manager job.

The City of Lake Worth was looking for someone who would help them get out of their financial crisis. Ms. Stanton’s interview was outstanding. She stood out from all the rest of the candidates. She was the right person for the job. When she stepped into the position, she analyzed the City’s financial situation, advised the City, and turned their finances around. She is a leader with vision. All employees were part of her team. She trusted them to do the job but stayed on top of them to make sure the project was heading the right direction. She was falsely accused of micromanaging. She trusted the department heads to do the right thing but when they let her down and she had to step in.

Ms. Stanton’s performance was excellent. She put herself at risk and did what was best for the City. She is a strong negotiator who stood up to the unions. No one had ever done that before. She negotiated with the Palm Beach Sheriff’s Office, reducing the budget by \$1.2 million over two consecutive years. She saved the City an additional \$1.3 million by cutting expenditures in the City employees’ retirement fund. She continued to save the Lake Worth money because the City’s survival depended on it. Previous Commissions had gone back and forth with how to supply water for the City. Initially Lake Worth invested \$14 million in a reverse osmosis plant. The next Commission to be elected decided to sign a costly 30-year water contract with Palm Beach County and ignore the investment the City had made when it started up a water plant. Ms. Stanton met Palm Beach County officials and persuaded them to drop the contract, saving the City a further \$3.7 million. She was then able to keep the reverse osmosis investment, which was less expensive and had a greater water supply than Palm Beach County would have provided.

Ms. Stanton skills are strong in financial management and analysis. The City electricity costs were high. She lowered the residential rates by cutting the public service and conservation taxes. She also lowered the General Fund Budget by nineteen percent.

Susan Stanton Reference Notes

Ms. Stanton's greatest asset is her talent for hiring fabulous personnel. She hired the best Utility and Financial Department heads for the City of Lake Worth. She is tough and expects people to do their jobs. Prior to her arrival employee performance was unimpressive. She changed all that.

Ms. Stanton is a great City Manager. She is especially good for a city in crisis. She did a great job for the City of Lake Worth, but politics got in the way. Some may think she is abrasive. Commissioner Maxwell did not like her. He hated her before he even knew her. He never gave her a chance.

Words or phrases used to describe Ms. Stanton:

- Shy and quiet,
- Devoted to her job,
- Misunderstood,
- Dedicated,
- Top negotiator,
- Matter of fact,
- Best at her job, and
- Smart.

Strengths: Analyzing situations and quickly solving problems. Hires the best people.

Weaknesses: She is not a PR person; that is up to the elected officials. She works too hard.

John Pickett - Community Activist, President and CEO Barrett Welles Property Group, Palm Beach, FL 561-301-5266

Since 2007, Mr. Pickett has been involved with the City of Lake Worth. He worked on several advisory boards for the City and has chaired the Finance Advisory Board since 2010. He first became acquainted with Ms. Stanton when she was hired as the City Manager of Lake Worth in April 2009. Mr. Pickett bonded with Ms. Stanton. He is a Harvard Alumni, and Ms. Stanton attended the Harvard Kennedy School. Mr. Pickett supported Ms. Stanton. They worked side by side, publicly and off the books.

When Ms. Stanton first took over as City Manager, the organization, the government and the process were broken. Her performance as a City Manager was incredible. In 3 years she made tough decisions and guided the Commission's process resulting in sound financial footing for the City. She spent as many full time hours fixing the City as she did running it. She worked double time. The most important job Ms. Stanton performed was to improve the City's finances which were a mess. She addressed runaway spending and bad contracts. Ms. Stanton spent considerable time re-negotiating contracts to be sustainable and affordable. She also negotiated with the unions. She stood up to people who had been in the City a long time. The settlements were unpopular, but these negotiated agreements were critical to the City.

Susan Stanton Reference Notes

Ms. Stanton is a hands-on leader who mobilizes the troops. She led a team working on the Lake Work Beach project. She likes to have her finger in all the cookie jars. She is involved in every aspect of city management. She puts employees in the right place and marshals forces to solve specific problems on a daily and continual basis. To single out one example does not take the full measure of her leadership.

Ms. Stanton withstood significant opposition within the City. She guided the Commission while taking vocal dissent from a small group that did not like her proposed changes. She struggled on, making all the right decisions and taking the necessary and correct path.

Ms. Stanton is an excellent City Manager. Mr. Pickett has tremendous respect for her. Whoever hires her will be very fortunate to have her as a City Manager.

Words or phrases used to describe Ms. Stanton:

- Consensus builder,
- Strong leader,
- Not afraid to make the tough calls,
- Calm under fire,
- Incredibly hard worker,
- Congenial, a very nice person, and
- Funny.

Strengths: Extraordinarily intelligent. Strongly analytical. Able to figure out problems quickly by going to the root of the problem. Very good public speaker; articulates her thoughts well, reasonably and with logic rather than emotion.

Weaknesses: Her public persona. Some felt she needed to get out into the community more and attend more events. She needs to let more people get to know her.

Suzanne Mulvehill - Commissioner, City of Lake Worth, Lake Worth, FL 561-267-9829

Ms. Mulvehill was elected to the City of Lake Worth Board of Commission in November 2008. She has known Ms. Stanton since April 2009.

Ms. Stanton is an outstanding City Manager. She took The City of Lake Worth to a whole new level. The City was able to function again under her management. She improved City staffing and finances. In 3 years under her management, she took the City from a financial disaster to winning financial awards.

Ms. Stanton is a driven individual. She likes a challenge and works well in difficult situations. She worked with the Commission to put together goals they wanted and could stand behind. She developed a plan, garnered consensus, and implemented its key concepts.

Ms. Stanton prevented the City from going into bankruptcy. She put together and carried out a sustainability plan that no one previously in her position had even considered. She cut \$1.2 million per year from the police budget and an additional \$1 million through outsourcing. She

Susan Stanton Reference Notes

renegotiated with the Fire Department and was able to get out of a 10-year supplemental fee totaling over \$10 million through the use of a fire assessment.

Ms. Stanton is a visionary who sets and achieves goals. She created a CIP plan and a 5-year plan for the City. Two prime examples are the reverse osmosis plant and the Lake Worth Casino project. Not only did she complete the project for the osmosis plant, she did so even though Lake Worth was under contract with another entity. The city invested \$15 million dollars through prior leadership that would have been wasted if they followed through on the contract. She went through a government process no one heard of to break the contract and then maximized the \$15 million dollar investment. She also saved a \$1.5 million dollar grant they would have lost if they did not move forward with the plant. She managed and carried out the Beachfront Casino and the Beach project, combining them into one project and saving the City \$.5 million in interest. For 30 years the community has been divided on what should be done with the property. She built community consensus. The Casino building was renovated back to its original 1923 style. It is opening in October and is 100% occupied at market base rent. She also created green space and a parking lot in the 18 acres surrounding it. She managed these projects on time and under budget even though the City Attorney said it could not be done.

Ms. Stanton has great leadership skills and knows how to attract excellent talent. She hired qualified, high performing employees who helped facilitate her vision in the City of Lake Worth. Among others, she chose Kathleen Margoles as the Assistant City Manager, and Steve Carr as the City's Finance Director. They worked together to cut \$4.7 million out of the budget. Under Ms. Stanton's direction, the City operated more effectively with less.

Ms. Stanton led a team of employees who implemented a city wide conservation program. The program moved the city towards urban renewal and sustainability, and saved millions of gallons of water and energy. It is one of the best conservation programs in the entire state. She implemented single stream recycling that put Lake Worth on the map internationally with sustainability. Ms. Mulvehill is scheduled to speak in Germany about Lake Worth's sustainability efforts, all due to the efforts of Ms. Stanton.

Ms. Stanton was able to endure confrontation and conflict. Commissioner Maxwell bullied her relentlessly for three years behind closed doors. The city received complaints about some of the bars in the area who were in severe violation of path and noise ordinances. They were fined. Most of the bars paid the fine and lowered their music. The Cottage Bar went after Ms. Stanton and falsely accused her of being homophobic. The documentation proves that this bar was not singled out as they suggest. Other bars were given fines for the same violation in the same time period. Ms. Stanton was only doing her job in enforcing the ordinances.

Ms. Stanton was hired at difficult time and was required to make some very unpopular decisions to address the financial crisis. They had to cut 35% of the staff. Some were very angry about these cuts and stormed her office. The police were called to diffuse the situation. She also set parameters around the drop plan, which was crucial but also did not sit well in a community that has never had to make those types of decisions before. She expects employees to perform. She makes sure the work gets done, even if it means letting someone go. She commands excellence.

Susan Stanton Reference Notes

Politics played a significant role in Ms. Stanton's termination. Commissioner Maxwell frequently threatened to fire her as soon as he acquired a majority. The new Commission was pro-union and set on undoing what she had accomplished. They wanted to outsource the water service, privatize the Beach project, and repeal the fire assessment.

Ms. Stanton is an outstanding City Manager and Ms. Mulvehill would hire her back in a minute. Ms. Stanton has the ability to put in place a vision for the City. She is a creative problem solver who comes up with new and innovative ideas.

Words or phrases used to describe Ms. Stanton:

- Hardworking, knowledgeable, and experienced,
- Passionate about her work in public service,
- Able to inspire employees, raise moral and build an outstanding team,
- Committed and loyal to the people she works with and for,
- Thick skinned; able to weather difficult situations,
- Courageous leader and innovative thinker, and
- Committed to promoting excellence; she raises the bar.

Strengths: Innovative, bringing forth new ideas and accomplishing them. Creates plans to solve problems, articulating how they will work and then implementing them. Good negotiator and dealing with confrontation and resistance. Possesses outstanding leadership and financial skills. Attracts talented people.

Weaknesses: Putting together a marketing campaign to communicate the City's vision.

Rebecca Matthey - Utility Director, City of Lake Worth, Lake Worth, FL 352-812-2904

Ms. Matthey has worked for the City of Lake Worth since October 2008 and was hired as the Utility Director. Ms. Matthey has known Ms. Stanton since April of 2009 when she was first hired as the Lake Worth City Manager.

Ms. Matthey and Ms. Stanton have strong personalities. They both think they are right. Occasionally they engaged in heated arguments, but they continued to work with each other. When Ms. Matthey was right, Ms. Stanton listened to reason and admitted when she was wrong.

Ms. Stanton is brilliant, and has a tremendous ability to absorb and quickly comprehend plenty of information. Lake Worth had been completely dysfunctional. Its problems were created decades ago. When Ms. Stanton first took charge she was grasped the key issues in the Finance, Utility and Public Works Departments. She managed a considerable number of projects and solved many problems. She scrapped an agreement with Palm Beach County to supply the City with water and instead completed a \$25 million water plant. Prior to the county agreement, the City had invested approximately \$15 million into building its own water plant. Ms. Stanton

Susan Stanton Reference Notes

helped reverse public opinion back to support for the construction of the new plant. This decision was the correct one. The new plan ensured water supply to Lake Worth for over 100 years.

Ms. Stanton also took charge of the Beachfront project and Casino. The City of Lake Worth had been discussing the plans for 20 years. The City had done studies and paid for engineering reports, but no one ever moved the project along. Ms. Stanton was the only City Manager in 20 years to break ground on the project. The project will be completed in 2012.

Ms. Stanton held regular weekly meetings. The schedule was tough on the Department heads because the City had so many problems. She and her staff addressed the important issues. They completed their assignments and accomplished what they set out to do. She is a leader who takes the organization's vision and rallies the employees around it. She built a management team that was sorely lacking in Lake Worth. She gave them a vision and the tools to move forward.

Ms. Stanton could sometimes be seen micro-managing her staff. Perhaps she had underperforming departments. However, she did not do this to Ms. Matthey. They came to a meeting of the minds. Ms. Stanton relied on Ms. Matthey and the strength of her Utility Department. Ms. Stanton could improve her social skills. She should let her department heads handle more of the personnel issues. Her skills lie elsewhere and her downfall in Lake Worth was not relying on the strengths of the department heads.

Ms. Stanton makes good decisions when hiring personnel. Ms. Matthey sat on the hiring committee. Applicants did not realize how difficult a place it was to work. The City had serious problems. Everything needed to be fixed, and the City had significant turnover. When Ms. Stanton arrived, she cleaned house. Some department heads did not want things to change. They were the non-producers. Working for the City required an enormous amount of dedication. She hired a good Finance Director and other qualified people to help solve the City's problems.

In the recent elections new Commissioners were voted in, and Ms. Stanton's contract was terminated. This action was not warranted. The Commission should have met with her and communicated their expectations before making a decision. Their decision was disappointing because Ms. Stanton is a reasonable person.

Ms. Stanton is good at what she does. Ms. Matthey learned a lot about a city's finances from her. She watched Ms. Stanton maneuver through the General Fund crisis. In the midst of it all, Ms. Stanton was able to find funding for the Beachfront project.

Words or phrases used to describe Ms. Stanton:

- Brilliant,
- Determined,
- Professional,
- Problem solver,
- Able to admit when she is wrong, and
- Enormous ability to absorb and comprehend a lot of information quickly.

Strengths: Ability to manage a wide range and scope of information.

Susan Stanton Reference Notes

Weaknesses: Has a tendency to micro-manage.

Bill Thrasher - Town Manager, Town of Gulf Stream, FL 561-276-5116

Mr. Thrasher is long-time Lake Worth resident and married with three children. He is also the Town Manager of nearby Gulf Stream and, as such is a colleague of Ms. Stanton's.

Prior to Ms. Stanton, Lake Worth had serious problems and little structure or policy. Human Resources and the Finance Department were dysfunctional. The taxable value of properties had dropped significantly in a short period of time. The City had no General Fund revenue. They had to tap into their reserves. Some employees were laid off. Mr. Thrasher wished he could have done what she did to fix the problems. She turned the City around.

Ms. Stanton formed a Citizen Financial Advisory Committee comprised of residents. Mr. Thrasher worked through and reviewed several of Ms. Stanton's budgets. She had done a phenomenal job. She made the correct short and long term decisions. Her last budget was brilliant. Mr. Thrasher was somewhat jealous that she was so adept and capable. She saw through the problems, planned ahead, and provided solutions to extremely difficult issues.

Union disputes and arguments were common. Ms. Stanton took the right approach even though she knew it might cost her job. Lake Worth was a very difficult city to manage and they had to make personnel changes and cuts. She hired top notch individuals that were accomplished in their field. She looks at the total enterprise and makes the appropriate decision.

Ms. Stanton pulled together a team and accomplished something that was almost impossible. The city has a fire rescue contract with Palm Beach County. Prior to her becoming manager it was negotiated that in addition to the taxable value x the MSTU (Municipal Service Taxing Unit) rate, the city had to pay an additional million dollar fee. Mr. Thrasher was vehemently against that extra fee. Ms. Stanton led the troops to nullify the fee which saved the city a large sum of money. Her handling of the situation was impressive.

Ms. Stanton had trouble with the public in the City of Lake Worth. She had proposed that the City establish a Police Department. She made the appropriate recommendation, but the public vehemently opposed it. She attended a homeowners' association meeting in Mr. Thrasher's neighborhood to answer peoples' questions. People were angry and the meeting got out of control. The president of the homeowners association did nothing to calm the crowd down.

Ms. Stanton worked long hours. Mr. Thrasher lives only 8 blocks from City Hall, and her car was always in the parking lot late at night. She worked 100-hour workweeks, 7 days a week.

Mr. Thrasher admires Ms. Stanton's skill set. She is able to analyze, evaluate, and decide. She is terrific as a City Manager, but politics caused her to lose her job. She was gone after the election. Mr. Thrasher strongly supported her. She was unfairly and unjustly terminated. She lost her job partly because of her background. Some people in public office can be cruel.

Susan Stanton Reference Notes

When Ms. Stanton first started working for the City she installed a security door to the entrance of the City Hall. During her first Commissioners' meeting, she was told to take it down. The purpose of the directive was to belittle her. She had it taken down the following day. Immediately after she left the City, they put it back up.

Lake Worth's Vice Mayor Maxwell is the one person with a negative opinion of Ms. Stanton. Mr. Thrasher sits next to him on the Palm Beach County Board League of Cities. Mr. Maxwell looked forward to gaining a majority on the Commission so he could terminate her contract.

Ms. Stanton is a great City Manager. Mr. Thrasher hopes she gets the job she deserves. He would appear on her behalf in person.

Words or phrases used to describe Ms. Stanton:

- Extremely intelligent,
- Articulate,
- Hardworking,
- Driven,
- Polite, and
- A great person.

Strengths: Intelligence, work ethic, zeal, and follow through. She is a quick study.

Weaknesses: Sometimes you have to do what you do not want to do.

Patricia Burke – Former Commissioner, City of Largo, FL 727-581-6220

Ms. Burke has been involved with the City of Largo and has known Ms. Stanton since 1990 when she was first hired as the Assistant City Manager. Ms. Burke was President of Partners N Progress for the City of Largo, and a City Commissioner from 1995 to 2005.

Ms. Burke has a unique perspective on Ms. Stanton. In addition to being an involved resident and a long time past Commissioner in Largo, Ms. Burke works fulltime for Time Warner as the Manager for Government Relations in Pinellas County. She knows all fifteen City Managers well. She negotiates cable contracts with each of the City Managers on behalf of Time Warner.

Ms. Stanton's performance for the City of Largo was exceptional. She was the absolute best City Manager in the County. Ms. Burke would definitely give her high marks in an evaluation.

Two years after being hired as the Assistant City Manager for the City of Largo, Ms. Stanton became the City Manager and remained in that position for over fourteen years.

Up until Ms. Stanton's position as the City Manager, the City had no parks, no culture, an outdated library, and was contiguous with the County. Ms. Stanton had a vision for the City and

Susan Stanton Reference Notes

knew how to achieve it. She became aggressive on the issue of annexation and changed the surrounding City. Both population and revenues increased. Ms. Stanton worked with the Mayor and convinced the community to change the City of Largo. They created a Central Park, and built a Cultural Center and library. Ms. Stanton possessed the leadership qualities the City needed.

Ms. Stanton is very knowledgeable and always willing to share her expertise. Walking into her office was like entering a classroom. She never talked down to you and shared what relevant information she had about any department. Her discussions were better than attending four years of college. She would make a great professor. She helped her staff become better in their jobs.

Ms. Stanton is very social. Getting involved with residents was quite easy for her. Leaders in other cities knew Ms. Stanton. She attended Chamber of Commerce events and ran marathons. She was consistently out in the community.

Ms. Stanton was ousted from the City of Largo because she is transgender. Even though she had a solid record working for the City of Largo over 17 years, the news about her was too much for some people to accept and understand. Ms. Burke fought to keep her. Ms. Stanton's termination was very unfortunate.

Ms. Burke and Ms. Stanton have remained friends. They talk every year. Ms. Burke would love to see her back in the City of Largo. She highly recommends Ms. Stanton as a City Manager.

Words or phrases used to describe Ms. Stanton:

- Brilliant,
- Excellent communicator,
- Writes like we all wish we could,
- A master at budgets,
- Very friendly and outgoing, and
- Good sense of humor.

Strengths: Knowledge of how to run a city; negotiating union contracts; and can see the details and develop a long-term vision.

Weaknesses: Management style; has high standards and expects the same.

Patricia Gerard, Mayor, City of Largo, FL 727-521-5204

Mayor Gerard has known Ms. Stanton since November of 2000 when Mayor Gerard was first elected as a Commissioner for the City of Largo. She has been the Mayor now since 2006.

Ms. Stanton is a very skilled City Manager and takes her job quite seriously. She had a vision and was responsible for everything the City of Largo accomplished. Prior to Ms. Stanton's arrival, the City was derisively called 'Larghetto'.

Susan Stanton Reference Notes

Mayor Gerard and Ms. Stanton got along very well. Occasionally they argued, but they always worked out their differences. They met weekly, sometimes twice each week. Ms. Stanton and Mayor Gerard would discuss planning and the broader picture. Ms. Stanton had a long-term vision and kept the City on a steady path towards being more upscale. With her determination, she built a new library, two recreational centers, a Cultural Center, and huge, beautiful parks.

Ms. Stanton improved the staff at the City of Largo. She was very good at choosing topnotch people, and she eased out the older Department Heads who were underperforming.

Ms. Stanton's communication skills are very good. She kept the Commission well informed. She was adept at juggling the seven Commissioners. She knew where to draw the line between being administrative and political. She let the Mayor and Commissioners take care of politics.

Ms. Stanton had conflicts with the County. She and the County Manager had similar personalities. The City of Largo's attorney was strong, and he took the lead. Ms. Stanton stood up to the County on annexation and development issues. The County tried to block Largo's efforts, but the City succeeded. Ms. Stanton always had the best interest of the City at heart.

Ms. Stanton's predecessor fought with her. Rather than have a vision for the City he merely wanted to take care of his friends.

Financially, Ms. Stanton left the City in a great condition. Compared to most other cities since the housing crisis, the City of Largo remains in very good shape.

Words or phrases used to describe Ms. Stanton:

- Very Ethical,
- Visionary,
- Competitive,
- Tough manager and administrator,
- Engaging, and
- Extremely intelligent.

Strengths: Has vision, incredible energy and on top of everything all the time.

Weaknesses: Conflicts with the County, which became a double edged sword.

Jaene Miranda - Executive Director, Palms West Chamber of Commerce and Acting CEO Lake Worth Chamber of Commerce, Loxahatchee, FL 561-847-6221

Ms. Miranda has known Ms. Stanton since the November elections in 2011. She had a short tenure with Ms. Stanton.

The recent election as well as successes and improvements in the City of Lake Worth prompted Ms. Miranda to call Ms. Stanton. She wanted to discuss merging the Chamber with the City of Lake Worth. The Chamber and the City did not have a good relationship under the previous Commissioners. They were more concerned with environmental issues. The new Commission was pro-business. They were interested in economic development. Prior to the election Ms.

Susan Stanton Reference Notes

Stanton often found herself in the middle between the City and the Chamber. It had seemed as if she wanted to drive economic development, but the Commission had a different agenda. As the City Manager she satisfied the needs and desires of her Council.

Ms. Burke empathizes with Ms. Stanton. Lake Worth does not have a good reputation. Some people consider it a rogue city. The City has gone through several City Managers.

Words or phrases used to describe Ms. Stanton:

- Professional,
- Very positive,
- Says all the right things,
- Excited about the Chamber coming on board, and
- Nothing negative about their meetings.

Strengths: No real opinion because she has spent so little time with her.

Weaknesses: No opinion expressed.

Elaine Humphreys, City Attorney, City of Lake Worth, FL 561-586-1631

Ms. Humphreys is a resident and the City Attorney for the City of Lake Worth. Ms. Humphreys was hired for the City in August of 2004 as the Assistant City Attorney. She met Ms. Stanton in April of 2009. Ms. Humphreys was promoted to City Attorney four days after Ms. Stanton started as the City Manager for Lake Worth. Ms. Humphreys did not report to Ms. Stanton. She and Ms. Stanton both reported directly to the City Commission.

Ms. Humphreys' relationship with Ms. Stanton was professional. They had a good, decent working relationship. Ms. Stanton and Ms. Humphreys consulted with each other on various legal issues. They worked well with each other and addressed all the typical legal issues a city is faced with such as litigation, contracts, Sunshine Law requirements, special assessment ordinances and resolutions, planning and zoning, and a few employment issues. Some labor issues were handed over to outside consultants.

Ms. Stanton was competent. She had a good working relationship with the majority of the Commission. She did what the Commission asked her to do.

After the November 2011 elections, the majority on the Commission changed. With the new Commission, came a new direction for the City.

Words or phrases used to describe Ms. Stanton:

- Dedicated,
- Passionate about her work,
- Committed,
- Experienced with government contracts,
- Knows how to gain consensus, and
- Good leadership qualities.

Susan Stanton Reference Notes

Strengths: Very experienced municipal manager; knows how to lead; and knows how to work with a board and commission to move an agenda forward.

Weaknesses: Lake Worth is a very diverse community and getting everyone on the same page is very difficult. The average managerial tenure is only three years.

William B. Horne, III - City Manager, City of Clearwater, Clearwater, FL 727-562-4046

Mr. Horne has known Ms. Stanton since July of 2000. They grew to know each other through the City Managers Consortium Group and the International City/County Managers Association. They were good friends and remain friends to this day.

Ms. Stanton was a successful City Manager for the City of Largo for 14 years. Her performance was exemplary and she should not have been fired. Following her efficacious tenure with the City of Largo, she turned the City of Lake Worth around. She did what the Board of Commissioners wanted her to do. She stayed out of the City politics.

Her record in both the City of Largo and the City of Lake Worth is evidence that Ms. Stanton can be a tough manager. She made some difficult decisions. She removed the non-performing staff members. She sustained employee backlash and politics from the Board.

Ms. Stanton has the requisite skills for a City Manager. She manages her emotions. She works with the Board intelligently, and has a moderate style and personality. At ICMA conferences she is always pleasant. She is still the same person now that she was when she was with the City of Largo. She improved the City of Lake Worth just as she had done for the City of Largo.

Upon her departure from the City of Lake Worth the newspaper gave her the credit she was due. The City was impressed by her performance. Mr. Horne would like to see her as a City Manager in a municipality that can accept her for who she is, based on her qualifications.

Words or phrases used to describe Ms. Stanton:

- Competent,
- Energetic,
- Professional,
- Strategic,
- A thinker, and
- Dedicated.

Strengths: Smart, well-prepared public administrator; well trained through the Harvard executive program; an expert on public safety, police, fire and EMS; and a forceful, strong leader.

Weaknesses: At one time, abrasive and has difficulty moderating that attribute. She has a softer side now.

Susan Stanton Reference Notes

Retha Lowe – Former Commissioner, Lake Worth, FL 561-586-7276

Ms. Lowe was a member of the Lake Worth City Commission when Ms. Stanton was hired in 2009.

Ms. Stanton was one of the worst managers Lake Worth has had in the last 30 years. She did not value continuity or institutional knowledge. In fact, she essentially cleaned out the senior staff at Lake Worth - both good and bad employees were asked to leave or their lives made so difficult that they left on their own. Ms. Stanton brought in her own people, but did not build a team but ruled through intimidation. In fact, she seemed to thrive on staff living in uncertainty. In contrast, since her replacement as City Manager, Michael Bornstien, was hired, city employees are upbeat and positive and have a smile on their faces. The tension and stress that dominated the work force in Lake Worth while Ms. Stanton was there is now gone.

Ms. Stanton lacks skill in dealing with people. She does not communicate well and did not have a good working relationship with most of the employees, most of the City Commissioners and most of the residents. In fairness, she did build a relationship with two of the Commissioners and spent a great deal of time with them and in their districts. On the other hand, she largely ignored the other three commissioners and their districts. She did not, for example, build a relationship with Ms. Lowe and she did not set foot in Ms. Lowe's district in the 2 ½ years she was the City Manager.

Ms. Stanton is confrontational and has gotten the City involved in many law suits. She does not work towards solving problems and reasonable settlements but towards the City getting its way. As a result, intergovernmental relations between Lake Worth and its neighbors (including the County) were at a very low point when she left.

Ms. Lowe cannot recommend Ms. Stanton to any city or town and would not hire her.

Strengths: Ms. Lowe realizes that it is always a good idea to point out strengths in a candidate – it shows balance – but frankly she cannot think of any with respect to Mr. Stanton. She simply caused too much chaos.

Weaknesses: People skills, confrontational disposition and lack of respect for continuity and institutional knowledge.

Prepared by: Diane Wainwright and Lynelle Klein, Colin Baenziger & Associates

Internet Research

Palm Beach Post, The (FL)

December 8, 2011

A bad thing, done badly

Author: *Palm Beach Post Editorial, Thursday, Dec. 8*

Among Lake Worth's many self-destructive acts, firing City Manager **Susan Stanton** ranks as one of the worst and one of the most suspicious.

The agenda for Tuesday's city commission meeting made no mention of a discussion about Ms. **Stanton**. Yet somehow, at the start of the meeting, such a discussion began. When what passed for debate had ended, new Mayor Pam Triolo and Commissioners Andy Amoroso -- also elected last month -- and Scott Maxwell had dumped Ms. **Stanton**.

"This looked to me very orchestrated," Commissioner Chris McVoy told The Post's Willie Howard. "The public was not even aware, and this is a community that values public input," Commissioner Suzanne Mulvehill said. "There was no respect for our governmental process." Indeed, this was a bad thing done badly. It was the Lake Worth of 30 years ago, when a purge followed each election and shift of power.

Ms. **Stanton** had faults. On her best days, she could be brusque with residents and defensive with commissioners, some of whom suspected that Ms. **Stanton** didn't always reveal everything about Lake Worth's finances. Her supporters conceded some of those points.

What mattered more, though, was what Ms. **Stanton** had done in nearly three years to repair the disaster that was Lake Worth government. She dismissed low-performing employees and brought in smart, eager wonks. She revised union contracts that were stacked against the city. She prodded cities that owed Lake Worth for contracted services. She saved Lake Worth \$2 million a year on its police and fire contracts.

Lake Worth had tried for decades to renovate its beachfront casino. Incompetence and infighting had stalled the work. Under Ms. **Stanton** and her team, it happened. On Wednesday, a story in The Post's Local News section reported that the casino is on schedule to open next year. On the Local News front page was the story of Ms. **Stanton**'s firing.

If Mayor Triolo and the two commissioners had wanted to demonstrate the competence and stability they claim Lake Worth needs to attract businesses and residents, they would have specified their complaints and put Ms. **Stanton** on notice to improve by her next evaluation in the spring. Instead, they staged a near-rerun of January 2007, when the commission brought up the status of then-City Manager Paul Boyer, debated for 10 minutes and canned him.

After that self-destructive act, the commission hired a man who basically functioned as a temp, leaving the mess Ms. **Stanton** had begun to clean up. The mess just got a lot bigger.

*Internet Research
Stanton, Susan*

Note: This research will be presented in reverse chronological order

Palm Beach Post, The (FL)

December 7, 2011

City manager ousted after 2 1/2 years

Finance chief named acting head

Author: *WILLIE HOWARD Palm Beach Post Staff Writer*

Dateline: LAKE WORTH

Susan **Stanton**'s term as city manager came to an abrupt end after 2 1/2 years Tuesday night when the city commission voted 3-2 to fire her.

Stanton, who earned \$150,000 annually, made no comment during the discussion to fire her, and was silent as she walked out of the crowded chambers to exit city hall.

The vote included the immediate appointment of Finance Director Steve Carr as acting city manager.

Vice Mayor Scott Maxwell, who has disagreed with **Stanton** over a variety of issues for years, made the motion to fire her at the beginning of Tuesday's meeting.

Maxwell was joined by Mayor Pam Triolo and Commissioner Andy Amoroso, both of whom were elected on Nov. 8, in the decision to fire **Stanton**.

Commissioners Christopher McVoy and Suzanne Mulvehill voted against.

Triolo cited a sense of distrust and anger among residents before voting to fire **Stanton**.

McVoy praised **Stanton** for the professional staff she brought to city hall and criticized the abrupt firing.

"I find it really out of line to have this dropped on us and on the public without advance notice," McVoy said.

Mulvehill called **Stanton**'s firing "a reckless and irresponsible decision for the best interests of the city."

Mulvehill praised **Stanton** for clearing up many city problems.

"It was absolutely mayhem in this city when I came on board in 2008," she said. "We have made tremendous progress."

Stanton, formerly **Steve Stanton**, was fired in 2007 from her longtime job as city manager in Largo after announcing plans to change her gender. She was hired by Lake Worth in April 2009.

Internet Research

Stanton, Susan

Note: This research will be presented in reverse chronological order

Stanton received a mostly favorable evaluation by the commission in April, though then-Mayor Rene Varela criticized her for poor relations with residents, employees and other government leaders.

In an April 4 memo to the commission, **Stanton** said she found more problems than she expected after she became city manager, including a financial system that allowed departments to spend money not approved in the budget, a lack of personnel policies and no payroll time-recording system.

"At times, it feels like everything needs to be fixed," **Stanton** wrote.

Under terms of her contract, **Stanton** will receive six months' salary plus payment for accrued sick and vacation time.

McClatchy-Tribune Regional News (USA)

July 20, 2011

Lake Worth to review fire rescue options

Author: *Willie Howard, The Palm Beach Post, Fla.*

July 20--LAKE WORTH -- City Manager **Susan Stanton** is recommending that city commissioners notify Palm Beach County Fire Rescue of the city's intent to terminate the county contract for fire and rescue service.

Stanton makes the recommendation in a memo about Thursday night's special commission meeting, during which consultants from Willdan Homeland Solutions are scheduled to explain a report showing how the city can reconstitute a city fire rescue department for an annual cost of about \$6 million.

Palm Beach County has been providing fire rescue service in the city since it merged with the former Lake Worth Fire Department on Oct. 1, 2009. Under the contract, the city must provide written notice by Aug. 1 to end the agreement on Oct. 1, 2012.

Ed Fry, manager of the city's Office of Budget and Management, said the city's goal is to keep Palm Beach County as the provider of fire rescue service but to scrap the existing contract and enter a new contract that eliminates the fire rescue property tax for Lake Worth property owners.

That would give the city the flexibility to levy per-building fire assessments on homes and businesses to pay for most of the cost of providing fire rescue service. Boynton Beach and West Palm Beach levy fire assessments.

Because there are many small homes with low values in Lake Worth, city officials argue that a per-building assessment is a fairer way to charge for fire protection.

Stanton presented a proposal for a new contract to county fire rescue officials in June. It includes eliminating the county fire tax levy, creating a fire assessment for city property and giving the city control over collective bargaining for firefighter pensions, expected to cost the city \$1.8 million this year.

County Fire Rescue Chief Steve Jerauld said will present it to county commissioners.

Palm Beach Post, The (FL)

April 5, 2011

BAR OWNERS: CITY MANAGER BIASED LAKE WORTH NOISE ORDINANCE

Author: *WILLIE HOWARD Palm Beach Post Staff Writer*

Dateline: LAKE WORTH

Owners of The Cottage bar on Lucerne Avenue recently mounted an e-mail campaign accusing Lake Worth's transgender city manager, Susan **Stanton**, of being biased against gays and lesbians.

An e-mail petition begun on Change.org had gathered more than 1,300 signatures as of Monday. The e-mails came from as far away as Canada in response to a petition by The Cottage that claims **Stanton**, Commissioner Jo-Ann Golden and four unnamed residents have used complaints under the city's noise ordinance to harass the bar at 522 Lucerne Ave. after it began hosting "tea dances" for gays and lesbians on Sundays.

The petition claims The Cottage has been targeted for noise complaints even when the bar has no live music playing and that **Stanton** has "added to the attack by sending code enforcement daily to The Cottage to look for violations."

"It's selective code enforcement," bar owner Loretta Lufty said Monday. "Ms. **Stanton** has taken it upon herself to enforce ordinances directed only at The Cottage."

In the online petition, Lufty said she and gay rights advocate Mike Zewe met with **Stanton** in May 2009 to discuss the problem.

"She (**Stanton**) first asked if I would consider stopping the Tea Dance for a while," the online petition states. "I responded that I would close my entire business first. She dismissed Mike and me from the office, ending the conversation by saying that 'men in dresses and men dancing with men is offensive. If you continue, you will just have to suffer the consequences.' "

Stanton denied the allegations in a March 31 memo to the mayor and city commissioners.

"I want to state, categorically and unequivocally, that neither the City of Lake Worth, nor I as city manager, have engaged in any form of harassment regarding the enforcement of the city's noise ordinance," **Stanton** said in the memo.

Stanton will ask city commissioners today to approve a resolution reaffirming the city's commitment to equal rights for residents and employees, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.

Tony Plakas, president and CEO of Compass, the gay and lesbian community center in Lake Worth, said he has not been able to substantiate any of the claims against **Stanton**.

Internet Research

Stanton, Susan

Note: This research will be presented in reverse chronological order

Golden said she had not made disparaging remarks about The Cottage, as alleged.

The Cottage has been cited twice under the city's new noise ordinance, though there have been 15 calls there in response to noise complaints, according to the sheriff's office. The Cottage has not been fined under the noise ordinance, city officials said.

Another Lucerne Avenue bar, South Shores Tavern & Patio Bar at 502 Lucerne Ave., has been cited seven times and received \$750 in fines under the new noise ordinance.

Stanton said the e-mail campaign against her "hits an open wound."

"I was hoping I wouldn't have to drag back out of the closet again," said **Stanton**, who has undergone gender transformation.

Stanton, formerly **Steve Stanton**, was hired as Lake Worth's city manager two years ago. The former **Steve Stanton** was fired from the city manager's job in Largo in 2007 after announcing plans to change gender. **Stanton's** story was the subject of a CNN documentary that aired last spring titled Her Name was Steven.

McClatchy-Tribune Regional News (USA)

December 14, 2010

Unions sue Lake Worth over city's use of financial woes to trim pay, benefits

Author: *Willie Howard, The Palm Beach Post, Fla.*

Dec. 14 LAKE WORTH Unions representing Lake Worth's managers and general employees sued the city in Palm Beach County Circuit Court last week, saying the city improperly declared a state of "financial urgency" in its negotiations with the unions.

In a May letter, the lawsuit says, City Manager **Susan Stanton** used "financial urgency" to justify the need for modifications of the unions' collective bargaining agreement. Union employees have since seen reductions in longevity pay, the formula for calculating overtime pay and other benefits, said Jack Seddon, executive director of the Public Employees Union and the Professional Managers and Supervisors Association.

The unions' lawsuit says "no such financial urgency exists" in Lake Worth, noting that the city has a \$5.1 million emergency fund and that the city is not taxing at the maximum rate allowed by state law.

"The unions have continued to assert that the city is in a strong financial position," **Stanton** said in an e-mail. "That is contradicted by the assessed valuation of the community tax base, a \$3.2 million projected operating deficit in fiscal year 2012, \$58 million in unfunded accrued pension liability and the high cost of operating and reinvesting in the community."

The taxable value of Lake Worth property has dropped dramatically in recent years, from a building-boom peak of \$2.1 billion in 2007 to \$1.1 billion this year.

The unions' lawsuit also contends that the Florida statute outlining the concept of financial urgency is unconstitutional because it fails to provide objective standards and gives "unfettered discretion" to public employers to avoid obligations in labor contracts.

The lawsuit asks the court to declare the state law "void and unenforceable" and to prohibit any future negotiations based on it.

Internet Research

Stanton, Susan

Note: This research will be presented in reverse chronological order

Palm Beach Post, The (FL)

June 30, 2010

Lake Worth budget plan would cut benefits

Author: *WILLIE HOWARD Palm Beach Post Staff Writer*

Correction: The Palm Beach Post reported Wednesday that Lake Worth's proposed \$1 million recreation budget for the upcoming fiscal year represents a 7 percent increase. The \$1 million proposal is a 3.7 percent decrease from the current year's recreation budget, but is 7 percent higher than what the city expects it actually will spend on recreation for the current fiscal year. The information appeared in a box on Page 3B of the Local & Business section.

Facing an expected 23 percent drop in the taxable value of property in the city, City Manager **Susan Stanton** is recommending \$4.7 million in spending cuts to balance the budget for the year that begins Oct. 1.

The proposed budget, presented in a workshop Tuesday, also is noteworthy for what it does not recommend: layoffs or an increase in the city's property tax rate, now \$4.99 per \$1,000 taxable value.

Stanton's proposal calls for a general fund budget of \$28.7 million, down 16.4 percent from this year.

It also proposes some fee increases, such as putting parking meters at downtown municipal lots and red-light cameras at select intersections.

The proposed spending cuts include reductions in general employee and firefighter pensions, a reduction in employee perks and cuts in Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office staffing.

Under the proposal, the city would pay \$1.2 million less to the sheriff's office for law enforcement, resulting in the elimination of three lieutenant positions and the dismissal of three deputies, one sergeant and two communications officers.

Stanton proposes suspending the pension plan for 288 general employees and replacing it with a defined contribution plan -- similar to a 401(k) -- for a savings of \$1.8 million.

She also proposes saving \$1.3 million through reductions in personnel costs by instituting a four-day work week and reducing pay for overtime, sick leave and other perks.

Stanton said the city has reached an impasse with three unions representing city employees and has called for a special magistrate to mediate.

"This is not going to be easy," **Stanton** said. "The pain is going to be real."

Internet Research

Stanton, Susan

Note: This research will be presented in reverse chronological order

Mayor Rene Varela said the goal is a pared-down, realistic budget that will be sustainable in the years ahead.

The commission is scheduled to set the tentative tax rate during a meeting set for 6 p.m. Thursday.

Stanton said she will recommend that the commission set a tentative tax rate at \$6.42 per \$1,000 taxable value. That rate would raise the same amount from property owners, \$7.4 million, that was raised in this year's budget.

But before the budget faces a final vote in September, **Stanton** recommends that the commission cut the proposal to maintain the current tax rate of \$4.99 per \$1,000.

If the commission holds the tax rate at \$4.99, the city expects to raise \$5.8 million from property owners -- a drop of nearly \$10 million from 2008.

~ willie_howard@pbpost.com
Lake Worth's proposal at a glance

Proposed general fund budget: \$28.7 million, down 16.4 percent

Proposed tax rate: \$4.99 per \$1,000 taxable property value, unchanged. (Does not include a separate tax for Palm Beach County Fire Rescue service, set by commission.)

Proposed property tax revenue: \$5.8 million, down 21 percent.

Fee increases: Proposed parking meters at downtown municipal lots. Proposed red-light cameras at select intersections.

Personnel: No changes in city staff planned. Proposed reduction in pension benefits and special compensation for city employees. Proposed reduction of nine positions at Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office District 14, which provides law enforcement for Lake Worth.

Public hearings: Tax-rate workshop Thursday. Budget workshops July 6, Aug. 9, Aug. 16 and Aug. 20. Formal public hearings, Sept. 15 and Sept. 22. Where the money goes

Sheriff's office: \$13.2 million, down 9 percent.

Recreation: \$1 million, up 7 percent.

Administration: \$3.6 million, down 18 percent.

Internet Research

Stanton, Susan

Note: This research will be presented in reverse chronological order

St. Petersburg Times: Web Edition Articles (FL)

April 2, 2010

Lake Worth evaluation tough on former Largo manager Susan Stanton's management style

Author: *Times staff*

Review tough on **Stanton's** leadership style

Susan Stanton has impressed a few of her new bosses, but she's garnering some of the same criticism in **Lake Worth** that she received as Largo's manager, the Palm Beach Post says.

Some Largo workers and officials said **Stanton** was overly tough and inflexible. In her first annual evaluation as **Lake Worth's** city manager, the chief complaint city commissioners had about **Stanton** was her "abrasive management style," the paper said.

Stanton, 51, who was formerly known as Steve, was fired from Largo in 2007 after news of her decision to become a woman became public.

She was hired as **Lake Worth's** city manager a year ago.

Three **Lake Worth** city leaders gave **Stanton** high marks. The other two gave her average or below average scores.

Her job did not appear to be in danger.

Palm Beach Post, The (FL)

March 13, 2010

'HER NAME WAS STEVEN' SPOTLIGHTS LOCAL CITY MANAGER STORY HAS A HAPPY ENDING

Author: *WILLIE HOWARD*

Lake Worth City Manager **Susan Stanton**, formerly Largo City Manager **Steve Stanton**, is the subject of a two-hour CNN documentary scheduled to air this weekend.

She hopes it will alter public perceptions about gender change.

"I hope to give people another perspective," **Stanton** said. "I'm hoping when people see it they'll say: 'I get it. I understand why people do this.'"

CNN crews followed **Stanton** around for two years and made use of video monologues and diary entries to produce *Her Name Was Steven*, scheduled to air at 8 and 11 p.m. today and Sunday and the following days at 2 a.m.

"It's something I'm very proud of," **Stanton** said. "I gave CNN intimate access to my life. They were in the operating room."

A CNN crew also was in Sarasota when **Stanton** was served with divorce papers.

Parts of the film that include **Stanton's** son, 16-year-old Travis, are highlights for the Lake Worth city manager.

"The main story line is the love of a father and son," **Stanton** said.

Steve Stanton had worked for the Pinellas County town of Largo for 17 years when he was fired in February 2007 after city officials learned of his plans to become a woman.

Largo commissioners complained about the disruption and said they'd lost trust in his leadership. One pastor proclaimed that "if Jesus was here tonight, I guarantee you he'd want him terminated."

"This is the story of one person," said Bud Bultman, executive producer of the documentary, who has traveled the country with **Stanton** promoting the work at film festivals. "It's not the story of all transgender people. It gives you a feel for what Susan dealt with -- the pain of that transition and the joys as well."

The documentary ends with a note that **Stanton** was chosen in April for the \$150,000-a-year job as Lake Worth's city manager.

Internet Research

Stanton, Susan

Note: This research will be presented in reverse chronological order

"It's sort of like the happy ending that she got the job in Lake Worth," Bultman said.

Based on the national discussion sparked by **Stanton's** firing in Largo, other local governments such as Lake Worth and Palm Beach County updated their codes to prohibit discrimination based on gender identity.

"She was hired because she was the best candidate for the job," Lake Worth City Commissioner Suzanne Mulvehill said. Mulvehill said she hopes the documentary portrays Lake Worth as "a welcoming community."

Stanton, 51, is scheduled to have her first review as city manager on March 29.

"We're a very, very open city," Mayor Rene Varela said, adding that the city commission hires people "based on the content of their character, not on the wrapper on the outside."

Tony Plakas, chief executive officer of Compass, the Lake Worth-based gay and lesbian community center, said the **Stanton** documentary is educational and reflects well on Lake Worth.

"There's a strong sense of social justice in Lake Worth," Plakas said. "Somebody referred to us as the San Francisco of Florida, and we're quickly becoming that."

St. Petersburg Times (FL)

June 17, 2009

STANTON SHAKING UP LAKE WORTH CITY HALL

Author: *LORRI HELFAND; Times Staff Writer*

Former Largo City Manager **Susan Stanton** is revamping City Hall at her new job, and most of her bosses are on board with her.

Stanton took the helm as Lake Worth's city manager on April 27. And last week she urged Lake Worth's assistant city manager to step down..

"As a new city manager, you want to bring people in that complement your strengths and weaknesses," **Stanton** said Tuesday.

Laura Hannah, who served as assistant city manager for 5 1/2 years, resigned Friday and was given a six months severance package, said Diane Clark, the city's human resources manager.

Stanton said there would be more personnel changes to follow.

Lake Worth Commissioner Suzanne Mulvehill knew about **Stanton's** decision and supported it, she said.

"I feel like we're lucky to have (**Stanton**)," Mulvehill said. "She's doing a great job for us and really helping to get our city on track."

Stanton has prepared weekly reports and showed city leaders how she plans to help the organization run more smoothly, Mulvehill said.

Lake Worth Vice Mayor Jo-Ann Golden, who also supported **Stanton's** decision to hire a new assistant city manager, praised **Stanton's** organizational skills.

"That's what we really need in the city," Golden said. "Our meetings are much shorter and to the point."

Those skills are imperative because, like many other municipalities, Lake Worth is dealing with budget cuts and plunging property values, she said.

Lake Worth Commissioner Cara Jennings said she was impressed by **Stanton's** ability to "create more of a team feeling among" city employees.

A diverse city of about 37,000, Lake Worth is located in Palm Beach County. Largo, which has a population of about 75,000, is known pretty much as a middle- and working-class community.

Internet Research

Stanton, Susan

Note: This research will be presented in reverse chronological order

Over the past couple of years, Lake Worth has gone through a couple of city managers, Jennings said.

Stanton, 50, served Largo for 17 years, 14 as city manager. Largo commissioners fired her two years ago after news broke that **Stanton**, then known as Steve, planned to become a woman. Lake Worth leaders said they were looking for someone with **Stanton's** dependability.

"Their loss is our gain," Golden said.

Palm Beach Post, The (FL)

May 17, 2009

FINDING THE RIGHT FIT

Author: *CHRISTINE EVANS, Palm Beach Post Staff Writer*

The new city manager in this quirky little town has a lot on her mind: water rates, slumlords, gangs, a tricky redevelopment project -- and, of course, the fact that when she takes a quiet moment to consider city affairs, she often glances down.

And spots her own high heels.

"I'm still not used to that," Susan **Stanton** said. "It sounds like such a small thing, but the last time I was in a city manager position, I was a man. When I looked at the ground and saw my shoes under the conference table, they were men's shoes.

"Now I'm looking at sandals with heels and toenail polish."

There is, perhaps, no more perfect anecdote to sum up the head-swiveling transformation undertaken by the woman who used to be called Steve, back when she was the long-running city manager of Largo, an outpost of Tampa. There, she was a man.

Here, after a very personal sex change and a very public firing from Largo, she's a woman. And not just any woman -- the woman, a brand-new city leader who is expected to change things for the better in a place that, historically, has had too many vexing problems to achieve its big dreams.

"Everybody asks if Ms. **Stanton's** gender change was an issue for us," the mayor, Jeff Clemens, said. "It wasn't. It was a non-issue. People want good, professional management. That's what they're concerned about. It's interesting that we've had not one negative comment, and I don't expect any.

"The bottom line is, Susan **Stanton** is a city manager with a ton of great ideas, and in the end that's all that matters."

The fact that she changed her sex?

"I just think people couldn't care less."

In this hyper-diverse town of 36,000, where young gay couples live next to white-haired retirees and Guatemalan women stroll the streets in traditional dress, the acquisition of a transsexual city manager appears to be not all that big a deal. The acquisition of a city manager who will actually stay in the job awhile is.

Internet Research

Stanton, Susan

Note: This research will be presented in reverse chronological order

"We're not famous for keeping 'em too long," city historian Beverly Mustaine said. "People say she's smart as a whip and that's what they care about."

To prepare for interviews for the city manager's job, which comes with a \$150,000-a-year salary, **Stanton** listened to audio from 50 hours of city commission meetings. "I can't imagine anyone else doing that," the mayor said. "It's hard for us to sit through them."

When she came to town, they put her up at the Sabal Palm B&B, which almost seemed a kind of trick, since "when I looked out my window, I could see the park I used to sleep in, back in 1983, when I came to town knocking on doors, looking for a job."

She was **Steve Stanton** then, and fresh out of graduate school, and she, then he, very much wanted to learn the ropes in city government. He pointed his 1976 Mercury Monarch south from Gainesville and started making cold calls. He wore a white suit and a red tie and carried an eight-page résumé.

When he got to Lake Worth, he secured a (very brief) interview, but not a job, and little did he know he'd ever be back.

As a woman.

The other day, in her roomy new office in city hall, Susan Ashley **Stanton** tucked her shiny black sandals under the conference table and consented to her first interview since she has been in the job. What is she going to do?

"This," she said, whipping out the city commission's work plan, decorated with far too many blank spaces for her liking. In Largo, **Steve Stanton** was known for driving his employees hard - "Steve could be a jerk," **Stanton** told the St. Petersburg Times -- but he earned some glowing reviews from his bosses.

That is, until they fired him -- after he announced he planned to become Susan. It was 2007, and, at 48, he had been managing city affairs for nearly 17 years. All that time, Susan **Stanton** says now, indeed, for most of her life, she had felt that she was not really Steve at all; yes, she was a man's man on the outside -- Steve even broke his nose on a SWAT team exercise -- but on the inside?

Susan.

He had a wife, he had a son, he had a job.

It was complicated.

"It's such a difficult journey," she said softly, fiddling with the wedding ring she still wears. "You don't do this because it's fun. It's the last option prior to death -- it really is."

And yes, she did consider the last option.

The process of changing from Steve to Susan took about five years and required hormone treatments, painful electrolysis and, finally, gender reassignment surgery. Along the way, Steve-Susan had lots of therapy. Lots of highs and lows.

One of the biggest surprises turned out to be a happy one.

"People were just so shocked and appalled ... and they said how can you do this to your own child? They said how devastating this would be, how much this was going to cause my son to be teased by his friends, how he wouldn't be able to go to school.

"And none of that ever happened. Travis never lost a day of school. He's always been proud of his dad."

They still do stuff together, **Stanton** said, and Travis, who turned 16 Saturday, has even supplied a few helpful tips on her transformation: "We were in Publix, looking for horseradish and I just couldn't find it. Travis said, 'Dad, you're a girl now! It's OK to ask for directions!'"

Other aspects of the transition did not go as well.

When everything exploded, back in 2007, "lots of people were supportive," at first, she said. "But then there was an organized campaign by a few churches." People flooded city hall with letters and quoted Scripture at city meetings, and in five days' time, Steve was out.

People just weren't up for an on-the-job gender swap.

"Probably 95 percent of the communities would have done the same," she contends. "People thought they knew who Steven was, and when they found out they didn't, there were feelings of disappointment, of distrust and deception -- all those human emotions. I caused my organization a lot of problems.

"I guess I could have left quietly in the dark of the night," she added. "Or, I could have kept living as Steven."

But she didn't.

"I couldn't."

Now, after a divorce and a move to Arizona, where she had her gender reassignment surgery -- a single procedure "rearranged the parts" -- here she is, in a town half Largo's size, but one where, if first impressions are an accurate gauge, people are willing to give her a chance.

Internet Research

Stanton, Susan

Note: This research will be presented in reverse chronological order

A couple of weeks ago, at her first city commission meeting, residents seemed mildly interested in what she was wearing -- for about two seconds. (Dark suit, white blouse, a few pieces of jewelry.) Then they were on to other matters, such as the alley clean-up between K and L streets and the Halloween festival five months out.

It is, everybody knows, the honeymoon period. Anything could happen.

But even Retha Lowe, the lone commissioner of five who preferred another candidate, is having second thoughts: "Now that I've seen her in action, I think she can do a good job."

Which is precisely what **Stanton** intends to do. The job.

"I wanted it so bad, I couldn't bear to listen to the hearing when they voted me in," she said.

At 2:34 p.m., she was holed up in Arizona when the phone rang.

It was her brother, who had been listening for her. He said just two words.

She'll never forget them.

"You're in."

St. Petersburg Times (FL)

April 20, 2008

BEHIND HIS VOTE

Author: *LORRI HELFAND; Times Staff Writer*

Ask Andy Guyette about his most trying times as a city commissioner and of course he mentions **Steve Stanton**. "It was the hardest period of my life outside of my father's death," said Guyette, 50, who resigned last week to take a job in Huntsville, Ala.

Early last year, the news that **Stanton** planned to have a sex-change operation turned Largo City Hall into the center ring of a media circus.

Commissioners got thousands of e-mails. TV satellite trucks took over the parking lot. Hundreds of protesters packed City Commission meetings.

And in the end, Guyette voted to dismiss a city manager with a string of favorable evaluations.

Many said the vote was bigoted.

"It was bad enough having to make the decision," Guyette said. "The repercussions added to it."

In response, he said his decision was based on what he learned about **Stanton's** leadership, not who he was as a person.

But even before he faced the backlash, Guyette had to do something else.

First, he had to fire his friend.

For someone like Guyette - a son of the Midwest, with working-class roots and a lifetime of taking on evermore responsibility - it was not a decision to be made lightly.

One of six kids, Guyette grew up in Green Bay, Wis. His mom cooked in a restaurant and his dad was a mill worker. He joined the Air Force after high school and met his wife, Linda, at a Cocoa Beach base.

After leaving the Air Force, they moved here to be near his wife's family.

Guyette spent 13 years juggling his career, helping raise two daughters and night college classes. He earned a bachelor's degree in computer science from the University of South Florida and his master's degree in management technology from the University of Miami.

Internet Research

Stanton, Susan

Note: This research will be presented in reverse chronological order

Over the years, he met a few transgender people through work.

In the late 1980s or early '90s, he worked as a software engineer at Paradyne Corp. He remembers a guy, Ralph, who became Rachel for several months, but then decided to be Ralph again.

And about six years ago, a couple of transgender people came out at Honeywell.

Still, Guyette was stunned when **Stanton** told him he wanted to become a woman.

"I never in my wildest dreams would have imagined him to be transgender," Guyette said.

He recalled how **Stanton** showed off his bruises after a police SWAT drill and how the two bonded as fans of the University of Florida.

"The first 10 minutes I was in total shock," Guyette said. "But when I listened to his story I totally understood where he was coming from. I could see he really struggled his whole life with this issue."

And **Stanton** wasn't just a colleague. He was a friend, even a mentor.

Guyette first went to Largo City Hall in the 1990s to complain about a fee he was charged for a new sidewalk in his neighborhood.

Stanton persuaded him to get involved in city government as a member of the public works advisory board.

Later, as a city commissioner, Guyette earned a reputation for taking the job seriously, doing his homework and asking probing questions. He and **Stanton** met weekly to discuss city issues. Once city business was handled, conversation often drifted to fishing and hiking and the Gators.

Not everyone, however, was as friendly with the city manager. Former Mayor Bob Jackson and a former commissioner had both advised Guyette to keep an eye on **Stanton**.

- - -

As the news was breaking, **Stanton** met with Guyette one-on-one to explain what was happening. Guyette immediately decided to come to his aid.

So he thought about what he could say to help people understand **Stanton's** choice.

He knew about the harsh reaction a few years before when commissioners discussed an ordinance to ban discrimination of gay and transgender people.

Internet Research

Stanton, Susan

Note: This research will be presented in reverse chronological order

"I wanted to make sure I was going to deflect some of that from him," he said.

Guyette got home a little after 3:30 p.m. the Wednesday in February that **Stanton** told him the news. He grabbed a blue spiral notebook and sat on a cushy patio chair on his lanai looking out onto Allen's Creek.

He started to jot down thoughts. He wanted people to know it was a condition in **Stanton's** brain that made him this way. That it wouldn't affect his job performance.

Hours later, he had filled four pages.

Over the next few days, he slept little more than two hours at a shot. Ideas came to him, just a sentence or two at a time. He'd grab his book from the nightstand and start to write. He couldn't shut his mind off. So he crawled out of bed and went out to the lanai to write some more.

The Sunday morning after the news broke, he was back out on the lanai, drinking a cup of black coffee and reading the St. Petersburg Times.

On the front page was a story about the officials **Stanton** had confided in at City Hall before news of his plans became public. The story described how **Stanton's** confidants - his "circle of trust" - included the mayor, a former commissioner, the fire chief and the police chief.

Guyette barely made it through the first section of the story when he started to make connections he'd never made before.

To Guyette, it appeared **Stanton** had made personnel moves - like promoting Jeff Bullock to fire chief over more senior managers - to put people who could help him into influential jobs.

"Sunday's paper hit me like a brick wall," he said. "I don't mind him surrounding himself with people. It was the way he picked and chose and got those people in certain positions."

Guyette read the story, then read a section to his wife. He told her he could no longer support **Stanton**. She agreed.

In the time it took to drink a cup of coffee, Guyette's view had turned completely around.

Two days later, he voted to put **Stanton** on leave. A month later, he voted to fire **Stanton**.

Guyette didn't regret his votes - still doesn't - but he received a slew of negative e-mails and calls afterward. Even some co-workers he didn't know made comments to him, assuming he fired **Stanton** because he was transgendered.

Internet Research

Stanton, Susan

Note: This research will be presented in reverse chronological order

"People weren't listening to us," Guyette said. "People flat out didn't like me, but they didn't know me, and that was frustrating to say the least."

As for **Stanton**, Guyette hasn't seen or spoken to his old friend since **Stanton** started living as a woman.

Several month ago, though, CNN interviewed him for a documentary about **Stanton**.

Soon after, Guyette received a Christmas card.

"Gee," Susan **Stanton** wrote, "I sure miss our Gator talks."

The CNN producer had told her about Guyette's interview.

"I am sorry my personal life brought shame to my city," **Stanton** wrote. "So when the time is right let's talk my friend."

Sounds good, Guyette says. He did what he felt was his duty as a commissioner. But he, too, enjoyed those chats.

"If he was to call me today," he said, "I'd be more than happy to talk to him."

St. Petersburg Times (FL)

March 24, 2007

Despite outcry, Stanton is fired

Author: *LORRI HELFAND; Times Staff Writer*

Dateline: LARGO

Steve Stanton couldn't overcome the odds. Largo city commissioners voted 5-2 to fire him early this morning, a month after he revealed he planned to become a woman.

The vote was identical to one taken Feb. 27 and came after a six-hour meeting including four hours of public testimony, most of it urging the commission to save **Stanton's** job.

"I was optimistic, but realistic that it was going to be very difficult to slow down the train," **Stanton**, 48, said after the vote. He said he has made no decision about whether he'll take additional legal action.

Stanton - joined by his attorney, specialists and accomplished transgender people - had led the charge for his job Friday night, asking commissioners to look past gender issues and judge him on his accomplishments in 14 years as Largo's top bureaucrat.

"I'm asking you to realize I'm still the same person today that I was four weeks ago. I'm asking you to judge me on my qualifications and performance and the fact that this organization is the best run organization in Pinellas County," he said.

But in the end, commissioners said that they lost their trust in him and that he didn't meet the leadership standards he set for employees.

"I will tell you it is not about transgenderism," said Commissioner Gay Gentry. "It is about making sure that the 1,000 people who work in the city, work in such a way that they can give superior services for the 75,000 people who live in this city. I tried to vote the right way for the right reasons."

Commissioner Andy Guyette said honesty, integrity and trust were the foundations of their relationship with him and that "without trust, there is no longer a foundation to any relationship."

Gentry and Guyette were among the five commissioners who moved to fire **Stanton** in an emergency meeting Feb. 27, six days after the St. Petersburg Times disclosed he was undergoing hormone therapy in anticipation of gender re-assignment surgery. Later stories, which have garnered interest around the world, revealed **Stanton** had told a handful of subordinates and elected officials about his plans, but not every commissioner.

Stanton's 30-minute statement Friday night, his most extensive comments since the Feb. 27 meeting, were nearly eclipsed by the spectacle of the evening. After **Stanton** and his team spoke

*Internet Research
Stanton, Susan*

Note: This research will be presented in reverse chronological order

for two hours, commissioners began hearing from the roughly 100 people who had signed up to speak. Most were from Tampa Bay and they included several transgendered people, including a Pasco sheriff's deputy. Most spoke in support of **Stanton**.

Shortly before 10 p.m., the meeting was briefly stopped for a bomb scare; his assistant city manager, Henry Schubert, was treated by paramedics after he blacked out; and across City Hall, dozens of the nearly 300 people in attendance wore light pink T-shirts that proclaimed "Don't Discriminate."

They were distributed by Equality of Florida, a statewide advocacy group for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.

Stanton apologized for not informing some commissioners before they heard of his plans in the media, and he explained why he didn't leave and transition out of the public spotlight.

"Largo has not been a job to me," he said. "Largo's been a passion. One does not just replace one's passion."

Stanton's plea came after 90 minutes of presentations from his team of experts, who sought to remind commissioners of his success as city manager. They explained what it means to be transgendered and how someone can make a smooth transition in the work place.

Among those supporting **Stanton's** case were Susan Kimberly, former deputy mayor of St. Paul, Minn., who started living as a woman in 1983; and Margaret Stumpp, chief investment officer for Quantitative Investment Management Associates, who transitioned from man to woman five years ago while keeping her job overseeing \$60-billion in investments.

Stanton's case also included comments by Dr. Walter Bockting, associate professor at University of Minnesota Medical School and a specialist in transsexualism. He said gender identity disorder isn't something people can change.

The majority of the public who spoke urged the commission to keep **Stanton**, including longtime Pinellas County School Board member Linda Lerner, who told the commission it had a "wonderful opportunity" to serve as an example for students by keeping **Stanton**.

But some speakers, including former Mayor Bob Jackson, said **Stanton** created a culture of fear.

"You need to listen to what the residents are telling you in Largo and they're telling you it's time for a change in city management," Jackson said.

Another resident said Largo's choice made "Largo the laughing stock of the whole country.

"We're a disgrace," said resident Jimmy Dean. "It seems a couple people here want to make Largo into a weirdo town."

*Internet Research
Stanton, Susan*

Note: This research will be presented in reverse chronological order

FAST FACTS

What's at stake

Steve Stanton had been Largo's city manager for 14 years and received raise of nearly 9 percent in September. The St. Petersburg Times reported Feb. 21 that he was undergoing hormone therapy in preparation for gender-reassignment surgery.

Six days later, five of seven city commissioners moved to place **Stanton**, 48, on paid leave and to begin the process of firing him from his \$140,234-a-year job.

His severance package: one year's salary; vacation time equaling \$37,459; and health, life and disability insurance benefits and contributions to his retirement accounts for that period.

Friday night's hearing was **Stanton's** attempt to persuade at least one of the commissioners who voted to fire him to reconsider. Five votes are needed to fire a city manager.

Stanton hasn't ruled out suing the commission on grounds of discrimination should he lose Friday night's appeal.

How they voted

Voting to fire **Stanton** for a second time early today:

Commissioner Mary Gray Black, Commissioner Andy Guyette, Commissioner Gigi Arntzen, Commissioner Harriet K. Crozier, Commissioner Gay Gentry

Voting to retain **Stanton** for a second time:

Mayor Patricia Gerard, Commissioner Rodney J. Woo

Internet Research

Stanton, Susan

Note: This research will be presented in reverse chronological order

St. Petersburg Times (FL)

February 27, 2007

Stanton job may hang in balance

Author: *LORRI HELFAND; Times Staff Writer*

Dateline: LARGO

Three undecided Largo city commissioners could determine the fate of City Manager **Steve Stanton** tonight.

Last week, **Stanton's** announcement that he plans to have a sex-change operation roiled this city of 76,000, with its mobile home parks full of retirees and its feed store in the middle of downtown.

By Monday, Mayor Pat Gerard was the only member of the seven-member City Commission to say she still stands by **Stanton**, 48.

Three other commissioners say they intend to fire the 14-year city manager or are likely do so.

That leaves three commissioners - Gigi Arntzen, Gay Gentry and Rodney Woods - as the deciding votes. Largo's city charter requires a vote of five out of seven city commissioners to fire the city manager.

At a special meeting called to discuss **Stanton**, commissioners expect to face more than 500 people.

City Hall has received more than 250 e-mails about **Stanton**, more than 40 percent from people who identified themselves as Largo residents. Those e-mails called for his removal by a 7-to-1 ratio.

The first 520 people to arrive will be permitted to enter City Hall, with about 100 in commission chambers and the rest in the community room, staff break room and City Hall lobby.

Extra police officers will be on duty, but Chief Lester Aradi said he's not expecting an unruly crowd.

"This is a controversial issue, but we have faith that people will act accordingly," he said.

Both **Stanton** supporters and opponents say they plan to pack the chambers.

Charlie Martin, senior pastor at First Baptist Church of Indian Rocks, said he encouraged parishioners to attend because it's the "biggest issue facing Largo" in his 36-year tenure as pastor of the church, one of the largest in Pinellas County.

Internet Research

Stanton, Susan

Note: This research will be presented in reverse chronological order

Stanton's continued employment will be devastating to Largo's reputation and future business interests, Martin said.

Moreover, he said, it would trample on the rights of religious employees to force them to call the city manager Susan, the name **Stanton** plans to use when he comes to work as a woman this spring.

"Do we want what's controversial or do we want what's best for Largo?" said Martin, whose church includes many members from Largo.

Brian Winfield, communications director for Equality Florida, an organization that advocates for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender rights, said his group will urge members to attend the meeting as well.

The discussion of **Stanton's** future employment is discriminatory because the topic only came up after **Stanton** announced plans for gender reassignment surgery, he said.

"As long as he continues to do the excellent job he's doing, there isn't any reason for his termination whatsoever," Winfield said.

A large group from the Pinellas chapter of the National Organization for Women plans to come tonight as well, Winfield said.

Tonight's meeting was called by Commissioner Mary Gray Black and could echo a bitter 2003 debate over an ordinance that would have protected gay and transgender residents and city employees.

Black was recruited to run for the commission by a leading opponent of the antidiscrimination ordinance. On Monday, she proposed placing **Stanton** on paid leave while the city prepares to fire him.

Black didn't return calls for comments, but in an e-mail accompanying the proposed resolution, she said, **Stanton's** situation "has caused stress, turmoil, distraction and work disruption" to city employees.

City staff members also are "stressed by comments, questions, and jokes made during the employees' nonworking hours," she said.

Vice Mayor Harriet Crozier said she supports Black's resolution, which is the first phase of a three-step process required by the city charter to fire **Stanton**.

Commissioner Andy Guyette said he may vote to fire **Stanton** as well.

The rest of the commission is on the fence.

Internet Research

Stanton, Susan

Note: This research will be presented in reverse chronological order

"We need to determine the best course of direction for the city and our employees," Commissioner Gigi Arntzen said.

Commissioner Gay Gentry said she wanted to see how **Stanton's** choice will affect staffers before making a decision.

"I don't like to make my decisions in haste," Gentry said.

Meanwhile, **Stanton** sent an e-mail to commissioners asking them for more time.

"After 17 years with the city, I feel I should be given the courtesy to show I can still do my job and be an effective manager," wrote **Stanton**, who came to the city as assistant city manager in 1990 and makes \$140,234 annually.

Stanton asked commissioners, before taking a public vote on whether he should be fired, to discuss the effects of a workplace transition with qualified experts, give him six months to show he can still do the job and postpone his evaluation until August.

Several commissioners initially voiced support for **Stanton's** personal decision, but their support for his continued employment waned after the city was flooded by negative e-mails.

The mayor said she won't be swayed by e-mails, especially since many include incorrect assumptions, including that the city is funding his sex change operation.

Human Resources director Susan Sinz said the city's health insurance policy doesn't cover surgery, hormone treatments, electrolysis or anything else regarding the gender transition process.

"I'll be making this decision on what I know about this person and what he's done for the city, not on assumptions based on misinformation," Gerard said.

St. Petersburg Times: Web Edition Articles (FL)

August 6, 2006

Largo city manager makes a case for higher pay

Steve Stanton says his salary "is not competitive" and should be increased based on performance and the market.

Author: *LORRI HELFAND*

LARGO - City Manager **Steve Stanton** is asking city commissioners to re-evaluate his salary and make it competitive with those for managers of similar-sized cities.

As he completes his 16th year with the city, **Stanton** said it's time that the City Commission reviews his salary of \$128,960, based on his performance and the local labor market, **Stanton** wrote in a letter to the mayor and city commissioners Friday.

"I believe my longevity and commitment to this community has added a level of stability in local government not seen in most other cities in the county," **Stanton** wrote.

The letter came days after commissioners submitted their annual evaluations of him and about a month before the commission is scheduled to discuss his performance and salary.

Stanton, 47, who was hired as city manager in 1993, said the salary for his position "is not competitive" and that he has usually been paid toward the lower end of the salary range for city managers in the state.

"I'm not saying I want them to pay me more money," he said. "The position of city manager should be evaluated in the same way we evaluate every other manager. Most managers make what I do for communities that are a fraction of the size of Largo."

Stanton began working for the city as an assistant city manager and served as the interim city manager for several months before his promotion.

Stanton also outlined his experience and training in leadership and emergency management.

Last summer, he received a fellowship to attend Harvard University's state and local government senior executive program at the John F. Kennedy School of Government. And he has received emergency and disaster training from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and the U.S. Emergency Management Institute.

Stanton said he decided to bring up the topic because he has been interviewing candidates to head the public works and environmental services departments, and several applicants expected to make almost as much as he does.

Commissioners will use their annual evaluations to help determine whether he gets a raise.

Internet Research

Stanton, Susan

Note: This research will be presented in reverse chronological order

In their evaluations, three commissioners think **Stanton** is doing a good job, three think he's doing a great job and one thinks he is doing okay.

Commissioner Mary Gray Black was the most critical, saying **Stanton** needed improvement in administrative management and integrity and fairness.

Commissioners and members of the public "need and deserve straightforward truthful responses," she wrote.

"When the city manager hems and haws, I feel like he's not telling me what he really feels," Black explained later.

He tells commissioners what's on his mind when he meets with them, **Stanton** said, but rarely airs his feelings at the dais because he doesn't think it's the proper place to do so.

Stanton said he is not sure what Black's expectations are because she is the only commissioner who hasn't met or called him to discuss his performance.

But while Black was critical of **Stanton**, she did say that he has improved. Last year, she was the only commissioner who gave him an unsatisfactory rating in the category of integrity and fairness.

Mayor Pat Gerard and Commissioners Andy Guyette and Gay Gentry gave **Stanton** an overall excellent rating.

"I don't know of very many people who have more pride in Largo than he does," Guyette wrote. "Another strength of Steve's is his foresight and planning. He has a vision for where Largo can go and the majority of the citizens agree, and we can't wait to get there."

Last year, **Stanton** received a 4 percent pay increase, the same amount that other top Largo administrators received.

St. Petersburg Times (FL)

January 28, 2006

Broken hopes for a clean getaway

Author: *LORRI HELFAND*

Dateline: LARGO

The last time City Manager **Steve Stanton** tried to outgun city police officers in a reality-based training scenario, he was pelted more than 15 times with paint bullets.

This time, he broke his nose.

He also got a swollen right thumb, welts and bruises.

"When you play with the big dogs, you're going to get hurt," police Chief Lester Aradi said.

The 5-foot-8, 162-pound city manager isn't new to risky pursuits.

He has rappelled off the top of a 115-foot water tower with Largo firefighters, donned a bulletproof vest to patrol a crime-ridden nightclub and once promised to skydive into Largo Central Park to publicize a music festival, but was thwarted by bad weather.

So last week, **Stanton**, 47, didn't think twice about participating in a police SWAT drill at the former Hospice of the Florida Suncoast facility on East Bay Drive.

Told to search for "suspects," 16 SWAT-trained officers moved tactically through the building.

In a dark second-floor room, **Stanton**, playing a bad guy, barricaded himself behind a 4-foot-high bookcase.

From a prone position he fired his MP-5 submachine gun as the cops approached.

The weapons were real. But the bullets were paint projectiles that can reach speeds of 400 feet per second. And hurt.

Detective Joe Coyle, working the point of the assault, saw the perp's right hand and gun at the edge of the bookcase, some 30 yards away.

Ting, ting, ting. **Stanton's** bullets ricocheted off one cop's ballistic shield.

Suddenly **Stanton** was out of ammo. He pulled off his leather glove, and started to reload.

Five rounds blasted his exposed hand.

Internet Research

Stanton, Susan

Note: This research will be presented in reverse chronological order

Coyle then rushed the bookcase and kicked it over.

Stanton, wearing a helmet with a protective face cover, looked up just as the bookcase and a half dozen officers toppled on him.

He tried squirming away, but couldn't. He gave up.

It was then that Coyle got a close look at the perp. His first thought: "I guess I won't be a detective anymore."

But **Stanton** understood. He expects a bit of bruising when joining drills. "If they were going to baby me, I probably wouldn't want to participate," he said.

Stanton didn't know his nose was broken until Thursday - a week later.

His doctor told him the nose probably will have to be rebroken to set it correctly.

Stanton is not looking forward to that. He is looking forward to spending a little more time with the SWAT team.

"I shall heal and go again," **Stanton** said Friday. "I never get angry. I just get even."

St. Petersburg Times (FL)

September 17, 2005

Check dispute continues to bounce

Largo City Commissioner Mary Gray Black and City Manager **Steve Stanton** had a rare one-on-one chat Wednesday after she tried to pay for a special event permit for Taste of Largo with a personal check.

That wasn't allowed, leading to confusion and awkwardness at City Hall.

On Thursday, **Stanton** wrote commissioners about the incident. Black did not respond Friday to a reporter's request to comment on **Stanton's** letter, which is excerpted here:

"I . . . want to call commission attention to the substantial amount of disruption that takes place within the working environment when City Commissioners provide direct interface with city employees and give directions that are inconsistent with the provisions of the City Charter and legislative policies.

"As stated in (the) City Charter . . . `Except for the purpose of inquiries and investigations, the city commission and its members shall deal with the city officers and employees . . . solely through the city manager, and neither the City Commission nor its members shall give orders to any such officer or employee, either publicly or privately."

Before adding that the city's legislative policies echo the charter, **Stanton** wrote that the incident was "extremely embarrassing and very disruptive to personnel in the Building Department, Assistant City Manager Norton Craig and myself and has, once again, caused the city a substantial amount of embarrassment and undermined the confidence of the general public in the city administration."

St. Petersburg Times (FL)

September 1, 2005

Mayor asks why Stanton stays

Author: *LORRI HELFAND*

Dateline: LARGO

Two city leaders said City Manager **Steve Stanton** doesn't deserve a raise.

Now at least one of them wonders if **Stanton** should even keep his job.

"I'm not convinced his continued employment is in the best interest of the city," said Mayor Bob Jackson.

Jackson said he does not want **Stanton** to leave now, but questions **Stanton's** actions and thinks he needs to work with the majority of the commission.

"I would not ask for (his resignation) unless the majority of the commission wanted it," said Jackson, adding that he would put such a request in writing anyway.

Stanton initially said Wednesday that Jackson asked him to resign earlier this week. Jackson said he had simply questioned **Stanton** on why he would stay in the face of so much friction.

In response to Jackson's comments, **Stanton** said, "If you asked him a straight question and Bob Jackson said he didn't ask me to resign, then my memory is incorrect. I must have misunderstood."

Despite the recent controversy, **Stanton** said he's not planning to leave.

"Right now there's a lot of conflict and dissension. That's when I need to start doing my job, continuing practicing my craft, not cutting and running because the water is unstable," **Stanton** said.

The latest conflict stems from a recent commission vote over **Stanton's** annual raise.

Two weeks ago, commissioners voted 4-3 to give **Stanton** a 4 percent raise. But Commissioner Mary Gray Black, who voted against the raise, said the city charter required a supermajority to change his salary.

Stanton's contract states that if he gets a pay increase that is less than what other executive management city employees receive, he could consider the move "termination without cause."

Internet Research

Stanton, Susan

Note: This research will be presented in reverse chronological order

If the commission doesn't support his raise, **Stanton** said, he would consider that a vote of no confidence.

Jackson and Black requested an outside opinion on the matter, saying City Attorney Alan Zimmet couldn't be objective, since he reports to **Stanton**.

Attorney John Hubbard, who represents three other municipalities, issued his opinion Tuesday, and found that the 4-3 vote was legally sound. He said the supermajority mentioned in the charter referred only to setting the city manager's initial salary.

He also noted inconsistencies between the charter and the city's legislative policy, which requires a vote of five members to evaluate the city manager's performance and fix his or her compensation.

Next Tuesday, the commission will vote on an amendment to **Stanton**'s contract to raise his salary. **Stanton**'s previous raises were not tied to his contract.

Zimmet said Hubbard's opinion on the vote would likely stand unless the commission decides to reinterpret the charter to require a supermajority.

That's a possibility. But a majority vote saying the charter requires five votes for **Stanton**'s raise is unlikely because the majority of commissioners supported the raise in the first place.

Commissioner Jean Halvorsen, who voted against the raise, said she agreed with Hubbard's opinion. Jackson did not comment directly on Hubbard's recommendation, but said he wasn't surprised by it. Black did not return several calls for comment.

Jackson, who did not support **Stanton**'s raise last year either, has butted heads with **Stanton** over numerous issues including the firing of employees and the city's strategic plan.

Recently, Jackson said that **Stanton** is not standing behind issues the "new majority" of the commission supports, such as Fred Thomas' efforts to build facilities for Pinch-A-Penny's subsidiary, Cepcot Corp., at 150th Avenue. He also said commission support of a rollback on the property tax rate was met with offers to cut services rather than practical efforts to reduce expenses.

Stanton said that he would leave only if the majority of the commission said it lacked confidence in him.

"It takes five people to say, 'This isn't working anymore.' When that happens, that's when I say 'Okay,'" **Stanton** said.

St. Petersburg Times (FL)

August 25, 2005

Largo city manager: Pay up or I'll go

Author: *SHANNON TAN*

Dateline: LARGO

City Manager Steven **Stanton** said Wednesday he will resign if city commissioners vote to take away or reduce a raise they just gave him.

Commissioners voted 4-3 last week to give **Stanton** a 4 percent pay increase, the same raise other top city administrators received. But Commissioner Mary Gray Black, who voted against the raise, contended that the city charter requires a super majority vote to change his salary.

Mayor Bob Jackson asked **Stanton** Monday whether he planned to get a legal opinion on the issue from City Attorney Alan Zimmet. But Jackson and Black have accused Zimmet of being biased because he reports to **Stanton**. So **Stanton** suggested asking an outside attorney for an opinion.

Jackson chose John Hubbard, the city attorney for Dunedin and Tarpon Springs, who expects to issue an opinion by Wednesday.

If Hubbard agrees with Black that it takes at least a 5-2 vote of the commission to give **Stanton** a raise, then that could allow the commission to reconsider its vote on his raise.

Stanton's contract stipulates that if he gets a pay increase that is less than what other executive management employees at the city receive, he could consider the move "termination without cause."

"I would consider that a vote of no confidence, and I would submit my resignation at that point," said **Stanton**, who makes \$124,000 annually. "You're not going to treat me any less fairly than anybody that works for the city organization."

While **Stanton** says he is not looking for a job elsewhere, he says two cities have already approached him. He would not say which ones. Several commissioners are upset that it has come to this. They criticized the mayor, who has voted against **Stanton's** raise for two consecutive years.

"I think it's part of the mayor's campaign to either get rid of **Steve Stanton** or be a strong mayor of Largo," said Commissioner Pat Gerard.

"We would be fools to let him (**Stanton**) go," she said.

Mayor Jackson insists he's not trying to force **Stanton** out.

Internet Research

Stanton, Susan

Note: This research will be presented in reverse chronological order

"I would prefer he learn to work with the majority of the commission and pay attention to some of my suggestions," Jackson said. "I've never been out to get his job."

If Hubbard - who would be paid about \$1,000 for up to five hours of work - reads the city charter the same way Black does, commissioners could consider voting again.

But **Stanton** doesn't think Jackson, Black or Commissioner Jean Halvorsen would budge.

"I'm not speaking about it," said Halvorsen, who said she disagreed with the percentage of **Stanton's** pay increase. Black did not return a message left at her home Wednesday.

Jackson says his decision would depend on whether **Stanton** changes his attitude. **Stanton** should stay - even if he doesn't get his raise, Jackson said.

"If he was really committed to the city, he would bite the bullet and say, 'I will do what the commission wants,'" Jackson said.

This is not the first time **Stanton**, who was hired as city manager in 1993, has struggled with commissioners.

In 2001, then-Commissioner Marty Shelby called for his resignation when **Stanton** interviewed for a position in Colorado. But **Stanton** kept his job.

More recently, Jackson has complained about his limited powers as mayor, saying **Stanton** does not follow his direction. But while the two have clashed on a number of issues ranging from the strategic plan to the city's budget, Jackson often lacks support from most of the commission.

"I believe the city is going in a good direction, and I believe it's **Steve Stanton's** leadership that got us there," said Commissioner Andrew Guyette.

Vice Mayor Gay Gentry said she's concerned that **Stanton** received an overall satisfactory evaluation but now could be on his way out.

"What disturbs me is what message that sends to the city manager and everyone down the line," she said. "I don't think that makes for a good working environment."

Stanton's raise is the latest in a series of controversies involving city officials and the city charter.

Three commissioners contributed to city candidates in the March 1 election, an apparent violation of the charter. The Pinellas-Pasco State Attorney's Office decided not to file charges, and the commission voted against pursuing the matter.

Internet Research

Stanton, Susan

Note: This research will be presented in reverse chronological order

Shannon Tan can be reached at shtan@sptimes.com or 445-4174.

A QUESTION OF MEANING

Attorney John Hubbard will scrutinize this line in Largo's city charter to determine whether the City Commission can give City Manager Steven **Stanton** a raise by a 4-3 vote:

The city commission shall, by a vote of not less than five of its members, appoint a city manager and fix his compensation.

John Hubbard, city attorney for Tarpon Springs and Dunedin, will issue an opinion.

Mayor Bob Jackson said Steven **Stanton** should stay - even if he doesn't get his raise.

Commissioner Mary Gray Black voted against the raise for City Manager Steven **Stanton**.

St. Petersburg Times: Web Edition Articles (FL)

August 11, 2005

City manager's evaluation stirs debate

The mayor and one commissioner give Steve Stanton negative reviews. The other five commissioners back him.

Author: *SHANNON TAN*

LARGO - Mayor Bob Jackson says he will recommend that City Manager Steven **Stanton** not get a raise this year.

Jackson, who voted against a raise for **Stanton** last year, said **Stanton** does not follow his direction on issues. He said the firing of a Public Works employee and two veteran Fire Department officials brought negative publicity to the city, while last year's property tax rate increase was excessive.

"I don't believe government should take money from citizens that they may need three years from now," said Jackson, who is recommending that officials roll back the property tax rate this year.

Stanton said the two have fundamental differences over how he should do his job.

"I don't work for the mayor," **Stanton** said. "I work for the commission."

Jackson should find support in Commissioner Mary Gray Black, who also gave **Stanton** a negative evaluation.

Among other things, Black criticized **Stanton's** lack of knowledge of the city charter. She was the only commissioner who doled out an unsatisfactory rating in the category of integrity and fairness. "Confidence must be earned," she wrote.

Since Black was elected in March, she has refused to meet privately with **Stanton**.

"This helps me understand her needs," **Stanton** said. "Even though the evaluation was negative, it's good to receive the individual feedback."

The City Commission will vote on **Stanton's** raise at Tuesday's meeting.

Under **Stanton's** contract, if the City Commission approves a pay increase less than that of other executive management employees, he could consider the move to be "termination without cause."

The remaining five commissioners, however, expressed satisfaction with **Stanton's** performance.

Internet Research

Stanton, Susan

Note: This research will be presented in reverse chronological order

Stanton received "good" and "excellent" ratings in all categories from Vice Mayor Gay Gentry and Commissioner Andrew Guyette.

Gentry says she would recommend a raise in the neighborhood of 3 to 4 percent.

"In my opinion, (Jackson's) frustration is misplaced," she said. "Rather than trying to get Steve to do something he wants Steve to do, he should be working to build a consensus on the commission."

Jackson says he's aware the majority of the commission supports **Stanton**.

"I will try to do everything I can to work with him in the future," he wrote in his evaluation.

Stanton's current salary and benefits package is \$144,900, which includes automobile and expense allowances and retirement contributions. He received a 3 percent raise last year.

St. Petersburg Times (FL)

August 12, 2005

Attention, Bob Jackson, there is no `I' in mayor

After having been an elected official for around 30 years, you would think Largo Mayor Bob Jackson would know how it works.

But this week, he again sounded like he just doesn't get it.

Jackson is mad at City Manager **Steve Stanton** because, Jackson says, **Stanton** won't do what he tells him to do. He also says **Stanton** spends too much money and that he brought bad publicity to the city when he fired three employees. So Jackson says **Stanton** should not get a raise this year.

Jackson ought to know that **Stanton** doesn't work for the mayor, but for the entire City Commission, a group of seven.

Jackson ought to know that while **Stanton** has to prepare the budget, it is the City Commission that sets spending policy, approves expenditures and votes the city budget up or down. **Stanton** doesn't even get a vote.

Jackson ought to know that the city charter states that the city manager "shall appoint and, when deemed necessary for the good of the city, shall suspend or remove" city employees, but nowhere does the charter say that part of **Stanton's** job is to make sure the city doesn't get negative publicity.

Jackson surely knows these things. Perhaps he just can't bear them. Jackson appears to blame **Stanton** for Jackson's own inability to win a consensus from his fellow city commissioners on his pet issues. For example, if Jackson wants the city to spend less money, he must be a strong enough leader to convince a majority of the commission that the budget should be cut. To blame **Stanton** for Jackson's own leadership failures is unseemly.

Consensus-building just doesn't seem to come naturally to Jackson. Before he was elected mayor, he was a lone-wolf city commissioner, often voting differently from his colleagues and taking pride in being different. In his day job he was a school principal - the big cheese on campus - and students and faculty had to follow his lead. Now, he is increasingly frustrated that he can't get his goals accomplished because he is only one member of a team.

Stanton is not a perfect city manager, but he faces some difficult challenges trying to satisfy Jackson and new Commissioner Mary Gray Black, who won't even meet with him or talk with him except in public meetings because she thinks doing so is improper. It is no surprise, then, that Black ranked **Stanton** lower than any other commissioner, saying that he "needs improvement" or is "unsatisfactory" on nearly all of the items on which **Stanton** is evaluated.

Internet Research

Stanton, Susan

Note: This research will be presented in reverse chronological order

Stanton also struggles because the Largo City Commission is notorious for its inability to make a decision, set a direction and clearly define its goals. Sometimes **Stanton** gets the blame for the commission's dallying.

All of the commissioners gave **Stanton** satisfactory or higher marks for industriousness and dedication to the job. Five of the seven commissioners made it clear he is doing an excellent job overall, and they are satisfied with the way he relates to them. That includes new Commissioner Andrew Guyette, elected at the same time as Black. While Black criticizes **Stanton** in nearly every category, Guyette praises him and marks him "good" or excellent in every category.

Some of the commissioners also did a good job of providing constructive, on-point criticism of **Stanton**. They noted that **Stanton** still needs to work harder at building bridges with other local governments in Pinellas, including the county; that he sometimes conceals that he has a management agenda when he should be more straightforward; and that he and all city officials need to have a better working knowledge of the city charter.

St. Petersburg Times: Web Edition Articles (FL)

April 11, 2005

Mutual respect tempers opposing views

Mayor Bob Jackson and City Manager Steve Stanton don't hide their philosophical differences but say they're satisfied with the other's work.

Author: *LORRI HELFAND*

LARGO - Days before the city meeting, Mayor Bob Jackson rifled through Largo's new mission, vision and values statement.

Honing in on the values section, he circled various words and passages that stressed integrity and empathy.

Lately, he felt city management hadn't lived up to those ideals, especially when it came to the recent terminations of two veteran firefighters and the firing of a 30-year public works employee after he chose to stay with his mother during Hurricane Charley instead of going to work.

When Jackson entered the commission chambers for Tuesday's meeting, he wasn't sure if he would support the mission statement or not.

But the woman sitting in the front row, sobbing and clutching a framed photo of her three children convinced him.

He had to vote against it.

The woman was Tina King, wife of Largo Fire Rescue division chief David King, one of the firefighters terminated after 27 years of service. Wearing a black dress to symbolize her grief, she angled the photo toward the dais. She wanted to show city officials that her husband's abrupt firing also hurt 14-year-old Alyssa, 12-year-old Chelsea and 4-year-old Ryan.

Jackson got her point.

"The essence of the no vote is: What we say we value and what we have valued by our actions are not consistent," Jackson said.

City Manager **Steve Stanton**, who knows the King family socially, said he had to put the interests of the city as an organization before personal feelings.

Personnel files for the past five years for King and David Morrin, a district chief who was also fired, show no reprimands or disciplinary actions. But **Stanton** said the terminations had more to do with management philosophy. The new fire chief, Jeff Bullock, needed to have senior staff whose vision was compatible with his.

Internet Research

Stanton, Susan

Note: This research will be presented in reverse chronological order

In the case of James Gesicki, the spray technician who was fired during hurricane season, **Stanton** said he was not reliable.

"When that guy didn't show up at the time when the community most needed him, that person didn't have the commitment to public service," **Stanton** said.

But Jackson said it's disingenuous for the city to have a mission, vision and values statement that doesn't jibe with its actions.

"The whole thing is a package deal about how we were going to interact and deal with people," Jackson said.

Jackson said the ramifications stretch far beyond the families of the long-term employees who were shown the door.

The terminations hurt staff morale and tarnish Largo's reputation, he said.

Stanton insisted that morale has not been affected.

Jackson remembers the flood of calls and e-mails he received after Gesicki's firing and he still has an article on Gesicki that appeared in the AARP Bulletin.

"It sends an awful message to the rest of the employees," Jackson said.

Stanton admits the two don't see eye to eye on this and other issues.

"To say that Mr. Jackson and I see the world in very dissimilar ways might be an understatement. He and I have a very different philosophy of management and style of leadership," **Stanton** said.

The men have a history of friction on certain issues.

In December, Jackson voted against a 3 percent raise for **Stanton** even though he knew the commission would support the increase to send a message to **Stanton** about what he considered excessive spending habits and poor judgment in firing Gesicki.

They've also been at odds about how the strategic plan should be applied.

The discord has become so frustrating that **Stanton** said he plans to invite an educator to discuss the functions of the city manager and the mayor.

Jackson, a member of the City Commission for three decades, said he can't see why.

"I don't think it's necessary. I've been there for 30 years; if I don't know my role by now it's too late to learn," he said.

Internet Research
Stanton, Susan

Note: This research will be presented in reverse chronological order

He said he hopes other commissioners have the same concerns about such issues.

Commissioner Mary Black said she doesn't want to tell the city manager how to deal with personnel, but she said she might have had a few things to say about the firings if she had been asked.

"I personally would not have found it necessary to fire the employee during the hurricane who was attending to his mother," she said.

And she added that she was concerned that firefighters were asked to leave through the back door.

She also said she would be willing to talk about city policy relating to these issues.

"Any time the mayor would want to place that on the agenda, I would be glad to discuss it," she said.

Commissioner Andy Guyette agrees with **Stanton's** decisions on Gesicki and the firefighters.

"They all report to **Steve Stanton** and that's his job and he knows better than anybody what needs to be done," Guyette said.

Despite their philosophical differences, both Jackson and **Stanton** said they're satisfied with the job the other is doing.

Jackson said he doesn't want a new city manager. He just wants **Stanton** to change and be more empathetic.

And **Stanton** said his respect for Jackson hasn't wavered.

"I can't think of a mayor in Pinellas that I would want to work for other than Bob Jackson," he said.

St. Petersburg Times: Web Edition Articles (FL)

February 13, 2005

City prepares to shift annexation focus

Largo covers 17.28 square miles and is close to realizing its goals. What's next? Acquiring land near the airport and providing services to new residents.

Author: *SHANNON TAN*

LARGO - The framed newspaper article in City Manager **Steve Stanton**'s office proclaims "Largo's March to the Bay."

Since 1997, that has been the city's rallying cry, inspiring victories in hard-fought annexation battles.

Largo has been steadfastly marching to the bay, aggressively annexing unincorporated property past the Bayside Bridge into the Greater High Point area.

From 1997 to 2004, Largo annexed 1,560.24 acres and brought in \$330-million in taxable value. The city now covers 17.28 square miles and has brought in 2,250 new residents in the past four years, according to the Pinellas Planning Council.

Sixty-three percent of all voluntary annexations and 3 percent of referendum annexations in Pinellas County in the past four years were carried out by Largo.

Lawsuits have been fought and won. Turf wars have erupted; boundaries have been drawn.

An annexation agreement with the 100-acre Bay Vista office park in High Point is in the works. In the spring, the city is expected to annex 30 acres of property at Roosevelt Boulevard and 49th Street N, making Largo contiguous to the St. Petersburg-Clearwater International Airport.

Most of Largo's annexation goals will have been realized.

"We've reached the bay," **Stanton** said.

* * *

The goal was to annex unincorporated properties in Largo's planning service area of about 17 square miles.

This was a logical move, **Stanton** said, so a map of Largo would not look like a piece of Swiss cheese with the holes being internal, unincorporated enclaves. Largo started raking in high-value, commercial properties.

Internet Research

Stanton, Susan

Note: This research will be presented in reverse chronological order

Neighbors started crying foul. Other municipalities accused the city of using questionable tactics to expand its boundaries. The county charged Largo with "cherry-picking."

Officials argued over the definition of words like "contiguous" and "compactness." They pondered whether an annexation would create "serpentine patterns" or enclaves.

Largo spent \$95,400 in legal fees over disputes with the county from 1997 to 2004, and another \$5,600 battling other cities. The city budgets \$200,000 a year for incentives to persuade property owners to join Largo.

But the city's notorious annexation approach has led to several brouhahas.

The coveted gated community Cove Cay on U.S. 19 was one day away from a referendum to join the city when the City Commission scrapped the vote because the city staff had mishandled the project. County officials also contended that Largo's offer of incentives, such as new fire-safe windows, was illegal.

Wrens Way residents, who had defeated an annexation referendum, were surprised to learn that they were part of Largo because although the city had published a notice in the Tampa Tribune, it had failed to notify residents individually. The county voided that annexation, and Largo officials had to vote again to bring the subdivision into the city.

"We're all looking forward to less contention in the future," said assistant county administrator Gay Lancaster. "That would be a good thing."

* * *

The meeting before Thanksgiving in 2004 turned contentious.

County and city officials were discussing a potential master contract for fire and emergency medical services when Lancaster brought up the subject of tax inequities in the High Point fire district. Pinellas County intends to reduce the amount it pays cities for fire service in the High Point area, which now has fewer unincorporated residents because of annexations by Largo, Pinellas Park and St. Petersburg.

"He was reluctant to resolve those problems," Lancaster said of **Stanton**.

Lancaster's parting shot: "I hope you choke on your Thanksgiving turkey!"

The next time **Stanton** saw Lancaster, he brought his turkey bones in a gift-wrapped box. As a gesture of peace, he presented her with the wishbone. Lancaster pulled the longer piece. The wishbone is now taped to the wall of her office.

Internet Research
Stanton, Susan

Note: This research will be presented in reverse chronological order

Annexation is at the heart of the problem relative to the High Point fire service dispute, Lancaster said.

The annexation dispute should not have gotten personal over the years, **Stanton** said, but it did.

In the past four years, the Pinellas Planning Council was asked to conduct 10 full reviews of voluntary annexations. All of the annexations were Largo's.

Largo has acquired a bad reputation.

At one point, Largo has threatened to sue or has sued all of its neighbors, including the school district.

"That's not a way of winning friends," said **Stanton**, "but the nice thing is, we have arrived."

* * *

Annexation will not grind to a halt in Largo. The city just won't be as assertive in its actions as it has been before.

Lou Hilton, Largo's annexation program planner, said the city will focus on annexing unincorporated enclaves, neighborhoods with annexation agreements and property owners who want to sign such agreements.

Those plans do not include the Greater Ridgecrest area, where residents overwhelmingly rejected a recent annexation offer by Largo, or neighborhoods south of Roosevelt Boulevard in the High Point area that do not have sewer indenture or annexation agreements with the city.

The city will begin to focus on providing services to the people it just annexed. Plans are in the works for a town center at the corner of Roosevelt Boulevard and U.S. 19. There's talk of buying property east of U.S. 19 for a new park.

Lendel Bright, who lives in the recently annexed Rainforest subdivision, was initially concerned about becoming part of Largo.

But he was surprised to find that the taxes he pays are about the same as before. He was pleased to see the police department patrolling his neighborhood. He likes the Largo Library.

"My only concern is access to recreation," said Bright, who hopes for facilities similar to ones in west Largo.

But other residents in the Greater High Point area aren't convinced.

Internet Research

Stanton, Susan

Note: This research will be presented in reverse chronological order

James Byers, a High Point resident who owns a day care center in Bay Vista office park, knows that annexation is inevitable. "But don't make me pay more and give me less," said Byers, who estimates his taxes will increase while the services provided will not.

The Largo Police Department is stretched thin, he said, and is used to handling a community that is not ethnically or economically diverse.

With 138 sworn officers, Largo has one of the lowest ratios of officers per 1,000 citizens in Florida.

"They're not prepared for it," Byers said. "The business and residential community will suffer because of it."

Chief Lester Aradi says he factored in the Bay Vista office park when evaluating staffing in the police department. He is also asking for three new police officers next year.

"I feel if we get (them) next year and we have no major annexations, and the fact that we're finally fully staffed, we can adequately cover our area," Aradi said.

Internet Research

Stanton, Susan

Note: This research will be presented in reverse chronological order

St. Petersburg Times (FL)

December 15, 2004

Stanton's pay rises, despite mayor

Author: *LORRI HELFAND*

Mayor Bob Jackson voted against a 3 percent raise for City Manager **Steve Stanton** at Tuesday's City Commission meeting even though he predicted the commission would support the increase.

Jackson, who was the only dissenting vote, said he wanted to send a message to **Stanton** about what he considered excessive spending habits and poor judgment in the firing of a Largo employee.

"I wouldn't even vote for 3 percent," Jackson said before the meeting.

Charlie Harper was not present at Tuesday's meeting, where **Stanton** received an annual raise from \$120,245 to \$124,000.

In August, Jackson gave **Stanton** "good" or "excellent" ratings on all categories in his annual evaluation and recommended 3 percent, but he said recent events changed his mind. Jackson opposed this year's property tax rate increase of \$1 per \$1,000 of value, saying it was excessive and said he was "embarrassed" the city needed to raise taxes two years in a row after having a \$10-million surplus five years ago.

He also said the city was stained by how **Stanton** handled the firing of 30-year employee James Gesicki. Gesicki stayed with his mother the day Hurricane Charley was supposed to hit and was terminated for breaking the city's policy, which required public works employees to show up for work during major emergencies.

Calls and e-mails of protest flooded the city from as far as Canada after the firing was reported by the St. Petersburg Times. And Jackson said he got a second spurt of critical mail after Gesicki's story was reported in the AARP Bulletin.

"There's no question it brought a lot of negative publicity to the city," Jackson said.

Jackson said he studied reports from other cities. Very few fired employees, he said, and none let go someone with 30 years' experience.

Stanton said he and the mayor have basic philosophical differences. The tax rates were raised because the commission as a whole wanted to maintain the quality of services in the city, he said.

"Bob (Jackson) felt I was unresponsive to him," **Stanton** said. "But in this form of government I don't work for the mayor. I work for the entire City Commission."

Internet Research

Stanton, Susan

Note: This research will be presented in reverse chronological order

Stanton also stood by the city's decision to fire Gesicki.

"Especially in that situation, when the hurricane was coming in on us, every employee was vital. The action that the city took was proper and justified and Mayor Jackson is wrong," **Stanton** said.

Most of the commissioners seemed to support **Stanton's** performance. Commissioner Pat Burke recommended a 4 percent pay raise for him.

"I do believe the city of Largo is very lucky to have Mr. **Stanton** as a city manager. In my estimation, he's the best city manager in Pinellas County," Burke said at the meeting.

Her motion for the 4 percent raise was met with silence by other commissioners.

Commissioner Gay Gentry said **Stanton's** overall evaluation was 3.1 on a scale of 4, which she thought was better than average.

Last year, **Stanton** received a 5 percent raise.

In 2001, he received a 10 percent increase, and two years ago, the commission approved a 6 percent raise for him.

In 2003 city commissioners refused raises for themselves and in September, they voted to give themselves a 3 percent salary increase.

Stanton's new salary and benefits package will total \$144,900, which includes automobile and expense allowances and retirement contributions.

In other action, the commission voted 5-1 against the formation of a sign advisory committee to review citywide sign regulations. The vote went against a directive two months ago when the commission asked the city staff to assemble the committee.

Burke, who missed the October meeting, said she opposed the new committee because she thinks merchants would try to increase signs and undo current sign regulations.

"All we're doing with this is asking the fox to take care of the chicken house," Burke said.

St. Petersburg Times (FL)

August 19, 2004

City manager gets B grade overall

Author: *SHANNON TAN*

Dateline: LARGO

City Manager Steven **Stanton** is expected to receive a raise of about 3 percent after receiving favorable marks on his annual evaluation.

Mayor Bob Jackson said he will recommend a raise "in the neighborhood of 3 percent." Commissioners will discuss at an upcoming work session whether to increase **Stanton's** current salary of \$120,244.

Stanton, who got a 5 percent raise last year, received an overall rating of "good" on his annual evaluation.

Although **Stanton** is "worth considerably more," Jackson said, the city cannot continue to dole out larger raises unless taxes are increased as well.

"We can't continue to give the raises we've been giving in the past," Jackson said.

Stanton received "good" and "excellent" ratings on all nine categories from Commissioners Gay Gentry, Pat Burke, Pat Gerard and Jackson.

"I cannot overemphasize his tremendous skills in written communication, his work ethic, his willingness to explain complicated issues and, most of all," wrote Gentry, "his desire for excellence in himself and his staff."

Commissioner Pat Burke wrote that **Stanton's** communication skills have "brought the annexation issue to where it is today. Largo has much to thank his leadership for."

Commissioner Charlie Harper, however, was critical of **Stanton**.

The downside of having a longtime city manager is that the city does not get fresh ideas and concepts, he wrote. **Stanton** is in his 12th year as Largo's city manager.

Harper added that he was concerned with a lack of new direction on annexation issues, business growth and citywide economic development.

"As Largo continues its transition move from being just one of the other cities in the country, to one of significance and regional importance, the City Manager will play a pivotal role," Harper wrote. "Will the city manager be **Steve Stanton** is the question?"

St. Petersburg Times: Web Edition Articles (FL)

November 3, 2003

LTV series may spotlight commissioners

The brainchild of City Manager Steve Stanton would attempt to put a "personal face" on politics by interviewing each Largo commissioner.

Author: *LORRI HELFAND*

LARGO - First there was Booknotes, C-SPAN's show interviewing authors. Then came Inside the Actors Studio, Bravo's program profiling celebrities.

And soon, there may be In Focus, Channel 15's public service series highlighting Largo commissioners.

It may not be sizzling TV, but City Manager **Steve Stanton**, the Booknotes fan who came up with the idea, thinks the new show will be an effective tool. Instead of exploring Antonio Banderas' turnoffs or Michael Moore's newest satire, the show might detail how city commissioners' lives have shaped their opinions on various issues.

Stanton hopes residents will gain more interest in government and will feel more comfortable approaching officials after learning about their personalities.

"If you get to know your commissioners as individuals, I think you're more apt to pick up the phone," **Stanton** said. "It puts a personal face on a very impersonal process, which is politics."

Last week, the commission gave Communications and Marketing Manager Karen Barth the okay to produce a trial episode of the 30-minute sit-down interview program, which would focus on the mayor or a different member of the commission each month. If the commission likes the final product, In Focus will air on LTV in December. If not, it may end up on a shelf in the production studio.

Most members of the commission are wary, but they're willing to give it a shot.

Commissioner Charlie Harper thinks In Focus may fly if it's well-researched and tasteful, but he said, "I would not want it if it was a self-gratification type program, and that's what I've seen from other cities and counties."

Commissioner Pat Gerard said she doesn't mind talking about issues, but she's not keen on talking about feelings.

"The things that shape my ideas and attitudes are very personal," she said.

Internet Research

Stanton, Susan

Note: This research will be presented in reverse chronological order

Len Ciecieznski, Pinellas County's senior public information specialist, said the county also likes to put a personal face on government. A couple of public service shows feature commissioners. On Progressive Pinellas, officials discuss issues of the community. "It's a real effective vehicle for us," Ciecieznski said.

A host has not been selected for In Focus, but Barth said she's considering members of the community. The star of the premiere show hasn't been picked either. Barth suggested **Stanton**. But he said he doesn't want to be in the spotlight.

"It's not relevant what my life experience is," **Stanton** said.

Mayor Bob Jackson wouldn't mind being the first "guinea pig." The public has the right to know what officials are thinking, he said.

"I think it has a lot of potential if the commission is candid," he said.

St. Petersburg Times

February 20, 2002

Discord may play into campaign

Author: *MICHAEL SANDLER*

Dateline: LARGO

The tenuous relationship between Largo Commissioner Mary Laurance and City Manager **Steve Stanton** has reached a new low that may end up becoming a campaign issue in her bid for re-election.

Laurance has openly criticized **Stanton's** management of the city during her first term and was the only commissioner who opposed his raise last year.

Now she says she is unwilling to meet privately with **Stanton** to discuss city issues without Assistant Manager Henry Schubert in the room. She said she has lost confidence in **Stanton's** ability and wants to see him replaced.

"I've told Steve I hope he is sending out his resumes," she said. "I've pulled away from **Steve Stanton**. I'm convinced he's not the type of leader Largo needs."

Her opponent, Charlie Harper, said the strained relationship hurts city business. That alone is reason for change. If elected, his priority would be consensus building on the commission and improved dialogue with **Stanton**.

"We've got to have harmony," he said. "It's pretty self-evident. People can say there is no problem, but all you have to do is watch."

In the other Largo race, for Seat 1, **Stanton's** job seems an unlikely topic of debate. Incumbent Pat Burke, who could not be reached for comment Tuesday, has been one of **Stanton's** most vocal supporters during the past year. Charles Graul, the challenger, has met with **Stanton** and said he appears to be effective.

"He seems to be a pretty open fellow," Graul said. "From what I perceive, he does very well."

Laurance said she and **Stanton** do not see eye-to-eye on several issues. She disapproves of **Stanton's** meeting one-on-one with commissioners, instead of talking to them as a group. She said he "counts votes" on the commission before bringing proposals forward. She accused **Stanton** of withholding information from some commissioners, while giving more freely to others.

"Steve is a talented person, but with a let-me-divide-and-conquer attitude," said Laurance last week in an interview with editors and reporters at the St. Petersburg Times.

Internet Research

Stanton, Susan

Note: This research will be presented in reverse chronological order

The news came as no surprise to **Stanton**, who has been Largo's city manager since 1993.

"She questions my integrity, which is extremely difficult for a city manager," **Stanton** said Tuesday.

Stanton said Laurance no longer calls him with inquiries. Instead, he said, she sends memos and e-mails requesting information.

Furthermore, he has been troubled by having to drag Schubert into the room just so he can help with a job **Stanton** is paid to handle. The city charter mandates commissioners work through the city manager, and not with its directors.

"The only person that works for the City Commission is the city manager," said **Stanton**. "They hire and fire me. Nobody else should have to worry about making an elected official happy."

Mayor Bob Jackson said he welcomes open dialogue on the commission but has noticed the personal divide worsen.

"You have to work together, and you don't necessarily have to like the people you work with," he said. "But I sense animosity, and I wouldn't limit it to one person on the (commission). It's been more personal."

Stanton has struggled with other commissioners in recent years.

Marty Shelby led a campaign to have him fired last March when **Stanton** interviewed for a job in Colorado. Shelby said **Stanton** was using the job as leverage for a better contract.

But Shelby ultimately voted for **Stanton's** raise in August. He cited a smoother relationship cultivated by **Stanton** before casting his vote.

Harper said Laurance maintains a grudge.

"There is no hiding the fact of her displeasure with **Steve Stanton**," said Harper. "Some other commissioners had a problem with Steve, but they worked it out."

One issue that has irritated Laurance is **Stanton's** pay.

Records show **Stanton** now earns \$108,048 per year. Other compensation, such as \$4,200 a year for his car allowance and a 12 percent retirement contribution, jumps it to more than \$125,000.

Laurance was the only commissioner who voted against giving **Stanton**, who can be fired by the commission at any time, the 10 percent raise last year.

Internet Research

Stanton, Susan

Note: This research will be presented in reverse chronological order

Laurance also voted against giving herself a 10 percent raise, though four commissioners approved boosting their salaries from \$10,010 to \$11,011.

Laurance says the strained relationship has not hampered her ability to govern.

"I meet with Steve, and I meet with Henry," she said. "I don't think it makes me less effective. I think it makes me more effective."

Harper disagrees. He says they can't communicate.

"That's the bottom line," he said. "They don't communicate, and that causes problems."

Internet Research

Stanton, Susan

Note: This research will be presented in reverse chronological order

St. Petersburg Times

March 14, 2001

Shelby to city: Stanton should go

Author: *ERIC STIRGUS*

Dateline: LARGO

But the City Commission appears split, and the city manager vows that he will not resign.

City Commissioner Marty Shelby told his colleagues Tuesday that it is time to remove Steven **Stanton** as city manager.

"It is my conclusion that Mr. **Stanton**'s ability to serve as Largo government's chief executive has been irreparably damaged," Shelby wrote in a memo to commissioners Tuesday morning and added that he wants "a mutually acceptable employment separation agreement."

The city charter requires the votes of five of seven commissioners to remove **Stanton**, who has been city manager for more than seven years. At least three have said they don't want to fire him.

"I was never so disappointed," Commissioner Pat Burke said of Shelby's memo. "It's a huge mistake for the city to lose **Steve Stanton** or even think about removing him."

A defiant **Stanton** told Shelby he would have to be forced from his position.

"With much acrimony in his voice, (**Stanton**) told me by telephone categorically that he would not consider resigning," Shelby wrote. " 'I'm not going like (Stephen) Bonczek,' he stated. 'You're going to have to fire me.' "

Bonczek was **Stanton**'s predecessor, forced from his job in 1993 by then-Mayor Thomas Feaster.

Last month, **Stanton** asked commissioners for a three-year contract and a raise shortly before telling them he was a finalist for the city manager's job in Westminster, Colo.

Shelby has accused **Stanton** of using the Westminster job opening as leverage for his contract and salary requests, which Shelby had worried would cause a rift among commissioners and make **Stanton** ineffective.

Shelby declined further comment on his memo.

Stanton pulled his name from consideration for the Westminster job on Monday, citing the friction it has created among commissioners.

"This whole thing is crazy," he said. "This is a nightmare gone bad."

Internet Research

Stanton, Susan

Note: This research will be presented in reverse chronological order

The debate over **Stanton**'s contract has also raised veiled criticisms by commissioners of each other and questions about the city manager's integrity.

Stanton, 42, who tries to keep a low profile, said the newspaper headlines about his job status have his 7-year-old son, Travis, asking questions.

"Daddy, how come they don't like you anymore?" **Stanton** quoted his son as asking him.

Stanton said he asked for the contract because he wanted long-term security. **Stanton** has also complained he is paid less than other city managers in comparable Florida cities. His annual salary is \$98,600. Including a car allowance and other benefits, **Stanton**'s yearly package amounts to \$120,378.

St. Petersburg Times

November 13, 1998

Annexed acres expand revenue

Author: *ERIC STIRGUS*

Dateline: LARGO

The city's recent annexation push has netted 184 acres valued at \$25.8-million in the last budget year, officials said Thursday.

City Manager **Steve Stanton** said Largo has collected \$87,850 in property taxes from the annexed areas for the fiscal year that ended Sept. 30.

The city has also received an undetermined amount of revenue from taxes on water, gas, electric, telephone and other services.

The city annexed 58 properties in the past year.

Stanton said Thursday that the extra revenue is not what the city was looking for when it began its aggressive annexation approach in December.

"There are some burdens and responsibilities of citizenship, and that's what annexation is all about," he said.

City officials have argued that the city loses large sums of money as a result of non-residents and businesses using city services.

Much of the land annexed in the past year has been east of U.S. 19 and includes mostly businesses. City officials have said they eventually want the city limits to extend to Tampa Bay.

Stanton said that the city can do a better job of communicating with the county on annexation issues and that Largo needs to work on the perception that it is a hostile municipality.

County Administrator Fred Marquis said his major complaint with Largo officials is their refusal to release businesses from annexation agreements signed years ago to gain access to city services.

"They've got to recognize that the world doesn't want to be annexed into the city of Largo," he said.

One of the business owners who encountered that problem was Ed Lurie.

Lurie, who owns Suncoast Workshop/Warehouse Center, signed one of the agreements years ago because that was the only way to gain access to sewer service.

Internet Research

Stanton, Susan

Note: This research will be presented in reverse chronological order

The city annexed his property, on Ulmerton Road, in August.

He now pays a 10 percent tax on electric bills and 7 percent on phone bills.

"It may be a little here, a little there, but it adds up," he said.

Largo's property tax rate is \$3.40 per \$1,000 of assessed taxable property value, compared with the county's rate of \$4.456 per \$1,000 of property value.

Robert Daugherty is an executive vice president for Ditek, a surge protection manufacturer. The company moved to its site on Starkey Road in May and now pays utility taxes that it did not pay before. But he said some of the services provided make annexing into Largo worth those costs.

"We supported it, and it made good business sense in receiving services," he said.

The Tampa Tribune

July 4, 1997

Largo chief resigns amid controversy

Author: *SEAN LENGELL; of The Tampa Tribune*

LARGO -- Largo Police Chief Richard Kistner, who was put on paid leave last week during an investigation of allegations he withheld sheriff's evidence, resigned Thursday.

City Manager **Steve Stanton** requested Kistner's resignation Wednesday, and Kistner complied late Thursday afternoon.

Deputy Chief Gerry Bloechle, a 13-year veteran of the police force, will be acting chief.

"As city manager, I have concluded that irrespective of the outcome of the criminal investigation into this matter, Chief Kistner's ability to lead the Largo Police Department has been irrevocably compromised," said **Stanton** in a letter to the mayor and city commission Thursday.

"It is truly unfortunate Mr. Kistner's error in judgment has caused me to request this resignation."

Last week **Stanton** requested the sheriff's office investigate Kistner after learning the chief kept an amplifier stolen from Seminole High School for six weeks.

Kistner's 15-year-old son and two other teens were accused of breaking into the school in March and stealing the amplifier.

Kistner says he found the amplifier in April and kept it in his office until sheriff's deputies came to his house June 11 to question his son. Kistner told the deputies he had the amplifier and would turn it in.

The following day Kistner returned the amplifier to Seminole High Assistant Principal Anthony Thurston.

Kistner, who has been the city's top cop since February 1993, was put on paid leave last week, pending the outcome of the investigation.

"Regardless of the outcome of my current personnel situation, it has become increasingly clear to me that my effectiveness as chief of police for the city of Largo has been greatly undermined," Kistner wrote in his resignation letter. "I recognized that it is unlikely that any outcome will change the situation.

"I have no desire to subject our elected officials, yourself, my co-workers or the employees of the police department to the continuing scrutiny that current circumstances have created."

Internet Research

Stanton, Susan

Note: This research will be presented in reverse chronological order

Kistner was unavailable for comment Thursday.

Stanton said he hopes Kistner's resignation will help stabilize a police department that has been operating in the shadow of the controversy.

"Whenever you go through this type of personnel process, it's difficult [for the police department] -- it's divisive," **Stanton** said.

Kistner will continue to cooperate with sheriff's officials during the investigation, **Stanton** said.

Last year Kistner's former secretary, a 17-year city employee, accused him of verbally abusing and discriminating against women in the department.

A human resources investigation concluded Kistner was not abusive or discriminatory, but he could improve his people skills.

The secretary was transferred to another department, and the city hired a new secretary for Kistner.

Kistner's resignation is the second time this year the city has lost a key department head.

In January **Stanton** fired Fire Chief Daniel Fries, a 20-year veteran of the department, after disagreements about Fries' handling of the department.

Fries has filed a federal complaint and lawsuit against the city

St. Petersburg Times

January 3, 1997

Largo's fire chief is fired

Author: ANITA KUMAR

Dateline: LARGO

City Manager **Steve Stanton** fired fire Chief Dan Fries on Thursday afternoon, citing numerous problems with his management style, years of poor evaluations and failure to set a good example for his employees.

In a memo to Fries dated Thursday, **Stanton** said problems with Fries reached a boiling point two weeks ago, after Fries' poor handling of an investigation into a fire inspector's \$1 purchase of a refrigerator from an appliance store he had just inspected.

Fries has been fire chief in Largo since 1993. The termination was effective at 5 p.m. Thursday.

"I must now inform you that I no longer have the level of continued confidence in your ability to direct the activities of the Largo Fire Department that is necessary to continue our professional relationship," **Stanton** wrote.

Fries said he got the word he would be fired at about 4 p.m. Thursday.

"I can't say it wasn't expected," said Fries, who would have had 40 years in the firefighting business April 30.

Fries said he would begin his retirement and would not seek another job in fire service. He already receives \$2,020 a month in disability retirement from the St. Petersburg Fire Department.

Fries said he hopes the philosophy of the next chief is "more in keeping with their (**Stanton's**) philosophy than mine was."

Problems between **Stanton** and Fries have existed for years and have led to repeated clashes over management style since the two men were promoted within a month of each other in 1993.

Stanton has given Fries poor evaluations and denied him a raise last year, and the two have exchanged letters complaining about their expectations of each other.

Two weeks ago, after **Stanton** launched his investigation, Fries, 59, filed an age discrimination lawsuit against the city that accuses **Stanton**, 38, of giving him poor evaluations based on his age and repeatedly asking when he would retire.

In a five-page letter of dismissal, **Stanton** cited the following problems, saying Fries:

Internet Research

Stanton, Susan

Note: This research will be presented in reverse chronological order

Assigned firefighters to help with the St. Petersburg disturbances without notifying the city manager's office.

Conducted poor internal affairs investigations.

Failed to inform him of the investigation into Fire Inspector Warren Cargill's purchase of the refrigerator.

Failed to revise and review department rules and procedures.

"As fire chief you (had) the responsibility to ensure that I am involved in all significant operational issues," **Stanton** wrote. "It is very apparent that our basic managerial philosophies . . . are simply incompatible and irreconcilable."

In recent evaluations, **Stanton** said Fries had a host of problems, including not setting a proper example for his staff, not communicating well with the manager and other city administrators and not providing appropriate goals for the department. He said Fries resisted implementing electronic mail in the department, failed to write an emergency plan and would go on vacation for up to four weeks at a time.

"Chief Fries is at a very critical point in his career as fire chief with the city of Largo," **Stanton** wrote in October 1995. "For the past 18 months, he has displayed passive (and at time active) resistance in the following my direction. . . . We have continued to debate our working relationship and our respective roles of city manager and fire chief. This longstanding debate must stop."

Fries has written letters to **Stanton** disputing his evaluations and arguing he was never told he was doing a bad job or that his annual merit raise was in jeopardy.

"I have never, in 38 years in fire service, had comments like this directed toward me or my job performance," Fries wrote in April 1995. "I feel that I have been harassed and denied a pay raise because of my age and the desire of the city to have me retire."

Stanton told the mayor and city commissioners by letter Thursday afternoon of his decision to fire Fries. He also told them that because Cargill had received a written reprimand from the chief, the city was prohibited from further disciplining Cargill.

A Fire Department investigation concluded Cargill used "bad judgment" by combining personal and professional business and creating a perception of wrongdoing.

On Thursday, Cargill was given a warning that any similar action would result in more severe discipline, up to and including dismissal.

Internet Research

Stanton, Susan

Note: This research will be presented in reverse chronological order

Fries said Thursday that he feels worse for Cargill than for himself. "My inspector made a mistake," Fries said. "He has really suffered for it."

Stanton said the department's investigation into Cargill was "flawed" because Fries never consulted other city administrators and gave Cargill a punishment that was too light. **Stanton** also said some key facts were missing from the investigation. For example, he said, no one ever looked at the refrigerator or determined how much it was worth.

"Chief Fries failed to see the significance of the action and the shortcomings of the investigation," personnel manager Pat Catalano wrote in a report given to **Stanton** on Thursday.

The report concluded that Cargill and Dave Minton, manager of Apsco's repair shop on East Bay Drive, did not exchange the refrigerator for a favorable inspection.

"The fact remains that he did indeed conduct personal business in the performance of his city duties," the report states. "Doing so placed him in a position where an appearance of inappropriate behavior became possible."

Cargill violated a city policy that prohibits "engaging at any time in an employment, activity or enterprise which created a conflict of interest with his duties, functions and responsibilities as a city employee."

St. Petersburg Times

December 22, 1996

Hostility smolders between officials

Author: ANITA KUMAR

Dateline: LARGO

Problems between Largo's city manager and fire chief have existed for years and have led to repeated clashes over different management styles since the two men were promoted within a month of each other.

City commissioners say fire Chief Dan Fries needs to change his attitude and start obeying City Manager **Steve Stanton**. They hope that will put an end to a rocky relationship that has led to a lawsuit filed against the city and an investigation into the Fire Department.

"Chief Fries works for **Steve Stanton**. **Steve Stanton** tells Chief Fries what he needs him to do," Mayor Thomas "Thom" Feaster said. "We have a well-oiled machine that's run by **Steve Stanton**. There's an order. Maybe that's what the problem is: that Chief Fries can't accept that."

Commissioners say **Stanton** and Fries have different management styles and different expectations from their jobs. That, they say, can be blamed partly on their age difference.

"The problem is adapting to a new management style," Commissioner Robert Jackson said. "Those of us over 50 years old have a problem with that. My sense is that (Fries) thought: 'I'm 59 years old. I want to coast until I retire.'"

Most city commissioners describe **Stanton**, 38, as a manager who encourages change, believes in team management and likes to know what is happening in all city departments.

Those same people say Fries, 59, is content to sit back and watch what happens, keeps himself removed from the day-to-day operations and is unable and unwilling to explain what is happening in his department.

As a result, **Stanton** has given Fries poor evaluations and denied him a raise last year. The two have exchanged letters, complaining about their expectations of each other.

On Tuesday, **Stanton** announced he would begin an investigation into Fries' handling of a case involving a fire inspector who bought a refrigerator for \$1 from an appliance dealer he had just inspected. Fries gave the inspector a written reprimand.

Stanton said he was upset that he didn't know that the incident had taken place and that he isn't sure the punishment was adequate. Fries responded by saying he had handled the case and didn't think he needed to talk to **Stanton**.

Internet Research

Stanton, Susan

Note: This research will be presented in reverse chronological order

On Wednesday, Fries filed an age discrimination lawsuit against the city, accusing **Stanton** of giving him poor evaluations based on his age, and repeatedly asking when he would retire.

The chief was the first of two city employees to file a complaint against the city for age discrimination since **Stanton** became city manager in April 1993. Former City Engineer Jim Petrak filed a complaint with the EEOC in April. The case has not been resolved.

The city denies the complaints and says the manager treats all 10 of his department leaders fairly. All are older than **Stanton**.

""The city manager has been bending over backwards to support the chief," Commissioner Marty Shelby said. ""I think what he has done is above and beyond the call of duty."

Fries was on vacation Friday. Neither He nor his attorney, Steven G. Wenzel of Tampa, could be reached for comment.

Stanton declined to comment on his relationship with Fries both because of the pending lawsuit and because it involves a personnel matter.

In recent evaluations, **Stanton** said Fries had a host of problems, including not setting a proper example for his staff, not communicating well with the manager and other city administrators, and not providing appropriate goals for the department. He said Fries was resistant to implementing electronic mail in the department, failed to write an emergency plan and would go on vacation for as long as four weeks at a time.

""Chief Fries is at a very critical point in his career as fire chief with the city of Largo," **Stanton** wrote in October 1995. ""For the past 18 months, he has displayed passive (and at time active) resistance in the following my direction. . . . We have continued to debate our working relationship and our respective roles of city manager and fire chief. This longstanding debate must stop."

Fries has written letters to **Stanton** disputing his evaluations and arguing that he never was told he was doing a bad job or that his annual merit raise was in jeopardy.

""I have never, in 38 years in fire service, had comments like this directed toward me or my job performance," Fries wrote in April 1995. ""I feel that I have been harassed and denied a pay raise because of my age and the desire of the city to have me retire."

Stanton has given Fries all of his annual evaluations since Fries was named fire chief in March 1993 by former City Manager Stephen Bonczek.

Stanton, then an assistant city manager, became the acting city manager when Bonczek resigned in April 1993 before moving into a permanent position.

Internet Research

Stanton, Susan

Note: This research will be presented in reverse chronological order

""They had different management styles," said Bonczek, who is now a city manager in Reading, Pa. ""But that's not necessarily a bad thing."

Bonczek said Fries was not the first choice for chief or the best candidate for the job. He was chosen after two nationwide searches in 1992 and 1993 and after several other candidates turned down the job. The choice was made in part because Largo firefighters wanted their new chief to be from the department.

Commissioners say they understand why Fries, who has been a firefighter for almost four decades, is not familiar or comfortable with **Stanton's** younger, newer management approach. But, they say, he has to be willing to change.

""There is a feeling that he tended to go his own way - and not pay attention to the manager's wishes," Jackson said. ""People go one of two ways: They either try to change things or they let it ride, not making any waves."

Commissioners say they were embarrassed and surprised by the lawsuit Fries filed recently against the city and by **Stanton's** investigation into the Fire Department because they thought the two were working together better. Fries' 1996 evaluation was considerably better than the one he received in 1995, and he received the city's standard 4-percent raise. He makes \$61,214 a year.

""He (**Stanton**) tried to work and bridge the communication gap between both of them," Commissioner Harriet Crozier said. ""I thought they had made some progress. Where they go from here, only the two of them know."

In about two weeks, **Stanton** will decide whether Fries or Fire Inspector Warren G. Cargill should be disciplined. **Stanton** is waiting for the police chief and personnel manager to finish their investigations. He also plans to refer the matter to State Attorney Bernie McCabe.

Until those investigations are complete, some commissioners say, they are worried that **Stanton** and Fries will not be able to work together.

""I can't see how the fire chief can effectively run the department while (the lawsuit and investigation) are pending," Shelby said. ""The relationship has been severely undermined."

The Tampa Tribune

December 22, 1996

Largo fire chief claims age bias

Author: *SEAN LENGELL; of The Tampa Tribune*

SUMMARY: Largo's fire chief has filed an age discrimination lawsuit against the city. It's not the first time he has made the accusation.

LARGO -- The often tense relationship between Fire Chief Daniel Fries and City Manager **Steve Stanton** became even more strained in March 1995.

In the chief's annual evaluation, **Stanton** criticized Fries on several issues, claiming the chief had poor communication skills within his department and with city hall, took too many weeks of vacation, submitted vague and incomplete reports, and lacked a comprehensive hiring plan.

Stanton then refused to grant Fries a salary increase.

Fries reacted strongly.

"I feel that I have been harassed and denied a pay raise because of my age and the desire of the city administration to have me retire," the chief said in a letter to **Stanton** in April 1995.

He went on to warn that "depending on how this matter is resolved, I am considering obtaining legal counsel to examine the possibility that my legal rights have, or are being violated."

In September 1995, Fries followed through on that threat. The chief filed a complaint with the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, claiming the city discriminated against him because of his age.

The EEOC dismissed the case 12 months later after finding no wrongdoing by the city, but Fries has persisted.

On Dec. 18, he filed an age discrimination lawsuit against the city in federal court in Tampa, seeking an undisclosed amount of money.

Fries, 59, a 19-year veteran of the fire department, claims in the lawsuit that **Stanton**, 38, regularly asks him when he will retire and has said he doesn't want an "older image" for the department.

He accuses **Stanton** in the lawsuit of falsely giving him poor annual evaluations to deny him a salary increase and to force him to retire.

Internet Research

Stanton, Susan

Note: This research will be presented in reverse chronological order

The lawsuit also accuses **Stanton** of asking older city employees about retiring and suggesting one older employee be given a more demanding job to force him into retirement.

"[Fries] has lived in fear of an imminent and unjust dismissal," says the lawsuit, filed by Tampa attorney Steven G. Wenzel.

One other city employee has filed an age discrimination complaint against the city during the past two years, said City Attorney Gerald McClelland. The case is still pending, he said.

Stanton refused to comment about the pending litigation.

Fries is on vacation and was not available for comment.

The lawsuit comes on the heels of an investigation into possible wrongdoing by a Largo fire inspector who bought a refrigerator for \$1 from an appliance business he inspected.

Last month, Fries issued Inspector Warren G. Cargill a written reprimand after conducting an investigation into the matter.

Stanton criticized Fries' handling of the case and on Tuesday ordered the city's personnel department to conduct another investigation.

The Largo police also have initiated an investigation regarding possible criminal charges against Cargill, said police spokesman Joe Gillette.

The Tampa Tribune

December 18, 1996

Largo reopens fire inspector's case

Author: *SEAN LENGELL; of The Tampa Tribune*

SUMMARY: Largo City Manager **Steve Stanton** is unhappy with an investigation of a fire inspector and has ordered another.

LARGO -- The city is reopening an investigation regarding a fire inspector who bought a refrigerator for \$1 from an appliance business he inspected.

City Manager **Steve Stanton** said he is "highly disappointed" with the fire department's handling of the investigation, which concluded in written reprimand for Inspector Warren G. Cargill.

Stanton asked the city's personnel department on Tuesday to conduct its own investigation. Cargill also was removed Tuesday as a fire inspector and re-assigned to administrative duties until the new investigation is complete, **Stanton** said.

"I've got serious concerns about the appropriateness of the discipline that was given [to Cargill]," **Stanton** said.

After inspecting a storage building owned by Apsco appliances in Largo and finding several fire code violations, Cargill told the building manager he was looking to buy a refrigerator for his garage, according to a fire department report.

When Cargill went back for a follow-up inspection two weeks later, he found all of the violations had been corrected. The manager then offered to sell him a used refrigerator for \$1.

The fire department began its investigation in October after receiving an anonymous telephone call from a man who told fire officials he was an Apsco employee.

When the investigation ended last month, Fire Chief Daniel Fries chose not to dismiss or suspend Cargill, who has been with the fire department for eight years.

The final report on Nov. 13 stated Cargill violated city policy by "engaging in an activity, which created a misperceived conflict of interest with his duties as a city employee."

Stanton said he thinks Cargill has compromised his position as a fire inspector.

"There was nothing perceived about [allegations of a conflict of interest] -- that was a real conflict," **Stanton** said. "It was wrong."

Internet Research

Stanton, Susan

Note: This research will be presented in reverse chronological order

"It does raise the question of integrity within a local government when this sort of thing happens -- it casts dispersions on everybody [working for the city]..[but] city hall is not for sale," **Stanton** said.

Fries said he thinks the initial investigation conducted by two fire department division chiefs was done properly. He added, however, that he would cooperate with the city as they re-examine the case.

"Barring some new information that I totally overlooked, I feel like I have to stand by my division chiefs," Fries said.

Stanton said he knew the fire department was investigating a complaint against one of its inspectors but wasn't informed of the results until a reporter called him Monday.

The city's investigation is expected to take about a week, **Stanton** said.

The Tampa Tribune

December 11, 1995

Neighborhood up the creek on sewer issue

A neighborhood has been told it must give up septic tanks for city services.

Author: *CHANI WIGGINS; Tribune Staff Writer*

LARGO -- About 130 households in the Allen's Creek area will vote Tuesday on whether to join the city and pay \$900 to hook up to Largo sewers, or stay unincorporated and pay \$10,000 each for the city service.

"It's like we're being forced into this," said Larry Starnes, who lives near Allen's Creek, which winds northeast of Largo city limits. "We're trapped."

Neighborhood residents have been told by public health officials they must give up their septic tanks and hook up to the city sewer system. Some of the tanks, which are 20 years old, are leaking into the creek and into the aquifer, said Largo City Manager **Steve Stanton**.

If the residents agree to the annexation, they get the big hook-up discount.

"We've tried to downplay that and emphasize the value of city services in the area," **Stanton** said.

For three months, the city of Largo has been trying to woo residents by touting recreation programs, police and cheaper garbage service.

But residents also will pay taxes for those services -- taxes they don't pay as long as the area is unincorporated. The city would receive \$81,000 in additional tax revenue each year with the annexation.

Starnes said most of the neighbors he has talked to will vote for annexation, especially if it means paying only a fraction of the \$1.2 million it will cost to extend sewer service to the area. The city will absorb the rest of the cost.

The referendum will be held in the neighborhood Tuesday.

The Tampa Tribune

August 1, 1995

9% pay raises shock officials

Author: *CHANI WIGGINS; Tribune Staff Writer*

LARGO -- A few lucky city staffers received a 9 percent pay raise this year -- much to the surprise of some city commissioners.

City Manager **Steve Stanton** gave three managers and two executive secretaries the sizable salary increases, while most of the city's 807 employees received just the standard 4 percent raise.

Some commissioners said they didn't realize a select few would receive such a big pay boost.

"I was under the impression we had a tight budget year," said Commissioner Harriet Crozier. "I wasn't really pleased about it because we did not know of this."

Commissioner Jim Miles also found out a few weeks ago.

"You can't say it was hidden in the budget. But it certainly wasn't brought out," he said.

The proposed 1994/95 budget that commissioners received last summer did not contain details of the special pay increases. That information was included in a memo to commissioners before they approved the budget in September, said Assistant City Manager Henry Schubert.

Stanton said Monday he wasn't trying to hide anything. City managers have the authority to budget a certain amount for what they call "pay equity" increases for employees who take on extra duties or do a sterling job that year.

"Typically, this is not brought to the city commission for review. It's really an administrative issue," **Stanton** said.

This year's merit increases amounted to \$11,271. Last budget year, four other employees, including the assistant city manager, received the 9 percent raises -- the standard 4 percent plus the 5 percent in pay equity.

Those receiving the increases in May include the police chief; community development director; parks and recreation director; and **Stanton's** secretary, Brenda Francisco, who earns \$31,000 a year.

Roger Francisco, Brenda's husband and president of the local Communication Workers of America, which represents 300 city employees, said union leaders were surprised about the special increases for those non-union employees.

Internet Research

Stanton, Susan

Note: This research will be presented in reverse chronological order

"We were told no one was getting more than a 4 percent raise this year," Francisco said. "Nobody seemed to know anything about it -- including the commission."

Mayor Thomas Feaster said **Stanton** had a right to award the special raises. And the only reason it was brought up this year was because the union found out about it and because the contracts are up for renegotiation.

"I don't know who got the raises, and I don't really care," Feaster said. "Every manager has a right to give an equity increase for specific people. He needs to have that kind of latitude."

Stanton included written lists of reasons in personnel records.

Crozier said she knows the pay increases probably are deserved. She just wanted to know about them.

Crozier, Miles and Commissioner Bob Jackson have asked **Stanton** to let them know if he plans to include such increases in next year's budget and who will receive them.

"I don't see why he can't notify us when he feels the need to give it to them," Jackson said. "The commission should be aware of it."

Stanton said he would keep commissioners informed. He also plans to ask if he can award more than the 5 percent cap.

In addition, **Stanton** wants to make union employees eligible for the same type of increase. Those workers usually are bound by their contracts to an across-the-board raise.

Talks on salary and benefits began last week between city and union officials and will continue through September.

The Tampa Tribune

January 24, 1994

Sensitivity training set for city workers

Author: *JACK REJTMAN; Tribune Staff Writer*

LARGO -- When **Steve Stanton** assumed the reins of city manager three months ago, he heard an undercurrent of grumblings in the wake of three city lawsuits alleging sexual harassment, ageism and racism.

"How am I supposed to talk to people?" employees would ask. "What is 'appropriate' to say?"

So **Stanton** found a solution. He decided to require the city's 510 full-time employees to enlist in a sensitivity training seminar.

Now, the grumblings have begun anew.

"Why must I take this course?" employees are asking. "How come I'm being punished for someone else's actions?"

But the planned 16-hour courses are not punishment nor are they an admission of guilt by city administrators, **Stanton** said.

They are recognition of a growing trend.

"For anybody with just a minimum literacy about managing in the '90s, the issue of diversification is a predominant theme," **Stanton** said. "It's a standard issue that ought to be incorporated into any program."

Largo's police department recognized the importance of cultural sensitivity two years ago, when 24 hours of training became a requirement for all employees -- both civilians and officers.

On July 1, the state followed suit with a law requiring all law enforcement, probation and correctional officers to take an eight-hour sensitivity course. The state Criminal Justice Standards and Training Commission boosted that requirement to 24 hours of basic training and 16 hours of continuing education every four years.

James E. Tokley, instructor and director of the Cultural Diversity Institute at St. Petersburg Junior College, said he will work with Largo employees to bridge the gaps that naturally exist between people of different races, genders or nationalities.

"We will talk about personal attitudes, stereotypes, various things to be aware of in terms of interpersonal communication, certain empowering terms or terms that for one reason or other might be misconstrued," Tokley said.

Internet Research

Stanton, Susan

Note: This research will be presented in reverse chronological order

"One thing we'd like to stress is that most instances of racism and sexism, when reviewed closely and dispassionately, usually turn out to be examples of miscommunication," he said. If a person is in a bad mood, for example, he or she might take a joking comment the wrong way.

In the past five years, Tokley has trained more than 3,000 people from Miami to Baton Rouge, La. He has conducted sensitivity courses for the city of St. Petersburg and Tampa. And he has worked with virtually all police officers in Pinellas County, from dispatchers to police chiefs.

Among his pupils are Pinellas Park police Chief David Milchan and Pinellas-Pasco State Attorney Bernie McCabe.

Largo supervisors and department heads also plan to participate in Tokley's seminars, which are slated to begin within the next month. Largo police Sgt. Charlie Ciminera, who completed Tokley's 24-hour course two weeks ago, said administrators will learn as much from the courses as their employees.

"We live in a melting pot where we all come from different countries," said Ciminera, vice president of the Pinellas County Police Benevolent Association. "And when you're dealing with all different types of ethnic groups, you should know what each of those groups are and how to treat each other.

"The classes make people think: Let's start communicating with each other rather than fight."

St. Petersburg Times

September 8, 1993

Largo manager now permanent

Author: *AMELIA DAVIS*

Steve Stanton, the man who has filled in as city manager since a former manager resigned last April, got the title ""interim" removed from his name tag Tuesday night.

Commissioners voted unanimously to offer **Stanton** the full-time job for the next 18 months.

Stanton, 34, accepted on the spot. His annual salary will be \$70,000. In addition, he will receive a \$300 monthly car allowance, and the city will make monthly payments into a retirement account. The total package is expected to cost Largo about \$85,000 annually.

""I feel flattered to be even considered," **Stanton** said before Mayor Thomas ""Thom" Feaster pinned a name tag with the new title on **Stanton's** lapel.

Stanton was assistant city manager when former city manager Stephen Bonczek resigned under fire April 21. A few weeks later, commissioners decided to name him interim manager to see whether he was up to the job.

""He has gained my trust, certainly," Feaster said. ""I had no thought of going out nationally, especially since we have talent here.""

Also at Tuesday's commission meeting, commissioners tentatively agreed not to increase property taxes next year. They tentatively approved a budget that includes three additional firefighters, three police officers, three new dispatchers and an employee for the library's children's division.

Commissioners are to consider the tax rate and the budget a final time Sept. 21.

Stanton is married and has a newborn son. Before coming to Largo, **Stanton** worked as city administrator in Berea, Ky. A native of upper New York state, **Stanton** has worked for the city of Champaign, Ill., the Ketchikan Gateway Borough in Alaska and the city of Newburg, N.Y. He has bachelor's and master's degrees from the University of Florida.

Feaster previously had proposed that **Stanton** be awarded a one-year contract. It was Commissioner Bob Jackson who brought up the idea Tuesday night of making it for 18 months.

Jackson said he didn't like the thought of having to decide on extending the contract during next year's budget deliberations.

The Tampa Tribune

May 15, 1993

Largo gives Stanton try at manager's spot

The former Bonczek assistant, now interim manager, is getting a chance to prove himself, and may land the job permanently.

Author: *DOUG REARDON; Tribune Staff Writer*

LARGO - City commissioners will let interim City Manager **Steve Stanton** have a chance at the helm instead of starting the search for a new top administrator.

While expressing confidence in **Stanton**, the commission also was concerned about the cost and time of recruiting a replacement for Stephen Bonczek, said Commissioner Ned Ford.

After nearly five years as city manager, Bonczek resigned April 20 under pressure from commissioners dissatisfied with his soured relationship with employees and unions.

Stanton, 34, has been an assistant city manager since August 1990. He came to Largo from Berea, Ky., a small industrial town where he was city manager for about four years.

"We thought we'd give these people a chance to see if they could do the job," said Ford.

City Clerk Henry Schubert also was reassigned, to the post of assistant city manager.

The assignments are open-ended. Ford said the commission might wait until the end of the year before making a decision on a permanent city manager. **Stanton** expects the commission to wait at least until the budget process concludes and the new fiscal year begins in October.

"I don't think the city will skip a beat," Mayor Thom Feaster said. "We have some talent here. We need to wait and observe [their performance] for a while."

The cost and time involved in recruiting a new manager also were factors in the decision to look in-house, Feaster and Ford said.

Ford said advertisements, background checks, interviews and other expenses could drive the cost of recruitment up to \$30,000. Meanwhile, the process could take from four to seven months.

As acting city manager, **Stanton's** salary will increase from about \$50,000 to \$62,500.

Stanton has a master's degree in public administration and a bachelor's degree in political science from the University of Florida. He and his wife are expecting their first child May 25.

Internet Research

Stanton, Susan

Note: This research will be presented in reverse chronological order

St. Petersburg Times

April 22, 1993

He likes his low profile

Author: *AMELIA DAVIS*

Steve Stanton, the New Yorker who was thrust into the role of interim city manager this week, is a three-year resident who thinks Largo is as fine a place to live as any.

Stanton, 36, said Wednesday he hasn't decided whether he will seek the permanent job of city manager. If he doesn't apply, **Stanton** said he would like to remain as assistant city manager and would work for whomever the commission picks for the top spot.

"I definitely hope to be in Largo a long time," **Stanton** said.

Few people outside City Hall and his east Largo neighborhood know **Stanton**, who was hired from Berea, Ky., three years ago where he worked as the city administrator.

He said that's because he keeps a low profile, a style that contrasts sharply with his predecessor.

"We are very different," **Stanton** said, referring to Stephen Bonczek.

One noticeable difference: **Stanton** keeps a jar of jelly beans on his desk. Bonczek is a health food advocate who avoids such foods.

Stanton said he grew up in the Catskill Mountains in New York. His public school years were uneventful, he said. He recalls being rejected as a drummer in the sixth-grade band. And when he reached ninth grade, a coach decided he was too short, at 5 feet 9, to make the basketball team.

During high school, **Stanton** said he worked 30 hours a week cleaning offices at night. His only extracurricular activity was as a typist for the yearbook. He said Wednesday he's not sure if he ever actually fulfilled that task.

Stanton has been more successful in his professional life.

While in Berea, **Stanton** played a role in convincing four manufacturing companies to relocate to the city. The industries represented a total capital investment of \$120-million and annual payrolls of \$10-million.

Also, then-Gov. Wallace Wilkinson named **Stanton** a Kentucky Colonel, which is an honorary award with no particular criteria. His colonel's certificate is on his office wall at Largo City Hall.

Internet Research

Stanton, Susan

Note: This research will be presented in reverse chronological order

Stanton also has worked as an assistant to the city manager of Champaign, Ill., as an administrative assistant to the borough manager of Ketchikan Gateway Borough in Alaska, and as an assistant to the city manager of Newburgh, N.Y.

Stanton holds two degrees from the University of Florida in Gainesville. Wednesday, his last day as Bonczek's assistant, **Stanton** was wearing a "'Gator" tie.

In addition to following Florida and Kentucky athletic teams, **Stanton** enjoys scuba diving and running.

He said Wednesday his free time could be coming to an end. **Stanton** and his wife Donna are expecting their first child in May.

Compiled By: Sean Baenziger
Colin Baenziger and Associates