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News Release

For Immediate Release

Public Involvement Committee Recommends Task Force Members

City Council's Public Involvement Committee narrowed down a list of 48 applicants to a recommended seven members and two alternates at today's noon meeting. The recommended slate will go to Mayor Bob Stephens for review. City Council could vote to adopt the complete 18-member roster as soon as Monday, Dec. 17.

The process today involved each committee member voting on his or her top five choices. The top vote-getters were then discussed and voted upon.

The members selected today include:

- Jeff Houghton, a copywriter for the Marlin Network Deep
- Rick McLain, the president of REDICO, LLC, an electrical contracting business, has been involved with various community organizations, some through his church
- Gary Whitaker, the owner and publisher of 417 Magazine, has been involved in several organizations including the Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce
- Ginger Holczer, a self-employed clinical psychologist, is formerly the chair of the Christian County Democrats club and co-founder of Neighbors Helping Neighbors of Christian County
- Pam Sailors, a professor and associate dean at Missouri State, has served on various ethics and health care committees
- Sarah Smith, a student at Missouri State, has worked with various community and campus organizations
- Rev. Steve Gardner, a retired instructional designer who serves on various boards including the Traffic Advisory Board

The two alternates are:

- Cindy Lear, the owner of Associates in Sign Language LLC, has been involved in several faith-based organizations
- Angela Filbeck, an employee of the Trust Company of the Ozarks, previously served as the vice president of the board of a yoga center

Eight members of the task force had previously been selected and approved by the Mayor and City Council. They include:

- Judge Miles Sweeney, non-voting chairperson, selected by Mayor Bob Stephens; view [Judge Sweeney's biographical info](#) (pdf)
- Reverend Michael Overton, selected by Councilman Jerry Compton
- David Trippe, selected by Councilwoman Cynthia Rushefsky
- Dr. Robert Saylor, selected by Mayor Bob Stephens

- Dick Hardy, selected by Councilman John Rush
- Randy Doennig, selected by Councilman Scott Bailes
- Lorie Latimer, selected by Councilman Jeff Seifried
- Lola Butcher, selected by Councilwoman Jan Fisk
- Lynne Meyerkord, selected by Councilman Doug Burlison

The task force is expected to begin meeting after the first of the year. Members will have until June 30 to submit a report and make a recommendation to City Council. Any recommendations out of the task force will still require approval by City Council before they take effect.

Scope of Duties:

- Research and investigate the level of discrimination in Springfield because of sexual orientation or transgender issues and the level of urgency to resolve any identified problem. Also, research and investigate the appropriate level for solution if any problems are identified, whether that level be local, county, state, or federal.
- Meet with a variety of stakeholders to collect input and hear various perspectives, including, but not limited to GLBT members, not-for-profit advocacy groups, private businesses, the medical community, the business community, the faith-based community, the academic community, and any other group with which the Committee desires to meet. This Task Force may consider any option.
- Provide written recommendations to the Mayor and City Manager, ranking the one or more recommended options that should be considered, recognizing that City Council must ultimately approve any proposal. In addition to ranking the Task Force's recommendations, the report should indicate the advantages and disadvantages of each option considered from the perspective of the citizens of Springfield.

The History of the Issue

City Council voted in August to table and "send to task force" a controversial proposal which would have added sexual orientation and gender identity to the City's anti-discrimination law. City council formally adopted a [resolution to create this Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Citizens' Task Force](#) (pdf), and charge the group to look into discrimination related to sexual orientation and gender identity in the city.

The task force will allow voices into the discussion that were not a part of the ordinance's formation, Mayor Stephens said.

About the City's Current Non-discrimination Ordinance

City Code currently prohibits discrimination based on factors such as race, religion and disability when offering employment, housing or public accommodations, such as hotel rooms or restaurants. Federal law includes some limited protections, but Missouri law currently contains no provision against discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity.

The original proposal was brought forward by the Mayor's Commission on Human Rights, a citizen board in charge of investigating and mediating discrimination complaints. It would have

amended the existing City Code to include sexual orientation and gender identity as protected categories when it comes to employment, public housing and public accommodations.

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