

From: [Kristin Lortie](#)
To: [Carie Shealy](#); [Monica Arsenault](#)
Cc: [Lorraine Koss](#); [Michael Blake](#); [Matthew Barringer](#); [Lavander Hearn](#); [James Goins](#); [Stockton Whitten](#); [Anthony Garganese \(OrlandoLaw\)](#)
Subject: Please vote NO on Agenda 24-162 to Approve a First Addendum to the City Manager's Employment Agreement
Date: Monday, March 25, 2024 10:32:14 PM

EXTERNAL MESSAGE - USE CAUTION WITH LINKS AND ATTACHMENTS!

City of Cocoa Clerk,

I am requesting that the statement below be added to the meeting minutes for the 3/26/24 Meeting Minutes for Agenda item 24-162.

Mayor Blake and Cocoa City Council Members,

I am writing to request your support for the 2024 election, by voting **NO on agenda item 24-162 to Approve a First Addendum to the City Manager's Employment Agreement**. The Cocoa city manager's contract is not scheduled to renew until October 2025. There is no need to **prematurely renew Mr. Whitten's contract at this time**. Your decision to renew the city manager's contract will reflect to residents that city council members do not care about the will of the Cocoa voters in the upcoming election, nor the wishes of the city council that will be seated in November 2024 after the November 5th election. The extension of Mr. Whitten's current contract is a **matter best decided by the council members that he will be serving following the 2024 election, including if the council members remain the same**. Council members' premature contract renewal thwarts the authority of the council members that prevail in the 2024 election.

At the 3/12 County Commission meeting, the commissioners deliberately chose against moving toward a 3-year contract renewal for their lobbyist and instead opted for a 1-year contract, specifically not to tie the hands of the incoming commission, and which was the better decision regarding length of contract. The decision had nothing to do with the actual performance of the lobbyist in question. This is the same thought process council members should apply to Mr. Whitten's current request.

Further, the meeting agenda details state that *"council members will provide performance evaluations"* as a part of the premature contract renewal and that he is capping his current salary. The addendum itself was not attached to online details; it is still not available for public review as of Monday evening at 10 p.m. Regarding the salary freeze, while it certainly saves the city some amount of dollars to cap Mr. Whitten's salary, at \$196,227.20/year a 3% raise comes out to \$22.64/workday. For a city that allocates millions of dollars per city meeting, \$22.65/day hardly seems worth the cost of tying the hands of the next city council.

On the performance reviews, as (4) council members are aware, I brought the performance evaluation matter up as a concern multiple times in 2022, and in writing and during public comment in 2023. The fact that Mr. Whitten is now willing to have a performance review in order to gain additional advantage for himself is an unacceptable exchange. Mr. Whitten's refusal to abide by his current contract should not have been tolerated by city council members for the past 2.5 years, but his willingness to begin abiding by his contract in 2024 should not gain him the additional privilege of prematurely extending his contract.

I have received a preview of the form that Mr. Whitten is using, and the **anemic 2-page form he provided to you is not a useful tool to gauge his performance**. Instead it is reflective of the **ongoing lack of accountability that has eroded the current city leadership**. I would suggest that council members and Mr. Whitten review the more robust evaluation tools used by the prior city manager. When researching this item today, I was able to locate the last review of the prior city manager in the city's archives. This could be especially helpful to Councilmen Hearn and Barringer who have not been through a Cocoa city manager evaluation process, and serves as a reminder to the (3) members that have been through a more robust review process. Mr. Whitten's predecessor had **(40) evaluation criteria measured on a 1-5 scale on the prior city evaluation tool**. **Mr. Whitten's evaluation contains only (8) evaluation criteria, and only (3) measurement options to select from** (Excellent, Satisfactory, and Needs Improvement). Why would council be satisfied with such a watered down tool when (4) of you have personally utilized a more robust system? **Based on the criteria alone Mr. Whitten's form has only 20% of the criteria measures as the prior form does. How is this acceptable to city council members?** It appears to be a "check the box" event rather than a useful tool. BTW I have just reviewed the Titusville city manager's most recent performance review, and it is similar to the prior city manager's tool with extensive commentary included from city council members. Why not create a thorough review process that is not susceptible to the current criticisms?

Here is a link to this review: <https://cocoa.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=4390167&GUID=4AFEEC0D-058B-43FF-8F9F-CB24F7F14657&Options=&Search=&FullText=1&fbclid=IwAR3VJHKByXCdzfW7CqBTaLitm2ueaHCrpz6XNIiCAXazPEG31yflIDG21YxY>

Lastly, with the topic of strategic planning making it to Mr. Whitten's evaluation criteria sheet, I'd like to mention that after a search of the city's budget website, I was able to locate the few goal statements that are included in the city's budget workbook under various (but not all) departments. These are buried by scrolling down within some of the department tabs in case you haven't searched yet. I did locate one SMART goal regarding the police reducing crime by 50% by 2024. Unfortunately the best example I found does not appear to have been updated as it's now 2024. What I found overall was more aspirational or affirmative statements that were not time-specific or measurement-specific. The city manager even included one of his (3) goals for hosting the Citizens Academy, which I found slightly amusing. **Are the city's goals and objectives to simply repeat what they did last year? I would certainly not consider these measurable goals.**

Please request Mr. Whitten utilize the city's prior performance evaluation tool which was more robust, contained more relevant and detailed criteria, and included both a self-evaluation and the city manager's own Goals and Objectives for himself. As proposed by Councilwoman Koss at the February 20th city workshop, the city should originate actual performance measurements and targets for the city for the residents to understand the specific items the city is targeting each year in a single document, and to stop the

numerous attempts to gaslight residents and council members with various illustrations of city strategic planning that is not strategic planning.

In closing, please support the voters of Cocoa and the City Council that will be elected on November 5, 2024, by voting NO on agenda item 24-162. Let the Cocoa voters and the post-election city council members determine the future and the length of tenure of the city manager position in the City of Cocoa.

I am requesting confirmation of receipt of my comment by the city clerk, and confirmation that it will be included in the city meeting minutes under the noted agenda item.

Sincerely,

Kristin Lortie, Cocoa Resident Concerned about the Current City Manager Proposal Thwarting the Will of Cocoa Voters in the November 2024 Election

From: [Lil L](#)
To: [City Council](#)
Subject: "NO" TO EARLY APPROVAL OF CITY MANAGERS EMPLOYMENT AGREEMENT
Date: Monday, March 25, 2024 4:10:31 AM

EXTERNAL MESSAGE - USE CAUTION WITH LINKS AND ATTACHMENTS!

Mayor Blake and Cocoa City Council Members,

I am writing to request your support for the 2024 election, by voting NO on agenda item 24-162 to Approve a First Addendum to the City Manager's Employment Agreement. The Cocoa city manager's contract is not scheduled to renew until October 2025. There is no need to extend this contract at this time. I truly can't figure out why this is even on the agenda in March 2024. .

Please support the voters of Cocoa and the City Council that will be elected in November 2024, by voting NO on agenda item 24-162. Let the Cocoa voters and the new city council determine the future and tenure of the city manager position in the City of Cocoa.

Sincerely,

Lillian Leber
Cocoa

From: [Carter, Tammy](#)
To: [City Council](#)
Subject: Agenda item 24-162 to Approve a First Addendum to the City Manager's Employment Agreement
Date: Tuesday, March 26, 2024 9:55:37 AM

EXTERNAL MESSAGE - USE CAUTION WITH LINKS AND ATTACHMENTS!

Mayor Blake and Cocoa City Council Members,

Being unable to attend the meeting this evening due to be out of town on business travel, I am writing to urge you to vote **NO on agenda item 24-162 to Approve a First Addendum to the City Manager's Employment Agreement.**

The Cocoa city manager's contract is not scheduled to renew until October 2025. Given that the deadline is over a year and half away, the renewal vote is premature at this time. On the surface, this could easily be interpreted as an attempt to subvert the will of the electorate plus it ensures that the 2024 council are unable to choose their city manager.

Let the Cocoa voters and our new city council determine the future and tenure of the city manager position for the City of Cocoa.

Please, vote **NO on agenda item 24-162** to show your support of the 2024 election and the will of Cocoa's voters.

Regards,

Tammy
1809 Indian River Dr.
Cocoa, Fl.

Tammy Carter
Sr. Product Manager

Curtiss-Wright
20130 Lakeview Center Plaza, Suite 200, Ashburn, VA 20147 United States
T: 703.840.6690 | M: 703.431.8928
tammy.carter@curtisswright.com | www.curtisswrightds.com

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From: [CCorrado](#)
To: [Monica Arsenault](#)
Subject: Cocoa City Manager's Contract - Please Add My Comment to The Meeting Minutes for 3/26/2023
Date: Monday, March 25, 2024 11:17:18 AM

EXTERNAL MESSAGE - USE CAUTION WITH LINKS AND ATTACHMENTS!

Attn: Monica Arsenault---City of Cocoa Clerk
Re: Add comments to Meeting Minutes for 3/26/2023

I am requesting that the statement below be added to the meeting minutes for the 3/26/24 Meeting Minutes.

Mayor Blake and Cocoa City Council Members,

I am writing to request your support for the 2024 election, by voting NO on agenda item 24-162 to Approve a First Addendum to the City Manager's Employment Agreement. The Cocoa city manager's contract is not scheduled to renew until October 2025. There is no need to prematurely renew Mr. Whitten's contract at this time. Your decision to renew the city manager's contract will reflect to residents that city council members do not care about the will of the Cocoa voters in the upcoming election, nor the wishes of the city council that will be seated in November 2024 after the November 5th election. The extension of Mr. Whitten's current contract is a matter best decided by the council members that he will be serving following the 2024 election. Council members' premature contract renewal thwarts the authority of the council members that prevail in the 2024 election.

The meeting agenda details state that council members will provide performance evaluations as a part of the premature contract renewal and that he is capping his current salary. The addendum itself was not attached to online details and I have requested it from the clerk. As council members are aware, I brought this matter up as a concern multiple times in 2022, and in writing and during public comment in 2023. The fact that Mr. Whitten is now willing to have a performance review in order to gain additional advantage for himself is an unacceptable exchange. Mr. Whitten's refusal to abide by his current contract should not have been tolerated by city council members for the past 2.5 years, but his willingness to begin abiding by his contract in 2024 should not gain him the additional privilege of prematurely extending his contract.

Please support the voters of Cocoa and the City Council that will be elected on November 5, 2024, by voting NO on agenda item 24-162. Let the Cocoa voters and the post-election city council members determine the future and tenure of the city manager position in the City of Cocoa.

Sincerely,

Concerned Cocoa Resident - Celeste Corrado

From: [Marilyn Ross Smith](#)
To: [Monica Arsenault](#); [Michael Blake](#)
Subject: Endorsement for Extension of Salary for Mr. Stockton Whitten
Date: Tuesday, March 26, 2024 3:25:19 PM

EXTERNAL MESSAGE - USE CAUTION WITH LINKS AND ATTACHMENTS!

Dear Council & City Manager,

I hope this email finds you well. I am writing to express my full endorsement and support for extending Mr. Stockton Whitten's salary for another year. As a key member of our community, Mr. Whitten has consistently demonstrated outstanding leadership and commitment to our collective success.

One of Mr. Whitten's most significant contributions has been his exceptional rapport with our community. His ability to engage with diverse stakeholders and foster positive relationships has been instrumental in promoting cooperation and unity among various groups. This has not only enhanced our community's cohesion but has also contributed significantly to our overall growth and development.

Moreover, Mr. Whitten's efforts have led to the attraction of reputable and respectable businesses to our area. A notable example is the successful partnership with Brightline, which has brought substantial benefits to our community in terms of economic opportunities and infrastructure development. Mr. Whitten's strategic vision and effective negotiation skills have played a pivotal role in securing such partnerships, further highlighting his value to our community.

Given Mr. Whitten's proven track record of accomplishments and his ongoing dedication to our community's prosperity, I strongly recommend extending his salary for another year. Doing so not only acknowledges his past achievements but also reinforces our commitment to retaining top talent that positively impacts our community's growth trajectory.

Thank you for considering my endorsement, and I look forward to continued collaboration and success under Mr. Whitten's leadership.

Best regards,

Marilyn Ross Smith

Diamond Square Board Member (321) 795-1252

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[IMDb](#)

From: [Tammy Findlay-bell](#)
To: [Monica Arsenault](#)
Subject: Extending City Manager's contract
Date: Monday, March 25, 2024 10:45:35 PM

Greetings,

I'm Tammy Findlay-Bell and I reside at 244 Lemon Street in the great city of Cocoa. I'm writing to support extending the contract of our City Manager, Mr. Stockton Whitten. I've witnessed first hand the hard work and dedication Mr. Whitten has given our city. I've worked with him on a special project to help meet the needs of our citizens and witnessed his diligence, heartfelt support and commitment to making our community a safer and more prosperous place. It has truly been an asset having him, our Police Chief and Mayor striving for excellence. We have seen the growth under his leadership. Please consider supporting the extension of his contract.

Sincerely submitted,

Sent from my iPhone

Tracy Moore
2747 Wentworth Place
Cocoa, FL 32926

Monica Arsenault
City Clerk
City of Cocoa
65 Stone Street
Cocoa, FL 32922

March 26, 2024

Greetings Ms. Arsenault,

This letter is in support of extending the contract of Cocoa City Manager, Stockton Whitten.

Mr. Whitten has been a strong and effective advocate for the City of Cocoa, and has a stellar reputation in the Cocoa community. His efforts in the Diamond Square Community has yield outstanding results, such as the Veteran Village for Homeless Female Vets and their families, working with the board on building partnership with foundations focused on community sustainability, and providing insights into how to leverage Diamond Square funds for upward mobility and enhancements.

I look forward to working with the City of Cocoa as a UNITED community as we become a gateway for Central Florida through TEAM Cocoa's efforts through Bright Line. Stockton Whitten should be commended for his forward thinking.

Sincerely,
Tracy Moore
Cocoa Citizen, and Chairperson
Diamond Square Redevelopment Agency

Errol Beckford

Contact

1222 Dixon Blvd.
Cocoa, FL 32922
PH. 321.961.1575

Monica Arsenault
City Clerk
City of Cocoa

Dear Monica Arsenault:

It is with great contentment that I support and recommend Mr. Stockton Whitten for the continuation in his position as the City of Cocoa City Manager.

Stockton Whitten and I met several times earlier this year upon my request for a meeting. I had the pleasure of sitting down with him to discuss the furthering of safety and development of our exceptional city of Cocoa. In addition, I wanted to discuss some concerns I had about our community and share my vision with him in that area.

As a Pastor in this city for over twenty-four years and a business owner, economic development is of grave importance to me and something I hold dear to my heart.

Upon meeting with Stockton, I immediately recognized and could see how genuine he was and concerned about these matters as well. I could tell we shared the same values and ideas on how to rebuild our community. He has a strong desire to see Cocoa grow economically and see a reduction in crime.

Mr. Whitten has the experience and expertise our growing community needs to go forward into the next chapter. I truly believe he is an asset and extremely valuable to the city of Cocoa.

Stockton is very knowledgeable and skilled in his field of work. Since he has taken on this position I can see progress and improvement. He is a team player and all-around leveled individual who shows no partiality.

Undoubtedly and with high confidence I can recommend his continuance as the City Manager of Cocoa.

Whatever your decision, please accept my sincere thanks for your time and consideration of my request.

Sincerely,

Errol Beckford

Stone Street Church of God



708 Stone Street
Cocoa, FL 32922

From: Bishop Timothy McGahee, Pastor
Stone Street Church of God

To: City of Cocoa

RE: City Manager Contract Extension

We greet you in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We, the Pastor, Officers, and Members of Stone Street Church of God, would like to give our **full support** for the Proposed Contract Extension of the City Manager (VII.1 24-162). His cooperativeness in matters concerning our community has been outstanding.

May God ever Bless You!

From: jhunnicut4@gmail.com
To: [City Council](#)
Subject: Mayor Blake and Cocoa City Council Members,
Date: Monday, March 25, 2024 2:11:40 PM

EXTERNAL MESSAGE - USE CAUTION WITH LINKS AND ATTACHMENTS!

Mayor Blake and Cocoa City Council Members,

I am writing to request your support for the 2024 election, by voting NO on agenda item 24-162 to Approve a First Addendum to the City Manager's Employment Agreement. The Cocoa city manager's contract is not scheduled to renew until October 2025. There is no need to renew this contract at this time.

Please support the voters of Cocoa and the City Council that will be elected in November 2024, by voting NO on agenda item 24-162. Let the Cocoa voters and the new city council determine the future and tenure of the city manager position in the City of Cocoa.

Sincerely
Janice Hunnicutt.
4948 Hidden Pine Place
Cocoa. 32926

Sent from my iPad

From: [Tammy Findlay-bell](#)
To: [Monica Arsenault](#)
Subject: Mr. Stockton Whitten
Date: Tuesday, March 26, 2024 4:53:42 PM

I'm Sammie Robbins, a Retired employee of the City of Cocoa Utilities Dept. and a resident since 1957. I was just made aware of the situation with our City Manager. I want to extend my support and gratitude for Mr. Whitten. I'm very pleased with his work and willingness to help build a better city. I think as a community we have seen greatness under our present leadership! I support wholeheartedly extending the contract of Mr. Whitten. Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Sent from my iPhone

From: [Toni](#)
To: [City Council](#)
Subject: NO on agenda item 24-162.
Date: Sunday, March 24, 2024 7:49:22 AM

Mayor Blake and Cocoa City Council Members,

As a frequent visitor to Cocoa both on business and recreation, I am quite concerned about an item coming before Council concerning the premature extension of contracts.

I am writing to request your support for the 2024 election, by voting **NO on agenda item 24-162 to Approve a First Addendum to the City Manager's Employment Agreement**. The Cocoa city manager's contract is not scheduled to renew until October 2025. There is no need to prematurely renew his contract at this time.

Please support the voters of Cocoa and the City Council that will be elected in November 2024, by voting **NO on agenda item 24-162**. Let the Cocoa voters and the new city council determine the future and tenure of the city manager position in the City of Cocoa.

Sincerely,
Toni Shifalo
Titusville

From: [Linda Dolphin](#)
To: [Carie Shealy](#); [City Council](#)
Subject: Re: Agenda Item 24-162
Date: Monday, March 25, 2024 7:30:37 PM

EXTERNAL MESSAGE - USE CAUTION WITH LINKS AND ATTACHMENTS!

Dear Council Members,

I am asking you to vote against Agenda Item 24-162 at the Council meeting on 3/26/24 because it is important for a newly elected council to be allowed to determine what to do with Mr. Whitten's original contract at the end of its term in 2025 without any cost to the city. It would be inappropriate for this council to make that decision before the upcoming 2024 election. Residents should be allowed to vote for either the current council members who may seek re-election or vote up to 3 new council members into office who may have different points of view from the current members.

As the upcoming election is less than 9 months away, Mr. Whitten could request an early extension of his contract as soon as a new council is sworn in after the 11/24 election or he could simply wait for the "automatic" renewal clause which occurs in April 2025. If a potentially new council agrees that Mr. Whitten is doing a good job, his contract will automatically be renewed in April 2025 thus providing continuity of leadership. Why require the newly elected 2024 council to wait 2 additional years to have any option to make a no-penalty decision regarding his contract? Of what benefit could that be to the city?

I would also request that council members complete the evaluations of Mr. Whitten on an annual basis which are REQUIRED by his current contract and which the residents of Cocoa have continually requested be done. None have been completed during his previous 3 years of employment. His first request for an evaluation was made this month due to his desire to extend his contract.

As stated in the agenda item, Mr. Whitten has requested this early contract extension due to the unprecedented growth that Cocoa is experiencing and suggesting that Cocoa needs continuity of leadership during this time. If he is effective in his job, his contract will continue to renew every 3 years starting in 2025 without any action required on his or council's part, so there will be the continuity of leadership he seeks. If he is not effective in his role, council members should have the right of no-penalty decision-making at the end of his current term in 2025.

As far as the benefit to Cocoa is concerned, Mr Whitten stated he would forgo salary increases for 2 years which would potentially save the city up to \$6,000 per year, (or more if director salaries are increased by more than a cost of living adjustment). A reduction of \$6,000 to Cocoa's multimillion dollar annual

budget is a rounding error at best and provides no financial incentive to extend his contract. Based upon these points, I can see no reason to approve Agenda Item 24-162. I hope you agree with me.

Please vote no to preserve the authority of the voters of Cocoa and the decision-making of the 2024 elected representatives. I am requesting that my statement be included in the 3/26 meeting minutes as an e-comment and that the clerk confirm that it has been included. Thank you for your consideration.

Linda Dolphin

21 year Cocoa resident

Sent from my iPhone

From: [Sheila Smiley](#)
To: [City Council](#)
Subject: Retain Stockton Whitten
Date: Tuesday, March 26, 2024 12:49:10 PM

Dear Council,

As a taxpayer residing in the city of Cocoa, I urge the mayor and council to vote affirmatively on agenda item 24-162, renewing the city manager's contract. Continuity with the current city manager is essential for completing ongoing progress and sustaining valuable community relationships fostered by this council and the city manager over the past four years.

Best Regards,

Jessie Smiley

[Sent from Yahoo Mail for iPhone](#)

From: [Tammie Henderson](#)
To: [City Council](#)
Subject: Vote
Date: Wednesday, March 27, 2024 8:05:06 PM

EXTERNAL MESSAGE - USE CAUTION WITH LINKS AND ATTACHMENTS!

Yes on agenda item 24-162 to renew the city manager's contract

A Cocoa resident
Sent from my iPhone

From: [Stel Bailey](#)
To: [City Council](#)
Cc: [James Goins](#)
Subject: Vote No Agenda Item 24-162
Date: Tuesday, March 26, 2024 2:03:33 AM

EXTERNAL MESSAGE - USE CAUTION WITH LINKS AND ATTACHMENTS!

Mayor Blake and the members of the Cocoa City Council,

I kindly request that you vote against agenda item 24-162, which pertains to the approval of a First Addendum to the City Manager's Employment Agreement. It is important to note that the Cocoa city manager's contract is not due for renewal until October 2025. Therefore, there is no urgency to extend the contract at this moment. Thank you for considering my request.

Sincerely,

Stel Bailey
Cocoa, Florida