

CITIZENS LEAGUE REPORT

No. III

**Recommendations to apply in selecting a
new Minneapolis City Assessor**

July 1959

Approved by 12-8 &
July 1, 1959

(111)

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Members of the Minneapolis City Council

FROM: Citizens League of Minneapolis and Hennepin County

SUBJECT: Recommendations of the general principles which we believe should be applied in selecting a new Minneapolis City Assessor.

BACKGROUND:

City Assessor Ed Gould will reach mandatory retirement age on July 20 of this year. Several months ago, the City Council, in anticipation of Gould's impending retirement, went before the Hennepin County delegation of the State Legislature to urge passage of a bill which would have permitted Gould to continue to serve as City Assessor beyond his normal retirement date. The principal reason given at that time was that the most likely replacement had died a short time ago and Gould's retirement at this time would create a serious problem in the office of City Assessor. The bill was not favorably acted upon and Gould now will be compelled to retire on July 20.

Nothing by way of official Council action to establish a formal procedure in selecting Gould's successor occurred until the June 26 meeting of the City Council, when the President of the Council was authorized to establish a committee to make recommendations for a replacement. In view of the impending new organization of the City Council at its July 6 meeting, following the recent election, it is not certain whether this committee will be named prior to July 6.

The City Assessor serves for a two-year term commencing on the date on which the Council is organized following an election. The appointment is made by the Council. It is not known whether the Council plans to select Gould's successor at the July 6 Council meeting, or whether it contemplates reappointing him to serve until his mandatory retirement date of July 20.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

We recommend to the Council certain guiding principles as it proceeds to select a new City Assessor:

1. An extensive search should be made to find the most qualified individual it is possible to interest in the position. This procedure will not only assure the selection of an outstanding City Assessor but will gain public confidence and will add stature to the individual finally selected.
2. Although there are obvious advantages in selecting the new assessor on or before July 20, the more important consideration is to secure the best possible individual for the position. A final decision should be withheld until reasonable steps have been taken to assure that the man chosen compares favorably with other prospective candidates who might be interested in the position.

3. We believe that the committee should adopt the general procedure of accumulating a list of experienced assessors in other cities who have attained outstanding reputations, contact them, personally assess their qualifications, and determine if they might be interested in coming to Minneapolis. These men then should be compared with ranking employees now in the City Assessor's office and, in making the final selection, if an individual now in the department compares favorably with other prospective candidates, then he, of course, should be named to the position.
4. We urge that the committee establish general guidelines of qualifications which should be looked for in a City Assessor. Among those we consider to be most significant are the following:
 - a) Demonstrated administrative ability as indicated by managerial experience in an assessment office or a closely related area. This is a particularly important qualification in a city the size of Minneapolis.
 - b) Ability to communicate and cooperate with the public, as well as with elected local governmental officials.
 - c) The prospect that he will offer a relatively extended period of service as City Assessor.
 - d) Considerable technical knowledge and experience in the field of assessments.
 - e) The customary general qualifications, such as native ability, leadership, character, integrity, dedication, etc.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS:

First, it seems most appropriate to commend most highly and thank City Assessor Ed Gould for his long, dedicated, and able service to the City of Minneapolis in that capacity. Few assessors have attained a more respected position nationally, as well as locally. We will sorely miss him in the years ahead.

1. We recognize that the argument can be made that there might be some difficulty in getting an able assessor from some other city, in view of the fact the appointment is for only a two-year term. However, historical review of the number of assessors Minneapolis has had over the years will demonstrate that this problem is not of decisive influence.
2. The importance of the position of City Assessor in Minneapolis should not be underestimated. All taxpayers, business and residential, have a vital interest in having a competent and a fair-minded City Assessor. In addition, his responsibility under the weak mayor-weak council form of government we now have is greater than otherwise would be the case.
3. We believe it would be a serious mistake to select someone who has little or no previous experience in the specific area of assessment procedures and practices.