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Tybee Island City Manager Search Violating Open Records Law

Professional association for city managers blames city's recruitment firm

WICHITA, Kansas – Tybee Island’s decision not to release the names of its three city manager finalists appears to violate Georgia state law and we question the advice and counsel given to them by their recruitment firm, Baker Tilly.

Mayor Brian West was recently quoted saying: “We decided we're not going to let anyone know who our top choices are, only because we don't want to jeopardize the current employer any of them have.”

“Cities pay Baker Tilly tens of thousands of dollars to guide them through the recruitment process because they are supposed to be highly experienced subject matter experts,” stated Joseph Turner, president of the American Association of Municipal Executives. **“Did Baker Tilly inform Mayor West and the governing body about state open records laws?”**

Under Article 4 subsection (a)(11) of GA Code 50-18-72, the law states that municipal governments must disclose the names and information of the finalists and that a 14-day public notice period must elapse before a final vote can be taken.

It also reads that “the agency shall not be allowed to avoid the provisions of this paragraph by the employment of a private person or agency to assist with the search or application process.”

“Baker Tilly has a history of engaging in questionable conduct around open records laws and for the poor treatment of city manager candidates,” Turner said. **“One of our objectives is to educate elected officials and advocate on behalf of public sector executives.”**

Upon reading the state code it appears that naming a sole city manager finalist this week would violate the law.

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