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Madeira Beach commission lavishes praise, raise on city manager

By Sheila Mullane Estrada, Times Correspondent

MADEIRA BEACH — This city loves its city manager and that is not an exaggeration, given the 10 percent raise it just granted him.

"**Mr. Crawford** continues to amaze this commission and the residents of Madeira Beach," Vice Mayor Elaine Poe said.

Shane Crawford, who was hired for his first job managing a city four years ago, was given \$13,875 raise to bring him to one of the highest paid managers in the county.

Crawford, who made \$117,000 in 2011, is now earning \$150,000 a year.

In comparison, neighboring Treasure Island City Manager Reid Silverboard is now earning \$120,529, while St. Pete Beach City Manager Wayne Saunders is making \$145,000.

Each commissioner filled out formal evaluations rating **Crawford's** performance in a variety of areas ranging from his relationship with the commission, city employees, residents and outside agencies, his financial and organizational management skills, and his personal characteristics.

The entire commission gave **Crawford** a "5" on every measure, the highest rating possible.

"**Shane Crawford** has proven to be an excellent city manager able to complete projects on time and bring them in on or under budget," wrote Mayor Travis Palladeno. "He is able to solve issues quickly and can think outside the box to get it done."

When **Crawford** was hired, the city had been in political turmoil for years, with a manager and most of the city staff resigning, one interim manager after another fired by the commission, and board members fighting over how the city's money was being spent.

"I have seen so many cities torn apart by bad management," said Commissioner Terry Lister. "We have the very best city manager for this time that we could possibly want. I have given him a perfect score because he is doing a fantastic job."

Commissioner Nancy Hodges noted how "the city has changed in a positive way ... when it comes down to it, the city is better than it was four years ago."

Commissioner and former Mayor Pat Shontz called **Crawford** "a super city manager" who both "gives respect and commands respect".

Crawford attributes the commission's action to their support of his approach to "turning a dumpy little town" into a growing, vibrant city that is becoming a go-to place for new development, including major hotels.

He said previous boards had "squirreled" enough money away to give a boost to major projects including the new city hall-recreation center complex, a revitalized gulf front Archibald Park and expanding marina.

Although the city has taken on millions in debt to accomplish these and other infrastructure projects, **Crawford** has also managed to raise revenues through a property tax hike, increased parking fees and burgeoning rental fees from sports and entertainment events at the new city center.

"This was an unbelievable raise. Ten percent is unheard of. I think the board was concerned that I might be lured away," **Crawford** said.

He admits he has been approached by recruiters seeking to fill manager positions in other cities.

"I am here for the long haul. I like it here. I have a great board and have never worked with a better staff," he said.