

6 Month Evaluation of City Attorney – Mark Sokolow

05/11/2010

OVERALL PERFORMANCE:

Mark has done a respectable job.

Overall, Mark has done a good job as Georgetown's city attorney. He effectively navigated an initial period when he had no legal assistance, often working lengthy hours to ensure legal services continued to be provided. He deserves credit for hiring two legal assistants in a timely manner.

Mark appears to have a firm grasp of relevant legal issues and how they affect the city. He appears to be independent and committed to providing solid, reliable legal counsel to the city and staff.

I think he can have a good future in Georgetown, but that he has more to learn and skills that need to be developed better for this to occur. See below for some suggestions.

COUNCIL CAN ASSIST IN HELPING MARK:

He needs clearer and more specific direction from Council with respect to their expectations of him and his department.

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT:

(1) LISTENING SKILLS:

It would be most helpful if Mark could refine his listening skills.

He needs to be a more effective listener within the organization, at all levels, and to external stakeholders.

(2) POLICY MATTERS:



Sections 552.101, 552.107, 552.111, 552.102, 552.109

[TRE 503]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(3) TECHNOLOGY:

Needs to embrace technology; upgrade his technology skills; and fully appreciate the benefits to be derived from it in terms of time management, efficiency, and effectiveness.

(4) POLITICS:

[REDACTED]

He needs to continue to learn the Georgetown governmental history, project history, politics and people of the community. Eyes and ears open with respect to staff, individuals and other organizations in the community – GISD, Williamson County, developers etc.

(5) COMMUNICATION:

It would be helpful to keep all stakeholders better informed and updated with regards to items that impact their area of responsibility.

(6) OTHER:

It may be helpful to keep references to his prior Port Arthur position at a minimum. Instead of saying "in Port Arthur we did it this way", perhaps a better phrase would be something to the effect, "another way to look at this item is"

Consider answering Council's questions on legal matters at Council Meetings quickly and succinctly and perhaps be more assertive in this regard.

SEE ATTACHED – COUNCILWOMAN BERRYMAN'S COMMENTS

Card. inc 552 101 552 107 552 111 552 102 552 109

[TRE 503]

After reviewing our city charter, section 5.06 City Attorney defines this position. It is obvious that City Attorney Mark Sokolow has worked very hard to raise the standard of our city government regarding our contracting, documents, and legal instruments. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] This was a major undertaking of our staff and they were complimented for this success.

The Legal Department has generated a substantial cost savings to the city and is operating 30% below the budget assigned to it by council. Mark has accomplished this by searching for excellent, highly qualified staff and not just hiring the first round of candidates. He has a full attorney as our Paralegal and a highly trained litigator as an assistant. Now that he is fully staffed there is every reason to anticipate that the Legal Department will be even more successful and [REDACTED]

In terms of areas for improvement, it would be good to refer to his past experiences through a broader prism than his most recent employer.

There is an area of concern for council to consider. The City Attorney position has become politicized recently and consideration should be given to allow the City Attorney to have a contract with a one year severance package in line with that of the City Manager. Since his performance has been above average and has met the standards presented him by council, this would offer stability to the department.

Pat Berryman

District 5 Councilman

Sections 552.101, 552.107, 552.111, 552.102, 552.109

Evaluation of City Attorney, S-S-10

George G. Garver

to:

Jessica Hamilton

05/17/2010 10:51 PM

Show Details

Jessica: Would you please see that a copy of this document gets placed in the personnel folder of our City Attorney. I will sign it when I come in tomorrow. Thank you. ggg

To: Councilman Dale Ross

Date: May 5, 2010

From: George Garver

Topic: Evaluation of City Attorney
Mark Sokolow

[]: TRES03

Areas where improvement would strengthen his effectiveness:

1. It would be most helpful if Mark could refine his listening skills.

2.

3. He needs to keep the City Manager better informed about all aspects of his activities. Listed below are examples of potential problems for the city which were caused by him not seeking advice or direction before proceeding.

4. He has not earned the respect of staff. They are not impressed with his frequent referral to Port Arthur as the example of how Georgetown should be doing business.

5. His skill level with technology is less than what he indicated during his interviews.

Patty Eason

From: Patty Eason [mailto: [REDACTED]]
Sent: Tuesday, May 11, 2010 1:47 PM
To: Dist7@georgetowntx.org
Cc: 'jhamilton@georgetowntx.org'
Subject: FW: Review of City Atty — Final draft

SS2.137

From: Patty Eason [mailto: [REDACTED]]
Sent: Monday, May 10, 2010 5:49 PM
To: Dist7@georgetowntx.org
Cc: 'jhamilton@georgetowntx.org'
Subject: Review of City Atty

SS2.137

[7].TRES03

The following is a written statement of the issues that I feel are important in assessing the City Attorney's job performance during his first six months with the City of Georgetown.

I voted against his pay raise because I think that his performance has been unsatisfactory for the following reasons:

1. [REDACTED]
2. This is not Port Arthur and we do not do things the same way that they do them in Port Arthur. That is why people want to move to Georgetown.....it is not Port Arthur.
3. He has literally angered people and created a very bad rapport with city employees and citizens all over town. He must be mindful of the fact that he is considered "The City" when he is out interacting with the public and representing us as counsel. I don't know how he will ever be able to repair the damage that he has done.
4. [REDACTED]
5. When he came here he had extremely limited technological skills. That inadequacy has created a great deal of extra work for others. I have not seen any major improvement in that area.

Patty Eason, City Council District 1
May 10, 2010

Evaluation of City Attorney May 2010

CJ: TRES03

I had not submitted an evaluation in writing previously, as I felt that it would be ignored, both by the city attorney and by the majority of the sitting council. However, in an effort to be a team member and have my opinions be a part of the city attorney's permanent records, I am submitting my thought and request they be attached to his permanent employee file.

I wish to make one thing clear; I did vote to hire Mark Sokolow for the city attorney position. I felt that one of the female interviewees was a better candidate; however, a six year old could tell from the conversation that a female was not going to be our next attorney, so I cast my vote accordingly!

Just after his hiring, I had lunch with Mr. Sokolow and gave him my feedback and suggestions at that time. I will reiterate my points below with additional observations.

- Mr. Sokolow needs to talk less and listen more. One cannot hear what someone is saying if they are constantly talking.



- The city attorney should be concise and direct in his/her efforts to report issues to council. Rambling and wandering stories of past issues in other cities are not needed or solicited. Get to the point, make it and move on.
- In an effort to be more efficient and frugal with the citizen's tax dollars, Mr. Sokolow needs to learn how to use a computer and the necessary software. I remember him telling us that he had an electronic law library; however, he has shown that he does not know what a laptop and docking station is. Therefore, I feel that he misled the council during his interview about his computer skills. This makes me wonder what other issues, if any, he may have misled us about. When I heard that he had put in a request for an electric typewriter, I about fell out of my chair! The city has taken great strides, not to mention expense, to have a "paperless" organization. Mr. Sokolow was making hard copies of everything just after his hiring. I am hopeful that this is getting better, especially with the hiring of a legal assistant and assistant city attorney.
- It has been my observation that he has wasted a lot of time in an effort to re-write many of the simple policies and procedures that the city has been following for years. It seems a waste of time and tax dollars, not to mention long, late hours for him.
- Although all board and commission meetings are purely advisory in nature



[REDACTED] This is another waste of taxpayer dollars and time that could be put to better use elsewhere. Every board/commission decision is reported to the council and considered by council for a final vote. [REDACTED]

- Mr. Sokolow has alienated almost every department head within the city and from what I am hearing there has been no apparent mending of fences.

- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]

These are my observations and comments. They are solely my comments and I did not seek or solicit feedback from any other person. These are not all of my comments; only the ones I could think of at the time of this writing.

Overall, I feel that Mr. Sokolow has made slight improvement; however, in retrospect, I feel that it was a mistake to hire him. If give the opportunity to do so again, I would vote differently.

Gabe Sansing
Councilmember, Dist. 2