



## **Legal Services Review Advisory Group**

**Monday, October 22, 2018**

**7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.**

**Takoma Park Community Center  
7500 Maple Avenue, Takoma Park MD**

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Present: Ellen Zavian, Anne Hollander, Rizzy Qureshi, Jason Damweber

Meeting Start Time: 7:15pm

- The meeting began with a review of the draft meeting minutes from the group's previous meeting, held on October 8, 2018. Anne made a motion to accept the minutes, which was seconded by Rizzy. The minutes were unanimously approved.
- Since the last meeting, Jason provided the group with information that had been requested, including contracts (some outdated) with legal service providers to the City, submissions from the last Request for Proposals for City Attorney services (2014), and a 2016 memorandum outlining Council expectations regarding legal services provided by the City Attorney outside of the fixed fee arrangement. The group briefly discussed the documents and considered the extent to which their report and recommendations should factor in what the group thinks are reasonable costs for quality legal services that meet the City's needs. Anne suggested that, at the very least, the group provide a range for the Council to consider. More discussion will be forthcoming about the subject.
- Prior to the meeting, group members had conducted interviews with five Councilmembers to gather feedback about legal needs, the existing framework for how the City's legal services needs are met, working with the City Attorney, and working with specialized counsel. During the meeting, they revealed and discussed some general themes that emerged from their interviews with Councilmembers. In particular, they noted that there seemed to be consensus from Council that there is room for improvement with regard to the existing arrangement, especially as it relates to the process for requesting and receiving legal advice, establishing priorities, and communicating effectively. They also noted that there seem to be different understandings among Councilmembers about the role of the City Attorney vis-à-vis the Council (Is the "client" individual councilmembers? The full Council? Staff? The City?). Jason noted that technically the City Attorney reports to the Council, as representatives of the City, and is obliged to follow the direction of a majority of the Council. Similar to the role of the City Manager, this can sometimes be a difficult relationship to navigate because the City Attorney must try to balance and satisfy the needs of individual Councilmembers and the Council as a whole. The group also noted that they expect that there will be escalation in legal risk in the City, as there is a potential ramp up in development and/or redevelopment that could result in part from the Purple Line and other factors.

- The group then turned to next steps. They agreed to meet again at 6:00pm on November 5<sup>th</sup>. Prior to that meeting, they hope to interview some staff members who have legal services needs in their respective work areas and interact with the City Attorney or specialized counsel. Group members will also begin drafting a document that outlines the City's legal needs and how they are currently being met and a document on various options regarding legal relationships and pros and cons of each.

Meeting End Time: 8:45pm