



Takoma Park City Council Meeting – July 18, 2018 Agenda Item 7

Work Session

Discussion of Formation of a Legal Services Review Advisory Group

Recommended Council Action

Discuss attached draft charter regarding a Legal Services Review Advisory Group

Context with Key Issues

In recent years, the City has experienced an increased need for legal services, as well as a broader range of legal expertise than in the past. Given these developments, the Council has considered forming an advisory group to evaluate legal needs and how they might best be met. The primary objective of the Legal Services Review Advisory Group would be to 1) review and document the City's legal service needs currently and what we expect in the near future, the manner in which those needs are currently being met, advantages and disadvantages of the existing structure and processes, and 2) provide recommendations to the City Council for how to meet the City's legal service needs in the future.

Council Priority

Fiscally Sustainable Government

Environmental Considerations

N/A – would depend on specific legal issues

Fiscal Considerations

There may be some incidental expenses associated with the work of the group, such as copying and printing costs, refreshments for meetings, etc.

For the past several years, the City has spent approximately \$155,000-\$175,000 per year on contracted legal services for the City Attorney. We also utilize the services of labor counsel and a development attorney, which we pay on an hourly basis.

Racial Equity Considerations

We are unable to determine whether any group would be disproportionately impacted by Council action taken in light of the recommendations of a Legal Services Review Advisory Group.

Attachments and Links

- Draft Charter for Legal Services Review Advisory Group



Legal Services Review Advisory Group

Overview

The City of Takoma Park issues contracts for various legal services. While the City Attorney's Office provides general legal services on a day to-day basis, the City also utilizes other counsel for specialized legal services associated with labor and personnel matters, development issues, the Police Pension Plan, and other needs as they arise. The current contract with the City Attorney began in February 2015 and can be renewed for up to five additional one-year terms, through 2020. All other contracts are due to be competitively bid or otherwise renewed.

Primary Objective

Recently, the City has experienced an increased need for legal services, as well as a broader range of legal expertise. The primary objective of the Legal Services Review Advisory Group is to 1) review and document the City's legal service needs currently and what we expect in near future, the manner in which those needs are currently being met, advantages and disadvantages of the existing structure and processes, and 2) provide recommendations to the City Council for how to meet the City's legal service needs in the future.

Specific Tasks

To be completed by February 1, 2019:

- Identify the City's legal services needs now and in the near future; look for and present possible new opportunities for utilizing legal services in ways they are not currently available or being considered
- Review and document how the existing arrangement for legal services is meeting or not adequately meeting identified needs (where are there gaps?)
- Interview current Councilmembers regarding their perspectives and legal services needs
- Interview staff members who frequently interact with the City's legal service providers in the course of their work regarding their perspectives and legal services needs
- Gather comparative information on various options and arrangements for legal services
- Develop recommended approaches for Council's consideration for most effectively and efficiently meeting legal services needs

Composition

- Former Councilmember with experience working with the City Attorney
- Three residents appointed by the Council; each resident should have a demonstrated background in one or more of the following areas: the field of law, familiarity with at least one area of the City's legal needs (contracts, finance, personnel, land use and development, etc.), and/or experience serving on a Council committee
- Staff liaison

Resources

- The role of the staff member assigned to the advisory group is to provide information regarding the existing arrangements for legal services, including but not limited to contracts and financial information, and to coordinate between other group members, Councilmembers, and staff as appropriate.