

Item 23-0118: Request to Approve Legal Services TO Adjustment

Human Resources & Information Technology Committee

Wed, Feb 08, 2023 6:30PM

Alderson Denise Fenton (District 6) 02:27

Moving on to our next act--next action item number 23-0118. Request to approve legal services Table of Organization adjustment.

Alderson Sheri Hartzheim (District 13) 02:38

Move for approval.

Alderson Kristin Alfheim (District 11) 02:39

Second.

Alderson Denise Fenton (District 6) 02:40

Okay. Attorney Behrens, are you speaking to that to this one? Or is it is Director Ratchman?

Attorney Christopher Behrens 02:47

I can, and Direct Ratchman certainly can also. But if it's okay, I'll start with it.

Alderson Denise Fenton (District 6) 02:52

Thank you.

Attorney Christopher Behrens 02:54

This has been an effort underway for, in excess of a year, coming into the third year of my term and it's given me an opportunity during the term to work more closely with the clerk's office and really see and understand what they do. As far as the organizational chart itself, I guess it started to bother me that we were just known as the Legal Services department when taking into consideration everything that the clerk's office does for the city. So one of the proposals I had was to change the name of our department to Legal and Administrative services to acknowledge that there is more than just legal services being provided.

Attorney Christopher Behrens 03:39

Along with that, within the table itself, and as I've outlined in the memo, there would be some structural change as far as reporting structure goes. No changes on the attorney side. But as far as the clerk's office, one of the things we've looked at is basically reestablishing the election clerk position, recognizing the the amount of work that the person in that position does relate it to the elections, leading up to elections, but also following the elections. It does involve significant amount of that individual's time throughout the year. They would continue to provide other administrative support as they could for the department but thought it better to recognize that position, really, for what it does most of the time throughout the year. And that position would then report directly to the city clerk, given that it's ultimately the clerk's responsibility to administer the elections.

Attorney Christopher Behrens 04:39

Within the department too we would also be changing the deputy clerk title to administrative services lead. And with that change, what it really does is it acknowledges to some extent what we've observed going on already. The individual in that position takes a leadership, almost a management role, in guiding some of the day to day

functions of other support staff in the office. So that change better acknowledges that position I think and what that position does.

Attorney Christopher Behrens 05:13

Like I said, we've been working on this a long time. And when I say we, Director Ratchman has been great support through this, as we've looked at different ideas, and we took our time with it, because we wanted to do it right. And that's why you're seeing a number of different changes taking place. And the clerk has been consulted on this too, obviously. She she understands how that our department works best. So she's aware of the changes, obviously supportive of them, as well. Is there anything you'd like to add?

Attorney Christopher Behrens 05:13

And then lastly, the city clerk position would be changed from a grade level, I think it's two grade levels up. It may come as a surprise to some of you, but the city clerk in the current grade level is not recognized at the same level as other deputy directors of departments. And it's something that Director Ratchman and I've been working on for quite some time and talking about. That that adjustment, I think, is well overdue given everybody's aware of the responsibilities that the clerk has, but other functions also. And I used an example when I explained this to the Finance Committee, if you think back to budget Saturday, the city clerk is sitting up at the table with the city attorney explaining the clerk side of the budget. The clerk develops that budget, and really administers that budget through the year, and that's just one of the functions that really makes the case for that position to be a deputy level position.

Attorney Christopher Behrens 06:20

Also, just taking into consideration some historical context. 11, 12 years ago, City Clerk's office was actually a standalone department when that was an elected position and person in that position was a department head. And really, the functions and responsibilities of that position haven't significantly changed. So I think a strong case can be made for recognizing that position as a deputy director level position.

Aldersperson Denise Fenton (District 6) 07:31

Thank you, Attorney Behrens. Director Ratchman, do you have anything?

Director Jay Ratchman (HR) 07:34

I'm not sure if I can add much of value because I think he said it's so well. But this wasn't just about the clerk position. Our discussion started there, and then we went deeper about the organization as a whole, or the Legal Services Department and the entire table of organization. And really the history of the elections position that at one point, we did have that as a specialized position. So appreciate Attorney Behrens as well, because he was very patient as we had questions and as we dug deeper, and--because I think we probably would have been here sooner than we are today, but we wanted to make sure that that we really rolled this out correctly. In addition, we wanted to make sure that we understood what the impacts would be, where these positions should be placed grade wise, or if there was any sort of additional compensation. So but I'm in full support of it. This is the way a reorganization should be approached.

Aldersperson Denise Fenton (District 6) 08:28

Thank you. I know--I don't want to speak for the whole Council but I think we all know that we would be fairly inoperable without that part of the clerk and her team. So questions, comments?

Aldersperson Kristin Alfheim (District 11) 08:47

I'm good as well.

Aldersperson Denise Fenton (District 6) 08:48

All right, thank you. Thank you for both for your work on this and the whole team. So hearing no comments or questions, and we have a motion and a second. Let's go ahead and take a vote. All those in favor, please signify by saying aye. Aye. That passes three to zero.