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A City Attorney's Rules to Live By

*"Hitting the Trifecta" in City Management:
Elected Officials, Administration, and City Staff Working Together
TML Annual Conference ★ Houston, Texas ★ October 2, 2014*

- (1) We are just lawyers. We are not engineers, policemen, campaign strategists or publicists. We weren't elected or appointed to make policy decisions.
- (2) We are dedicated to lawful procedures and processes, not political outcomes.
- (3) We do not dictate decisions to our clients. We provide options, advise regarding PROs and CONs, then advocate our clients' choices.
- (4) We do not play favorites. We advise the city as an organization, as a whole (in its entirety). We refuse to allow ourselves be strictly aligned with one faction or another. The answer doesn't change depending on who's asking the question.
- (5) We do not shoot from the hip. While off-the-cuff answers are sometimes okay in the short-term, we owe it to our clients to conduct research and verify our answers so that our certainty provides our clients with confidence in the long-term.
- (6) The importance of the actions our clients perform require that we remain on the cutting-edge of the ever-developing field of Municipal Law.
- (7) The City Attorney's Office should not be the place where good ideas go to die. Respond to clients in a timely manner.
- (8) Speak in plain English. During the course of providing legal representation we educate our clients on the law. There's no room for legalese.
- (9) Act professionally. Citizens, applicants, defendants and co-workers deserve respect.
- (10) While we certainly enjoy being friendly with our colleagues at city hall, we must retain our objectivity in performing our duties.
- (11) City council meetings (and public forums, generally) are not our opportunities to dazzle our adoring fans by showcasing our brilliance. The spotlight is for the elected officials. Most of our work is performed quietly behind the scenes.
- (12) We are part of a team of dedicated public servants. Our role is vital, as a support function, but is not dominant. We are here to serve.

by: Alan Bojorquez