



THE CITY ATTORNEY IN CONTEXT A CALL-IN CONVERSATION IN THREE INTERVIEWS



City Attorney - City Manager Relationship


Paul Arevalo, City Manager, West Hollywood
Michael Jenkins, City Attorney, Hermosa Beach,
Rolling Hills & West Hollywood

City Attorney - City Clerk Relationship

Lisa Pope, Assistant City Clerk, Santa Monica
Christi Hogin, City Attorney, Lomita, Malibu
& Palos Verdes Estates

City Attorney - Councilmember Relationship

Richard W. Kite, Councilmember, Rancho Mirage
Steven B. Quintanilla, City Attorney, Rancho Mirage
& Desert Hot Springs



Question regarding City Attorney - City Manager Relationship



On the phone:
FRODO B.
Rivendell





“yeah, thanks. I appreciate the opportunity to ask this question. It has been bothering for sometime. I am a councilmember and I get the feeling that the city manager and city attorney are conspiring. Our city attorney always seems to support the city manager’s recommendation. Does that seem suspicious to you?”

Question from FRODO B. from Rivendell



Question regarding City Attorney - City Manager Relationship



On the phone:
SCOUT F.
Maycomb





"This is Scout from Maycomb. I often feel like the city manager is trying to get me to tell the councilmembers that they legally have to do what he thinks the best thing to do is. I don't want to frustrate him but I am also not going to skew my advice so he gets his way. Any suggestions?"

Question from SCOUT F. from Maycomb



Question regarding City Attorney - City Manager Relationship



On the phone:

JAMES K.

City of Enterprise





"Hello. I am a city manager in a small city here in California. I gotta be honest. My city attorney is hard to work with. She thinks she has to report everything to the City Council because she says she 'works for the Council, not me' Can I exclude her from staff meetings?"

Question from JAMES K. from City of Enterprise



Question regarding City Attorney - City Manager Relationship



On the phone:

Anonymous





“Hello, due to the nature of my question I do not want to identify myself. I am a city attorney and I really think my city manager routinely violates the Brown Act with his so-called pre-meeting ‘individual briefings.’ What should I do?”

Question from Anonymous

Question regarding City Attorney - City Manager Relationship



On the phone:

Rory G.

Stars Hollow





"Hi, long time listener, first-time caller here. My city is organized in the council-manager form of government. My councilmembers know to go through me and, except for quick requests for information, do not make direct requests of my staff. I appreciate that, of course, because I had a city hall to run here. My ability to meet deadlines and advance the Council's agenda depends on being able to set priorities and manage my staff's time. Our contract city attorney seems to have no respect for this. Every time he calls it is some litigation emergency that he wants staff to drop everything for. He ties up all the support staff gathering documents for administrative records and subpoenas. He goes right to department heads to ask for information and gives advice directly to staff. Can I make the city attorney adhere to the same rules as the council and go through me?"

Question from Rory G. from *Stars Hollow*



Question regarding City Attorney - City Clerk Relationship



On the phone:

Katniss E.

City of District 12





“Thank you. Hello. This is Katniss E. from the city of District 12. I am appointed by the City Clerk and we have a contract city attorney. In order to manage costs of the contract, no staff member can call the city attorney without approval of the city manager. I am reluctant to seek approval too often because, well, I don’t want my boss to get the impression that I don’t know what I am doing. Do you think this kind of gatekeeper arrangement is a bad idea?”

Question from **Katniss E. from City of District 12**



Question regarding City Attorney - City Clerk Relationship



On the phone:
Isabella S.
Forks, CA



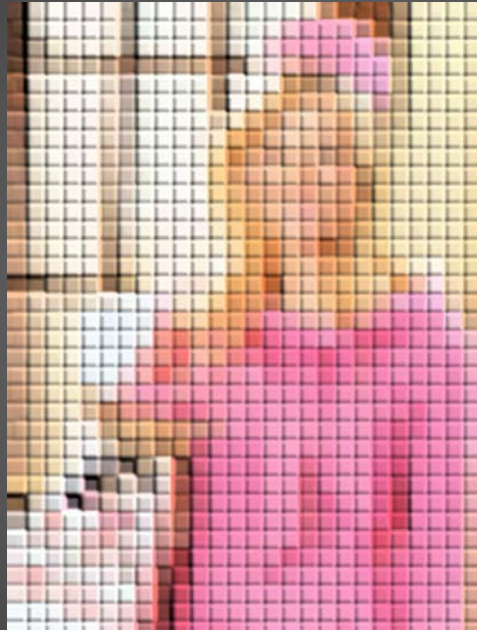


“Hi. This is Isabella S. from Forks, California. I just want to say that my city attorney is totally helpful. I just ask her questions and she says yes or no or tells me just what I need to do to comply with the law. The only thing is I don’t always understand why and sometimes I see other cities doing things differently than she said to. Do you think it is out of line to ask her to explain her answer or tell me the statutes that she is relying on?”

Question from Isabella S. from Forks, CA



Question regarding City Attorney - City Clerk Relationship



On the phone:

Elle W.

Bel Air, CA





“My city clerk thinks every Public Records Act request is burdensome and he never wants to take the time to go through the responsive documents to check for privilege. How do you handle this?”

Question from Elle W. from *Bel Air, CA*

Question regarding City Attorney - City Councilmember Relationship



On the phone:

Perry M.

Los Angeles, CA





“Hello. Thank you for your service to our California cities. I am a hardworking lawyer and I generally win my cases. I recently lost a big case and the Councilmembers are very disappointed. Residents come to public comment and blame everything on me and the Council never even tries to defend me. Letters to the Editor in the local paper say that I should be fired for incompetence. I told the Council in closed session that the litigation was risky. Heck, I told them when they denied the permit that a challenge would be hard to defend. But I can’t tell anyone about my confidential advice so that makes it seem like I am at fault. Am I the only city attorney this ever happened to?

Question from Perry M. from *Los Angeles, CA*



Question regarding City Attorney - City Councilmember Relationship



On the phone:
Ally McB.
Los Angeles





“The attorney-client relationship depends on trust. I know it is important to cultivate that. But what do I do when one Councilmember wants to confide in me and suddenly I realize he is disclosing that he has a conflict of interest but intends to vote on the item anyway?”

Question from **Ally McB.** from Los Angeles



Question regarding City Attorney - City Councilmember Relationship



On the phone:
Jessica J.
MidTown





"Hi, yeah, my question is how do I get a straight answer from the city attorney? I am going to hang up now so I can listen to your answers."

Question from Jessica J. from MidTown

Question regarding City Attorney - City Councilmember Relationship



On the phone:

Luke C.

Marvel, CA





"I want to follow up on that last caller's question. I am not a lawyer. Since I been on Council, I discovered there are a lot of opinions about what the law requires. How do I know whether I am getting good legal advice?"

Question from Luke C. from Marvel, CA



Question regarding City Attorney - City Councilmember Relationship



On the phone:
Jon S.
Winterfell





“My name is Jon S. I’m from Winterfell. I get asked a question by residents sometimes that I can’t really answer. Maybe you can help me. How do I know that the city attorney is not giving me bad advice just so it will result in litigation and he will make more money?”

Question from Jon S. from Winterfell



City Attorney – City Hall Relationships

“The life of the law has not been logic; it has been experience.”

– *Oliver Wendell Holmes*

