

October 11, 2023

To: Ann Arbor City Council
From: Amy Cell, Amy Cell Talent
RE: 360 Degree Feedback Report

Summary

Ms. Kaur joined the City of Ann Arbor as the City Attorney in April of 2022. During this time she rapidly came up to speed and quickly excelled in the role. As one respondent stated, “...following in the footsteps of someone who had been leading the office for almost two decades can’t have been easy. I expected more bumps in the road and instead it has seemed like an incredibly smooth transition.”

Participation

The 2023 360 degree performance review for the City Attorney generated an overall response rate of 94% with 34 participants. Participation and overall ratings on a five point scale include:

- Current Council 91% (10/11): 4.9/5
- Direct Reports 100% (13/13): 4.9/5
- Service Area Administrators & City Administrator 89% (8/9): 4.5/5

Council Themes

Key themes from Council indicate that Ms. Kaur oversees a legal function that is professional, ethical, competent and manages a very high workload. She does an excellent job attracting and supporting high quality staff.

Council appreciates how quickly Ms. Kaur came up to speed after joining The City as well as the diligence, knowledgeability (pertaining to ordinances, contracts, bonds, regulations, and case law) and professionalism with which she has led the Attorney’s Office.

Council gave Ms. Kaur particularly high praise for the objectivity, professional nature and thoroughness of her legal advice provided for use in decision making and policy formulation. One comment said, “...I've consistently felt like we've gotten the most thorough and professional legal advise[sic] possible on every issue.”

Council would like to see more timely responses to inquiries, although they understand that the Attorney’s Office is very busy and receives high volumes of inquiries. To that end Council would also like to see data from the recently implemented ticketing system used to establish clear expectations for responsiveness.

For the coming year Council would like for Ms. Kaur to continue to look for operational efficiencies within the Attorney's Office as well as the establishment of relevant KPIs for The Office.

Staff Themes

Staff members gave Ms. Kaur very high scores and left comments that express a particular appreciation for how well she provides the staff with the support, resources and trust necessary for them to excel in their roles.

Staff members appreciate the professional work environment that Ms. Kaur has fostered, one saying, "Atleen fosters a good space where each member on the team is valued for what they contribute to the department."

Staff gave Ms. Kaur exceptionally high remarks for the support she gives them in all aspects of their jobs including interaction with other administrators and Council members, addressing work related issues and access to necessary resources. One said, "Atleen will provide whatever support or training necessary to develop an effective, efficient, and safe workplace. She is sincere in ensuring her team is mentally and physically healthy and will provide whatever tool available to accomplish that goal."

When asked for suggested goals, objectives or areas of improvement for the coming year, most staff did not identify a need for improvement, but rather requested that Ms. Kaur keeps doing what she is doing. Some staff observed that Ms. Kaur may have a larger than ideal workload and that there are some items before the Attorney's office that get her personal attention which don't need it. Some suggested that these things could be delegated to others instead of being handled directly by Ms. Kaur, while another suggested that she should, "...continue to consider the appropriate level of staff..."

Service Area Administrators & City Administrator Themes

This group views Ms. Kaur as impartial, ethical, objective and trustworthy.

Ms. Kaur received particularly high praise from this group for how well she respects confidences and the quality of her legal recommendations. In addition, she also received high praise for her professionalism as mentioned in this comment, "I have been very impressed with Atleen's professionalism since she was appointed City Attorney. She is trustworthy and impartial in thought."

There is a theme around timeliness and responsiveness that could be further explored, regarding the department completing legal reviews and responding to requests. Many respondents gave the highest possible rating for questions pertaining to timeliness and

responsiveness. However, some respondents reported that they have experienced delays and long lead times from the Attorney's Office, "There has been a struggle at times with the timeliness of the workflow coming out of the department. The quality of the work is usually stellar."

For the next year, multiple respondents requested that Ms. Kaur work towards reducing the amount of time needed to respond to inquiries. Some respondents mentioned that there is often a backlog of projects in the Attorney's Office; one observed that this is not new to the department under Ms. Kaur's leadership. Suggestions included additional resources for planning and development projects and increased communication up-front about project timelines.

Reflections from Ms. Kaur

(The following are excerpts from Ms. Kaur's response. The full response has been provided as underlying data to support the performance review process, and contains privileged information due to ongoing legal matters.)

Dear Council Members,

I am humbled by the feedback provided by you, the SAAs and my team. The words of encouragement and appreciation have bolstered my motivation to provide the highest level of legal services to the City.

There is much that I am proud of in the past 18 months. In this response, I would like to highlight 3 key achievements for you. But I do that with full acknowledgement that a leader does not stand alone and cannot achieve excellent results without the full efforts of her team.

First and foremost, I am proud of the stability of the team and the continuity of high-quality service to Council and Staff. I considered it my priority to learn the role of City Attorney quickly while maintaining this stability. There has been no turnover in the team since I took the position of City Attorney except for the prosecutor's role. That job vacancy was created as a result of the election victory of former city prosecutor Slay to Judge in the 22nd circuit court. Ms. Janetsky's hire as city prosecutor has proven to be successful and she has transitioned seamlessly into the role. The rest of the team has remained stable and has continued to provide excellent service.

Second, I would like to highlight the successful collaboration between our internal and external legal team, finance department and public services department that has resulted in the (dismissal of a key lawsuit) The team worked tirelessly, including holding standing meetings on Fridays, and created a solid defense. While the Court of Appeals is the final decision maker, we have done everything in our power to establish a record in the City's favor. My role was to keep the team organized with

priorities defined, provide input into legal strategy, and pursue creative paths to allow the City to conduct other critical business while the litigation was pending.

Third, the legal team's creativity and willingness to explore alternatives that would enable the City to achieve its climate-related goals was exemplified by the opportunity identified by the legal team to renegotiate (an agreement) My role was to encourage the legal team and brainstorm collectively to help flush out the pros and cons of franchise negotiations vis-à-vis other legal options, hold meetings with internal stakeholders to ensure alignment with the approach, and present this alternative to Council for your consideration and approval.

Finally, I would like to illuminate for you one area of service provided by our Office that often does not receive recognition. Our Office is key to pursuing funds owed to the City by various entities. Often this is done via negotiation rather than formal legal proceedings. The funds owed could be for contract obligations, unpaid taxes, damage to City property, or class action settlements.

I also understand and appreciate the areas of improvement identified in the evaluation comments. A key theme in the comments was to improve transparency in the workload of our Office and to improve response times. The SharePoint site established to intake Council requests is a first step toward that improvement. I hope to build on that first step in the coming year. I have also personally identified that I need to further strengthen our Office's capability in the substantive area of land use and development, which will help with response time and workload management, because Mr. McDonald who primarily advises in this area now has expanded responsibilities as Chief Deputy City Attorney. In my next self-evaluation, I will aim to report progress in these areas to you.

Thank you for the opportunity to be of service to our wonderful City.