

**Vancouver City Manager**  
**2017 Performance Evaluation**

July/August 2017

Final

**Confidential**

**Introduction:** In July 2016 the Vancouver City Council completed a performance evaluation of Eric Holmes, the Vancouver City Manager. This evaluation occurred approximately six months after the previous evaluation in order to move the annual evaluation from a year end cycle to a mid-year cycle. The current evaluation represents the City Council's annual evaluation of the City Manager.

The evaluation process follows that of past evaluations beginning with Eric Holmes submitting to the Council a written self-evaluation. This was followed by individual Council interviews conducted by Dick Cushing with Waldron & Company and which form the basis of this report.

The interviews were based on the same six questions as in the past and are as follows:

1. Accomplishments/Things Done Well
2. Things That Could Have Gone Better
3. Areas To Focus On
4. Overall Assessment
5. What can the Council do to increase the effectiveness and success of the City Manager?
6. What can the Council do to increase the effectiveness and success of the City Council?

The City Council appreciates and concurs with Eric's Self-Evaluation. It is thoughtful and reflects the sizeable work load being undertaken by the City Council and staff. It demonstrates significant progress in achieving the City Council's priorities, the City's Strategic Plan and work program as well as the areas identified in last year's evaluation. In addition, it provides a glimpse into the forces at work that could affect future City decisions.

## Things Done Well:

- Strategic Plan: Eric and his staff have done an excellent job in moving forward on achieving the goals contained in the Strategic Plan. The use of color codes is helpful in tracking the progress.
- Supplemental Budget: Eric and the staff did a good job in bringing forward a supplemental budget that reflects the Council's priorities balanced with a prudent approach to the City's finances.
- Council Communication: The end of the week wrap up of City activity and issues together with FYI texts has further improved communication with the City Council.
- Follow Through: Eric does an excellent job pursuing and getting back to Councilmembers on issues whether they arise at a Council meeting or through individual discussions.
- Union Relations: Eric and his staff did an outstanding job handling union negotiations especially the fire contract where each party achieved some of their objectives and neither police or fire required arbitration.
- Gender Issues: Eric deserves credit for moving quickly to identify and address gender issues in the Fire Department.
- Oil Terminal: Eric and his staff did a nice job in coordinating the City's response on the proposed oil terminal.
- LEAN: Eric has done a good job providing the leadership in changing the culture through the implementation of LEAN initiatives focused on efficiency and effectiveness through data and measurement.
- Tower Mall Acquisition: Eric's execution of the purchase of the Tower Mall property was handled effectively, affording the opportunity for policy and planning of redevelopment in an underutilized area.
- Minneapolis/St. Paul Tour: Eric deserves a lot of credit for putting together a very informative best practices tour involving a diverse group of community representatives in addition to city officials.
- Street Funding Implementation/Pavement Management: Eric has provided the leadership in initiating a variety of street projects from this new funding source. In addition the staff did a good job handling the Evergreen Highway project and the community process related to it.
- Waterfront Development and River Gateway Projects: Eric has diligently followed through on these projects to make sure they are moving forward.

- CRT: Eric has done an excellent job educating the Council and the community regarding the needs of the police department and with Council authorization the multi-year hiring of additional officers and staff has begun.
- Apple Pass: Eric facilitated extending the free access pass to transportation and the community centers to middle and high school students.
- Economic Development Council Relations: Eric has done a nice job building a strong relationship with the Economic Development Council.
- Organizational Diversity and Cultural Intelligence: Eric deserves credit for initiating and advancing an internal effort to enhance organizational diversity and inclusion.
- Fireworks Ban: Eric and his staff did an excellent job providing outreach to the community following the Council's 2015 decision to ban fireworks and were well prepared to handle matters when it went into effect this year.
- Neighborhood Association Relations: The Council appreciates Eric's leadership and outreach to Vancouver's neighborhood associations to involve them in the decision making process and maintain communication through quarterly meetings.
- Community Involvement: The Council appreciates Eric's leadership to encourage community involvement and outreach regarding City issues. The result is a better informed citizenry, greater understanding and often support of actions being taken.
- Quarterly Community Meetings: Eric deserves credit for holding quarterly meetings open to the public which help build community understanding of issues and offer another forum for community feedback.
- Van Mall North Annexation: Eric and his staff did an excellent managing the recent annexation process.
- Police Records: Eric provided leadership in the takeover of police records which resulted in not only saving money but improving service.
- Police Volunteers: Eric and the Police Chief have done a good job fostering a culture in the Police Department where the volunteers fill meaningful roles and feel valued.

- Affordable Housing: The City has made good progress in addressing housing issues including affordable housing as affirmed by the public's support of Proposition 1.
- Agenda Packets: The Council appreciates receiving the weekly agenda packets earlier on Tuesday for the following Monday meeting.
- Staff Presentations: The Council appreciates staff efforts to improve presentations through rehearsing and critiquing presentations beforehand. However, this still seems somewhat like a work in progress. See Areas To Focus On.
- Succession Planning: Eric has done a nice job in developing succession plans to smooth out staff transitions.
- Staff Quality and Management: Eric does a good job hiring quality staff and dealing compassionately and effectively with staff issues.
- Personal Time: The Council appreciates the importance of appropriate work/life balance and is pleased that Eric takes time away from a very demanding job for himself and his family.

### **Things That Could Have Gone Better:**

- Affordable Housing: Managing the roll out of the affordable housing fund could have gone smoother. The initial proposal, process and location for a Day Shelter was not well planned and created unnecessary controversy.
- Processing of Planning Related Issues: A couple issues raise questions of how a change in the process might have improved the outcome. For example minor Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU) amendments grew from the original intent and with the Planning Commission and staff presenting different recommendations put the Council in an awkward position. Also an amendment to the animal ordinance to allow chickens failed to also address the issue of fostering dogs.
- Street Funding Implementation: While Eric has done a good job initiating street construction projects it has not been without some glitches such as the disruption to pedestrians as well as adjacent properties.

## Areas To Focus On:

- Tower Mall Redevelopment: Advance the redevelopment project by initiating the RFP process and managing the process to include significant community involvement and working with surrounding businesses.
- Permit Process: With added staffing continue to pursue process improvements using data and measurement of turnaround times and comparison with other jurisdictions.
- New Mayor and City Council Members: With the election there will be at least two new members of the City Council and a new Mayor. Initiate an early and comprehensive orientation program for new members including tours of City facilities to bring them up to speed as soon as possible. And develop a plan to help the Mayor and City Council forge an effective team.
- Waterfront Redevelopment: Continue the momentum to keep this project moving forward.
- Complete Streets Policy: Implement the pilot project from Reserve to Brandt on McLoughlin.
- Vancouver Strong: The Council strongly endorses this effort to develop a long term financial strategy and recognizes that the fairly short time line will require close monitoring of the various project phases.
- Housing: Ensure that the strategy for implementing the affordable housing fund is well resourced and properly staffed. In addition develop a plan and process to implement a day shelter, a permanent shelter for women and a reliable inclement weather shelter.
- Strategic Plan: Continue to keep the plan on track and monitor progress and provide reports to the Council.
- Personal/Family Time: Continue to take time away from work for himself and his family.
- Employee Recognition: Develop a city wide, ongoing, formalized and multi-faceted employee recognition program for both individual and team achievement.
- Staff Presentations: Continue to have staff rehearse presentations to the Council and assist the staff in identifying and anticipating Council's likely reaction, questions, concerns, etc. so that the staff is as prepared as possible. Use individual meetings with Councilmembers to focus on

- Council interests and communicate those to staff preparing for Council presentations.
- Intergovernmental Relations: Continue to build relations with the County, other cities and other governmental organizations.
  - Minneapolis/St. Paul Tour: Complete a report for the City Council and the public regarding the tour to include what it was about, who participated, how it was financed and a list of outcomes, opportunities and what was learned.
  - City Manager's Office: Evaluate, create and resource a City Manager's Office structure that effectively uses the Deputy City Manager, frees Eric to deal with higher level issues and that breaks down organizational silos. In addition, the City Council encourages Eric to be bold, taking intelligent risks that are properly vetted and present them to the City Council for review.

**Overall Assessment:** Eric is doing an excellent job. He is knowledgeable, skilled, diplomatic, a good listener and communicates well with the Council and the public. Eric and his staff effectively manage a huge work program supported by a solid strategic plan and an excellent grasp of the City's finances. He has a great grasp of administrative details, is skilled in handling delicate issues and has built trust and credibility with the Council, the community and his staff. He pursues creative solutions, measured risks and emerging opportunities. Regular communication with the Councilmembers continues to be helpful. Eric is well respected and has developed an excellent staff who do quality work and work well together.

### **What can the Council do to increase the effectiveness and success of the City Manager?**

- Community Outreach: Councilmembers should provide Eric with information they pick up from their community involvement in order to avoid surprises and to enhance the decision making process.
- Regular Communication: The Council should continue to meet regularly with Eric both to be informed but also to provide valuable feedback.

- Seek Information Not Direction: While it is appropriate to work directly with staff for the purpose of inquiry and obtaining information Councilmembers should avoid providing direction to staff. Those matters are best directed to Eric. In addition, Councilmembers should keep Eric informed of their contacts with staff.
- Employee Recognition: Vancouver has a quality staff that works hard and cares a lot about the City. The Council should look for opportunities to express appreciation to the staff for their work and dedication.
- Eric's Personal Time: Continue to honor Eric's personal time on evenings and weekends.
- Compensation: Make sure Eric is fairly compensated

### **What can the Council do to increase the effectiveness and success of the City Council?**

- New Council Team: With the addition of at least two new Councilmembers and a new Mayor this fall it will be important for the Council to work toward building strong individual and group relationships so the Council as a whole can be as effective as possible. In addition, Councilmembers should help newly elected Councilmembers understand their role regarding committee and intergovernmental assignments.
- Community Outreach: Councilmembers should continue to attend community and neighborhood meetings and events to listen to their ideas and concerns and then communicate that back to their colleagues on the Council and with Eric.
- Educational Opportunities: Councilmembers should take advantage of conferences and other educational opportunities including visits to other communities to learn more about what other jurisdictions are doing in areas that are relevant to the challenges and opportunities that face Vancouver.
- No Surprise Rule: Councilmember's should periodically discuss and remind each other of the importance and value of the "No Surprise Rule".
- Council Communication: Councilmembers should openly communicate with each other both in meetings and informally balancing individual

interests with the need to build trust and the success of the Council and the City.

- Decision and Follow Up: Once a Council decision is made Councilmembers should accept the direction taken and move on.