

**CITY OF ALBANY
CITY COUNCIL AGENDA
STAFF REPORT**

STUDY SESSION

Agenda Date: October 19, 2009

SUBJECT: Organizational Study of the City of Albany by Citygate Associates

REPORT BY: Beth Pollard, City Administrator

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

This is a study session to receive and discuss a presentation from Citygate Associates on the organizational study report. No action is scheduled other than referral to staff for recommendations on implementation.

BACKGROUND

On March 2, 2009, the City Council approved a contract with Citygate Associates to perform an organizational and staffing review of the City. The purpose of the review was to conduct an independent review of systems and staffing to provide another perspective on how the city organization is structured and delivers services. At that time a budget deficit was projected for the 2009-10 fiscal year, which prompted an added element to consider potential cost savings for City operations. Since that time, a balanced budget was realized through staff recommendations and Council action, moving the report more into longer range strategies for the organization.

Citygate met with individuals and groups of employees and City Council members, and provided email and telephone access for further comment opportunity in development of the report.

DISCUSSION

The Citygate report is completed and attached. Jay Corey and Dave DeRoos from Citygate will be at the study session to make a presentation on their overall findings and recommendations.

The conclusions from the Citygate report identify seven recurring themes for the City to be aware of and to address:

1. The City of Albany is well positioned to make positive organizational changes.
2. Albany is committed to quality services.
3. Albany is committed to citizen involvement.

4. Albany has a talented, hard working staff that believes it is stretched thin.
5. Albany faces challenges with cost, quality, and responsiveness tradeoffs.
6. Albany has fallen behind in technology and training.
7. Albany has challenges and opportunities with succession planning and development.

Citygate makes 40 recommendations related to the following:

- Succession planning and development to ensure organizational vitality and responsiveness
- Aligning the organization to improve communications and community engagement
- Avoiding small city burnout of staff and managing expectations
- Developing professional development plans for key personnel
- Strengthening the City's Informational Technology program
- Dealing effectively with the City's public works program and exploring new venturing options for the future
- Aligning the City's administrative support programs for the future
- Institutionalizing continual improvement through internal customer service surveying
- Exploring new venturing options in fire and police public safety services.

ANALYSIS

The report covers a wide range of issues, some of which are policy matters requiring City Council direction and prioritization, and others which are administrative for improving effectiveness and efficiency.

Policy matters in the report include:

- Allocating funds to create an Information Technology Strategic Plan and increase the City's investment in technology and training
- Number of advisory bodies, level/type of staff support, and periodic review of continuing the advisory bodies
- Zero sum programming as a tool for monitoring appropriate workload levels, so that when tasks and responsibilities are added, others are reduced and/or resources are allocated; inventory core duties and non-core business in each department
- Considering priorities among price, quality, and speed
- City Administrator roles, responsibilities, priorities, and title/authority; place greater focus on Mayor and Council support, communications and community engagement, and department performance
- Joint ventures with other agencies, such as in portions of public safety and public works/wastewater collection
- Greater focus around cost recovery in the Recreation Department and the Community Development Department

An underlying policy issue is whether the City's resources are being allocated for the types of services that are priorities for the Council. If not, the question becomes whether other

services can be cut back in quality or quantity to release funds for new priorities, or can other funding strategies be developed – both of which are challenging to cities. These questions are typically raised in the context of goal setting and preparing for the bi-annual budget, scheduled for next spring, but are important to keep in mind on an ongoing basis.

Administrative matters include:

- Ongoing staff development and succession planning to aim organization towards the future
- Organization of staff resources and contract services into functional areas to meet Council direction and priorities; overlaps into policy if additional funding is required or Council reporting relationships are changed
- Internal customer service surveys among staff for continual inter-departmental service development

City employees have had the opportunity to provide me with comments on the report, including feedback such as:

- Future planning including possible joint ventures in Fire/EMS should consider unique aspects to Albany's services, including but not limited to ambulance transport, ambitious cost recovery, local codes and control, comparably lower per capita staffing in Albany, existing joint efforts already employed, current high quality of service and potential impacts, etc.
- Supportive and critical comments about succession planning approaches; concern that more emphasis was placed on succession planning for employees who have been with the organization for a longer period of time
- Concern that the analysis did not sufficiently explore or recognize job duties, responsibilities, and operations in the City Clerk and Fire/EMS Departments
- That City Clerk duties and responsibilities should be retained in a separate position
- Retain Finance in the title of the Administrative Services Department and consider the recommendations to broaden responsibilities
- That the timing to consider public safety dispatch should follow completion of the East Bay Regional Communications Authority emergency radio system currently under development in Alameda and Contra Costa counties, and it needs to consider the other support duties performed by dispatch personnel
- Appreciation for recognizing the need to establish reasonable staff workloads through zero sum programming
- Support for expanding technology and staff training; other comment was to scale to Albany's needs and resources
- Desire to establish professional development strategies for employees
- Consider ramifications to low income residents and the attraction of desired development if Recreation and Community Development Departments become more entrepreneurial

These staff comments, as well as Council comments at the study session, will be considered as part of developing recommendations on implementation.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT

Not applicable.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

None from presentation of the report.

Attachments

Organizational Study of the City of Albany, CA Final Report, September 28, 2009