

Resignation wasn't demanded

(Response from Bob Daniels to Venice Gondolier Editorial)

I have the following in response to your editorial that criticized my approach to City Manager Isaac Turner about his job performance. I realize very little was said about the meeting by the participants, and therefore an incorrect belief of what transpired has been formed by your editorial writers (none of whom has talked to me).

It is an unfortunate fact that raising the subject of letting a city manager go is never an easy process. No matter how you go about it, there will be criticism, especially from those who don't want to see a change.

There are essentially two ways to handle the situation. One way is to just bring it up at a city council meeting, make a motion to end his employment and have council vote. This method is unfair to the city manager, unfair to city council and, most important, unfair to citizens, all of whom would have no advance notice of the proposed action.

The other method is to inform the city manager ahead of time and have the matter placed on the meeting agenda so that everyone would have advance notice of the matter. I chose the latter method, as I thought it was the fairest and best way to go about it.

I also want to clarify that I did not demand that the city manager resign. I did tell him I was going to bring up the matter of terminating his employment, and suggested if he did not have the votes on council to support him, he might want to consider resigning. I never thought he would resign at the end of our meeting. I assumed he would take the 10 days or so before the next city council meeting to talk to the mayor and other council members to see how they felt about his performance, and then make the best decision for himself as to how to proceed.

At the time of the meeting I had no knowledge of how the mayor and other city council members would vote on the matter, as I had not discussed it with any of my fellow elected representatives. I could not have discussed it with them due to Sunshine Law prohibitions against city council members discussing matters such as these outside of a city council meeting.

As an act of good faith, I had taken the former police chief's separation agreement (which Mr. Turner had prepared), inserted his name for hers and added the termination terms from his employment contract with the city. This was not a difficult task for me; I had spent a considerable part of my professional career working on agreements of this type, and similar agreements. I have probably prepared or revised hundreds of them in the past.

I presented the agreement to Mr. Turner not as an agreement for him to sign, but as evidence of the type of agreement I would support if he resigned. I was fully aware that any separation agreement would have to be approved by both the city attorney and Mr. Turner's attorney and then approved by city council.

I knew there was no way Mr. Turner could, or would, sign the agreement the day I gave it to him, and I was not proposing it as the official separation agreement. To think or report otherwise is illogical and extremely erroneous.

As stated above, there is no good way to go about a difficult task such as this. If I offended anyone, I apologize and hope that once the matter of Mr. Turner's job performance is fully and openly discussed at a city council meeting, citizens will understand the reasons I believe the discussion should be held. I fully trust the mayor and city council will make the best decision for the city in this matter.

Bob Daniels is a Venice City Council Member. He was elected in November 2010.