CITY OF BELLINGHAM

JOB DESCRIPTION

JOB TITLE: **City Attorney** **E-PLAN**
SG:E-DH-B
DEPARTMENT: **Legal** **CS:N**
FLSA:N
EEO4/SOCCODE:OA/23-1011

JOB SUMMARY:

The City Attorney position is established by City Charter to serve as chief legal advisor to the Council, the Mayor and all City departments; represents the City in legal proceedings, including the prosecutorial function before Municipal Court; and performs other duties established by Charter or ordinance. This highly visible executive position provides leadership and general administrative oversight to the City's Legal Department and contributes as a member of the City's senior management team on strategy and policy to ensure that the City's mission and core values are incorporated into operational activities and services.

SUPERVISORY RELATIONSHIPS:

As a Charter position appointed or removed by the Mayor with Council approval, works independently in carrying out Charter functions with general guidance from the Mayor. Supervises staff directly or through assigned managers. Works under City's policies, procedures, codes and ordinances, and various State and federal regulations.

ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS OF THE JOB:

1. General Management: Plans, organizes, directs, controls, and evaluates the work of the Legal Department, including providing legal counsel to the elected officials and City departments, prosecuting crimes and misdemeanors under municipal law, and overseeing the City's risk management and liability and property and insurance programs.

2. Legal Counsel: Directly or through staff, researches federal, State and local laws and regulations, and issues legal opinions to the elected and appointed officials of the City and to various City boards and commissions. Maintains close liaison with the Mayor, City Council, City departments, boards and commissions. Staffs or attends all regular City Council meetings, and committee meetings as appropriate to provide legal guidance to elected officials in carrying out their responsibilities within the law.

3. Legal Documents: Drafts legal documents on behalf of the City, including ordinances, resolutions, code provisions, contracts, and a variety of other legal instruments. Approves as to form and content all City legal documents prior to execution by the Mayor or other approving authority. Oversees the preparation, maintenance, and updating of the City Municipal Code and related documents.

4. Litigation: Directly or through staff, brings legal action on behalf of the City. Defends the City, its officials and employees acting on behalf of the City, when charged with violation of law or regulation. Hires special (outside) legal counsel to provide special expertise or to handle

exceptional legal workload. Oversees the work of special legal counsel performance of their legal services for the City.

5. City Prosecutor: Directly or through staff, prosecutes criminal violations before the Municipal Court. Works cooperatively with law enforcement agencies to deal with patterns of criminal activity and code violations. Recommends code provisions to address nuisance, disruptive, or criminal behavior in the City within law.

6. Risk Management: Oversees the City's risk management and loss liability programs. Recommends levels and types of liability insurance coverage and procures necessary insurance protection; recommends and manages self insured liability coverage and funds; and provides for efficient claims processing and management. Works with City departments to review liability risk situations and to manage and reduce City exposure to adverse claims. Develops accident review and claims risk assessment response programs. Encourages education and best practices for conduct of City business that balances reasonable risk with protection of citizen and City assets.

7. Media Response: Receives and responds to inquiries from the public and the news media concerning the actions of City government, rights and duties under the City Charter and ordinances, state and federal laws and regulations.

8. Personnel Management: Develops and maintains Legal Department staff committed to, and with highly developed competencies in, municipal law, customer service, results orientation, and teamwork. Directly or through managers, appoints, supervises, provides for training, development, performance evaluation and ensures accountability of department employees. Ensures compliance with City-wide and Department policies, and local, State and federal laws and regulations.

9. Policy Development: Develops, recommends, and oversees the administration of department policies and guidelines. Maintains currency of policy and practice with the organizational needs of the City and with applicable federal and State laws and City Charter.

10. Fiscal and Business Management: Assures the financial well-being of the department by establishing cost control measures and monitoring all fiscal operations of the department. Prepares annual budget and justifies budget requests and amendments. Assures the efficient and economical use of departmental funds, staff, materials, facilities and time.

11. Senior Management Team: Provides information and advice to the Mayor and City Council, on strategic planning and accomplishment of City goals and objectives. Coordinates the Department's activities with those of other City departments and offices to ensure a consistent approach towards common projects and interests and the cost-effective delivery of services.

ADDITIONAL WORK PERFORMED:

1. Other duties as assigned by the Mayor.

PERFORMANCE REQUIREMENTS (Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities):

Knowledge of:
- Municipal law principles, practices and trends.
- City Charter and City Municipal Code.
- Legal processes and procedures.

- City legislative processes, fiscal and budget management processes, and applicable administrative policies and procedures.
- Relevant government and/or community and legal institutions, organizations, procedures and processes.
- Current departmental and related city issues and stakeholders (both internal and external), including other governmental legislative and agency processes, players, and issues.
- Applicable federal, State, and local laws and regulations affecting the work of City departments.

Skill in:
- Excellent interpersonal skills for establishing and maintaining effective working relationships with staff, other departments, elected officials, the media, and the public.
- Highly effective team building and leadership skills including consensus-building to resolve conflicts, negotiate agreements and gain cooperation among competing interest groups.
- Interpreting and appropriately applying complex codes, regulations, legal documents, policies and procedures and explaining these to clients.
- Excellent oral communications skills for explaining legal issues and options, as well as, complex legal principals and regulations to clients and to garner their compliance.
- Skilled in litigation and in trial work and in negotiating settlements and agreements in the best interests of the City.
- Problem analysis and decision-making, adaptability/flexibility, and stress tolerance in a highly visible public environment.
- Excellent strategic planning, organizational, and time management skills.
- Excellent writing skills for preparation and review of legal documents and opinions.
- Public presentation skills.

Ability to:
- Conduct self at all times in an ethical, professional and respectful manner, remain objective when providing services given competing demands/points of view of elected officials, appointed officials, and the public.
- Establish and maintain cooperative and effective working relationships with elected officials and staff, law enforcement, legal and court officials and stakeholders, both internal and external.
- Effectively apply legal knowledge and skills in the context of the operation of municipal government and the development of public policy and laws.
- Develop and maintain effective organizational structure, financial control, and management information systems for the department.
- Identify the Department's future direction in response to changing City needs, and to develop, implement, and monitor appropriate plans, schedules, and action steps.
- Work independently under general policy and strategic guidance.
- Maintain consistent and punctual attendance.
- Ability and willingness to demonstrate the Public Service Competencies of Service Orientation, Results Orientation, and Teamwork and Cooperation.
- Physical ability to perform the essential functions of the job, including:
  - Frequently operate a computer and other office machinery such as a keyboard, mouse, phone, and fax machine;
  - Frequently communicate accurate information and ideas with others;
  - Some travel may be required for work related meetings.

WORKING ENVIRONMENT:

Work is performed primarily in an office setting subject to frequent interruptions and includes sitting for extended periods of time. May be exposed to highly stressful situations and individuals who are irate or

hostile; may be subject to long hours due to attendance at City Council and Committee meetings and other responsibilities required at this executive level. Flexibility to work evening and weekend hours and occasional overnight travel to conferences and training sessions required. This is a sedentary position with minimal physical exertion requirements.

EXPERIENCE AND TRAINING REQUIREMENTS:

- Bachelor's Degree from an accredited four-year college.
- Juris Doctorate Degree from a law school accredited by the American Bar Association.
- Five years of combined legal experience as a city attorney, assistant city attorney, deputy prosecuting attorney, or other relevant law practice with at least two years of experience in municipal law.
- Two years of demonstrated experience in a management position. Additional years of management experience are strongly preferred
- Significant litigation and trial experience preferred.
- Demonstrated creativity and innovation in programs and processes preferred.
- An equivalent combination of education and experience sufficient to provide the candidate with the knowledge, skill and ability to successfully perform the essential functions of the job will be considered.

NECESSARY SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS:

- Not less than three years experience in legal practice in the State of Washington (City Charter Requirement).
- Active membership in good standing with the Washington State Bar Association and current license to practice in the State of Washington.
- Employment contingent upon passing a criminal background check.

PREPARED BY: KH for TD
5/91

REVIEWED BY: _____
Kim Lund,
Mayor

REVISED BY: KH/RMA
1/06
AM
6/21
A.Sullivan
3/26