

# From Council Interview

## COURI & RUPPE (Civil Only)

Describe the backgrounds of the civil and/or prosecuting attorneys who will be assigned to Ramsey.

Mike Couri stated he and Bob Ruppe are the firm, been in municipal law for 21 years, and practice almost exclusively (90%) municipal law with 10% in municipal-related cases like condemnation. Their hallmark has been growing cities with Albertville being their primary client. They have represented Albertville for 22 years including development of the outlet mall, Highway 19 corridor, and the new exit ramp from I-94 to the outlet mall. Mr. Couri stated he has been working with cities since 1991 and attended about 1,000 Council meetings. He explained the hallmark of their firm is to get things moving and done and they will not sit back silently at Council meeting when they need to address an issue of law. Mr. Couri stated he reviewed the Council's past meeting minutes and it may be a preference to approve a lease subject to legal drafting but it is his preference to have the lease in front of the Council prior to approval. He stated they try to be ahead of things and provide a fairly quick response with same day or next day call back, or evening e-mail. Mr. Couri stated he understands the Council serves the public and his firm does not want to hold that up.

Mr. Couri disclosed that Bob Ruppe represents Nowthen and in 2008, had worked to incorporate Nowthen and also drafted a joint fire agreement with Ramsey Fire Chief Kapler. He explained that Nowthen is okay with their firm representing Ramsey. Mr. Couri stated they have also worked, on a fairly regular basis, with Shane Nelson of Hakanson Anderson, who had been Ramsey's interim/consulting engineer. He stated if approved, he would be the primary contact for Ramsey and attend its Council meetings. If he is not available, then Mr. Ruppe would be the contact and he would be knowledgeable with what is going on.

How will your firm make Ramsey a priority and meet the terms outlined in the RFP for meeting attendance, response time for Council staff inquiries, document review turn-around, and office hours?

Mr. Couri stated they have recently gone to a paperless office; however, he takes his laptop to meetings and during meetings, will complete documents and e-mail them to the City Administrator. He stated technology has changed their profession for the better if you are willing to embrace it so Ramsey will see documents quickly and telephone calls will be responded to quickly. Mr. Couri stated they have time in their schedule to accommodate the needs of Ramsey and since they practice only municipal law, they are familiar with the Statutes. In addition, his firm has extensive files and can quickly find the law and documents needed.

If your firm is not located locally, how do you intend to manage drive time, getting to City Hall on short notice, would officers be required to come to your office or would you come here for compliant processing, etc?

Mr. Couri stated their office is about 30 minutes away and they currently represent clients from five minutes to two hours distance. He stated most of their work is done via e-mail but he will attend regular staff meetings and is available by telephone. He stated they do not charge for

travel time and if approved he would attend weekly or semi-weekly staff meetings and Council meetings. He stated they are used to traveling so that will not be an issue or problem.

Do you bill hourly for civil work or are you open to retainer to assure staying within budget?

Mr. Couri stated they are willing to consider a retainer once they know the scope of work involved. He stated he would be happy to meet with staff to determine the number of hours and types of work. Mr. Couri stated he is interested in a long-term relationship and will do what they need to assure that occurs. He stated it either works for them or it does not and it has to be mutual.

Do you feel it is appropriate for City staff to draft legal documents such as ordinances, purchase agreements, development agreements? If not, why? If so, what is your role to ensure the City's interests are protected?

Mr. Couri stated they represent a number of cities and townships and encourage staff to draft the document as part of the educational process and he then reviews the document. He noted the documents are relatively standard with the basics and some embellishments. Mr. Couri stated it is cheaper for the City and their view is how to keep the relationship beneficial to both long term.

Describe the most challenging municipal issues you have faced during your legal career? What were the circumstances and what was the outcome?

Mr. Couri stated they had a situation where a Councilmember and former Councilmember were running against each other and finished one vote apart. It went before the City Council and while he wrote a memorandum, he did not tell the Council how to interpret the ballot but told them what the law was. The Council deadlocked two-two with the sitting Councilmember abstaining. The Council did not accept the ballot, as he thought it should have been. It went to a coin flip and the sitting councilmember won. Mr. Couri noted in those discussions, he had to tell the sitting Council that if they deadlocked two-two, he would have to, on his own initiative without direction from the Council, take them into court and ask the judge to make the decision. He stated he thinks the court would have ruled in favor of the sitting Council member.

Please describe your philosophy with serving as the City Attorney.

Mr. Couri stated over time, it is about public service. It is a job he likes and the best of both worlds to be in private practice yet serving the public. He stated he understands his job is to represent the Council in front of their constituents, which reflects on the City. Mr. Couri stated it is crucial that the public have good faith in what the Council is doing and how he advises the Council. He stated he does not set policy and the Council knows what is best for its community. His job is to advise the Council while it is forming policy.

Any other questions and/or concerns?

Mr. Couri stated he has reviewed past Council minutes and worked with the Fire Chief Kapler so he knows a fair amount about Ramsey, appreciates the City's undertaking with The COR, and

applauds what the City is attempting to do. He stated he finds it challenging and if approved, would look forward to working with the City of Ramsey.