

From Council Interview

RATWIK, ROSZAK & MALONEY (Civil Only)

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

Joe Langel, shareholder with Ratwik, Roszak & Maloney, stated he has practiced municipal law for 17 years, is the city attorney for several cities in Minnesota, the most similar being Lino Lakes. Mr. Langel stated he has represented Lino Lakes for several years, noting it is similar in size to Ramsey with an outer tier with a lot of agricultural area open and development to hope for. Mr. Langel stated they are a municipal only firm or about 99%, since the firm began 26 years ago. Their firm has 11 attorneys and is growing so it has the depth to handle a City of Ramsey's size without difficulty. Mr. Langel stated they have expertise in municipal law, labor employment, zoning, and general counsel.

Eric Quiring stated he has been with this firm for 12 years and represents some municipalities.

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. Langel stated they would have office hours the first and third Monday for three hours and there would be no problem or conflicts with the Council's meeting days because all of his cities have gone to not having counsel at their Council meetings. He felt office hours were a good idea to keep all up-to-speed and assure efficient use of counsel time. Mr. Langel stated they would look at a flat rate for those hours. He explained that broad retainers are difficult because of exceptions carved out of them. Typically, they use an hourly basis because other cities prefer it that way. Mr. Langel stated if Ramsey wants counsel at Council meetings and office hours, they would use a flat rate at two hours with no travel time and eat the rest of it. In terms of priority, he stated it helps to have 11 attorneys in the office, a deep bench, and they would not have submitted an RFP if they did not think they had the wherewithal to handle the load. Mr. Langel stated they have not responded to other RFPs but believe they can handle the services required by the City of Ramsey.

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. Langel stated the practice has become more electronic over time and even with Lino Lakes, the vast majority of communications are via telephone and e-mail. He stated he does go to Lino Lakes for meetings and it has never been a problem to schedule on short notice. Mr. Langel stated they represent clients Statewide but most times not on site for those client meetings. He stated it would not be a problem to get to the Ramsey City Hall.

Mr. Quiring stated they propose a flat rate for office hours and meetings and no travel time, which would address concerns with cost.

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

Mr. Langel stated they have done retainers before but the challenge is to get a handle on the City's usage of legal services so everyone is on the same page.

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. Langel stated it is entirely appropriate and City staff drafts legal documents all the time, unless the City has extremely limited staff. He stated it would be expected that Ramsey's professional staff would draft the document and, at that point, his role would be to review the document and advise of problems or holes that need to be addressed. He stated that is his view of efficient legal services.

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

Mr. Langel stated the most delicate cases are those involving Councilmembers, investigations involving Councilmembers, or misconduct by Councilmembers. He stated they work for the City Council and answer to them so when dealing with misconduct and allegations of use of position for financial benefit, they have to be handled in a delicate manner. Mr. Langel stated their firm has done hundreds of investigations and has the ability to send out someone other than the City Attorney to conduct the investigation and write up the report with the City Attorney presenting the report before the Council. In this way, the issue is taken care of without becoming a public debacle.

Mr. Quiring stated the firm has a wealth of experience and holds contracts with the State of Minnesota to do investigations. In the past 12 months, the firm has conducted 30 investigations on behalf of the State relating to employee misconduct and politically sensitive investigations. Mr. Quiring stated the firm has had that contract for 20 years and also conducted investigations for school districts, counties, and municipal clients.

Please describe your philosophy with serving as the City Attorney.

Mr. Langel stated if retained as counsel to the City, their role is to not just answer questions or be a "yes man" but to tell staff and the Council of the options and what he thinks is the best option. The ultimate decision is up to the Council. Mr. Langel stated it is not his job to say only what the Council wants to hear but to recognize the risks and assure full disclosure. He stated he is here to provide advice and it is then up to the Council to decide if they want to take the advice. Mr. Langel stated it is not his job to become an adjunct councilmember and make the decisions.

Any other questions and/or concerns?

Mr. Langel stated they proposed \$145/hour but in reality, it is his experience that because of how long they have practiced and their number of attorneys, they are able to provide a very efficient

level of municipal legal work to cities and all of their clients. They do not turn files or spin wheels and are acutely aware of financial difficulties faced by all municipal clients. Mr. Langel stated they are efficient and can come to agreement with a retainer at a place comfortable in the City's budget. He asked what is the Council's number one aspect in a City Attorney.

Councilmember Backous stated he wants to hear what is needed and not what he wants to hear.

Mr. Langel stated some do not want that and instead want a City Attorney who is a "yes man." He stated he has lost clients because of that, giving the brutal honest answer. Mr. Langel stated that is key to their services and part of their firm's ethic. He stated they have a fairly narrow clientele of counties, school districts, and municipalities but their services are very broad and he does not think Ramsey will come up with something they have not already seen and done. Mr. Langel stated they would love the opportunity to serve Ramsey, a growing community.

Councilmember Backous asked if it is necessary for counsel to attend all Council meetings.

Mr. Langel stated it is not and when he started at Lino Lakes, the City Attorney was historically at the meetings but the City Administrator said they needed to address the budget so he suggested that he not be required to attend the Council meetings. Mr. Langel noted that most times if an issue is coming up, he works through the issue with staff before the Council meeting. He stated on average, he attends the Lino Lakes three times a year.

Mr. Quiring stated if there is a big issue at the meeting, it would be appropriate for the City Attorney to attend so it does not have to be an all or nothing.

Mayor Strommen asked if they wait to be asked for input.

Mr. Langel stated he always reviews agenda packets ahead of time and if there is an issue that could be a problem, staff has probably called him already. He stated he can meet with staff during office hours or during Council Work Sessions to work through the issues. Mr. Langel stated he and his staff work to avoid issues popping up at a Council meeting.