

Ethics

Litigation Puts Manager in a Bind

Q. A group of local governments went to court to fight the actions of a regional transportation authority. The city council in one of the communities voted to appropriate \$500,000 to fund its share of the litigation costs. The problem is that in recent council elections, a new majority won and these new council members will be installed in a few months. The newly elected majority opposes the litigation and has approached the city manager to ask her not to carry out the current council's directive to fund the litigation costs. How can the city manager ethically handle this dilemma?

A. The manager agrees that she has a legal and ethical obligation to fulfill the duly approved policy of the current city council and has no authority to withhold the payment. She can do her best to explain the role of the city manager to her newly elected bosses, recognizing that the circumstances are less than ideal. Some city and county managers also provide an overview of the ICMA Code of Ethics when they hold orientation sessions for newly elected officials.

