

Mr. Neal Florence, Mayor
P.O. Box 89
207 S. Duke Street
LaFayette, GA 30728

March 27, 2013

RE: LaFayette City Manager Position

Dear Mayor Florence and City Council:

I believe I served you in an exceptional manner as a professional City Manager, helping to make the city's transition a smooth one following my predecessor's uneasy departure. I have given you honest and faithful support in your efforts to keep the City moving forward during these economically difficult times. I took over a budget that you had already approved, and I strived to ensure we stayed within that budget. Overall, we spent less than we had budgeted.

I have experienced dismay witnessing some of you drift away over the last 45 days. Staff and I labored countless hours to identify the severity of our fiscal issues as we prepared sound advice for your review. We had hoped for feedback on the direction you, as a Council, desired to take. Yes, at times it took us a while to gather data. The reality is that the city's financial staff will do anything to support your goals, but has not been trained in the broader responsibilities of finance. Staff also continues to use an older finance software packet that is unable to answer anything except canned questions and requires significant time to manually delve into records. Since January, we have made efforts to provide you more information in an abbreviated format since you do not have the time to review the monthly balance sheets. As you move forward, I hope you use the proposed rate sheets that staff prepared in conjunction with Electric Cities and MGAG.

I understand from third-hand sources that Council Member Meeks feels I have not disclosed the full amount of the cost of service work prepared by ECG. If she has asked, I was not fully aware of the request. If you look at the billing, I believe the number is around \$15,000 over three months. I was still working with Michelle Cooper at ECG because her predecessor, who began the process to update our cost of services, had promised that the electrical portion would be handled within the existed ECG annual contract. Bear in mind, the City has not had an update in nearly a decade.

You have stated that I am a micro-manager. I believe this has been necessary given that when I began employment with the City in October 2011, there was a deficit of over \$650,000. Under my leadership, the City ended the budget year by being slightly in the black, as shown in the FY 2012 audit. I don't think this is what lies behind the criticism of my management style. I believe one of our Department Heads was, and still is, upset that I would not permit him to violate an existing city-wide contract so he could acquire his own contract for uniform services. Even if the base cost in his department would be a dollar or two a week more than staying with Aramark. You never asked, but I did get our attorney's opinion on breaking the contract and was working through the issue. I recommend that you continue to move forward by letting Aramark complete their contract and give them more than 60 days notice of termination in this upcoming cycle. And, at the same time, permit the Fire Department and Public Works to use Clean-A-Matic, the firm out of Rossville.

At no time have I ever attempted to withhold information from any of you. I have offered on many occasions to meet with each of you individually, as your schedules permitted, to go over City matters and to address your concerns. At least one of you told me, on many occasions, including this past Monday afternoon, that everything was fine and that you had no concerns or questions.

With the exception of one or two individuals, you have a fine, hardworking staff willing to make your vision a reality if you are clear in your directions and give them the support they need. Treat them well, praise them for their accomplishments, offer them guidance when they go in a direction you don't expect or want, and they will follow your lead in reaching your goals for the community.

You have two skilled employees who could perform the City Manager's job. One person is at an age where he doesn't want to take on the demands of the job, and the other is still young enough to enjoy his current position and could use a few more years of career experience. You also have a few individuals who claim to want the position; one in particular. I hope you keep the community's best interests in mind and do not appoint these individuals to the interim or permanent position.

It's certainly easier for a manager to do his or her job when you are actively engaged with said manager. When you stop asking questions and do not comment on what you have been given, then communication ceases. I am saddened over your apparent loss of confidence. Therefore, I reluctantly tender my resignation, especially as you made clear you have the votes to remove me at a called meeting. For those of you who continue to support me, and my efforts to serve, thank you.

I wish each of you personally, and as a City Council, the best as you move forward. I stand ready to support any needs you have of me to close out open issues.

Sincerely,

Franklin T. Etheridge
City Manager