

CITY OF EAST LANSING

CITY MANAGER PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

Purpose of Evaluation

The purposes of the performance evaluation process to be conducted by and between the City Council and City Manager are:

1. To provide important feedback to the City Manager identifying areas of strengths and accomplishments as well as areas in which improvement may be needed.
2. To strengthen the relationship between the City Council and City Manager and help in clarifying expectations of the roles and responsibilities of both the City Council and the City Manager.
3. To provide a mechanism for regular evaluation.

Frequency

The City Manager will have an evaluation annually by May 1 on the following schedule:

2022: City Council Performance Evaluation

2023: 360 Evaluation

This evaluation schedule will continue moving forward.

Evaluation Procedure

The evaluation procedure remains at the will and direction of the City Council and may be modified at any time. In general, the evaluation process will include the following steps:

1. The City Manager will inform the Mayor 30 days prior to the evaluation due date to begin the process.
2. The Mayor will ask Council Members to complete the evaluation form individually.
3. The Mayor will ask the City Manager to complete a self-assessment as well as draft a report on city operations, including issues and matters pertinent to the governance and management of the organization. This information will be shared with City Council for their consideration.
4. The Mayor and Council will meet in executive session to discuss the Manager's performance and to assimilate their individual performance evaluations of the Manager into one summary document. The Council shall seek to arrive at a consensus.
5. The Council will meet with the City Manager to discuss the Manager's performance, future performance goals and objectives or action items. The City Manager may request that the performance review be discussed in an executive session.
6. The Mayor will direct that the completed performance evaluation delivered by City Council to the City Manager be placed in the City Manager's employee personnel file.

Form/Format

This evaluation form consists of eight categories related to the City Manager’s performance. Each category receives a mark of Exceeds Expectations, Meets Expectation, or Needs Improvement. Following each category is space for comments and an optional “Action Item” should Council require it. Evaluators are encouraged to note specific examples of the City Manager’s performance, either positive or negative, that supports their rating in each category.

1. PROFESSIONALISM:

Deals effectively and appropriately with the public and other organizations. Devotes time and energy to the job. Demonstrates high ethical standards in the organization. Works to keep “politics” and personal perspectives out of the decision making process. Stays active in professional organizations and regional issues.

Exceeds Expectations	X / X / X / X
Meets Expectations	_____
Needs Improvement	X

Comments:

High level professionalism seeks to find common ground regardless of personal preferences

I have always found George to be professional in his interactions with Council and staff, as well as his peers in our region. I especially appreciate the fact that he has been a steady leader during an incredibly tumultuous time. I think the police reorganization is a prime example of how George has balanced the fine line between our staff and community’s desire for security and consistency with Council’s desire for change.

The city manager’s attendance at events is frequent and positive.

From prospective of financial corruption, the city manager’s integrity is stellar. In the context of candor with the community and the city council there is room for improvement.

City manager needs to identify his own areas of growth areas or future goals proactively looking at weaknesses.

Action Item (optional):

MERS has rated the city’s pension funding at 61 percent, this is truly welcome. Apprise council members of the other relatively low rankings the state has provided on its municipal finance scoreboard.

Identify areas of improvement that also articulate a vision for the city’s future

2. COMMUNICATIONS:

Ensures that Council Members receive important information in a timely and effective manner. Presents the Council and community with clear and accurate verbal and written reports and information. Responds to correspondence, requests, and complaints, quickly and appropriately. Facilitates open two-way communication and encourages mutual honesty and respect with the Council, staff, and community.

Exceeds Expectations	X / X / X
Meets Expectations	X
Needs Improvement	X

Comments:

Internal communication is excellent.

Makes time to meet in person and virtually

Available for external meetings

There has been more than one occasion where I was able to answer my own question without picking up the telephone by reviewing previous Council/Manager communication memos.

Communication with council members is frequent but needs improved candor and consistency among council members. Aside from differing communication styles, there remains a perception that different council members get different information.

Many parts of the city manager's communication efforts are positive: there are many ways for residents and council members to stay abreast of city activities. For council members, there are biweekly meetings, emails and, in urgent situations, texts. The tracking logs are a positive thing: I've started using them in other areas of my life. For residents, there are post-council meeting emails, the Dialog, and the city newsletter. I look forward to city staff liaisons increasing connection with residents as the neighborhood associations resume regular and in person meetings as we emerge from Covid.

Communications failures broadly have severely damaged the credibility of the city with its residents and businesses, and have cost the city money.

It is worth noting that these communications failures have financial repercussions, and fear of the financial repercussions fuels a defensiveness and urgency that results in the communications failures. It is a vicious circle that serves no one.

Action Item (optional):

Looking for opportunities to enhance communication between council and staff.

Enhance systems for city communication with public

Create new channels for staff to communicate concerns beyond director levels

Address and lead in shifting work culture regarding council and public requests.

Work toward repairing defensiveness among department heads. This affects the city manager's relationship with the city council and damages the city's relationships with its businesses and residents.

Consider how the processes can be improved.

Identify areas of improvement when communication could have been approved

3. COMMUNITY RELATIONS:

Makes an effort to understand general community issues and concerns. Remains actively involved in the community. Works proactively with community stakeholders including Michigan State University and surrounding governmental organizations. Works effectively with community organizations including the East Lansing School District and other agencies. Educates the community on City goals and services as well as challenges and concerns.

Exceeds Expectations X / X / X
Meets Expectations X / X
Needs Improvement _____

Comments:

Engages the community

Manages community needs directly

Excellent crisis management

I know that this particular area has been hampered by the COVID pandemic, especially the direct community outreach portion. I have been a frequent participant in the weekly calls with MSU and other community stakeholders, and I feel that that group, and specifically George’s participation in it, has lead to a closer relationship with MSU than East Lansing has had in the past. I was also able to observe first hand the way that Mr. Lahanas made himself available to residents of the Glencairn Neighborhood following the flooding event in August of 2021. I was particularly impressed by the way he both offered support to Director McPherson during a time when she was responding to an emergency level flooding event, and also made himself available to residents who were deeply distressed by flooding damage. I think that represents the balance of managing a large staff while also providing service to the community.

Relationships and communications with high profile stakeholders exceed expectations.

Efforts fall short with those who are not high profile, deepen listening to alternative voices to get a better 360 view in issues.

Improve follow-up with community members since the council asked staff to consult with them.

Action Item (optional):

Look for new avenues/partnerships MSU

Help export DEI values to broader community /Workforce

Help balance town/gown and developing Downtown/neighborhood relationships

When COVID protocol permits I would love to see the resumption of the Coffee with the Manager meetings, and I invite Mr. Lahanas to join me whenever I host a Council coffee hour as well.

4. LEADERSHIP:

Provides the Council and the organization with real solutions and creative alternatives to issues and problems. Anticipates and responds to issues. Ensures that council decisions are thought out, objective, and are legal and ethical. Makes use of sound administrative practices. Leads the organization through effective management of people and tasks. Effectively represents the City’s interests when dealing with other parties.

Exceeds Expectations	X / X / X / X
Meets Expectations	_____
Needs Improvement	X

Comments:

Highly ethical leader/manager with good institutional memory and sense of future opportunities

Mr. Lahanas places a high value on stability for our staff, and fiscal stability for our city. Both of those are somewhat at odds with a Council that has undertaken a perhaps higher than usual amount of change. Two examples of cultural change within the city that could have gone badly without strong leadership from the City Manager’s office are the DEI capacity building initiative, and the realignment of our police department. I know that the amount of shift that has been undertaken in the 2.5 years that it has been my honor to serve has not been comfortable, but I feel that Mr. Lahanas has risen to the occasion, including putting in additional time with our staff, especially our Public Safety staff, to provide reassurance and support.

Dealing with Covid has truly been the city manager’s finest hour. His focus on safety and resolve resulted in East Lansing being the only mid-Michigan city without a workplace-related Covid infection for several months. He improved and deepened the connection with MSU, which continues to benefit the city and likely will for many years.

Action Item (optional):

Help to provide greater buy in/synergy between council directives and staff priorities

Help to better reconcile economic present with future growth priorities

When necessary provide stronger check on directorial latitude making sure all staff feel represented

Support cultural change and alignment within ELPD.

Accountability and change in tone within the all departments.

5. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT:

Properly prepares, manages and communicates the budget. Demonstrates ingenuity and creativity in approaching budgetary matters, including both short-term and long-range planning for the organization.

Exceeds Expectations	X / X / X / X
Meets Expectations	X
Needs Improvement	_____

Comments:

Highly ethical and proactive

I know in your work that this is valued. You have gone back to re-create or give new ideas when Council requests.

The attention that goes into the preparation of our City budget is truly astounding.

Priority-based budgeting and achieving 61% funding on the pension debt are the highlights of the city manager’s financial management strategy. However, the departure of Jill Feldpausch, the finance director, without a willing internal candidate or any known potential external candidates, is troublesome. It also merits mention that the increased pension funding was achieved by an additional millage, and that the state’s dashboard of municipal finances shows East Lansing performing sufficiently, but not exceptionally well. (In the city’s annual audit meeting, the Plante & Moran auditors and the city manager seemed unaware of the dashboard’s existence.) Five-year budgeting forecasting is an important tool, but considering the turnover on city council, there is a risk that council members will be discouraged from bringing forth new ideas under the guise of something having been budgeted for previously. I do not consider the city’s budget “creative” or created with “ingenuity.”

Action Item (optional):

- Continue public/private partnerships
- Balance growth with strategic pay downs
- Separate short term and long term goals

6. MANAGEMENT OF THE ORGANIZATION:

Effectively runs the operations of the organization. Creates a collaborative, team building environment for staff. Recognizes the accomplishments of staff and other agencies working on behalf of the City. Actively works to align City's work with identified Strategic Priorities. Supports professional growth and opportunity within the organization. Accepts full accountability for staff and the outcome of City projects or decisions. Identifies organizational problems and takes remedial action.

Exceeds Expectations X / X
Meets Expectations X / X
Needs Improvement _____

Comments:

Supports and empowers leaders

Looks for compromise

Supports retention

I am not in a place to answer this. The only kudos I see are in support of officers. Are managers encouraged to recognize staff all around?

I feel that Mr. Lahanas is very good at empowering our staff to think in creative directions.

Action Item (optional):

Cultural shifts towards all departments feeling secure, being encouraged and valued.

Raise the bar on support for EL broader vision

More creative work on workforce and hiring.

Including DEI, candidate pool, etc beyond talent management

More support for fledgling areas like DEI, communication, business support

7. INTERACTION WITH CITY COUNCIL:

Accessible to all Councilmembers. Provides regular updates to Councilmembers, keeping them informed about current and critical issues. Follows through with Councilmembers' concerns. Carries out and supports Council's directives and actions.

Exceeds Expectations	X / X / X
Meets Expectations	_____
Needs Improvement	X / X

Comments:

Highly communicated with on city business

I have always found **Mr. Lahanas to be very responsive.**

Staff contact is minimal, when I have questions. Meetings are offered with multiple higher ups, not at my request. Why are meetings held with this type of "checks" structure.

Action Item (optional):

Review and follow policies regarding council contact with staff.

Alert council when meetings are being held who has been invited and when appropriate ask.

8. POLICY EXECUTION:

Understands, supports and enforces City's laws, ordinances and policies. Implements City policy consistently and fairly, based upon Council decisions. Works on accomplishing Council's identified goals. Focuses on the City's Strategic Priorities.

Exceeds Expectations	X / X
Meets Expectations	X / X
Needs Improvement	X

Comments:

Overall support priorities and strategies

Strategic goals including housing, equity and diversity. More efforts towards this.

Mr. Lahanas has a very strong knowledge of existing policies and is good at explaining the reasoning behind them.

Understands, supports, and enforces City's laws, ordinances and policies. Implements City policy consistently and fairly, based upon Council decisions. Works on accomplishing Council's identified goals. Focuses on City's Strategic Priorities.

- The Strategic Priorities document, under the policy direction of the City Council, lists an ambitious array of tasks to improve the community and our City organization. The

CITY MANAGER

Quality Services for a Quality Community

organization accomplished many of the previous goals and objectives laid out in the previous version of the Strategic Priorities.

- I oversee the senior staff charged with the direct enforcement of City laws, ordinances and policies. We continuously work to appropriately and professionally enforce laws, ordinances and policies and provide education to members of the public, when appropriate.
- We provided extensive support to the police oversight study committee, which led to an approved ordinance. We have allocated the required staff to ensure the permanent Independent Police Oversight Commission has necessary resources.

Action Item (optional):

Helping Council better identify problematic code and policies to better support the public.
