

GET Committee

From: Richelle Thomson <richelleinhawaii@yahoo.com>
Sent: Monday, January 21, 2019 8:37 PM
To: GET Committee
Subject: GET-1(2) Appointment of Patrick K. Wong as Corporation Counsel

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January 21, 2019

RE: GET-1(2) Appointment of Patrick K. Wong as Corporation Counsel

Dear Council Chair King, GET Committee Chair Molina, and Councilmembers:

I write in support of the re-appointment of Patrick K. Wong as Corporation Counsel.

I've had the privilege of working with Pat since 2011 as a deputy assigned to the counseling and drafting division. My primary areas of focus are environmental law and compliance, land use, and procurement.

During the nearly 8 years I've been with the department, I've watched as Pat has assembled and overseen an exemplary team of talented and dedicated attorneys and excellent support staff. The scope of legal representation for the County's departments, administration, Council, as well as dozens of boards and commissions is vast – literally from A to Z – from compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act to Zoning Enforcement. Our department is tasked with the provision of competent and timely legal advice in dozens, if not hundreds, of cases, issues, legislation, and routine business each week. Pat is a strong and competent leader at the helm of this effort.

Pat has an open-door policy, and I've found his depth of knowledge in the legal matters involving this County to be impressive. With his background in litigation, he sees the pitfalls that might result from certain choices, which offers the administration or the Council sound guidance to avoid those potential issues, or to understand the risks and face them head-on. He is a natural coach, and has prioritized continuing legal education so that each of us, in our areas of expertise, is versed in the changes to the law. He expects us to be our best, and he demands this level of professionalism of himself as well.

The County has faced some high-profile legal challenges during the time Pat has been Corporation Counsel. For the cases or issues I've been involved with, I've seen his fair handling of the matters. He provides the guidance to our directors, the Mayor, and the Council so that they may make the most informed decisions. This is the goal he sets for all of his deputies as well: It's not our job to direct policy; it is our job to assist the representatives of the County of Maui to make their best decisions, based on competent analysis of the legal issues. Sometimes, we have to be the bearers of "bad" news or

cautionary advice, but that's our job. It doesn't always make us the most popular person in the room.

I strongly believe that the Council, the administration, and the County of Maui will best be served by retaining Pat Wong as Corporation Counsel.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to submit this testimony.

Sincerely,

Richelle Thomson