

**DEPARTMENTS**

## Can the Retiring Manager Serve on the City Council?

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**Scenario:** Shortly after the city manager announced his retirement after 30 years of service, a citizen group let him know that the group had endorsed him for a vacant seat on the city council. While serving in an elected position had not been part of his retirement plans, the manager finds he is intrigued with the idea. He did not attend any of the citizen group meetings nor did he ask for its endorsement. The seat is vacant due to the untimely death of a well-regarded councilmember, and the appointment would give him a year of experience as an elected official. The council makes the appointment, and it does not need to act until after the city manager retires. What ethical issues should the city manager consider in these circumstances?

**Response:** Until the city manager retires, he is expected to abide by Tenet 7 of the ICMA Code of Ethics and its restrictions on political activity. This means he should not actively seek this office or any endorsements. He cannot raise campaign funds, sign or circulate petitions, or any other prohibited activity.

Once he has left his city manager post, he can engage in political activities if he so chooses. As a retired city manager, he is required to support Tenets 1 and 3, which outline the member's responsibility to support democratic local government and to maintain the highest ideals of honor and integrity.