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FEATURES

Ethics

Ethics Inquiries

THE CHAMBER BOARD PUSHES A CANDIDATE

Q: The board of directors of the local chamber of commerce recently voted to endorse an incumbent council member in her bid for reelection. Because the city government is a member of the chamber of commerce, the city manager and staff are suddenly in an awkward position. It has been the city manager's practice to attend chamber meetings or to send senior staff in his place. In fact, the city manager is scheduled to be a featured speaker at an upcoming luncheon just one month before the council election.

The manager plans to discuss the issue at the next city council meeting. Although the city manager believes the city government should withdraw its membership, he is unsure what the city council will decide to do. What else can the city manager do to avoid any appearance of favoritism in this campaign season?

A. The city manager and senior staff can stop attending chamber meetings unless the chamber is considering a special issue that the city needs to address. In addition, the manager will want to postpone the speaking engagement because the timing could create an impression that he is lending support to the chamber's position in the council election. These steps are recommended so that the city manager can maintain his reputation for impartiality involving candidates for elected office.

For advice on the ICMA Code of Ethics, or to find out more on ethics training and technical assistance available to local governments, call the Ethics Center at ICMA at 202/962-3521, or visit the Web site at <http://icma.org/ethics>. Calls or e-mails can also be directed to ICMA's ethics advisers Martha Perego, 202/962-3668, mperego@icma.org, and Elizabeth Kellar, 202/962-3611, ekellar@icma.org.