



From the Bureau of
Governmental Research

QUESTIONS ? FOR A NEW MAYOR

PART II OF IV: TO SERVE THE CITIZENS

JANUARY 21, 2010

INTRODUCTION

One of city government's fundamental responsibilities is to provide services to citizens. The services include activities as diverse as public safety, sanitation and code enforcement. Such services require not only competent civil servants, but the able administration of finances and personnel.

The city employs approximately 4,500 people to provide the services on which citizens rely, so it should be no surprise that employee costs constitute a major expense of city government. Yet, through their interactions with personnel at City Hall and experiences with the services City Hall delivers, many citizens perceive that they are not getting their tax dollar's worth.

Meanwhile, the city also spends substantial amounts on outsourcing. Here, again, it is unclear to citizens that they are getting a good return on their investments. In fact, news reports and federal investigations have repeatedly put the spotlight on contracting irregularities, the high cost of certain services and poor contractor performance. The procurement process in New Orleans is clearly broken, undermining trust in government, discouraging economic development, and subverting confidence in programs designed to help local and disadvantaged businesses.

In 2004, BGR issued *System Upgrade: Retooling New Orleans' Civil Service*. Among other problems, the report found that city management lacked adequate flexibility in hiring and firing, and that the system worked against achievement by failing to recognize and reward quality performance.

In several reports over the years, BGR has also analyzed troubling transactions between the city and private enterprise, and called for comprehensive reform of contracting practices. In order to ensure that citizens are receiving a decent return on their investments in services, serious measure must be taken to better manage City Hall and clean up outsourcing practices.

For this installment of *Questions for a New Mayor*, BGR asked candidates how they would improve the performance of City Hall. It also asked them how they would address problems related to contracting.

About this Series

With the mayoral primary on the way, BGR submitted questions to all candidates on topics in four areas: the city's budget, city services, infrastructure and blight. Rob Couhig, John Georges, Mitch Landrieu and James Perry responded. BGR is presenting the Q&A to the public in this web-only, four-part series. This installment, *To Serve the Citizens*, is the second of four. We will issue the next two parts on Tuesday, Jan. 26, and Thursday, Jan. 28.

Question 1: City Hall is widely perceived as deeply dysfunctional. What is your plan for reversing the dysfunction and maximizing the performance and productivity of City Hall? Please describe your approach to service delivery and personnel management. Be sure to address structural and managerial issues and reforms.

John GEORGES I would completely create a new organizational chart with new lines of responsibility and better use of Deputy CAOs. I would hire a new team of fresh, diverse and capable leaders for City Hall. I would ask each department head to do an audit of their department and come up with a revised plan for efficiency based on customer service. It's also imperative to increase training of city workers in the areas of communication, customer service and customer satisfaction.

Mitch LANDRIEU During my 22 years of public service, I have had an unyielding commitment to honest and open government. As Mayor, I will have zero tolerance for corruption, incompetence and waste. I will bring a culture of open and honest government that guarantees New Orleanians from all walks of life have a seat at the table.

City Hall must be reformed. I will create a level playing field for those who want to do business in our city, support participation by disadvantaged businesses in city contracts, work closely with the Office of Inspector General, reorganize the way the city grants professional service contracts, and use the city budgeting process to eliminate waste and fraud.

As chief executive of a large statewide organization I have a track record of building strong teams that produce results. I will hire professionals who are experts in their field. My management philosophy is hands-on and demanding. I will create a culture of accountability, hard work, and dedication.

James PERRY Excellent leadership can drive this city forward, but for too long we have seen how poor management can hold us back. As Mayor I will be engaged with the competent administration of our city government and will set a model for all employees. If there is a dysfunction at any level of city government, it must be changed at the management level of each department. Personnel need to be given training that creates a competent and service-oriented environment. My administration will work with the Civil Service department to develop a personnel policy that includes a training and review process for employees, and department heads will be tasked with the responsibility of sending their employees for such training. My administration will welcome the recommendations of the Office of the Inspector General, who is charged with conducting performance and management audits and making recommendations for improvement in the operations of the city's workforce. Recommendations of the Inspector General's office are to be welcomed, and implemented, by my administration.

Rob COUHIG On our first day in office, we will begin to change the culture of city government. We will hire a new police chief dedicated to the principles of discipline, accountability, and integrity.

Every employee will be placed on his or her desk a simple statement that will outline the new philosophy of our government:

- (1) Is what I am doing today making New Orleans more livable?
- (2) Is what I am doing making New Orleans more affordable?
- (3) Is what I am doing creating economic opportunity for New Orleans?
- (4) Am I being fair and equitable to all of our citizens?

I will sign the cooperative endeavor agreement for the elimination of blight presently sitting on the Mayor's desk. I will sign the cooperative endeavor agreement setting up the Public-Private Partnership for Economic Development. I will require that all members of the administration sign a Code of Ethics with civil penalties. I will open up the entire process of government such that the public and the Inspector General will be invited into all projects and contracts from conception to completion.

Question 2: What specific reforms would you make, if any, to increase competition, transparency and objective outcomes in professional services contracting? What role would you as the mayor have in the process, if any? What role would the Inspector General play, if any?

John GEORGES

I would abide by the Louisiana Open Meetings

Law with regard to awarding contracts. All contractors will be required to disclose their sub-contractors. RFP's and RFQ's will comply to national industry standards. City employees will be required to know and understand bid procedure and open meeting laws, and will be held accountable for violations of law, rules, and policies. I will maintain existing local DBE goals for the City and put severe penalties in place for violators. I will fully fund the Inspector General's office and give full access to all city records and bids.

Mitch LANDRIEU

The city's contracting process must be transparent

and accountable. At the same time, the contracting process must be a level playing field. We must build capacity for local businesses, ensuring small and disadvantaged business participation in city business.

I view the city's inspector general as a key asset in a well-run city government. The mayor should work with the inspector general to root out waste and to make sure our tax dollars work for the benefit of all our residents.

I will ask the inspector general and other community representatives to identify three leading models for professional services hiring to guide me in the development of a sound process for awarding and monitoring such contracts. I support disclosing the identities of persons who have ownership interests in businesses that receive contracts or subcontracts and will ask the Louisiana Board of Ethics to conduct training and briefings on current ethics laws for all of my cabinet officials, appointed employees and board appointees.

James PERRY

Noncompetitive selection procedures invite abuse, by both public

officials and contractors. But even competitive selection procedures can fail to serve the public interest, when they lack certain basic protections. As Mayor, I will implement a competitive selection process that:

- (1) Requires Prior Notice, advertising contracting opportunities widely and with sufficient lead time;
- (2) Eliminates Ambiguity in RFPs and backroom dealing so that all respondents stand on an equal footing;
- (3) Provides Objective Selection Criteria;
- (4) Requires Diversity in the composition of evaluation teams;
- (5) Requires Transparency by making evaluation forms available for public review and requiring that evaluation committees hold public meetings;
- (6) Requires Justification, where contract awards must be accompanied with an explanation of why the contractor was chosen and ranking of the successful respondent as compared with competitors; and by establishing (7) Monitoring and Accountability in the selection process as an ongoing responsibility for monitoring contract compliance and ensuring accountability. The Inspector General has a noble role and should be a partner to the Mayor, not an adversary. As such, I support the IG's plan to review city bid responses before contracts are awarded.

Rob COUHIG

In order to increase competition, transparency, and objective

outcomes in professional services, I will insist that the use of professional services contracts be strictly limited. I will have all projects that involve professional services contracts open to the public and the Inspector General from the time of conception through completion. This will include scoring of the proposals as well as of the performance. As Mayor, I will insist that the process be open, and that the Inspector General has full opportunity to inspect, review, and recommend. I will create, in those instances where possible, civilian expert panels to assist in any selection and have them advise me on the best proposals to accept.



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Related Reports

The following recent BGR reports may be of interest to readers of this publication:

City Council Contract is Out of Bounds (2006)

Challenge for Mayoral Candidates: Professional Services Contracting (2006)

System Upgrade: Retooling New Orleans' Civil Service (2004)

Report of Proposal Evaluation Sewerage and Water Board of New Orleans (2002)

Sewerage and Water Board Privatization at a Critical Stage (2002)

Legal Services Contracting at the Local Level (2001)

Public Contracting for Legal Services (2001)

Privatization of Water and Wastewater Systems in New Orleans (2001)

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