Council holds direct authority over City Manager, City Attorney

By Amy Sylvestri

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The San Leandro City Council is now considering the contract renewal of the City's attorneys — Oakland-based firm Meyers-Nave and lead attorney Jayne Williams.

The contract negotiations are routine, according to City Manager Chris Zapata, who spoke about the matter at a City Council meeting last week.

"The City Council has direct authority over two employees," Zapata told the council. "The City Attorney and the City Manager. And, in the case of the City Attorney, it is a contract relationship."

Details of employment contracts remain closed until settled, and the contract is now being evaluated by a third party, which will report to the City Council at a later date for a future vote.

Williams, as the City Attorney, has been busy with San Leandro lawsuits over the past couple of years:

In September, the city paid $2.3 million to settle a lawsuit regarding zoning brought by Faith Fellowship Church.

In June, the wrongful-death claim brought against the city by a woman who was killed by a police officer was settled for $50,000 — the family initially sought up to $15 million.

In 2010, seven sexual-harassment suits brought against the city by female police officers and civilian police employees were settled for a combined total of just shy of $1 million.

And last November, the officer who was accused in those harassment suits brought his own suit against the city, which was settled for $300,000.

There is also the ongoing case of a wrongful-death lawsuit brought by the mother of a man who died in police custody after being Tasered.

In the coming months, Meyers-Nave will also have to help the City Council navigate the tricky matter of medical marijuana dispensaries, which are illegal federally, but legal according to state law.