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## Helping streamline city

Consultant works with unions to overhaul government

BY TOM GANTERT  
*News Staff Reporter*

Kerry Laycock earns a little more than \$100,000 a year for working a little less than two days a week for the city of Ann Arbor.

But the city's top administrators say Laycock is worth the cost and has saved the city many times over the \$1,080 a day he's paid as an outside consultant.

Laycock describes himself as a "facilitator." His goal as a con-

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Kerry Laycock, city of Ann Arbor outside consultant

sultant is to make things work better – in Ann Arbor's case, an ongoing, massive overhaul of city government.

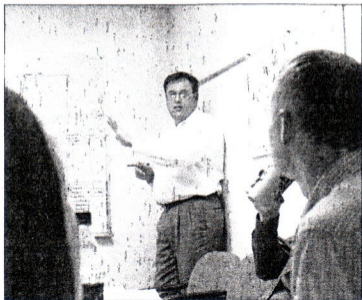
On a spring day in a sixth-floor office at city hall, he is

wearing a white, buttoned-down shirt with no tie – sort of a fashion cross between management and rank-and-file, the very groups for which Laycock serves as a go-between.

"Some believe it's simply asking them to do more and work harder," Laycock said. "That's not it. It's not cracking the whip and saying, 'Work harder.'"

Laycock's job is to get the unionized workers – 85 percent of the city's work force – to buy into the city's plan to streamline its government, which includes combining duties and slashing some jobs altogether. Union jobs.

SEE LAYCOCK, B2



ROBERT CHASE, THE ANN ARBOR NEWS

Kerry Laycock, consultant to the Development Process Design Team, works with city employees to learn about procedures in the Building Department.

LAYCOCK FROM B1

# Efficiency expert worked to sort out confusion over early retirement program

"That's everyone's fear - that efficiency translates to their personal loss of a job," he said.

Following the confusion and controversy three years ago that surrounded the early retirement program, meant to trim the city workforce without resorting to layoffs, city leaders turned to Laycock to help salvage it. Unless the reorganization worked, the city eventually would have to replace most of the 132 employees who retired.

"The early retirement is like a crash diet," Laycock said. "It all comes off fast, and it feels good. But unless you make permanent lifestyle changes, it's all going to come back."

Laycock was originally hired in December 2001 to revamp the city's water utilities department. That went so well, Utilities Director Sue McCormick said, that Laycock was brought into the entire reorganization.

His fingerprints are all over the new-look streamlined government that has been slowly put into place since City Administrator Roger Fraser came on board in April 2002.

"There is no corner of the city I haven't been involved with," Laycock said.

The City Council has been given numerous updates on Laycock as they approve exten-

'The early retirement is like a crash diet. It all comes off fast and it feels good. But unless you make permanent lifestyle changes, it's all going to come back.'

Kerry Laycock, city of Ann Arbor outside consultant

sions to his original contract. Still, many council member don't know what he looks like.

City Council Member Bob Johnson, D-1st Ward, has served on the council since 2001 but said he's never met the consultant, even though Laycock has appeared a handful of council meetings.

Council Member Leigh Greden, D-3rd Ward, hasn't met Laycock either. "But I hear that name a lot," Greden said.

Roger Fraser, McCormick and Police Chief Dan Oates have trumpeted Laycock's successes in council meetings and retreats.

A city report on the redesign of the water department shows \$1.3 million in savings a year and a reduction of 22 full-time jobs. McCormick said the report does-

n't reflect additional savings, such as a reduction in vehicles needed or retiree health costs or pension contributions due to the permanent reductions.

Much of Laycock's work centers around reclassifying jobs.

For instance, in the parks department, Laycock has helped combine 11 different job titles into one: "Field operations technician."

As an incentive, the city offers a minimum of a 2.5 percent raise to any employee who agrees to change to the broader classification.

According to a city study, 93 percent of the first 161 workers have agreed to change classification, which is considered a stunning success by city staff because it meant

getting the union members to buy into it.

Fraser said that is Laycock's talent - the ability to get people to believe in him.

The city's union leadership does.

"I trust him," said Don Ratliff, president of AFSCME Local 369, the city's largest union with about 320 members who are mostly clerical, parks and utility workers. "He's honest. I don't think he would take information from the workers he is working with and give different information to management. We can believe he'll do what he says he'll do."

Still, they know who signs Laycock's checks.

City records show Laycock made \$101,520 for working 94 days during a 12-month span from November 2002 to October 2003. During a six-month span from February to July 2003, the city paid Laycock's assistant Colleen Brown \$22,545 for working about 6.5 hours a week.

"Make no mistake," Laycock said, "I'm paid by management. At any point I'm not serving their agenda, I'm gone instantly."

Laycock's invoices read like something out of a management seminar conference brochure - a half-day with one

design team, another half-day with a steering committee, a job progression revision meeting followed by a transition team meeting.

But in the workplace, the city says it translated to better efficiency. Two parks employees could do the work of four simply by expanding their job definitions.

For example, in the past a park ranger would go from park to park to open it and do parking lot enforcement. At the same time, another employee's sole job may be cutting the grass, a third employee could be only allowed to take out an infested ash tree, and a fourth employee could be doing maintenance plumbing in a bathroom.

Now, one employee is trained to do it all.

Despite the inherent mistrust in any management vs. rank-and-file discussions, Laycock says he has been able to get union workers to keep an open mind.

"We could not have gotten as far as we have gotten as quickly as we've gotten with as high a rate of participation without the use of consultative services," McCormick said.

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