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Opinion

December 16, 2018

We need "Steady Stefan"

Our Christmas wish for the city of Hopewell this year is twofold -- peace in the valley for the upcoming City Council, and Stefan Calos to reconsider his resignation as Hopewell's city attorney and chief legal adviser. In our opinion, if the first part is to come to pass, then the second part really has to happen.

It's only been 18 months since Mr. Calos said he was pulling the pin on his Hopewell tenure, but it seems like 18 eons ago, considering what has happened in Hopewell over that period. Looking back, he might wish he had not chosen to be so gentlemanly by offering to stay on until his successor is found, but he did. And Hopewell government is better for it.

We are not sure what his name might mean in other languages, but somewhere in the world, "Stefan Calos" must translate into "Steady Calm" because Mr. Calos has been nothing short of a safe harbor in a turbulent council climate. In just the last half of 2018, he has been called upon countless times to pull council discussions and interactions off the edges of cliffs, and done so with a firm but pleasant tone and sometimes throwing in some self-deprecating humor.

He is a whiz at turning legalese into citizen-ese and making seat-of-your-pants snap decisions whenever a councilor hollers, "Point of Order!" during a meeting. On the other hand, he's compiled years of experience in doing that practically in the last three months' worth of council sessions.

Stefan Calos resigned because he felt he had been improperly put upon by certain councilors because his opinions did not jibe with theirs. If they did not like what he had to say, they had no problems stating their displeasure -- sometimes doing so in not-so-pleasurable terms. Yet, Mr. Calos soldiered on because he only was doing what he was hired to do -- provide the best legal advice and opinions. Nowhere does it say these opinions have to be popular, just the best.

No doubt, one of his biggest detractors is Anthony J. Zevgolis, who fancies himself as an armchair city attorney. Always quick to point out that he was told he knows more about city law than most attorneys do, Mr. Zevgolis was not a fan of how the city had contracted with Mr. Calos and his law firm, Sands Anderson, to be Hopewell's top legal eagle. In his mind, the city attorney needed to have only one client -- the city.

Because of that, Mr. Zevgolis frequently trolled Mr. Calos' opinions. It eventually got to the point where others on council were routinely reminding him that it was Mr. Calos, not Mr. Zevgolis, who had the law degree. When Mr. Calos threw in the towel in the summer of 2017, it was Mr. Zevgolis who told this newspaper that Mr. Calos "needs to move on."

Well, as it turns out, Mr. Zevgolis was the one to move on, thanks to the outcome of the Nov. 6 election. And with that political, municipal, and we can only imagine emotional, roadblock out of

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the way, perhaps Mr. Calos might want to consider withdrawing his resignation. Three new council members are coming on board in January -- two of them first-timers at running for elected office in Hopewell. Now more than ever, the calming nature of "Steady Stefan" Calos is needed to guide this council-in-transition and be an example of how being passionate about what is legally right for the city does not have to devolve into a passion play.

Mr. Calos, at least think about reconsidering. We know one of the biggest draws of this job was serving the city where you have deep family roots. And while we certainly understand if you still feel the need to pursue other legal avenues because you never fault someone for wanting to better themselves, we just want you to know that the city and its government are better just because you now sit in that chair.