

Organizational Audit: The City of Paterson

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Abstract

This paper delves into the persistent ethical challenges faced by the City of Paterson, New Jersey, employing a comprehensive approach that draws on frameworks, theories, concepts, and course lessons. The analysis encompasses the city's rich history, intricate organizational structure, overarching purpose, mission, staffing arrangements, and the effectiveness of its ethics management infrastructure. The selection of this topic stems from the city's recent notoriety in the news and its apparent struggle to navigate these ethical issues despite the explicit guidelines mandated by the State of New Jersey. The specific focus is on the high-profile ethical misconduct case involving former Mayor Jose "Joey" Torres. Mayor Torres's actions, characterized by the improper use of city resources for personal gain, represent a significant breach of public trust and fundamental principles of public service. The examination extends to the city's response to identified misconduct cases, with a critical evaluation of Mayor Torres's actions revealing shortcomings in promptly and effectively addressing ethical violations. The unprecedented intervention of the attorney general in assuming control of the Paterson police force in 2023 underscores the pressing need for systemic reform within the city. Mayor Torres's ethical transgressions are positioned as emblematic of a broader systemic issue within Paterson rather than isolated incidents. The paper advocates for a rigorous evaluation of the city's ethics infrastructure, leadership, and commitment to ethical governance. A call for a comprehensive overhaul is emphasized, recognizing its imperative role in restoring public trust, rehabilitating the city's reputation, and instituting a more transparent and accountable municipal administration. We will leave with lessons and recommendations on how this deeply historic city can turn the tides of corruption back by taking simple actions to prevent poor ethical behavior going forward.

Introduction

The City of Paterson, in Passaic County, New Jersey, stands as a bastion of American diversity and history, with roots deeply embedded in the Industrial Revolution. Paterson has recently emerged as a crucible for ethical transgressions within its public administration. This paper embarks on an extensive exploration into the case of Mayor Jose Torres, exposing his egregious misuse of on-duty workers for private property endeavors. The impetus for this study is deeply rooted in the disconcerting context of recent indictments involving council members Michael Jackson and Alex Mendez, coupled with the arrest of numerous Paterson police officers for public corruption. In prior years Ex-Mayor Marty Barnes was incarcerated for corruption and more recently in 2017, the Ex-Mayor Jose “Joey” Torres was also incarcerated for criminal abuse of power. Its recurring appearances in up-to-date news cycles due to ethical missteps, make it a pertinent subject for comprehensive ethical analysis. These incidents compel a nuanced inquiry into the ethical landscape of the City of Paterson, scrutinizing the organization's misconduct despite the clearly defined ethics rules mandated by the State of New Jersey. In addition, historical instances, such as Ex-Mayor Marty Barnes' tumultuous tenure, serve as crucial contextual markers, shedding light on a systemic culture of ethical violations within the organization.

With a rich past linked to the growth of our nation, Paterson is on a collision course with ever repeating public corruption incidents. In this paper, we will specifically examine the power abuse of Ex-Mayor Joey Torres and assist in providing solutions for the future of ethics oversight to prevent repeating the recent historical ethical blunders.

Paterson in Historical Context

Paterson's historical significance as a powerhouse in the silk industry during the Industrial Revolution underscores the gravity of understanding its organizational intricacies. Examining its historical trajectory allows for a nuanced evaluation of how past events may have shaped its current ethical landscape. The City of Paterson has a population of 159,732, according to the 2020 census. (Quickfacts, 2022) This population is within just 8.41 square miles. At 18,986 residents per square mile, it is one of the most densely populated cities in America (Quickfacts). Paterson is also a troubled city. “In recent years, the two largest cities in New Jersey, Newark, and Jersey City, have mostly been on the rise. But Paterson, the third largest, has continued to be defined in large part by its struggles: crime, poverty, and a pervasive sense of limited opportunity.” (Rojas, 2018) Plagued by violence, the city rings with gunshots and sirens. Oppression is palpable. This may be the cause for the ethical quandaries that befall political leaders consistently.

Organization’s Purpose and Mission

The City of Paterson's purpose encompasses the provision of essential services, the maintenance of public infrastructure, and the cultivation of a safe, thriving community. A granular examination of its mission elucidates its commitment to effective governance, equitable resource allocation, and collaboration with diverse stakeholders. Understanding the organization's core purpose is foundational to unraveling the ethical implications of its actions.

The Mission Statement

“The City of Paterson is committed to providing high-quality public services that meet the needs of our diverse community. We are dedicated to preserving the health, safety, and welfare of our

residents and businesses, and to promoting economic vitality and sustainability throughout the city. We strive to foster a culture of transparency, accountability, and innovation in all that we do, and to work collaboratively with our partners in government, the private sector, and the community to achieve our shared goals” . (The City of Paterson, 2023)

The Organizational Chart

The organizational chart of the City of Paterson reveals a hierarchical structure, with the mayor at the pinnacle overseeing various departments. This section will delve into the intricacies of staffing arrangements, identifying potential points of ethical vulnerability within the organization's hierarchy. The city collaborates with a Mayor/Council form of government. The mayor is responsible for the Executive Branch of the government and the mayor is the chief executive. Below the Mayor are his Cabinet Directors for multiple different Departments such as: Administration, Public Safety, Public Works, Health & Human Services, Community Development, Law, Community Improvement and Treasury (The City of Paterson, 2023). Each has a director appointed by the mayor and then there are Civil Service leaders below the Directors that govern the day-to-day of the physical Departments.

This exercise will examine the relationship between the Mayor and his Department of Public Works staff. Public Works has an appointed Director who reports to the mayor, three Deputy Directors, and multiple supervisors below the Directors. They manage Recreation, Parks, Shade Tree, Roads, Signals, and facilities management. Numerous skilled laborers such as electricians, plumbers, and mechanics work for Public Works. In the end, they all indirectly report to the mayor who has the ultimate responsibility. All the Public Works' staff are governed by New Jersey Civil Service and extremely strict job descriptions and rules governing behavior.

The DPW does not publish an organizational chart, however, according to their website, the hierarchy begins with the Director of the DPW with 3 Deputy Directors in place to decentralize duties. The Divisions are as follows; each being led by Division Supervisors:

- Engineering
- Passaic Valley Water Commission
- Traffic & Lighting
- Sewer
- Facilities
- Auto Maintenance
- Cable Communications
- Recycling
- Recreation
- Garbage Collection
- Great Falls Historic District Cultural Center

(The City of Paterson, 2023)

The issue in question regarding Mayor Torres occurred via abuse within the Facilities Division and several of its employees.

There are several ways that the city manages ethics. First, the Business Administrator develops policy for managing ethics within the Rules and Regulations. The last version of which was developed in 2010, ironically under Ex-Mayor Torres. The Department Directors have the oversight of managing the rules and regulations in their departments. Human Resources is given the responsibility of compliance, which should include training. As a 28-year employee,

culminating as the Chief, I never once received ethics training, with exception of harassment and sexual harassment awareness. There are ways to allow reporting of abuses. Employees are encouraged to report to their direct supervisor and move through the chain of command. The Legal Department also has an Affirmative Action Officer whose role has never been defined for any of the staff until after a problem has occurred. That practice continues today. There are also other avenues such as whistle blower. Overall, management of ethics is loose at best. Although the City has rules in place, it lacks proper training for its employees to make them aware of their restrictions and their outlets alike. It is very reactionary.

The Ethical Misconduct Case

The heart of this study lies in the ethical misconduct case involving former Mayor Jose "Joey" Torres. Torres faced criminal charges for conspiring to commit official misconduct by using city employees for personal tasks, including renovating a warehouse owned by his relatives. This section will meticulously dissect the details of the case, exploring the legal intricacies, ethical breaches, and the wider implications for municipal governance. Between 2014-2015, "Paterson Mayor Jose "Joey" Torres and three supervisors in the Paterson Department of Public Works ("DPW") for allegedly conspiring to have city employees perform work at a private warehouse leased by the mayor's daughter and nephew while the employees were being paid by the city." (Insider NJ, 2017) "This is a case of old-school public corruption and abuse of power," said Attorney General Porrino "Mayor Torres is alleged to have misappropriated public resources and workers to advance a family business, and his co-defendants allegedly joined in his blatantly crooked scheme. We have zero tolerance for this type of abuse of public office in New Jersey." (Insider NJ, 2017) Mayor Torres abused his power by

pressuring staff to work for his personal gain and used public funds to support same. This is a violation of the most basic of rules regarding abuse of power.

Application of Ethical Frameworks, Theories, and Concepts

This pivotal section will undertake an in-depth exploration of ethical frameworks, theories, and concepts, employing a diverse range such as virtue ethics, deontology, consequentialism, and pertinent management theories drawn from the course literature. The aim is to dissect the intricate moral fabric of the City of Paterson, especially considering the moral misconduct case involving Mayor Joey Torres, who utilized on-duty staff for personal tasks, a transgression that led to his imprisonment for five years.

Virtue ethics, emphasizing the development of moral character, provides a lens through which to assess the ethical conduct of public officials (Cooper, 2012). In the context of Mayor Torres, this framework would scrutinize not only the specific actions but also the virtues exhibited or lacking in his leadership. Questions surrounding integrity, honesty, and responsibility will be pivotal in evaluating the virtuous dimensions of governance in Paterson.

Deontological ethics, grounded in principles and duties, offers a structured approach to evaluating ethical dilemmas (Cooper). In examining Mayor Torres's actions, we explore the moral obligations inherent in public service roles, questioning whether the use of on-duty staff for personal tasks aligns with the duty-bound responsibilities expected from a city official. This analysis will shed light on the ethical responsibilities that ought to guide decision-making in municipal governance.

Consequentialism positions that the morality of an action is determined by its outcomes. (Cooper) In the context of Mayor Torres's case, this framework scrutinizes the repercussions of

his actions on the city, its residents, and the overall public trust. Assessing the consequences of utilizing public resources for personal gain will provide insights into the broader implications of such ethical lapses within the governance structure.

Drawing from management theories discussed in the course literature, we explore how organizational behavior and leadership styles may contribute to or mitigate ethical misconduct. Examining Mayor Torres's actions through the lens of management theories we unveil potential systemic issues within Paterson's governance, addressing questions of accountability, transparency, and the role of leadership in fostering an ethical organizational culture.

To ground these ethical frameworks in the specific context of Paterson, we consider the city's history, socio-economic landscape, and political culture. Understanding the unique challenges and dynamics of Paterson will provide a clear perspective on the applicability of these ethical frameworks within the municipal governance structure.

Through this multifaceted analysis, the paper aims to unravel actionable insights for ethical decision-making within public organizations, with a focus on preventing ethical misconduct like that which led to Mayor Torres's incarceration. By synthesizing the principles of virtue ethics, deontology, consequentialism, and management theories, the paper will contribute to a robust understanding of how ethical frameworks can be practically applied to enhance the integrity and accountability of municipal governance.

In doing so, this section will not only serve as an academic exercise but will also provide practical guidance for public officials, administrators, and policymakers aiming to fortify ethical standards within their organizations, thereby contributing to the development of a more ethically resilient and responsible governance framework.

The Case of Misconduct

Mayor Jose Torres, once a bastion of public trust, now finds himself guilty of a profound ethical transgression—utilizing on-duty workers for private property maintenance. This grave misconduct not only breaches the social contract with the public but also corrodes the bedrock principles of public service. The misuse of city resources for personal gain raises profound questions about Mayor Torres' integrity, ethical compass, and his suitability for public office. The case mirrors a disconcerting pattern of misconduct observed in other prominent figures within the city, including council members Jackson and Mendez, as well as multiple police officers. This pervasive culture of corruption, woven into the fabric of diverse branches of city governance, suggests a deeply entrenched and systemic ethical crisis. It should be clearly noted that the indictments of both Council members and the arrest and trial of the police officers was after the guilty verdict found for Ex-Mayor Jose Torres.

Reflected Issues in Ethics Infrastructure

Despite the unambiguous ethics rules established by the State of New Jersey, the City of Paterson appears to grapple with the enforcement and adherence to ethical standards. The misconduct of Mayor Torres, among others, serves as a glaring symptom of a systemic failure within the city's ethics infrastructure. An apparent lack of effective oversight, coupled with a permissive approach to ethics enforcement, has cultivated an environment where unethical behavior not only persists but proliferates. This troubling situation is further exacerbated by historical instances, including Mayor Marty Barnes' tumultuous tenure, where ethical standards crumbled, contributing to the gradual erosion of ethical values within the organization.

Organization's Response to the Misconduct Case

The City of Paterson's response to the myriad of misconduct cases involving Mayor Torres, council members Jackson and Mendez, and members of the police force has been disappointingly inadequate. Despite being armed with a set of clear ethics rules from the state, the organization has displayed a marked inability to address ethical violations promptly and effectively. Mayor Torres' actions highlight a blatant disregard for both ethical standards and the rule of law. The lack of a swift and decisive response from the city administration implies a systemic issue that transcends individual wrongdoings. The city's incapacity to self-regulate reached a crescendo with the attorney general taking control of the police force in 2023—an unprecedented move born out of desperation to curb rampant ethical transgressions.

Systemic Ethical Failures: Historical Perspectives

To comprehensively understand the depth of the ethical crisis in the City of Paterson, it is imperative to delve into historical instances that have paved the way for the current situation. Mayor Marty Barnes, whose tenure was marred by scandal and ethical lapses, stands as a stark testament to the persistent challenges within the city's leadership. Barnes' ethical failings, instead of serving as a cautionary tale, seemed to have permeated the organizational culture, contributing to a permissive environment where ethical misconduct became more normalized than condemned.

The Police Takeover: An Extreme Intervention

The unprecedented move by the attorney general to take control of the Paterson police force in 2023 underscores the gravity of the ethical crisis. This extreme intervention is a testament to the failure of the city's internal mechanisms to address rampant ethical

transgressions within law enforcement. It also reflects a lack of trust in the city's ability to self-regulate and signals the need for a systemic overhaul to restore public confidence.

Lessons Learned and Recommendations

The City of Paterson has faced persistent challenges in upholding ethical standards within its governance structure, as exemplified by the high-profile ethical misconduct cases, particularly that of former Mayor Jose "Joey" Torres. This section outlines a comprehensive set of my recommendations aimed at fortifying ethical governance in Paterson.

Revise Codes of Conduct:

To establish a solid foundation for ethical governance, it is crucial to revise existing codes of conduct, placing a renewed emphasis on adherence to ethical standards. The revised codes should provide clear guidelines for ethical behavior, ensuring alignment with state regulations and promoting a culture of integrity.

Implement Targeted Training Programs:

Conduct targeted training programs, with a specific focus on leaders within the municipal administration. These programs should delve into ethical principles, emphasizing the consequences of misconduct, and equip leaders with the knowledge and tools to make ethically informed decisions. Training sessions can include case studies, ethical dilemmas, and interactive discussions to enhance understanding.

Strengthen Oversight Mechanisms:

Enhance monitoring systems and establish periodic reviews of governance processes to identify and address potential ethical vulnerabilities. Consider the establishment of an independent ethics

committee tasked with conducting impartial investigations into reported ethical concerns. This committee should be composed of individuals with expertise in ethics, law, and governance.

Integrate Ethical Considerations into Performance Evaluations:

Integrate ethical considerations into performance evaluations for all employees, including leaders. This ensures that ethical conduct is not only expected but also assessed as a fundamental aspect of job performance. Employees who consistently demonstrate ethical behavior should be recognized and rewarded, reinforcing the importance of integrity.

Establish a Robust Whistleblower Protection Program:

Create a robust whistleblower protection program to encourage individuals to come forward with information about ethical violations without fear of retaliation. Clearly communicate the process for reporting concerns, ensure confidentiality, and establish safeguards against any form of reprisal. This program will serve as a critical mechanism for uncovering and addressing ethical lapses.

Engage in Community Outreach:

Initiate community outreach programs to transparently communicate governance processes, ethical guidelines, and the commitment to upholding ethical standards. Building public awareness fosters trust and enables the community to hold the municipal administration accountable. This can be achieved through town hall meetings, informational sessions, and online platforms.

Institute Continuous Improvement Mechanisms:

Implement continuous improvement mechanisms to adapt to emerging ethical challenges. This involves regularly reviewing and updating ethical guidelines, codes of conduct, and training programs in response to evolving ethical considerations. Establish feedback loops to gather input from employees, leaders, and the community, fostering a culture of continuous learning and improvement.

Conclusion

The unethical behavior exhibited by Mayor Jose Torres, especially his use of on-duty workers for personal gain, is just a symptom of a broader, deeply entrenched systemic problem in the City of Paterson. The recent wave of indictments, arrests, and historical instances of ethical breaches paint a stark portrait of a city grappling with profound and pervasive ethical issues. Despite having unequivocal ethics rules mandated by the State of New Jersey, the city's leadership, exemplified by Mayor Torres and others, has proven woefully inadequate in fostering an environment that upholds and prioritizes ethical conduct.

Mayor Torres' case is not an isolated incident but rather emblematic of a culture that tolerates and, in some instances, enables ethical violations to persist unchecked. The organization's feeble response to these misconduct cases raises grave concerns about the efficacy of the existing ethics infrastructure. The unprecedented intervention of the attorney general in assuming control of the police force in 2023 serves as an alarming wake-up call, highlighting the imperative for external intervention when an organization is unable to rectify its internal ethical shortcomings.

The City of Paterson stands at a crossroads, necessitating a profound examination of its ethics infrastructure, leadership, and commitment to upholding ethical standards. Only through a

comprehensive overhaul and a renewed dedication to ethical governance can the city hope to rebuild public trust, restore its tarnished reputation, and pave the way for a more transparent, accountable, and ethically robust future. The multifaceted recommendations outlined above collectively form a comprehensive framework for fortifying ethical governance in the City of Paterson. By revising codes of conduct, implementing targeted training programs, strengthening oversight mechanisms, integrating ethical considerations into performance evaluations, establishing a whistleblower protection program, engaging in community outreach, and instituting continuous improvement mechanisms, the city can significantly reduce the risk of misconduct and promote a governance culture rooted in integrity, accountability, and transparency. These measures are not only essential for addressing existing challenges but also for creating a resilient and ethically sound foundation for the future of Paterson's municipal administration.

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