

# CITY SPEAK

## “Most Embarrassing Moment at City Hall”

LinkedIn reminded me that today is the birthday of City Clerk Byron Pope, MMC at the City of Beverly Hills!

Actually, LinkedIn has been reminding me of Byron’s birthday for 12 years, and each year this reminds me of a *most embarrassing presentation* I made at City of Beverly Hills City Hall.

### ENTREPRENEURIAL SEIZURE AT CITY HALL

A little background on how I got to this embarrassing presentation. After 16 years working in City government, while brainstorming creative budget solutions for a staff report, I experienced an *entrepreneurial seizure* (I’ll give you more details about this “seizure” in a future CitySpeak newsletter). But this entrepreneurial seizure in 2006 led to my decision to capitalize on my City work experience to invent and give birth to [MuniTemps.com](http://MuniTemps.com) to provide municipal organizations with budget-friendly interim staffing solutions.

### PRESENTATION I WILL NEVER FORGET

Within six months of launching MuniTemps.com, I began seeking out opportunities to present my company service model to City organizations throughout California

My first opportunity to present [MuniTemps.com](http://MuniTemps.com) to a City organization was in response to a request for staffing services in the City Clerk’s Office of the City of Beverly Hills in 2006/2007.

Of all the City Halls to pick to make my first presentation, why pick Beverly Hills? I don’t think it was by choice. It just worked out that way, but as I would later learn, there were “big boys” making presentations to this City, against which I would need to compete.

Thus, there I was, 12 years ago, sitting in a comfortable chair, outside a nice City Hall conference room of this beautiful, historic City of Beverly Hills building constructed in 1932, consistent with Spanish Colonial Revival architecture.

Anyway, there I was, sitting all alone, with my Sunday best suit, some [MuniTemps.com](http://MuniTemps.com) marketing materials, and notes to a proposal presentation which I would never forget.



I arrived early to this presentation opportunity, so I had about 30 minutes to think about everything that could go wrong. Remember, this was my very first presentation as a municipal consultant. City governments are sometimes not very forgiving of new consultants!

## **SWEATING WHEN A “BIG BOY” COMPETITOR IN THE ROOM**

At this point, it is 1pm and it is my turn to make my proposal and presentation. As the door to the conference room opens, I stand up proudly and at attention, ready to be invited in.

Just then, I see Michael Moreland, CPA and two of his seasoned partners standing tall and confident, shaking hands with one of the three panelists of the City, who thanked Moreland & Associates, CPAs for their excellent presentation.

Dang! I’m competing with Mike Moreland?!

At this point, my palms quickly began to sweat. During a span of the next 30 seconds, my mind raced with negative thoughts, undermining the confidence I had just spent the last 30 minutes trying to build up.

What am I thinking? I’m not qualified to be a municipal consultant! Why I’m just a City Finance Director, with zero private-sector experience! What do I know about business or doing consulting work? This is the City of Beverly Hills!!! What am I thinking? Who am I fooling?

I’m no Mike Moreland & Associates, CPAs! I’m just John Herrera, a wannabe consultant from Riverside, California. Sure, I have college degrees and valuable municipal experience, but who am I to be standing up against the likes of Moreland & Associates, CPAs?

Here I am in my Sunday best suit, looking pretty good, but I felt like Nacho from the movie [“Nacho Libre”](#)...I felt like a fool inside!

## **THIS CAN’T BE HARDER THAN A COUNCIL PRESENTATION!**

But just then I remembered all the gut-wrenching and stressful presentations I made to the City Council of the City of San Jacinto during the tumultuous days of 1995-1998. This presentation can’t be harder than that. Those of you who worked at this City then know what I mean.

All right, 30 seconds of self-talk was over. Now I’m called in by the Assistant City Manager and so I use the next 10 seconds to say to myself, “you can do this John!” as I walk over to shake hands.

By this time, I sweating buckets.

Ever seen Ben Stiller in the movie [“Along Came Polly”](#)? Well that was me. Well, almost, but dang, I was SO nervous inside and I was sweating profusely. How do I stop this?

I should have worn a white shirt, right? Nope, I wore an expensive light green shirt and a dark green tie. Don’t ask me why? Yes, I know, I should have asked my wife!



But I know my stuff. I have spent a month preparing this presentation. I'm passionate about City government and I'm going to not just get through this, I'm going to do great.

So, I proceed to make my presentation. I answer all questions professionally and I felt that I had impressed the three panelists at the City of Beverly Hills. I'm in there about one hour. And when the presentation is over, I thank the three panelists and the Assistant City Manager walks me to the door and thanks me for introducing MuniTemps.com to the City.

When I walk away from the conference room, I ask the City Manager's receptionist for directions to the men's bathroom. As soon as I enter, I go look at myself in the mirror and the collar to my nice green shirt was awful...with sweat marks going up to half the collar and even in my upper chest. Another mistake is to wear a v neck undershirt if you're going to sweat.

How embarrassing! I couldn't wait to get out of City Hall and drive back to Temecula. But I had interviews already scheduled in Los Angeles with municipal candidates I would be assigning to work on interim assignments at various local Cities. This is a whole separate story I will discuss in a future CitySpeak newsletter.

But overall, believe it or not, it was a productive day back then in 2006. That embarrassing presentation experience at City of Beverly Hills was most valuable to all the work I have done since then.

## **THERE'S VALUE IN EVERY FAILED ATTEMPT**

So, I did NOT win this contract. Moreland & Associates, CPAs was the superior presenter and they deserved to win...this time. I did get other work at City of Beverly Hills since then.

And this was NOT the only contract I lost when I competed against other "big boy" consulting firms. But that was ok. The important thing was that every single presentation I made where I failed to obtain the job, was a success.

Why do I say this? Because of the *valuable experience I gained every time I failed* as I was building the [MuniTemps.com](http://MuniTemps.com) model. And I'm still refining my model as I continue to take the feedback from our many municipal clients to continuously improve our service.

I know I can't compare myself against America's greatest inventor, Thomas Edison, but I and others can emulate his tenacity to succeed. Edison, made 1,000 unsuccessful attempts at inventing the light bulb. When a reporter asked, "How did it feel to fail 1,000 times?" Edison replied, "I didn't fail 1,000 times. The light bulb was an invention with 1,000 steps."

Moreland & Associates, CPAs may have won that presentation and contract against me back in 2006/2007, but they are no longer around. They sold out to the "bigger boys". [MuniTemps.com](http://MuniTemps.com) is still here and will still be here for a long time, if God wills, and if my succession plan is carried out when I retire.



## JOIN THE MUNITEMPS STAFFING TEAM

If you like my story, consider joining our team. We need good men and women to help us!

I'm 55 years old now. I could retire from the CalPERS pension system and golf my days away, but I'm not ready for that. And I don't want to be limited to working the 960 hours per fiscal year quite yet, among other constraints. But I do want fresh ideas at MuniTemps.

To achieve the succession plan I mentioned above, I'm looking for people who share my values and passion for serving municipal organizations.

If you're interested in joining [MuniTemps.com](http://MuniTemps.com) Staffing, please call me.

## I LOVE YOUR FEEDBACK...

And as always, please share your ideas with me. I would love to hear about your most embarrassing presentation at City Hall (or any other noteworthy experience).

Come on, we're all human. Talk about it. It is even therapeutic!

Or call me if you want to share your thoughts on any subject I write about in my blog at [MuniTemps.com](http://MuniTemps.com); I would also love to talk to you about your ideas for interesting municipal topics for future CitySpeak newsletters.

## MUNITEMPS IS HERE TO HELP...

And remember, MuniTemps is here for you should you need temporary help to fill a staff vacancy in your Department. We can help you with experienced municipal professionals for **Administration, City Clerk, Human Resources, Finance, Community Development, Public Works, Library, Community Services**, and other Departments.

As President of [MuniTemps.com](http://MuniTemps.com) Staffing, I am passionate about implementing best practices in municipal organizations.

I have worked hard during the past 28 years, serving many Cities and Special Districts as Finance Director and can provide your municipality with tried and tested staffing reorganizations and organizational solutions.

My team and I understand municipal organizations and the nuances of municipalities in serving their communities.

We consider it an honor and a privilege as we fill every order for temporary staffing and recruiting services for our municipalities.



I wish us all success as we work through the execution of municipal best practices and the continuous professional work ethic of serving our City organizations!



**John Herrera, CPA, MPA**  
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**Note:** MuniTemps will soon be launching the new **MuniGlobal®** division to provide budget-friendly **executive search services** exclusively for municipal organizations. Call us at (866) 406-MUNI (6864) to learn more. The **municipal managers and executives we recruit for your municipality will stay with your organization!**