

PARTNER

Jeffrey S. Ballinger

He/Him

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📍 San Diego



Jeffrey S. Ballinger is a partner with Best Best & Krieger LLP. His practice emphasizes all aspects of governmental law, including the Brown Act, Public Records Act, and the Political Reform Act, planning/zoning and environmental/natural resources law.

Municipal Law

Jeff serves as city attorney for the cities of Palm Springs and San Juan Capistrano, and is the former city attorney for the cities of Fontana, San Jacinto and Indian Wells. In addition to his city attorney work, Jeff also serves as general counsel to the Western Municipal Water District, Chino Valley Independent Fire Protection District and the Valley-Wide Recreation and Park District. Jeff frequently advises cities and other local governmental agencies on the Brown Act, the Political Reform Act and the Public Records Act. He works hard to ensure that the governing boards and councils he advises operate legally and smoothly to best serve their constituents. In often politically charged atmospheres, Jeff's calm influence helps keep intra-council relations positive as he helps them find common ground.

Jeff is a past chapter chair for the League of California Cities Municipal Law Handbook. He also previously served on the League of California Cities Legal Advocacy Committee, including as chair. Jeff has also served on the League of California Cities Environmental Policy Committee. Jeff also serves on the Board of Advisors to the University of Southern California Sol Price School of Public Policy, Executive Education Forum.

Recent projects include:

- Assisted the City of San Juan Capistrano with the development of a hotel-incentive program, which resulted in the development of a five-star resort hotel project.
- Helped the City of Big Bear Lake form a tourism improvement business district, which serves as a funding mechanism to collect assessments from the lodging businesses and two large ski resorts in the City. The revenues raised help market the City as a destination resort to boost tourism during the off-season.
- Jeff was on the legal team that helped the City of San Jacinto overcome challenges to bringing a Wal-Mart into the City. He is putting that experience to use again in assisting the City of Fontana do the same. It is typically controversial when Wal-Mart wants to open a new location, and challenges often lead to litigation.

CORE PRACTICES

California Public Records Act

California Coastal Act

Housing, Economic Development and Real Estate

Open Government & Ethics

Municipal Law

Special Districts

Police & Public Safety

EDUCATION & ADMISSIONS

Education

University of Southern California
Gould School of Law, J.D.University of California, Riverside,
B.S., sociology/law & society

Bar Admissions

California

- As local governments and other public agencies struggle to convert from paper to digital, Jeff is assisting the City of Fontana in its effort to create a paperless city hall. He is overseeing the drafting of ordinances, contracts and resolutions so that the City can format and store documents electronically in a way that is legal, yet promotes transparency.
- Over the past decade, Jeff has assisted the City of Ontario with the design, funding and build-out of the New Model Colony, consisting of 13 acres, 7,396 single family dwelling units, nearly 1.4 million square feet of commercial/industrial development, and \$150 million of public improvement financing. This build-out has included negotiating and drafting of a design and construction financing agreement as well as dozens of statutory development agreements, subdivision improvements agreements and development impact fee credit agreements with the developers of this land.

Jeff is putting his municipal law experience and knowledge on such issues as the Political Reform Act and the Public Records Act to use while providing as special counsel to LA28. The nonprofit, which he has served since 2015, was formed to bring the Olympics to Los Angeles in 2028.

Land Use, Planning & Zoning

Jeff represents both cities and special districts in court, at public meetings and in the course of complex land use transactions. He advises both public and private clients on matters including the Planning and Zoning law, the Subdivision Map Act and the California Environmental Quality Act. In addition, he has successfully defended land use and CEQA challenges both at the trial and appellate levels. Jeff's experience includes serving as legal counsel to the planning commissions of five cities, one of whom – Fontana – was listed as one of the top three fastest growing cities in California. He has also assisted private parties in obtaining development approvals before cities and counties throughout California.

Originally, Jeff aimed to become a prosecutor, as he wanted to serve the community by keeping it safe. Prior to joining BBK, Jeff worked at the Riverside County District Attorney's Office, as well as the San Bernardino County District Attorney's Office in the Writs and Appeals Department. He also worked at the Los Angeles County District Attorney's office, gaining daily courtroom experience. He is glad that the work he does serving public agencies has a positive impact on the community.

While attending law school, Jeff served as a judicial intern for Judge Mitchell Goldberg in the U.S. Bankruptcy Court. He was also editor of the USC Law Review. Jeff taught courses at his alma mater, the University of California, Riverside. He enjoys sailing, snowboarding and participating in physical endurance competitions to benefit charitable causes, including the AIDS LifeCycle and Tough Mudder. He also collects Swatch watches. Jeff and his husband live in San Diego.

Accolades

- Order of the Coif
- Trial Advocacy Awards for Best Opening Argument and Best Cross Examination
- American Jurisprudence Award for Torts

Professional & Community Involvement

- League of California Cities, City Attorney's Department, Municipal Law Handbook Committee, 2019-2021
 - San Bernardino Chapter of Habitat for Humanity
 - Central City Lutheran Mission in San Bernardino
 - First Lutheran Church, Redlands
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Thought Leadership

Publications

- “New California Laws Require New Ways of Operating Your Agency,” *BBKnowledge*, Jan. 26, 2017
- “Are You Complying? New 2015 Laws Affecting Public Agencies” *PublicCEO*, Jan. 14, 2015 (via *BBKnowledge*)
- “When Attorneys Serve As Local Politicians,” *Los Angeles Lawyer* magazine
- “Group Homes In The Neighborhood,” *Western City* magazine, September 2006

Presentations

- "Avoiding Liability as You Embrace the New Normal," California Park & Recreation Society Conference & Expo, March 9, 2022
- "Sober Living Facilities," International Municipal Lawyers Association Webinar, March 8, 2018
- "Fair Housing Claims and Enforcement Actions," League of California Cities Annual Conference, Sept. 3, 2014