Don’t Settle - Be Exceptional: Achieving Council Civility & Purpose

City Managers’ Department Meeting
February 1, 2018
The Institute for Local Government
ILG is the non-profit research and education affiliate of

www.ca-ilg.org
ILG Mission

- Promoting good government at the local level
- Practical, impartial and easy-to-use materials
Today’s Objectives

• Understand why governance matters.
• Share the attributes of exceptional councils.
• Take away strategies and techniques to help you and your council become an exceptional team.
Who's in the room today?
Today’s Presenters

Martin Gonzalez
Executive Director
Institute for Local Government

Rod Gould
City Manager (retired)

Shelly Masur
Redwood City, Councilmember

Patrick Blacklock
County Administrator
County of Yolo
What is Effective Governance & Why Does it Matter?
Foundation for Exceptional Councils

Governance Mindset

Effective Councils

Governance Tools
Attributes of Exceptional Councils

Leading public organizations and governing with colleagues on a council is a challenging art of community service. The Institute recognizes that many aspects of leadership and governance are not intuitive. This piece is intended to provide councilmembers and city managers insight into the attributes of exceptional councils as well as provide practical tips to help them become exceptional.

1. Exceptional councils develop a sense of team – a partnership with the city manager to govern and manage the city

   The mayor, councilmembers and city manager see themselves and work as a team as they undertake a series of tasks to further their common purpose. The individual team members work in a coordinated and collaborative manner with a high degree of respect, trust and openness. The team values diversity in style and perspective. The team thinks and acts strategically as it examines issues/situations and decides on a course of action serving their city’s mission and goals.

   **KEY CHARACTERISTICS**

   - Successfully transition from candidate to a member of the council.
   - Become a champion of the city. Make decisions based on the needs and interests of the community at-large / the greater good.
   - Develop, communicate and support policy goals and council decisions.
   - Demonstrate a willingness to work collaboratively (as a team) and have a citywide perspective.

   **BEST PRACTICE TIPS**

   Build capacity to create a more effective team. The governance team (mayor, councilmembers and city manager) should get to know each other, how each person approaches issues, decision making style and so on. This can be accomplished at annual meetings or workshops throughout the year. In the event that councilmembers disagree, clear ground rules (norms of behavior and practice) can help quell acrimony before it becomes a problem. It’s important to remember that trust is built around understanding and respect, not necessarily agreement.

2. Exceptional councils have clear roles and responsibilities that are understood and adhered.

   Exceptional councils understand their role is to serve as policy maker - to represent the values, beliefs and priorities of their community while serving in the community’s best interest. They carry out a variety of responsibilities including developing and adopting a vision for the city, focusing and aligning plans, policies, agreements and budgets in furtherance of this vision; and holding themselves and the city manager accountable for results.

   Exceptional councils understand that the city manager is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the city. The city manager is responsible for undertaking and accomplishing the policy objectives of the council. Exceptional councils recognize the subject matter expertise of staff and utilize their knowledge and experience to guide and inform decision making.

   **KEY CHARACTERISTICS**

   - Understand the role of local government and their responsibilities.
   - Know their role- to set vision and policy, avoid micromanagement.
   - Councilmembers should strive to be informed about the issues facing the city and be prepared to ask questions of staff and each other.

   **BEST PRACTICE TIPS**

   Create a shared understanding of the city manager’s role and the council’s expectations to optimize the working relationships. This shared understanding is informed by local charter and ordinance provisions that provide the overall framework for the relationship. The council should make time to have conversations during retreats and/or study sessions to define and/or reveal and refine their role and responsibilities. Since role clarity between the city council and city management is critical to mutual success, having clear protocols helps avoid misunderstandings.
Why Effective Governance Matters to CMs and ACMs

Hint: It’s Everything!!!
Noble Purposes

• Make Local Representative Democracy Work
• Build Community
• Enhance and Sustain your City
Difference between Agony and Ecstasy

• Council/Manager Form is a delicate dance
• Local government stakes never higher and environment is tough
• Good governance is the tonic for what ails the body politic
• Eight person crew example
Cal-ICMA tackles the issues that managers find most challenging
The Report of the City and County Manager Survival Skills Project  July 2015

Kevin Duggan, ICMA West Coast Regional Director, Mountain View, California

Frank Benest, ICMA Liaison for Next Generation Initiatives, Palo Alto, California

Jan Perkins, ICMA California State Liaison, Laguna Beach, California

Kevin O’Rourke, Cal-ICMA Board Member, Fairfield, California
SUPERHEROES
Partners & Resources
www.ca-ilg.org/leadership-and-governance

Elected Officials
- Effective Governance
- Making Decisions
- Working with Staff
- Media Relations
- Personnel & Labor

Management & Staff
- Effective Governance
- Responsibilities & Powers
- Developing Leadership
Greatest Challenges to the Manager and Governing Board Relationship

- Lack of respect for the council-manager form of government; role differentiation; micromanagement.
- Difficult financial conditions and budget reductions.
- Organizational impact of controversial issues.
- Conflict between councilmembers and “outlier” councilmember(s).
- Need for elected boards to set priorities and understand workload impacts and limited resources.
- Demands of individual council and board members (versus receiving direction from the council majority); bullying conduct by elected officials.
Focus on Outcomes

• Be attentive

• Ask clarifying questions

• Let people know you are listening
Separate People from the Problem
Focus on Interest, not Positions
Invent Options for Mutual Gain
Insist on Using Objective Criteria

LEADING YOUR CITY
IT’S ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS
Council Goal Setting

Encourage Council to work with the City Managers to establish goals for the year.
• City staff should support them
• Quarterly updates
• Budget priorities follow goals
Seek effective means to involve the community in big picture decisions

- Public hearings don’t cut it
- The civic engagement builds trust and confidence in local government
Teamwork

- Getting things done for the community as a team makes us all look good

- Accomplishments build relationships...which lead to other successes
Teamwork

How to get there --
• Play nice, be fair, be patient, be kind, no surprises
• Avoid squabbling and personal attacks
• Maintain a formal decorum and be respectful
• Refer to colleagues with their titles
City Manager – Council Relationship

• Council sets policy and overall direction
• City manager implements council policy and day-to-day operations and offers policy advice
• In discussions with Manager and Council, find that line and both stay within your area of responsibility
City Manager – Council Relationship

• Yes it is often more complicated
• But it is best if
  • The Council is not seen as involved in staff and administrative matters
  • The City Manager is not seen as dominating public decisions
City Manager – Council Relationship

• Show respect for:
  • Fellow councilmembers
  • Community at Large
  • Staff
  • Speakers
  • Press
  • Legislative Process
Manager Goals

• Make the Council as a whole productive and successful
• Help each Councilmember to succeed
• Meet the Council’s goals and the City looks good
• Help to keep the Council together and making progress
• Guide and develop staff and organizational culture
COUNCIL VS STAFF OR COUNCIL AND STAFF

- The work of the City is done by staff, not Council
- Set clear goals and policies
- Staff becomes a willing and effective partner
Neither City Managers nor City Councilmembers Can Do It Alone!

- Learn to compromise - take the long view
- Think strategically
- Always remember your values; why you ran for office or entered public service
- Put the community first in all matters
Do Your Homework and Be Prepared!

Read Agenda Materials
Ask questions in advance
Analyze alternatives
City Manager should share information equally with all Councilmembers
Set clear rules, policies, and procedures for Council Meetings.
Establish a Strong Council-Manager Partnership; Nurture, Feed, and Care For It

• Communicate through the Manager
• Ask questions of staff, but do not direct them
• Schedule time for team building, feedback, and relationship building
• Learn something new every time you can – on a daily basis
Establish Clear Measures for Success

- Achievable
- Measureable
- Motivating
- Regular review of policy effectiveness and implementation practices
Review How You Spend Your Time!

- Easiest or most important?
- Responding to crisis or anticipating future needs and challenges
- Pace your efforts for the long run
- Ask the public how you are doing
HAVE FUN!

• Celebrate Successes

• See the humor in your spectacular failures

• Enjoy your experiences – you worked hard to get here!
Shelly Masur, Councilmember
City of Redwood City
🐦 @skmasur
Effective Councils

- Unity of Purpose
- Agreed Upon Roles & Responsibilities
- Creating & Sustaining a Positive Governance Culture
- Governing with Protocols & Policies
Yolo County Transformation
Learning from Experience

Patrick Blacklock
Yolo County Administrator
February 2018
Governance Manual

- Manual developed in fiscal year 2014-2015

- Purpose to:
  - Utilize effective governance practices
  - Establish a unity of purpose

“Governance is the act of transforming the needs and desires of the community into policies that direct the organization...the way in which governance team members perform the governance role is critical.”
Governance Manual

Details the Board’s:

- Roles and responsibilities
- Guiding principles
- Norms for a positive governance culture
- Leadership Protocols

Source: California School Boards Association
Guiding Principles

1. Govern as a team, strategically focused and mission driven
2. Align goals and resources
3. Establish and govern within a culture of inquiry
4. Govern in an accessible manner, committed to openness and transparency
5. Govern in a collaborative manner with the community, staff and within the Board
6. Commit to continuous learning and improvement
7. Be accountable to each other for the highest standards of Board performance and effectiveness
**Sample Protocol**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Protocol</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual Supervisor</td>
<td>- Individual Supervisor requests will be only for information which does not require more than an incidental expenditure of staff resources. Every effort must be made to ensure questions are not considered direction for action and to understand the difference between commenting, suggesting and imposing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requests for Information</td>
<td>- Outside Board meetings, the initial request for information is made to the County Administrator or appropriate department head, thereby allowing department head or County Administrator to delegate response as appropriate to ensure the best outcome.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Following initial request, the County Administrator and appropriate department head are kept in the loop to further ensure the best outcome.</td>
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</table>
Review and Evaluation

▪ **Frequent Review:** Board holds 2 to 3 sessions each year to discuss the protocols and identify areas for improvement.

▪ **Survey:** All employee survey to evaluate the Board occurred in November 2017.

▪ **Self-evaluation:** Board Governance Session held in December 2017 designed as a self-evaluation workshop.
The Board has established 7 governance principles that guide their behavior. (More information can be found on pages 9 and 10 of the Board Governance Manual.) A workgroup of County employee’s created a values statement that was adopted by the Board in 2012. Please provide feedback on these two items below. (More information can be found on page 8 of the Board Governance Manual.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Governance Principles and County Values</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Board governs as a team, strategically focused and mission driven.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Board aligns goals and resources.</td>
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<tr>
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# Self-Evaluation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th><strong>UNSATISFACTORY</strong></th>
<th>Inconsistent and/or low quality practice of the majority of the Board or the Board as a whole</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td><strong>COULD BE IMPROVED</strong></td>
<td>Practice somewhat exhibited by some members of the Board or the Board as a whole</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td><strong>SATISFACTORY</strong></td>
<td>Practice often exhibited by some members of the Board or the Board as a whole</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td><strong>EXCELLENT</strong></td>
<td>Consistent and high quality practice of the Board as a whole</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Section I: The Board

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>The Board</th>
<th>(1) Unsatisfactory — (4) Excellent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The Board is committed to a common vision.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Governs as a team, strategically focused and mission driven.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Governs in a dignified and professional manner, treating everyone with civility and respect.</td>
<td></td>
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<td>4</td>
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<td>6</td>
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Resources

- Manual located on Yolo County webpage under “Board of Supervisors” page
- Direct document link: www.yolocounty.org/home/showdocument?id=42086
Foundation for
Exceptional Councils

Governance
Mindset

Effective
Councils

Governance
Tools
Foundation for Exceptional Councils

Governance Mindset
- System Thinking
- Strategic Focus
- Preparation
- Manner

Effective Councils
- Unity of Purpose
- Collaboration
- Coherence
- Commitment
- Consistency
- Agreed Upon Roles & Responsibilities

Creating & Sustaining a Positive Governance Culture

Governance Tools
- Discussion Meetings
- Governing with Protocols & Policies
- Governance Handbooks/Manuals
- Council Self-Evaluation
- Council Continuing Education

www.ca-ilg.org
Resources & Training for Managers & Councils

- Institute for Local Government
  - Exceptional Governance Team & Regional Trainings
  - Online Tools & Resources

- Cal-ICMA
  - Online Materials & Resources
  - Workshops & Conferences

www.ca-ilg.org
Contact Information

- Martin Gonzalez: mgonzalez@ca-ilg.org
- Rod Gould: rodgould17@gmail.com
- Shelly Masur: shellykmasur@gmail.com
- Patrick Blacklock: Patrick.Blacklock@yolocounty.org

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www.ca-ilg.org/ilg-news
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3. Exceptional councils honor the relationship with staff and each other

Exceptional councils understand that a good working relationship with staff is vital for the city to be run successfully. Exceptional councils treat each other and staff with dignity and respect. They act with civility and a high level of professional decorum. Councilmembers build trust by not playing the “gotcha game” and strive to have a no secrets, no surprises approach as an operating norm. Finally, they respect the diversity of styles and perspectives among their colleagues and staff and are open to new ideas.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS
• Councilmembers have the ability to respectfully disagree (to disagree without being disagreeable). They are able to leave it at the dais; debates are about policy, not personality.
• Exceptional councilmembers reflect positive decorum/model of leadership by providing respectful tone with colleagues.
• Establish a set of behaviors ahead of time, potentially documented in a code of conduct, to help promote civility and respect.

BEST PRACTICE TIPS
Set council priorities and strategic goals at an annual meeting; these goals and priorities are a tool to guide the city manager and staff on where to focus their efforts. This annual meeting provides time for the council to reflect on community priorities as well as offer an opportunity to discuss their decorum and their relationship among each other and the relationship between the city manager/staff and the council.

4. Exceptional councils routinely conduct effective meetings

Open and public meetings are central to democratic decision-making. Exceptional councils master the art of effective meetings. They develop and adhere to meeting protocols and processes. They spend time planning and organizing the agenda with the aim of having a more focused meeting. They allocate the council’s time and energy appropriately (focused on the council’s role and responsibilities) and meeting short- and long-term priorities. They honor the public’s participation and engagement and they generally start on time and are held during reasonable hours.

Exceptional councils use public meetings not only for their intended purpose, information sharing and decision-making,

KEY CHARACTERISTICS
• Councilmembers are respectful of each other, the public and everyone’s time.
• Councilmembers use engaging body language as a way to demonstrate respect.
• Issues are not personalized, thoughtful dialogue is the objective.
• Agenda packets are read, councilmembers come prepared and have an open mind
• Respect is demonstrated for varied opinions.
• Everyone strives to be civil and act with decorum.
but they also use the meeting to demonstrate respect and civility for each other, staff and the public. Exceptional councilmembers prepare in advance of the meeting, remain focused on the city goals and objectives and mindful of their role and responsibilities.

**BEST PRACTICE TIPS**

Develop and adopt (with regular reviews and updates), guidelines for conducting meetings and making decisions. These governance protocols typically address meeting procedures (agenda preparation, how to put issues on the agenda, debate and voting procedures (parliamentary rules) and standards of decorum (civility)). As part of a regular self-assessment, councils should evaluate their meetings and their effectiveness and adjust behavior and practices for better results.

### 5. Exceptional councils hold themselves and the city accountable

Exceptional councils operate openly, ethically and work to engage the community in a myriad of decisions impacting the prosperity and well-being of their community. Toward that end, exceptional councils consistently provide short- and long-term strategic direction and goals, as well as provide budget, program and policy oversight.

Exceptional councils hold themselves accountable for the conduct, behavior and effectiveness of the council. They establish clear priorities and goals and hold the city manager accountable for results. And finally, they embrace accountability as a process and tool to calibrate ongoing efforts to address and meet policy and program objectives.

**KEY CHARACTERISTICS**

- Councilmembers operate ethically and with integrity.
- Councils conduct team building / goal setting exercise to track progress towards mutually agreed upon goals
- Councils taking responsibility for the results (good and bad).
- Councils celebrate success.
- Councilmembers hold themselves responsible for adhering to operating protocols and codes of conduct.

**BEST PRACTICE TIPS**

Annually evaluate council and city manager performance toward achieving the city's priorities and goals (consider having this be part of an annual goal setting meeting). Council should consider assessing its own behavior and effectiveness as part of its annual self-assessment.
6. Exceptional councils have members who practice continuous personal learning and development

Governance is not intuitive. In addition, the policy and economic environment impacting cities are ever changing. Exceptional councils continually provide the opportunity to build their knowledge and skills, to enhance their understanding of key issues, increase their awareness of best practices and sharpen their leadership and governance skills.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Stay informed on key issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Gain key insights and knowledge on all aspects of governing, from budgets to plans and everything in between.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Learning to listen is sometimes more important than learning to give a speech.</td>
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<td>Seek out national, state and local professional growth and educational opportunities. These opportunities can focus on the nuts and bolts of governing to helping you gain valuable information and/or insights on key policy issues facing your city. In addition, city run orientations for newly elected officials provide a good way to acclimate new members to the council’s norms and protocols as well as the budget and key policy issues.</td>
</tr>
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