

How To Avoid Being Fired By Your Department Heads.....

League of CA Cities City Managers Department Annual Meeting | February 1, 2018

Panelists:

- Dan Rich, City Manager, Mountain View
- Lorie Tinfow, City Manager, Benicia
- Kevin Duggan, West Coast Regional Director, ICMA

Why This Topic:

- Cal-ICMA Survival Skills Project—Goal to Increase the Odds of City Manager Success
- Department Heads are a Key “Audience” for the CM
- Nature of the CM/DH Relationship Impacts the CM/Council Relationship
- Recent Examples of Significant Challenges

Types of Issues:

- Council Interference in Hiring/Termination of DH's
- Good (or bad) Relationships Between DH's and Councilmember(s)
- CM Viewed as Not Holding the DH's to a High Enough Standard
- CM Viewed as Not Able to Develop and Maintain and/or Maintain an Effective Relationship with DH's

Questions:

- What Was the Most Challenging Issue You Have Had with a DH and How Did You Handle It?
- As a New CM Coming Into an Organization, What Do You Do to Establish and Maintain an Effective Working Relationship With Department Heads?
- What Challenges Have You Experienced With City Councilmembers Relating to Department Heads?

Questions:

- What Can You Do to Establish and Maintain the Credibility of Your DH's With the City Council?
- How Do You Deal With One or More Councilmembers Wanting to Get Involved in DH Appointment or Termination Decisions?
- How Do You Strike a Balance Between Being Supportive of Your Department Heads While Being Responsive to Council/Community Concerns?

Strategies

- Recognize the Department Heads as a “Key Audience”—Commit the Time Necessary to Establish and Maintain an Effective Relationship
- Fully Appreciate the Connection Between Your Relationship With the DH Team and Your Relationship with the City Council
- Determine How the Council Can Provide Input on Service Quality Without Overstepping Into Managerial Responsibility

Strategies

- If You Are Having Challenges With Multiple Department Heads, Carefully Consider the Cause and What to Do About It
- Balance the Desire to Provide Support to DH’s With the Need to Require Adequate Performance
- Have a Plan, Including Specific Techniques, on How to Establish and Maintain an Effective Relationship With the DH Team—“Invest the Time!”

Strategies

- Help Establish the Credibility of DH's With the Council—Both as People and Professionals
- When You Need to Improve Performance/Replace DH's, Do So Thoughtfully and Skillfully
- Avoid Overreacting or Underreacting to DH Performance Issues

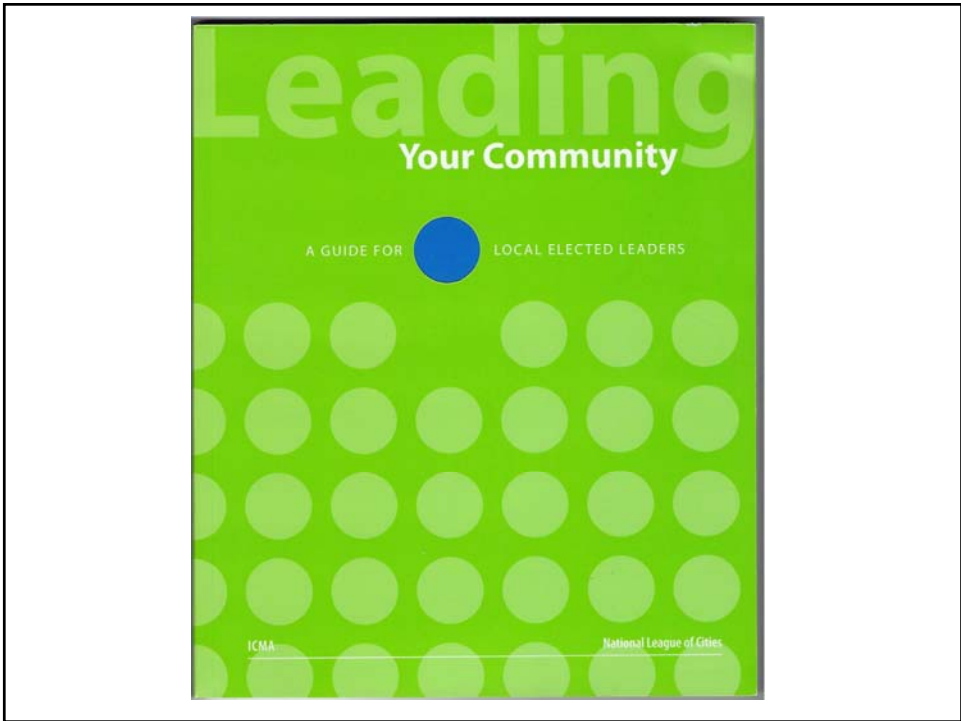
Strategies

- Clearly Communicate Expectations; Be Consistent, But Adjust Style and Technique Based on Circumstances
- Create Techniques to Allow City Council Input on Organizational/Departmental Performance—Without Direction on How to Resolve Concerns
- Protect Your Authority to Appoint/Remove DH's While Keeping the Council Informed of Significant Issues Involving Department Heads/Departments

QUESTIONS

Resources:

- ICMA (International City/County Management Association): icma.org
- ILG (Institute for Local Government): ca-ilg.org



ICMA

INTERNATIONAL CITY/COUNTY
MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION

