

City Manager & City Council Relations: Working With an “Outlier” Council Member

2017 Mayors & Council Members Executive Forum | June 29, 2017

Panelists:

- Gustav Larsson, Vice Mayor, Sunnyvale
- Dana Reed, Council Member, Indian Wells
- Deanna Santana, City Manager, Sunnyvale
- Kurt Wilson, City Manager, Stockton
- Moderator: Kevin Duggan, ICMA West Coast Regional Director, ICMA

Why This Topic?

- Cal-ICMA “Survival Skills Project”/Challenges and Opportunities Report
- “Outlier” Council Members Was a Significant Concern
- A Need to Define the Issue and Suggest Strategies

Goals for Session

- Define the Types of “Outlier” Council Members
- Review the Impacts They Can Have
- The Council’s Role vs. the City Manager’s Role
- Provide Strategies to Deal With These Situations:
 - What The Council Can/Should You Do
 - How You Can Help Support the City Manager and Staff in These Situations

Outline For The Session

- Creating Context
- Questions for the Panel/Discussion
- Some Suggested Strategies
- Questions/Discussion With the Audience

What is An Outlier?

- Different Types/Different Impacts
- Simply a New Member?
- A Council Member Who Represents Different Policy Positions/A Different Perspective?
- A Council Member With a Different Personality/Work Style?
- A Council Member With a Negative and Confrontational Approach?

The Most Challenging “Outliers”:

- Every Staff Presentation is an Inquisition
- Questions Motives/Integrity of Fellow Council Members
- Routinely Discloses Confidential Information
- Spends All Their Time on Minutia/Miss Big Picture
- Never Prepared for Meetings/Ask for Information Already Provided
- Never Willing to Bring Closure to An Issue
- Refuses to Abide by Meeting Rules of Order
- Goes Around Manager to Staff
- Always Trying to Make the Fellow Council Members/Manager/Staff Look Bad

Impacts on the Organization

- How the “Outlier” Can Impact the Council
- How the “Outlier” Can Impact the Manager/Staff
- The Significance of the Council’s Reaction:
 - If You Do Nothing
 - If You Overreact
 - The Attitude the Council Demonstrates

Question #1:

- What Type of “Outlier” Have You Experienced?
- What Did You Think Your Role as a Fellow Council Member or Manager Was in Regard to Getting Involved?
- What Did You Think Your Manager’s or Council’s Role Was?

Question #2:

- What Strategies Did You Enlist?
- How Effective Were They?
- Did You Consider “Enlisting Allies”?
- How Did it Work Out?
- What Would You Do Differently the “Next Time”?

Question #3:

- What Do You Do if There is No Hope of Change?
- Any Suggested “Coping” Mechanisms?
- Can Anything Positive Come From Having to Work With an Outlier Council Member?

When Is Intervention Appropriate?

- When the Work of the Council is Being Disrupted/Negative Interpersonal Relations
- When the Manager/Staff are Being Negatively Impacted
- When Public Confidence is Suffering

Steps in the Process

- Diagnose the Type of “Outlier”
- Carefully Discern Your Role
- Thoughtfully Consider Strategy
- Implement Strategy (if action is appropriate)

3 Levels of Strategy

- Personal Intervention
- Soliciting Help From Others/Facilitation
- Formal/Outside Intervention:
 - Censure
 - Investigation
 - Formal Complaint

What Allies Can You Enlist?

- Mayor?
- Other Councilmembers?
- Manager?
- Community Leaders?
- Supporters?

What If Nothing Changes?

- Exercise Emotional Maturity/Intelligence
- Keep Communication Open/Don't "Shut Down"
- Keep It in Perspective
- Do Your Best to Insulate Manager/Staff
- Help the Council/Staff Stay Focused
- Recognize That the Best You May be Able to Do is Minimize the Damage



Cal-ICMA Survival Skills Project:

Challenges and Strategies: Maximizing Success for City and County Managers in California

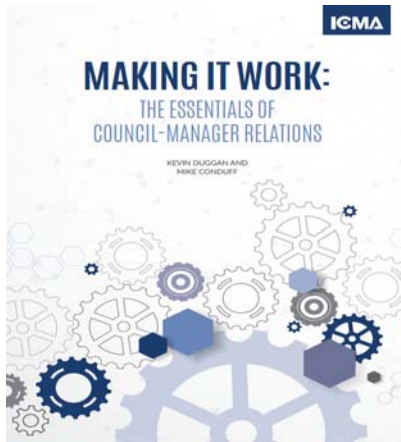
icma.org/challenges+strategies



The Institute for Local Government (ILG):

Leadership and Governance Resources:

www.ca-ilg.org



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