

How to Work Effectively With Your City Manager and Department Heads

League of CA Cities Mayor's and Councilmembers Executive Forum | June 28, 2018

Panelists:

- Chris Coursey, Mayor, Santa Rosa
- Alice Patino, City Mayor, Santa Maria
- June Catalano, City Manager, Pleasant Hill
- Moderator: Jim Lewis, City Manager, Pismo Beach & President of the City Manager's Department

Why This Topic:

- Cal-ICMA Survival Skills Project—Goal to Increase the Odds of City Manager Success in Effectively Working With Elected Officials
- Department Heads are a Fundamental to the City Manager and City Council Achieving Success
- Nature of the CM/DH Relationship Impacts the CM/Council Relationship

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:

- Describe the Type of Relationship You Have With Department Heads and the Appropriate Role for You to Play vs. the Role of the City Manager?
- Why Have You Found it Important/Appropriate for Councilmembers to Work Through the City Manager on Department Head Related Issues?

Questions:

- What is the Most Appropriate and Effective Way for a Member of the Council to Address Concerns with Department/Department Head Performance?
- Why is it Important for the Selection/Termination of Department Heads Not be Directed by the Council or Individual Members?
- How Can the City Council Address Concerns that the City Manager Is Either Too Close to or Not Getting Along with One or More Department Heads?

Questions:

- What Can the City Manager Do to Establish and Maintain the Credibility DH's With the City Council?
What Should the CM Avoid Doing?
- How Do You Deal With One or More Councilmembers Wanting to Get Involved in DH Appointment or Termination Decisions?
- How Should the Council React if They Here Complaints from One or More Department Heads Regarding the City Manager?

Strategies

- Recognize and Respect the Different Roles and Responsibilities of Elected Officials vs. the City Manager
- Work With the City Manager to Determine How the Council Can Provide Input on Service Quality Without Overstepping Into Managerial Responsibility

Strategies

- Take the Time to Get to Know the Department Heads/Department Head Team Including the Education and Experience they Bring to their Roles.
- Don't Blindside the City Manager Regarding Departmental/Department Head Issues
- Focus on "The What, Not the How"

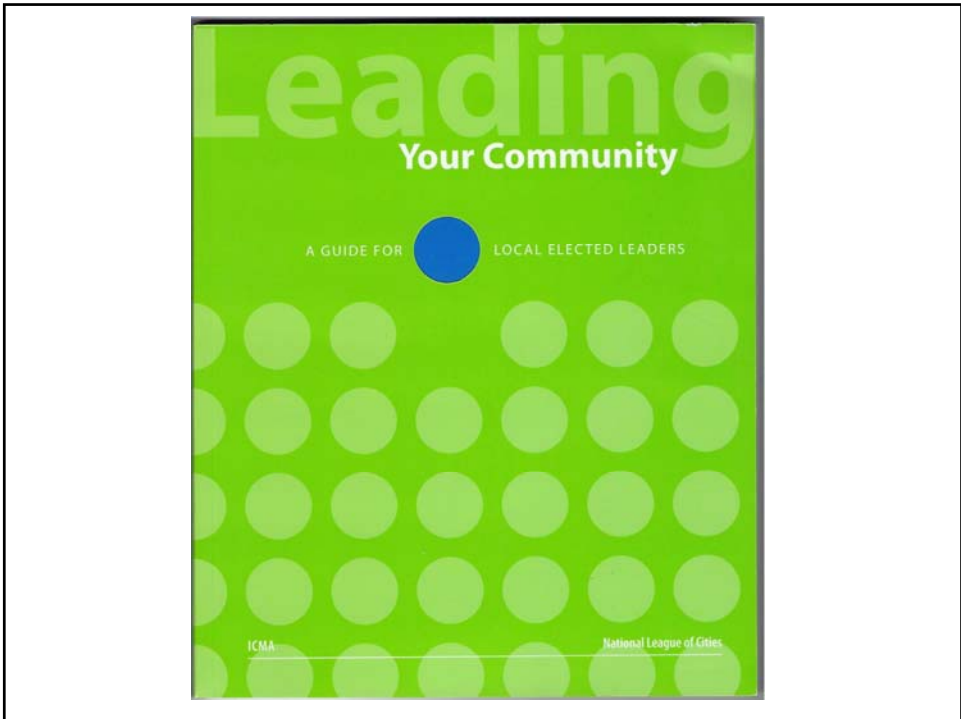
Strategies

- Allow the CM Sufficient Time ("Breathing Space") to Resolve DH Issues
- Avoid Jumping to Conclusions Regarding Complaints from the Public Regarding Departments/Department Heads

QUESTIONS

Resources:

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



The logo for the International City/County Management Association (ICMA). It features the letters 'ICMA' in a bold, white, sans-serif font. The letter 'I' is a simple vertical bar. The letter 'C' is a circle with a small square in the center. The letter 'M' is a simple vertical bar. The letter 'A' is a simple vertical bar with a small triangle at the top.

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