

The Relationship Between the City Council and the City Manager and Staff

New Mayor's and Council Member's Academy | January 19, 2017

Panelists:

- Nelson Fiahlo, City Manager, Pleasanton
- Kathy Narum, Council Member, Pleasanton
- Moderator: Kevin Duggan, ICMA West Coast Regional Director, ICMA

To Begin With

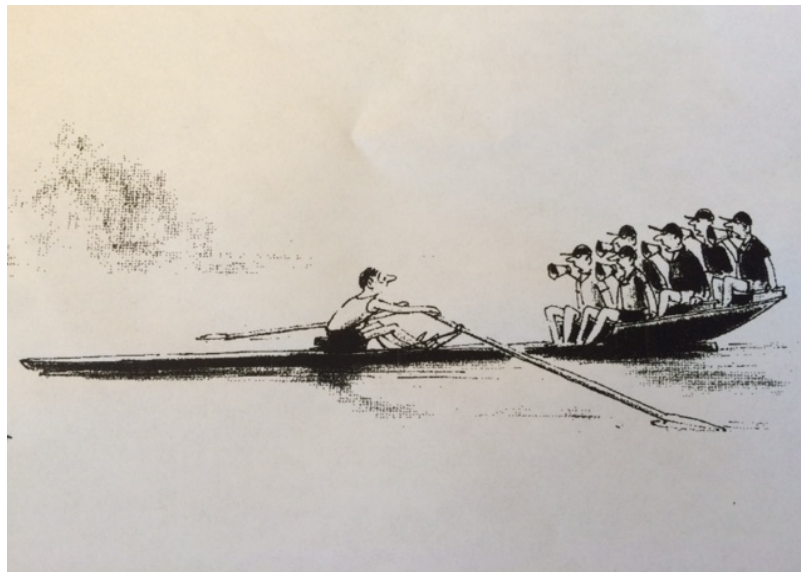
- Congratulations
- An Honor and a Responsibility
- Not Necessarily an Easy Adjustment
- It Takes Time and Effort

Session Outline:

- Introduction
- A “Manager’s Perspective”
- A “Councilmember’s Perspective”
- Panel Discussion Questions
- Questions From the Audience

What You Need to Know About Your City Manager

- What You May Already Perceive May Not Be Accurate
- Managers Put a Very High Priority on Having a Good Working Relationship with their Councilmembers
- Have an Open Mind
- They Represent the Policy Positions of the CURRENT City Council
- Take the Time to Develop a Relationship



It's All About Teams/Teamwork

- The Council Team
- The Council/Manager Team
- The Council/Manager/Staff Team

From a Manager's Perspective: Optimal Performance:

- Elected Officials Focus on the Big Picture/Not Detailed Implementation (Administration)
- City Manager/Staff Avoid Undue Influence on Policy Development—Focus on Policy Implementation and Service Delivery

From a Manager's Perspective: Suggestions

- Understand and Respect the Council/Manager Plan of Governance
- Allow Time for You and the Manager to Get to Know Each Other and Develop a Working Relationship
- City Managers Do Their Best to Carry Out the Policy Direction of the Council—Even When It Changes

From a Manager's Perspective: Suggestions

- Appreciate the Legitimate Difference Between “Community Perspective” and “Professional/Technical Perspective”
- The Critical Importance of Clear Policy Direction
- Be Sensitive to the Need for City Managers to Sometimes Tell You “What You Don't Want to Hear”

From a Manager's Perspective: Suggestions

- Don't Jump to Conclusions Regarding Citizen/Customer Feedback
- Don't Expect the Manager to Exercise "Political Leadership"
- Have a Clear Understanding With the Manager Regarding the Type and Frequency of Communication You Prefer
- If the Relationship is Not Going Well, Communicate Your Concerns and Provide Opportunities for the Manager to Address to Address Them

From a Manager's Perspective: Conclusion:

- Organizational Performance
- Organizational Reputation
- Value to the Community
- Personal Reputation
- Community Pride and Confidence

From a Councilmember's Perspective: Optimal Performance:

- Council Sets Policy/Overall Direction (Staff Offers Professional Advice, But Does Not Dominate Public Discussions)
- Manager and Staff Implements Policy and Day-to-Day Operations
- The Key for Both Parties is to “Find That Line” and Stay Within Your Areas of Responsibility

From a Councilmember's Perspective: Suggestions:

- Recognize That You Are Now “Different” Than Before You Were Elected
- But Don't Fall Into the Trap of Feeling You Are VERY Special
- Take Your Role Seriously, But Not Yourself

From a Councilmember's Perspective: Suggestions:

- Be Prepared and Do Your Homework!
- Conduct Yourself at Council Meetings in a Professional/Businesslike Manner
- Disagree With the Recommendation, But Don't "Attack the Messenger" (Critique the Idea, Not the Person)

From a Councilmember's Perspective: Suggestions:

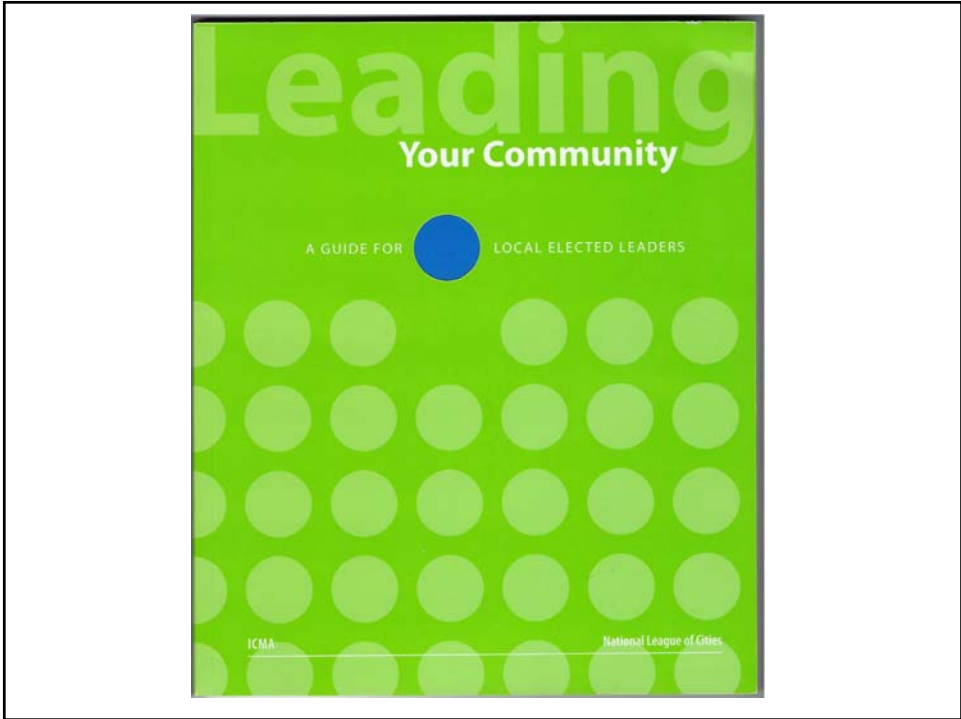
- Decisions: It's About the Majority, Not the Individual
- Remember, the City Manager Has 5, 7 or ? "Bosses"
- Support Reasonable Risk Taking By the Manager and Staff
- Model Tolerance for Organizational Imperfection (Mistakes!)

From a Councilmember's Perspective: Conclusion:

- Celebrate Success!
- See the Humor in Your Failures/Use Those Experiences as Learning Moments
- Have Fun!! Enjoy Your Experience—You Worked Hard to Get Here!!

Resources:

- ICMA (International City/County Management Association): icma.org
- ILG (Institute for Local Government): ca-ilg.org
- LCC (League of CA Cities): cacities.org



ICMA

INTERNATIONAL CITY/COUNTY
MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION

