

## The Relationship Between the City Council and City Management

---

New Mayor's and Council Members Academies | January 17&31, 2019

## Panelists:

---

- Nelson Fialho, 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 Councilmembers
- Have an Open Mind
- They Represent the Policy Positions of the CURRENT City Council
- Take the Time to Develop a Relationship
- You Will Succeed or Fail as a 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 Them

## From a Manager's Perspective: Conclusion:

---

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

## From a Council Member'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 Council Member'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 Council Member'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 Council Member'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 Council Member'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!!



## Digging a Little Deeper: Discussion

---

- What Are the Most Important Things the Manager Can Do to Help the Council be Successful?
  
- What Are the Most Important Things the Council Can Do to Help the Manager/Staff be Successful?

## Digging a Little Deeper: Discussion

---

- What Should the Manager Do if a Councilmember Attempts to Direct a Staff Member (Including the City Manager)?
  
- What Should a Council Member Do If They Are Hearing Concerns About a Staff Member?
  
- What Should A Council Member Do If They Are Concerned About Something the City Manager Said or Did?

## Resources:

---

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



[www.icma.org/en/press](http://www.icma.org/en/press)

