Council Member Roles and Responsibilities

New Mayors & Council Members Governance Workshop – Webinar Series
June 4, 2020
Los Angeles County Division

ABOUT THE LOS ANGELES COUNTY DIVISION

- The largest of 16 regional divisions in the League of California Cities®
- Representing 90 cities and over 11 million people in Los Angeles County
- Covering 4,500 square miles
- Over 450 Elected Officials
- Thousands of City Staff
- Membership includes the smallest in population (Venice) to the largest (Los Angeles) of the state’s 482 cities

ADVOCACY
- Bill Tracking and Advocacy
- Legislative Scorecard
- Engagement on County and Regional Issues
- Bold Measure Engagement
- Appointments to League Policy Committees and County Regional Board and Commissions

NETWORKING
- Regular Community Membership Meetings
- All Office Holiday Reception
- Division Networking Events at League Conferences

EDUCATION
- Newly Elected Governance Workshop
- Countywide City Managers Meeting
- Issues Specific Training Sessions

COMMUNICATIONS
- Monthly Newsletter
- Focused and Electronic Outreach toMayors, CityCouncil Members, and City Staff
- Social Media Engagement and Outreach
How to Ask a Question

• To verbally ask questions, use the ‘Raise Hand’ feature.
  • Click on the icon labeled “Participants” on the Zoom Menu.
  • Look for the little blue hand icon labeled “Raise Hand”.

• To write questions, you may put it in the ‘Chat’ and a moderator will pose the question to the presenter.
Speakers

Ron Bates, Ph.D.
*Past President, League of California Cities & Retired City Manager*

Pat West
*Retired City Manager, City of Long Beach*
Becoming an Effective Leader at City Hall

1. Council Staff Relationship
2. Codes of Conduct
3. Council Leadership Practices
4. Effective Council Meetings
Congratulations!

You ran a successful campaign, worked hard, and won. Now what???
Build and Strengthen Relationships

• People vote for and do business with people they like and trust.

• New council members must now build relationships with new colleagues and community members to achieve success.

• Collaboration and civility are keys!!
Take the Opportunity to Learn

- You may feel pressure from your constituency to produce results...but begin slowly.
- You don’t have to prove anything.
- Get the lay of the land.
- Listen, listen, listen...then listen some more to your colleagues and city staff.
You can be a standout Councilmember and a solid team player too!

City Government is a team sport.

It’s all about collaboration, persuasion and relationships.
Council and Staff

How to Maintain a Healthy Working Relationship with City Staff
City Manager / Council Relationships

• Council sets policy and overall direction.

• City manager implements council policy and day-to-day operations and offers policy advice.

• In discussions with city manager and council, recognize those roles and both stay within your area of responsibility.
City Manager’s Goals

• Make the council, as a whole, productive and successful.

• Help each councilmember to succeed.

• Meet the council's goals and make the city an effective service provider.

• Help keep the council together and make progress.

• Guide and develop staff and a positive organizational culture.
Council and Staff

Councilmember Role

• Encourage a professional relationship and meet with your city manager periodically.

• Your city manager can be your greatest asset in reaching your goals.

• Want to get things done? Ask the city manager, not the staff.

• Hold city manager accountable.
Council Goal Setting

• Encourage council to work with the city manager to establish annual goals:

  • City staff supports the annual goals.
  
  • Quarterly updates provided by staff.
  
  • Budget priorities follow goals.
  
  • Evaluate accomplishment of goals.
Evaluating the City Manager
• Hold the City Manager accountable for Council goals.

• If there is conflict around an individual councilmember's request, then the city manager needs to work to resolve the conflict.

• Best not to publicly criticize the city manager or staff - take up your disappointments privately with the city manager.
• Above all develop trust and respect.

• Come to meetings prepared.

• Avoid gifts and favors.

• Make decisions based on merit.
Council Code of Conduct

You are part of the City’s Team

• Play nice, be fair, be patient, be kind, no surprises.

• Avoid squabbling and personal attacks.

• Maintain a formal decorum and be respectful.
Effective Council Leadership Practices

Neither City Managers nor City Councilmembers Can Do It Alone!

• Learn to compromise - take the long view.

• Think strategically.

• Always remember your values; why you ran for office or entered public service.

• Put the community first on all matters.
Do your Homework & Be Prepared

• Read agenda and supporting materials.
• Ask questions in advance when possible.
• Analyze alternatives.
• City manager should share information equally with all council members.
• Set clear rules, policies, and procedures for council meetings.
Effective Council Leadership Practices

**Have Fun!**

- Celebrate success.
- See the humor in your mistakes and learn from them.
- Enjoy your work experiences—you worked hard to get here!
Effective Council Meetings
Effective Council Meetings

• Hold the City Manager responsible for working with the Mayor and organizing an effective agenda.
• Stick to the agenda when possible. Don’t wander off. Keep discussion relevant to the agenda item.
• Try to relax, be diligent and move the Council Meeting along.
• Allow sufficient discussion and engagement by Council members. When members start repeating the same points it may be time to move on.
• Allow for adequate public input without allowing the meeting to be hijacked.
• Answer simple questions from Council members and the public when they are asked – don’t delay the answers until later on the agenda or at the end of the meeting.
Questions?

Ron Bates  
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Pat West  
pat@patwestllc.com
Helpful Resources

Los Angeles County Division
www.lacities.org

League of California Cities
www.cacities.org

California City Finance
www.californiacityfinance.com

Institute For Local Government
www.ca-ilg.org
Don’t Forget to Join Us!

Financial Responsibilities & City Revenues
Thursday, June 11, 3:00-4:00 p.m.

• Financial Administration: Your Role as a Council Member
• Ins and Outs of City Funds
• The Budget and the Budget Process

Pat West, Retired City Manager, City of Long Beach