



Staff/Board/Elected Official Relationship

GAZA 2020 Winter Conference

PROMOTING EXCELLENCE IN GOVERNMENT

Welcome and Introduction

- Opening Remarks
- Introductions – Who’s in the Room?
 - Name
 - Organization
 - What is one of your challenges related to elected officials and staff relations?



Staff/Board/Elected Official Relationships

This course explores the unique perspectives of local government elected officials and staff and how a greater understanding of each other's perspectives can reduce friction and misunderstanding and result in improved public service delivery. The distinction between policy making and administration and other elected officials-staff related issues are explored using exercises, case studies and group discussion.



Teaching Methods

- Shared experiences and discussion
- Lecture (via power point presentation)
- Reflection ~ learning to action
("now what?")



Ground Rules

- Academic Freedom/Non-Attribution
- Interaction (learn from each other)
- Respect for the Speaker (whoever that may be!)
- Identify and Highlight "Best Practices" and Innovations



What do you see?



What do you see?



Table Talk

Why do elected officials & staff see the world differently?



Table Talk Follow-up

Why do elected officials & staff see the world differently?

- Different values embedded in local politics
- Different constituencies
- Different responsibilities/expectations/roles
- Different time frames
- Generational Issues
- Different ways of evaluating "success"

"Good Politics" is about values, not right answers.



Table Talk Follow-up

Assumptions & Assertions

- Good administration cannot overcome bad politics
- Good politics cannot overcome bad administration
- While it is impossible to draw clear lines between policy and administration, the actors from these separate functions can have very different perspectives



What is Politics?

What comes to your mind when you hear of the word "politics"?



What is Politics?

- Empty promises and speech-making
- Pay-offs and unethical activities
- Accommodation and compromise
- Saying one thing and doing another
- Taking care of your friends and not the general public
- Doing what you have to do to get re-elected
- Getting people to do what you want them to do
- Abuse of power



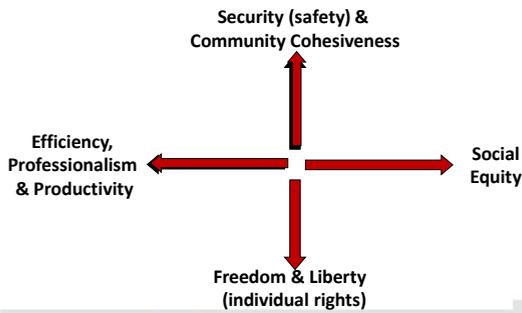
What is Politics?

Defined(1): Competition between multiple interest groups or individuals for power and leadership in a governmental or other group

Defined(2): Choosing between competing public values



American Public Values



Political Values

- Security (safety) & Community Cohesiveness
- Efficiency, Professionalism & Productivity
- Social Equity
- Freedom & Liberty (individual rights)

What do you value most?



Table Talk

What political values do you see playing out on your elected body?

What values do you see playing out with staff?



Role of Elected Official

“The voters selected us because they had confidence in our judgment and our ability to exercise that judgment from a position where we could determine what were their own best interests, as part of the community’s interests. This may mean that we must on occasion lead, inform, correct, or ignore constituent opinion, if we are to exercise fully that judgment for which we were elected.” -- John F. Kennedy

What do you think?



Council/Commission and Staff

Assumptions & Assertions

The chief role/responsibility of the governing body is community building and achieving its broad-based strategic goals

The chief role/responsibility of the staff is modernizing and shaping the organization so that it can be responsive to city goals

Why do local governments hire managers or administrators and other top level positions?



Roles are Like Owning/Operating a Train

- The elected body owns the train, says where the train will go, how much to charge for passage, and how fancy the décor will be
- The elected body hires professional executive staff with the skills and training to drive, operate and maintain the train, and serve passengers and other customers



So ... what do you think?

At your tables, discuss the appropriate roles of:

- Council/Commission/Boards
- Staff
- Employees

Who are the elected officials/board member constituents?

Who are staff's constituents?



Keys to developing a better relationship

Understand the Form of Government (Charter or State Statute)

- Sets out legal authority
- Defines authority of council/commission, mayor/chairman and manager/administrator
- Defines services of the local government
- Defines roles and responsibilities of officials and staff



Forms of Government

- Strong Mayor
 - Council serves policy-making role
 - Mayor serves executive role
- Weak Mayor
 - Mayor & Council share policy-making role
 - Mayor serves as executive; though primarily ceremonial



Forms of Government

- Council-Manager
 - Mayor & Council share policy-making role
 - Mayor serves as chairperson of meetings
 - Manager implements policy, oversees HR, develops budget and administers contracts
- Important to note that these are three distinct forms of government, but there are many variations



Recognize Today's Challenge for Local Government

- Closest to people
- Issues more complex
- High expectations with lack of resources
- Technology and information flow changing
- Intergovernmental relationship critical to service delivery



Recognize Today's Challenge for Local Government (cont.)

- More special interest groups and those with personal stakes
- High level of cynicism of public
- More division among the public and Council/Commission as to what the role of the local government should be in their community



Realize the Importance of Relationships

Today relationships are critical and require skill on how to get along with others

- Governments
- Private Businesses
- Non Profits, Churches, and other community groups
- Citizens



Defining Success and Evaluation Methods

- Which stakeholders are to be satisfied
- Agreeing on performance measures
- Unintended consequences
- Public's perception
- Cost/benefit
- Qualitative vs. quantitative
- Others?



Aligning Expectations and Contributions

- Can we get “politics” out of the day-to-day administration of city government?
- Translating Politics into Administration
- Translating Administration into Politics
- Ways to account for different time horizons, roles, values, constituencies and definitions of ‘success’



Aligning Expectations and Contributions

What does the Council expect from Staff?



What does the staff expect from the Council?

What will the Council contribute to staff?



What will the staff contribute to Council?



Aligning Expectations and Contributions

Council

For you to be successful, what do you need or expect from Senior Staff?

Staff

For you to be successful, what do you need or expect from the Council members?



- **Mayor & Council's expectations of staff:**
 - courteous and professional service
 - serve the entire council as a whole
 - honesty and loyalty
 - develop ideas and recommendations
- **Mayor & Council's contributions to staff:**
 - provide adequate resources
 - provide clear expectations & goals
 - be available, respect & trust the staff
 - no micro-management; follow chain of command



- **Staff's expectations of the mayor & council:**
 - consistent treatment; encouragement
 - trust and value the staff's work product
 - fair compensation
 - provide necessary resources to do job
 - feedback about what citizens want
- **Staff's contributions to the mayor & council:**
 - professional and courteous work
 - support the council's decisions
 - well thought-out & honest work
 - same information to all council members



Homework Assignment

Have the 2-way conversation with your officials about needs and expectations in a safe environment.



Reach agreement on those expectations.

Are you comfortable having this conversation? Why not?



What Are Some of the Unspoken Concerns Elected Officials Have About Staff?

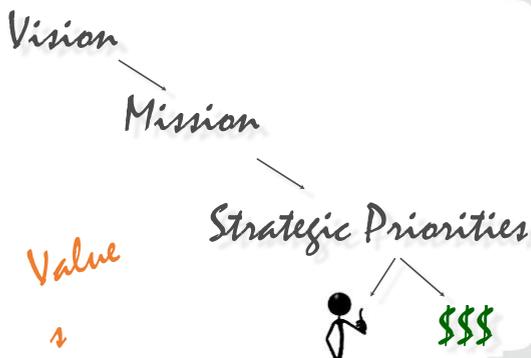
- They aren't telling me everything I need to know
- Staff has their own agenda
- Staff should be able to handle maverick council members
- Others?



What Are Some of the Unspoken Concerns Staff Have About Elected Officials?

- They don't know what is really going on
- Their personal political gains get in the way of good decision making
- They don't understand what their role is
- Others?





Build a Positive Image of the Local Govt

To be effective, today's Local Government must build a sense of community and a real belief in the value of the city which requires:

- An atmosphere of trust and commitment
- A feeling of belonging especially something more than an individual
- Foreseeing a sense of bonding and connection among citizens and nurturing a feeling of civic pride
- Creating a feeling of being rooted to the community through involvement with schools, neighborhood, and civic associations
- Creating a positive feeling of being active in community by volunteering



Acknowledge Working Together is Critical

- There are three primary groups involved in operation of local government
 - Elected Officials
 - Manager or Administrator
 - Professional Staff
- The success of a depends on the ability of these three groups to work together as a team for the benefit of the community



Traditional Role



Like unto a train...

- Council/Commission owns the train
- Council/Commission hires professional staff to run it



Public Administration

- More like being together in a rowboat
- Staff has more discretion and actually helps steer



“Administration is the most obvious part of government; it is government in action; it is the executive, the operative, the most visible side of government, and is of course as old as government itself.”

- Woodrow Wilson



“The acceptability of public administration principles is dependent upon their consistency with and contribution to those democratic values which the community is determined to preserve at all costs.”

- Marshall Dimock



Role of the Mayor/Chairman

- Chair council/commission meetings
- Serve as primary contact between management and council/commission
- Encourage communication with citizens, the media, staff and council to keep agenda moving
- Represent local government in a variety of settings
- Facilitate action
- Help create, maintain & strengthen effectiveness
- Encourage and support community during crisis



Role of the Council/Commission

- Establish community vision
- Develop long-term goals, priorities, objectives
- Adopt policies to guide local programs and services
- Enact ordinances (local laws)
- Communicate with citizens
- Review and approve annual budget
- Oversee management performance
- Respond to citizens – coordinate with staff
- Represent the local government in the community



Role of the Manager

The Manager is ultimately responsible for the day to day operations of the local government

- Assist the Mayor/Chairman and Council/Commission to develop good policies including providing policy alternatives to support council action
- Carry out policies adopted by the elected officials
- Oversee enforcement of city ordinances
- Manage all city services and oversee the delivery by city organization
- Ensure city adheres to national, state, and local laws and requirements for the city



Role of the Manager

- Prepare the annual operating budget and ensure fiscal responsibility
- Recruit, hire, train and supervise workforce
- Assist in the preparation and review of materials for council agenda
- Develop long-range operating plans for general service functions (police, fire, park, recreation etc. and city operated utilities)
- Final approval authority for administrative actions
- Coordinate information sharing and action among council
- Represent the city to other organizations and the community



Successful Managers Understand that Manager Functions in Three Major Categories

- Administrative head of organization
- Staff of the Council / Commission
- Representative of the City / County to other governmental groups, non-profit groups, private sector businesses and ultimately the community



Best Practices for professional managers

- Establish procedures for elected officials' interactions with professional staff
- With the Council/Commission and professional staff, assess the need for services and programs, understanding the impact on resources and demands of the public while balancing the ability of the community to pay for them
- Follow through on all requests of the council/commission making sure they are implemented in a timely manner and reporting back to the council periodically on the status
- Avoid public surprises keeping the council/commission and staff apprised of issues which could have policy, media, or public interest



Best Practices for professional managers

- Give visibility and credit to the Council/Commission for their leadership and respect their role
- Provide budget priorities and fiscal boundaries outlining potential impact of decisions or sustainability
- Attract and build a solid management team and delegate authority appropriately
- Ensure quality control of staff services and ensure staff feels engaged and appreciated
- Understand the importance of building partnerships and alliances with the public, private businesses, and nonprofits both inside and outside the community



Best Practices for professional managers

- Emphasize communication and high standards for the staff and hold the organization to good customer service standards
- Keep the staff members informed about community and council concerns and actions by insuring involvement of the managers in citywide leadership meetings
- Translate for the Council/Commission, technical information from staff and vice versa



Role of the Staff

- Provide different types of professional and technical expertise in the delivery of day to day services
- Respect the Manager/Administrator, Council/Commission and follow the direction given and provide technical and professional advice
- Be part of a functioning team with the Manager, Council/Commission and Mayor/Chairman with the local government's interest as the highest priority
- Follow ordinances, and where needed and appropriate, propose changes to them
- Assist the Manager to enable the Council/Commission to make good decisions and carry out goals and priorities



Role of the Staff (Cont.)

- Commit to help operate in an effective, efficient, accountable, and equitable way for the community
- Assist the Manager/Administrator to consistently communicate issues, successes, and failures to the Council/Commission and community in a timely fashion
- Assist the Manager to develop and execute a working relationship between the Manager, staff, Council/Commission through:
 - Open communication;
 - Clear operating guidance;
 - Mutual respect; and
 - A commitment to working together for the good of the community



Critical Characteristics of Professional Managers

Should focus on:

- Communication – (both inside and outside the organization)
- Competency – of all employees
- Respect – Council/Commission, Staff, and public
- Integrity
- Honesty
- Risk taking and innovation – (should be encouraged)
- Responsiveness
- Anticipation
- Celebration



Recognize that the work we do:

- Involves facts and values
- Affects people as public citizens
- Occurs in public settings



Recognize the Value of Legacy and Long Range Plans

- Make progress on Multi-year Projects
- Find ways to succeed even at small steps and celebrate successes



Team Building - Utilize Important Tools

- Team Building Exercises such as retreats
- Work/study sessions
- Develop and use formal agreements/communication
 - Ground rules for behavior
 - Expectations of Council/Manager/Staff
 - Formal staff reports and media policies
- Develop and use informal agreements/communications
 - One on One
 - Telephone
 - Email
 - End of week summary



Public Values

- Balance of:
 - Liberty
 - Community
 - Prosperity
 - Equality



“Build trust, it is Critical”

Set the tone at the top

- An organization’s culture is established by its leadership through the attitude and actions of the council/commission and management, administrative style and staff’s service to the public,



Organization must develop trust by:

- Not interfering with others roles
- Making sure written protocols are in place
- Understanding “good governance”
- Support good management; including effective, efficient, accountable, and equitable delivery of services
- Insuring a sense of respect for the public and openness to public input
- Willingness to move on key issues
- Operate under a comprehensive strategic business/planning process



Organization must develop trust by:

- Respecting each other
- Holding honest and open communication
- Agreeing on roles and responsibilities
- Establish ground rules to work together
- Demonstrating a strong commitment to work collaboratively
- Following through with commitment to hold regular and timely reviews and feedback on programs or services



Tools to Assist in Building the Trust

- New Elected Official Orientation (see handout for examples and hyperlinks)
 - GMA 50 Survival Skills
 - Sample In-House Local Govt 101 Orientation
- Council/Commission Manual/Handbook (see handout for hyperlinks)
- Staff and Elected Official Participation in Life Long Learning and Professional Associations



Wrap up

- What did you Learn Today that You Will Utilize in Your Work?
- Closing Thoughts and Questions
- Evaluations

