

City of Guadalupe

AGENDA

Special Meeting of the Guadalupe City Council

Tuesday, October 29, 2019

At 5:00 pm

City Hall, 918 Obispo Street, Council Chambers

Please be advised that, pursuant to State Law, any member of the public may address the City Council concerning any item on the Agenda, before or during Council consideration of that item. Please be aware that items on the Consent Calendar are considered to be routine and are normally enacted by one vote of the City Council. If you wish to speak on a Consent Calendar item, please do so during the Community Participation Forum.

The Agenda and related Staff reports are available on the City's website: www.ci.guadalupe.ca.us Friday before Council meeting.

Any documents produced by the City and distributed to a majority of the City Council regarding any item on this agenda will be made available the Friday before Council meetings at the Administration Office at City Hall 918 Obispo Street, Monday through Friday between 8:00 am and 4:30 pm, and also posted 72 hours prior to the meeting. The City may charge customary photocopying charges for copies of such documents. Any documents distributed to a majority of the City Council regarding any item on this agenda less than 72 hours before the meeting will be made available for inspection at the meeting and will be posted on the City's website and made available for inspection the day after the meeting at the Administrator Office at City Hall 918 Obispo Street, Monday through Friday between 8:00 am and 4:30 pm.

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, if you need special assistance to participate in this meeting, including review of the Agenda and related documents, please contact the Administration Office at (805) 356.3891 at least 72 hours prior to the meeting. This will allow time for the City to make reasonable arrangements to ensure accessibility to the meeting.

ROLL CALL:

Council Member Tony Ramirez
Council Member Eugene Costa Jr.
Council Member Liliana Cardenas
Mayor Pro Tempore Gina Rubalcaba
Mayor Ariston Julian

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION FORUM

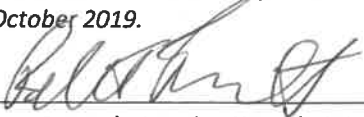
Each person will be limited to a discussion of 3 three minutes or as directed by the Mayor. This time is reserved to accept comments from the public on Consent items. Closed Session items, or matters not otherwise scheduled on this agenda. Pursuant to provisions of the Brown Act, no action may be taken on these matters unless they are listed on the agenda, or unless certain emergency or special circumstances exist. City Council may direct Staff to investigative and/or schedule certain matters for consideration at a future City Council meeting.

BUSINESS

1. **Ethics and Good Government Workshop – Presentation by Ken Hampian.**

ADJOURNMENT

I hereby certify under penalty of perjury under the laws of the State of California that the foregoing agenda was posted on the City Hall display case, Water Department bulletin board and website not less than 24 hours prior to the meeting. Dated this 24th day of October 2019.



Robert Perrault, Interim City Administrator

ETHICS & GOOD GOVERNMENT

The critical role of council leadership and teamwork

October 29, 2019

1. Introduction
2. The heart of the matter: Why do this work?
3. The City of Bell Scandal: Good Government lessons learned
4. Good Government and the role/responsibilities of city councils
5. A council member's individual and group responsibility
6. At our very best
 - a. What does this look like?
 - b. What are the obstacles, challenges?
7. Role alignment and the Council-staff partnership
8. Getting things done together
9. Qualities of the most effective councils
10. The rewards!



BIOGRAPHY: KEN HAMPIAN (2019)

Ken Hampian is the former city manager of San Luis Obispo (SLO). He came to SLO in 1989 after 15 years of service at the city, county and Federal levels of government (the first two in the Presidential Management Fellowship Program in Washington D.C.).

He served in SLO for over 20 years, the first half as Assistant City Manager. In 1996, Hampian received the *John S. Nail Award* presented by the League of California Cities annually to one assistant city manager for outstanding performance. In 2000, he was appointed city manager. During Ken's 10 year tenure, he was recognized by City employees for outstanding performance, receiving the *National Management Association Silver Knight of Management Award* and *Employee of the Year* honors. In 2010, he left city management to pursue other interests, including teaching, training and writing.

In the summer of 2011, Ken served as the pro-bono city manager for the City of Bell during a time of crisis there. He has received state and national recognition for his Bell service, including the International City & County Manager's Association inaugural *Hall of Fame Ethics Award* and Public CEO's *City Employee of the Year, 2012*.

Ken has co-authored *Guide to Local Government Finance in California*. League of Cities Executive Director Chris McKenzie called the book "...the most comprehensive treatment of local government finance in any state that I have ever seen."

Today, Ken consults and trains and has assisted several cities with community goal-setting, council teamwork, and city manager evaluation. He trains in such areas as leadership, ethics, public policy and council roles and relationships. He created and taught a graduate course at Cal Poly-San Luis Obispo on the topic of organizational leadership. He is engaged by the Centre for Organizational Effectiveness, the San Mateo County Leadership Academy, the California Police Chiefs Association, the California Joint Powers Insurance Authority and others.



Ethics & Good Government

The critical role of council leadership and teamwork

October 29, 2019

My short story




Tonight's topics

1. The heart of the matter ❤️
2. Bell: Good government lessons
3. Good government & city councils
 - A members' individual and group roles
 - At our best: Looks like? Challenges?
 - Role alignment and the council-staff team
 - Getting things done – *together*
 - Qualities of the most effective councils
4. The Rewards! ✨

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The Heart of the Matter



1. What is it about Guadalupe that has captured your heart; that inspires you to serve?
A translation: "Why the heck would anyone do this anyway?!"
2. What can the Guadalupe City Council do for the community that no one else can?

4

What the Bell?! Lessons Learned





6

How I ended up in Bell ...



Bell finds reform is harder than it looks

The scandal-plagued city forced to extend a deadline after no one applied for the city manager's job. (*LA Times, July 16, 2011*)

Bell in need of new leadership but city manager applicants total zero (*California City News: July 18, 2011*)

No one wants to ring that Bell: Zero applicants for city manager job

(*Wacktrap: Share your crazy stories now! July 21, 2011*)

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July 27, 2011



The 10 Worst Things that Happened to Bell



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#10 Outrageous pay +

City manager, assistant CM, police chief, council members, and others



#9 Eye off the ball

Conflicts fomented; personality over policy; little citizen involvement; low voter turnout; uncontested elections



#8 Degraded tech; offices

A facade of austerity: poor working conditions, equipment and technology



There was some technology



#7 Weak or no checks against arbitrary power

Absurd hierarchy; written policies, guidelines, procedures missing/ignored



#6 Withered civic oversight

Weak/no advisory bodies, little media coverage, withered service clubs



#5 Abuse of rules & power

Misuse of contracting, enforcement and power the norm (an expectation)

BELL IS TOLD IT OWES \$500,000

State parks agency wants repayment after auditor finds problems with grant spending.

State moves to limit cities' ability to impound cars in response to practices in Bell, the California Senate approves restrictions for DCI checkpoints. The measure goes back to the Assembly for final approval. Rizzo has not taken a position.



#4 Compromising strategies

Personal loans, subsidized rent, emotional and family hooks; *isolation*



City of Bell lent employees, elected officials nearly \$900,000

LA Times, August 18, 2010

#3 Monstrous \$ obligations

Tangle of bad property acquisitions, bond obligations, tax levies, other costs

Bell leaders leave, tax burden stays

City must pay back \$50 million in bonds for a nonexistent park. Part of the funds went into Rizzo's pocket (*LA Times, August 2011*)



Bell's bonds downgraded to junk status

#2 Damaged civic culture

Weak organization, service capacity, civic infrastructure & habits

Los Angeles Times

Bell could have trouble providing basic services

Bell finds reform is harder than it looks

The New York Times

An Audit Finds a City Spent Uncontrollably

#1 Working class town lost their local democracy, pride and self-respect



The Mess Left Behind...



- Endless investigations, audits, scrutiny
- Massive debts (litigations, bonds, grant violations)
- 75% of city contracts expired
- Inexperienced Council and citizens
- Trust very low; community divided

Down the dark path: The Conditions?



- Total lack of **transparency**
- No **discipline** (e.g. roles, practices)
- Weak **institutional controls & accountability**
- **Policies, written rules** non-existent or ignored
- Residents not engaged, **demanding a say**
- Almost no **media** attention – *until the scandal*
- Few **advocacy groups, non-profits, clubs**
- Isolation; no regional **partnerships**, no **training**

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Rebirth, rebuilding continues

- City Council is open and engaging citizens
- Sunny Award (transparency in governance)
- Citizen involvement encouraged, planned for
- Budget balanced; out of bond mess



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12 Years

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Are we all vulnerable?



- **YES!**
- Council & staff must play our different professional roles well by ...
- ... embracing best practices in our performance, policies, protocols & teamwork
- In a chaotic, undisciplined City Hall environment, vulnerability is especially high
- Be curious, humble enough to keep listening, growing and learning (not KIA)



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BREAK





1. My individual responsibility as an elected representative of Guadalupe residents is ...
2. My responsibility as a team member of the Guadalupe City Council is ...

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Trust ... the "Secret Sauce"



- Shared among elected leaders, staff & citizens
- With it, we can confront hard problems
- Without losing everyone along the way...

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"Our elected officials are role models and they train the community in how problems are deliberated and resolved."

LOCAL VIEWPOINT

In our polarized political climate, local government grows even more crucial



BY RICK MARIANI

How do we, as a political action in America,

are mostly concerned with their convenience, where relationships are prized above party and ideology. The nation, however, is getting more upside down in many communities where citizens are including national political behaviors and judging community issues — and their fellow citizens — through highly selective

despite a trend of civic disengagement and personal isolation. Putnam's book was published more than 15 years before smartphones, social media and other technologies further accelerated the trend. This critical combination — important topic and disengagement — manifests its consequences in a

profession, such cities are infrequently known as "less in chain," and more disconcerting messages more clear. While jurisdictions in our region are generally doing well, change is fragile and we are not immune from these trends. Unhealthy civic relationships are here, too. Healthy relationships —

and while still keeping people on board. Without it, big problems are not always done and party was mostly limited. And politics is where all the energy goes. So what can we do locally to promote and protect this precious thing, trust? First, our locally elected leaders are our role models.

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We can't do alone – but we make a BIG difference!

- We can promote trust and inspire active, constructive citizens ... or turn people off!
- Depends on how we do business:
 - how we **engage citizens** (or not)
 - our **attitude** and the **tone** we set
 - how well we **partner** with others (*including staff*)
 - how we solve problems, **build community**

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Community building ...

... requires **good processes** and **good council-staff teamwork** to navigate toward positive community outcomes

Starts with Council-City Manager/Administrator partnership



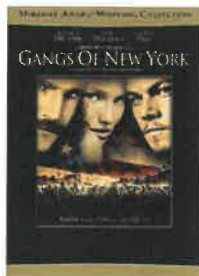
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A Little History: Council-Manager Government



Council-Manager birth?

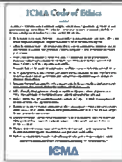
- Born of American reform movement (100+ yrs. ago)
- Profound corruption; *especially* local government
- Machine politics, spoils system, nepotism, bribes, other criminal behavior
- Tammany Hall, Pendergast Machine, Gangs of New York



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**ICMA Code of Ethics:
CM's live by a code, e.g.**

- No favoritism; serve all people
- Provide impartial facts and advice on policy decisions; uphold adopted policy
- Refrain from election involvement, partisanship
- Protect staff from political interference
- Assure merit-based personnel actions



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The Most Effective CM's

1. Top 10 qualities 
2. Put your very best foot forward during the recruitment (and background thoroughly)
3. Best Guadalupe candidate will be motivated by a spirit of *mission* and a *real opportunity to succeed*
4. This requires your support, partnership



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Council-Staff Partnership



Same destination; two lanes



Alignment is key ...



- How goals, priorities are set and managed
- How policy is developed; ways we include the public & other stakeholders
- How we manage council and staff roles; how we communicate and work together
- How performance is evaluated; how success is measured

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When things go south...



Elected – personality over policy, petty quarrelling, micro-management, obsess on complaints (avoid the *real* issues)

Staff – Afraid to surface BIG issues; to make professional recommendations

High RPM's, low torque!



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At our very best



1. What are the characteristics of a council performing at its "very best"?
2. What are the potential obstacles to performing at our "very best"?



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Elected official job description

- Solve problems, resolve conflict
- Feel community pulse; balance needs
- Set goals; generate enthusiasm for them
- Be sensitive to what people are saying
- Dream big, to provide vision



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Easier said than done



- There is no job description
- Dependent on staff to provide goal-setting and visioning opportunities to set priorities
- Complex issues, no perfect solutions
- Pressure from supporters to toe the line
- Don't get to pick your colleagues
- Relentless demands, limited resources
- Do it all in public (no dress rehearsals)

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Discipline and sharp focus



- Organized, collective **council goal setting**
- Goals translated into **practical work plans**
- **Protect goals and plans** with policies, protocols that *are respected*
 - From who, and how, manager takes direction
 - How much staff work is done for individuals
 - How the agenda gets set



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If everything is a priority, then nothing is a priority



The Council's highest priorities should be very clear ...

.... and very few



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Six Attributes of Exceptional Councils

- ... have **clear roles and responsibilities** that are understood and adhered
- ... **honor the relationships** with staff, each other
- ... routinely **conduct effective meetings**
- ... have members who **practice continuous learning and development**
- ... develop a **sense of team** (goals/decisions)
- ... **Assure accountability** (yourself, the city)

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Governing not like campaigning

▪ Campaigns



- Clear cut goals, objectives
- Common values & philosophies
- Fast paced, decisive, one decision-maker
- Competitive; kinda fun!

▪ Governance



- Multiple, conflicting goals, values, philosophies
- Slow, deliberative, many decision-makers
- Group decisions (debate, compromise)
- Kinda NOT FUN (at times) 🤔

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Council must do the *governing*

- You campaigned to get elected, but
- You were elected to govern

Remaining in "campaign mode" is not governing; it's not doing the job you swore you'd do



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2. Respects staffs' role & duty (agree to disagree at times)



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3. Civil; differences aren't personal; sense of humor is nice, too!

Newspaper of the Central Coast • SanLuisObispo.com

THE TRIBUNE

Monday, March 23, 2014

BOUQUETS AND BAUCONTS
OPINION OF THE TRIBUNE

The Dave and Christine show

Powerful example!

4. Works as a team - even when there's disagreement (e.g. modeling civility; negotiating with unions)

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Elected officials as "team"?

- Not like a sports team; not about "winning"
- But need each other to get anything done – especially the big things
- It's *as a team* that a council models, sets the community standard
 - how to respect others/their opinions
 - how negotiations are conducted (no end runs)
 - how differences are resolved
 - how decisions made; problems solved (or not)

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- 6. Does their homework; asks good questions (not to score points – or worse, blindside at meetings)
- 7. Makes decisions and provides clear direction/priorities
- 8. Knows when to push and when to protect
- 9. Provides adequate resources

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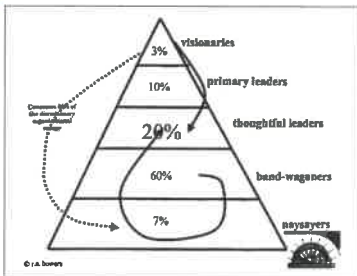
- 10. Embraces constructive citizen engagement, but knows when to say “no” – and resists feeding the beast.



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Who Gets the Juice?



Nurture the constructive people!

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A BIG question:



If elected officials and staff obsess on constant complainers and “watchdog questions”, who has the vision and sets the community’s major goals?

The answer: **NO ONE!**

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Remember Paul Harvey’s tag line *(Now you know the rest of the story)*

- Listen to complaints
- Understand (do your best)
- Give staff a chance to investigate and respond
- Most of the time, there is more to the story



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Attracting, nurturing positive people?



- ✓ Set a **positive, constructive tone** (who wants to join a dysfunctional family?)
- ✓ Make **good advisory body appointments, and supporting a rewarding experience**
- ✓ Encourage **leadership programs** (e.g. C of C Leadership; a city government academy)
- ✓ Practice **real community engagement** (let people experience what you experience)

Democracy is a process



- ***It's slow.*** Study, public notice, committees (engagement), debate, competing ideas ...
- ***It is a group endeavor.*** No place for Lone Rangers; "doing" requires collective action
- ***There are boundaries.*** Roles, "lanes", limits on staff support for individuals
- ***There are rules.*** Protocols, policies for how stuff get done; contracts bid; what gets on agenda
- ***Did I say it's slow?*** 

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- The honor of serving
- Impacting your community in a positive way - that you can *see, feel, touch*
- Impacting your community in a "spiritual" way - *civility, involvement, caring*
- Meeting new people, new challenges
- Learning new things and skills
- A life experience you will never forget!

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In A Polarized Political Climate, Local Government Is More Important Than Ever

Ken Hampian (retired city manager, San Luis Obispo)

For decades a political axiom in America, attributed to former House Speaker Tip O'Neill, has been that "all politics is local." In other words, politicians should never forget that people are mostly concerned with their communities, where relationships are prized above party and ideology.

This axiom, however, is getting turned upside down in many communities where citizens are modeling national political behaviors and judging community issues - and their fellow citizens - through highly ideological, rage-triggering lenses.

There's another trend, as well: "Bowling Alone," a metaphor used by author Robert Putnam to describe a trend of civic disengagement and personal isolation. Putnam's book was published over 15 years ago before smart phones, social media and other technologies further accelerated the trend.

This wicked combination - imported rage and disengagement - manifests in communities in a variety of corrosive ways, such as routine uncivil behavior, warring tribes, vile online trolling, and withdrawal and apathy. In the city management profession such cities are informally known as "toxic cities" - and most discerning managers steer clear.

While jurisdictions in our region are generally doing well, civility is always fragile and we are not immune from these trends. Unhealthy civic relationships are here, too.

Healthy relationships - in a marriage, among friends, in a family, an organization or a community - depend on one precious thing: *trust*. With trust, big problems can be solved while still keeping people on board. Without trust, big problems are not solved; divisive and petty ones multiply instead. And pettiness is where all the energy goes.

So what can we do locally to promote and protect this precious thing, trust?

First, our locally elected leaders can embrace community building as their most sacred duty. They can choose to nurture positive civic participation rather than feed the beast of mistrust and rage. They can use the power to convene constructively, involving more people in decisions that affect them. They can govern with humility and respect, even when disagreeing on the issues.

Our elected officials are role models, and they train the community in how problems are deliberated and resolved. If the modeling is tribal, partisan and negative - even disrespectful - then the elected body will invite similar behavior from the public. If civility and respect are modeled and rewarded, then constructive behavior becomes more the norm. In this respect, elected boards must perform as a team.

We citizens have an equally big responsibility. We must pay attention and remain constructively invested in our communities and with our fellow citizens. We can also reward, and not punish, healthy community leadership, which involves not only civility but also compromise.

Democracy is not a mystical thing. It's simply a process, a governing pact, for how free societies make decisions and solve problems *collectively*. The pact not only involves compromise, it demands compromise. If we expect our elected officials to always perfectly toe *our* party line, then we are a part of the problem.

The great student of America, Alexander Tocqueville, felt that communities were the key to making American democracy work. If he's right, and if we lose civility and cohesion at the community level, then one must ask: What is really left? Party affiliation alone, unmoored from community bonds, is a scary thing.

My wish for the New Year is that we all do our part to keep our politics local and our communities engaged and healthy. In this polarized era, the health of our American democracy may depend upon the standards we set locally.

ICMA Code of Ethics

The mission of ICMA is to create excellence in local governance by developing and fostering professional local government management worldwide. To further this mission, certain principles, as enforced by the Rules of Procedure, shall govern the conduct of every member of ICMA, who shall:

1. Be dedicated to the concepts of effective and democratic local government by responsible elected officials and believe that professional general management is essential to the achievement of this objective.
2. Affirm the dignity and worth of the services rendered by government and maintain a constructive, creative, and practical attitude toward local government affairs and a deep sense of social responsibility as a trusted public servant
3. Demonstrate by word and action the highest standards of ethical conduct and integrity in all public, professional, and personal relationships in order that the member may merit the trust and respect of the elected and appointed officials, employees, and the public.
4. Recognize that the chief function of local government at all times is to serve the best interests of all people.
5. Submit policy proposals to elected officials; provide them with facts and advice on matters of policy as a basis for making decisions and setting community goals; and uphold and implement local government policies adopted by elected officials.
6. Recognize that elected representatives of the people are entitled to the credit for the establishment of local government policies; responsibility for policy execution rests with the members.
7. Refrain from all political activities which undermine public confidence in professional administrators. Refrain from participation in the election of the members of the employing legislative body.
8. Make it a duty continually to improve the member's professional ability and to develop the competence of associates in the use of management techniques.
9. Keep the community informed on local government affairs; encourage communication between the citizens and all local government officers; emphasize friendly and courteous service to the public; and seek to improve the quality and image of public service.
10. Resist any encroachment on professional responsibilities, believing the member should be free to carry out official policies without interference, and handle each problem without discrimination on the basis of principle and justice.
11. Handle all matters of personnel on the basis of merit so that fairness and impartiality govern a member's decisions, pertaining to appointments, pay adjustments, promotions, and discipline.
12. Public office is a public trust. A member shall not leverage his or her position for personal gain or benefit.

Adopted by the ICMA Executive Board in 1924, and most recently revised by the membership in June 2017.

The logo for the International City/County Management Association (ICMA). It consists of the letters "ICMA" in a bold, blue, sans-serif font. The "I" and "C" are connected, and the "M" and "A" are also connected. The letters are evenly spaced and centered horizontally.

Hampian's Take: The Ideal City Manager

1. **Is a passionate, skilled manager.** Committed to ethical, good government and walks the talk. Is an organized and skilled manager/administrator with command of the broad fundamentals - e.g. budget, labor relations, land use.
2. **Leads, not only manages.** Positive, inspiring and creative leader. Straightforward, clear and sets high standard. Includes others before big decisions (but decides!). Responsive. Confident enough to follow others too.
3. **Communicates – relentlessly.** Is an excellent, intuitive, and proactive communicator. Maintains a constant dialogue with elected officials, employees, the media, and the public. Gets out of the office and *connects* with people.
4. **Expert at City Council relations.** Highly engaged with elected members. Has their confidence as a manager and leader. Promotes teamwork among members and with staff. Addresses relationship and protocol problems – pronto!
5. **“Gets” political values, translates and uses understanding effectively.** Knows that political decisions involve more than “efficiency” and uses this expertise to help staff navigate the political “mine field” toward good decisions.
6. **Sets high standards (has staff’s back too).** Expects high performance; isn’t a reflexive defender of the status quo. Never criticizes in public or throws staff under the bus. Owns staff recommendations. Defends staff when necessary.
7. **Is fair – and insists on same from others.** Acts in an even-handed way; no department head “favorite sons/daughters”. Treats employees fairly, too. Demands an equality of sacrifice from department heads. Discourages cliques.
8. **Promotes Council/community goal-setting processes.** Supports structured ways to develop and protect *collective* Council goals and priorities. Integrate priorities within employee and organizational work programs.
9. **Possesses policy and community engagement skills.** Knows how to professionally and politically manage and present complex policy issues. Insists on - and teaches - citizen engagement skills to improve public input.
10. **Provides the tools needed to achieve (tangible, intangibles).** Proactively supports the resources, systems and actions needed to meet expectations (staff, technology, training, goal setting, performance evaluation, timely and clear decisions).

Attributes of Exceptional Councils

Leading public organizations and governing with colleagues on a council is a challenging art of community service. The Institute recognizes that many aspects of leadership and governance are not intuitive. This piece is intended to provide councilmembers and city managers insight into the attributes of exceptional councils as well as provide practical tips to help them become exceptional.

1. Exceptional councils develop a sense of team – a partnership with the city manager to govern and manage the city

The mayor, councilmembers and city manager see themselves and work as a team as they undertake a series of tasks to further their common purpose. The individual team members work in a coordinated and collaborative manner with a high degree of respect, trust and openness. The team values diversity in style and perspective. The team thinks and acts strategically as it examines issues/situations and decides on a course of action serving their city's mission and goals.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Successfully transition from candidate to a member of the council.
- Become a champion of the city. Make decisions based on the needs and interests of the community at-large / the greater good.
- Develop, communicate and support policy goals and council decisions.
- Demonstrate a willingness to work collaboratively (as a team) and have a citywide perspective.

BEST PRACTICE TIPS

Build capacity to create a more effective team. The governance team (mayor, councilmembers and city manager) should get to know each other; how each person approaches issues, decision making style and so on. This can be accomplished at annual meetings or workshops through-out the year. In the event that councilmembers disagree, clear ground rules (norms of behavior and practice) can help quell acrimony before it becomes a problem. It's important to remember that trust is built around understanding and respect, not necessarily agreement.

2. Exceptional councils have clear roles and responsibilities that are understood and adhered.

Exceptional councils understand their role is to serve as policy maker - to represent the values, beliefs and priorities of their community while serving in the community's best interest. They carry out a variety of responsibilities including: developing and adopting a vision for the city; focusing and aligning plans, policies, agreements and budgets in furtherance of this vision; and holding themselves and the city manager accountable for results.

Exceptional councils understand that the city manager is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the city. The city manager is responsible for undertaking and accomplishing the policy objectives of the council. Exceptional councils recognize the subject matter expertise of staff and utilize their knowledge and experience to guide and inform decision making.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Understand the role of local government and their responsibilities.
- Know their role- to set vision and policy, avoid micromangement.
- Councilmembers should strive to be informed about the issues facing the city and be prepared to ask questions of staff and each other.

BEST PRACTICE TIPS

Create a shared understanding of the city manager's role and the council's expectations to optimize the working relationships. This shared understanding is informed by local charter and ordinance provisions that provide the overall framework for the relationship. The council should make time to have conversations during retreats and or study sessions to define and/or reveal and refine their role and responsibilities. Since role clarity between the city council and city management is critical to mutual success, having clear protocols helps avoid misunderstandings.

3. Exceptional councils honor the relationship with staff and each other

Exceptional councils understand that a good working relationship with staff is vital for the city to be run successfully. Exceptional councils treat each other and staff with dignity and respect. They act with civility and a high level of professional decorum. Councilmembers build trust by not playing the “gotcha game” and strive to have a no secrets, no surprises approach as an operating norm. Finally, they respect the diversity of styles and perspectives among their colleagues and staff and are open to new ideas.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Councilmembers have the ability to respectfully disagree (to disagree without being disagreeable). They are able to leave it at the dais; debates are about policy, not personality.
- Exceptional councilmembers reflect positive decorum/model of leadership by providing respectful tone with colleagues.
- Establish a set of behaviors ahead of time, potentially documented in a code of conduct, to help promote civility and respect.

BEST PRACTICE TIPS

Set council priorities and strategic goals at an annual meeting; these goals and priorities are a tool to guide the city manager and staff on where to focus their efforts. This annual meeting provides time for the council to reflect on community priorities as well as offer an opportunity to discuss their decorum and their relationship among each other and the relationship between the city manager/staff and the council.

4. Exceptional councils routinely conduct effective meetings

Open and public meetings are central to democratic decision-making. Exceptional councils master the art of effective meetings. They develop and adhere to meeting protocols and processes. They spend time planning and organizing the agenda with the aim of having a more focused meeting. They allocate the council's time and energy appropriately (focused on the council's role and responsibilities) and meeting short- and long-term priorities. They honor the public's participation and engagement and they generally start on time and are held during reasonable hours.

Exceptional councils use public meetings not only for their intended purpose, information sharing and decision-making,

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Councilmembers are respectful of each other, the public and everyone's time.
- Councilmembers use engaging body language as a way to demonstrate respect.
- Issues are not personalized, thoughtful dialogue is the objective.
- Agenda packets are read, councilmembers come prepared and have an open mind
- Respect is demonstrated for varied opinions.
- Everyone strives to be civil and act with decorum.

but they also use the meeting to demonstrate respect and civility for each other, staff and the public. Exceptional councilmembers prepare in advance of the meeting, remain focused on the city goals and objectives and mindful of their role and responsibilities.

BEST PRACTICE TIPS

Develop and adopt (with regular reviews and updates), guidelines for conducting meetings and making decisions. These governance protocols typically address meeting procedures (agenda preparation, how to put issues on the agenda, debate and voting procedures (parliamentary rules) and standards of decorum (civility)). As part of a regular self-assessment, councils should evaluate their meetings and their effectiveness and adjust behavior and practices for better results.

5. Exceptional councils hold themselves and the city accountable

Exceptional councils operate openly, ethically and work to engage the community in a myriad of decisions impacting the prosperity and well-being of their community. Toward that end, exceptional councils consistently provide short- and long-term strategic direction and goals, as well as provide budget, program and policy oversight.

Exceptional councils hold themselves accountable for the conduct, behavior and effectiveness of the council. They establish clear priorities and goals and hold the city manager accountable for results. And finally, they embrace accountability as a process and tool to calibrate ongoing efforts to address and meet policy and program objectives.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Councilmembers operate ethically and with integrity.
- Councils conduct team building / goal setting exercise to track progress towards mutually agreed upon goals
- Councils taking responsibility for the results (good and bad).
- Councils celebrate success.
- Councilmembers hold themselves responsible for adhering to operating protocols and codes of conduct.

BEST PRACTICE TIPS

Annually evaluate council and city manager performance toward achieving the city's priorities and goals (consider having this be part of an annual goal setting meeting). Council should consider assessing its own behavior and effectiveness as part of its annual self-assessment.

6. Exceptional councils have members who practice continuous personal learning and development

Governance is not intuitive. In addition, the policy and economic environment impacting cities are ever changing. Exceptional councils continually provide the opportunity to build their knowledge and skills, to enhance their understanding of key issues, increase their awareness of best practices and sharpen their leadership and governance skills.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Stay informed on key issues
- Gain key insights and knowledge on all aspects of governing, from budgets to plans and everything in between.
- Learning to listen is sometimes more important than learning to give a speech.

BEST PRACTICE TIPS

Seek out national, state and local professional growth and educational opportunities. These opportunities can focus on the nuts and bolts of governing to helping you gain valuable information and/or insights on key policy issues facing your city. In addition, city run orientations for newly elected officials provide a good way to acclimate new members to the council's norms and protocols as well as the budget and key policy issues.

10 Characteristics of the Most Effective Council Members

1. **Humble enough to have "The Aha Moment".** Early in tenure, recognizes that the issues and the organization are more complicated than it appears from the outside looking in. Therefore, strives to learn and grow throughout their term of office.
2. **Respects staff's role and professional duty.** Understands that staff can help them perform their difficult work and, therefore, accepts advice and support. Knows that staff must play an objective role and follow policy and protocol to protect the system overall.
3. **Behaves with civility.** Knows that council members collectively model and "train" the public in how to interact with government and solve problems. Works hard to set the right example and uphold high standards in their interaction with colleagues and staff.
4. **Works as a team – even when there's disagreement.** Recognizes that, if they want to get anything done, council colleagues are their most important constituency. Open to compromise and group problem solving. Willing to engage in council team-building.
5. **Plays fair, honestly.** Works through the director. Doesn't angle for special information or treatment. Avoids staking out hard positions before public hearings. Does not sand-bag at meetings with questions that could have been asked ahead of time.
6. **Does their homework.** Reads staff reports and asks questions before meetings, whenever possible. Actively listens to staff presentations and public testimony. Attends professional workshops and conferences to develop added skills and knowledge.
7. **Makes decisions and provides clear direction.** After all reasonable information has been considered, able to act. Doesn't procrastinate by asking for unnecessary added information. Works with colleagues to assure that decisions are clearly expressed.
8. **Knows when to push – and when to protect.** Able to constructively push staff outside of comfort zone. However, also considers reasonable cautions, fiscal and workload impacts and limits. Protects staff from any abusive from either the public or council colleagues.
9. **Provides adequate resources.** Knows that there are limits to *doing more with less*, and if new programs/service levels are desired, will support initiatives with proper resources. Recognizes that staff work is a resource and is judicious in directing new work.
10. **Embraces constructive citizen engagement, but knows when to say "no" (and resists feeding the beast!)** Encourages healthy citizen involvement, but resists overly investing in nay-sayers and trying to be all things to all people. Nurtures constructive people and future potential leaders the most.

SIX REASONS WHY IT'S BEST TO WORK THROUGH THE MANAGER

I'm a lucky city manager. I work for an excellent city council. Councilmembers take pride in promoting a tradition of community civility. They do their homework, serve for the right reasons, and have a sense of humor. They are supportive of staff, and they trust me. I can talk to them about almost anything. In such a healthy council-staff environment, councilmembers get to know and trust many staffers, and a smart manager wouldn't want to lose the feeling of a friendly, open organization.

So why is it necessary sometimes to remind our active and sincere councilmembers to work through my office or through department heads when seeking information or expressing interests and concerns? And why do I feel so awkward when I do?

Maybe it's because, no matter how diplomatically I express a desire that is consistent with our formal council policies and procedures, it can come across as a trust-and-control issue. And since the councilmembers trust the staff, why shouldn't staff trust councilmembers?

After all, their motivation is typically to avoid bothering me (or department heads) with the small stuff. What's there to hide? I guess this is where I am supposed to exclaim, "But it's not about trust and control!" In truth, however, it is, and here is why.

TRUST AND CONTROL

The jewel in a healthy local government environment is trust. With trust, we spend our time working together to solve problems and to get good things done for the community. Without trust, problems multiply, and the time spent solving them prevents work on more constructive items.

Preserving trust in any relationship, personal or professional, requires that we exercise a prudent amount of control in how we communicate. The council-staff relationship is no exception. In

fact, given the unique pressures and constraints imposed on this relationship, the two groups probably need even more structured guidance than most.

A LOT OF RULES, BUT WHY DO WE NEED THEM?

Fortunately, nearly all local governments have some formal rules in place, and virtually all such rules advise councilmembers to work through city and county managers and department heads on most organizational matters. Even with all the rules, however, something significant is missing.

Based on my research (admittedly not comprehensive, but I did check with ICMA, the League of California Cities, various trainers, and California city managers via an e-mail inquiry), there seems to be no prepared explanation for why such rules are important and how they preserve trust and benefit everyone involved in the relationship. In the absence of such context, the rules come across as, well, cold rules—a list of dos and don'ts designed to keep everyone in line.

This "context void" seems to be widely perceived by managers, and many of them have asked me to send them anything that I might find on the subject. Because I was unable to find anything already written, however, I have been forced to do a little more work. With the aid of some helpful managers, then, here are a half-dozen reasons why everyone's best interests are served when councilmembers work through the manager and/or department heads to gather information or address concerns.

Reason 1. Because city managers cannot be on top of things if they don't know what the things are.

Councilmembers correctly expect managers to be on top of things. But if councilmembers bypass the manager to make requests of staff or to express concerns to staff, then the manager cannot possibly be sufficiently aware of their interests or concerns. Even the world's greatest local government manager cannot assure a timely response to a councilmember's inquiry if the manager is not aware of

the request in the first place. Sure, staff members can inform the manager of the request, but this roundabout way of communication raises the chances of miscommunication.

Reason 2. Because bypassing the manager can give the impression that there is a problem in the council-manager relationship, and this perception can undermine both the manager's credibility within the organization and the respect that the staff feels for the councilmember. If a councilmember (or members) consistently goes directly to other staff members with issues, these harmful perceptions may evolve: 1) the councilmember does not like to work with the manager; 2) the councilmember does not trust the information provided by the manager; 3) the manager is ducking his or her responsibility and just "passing the buck"; 4) the councilmember does not play by the rules and seeks special treatment; and/or 5) it must be okay for staff to go around the manager because councilmembers do it. Such impressions will weaken a manager's credibility and authority in the organization or reflect poorly on the councilmember, or both.

Reason 3. Because it is not possible for managers to treat all councilmembers equally if the manager is unaware of the treatment that one councilmember is getting. Managers are in the highly unusual position of having many, equal bosses, and the expectation of equal treatment by each of those bosses is not only extremely high but also entirely appropriate.

Equal treatment includes providing councilmembers with the same information, the same levels of support, and the same accessibility to the staff in general. Thus, when an elected councilor goes through the manager in making a request, the manager can judge if the desired information should be shared with all councilmembers.

The manager can also judge whether a request for staff work is consistent with council policy or if the full council should direct such work. If requests are

only inconsistently made through the manager, then the likelihood of inequities cropping up over time is high. This leads us to Reason 4.

Reason 4. Because councilmembers are often perceived as having "awesome power" and, therefore, direct requests can lead to surprising and negative unintended consequences. Councilmembers may contact staff people in a department to make what they perceive to be "simple requests for information," only to find these requests later perceived as orders to do something never intended by the councilmembers.

This is especially possible when direct contacts are made with staff below the department-head level. Councilmembers are typically surprised by such overreactions and by the complications and rumors that can result (because they know they don't have *that much power*). But to the staff member who seldom has contact with the higher-ups, the mayor and councilmembers are as "high up" as they come.

Reason 5. Because direct councilmember contact with staff members below the department-head level boosts the likelihood of getting erroneous or incomplete information. The further a councilmember reaches beyond the manager or department head, the more likely he or she will communicate with someone who has significantly less familiarity with the legislative process, the deeper context of various local government issues, the cross-departmental stakeholders who should be consulted, and the local rules for staff-council communication.

Combine these differences with the "awesome power" phenomenon, and the margin for a mistake in responding to the councilmember climbs substantially. On the other hand, a manager can provide one-stop service, saving time while producing better, more complete information.

Reason 6. Because such direct councilmember contact also can inadvertently cause awkward, embar-

assing situations—or worse—for the staff members involved. After a Reason 5 scenario has occurred, a staff member who later learns that he provided incorrect or incomplete information feels embarrassed. In fact, a staff member who learns that she violated some staff-council communication rule is not only embarrassed but also worried that she might be perceived as acting politically and undermining her bosses.

A staff member who incorrectly completes excessive work at the direction of an individual councilmember may perceive him- or herself to be "in trouble," especially if they have failed to notify their bosses or failed to complete other assigned work as a result.

AN UGLY TRUTH, BUT NOT FOR MOST

There is one unfortunate truth that needs to be recognized: not everyone is sincere or competent in council-manager relationships. There are councilmembers who deliberately try to undermine the system, and there are managers who are not responsive to councilmember inquiries. For such people, this article will not help, and any solution probably needs to be found through a closed-session discussion but not through short-cutting the system.

Fortunately, most elected officials and managers want the system and the relationships to work in the best possible way. To achieve this end, is it necessary for every little thing to go through the manager? No. What is required, however, is an understanding between the council and the manager as to what differentiates a little thing from a bigger thing. This can only be achieved if the elected officials and manager are regularly talking and if there is a true commitment by all to play by the rules.

Such rules are worthy of commitment, and we can help uphold an excellent system while still preserving city hall as an open, friendly, helpful place.

—Ken Hampian
City Manager

San Luis Obispo, California
(khampian@slocity.org)

WHO GETS THE JUICE? A COMMUNITY PYRAMID EXPLANATION

(from a League of Cities presentation by Dick Bowers, former city manager of Scottsdale, Arizona)

Every community is layered with citizens that fall into categories ranging from "Visionaries" to "Naysayers" with layers in between, the biggest one being "Bandwagoners". The Bandwagoners gravitate in the direction of the layer that seems most effective in garnering attention; the one that gets the "city juice".

If those in government spend a disproportionate amount of discretionary time trying to appease (usually futilely) highly negative people, we will pull more people down into the Naysayer category. After all, this is apparently where all the governing energy goes. Instead, we should be investing more time nurturing constructive citizens and, therefore, lift more people up, building a stronger, healthier community as we do.

