

Council-Manager Relations

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Good Governance:

- The effective and responsible management of an organization dedicated to considering societal needs while not allowing dominance by a single sector.
 - Cambridge Business English Dictionary



Council Manager Form of Local Governance Primer

The Council Manager form of government combines the strong political leadership of elected officials with the managerial expertise of a local government manager.

This form establishes a representative governance system where all the power to weigh competing community values and determine a defining direction lies with the council as one body.

And, where that council hires a professionally trained manager to oversee the delivery of services to execute that direction.

- Created in the early 1900's
- Established via Charter
- **Rule #1 Adhere to Your Oath**



Local Governance Primer

- Roles and Responsibilities
 - Council
 - Manager
 - Theory
 - Reality



Local Governance Primer

Dimensions of the governmental process

Illustrative tasks for council

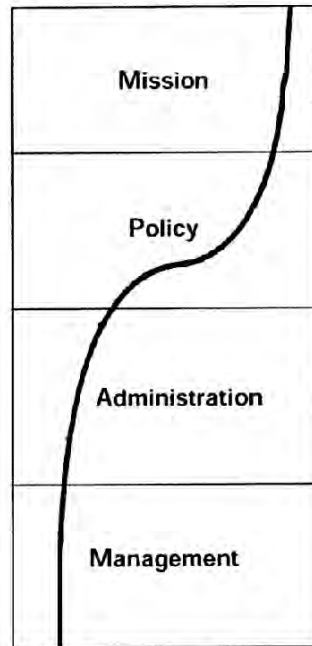
Determine "purpose," scope of services, tax level, constitutional issues

Pass ordinances; approve new projects and programs; ratify budget

Make implementing decisions (e.g., site selection); handle complaints; oversee administration

Suggest management changes to manager; review organizational performance in manager's appraisal

Elected officials' sphere



Appointed official's sphere

Illustrative tasks for administrators

Advise (what city "can" do may influence what it "should" do); analyze conditions and trends

Make recommendations on all decisions; formulate budget; determine service distribution formulae

Establish practices and procedures and make decisions for implementing policy

Control the human, material, and informational resources of organization to support policy and administrative functions

The curved line suggests the division between the elected officials' and the appointed official's spheres of activity, with the council to the *left* and the manager to the *right* of the line. The division represented is intended to roughly approximate a "proper" degree of separation and sharing. Shifts to either the left or right would indicate improper incursions.

Source: Reprinted with minor editing from James H. Svara, "Dichotomy and Duality: Reconceptualizing the Relationship between Policy and Administration in Council-Manager Cities," *Public Administration Review* 45 (1985): 228. Used with permission of the American Society for Public Administration.

Absolute Rule #2 – Talk about it

The Relationship Matters

- Improves Goal Setting and Achievement
- Aligns Resources in Same Direction
- The Community Deserves Harmony
- Failure is Very Expensive



Symptoms of Ailing Partnership

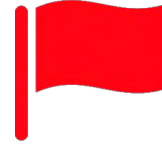
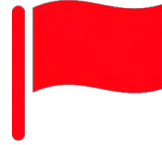
Caution Signs



- Communication stops
- Members stop spending time with each other and/or manager
- Eye contact becomes rare (before, during or after meetings)
- Team members badmouth each other
- Conversations stop when others enter the room
- Councilmembers begin to meet in small groups
- Council stops or delays hard decisions
- Council doesn't speak with one voice after votes are taken
- Council stops relying on staff recommendations
- Council will not defend or support the action of manager or staff
- Team members “throw each other under the bus” when tough decisions are necessary

Symptoms of Ailing Partnership, Cont'd

Red Flags



“My job as an elected official is to find out where the money is hidden.”

“It’s nearly impossible for me to get what I want done. There must be a secret agenda.”

“Those employees had better figure who makes the decisions around here.”

“The manager has favorites and special friends on the council and in the community.”

“If a problem exists, they need to change. I was elected for my honest approach.”

“Since she has been elected, we haven’t been able to get anything done. The manager had better figure out how to get her under control.”

“We pay her top dollar. She’ll have to do a better job behind the scenes, so we aren’t taking the heat from the voters.”

Rule #3 – Do Something

Building the Team Relationship

- *The relationship between a Manager and Council is like a marriage. When it works well the whole family succeeds. When it turns dysfunctional, everyone suffers, chaos ensues and separation is often the result.*
 - Stand on a Common Foundation
 - Move in the Same Direction
 - Agree on Who's Job is Whose
 - Set Expectations and Rules of Behavior
 - Regularly Check In

Check-In and Check-Up

- Ground-Rules and Expectations Confab
 - What are the ground-rules of acceptable behavior?
 - What do you expect of me?
 - What can I expect of you?
 - How do we hold each other accountable?
- Annual Retreats
- Regular Face-to-Face Meetings
- Periodic Evaluation and Review
 - This is what we expected.
 - This is what was done.
 - This is what worked well.
 - This is what should change going forward.



Questions?

We're here to help!

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