Council-Manager Relations

Welcome!

Speakers:
• Kathie Grinzinger, Lead Executive Recruiter, Michigan Municipal League
• The Council Manager form of government combines the strong political leadership of elected officials with the managerial expertise of a local government manager.

• It establishes a representative governance system where all the power to weigh competing values and determine a defining direction lies with the council as a 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
  • Form Constructed via Charter
    • Absolute Rule #1 – You took an oath
Local Governance Primer

- Roles and Responsibilities
  - Council
  - Manager
  - Theory
  - Reality
Local Governance Primer

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

Signs that CPR or Marriage Counseling May be in Your Future

• Communication stops
• Members stop spending time with each other and/or manager
• Eye contact becomes rare (before, during or after meetings)
• Team members find themselves badmouthing 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
Ailing Partnership

Red Flags and Fevers

• 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 writes the checks around here.
• The manager has favorites and special friends on the council and in the community.
• If a problem exists, it’s the others job to change. I was elected for my 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 any more heat from the voters.
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!

www.mml.org
(734) 662-3246
inquiry@mml.org