

Proyecto de Seminario Internacional  
International City/County Management Association  
Mexico City, Mexico  
October 27, 2011  
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The concept of the modern city manager and his role in the future of cities in this hemisphere is a subject that resonates with the International City/County Management Association's "Life Run Well" campaign. The professional managerial role in municipal government is one that has evolved since the early days of the Progressive movement in the United States. Today's presentation is to provide you with an understanding of how the modern municipal manager has developed into community and organization leaders that supplement the political leadership of our cities.

As background, I have served as a City Manager or City Administrator since 1981. I have served 7 cities ranging in size from 5,000 people to cities of 100,000 people and service areas of nearly 250,000. The cities have been in four U.S. states: Texas, Montana, Arizona and Tennessee. I worked with 11 Mayors and over 125 Councilmembers over these years. My service has led me to agricultural areas, regional medical communities, border communities with Mexico, suburban cities, and regional retail and banking centers. This background has shaped my perspective to one of positive perspective on all the cities I have served.

Presently, I serve as City Manager in one of the United States premier scientific communities, Oak Ridge, Tennessee. Oak Ridge is home of the Oak Ridge National Laboratories and is a world leader in scientific discovery and quantum physics research. Additionally, Oak Ridge serves as the national repository of the United States uranium stockpiles to serve our nation's nuclear energy and military needs. As a city of 29,000 people in the greater Knoxville region of 600,000, the City of Oak Ridge serves host to 15,000 daily workers and is home to many corporate citizens that serve the government and national markets. On the historical side, Oak Ridge began as a "Secret City" where the Manhattan Project was developed under watchful eye during World War II.

As City Manager, I am the Chief Executive Officer for the city and serve at the pleasure of the Mayor and City Council for an indefinite term. All city employees serve under my direction and I am also responsible for the budgetary, financial, policy research, public safety and quality of life matters for all our citizens. By charter, I serve in a governmental structure known as a Council-Manager form of government. Rather than directly electing a Mayor, our citizens have chosen to have our Mayor selected from within the ranks of the City Council for two year

increments after each election. As a “board of directors”, the City Council advises the City Manager on policy matters, conducts approvals of contracts and bids, provides strategic guidance on long term city plans, sets tax rates and approves the annual budget.

To understand the Council-Manager form of government today, we must first go back in history in the United States, when our country struggled between the desire of many for a strong federal government and an equal number that desired a more democratic and weaker federal government. The United States government was run by the privileged few or those that had fought for our freedom in the Revolutionary War of 1776. By 1824, a “Westerner” from Tennessee, Andrew Jackson became our seventh President, changing how our government structure would respond to its people, and ultimately replacing 10% of the federal workforce with new workers that were loyal to his administration. Overall, the President desired a federal workforce that would be responsive and ultimately let the voters decide whether to retain a President in office. As stated in Jon Meacham’s novel *American Lion*, “In Jackson’s mind, sins in the public sphere represented, as he said, a “struggle between the virtue of the people and executive patronage.” This began a continuous period of “spoils systems” and minor Civil Service Reform up until the Progressive Era of 1890-1917.

At that time, Americans desired to correct many of the social and economic problems of the day. The Industrial Era had begun in the U.S. and “scientific management” as studied by Frederick Taylor in the automobile industry, began to be applied in governments. The focus of the day began to concentrate on management and organization into efficient units of service to citizens. The City Manager appeared first in Staunton, Virginia, in 1908, when an appointed employee was given authority by statute over the affairs of the City. The Council-Manager form of government quickly spread and today represents the favored form of government for 3,500 cities or 49% of all U.S. cities. Cities opted for a trained professional manager in urban administration to coordinate the implementation of policy matters as defined by the Mayor and City Council.

Public Administration theory has gone through several eras of management change since that time: the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> New Public Administration periods where the skills and qualities of government managers were defined and recognized the value of the bureaucratic government organization for continuity of service, a generic management period where businesses and governments were viewed and run similarly and the Transformation Period, where city governments were innovative and used private sources to accomplish public service goals.

In Mexico, local governments were defined by Article 115 of the 1917 Constitution, where each *municipio libre* was established under the direction of a mayor or *regente* and served by a council or *ayuntamiento*. Amendments to the constitution in 1984 under De La Madrid granted new autonomy to local governments and established a new relationship with the federal government and dependency on federal monies for support. Today, 80% of local revenues come from federal

sources. However, the challenge of Mexican local government continues to be the short, term-limited, duration of Mayors and Councils by the Constitution.

As a City Manager of two communities in Texas and Arizona on the U.S.-Mexico border, there has always been a strong effort to work with neighboring cities despite an international border. Cooperation between governments might occur through financial, organizational, cultural and managerial exchanges. However, constitutionally required turnover among Mexican officials demanded re-establishment of relations after each election to insure the continuity of projects in a mayoral term. An example of this would be the opening of the Anzalduas Bridge in December 2009 at McAllen/Mission, Texas, along the border with Reynosa, Tamaulipas. This bridge had been in the making since the 1970s. A forty year project, which required both Mexican and U.S. federal, state, and local approval, finally came to fruition. Concerted efforts of local officials since 1989 completed the project. However, estimates of official Mexican government participation with three and six year political terms would reveal over 15 administrations to work with.

This concrete example should demonstrate a basic need for continuity in municipal service by a chief executive or city manager. Working through the approval processes to build an international bridge demonstrates a long term need for continuity of service. A city manager in this instance was essential to insure that the vision and direction continued despite the changes in the political makeup of local city councils, mayors and state officials.

The relationships between the City Manager and the Mayor and City Council are essential to success. As described in *Reframing Organizations* by Bolman and Deal, the manager must be a politician that has four key skills: agenda setting, mapping the political terrain, networking and forming coalitions, and bargaining/negotiating. These skills create an effective political balance to effectively manage change for local governing bodies. Initially, the City Manager must be sensitive to knowing how others think, so the agenda responds to their concerns. The vision becomes necessary, but the strategies to achieve the vision must be a strong part of the manager's overview. Second, the City Manager must know the political terrain and what is actually going to be accomplished and by whom. Key stakeholders in the change must be involved. Third, the City Manager must know how and when to build coalitions to move the change forward. Knowing those that support the change and how to develop more support for community goals is essential. Finally, the City Manager is a person that is able to Negotiate and Bargain with the best interests of the general community in mind. His sole purpose will be to develop a winning solution that the community can and will support (p.215-220).

In Oak Ridge, Tennessee, the City Manager has been designated by city charter as the key official that provides direction and support for the City Council as a whole in accomplishing the goals of the community. The skills identified by Bolman and Deal highlight the authorities of the City Manager position. The City Manager works with the City Council in prioritizing goals, balancing those goals with financial realities, and suggesting alternatives to attain those

goals which then become the directives from the political body to the City Manager. The key role of the Mayor becomes that of leading the City Council to understand its priorities and explaining them to the broader citizenry. The Mayor, however, is the essential member of the Council that provides collective guidance to the governing body and continuously works closely with the City Manager.

The City Manager must work with the city government organization, leading its efforts to implement the goals and priorities of the City Council. In an organization such as Oak Ridge, the City Manager establishes the values of that organization to its community: Openness, Responsibility, Communication, Innovation, and Decisiveness. These values are constantly reiterated to each employee and work group. Objectives are set by the City Manager with each work group to accomplish goals that meet the City Council criteria. Resources, both human and monetary, are allocated and timetables are set. These factors are set regardless of political change.

As another example, a 2005 study of Mexican local governments by Gilberto Garcia of the Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, studied the topic of innovation. Innovation is described in this study as a first time application of a program, practice, process or proceeding in an organization, regardless of whether it has been implemented in some other organization. New ways of addressing familiar problems or procedures allow for better efficiency or effectiveness in service delivery. The Garcia study, entitled *Emergence and Sustainability of the Innovation Process of Mexico's Local Governments*, examined 271 local government initiatives in 2001, 2002, and 2003. The purpose was to examine the ability of organizations to retain innovation beyond the 3 year terms of municipal mayors. As described (Page 15), "In Mexican government, the virtuous process of consolidation of good government practice is truncated by the change of administration." The Mayor must always play a central role in the implementation of innovation; however the retention of the innovation is at risk depending upon the organizational capacity, institutional development or political involvement levels of the citizenry.

Mr. Garcia concluded, "Due to the flimsiness of institutional design and its model of the pre-bureaucratic organization, innovative programs tend, almost unavoidably, to disappear. The process of innovation is discontinued when the municipal administration changes (every three years), or the promoter of the innovation leaves the organization. In the absence of a professionally oriented public service in the municipal arena, usually the first event carries the second." (Page 46.) This study identified that the prevalent leadership goals of a Mayor, by constitutional mandate, can and will affect the ongoing effectiveness of local government improvements through innovation and change.

Assuming this conclusion is true, the study identifies a strong need for continuity in municipal government service. Changing the staff after each election impacts the long term ability of the municipal government to respond and sustain its impact upon Mexico's cities and towns. A

solution to this dilemma may be the initiation of the City Manager as a formalized position in a local government structure. Providing for a professionally trained manager that can operate in ethical manner free from political interference in providing day to day services will be useful to the governing body and Mayor. It will also allow the Mayor and City Council to focus on more strategic directions and long term planning for the communities.

The City Manager can be professionally trained to provide an element of certainty and forward movement in cities across the western hemisphere. Working in tandem with the elected officials, a professional manager with a strong sense of ethics and dedication to long term community goals can be a partner in attaining success. As citizens and political groups demand more accountability of elected officials, future changes are inevitable. The time to consider the placement of professionally trained individuals in “city manager” positions should structurally be examined and determined to fill the need for long term continuity in Mexico’s cities as a strong option that should be considered just as it is used in Canada, the United States, and cities throughout the world.