

# Leading During a Council Crisis

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# Keeping Your Executive Team On Track in Times of Council Crisis



# R. Kim Wilde Background

- Over thirty years local government experience
  - Thirteen years in Snoqualmie, WA, and eight years in Waunakee, WI.
  - International experience in Iraq, Municipal Solutions Consultant, and Recovery Manager with FEMA
- Through my experience I hope to covey some ideas about keeping your staff on track during a Council Crisis.
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# Council Crisis

- How do you respond when an elected official intimidates others with their style and approach?
- What do you do when an elected official is determined to disrupt the executive staff?
- How do you address disloyalty within the executive staff due to the influence of an elected official?

# Keeping the Team on Track

- In what ways does a Council Crisis affect the Municipal Organization?
  - Process
  - Credibility
  - Reputation
  - Staff



# Keeping the Team on Track

- Can a Council Crisis affect Staff?
- How?



# Keeping the Team on Track

- A Council Crisis can have a significant negative affect on the functioning of staff.
- The Manager must take the initiative to keep the staff on track during times of Council Crisis.



# Keeping the Team on Track

- How can the Manager minimize the affects of a Council Crisis on the Organization?
  - Does what we do increase or decrease the drama?
  - Remember what we are here for.



# My Story

- New Administrator
- Opportunity to hire staff
- Building an executive team
- New Council Candidate
- Elections
- Council Crisis
- Affect on staff

# Council Member Jekyll



# Councilmember Hyde



# Keeping the Team on Track

## Start with the Governing Body

- Discuss how a successful executive team benefits everyone.
- Discuss with them how their actions can affect the functioning of the team.
- Ask for their support.



# Keeping the Team on Track

## Address Staff Collectively

- Council and the Manager expect them to act as a team.
- Ask for their ideas.
- Prepare a draft code of conduct.
- Let the staff have input.
- Adopt a code of conduct.



# Keeping the Team on Track

## Address Staff individually

- Ask for their ideas and help
- Hold them accountable



# Keeping Yourself on Track

- Managing the Personal Side of a Council Crisis.



# Keeping Yourself on Track

- How many of you have been personally attacked by a council member at a council meeting?
- What did that feel like?
- How many of you have gotten over it?
- How many of you have not?



# Keeping Yourself on Track

- What can be done to minimize the personal affects?
  - Seek to build and maintain strong relationships
  - Stay optimistic
  - Stay healthy
  - Decide what is most important

# Keeping Yourself on Track

- Stephen Covey. In his book, “Seven Habits of Highly Effective People”, states: “If I were to summarize in one sentence the single most important principle I have learned in the field of interpersonal relations, it would be this: Seek First to Understand, Then to Be Understood.”

# Keeping Yourself on Track

Scientists now believe that through some combination of genetics and personal experiences, we can develop a habit of seeing the proverbial glass as either half full or half **empty**. -The Essence of Optimism. Elaine Fox. The Scientific Mind, Jan/Feb 2013

# Keeping Yourself on Track

- Ultimately, the CM must choose whether it is worth continuing in a high stress situation. Difficult employment situations can be hard not just on the CM but on his/her family.
- Sometimes the price is just too high.

# Lessons Learned

- A Council Crisis can negatively affect staff
- It takes a team effort to build an executive team.
- It takes a team effort to keep the team on track.
- Remember to take care of yourself during times of Council Crisis.

# Questions/Comments?

Additional Information:

How to Get Your Team Back on Track; Public Management, Nov. 2010.



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