

PM

PUBLIC MANAGEMENT

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SEEING THINGS DIFFERENTLY

Through the Lens of Priority-Based
Budgeting, Communities
Gain Powerful Insights into
Their Programs





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cover story

SEEING THINGS
DIFFERENTLY

Through the lens of priority-based budgeting, communities gain powerful insights into their programs.

Jon Johnson AND Chris Fabian,
DENVER, COLORADO



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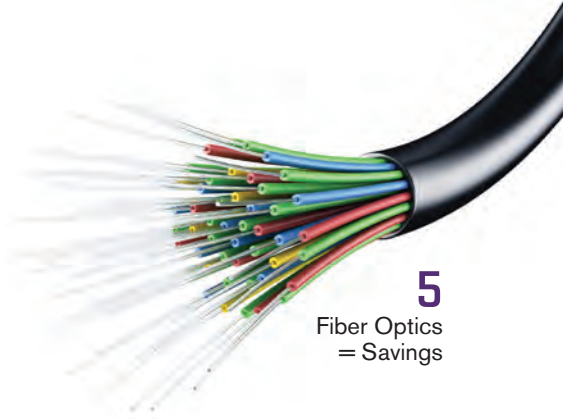
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This issue of *PM* is available online at icma.org/pm September 1, 2012.

BY MARTHA PEREGO

DEMOCRACY IN ACTION

Things to consider in the campaign season



Come November, voters in communities across America will have the opportunity to influence the direction of the country—in terms of elected leadership and policy.

On the policy front, statewide and local ballot measures will frame the future on a wide landscape of issues ranging from reforming arcane state administrative rules to regulating hunting, gambling, guns, marijuana, marriage, health care, voting, and even death.

Adding to the impact these choices will have are finance-specific measures at both the state and local levels addressing revenue uses, taxes, pensions, and the funding of infrastructure. Taken together, there is the potential for enormous change.

And exactly how does all this relate to ethics? For better or worse, the outcome will affect the lives of those serving in local government. Depending on the issue, the potential impact might be both personal and professional. Given

the possible outcomes in November and their consequences, local government professionals have a decision to make: Do I sit on the sidelines or get involved?

If I do get involved, what's appropriate? How do I balance my personal interest in having the best candidate elected with my obligations to my community and my profession? If in my professional assessment, passage of a statewide ballot measure will do harm to local governments, do I have an ethical obligation to speak up?

What role should I play if I support a local ballot measure affecting my organization that is opposed by a majority of the governing body? If I have a personal cause, am I in safe territory to do all that I can to make sure that my perspective prevails?

Candidate Politics

The profession has a longstanding commitment to political neutrality. The very first ICMA Code of Ethics stated that no manager should play an active role in

PM

PUBLIC MANAGEMENT

Public Management (PM) aims to inspire innovation, inform decision making, connect leading-edge thinking to everyday challenges, and serve ICMA members and local governments worldwide in the pursuit of excellence in local governance.

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Public Management (PM) (USPS: 449-300) is published monthly except February by ICMA (the International City/County Management Association) at 777 North Capitol Street, N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002-4201. Periodicals postage paid at Washington, D.C., and at additional mailing offices. The opinions expressed in the magazine are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of ICMA.

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REPRINTS: Apply to the editor for permission to reprint any part of the magazine.

SUBSCRIPTIONS: U.S. subscription rate, \$46 per year; other countries subscription rate, \$155 per year; single copies, \$10. Printed in the United States.

Contact: 202/289-4262; subscriptions@icma.org.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Public Management*, ICMA, 777 N. Capitol Street, N.E., Suite 500, Washington, D.C. 20002-4201.

ARTICLE PROPOSALS: Visit icma.org/pm to see "Editorial Guidelines" for contributors.

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adinfo.icma@foxrep.com

CHICAGO: 312/644-3888

NEW YORK: 212/725-2106

LOS ANGELES: 805/522-0501

DETROIT: 248/626-0511

ATLANTA: 800/440-0231

PRINTING

Westland Printers

Laurel, Maryland

ICMA

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2011–2012

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politics. Times have changed, but the fundamental principle that managers are selected based on their competencies, not their political affiliations, has not.

In this partisan political climate, it is perhaps even more difficult to demonstrate that your professional recommendations are truly independent of the influence of party politics, be they local or not.

Tenet 7 is the guiding principle here. ICMA members should “Refrain from all political activities which undermine public confidence in professional administrators.” Members working in local government should limit their involvement to voting for the candidate of their choice. The guideline on elections advises:

“Members share with their fellow citizens the right and responsibility to vote and to voice their opinion on public issues. However, in order not to impair their effectiveness on behalf of the local governments they serve, they shall not participate in political activities to support the candidacy of individuals running for any city, county, special district, school, state or federal offices. Specifically, they shall not endorse candidates, make financial contributions, sign or circulate petitions, or participate in fund-raising activities for individuals seeking or holding elected office.”

State and Local Ballot Measures

The ICMA Code of Ethics recognizes that members do have a voice in the debate on public issues. When state ballot measures affect local governments, members often play a critical role in educating the public about the potential impact that measure will have on their lives.

Managers in California are experienced in developing an organized and funded response to efforts by the state legislature to reduce local government revenues. Working with the California League of Cities and ICMA members’ elected officials, they raised funds for an issues-oriented political action committee (PAC) and conducted presentations on the issues. Their position was unified, public, and visible.

If you don’t have the benefit of an organized effort, consider whether your solo advocacy efforts align with your governing body. Getting too far out in front of your employer is not wise.

If it’s a local government ballot measure, members have options. Indeed, the governing body might expect staff to do the heavy lifting required for approval. The manager can take the lead to create and implement a PR campaign complete with promotional materials and public presentations. On a personal level, the manager can also donate to a ballot-related PAC.

If the governing body is divided over the issue, the manager and staff may decide that it is smarter to limit their involvement.

A strong argument can be made that the proper staff role is to provide the facts and let the voters decide. An equally compelling argument is that as professionals who have expertise in local government and a vested interest in the community, it’s an act of integrity on the part of leaders to make their voices heard.

What to Do When It’s Personal

Members are advised to consider the impact of such personal advocacy on their professional life. It’s not a reason to step down, just something to consider.

Here are three final tips:

- Comply with the law regarding use of public resources for ballot measures.
- Consider where the governing body stands on the issue. A lower-profile strategy limited to providing background information on the measure may be wise.

Think carefully about the most effective role you can play and what impact your involvement may have on your ability to serve the local government. **PM**



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HOW DO YOU MAINTAIN CONTROL AND BALANCE EVERYTHING ON YOUR FULL PLATE EACH DAY?



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While I like to think that I keep everything under control, I have worked in the management profession long enough to know that doesn't always happen. Early in my career, I believed that if I was organized enough, it would all get done and go smoothly, at home and at work. The flaw in my thinking was related to control.

We all face difficult work and family issues that we cannot control. In local government, the unexpected happens every day. Somewhere along the line, I learned that my responsibility was not to control situations but rather to manage them.

My effectiveness and work/personal life balance improved as my skills in organization, planning, delegation, and communication grew.



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"I don't have time to write a piece for *PM*". . . was my first reaction to the question. I humbly admit there are times that I seem to successfully balance my busy plate, and others when I clearly fail.

Lately, I've decided to embrace the 24/7 technology and not have the iPhone surgically removed from my ear. I've decided that if you can't beat it, join it. This has added some efficiency by making productive use of wasted time. In spite of my admittedly mixed track record, just maybe I'm doing okay. I'm pleased with my career and blessed by my family.

I asked my 26-year-old married daughter to grade me. She remembers the family being my highest priority. I also asked my 17-year-old daughter, who is still at home, and she reports that I am a highly involved dad. And, it's about time to book another getaway with my wife of 28 years.

As you might be able to detect from reading this, my family helps me stay balanced!



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My days start early, and I've learned to dedicate an hour every morning to exercise. It gives me a chance to think about the day, jot down notes, and plan. I tackle the difficult issues first thing and get those off my desk, so I can focus on problems as they occur.

If possible, I keep a morning clear at least one day a week for "desk time" to catch up on phone calls, e-mails, and anything else that was pushed aside and needs attention.

Balance is an ongoing challenge, but I've learned (the hard way) that our brains need a break to minimize the "brain clutter." It's easy to work 24/7 but harder to know when you need a break. My balancing act includes no computers or i-Pad use after 8 p.m.

As we all know, one crisis can throw your best-laid plans out the window. If this happens, the best thing to do is to get back into your routine as soon as possible.



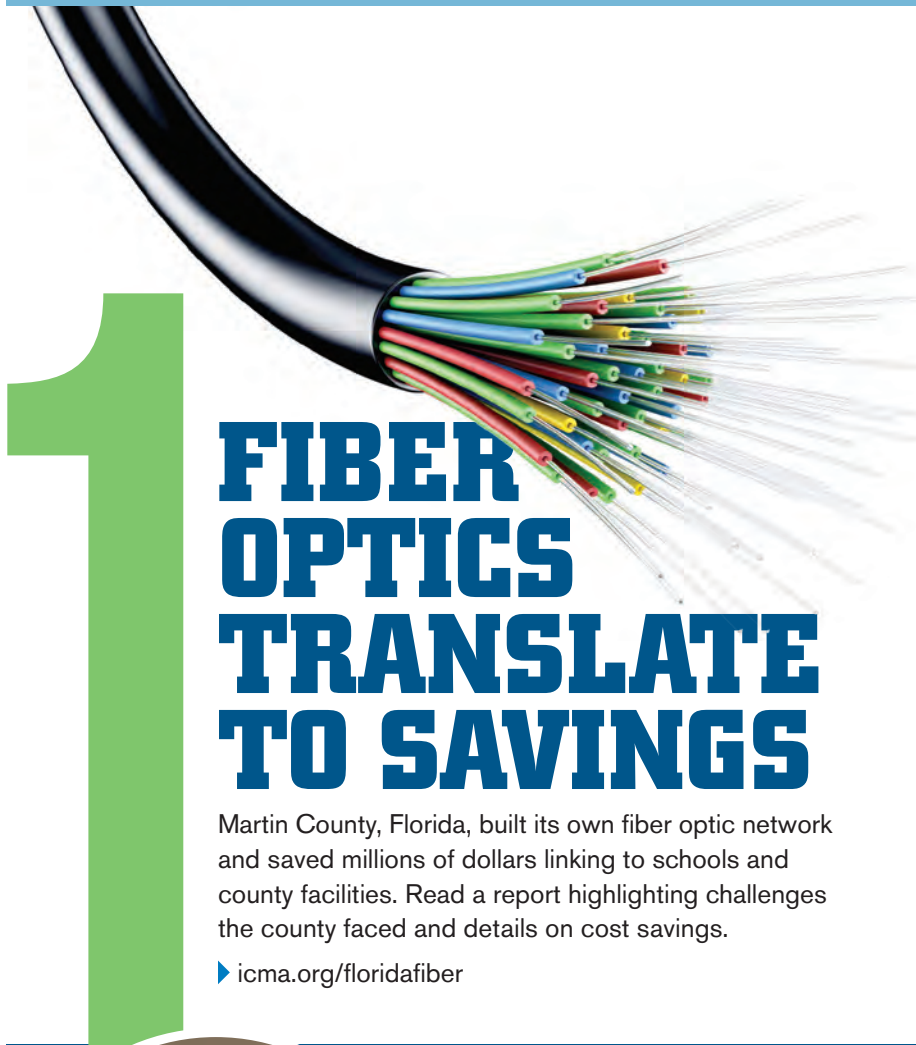
RANDALL DOWLING
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As a local government manager, no two days are the same. After 26 years in the profession, you never know what the next telephone call or e-mail will bring.

To maintain control and balance, I prepare, distribute, and update an easy-to-read report that contains budget-funded projects and their status. This report allows me to stay focused on the timely completion of important projects/issues and not get derailed on routine matters that others can handle.

I keep in constant contact with staff and elected officials to solve problems as they arise before they turn into bigger problems. A gatekeeper also is enlisted to keep sales calls at bay.

At the end of a long day serving the public, my family keeps me grounded on what is important which, in turn, helps me balance my professional life. **PM**



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FIBER OPTICS TRANSLATE TO SAVINGS

Martin County, Florida, built its own fiber optic network and saved millions of dollars linking to schools and county facilities. Read a report highlighting challenges the county faced and details on cost savings.

► icma.org/floridafiber

2 COMMUNITY-BASED CRIME PREVENTION IN CENTRAL AMERICA

U.S. cities and counties and their police and sheriff's departments are sharing community-oriented crime prevention practices with police in Panama and El Salvador through ICMA CityLinks partnerships.

► icma.org/amuprev

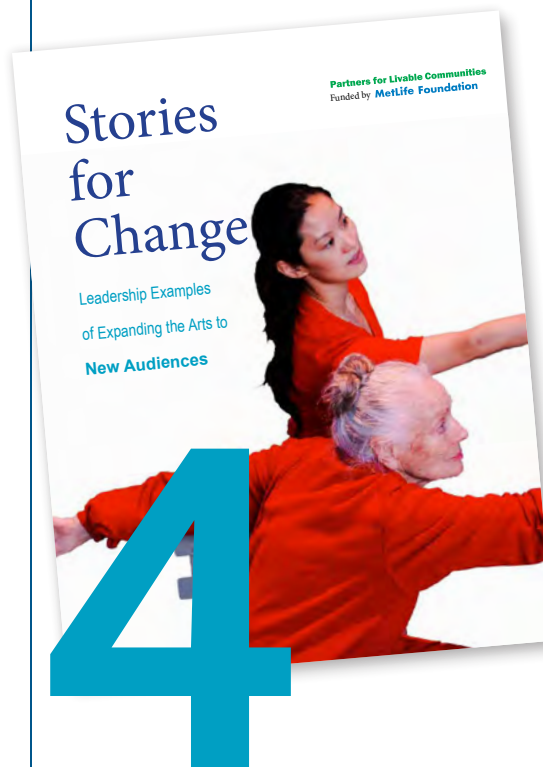


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GOOD PARTNERS

A public-private partnership in Fort Collins, Colorado, permitted construction of a facility dedicated to science and culture and includes classrooms, exhibitions, a museum café, and more.

► icma.org/fortcollinsmuseum



STORIES FOR CHANGE

Groundbreaking programs and strategies using arts and culture in communities experiencing demographic shifts can be found in the publication *Stories for Change*.

► icma.org/stories_for_change

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**BY JON JOHNSON AND
CHRIS FABIAN**

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THROUGH THE LENS OF PRIORITY-BASED BUDGETING, **COMMUNITIES GAIN POWERFUL INSIGHTS INTO THEIR PROGRAMS**



Challenges facing local governments today literally requires a new way to see. It's as if our vision has been blurred by the extraordinary stress of managing in this complex economic environment. Whether attempting to rebuild in a post-recession climate, or persevering through another year of stagnating or declining revenues, the challenge remains: how to allocate scarce resources to achieve our community's highest priorities. Through the new lens of priority-based budgeting, which provides powerful insights, local governments are making significant breakthroughs. →

TAKEAWAYS

- › Gain a clearer perspective on shifting resources to programs that are relevant to your community and away from programs that are of comparatively less importance.
- › Focus on what your local government is in business to do and align resources to provide those important programs.
- › Provide a clearer vision to elected officials as they make difficult resource allocation decisions around community priorities.



The June 2008 edition of *PM* magazine introduced this new budgeting process, which unveiled a way for local governments to spend within their means by continuously focusing on the results most relevant to their communities and the programs that influence those results to the highest possible degree.

The concept involved leveraging each tax dollar so programs with the greatest impact on results were distinguished from programs with a lesser influence. Four years later, priority-based budgeting has proven to be successful in more than 30 communities that have chosen to follow this initiative. Communities that have embraced it have redefined the notion of return on investment—it's a "return on results," a societal return, where each dollar is evaluated in terms of its influence on the community.

A Vast New Perspective

As more communities began reaping the anticipated benefits of this new way of seeing, however, something unexpected also happened. Surprising and new conversations began to emerge. The data assembled by communities to help evaluate their programs' overall priority opened up fascinating revelations about the programs themselves, all of which has created a vast new perspective.

Putting the scoring criteria to use, in particular the criteria having less to do with the program's influence on results and more to do with additional reasons that programs are relevant to the community, raises such questions as: Are the programs mandated? Are there other entities providing a similar service, do they pay for themselves?

Here are more intriguing questions:

- What is the local government uniquely qualified to provide, for the maximum benefit to citizens for the tax dollars they pay?
- What is the community actually mandated to provide? What does it cost to fulfill those mandates?
- What are the appropriate programs for which you might consider establishing or increasing user fees?
- What are the appropriate programs to consider partnerships with other community service providers?

- What services might the local government reach consensus about "getting out of the business" of providing?
- Where are there apparent overlaps and redundancies in a community where several entities are providing similar services?
- Where is the local government potentially competing against businesses in its own community?

And these were just the beginning of the new conversations created by looking through this new budgeting lens.

Priority-based budgeting enables local governments to truly see more clearly which programs are of the highest relevance. The wealth of data about individual programs obtained through the program scoring process also causes endless new conversations about programs to occur. All will contribute to the local government's ability to allocate its resources to its highest priorities and focus on delivering high-quality services that reflect what the community expects from it.

A Welcome Impact on Mandates

One of the criteria in addition to community results against which a program's priority is evaluated is whether or not that program is mandated to be provided. For most organizations that are striving to balance their budget in order

to address fiscal reality, simply uttering the word mandate strikes a note of terror and inflicts immediate paralysis.

How often in budget meetings do we hear the words: "It's mandated, we have no choice"? Sometimes this is applied to a program and oftentimes to an entire department. At that moment, this program (or department) is off the table for discussion in terms of its continued level of funding.

Wouldn't it be fantastic to have a conversation about those mysterious and sacred mandated programs, including questions like: What are they exactly? How much do we spend to provide them? How important are they to our community? What does the mandate truly require?

These conversations are now occurring in local governments that have embraced the new budgeting system. The process recognizes that a mandate is a critical reason for offering a program and should be a differentiator in terms of that program's level of importance, but it should not be used as a get-out-of-jail-free card. The process also recognizes that there are varying degrees of mandate that a local government is dealing with, which are taken into account as each program is evaluated.

To be considered a mandate, there must be written evidence of a formally adopted action by an official governing body or agency that calls for the program to be provided. Once that is established, the program is then evaluated against the *degree* of that mandate, that is, whether the program is required to be offered by:

- A higher level of government (federal, state, county).
- A charter or some other incorporation document.
- A regulatory agency with oversight responsibility.
- Local ordinance, resolution, adopted policy, or practice.
- A professional organization responsible for setting best-practice standards.

By understanding the degree of mandate associated with each program, including the criterion of no mandate, the local government can begin to clearly make a distinction between those requirements imposed by a higher authority, which are more difficult to change, and those mandates that are truly self-imposed and much less difficult to change. It can also see how much it is spending on highly mandated programs contrasted with the cost of those that are self-imposed.

For priority-based budgeting implementers, there is clearly a new lens through which to study programs that have previously been out of view because of the belief there is no choice and

State law, for example, requires Colorado counties to issue vehicle license plates, but Jefferson County evaluated this program using the priority budgeting process and found it to be of low importance in terms of achieving that county's stated results.

In evaluating the exact wording of the mandate, it was clear that the only requirement was to issue the license plates. The statute said nothing about offering that service in seven convenient locations across the county with a wait time of five minutes or less.

Where previous conversations about this mandated program were off the table, now there can be a conversation on the level of service required to meet

compliance issues established by an external regulatory agency, these could be eliminated entirely if the community decided to cease operation. To represent that an airport, solid-waste disposal site, or a water utility is federally mandated in most communities is not accurate. If these types of enterprises are determined to be of a low priority to the community, the mandated card simply can't be played, and the local government should seriously discuss whether or not to continue operating these enterprises at all.

Finally, what about programs that, at best, have a self-imposed mandate (i.e., local legislation) or adopted policies and practices? For programs that have been evaluated through priority-based budgeting as a low priority to the community, isn't it worth discussing whether or not that self-imposed requirement should be lifted?

Having recently implemented the new budgeting process, Billings, Montana, is now looking at programs identified as a low priority to its community. It is revisiting local ordinances or adopted practices that have been in place a long time but now may be considered antiquated or irrelevant to the community as it exists today.

Data gleaned will help officials focus on just those low-priority programs with a self-imposed mandate. It will also help determine if the resources being devoted to them are better used elsewhere or if eliminating the program and the self-imposed mandate can help them more effectively balance their budget.

The Reliance Factor

Another evaluation criterion used in priority-based budgeting is the degree of *reliance* the community has to provide a particular program. Too often, the perception is that there are no other options available for residents, businesses, or visitors to receive a particular service except through the local government they pay taxes to support. If budget cuts require programs to be eliminated, those constituents would be left high and dry.

COMMUNITIES THAT HAVE EMBRACED PRIORITY-BASED BUDGETING HAVE REDEFINED THE NOTION OF RETURN ON INVESTMENT—IT'S A "RETURN ON RESULTS," A SOCIETAL RETURN, WHERE EACH DOLLAR IS EVALUATED IN TERMS OF ITS INFLUENCE ON THE COMMUNITY.

thus no discussion. Surprisingly, when evaluating mandates at the program level and requiring evidence of what the mandate truly says, most local governments have discovered that what they are mandated to provide is far less than they believed.

Imagine identifying all the programs a local government offers and prioritizing them from highest to lowest in terms of importance to the community. Then, being able to explore the degree of mandate associated with each program and to uncover a host of opportunities for policy discussions about mandated programs.

For programs that are highly mandated (federal or state legislation, city charter, or related) but are of low relevance or importance to the community, communities can now discuss whether they are potentially over-delivering on these programs based on what the statute actually requires.

the letter of the law and how resources can be either shifted to programs that are of higher importance to the community or reduced to help the local government balance its budget.

The process also allows for the separation between programs that are mandated by a higher level of government and programs that are required because the local government chooses to operate an enterprise that involves regulatory compliance measures.

Programs that have a regulatory compliance component are not mandated in the true sense of the word since the local government could opt not to operate that enterprise entirely and eliminate the need for the regulatory programs. In most local governments, for example, there is no mandate from above to operate an airport, provide wastewater treatment, or operate a water utility.

While there are programs that then have to be offered to address regulatory

In these times of fiscal constraint, wouldn't it be beneficial to talk about programs for which there might be alternatives available so that constituents could still avail themselves of these services, without relying entirely on the limited resources of the local government?

Inarguably, a local government should be the only game in town for many programs. It's preferable not to give residents a choice as to whom they call to patrol the streets, arrest criminals, collect taxes, or install traffic lights.

But imagine if residents could call anyone to fix that pothole in front of their houses or even do it themselves? Is

offers something similar? Are there local or regional partnership opportunities to explore? Should we even be in this business if someone else offers it? Are we providing something for free that others are charging for?

Contemplating Consolidation

With every level of government and most nonprofit agencies struggling to address declining revenue streams, looking for opportunities to partner to provide services seems to be a win-win proposition. In an era where taxpayers are concerned about the costliness of duplicated and redundant services, being able to identify ways

worth exploring to ensure that the local government is indeed the right service provider and is not in competition with private businesses, especially if one of the community's stated objectives is to stimulate the local economy.

There needs to be a critical conversation about programs that are offered by the private sector and are also a low priority for the community. These are truly areas where limited resources could be saved and the program turned over to—or at least provided in partnership with—local business.

Even if the local government determines it wishes to continue offering these programs, it's a sure bet the private sector is not offering them free of charge. At the minimum, there should be a fee that recovers their cost.

Paying for Programs

For most local governments, it has become a question not of what we *want* to provide but rather, what can we *afford* to provide. Simply raising taxes to cover increased costs to offer a program much less add programs is not the answer taxpayers are looking for.

A critical discussion these days surrounds how programs should be paid for—general taxes levied on the community or fees for services charged to the end user? In other words, to whom should we send the bill?

The priority-based budgeting process identifies programs along with their associated costs. It also documents any program revenues, including fees for services, grants, or assessments that are specifically charged to recoup the cost of offering that service. The evaluation criteria allows the local government to identify which programs have some form of full or partial cost recovery and to what level.

This information allows communities to not waste time in budget reduction conversations by considering programs that already experience a substantial level of cost recovery. Reducing or eliminating such programs may successfully reduce expenditures

WE IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT ARE CURRENTLY UNDER SUCH STRESS THAT WE LONG FOR A DESTINATION WHEN THE ECONOMY RECOVERS, WHEN OUR RESOURCES ARE ABUNDANT, AND THERE IS LESS PRESSURE TO FIND MORE.

the city or county the only way someone can take a yoga class, play softball, rent a DVD, participate in an after-school program, have yard-waste removed, or obtain an inoculation?

In determining a program's overall importance, it seems logical to consider the degree of reliance the community has on the local government and evaluate specifically whether:

- There are no other providers except the local government.
- There are other public-sector entities, nonprofit agencies, or civic groups that provide a similar service.
- There are other private-sector businesses that provide a similar service.

With this information at a program level, a local government can talk about the level of dependency the community really has on it to provide specific services, and if there are other options, aggressively explore those opportunities. Think of the conversations that could arise with such questions as: Who else

to consolidate programs and share in their delivery is simply common sense.

With the data collected through the program-scoring process in priority-based budgeting, local governments can clearly see where these partnering opportunities exist and then actively pursue those conversations—putting cost-effective service delivery ahead of retaining total control. Adjoining cities, counties, school districts, and special districts can consider consolidating such services as fleet maintenance, information technology, facility maintenance, bomb squads, K-9 units, dispatch, internal audit, recreation programs, and building inspections to name a few.

Partnering with civic organizations to provide after-school programs, welfare programs, and senior programs, as well as sponsoring parades, festivals, fireworks, movies in the park, and other events that bring the community together also provide ways to conserve limited resources without sacrificing programs.

What about those programs for which a private-sector provider has been identified? These are areas truly

but the revenues also disappear, and the community is back to square one in terms of balancing the budget.

Having the detailed information at the program level in priority-based budgeting allows for a variety of rich conversations among policymakers with such questions as: Are we covering the full cost of the program with the fee being charged and if not, why not? Is it appropriate to charge fees for certain programs? If the fee revenue decreases or the grant funding disappears, should we continue to fund that program at the same level as before?

For programs identified by the process as a low priority, budget discussions can explore several options. Where cost recoupment is appropriate, it seems reasonable to look at fees for services in order to continue offering these programs.

Where a local government knows a low-priority program is at best self-imposed and that there are private businesses offering a similar service, wouldn't it be obvious to strongly consider charging the end user the program's full cost, including administrative and overhead costs, in order for the program to continue to be offered?

Some communities have also identified how broad a constituency each program serves, differentiating between those that benefit the entire community versus those that benefit only a small constituency. For these programs, especially ones that don't advance the community's goals, shouldn't the local government at least discuss charging the small group of users for the service instead of funding it with general tax dollars paid by the entire community?

Seeing Differently

It somehow seems fitting that author Henry Miller once wrote that "One's destination is never a place, but a new way of seeing things." Miller once lived in Big Sur, which is near the city of Monterey, California, and one of the pioneer implementers of priority-based budgeting.

We in local government are currently under such stress that we long for a destination when the economy recovers, when our resources are abundant, and there is less pressure to find more.

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ICMA's Center for Management Strategies provides education and technical assistance on leading practices in local government management, including the priority-based budgeting model.

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FIRST STEP IN CREATING A BROADBAND SAFETY NETWORK



D-block allocated to public safety in the U.S.

By Alex Brown

The passage of legislation in February 2012 to allocate a portion of broadband spectrum, known as D-block, to establish a nationwide, interoperable public-safety network is the first step in creating a communications network that meets the modern-day needs of America's first responders. After years of debate on the competing interests of public safety and economic development, a compromise was struck that will allow the nation's broadband policy to adapt to meet both needs.

The events that transpired on 9/11 highlighted the need for additional spectrum devoted to public safety. The response to the

terrorist attacks in three locations was coordinated by police, fire, and emergency medical services, but the communications network proved unfit for such a coordinated response. Crucial time was lost when messages were not received on time and data and visuals were not available for download due to jammed networks.

The Origins of D-block

In 2004, the 9/11 Commission report specifically requested that the D-block be allocated to public safety for the purpose of building out an interoperable network that would meet the needs of sophisticated local and state public-safety officers and first responders in ways that the current system could not do.

In late February, Congress passed the Middle Class Tax Relief and Job Creation Act of 2012, the primary focus of which was to extend a payroll tax cut. In order to secure funding to offset the

tax cut, the law provides for an auction of underused spectrum currently owned by television broadcasters. Part of the funding will be applied toward paying down the federal deficit, and another part will provide partial funding for the public-safety network buildout.

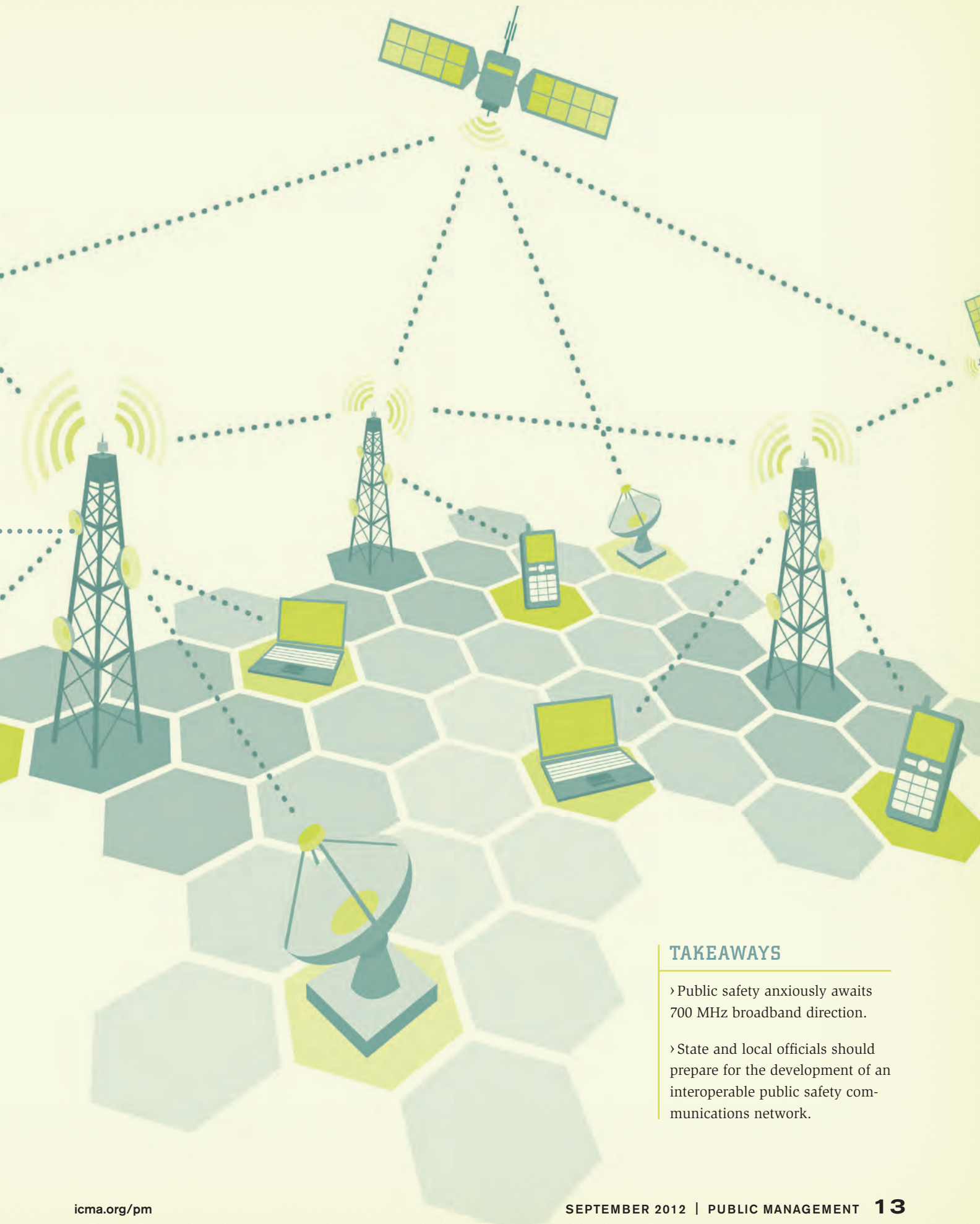
The new law provides for three critical elements of the new network:

Allocation: The law sets aside the D-block for use in building out a nationwide, interoperable public-safety communications network.

Governance: The law grants the license to the D-block and the existing public-safety spectrum to a sole authority.

Funding: The network is deficit neutral. It will be funded through the proceeds of spectrum auctions.





TAKEAWAYS

- › Public safety anxiously awaits 700 MHz broadband direction.
- › State and local officials should prepare for the development of an interoperable public safety communications network.

Network Spectrum Allocation Issues

The new law combines elements of both spectrum allocation and auction. A spectrum auction will be held but it will not include the D-block, which is allocated directly to public safety. The spectrum to be auctioned comes from television white space that is vacant space situated between television channels. Most likely the bidders will be established telecommunications companies but it is difficult to speculate as this is written who they will be.

An estimated \$22 billion in white-space spectrum was transferred to the FCC as part of the legislation. Television stations that agree to surrender this spectrum will be compensated by the FCC. Figure 1 shows a visualization of what will be up for auction.

This solution involving generally unused spectrum represents a policy compromise between earlier iterations of broadband policy proposed by those in favor of auction versus those in favor of allocation.

Network Governance Procedures

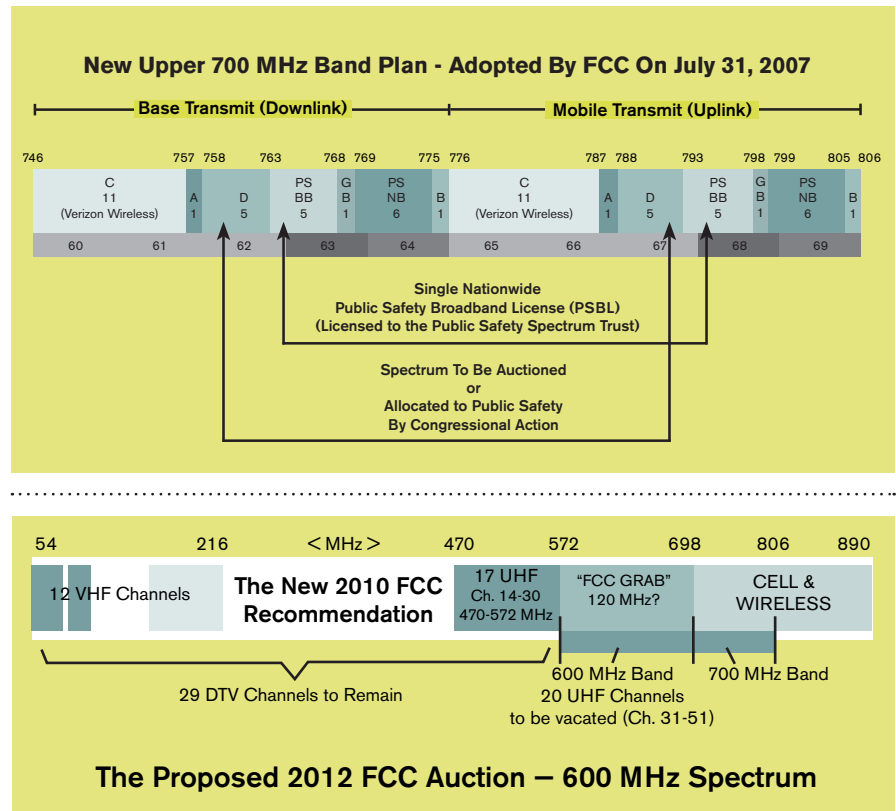
The act grants authority to existing institutions and also creates some new governing bodies. It establishes an interoperability board within the FCC to serve in an advisory role. This board will consist of 14 voting members appointed by the FCC chairman no later than 30 days after enactment. Once the board is established, its members will have 90 days to accomplish two tasks:

- Develop minimum technical requirements to ensure a nationwide level of interoperability.
- Submit developed minimum technical requirements to the FCC for review.

No later than 30 days after the board submits its recommendations to the FCC, the FCC will approve them, with any revisions that it finds necessary. Once finalized, the technical outline will be sent to the spectrum license holder.

The license for the spectrum is granted to the National Telecommunications

FIGURE 1: 700 MHz Band Plan.



Source: Federal Communications Commission.

and Information Association (NTIA), which is housed within the U.S. Department of Commerce. NTIA will establish the First Responder Network Authority (FirstNet) to manage the license and develop the network architecture.

FirstNet will be led by a 15-member board responsible for all aspects of network construction once the technical requirements are in place, and it will do so in consultation with the FCC; federal, state, and local public safety entities; and various advisory committees to be established. FirstNet's board will be an executive-level board consisting of these members:

- U.S. Department of Homeland Security.
- U.S. attorney general.
- Director, Office of Management and Budget.
- Twelve individuals appointed by the Secretary of Commerce who shall ensure representation of local and state governments and public-safety professionals.

The appointments will consider regional, rural, and urban representation as well as individual qualifications. Each board member should have expertise in public safety, the technical element, networks, or finance.

FirstNet will also establish a standing advisory committee for public safety, and it has the authority to establish additional standing or ad hoc committees, panels, or councils as deemed necessary.

State Options

The law does allow states to choose not to participate in the deployment of the network designed by FirstNet so long as interoperability is maintained. States that choose to opt out have 90 days to do so after being notified by FirstNet, and if they select this option, they will have to conduct deployments in their own states.

If a state decides to opt out, it will have 180 days to develop and complete requests for proposals for construction, maintenance, and operations of its own network. The state will also need to

develop an alternate plan that demonstrates it will be in compliance with the minimum technical requirements as approved by the FCC.

This plan will also need to demonstrate that the state's network will meet the interoperability standard of the FirstNet network, ensuring that a single interoperable network is maintained as opposed to a "network of networks." All state plans are subject to review and approval by the FCC, and if a state plan is not approved, then the state will be

required to comply with the requirements established by FirstNet.

Once the state has an approved plan, it can apply to NTIA for grants to construct (but not to operate and maintain) the network. It will have to demonstrate that it can maintain interoperability, control costs, and complete the project in a timely manner in order to receive these funds. Essentially, this amounts to a lease of spectrum capacity from FirstNet to the state(s).

Network Funding Details

The act provides for \$7 billion in initial funding for the construction of the network; \$5 billion will come from future spectrum auctions, and NTIA will have the authority to borrow \$2 billion to begin the network buildout. NTIA will also have the authority to borrow up to \$135 million for local and state network implementation.

Once the auctions take place, the funds will be deposited into the Public Safety Trust Fund (PSTF) and made available for these purposes (see Figure 2):

- Repayment of any amounts borrowed by NTIA (up to \$2 billion).
- Build out of the network (\$7 billion minus the amount borrowed initially by NTIA).
- Public-safety research and development (\$100 million).
- Deficit reduction (\$20.4 billion).
- 911 support (\$115 million).

- Additional public safety research (\$200 million).
- Additional deficit reduction (any leftover funds).

Grant Program Will Assist States

To assist states with the implementation of the plan, including integration of equipment and services, NTIA is charged with setting up a grant program for states to be established six months after the law's effective date. The grant program's initial objectives are to:

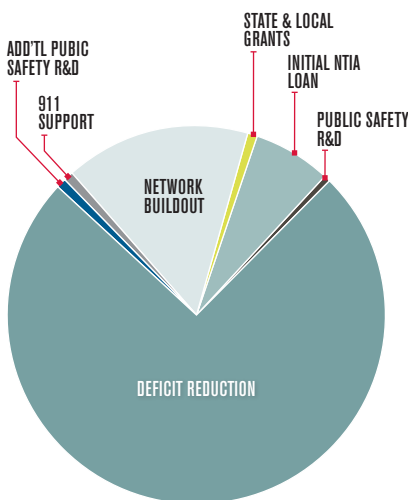
- Define eligible costs.
- Determine the scope of eligible activities.
- Prioritize grants for activities that ensure coverage is available in both urban and rural areas.

States will designate officers or governmental bodies to administer grant funds under the conditions established by the NTIA. FirstNet will be responsible for the request-for-proposal process for construction, operations, maintenance, and improvements under the network plan that is decided upon.

Looking Ahead

The buildout of a nationwide, interoperable public safety communications network is one of the nation's most significant telecommunications projects ever undertaken. The tools to take on this project have been given to the federal government, which will need to work closely with local and state governments to ensure that the network is developed on schedule and in a cost-effective manner. **PM**

FIGURE 2: Authorized Funding for Network Buildout and Associated Activities.



Source: Legislation H.R. 3630, www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/BILLS-112hr3630enr/pdf/BILLS-112hr3630enr.pdf.

FIGURE 3: Timeline for Developing Broadband Safety Network.

Date	Action
February 22, 2012	Enactment of D-block statute.
March 23, 2012	FCC appoints interoperability board.
May 22, 2012	Technical recommendations submitted to FCC.
June 21, 2012	FCC approves technical recommendations with revisions.
August 20, 2012	Secretary of Commerce appoints FirstNet board.
August 22, 2012	NTIA establishes requirements for local and state planning grants.
TBD	FirstNet forms Advisory Committee for Public Safety.
TBD	FirstNet establishes itself organizationally and releases opt-out notice.
TBD	States have 90 days after receipt of notice to opt-out.

The source for all the information in this article is H.R. 3630. See <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/BILLS-112hr3630enr/pdf/BILLS-112hr3630enr.pdf>. Specifically, Title VI - Public Safety Communications and Electromagnetic Spectrum Auctions, Sec. 6101-6703 - Spectrum Auction.



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CAUTION CAUTION CAUTION CAUTION CAUTION

POLICE IN TRAINING POLICE IN TRAINING POLICE IN TRAINING

KEEPING COPS SAFE

ON THE ROAD

**WHY POLICE DRIVER TRAINING
NEEDS TO BE A COMMUNITY PRIORITY**

By Eric Peterson and Travis Yates

POLICE DRIVER TRAINING IS A TYPICAL CASUALTY OF THE BUDGET AX DURING TIGHT TIMES.

It's an easy cut to make if nothing bad has happened recently, but that's not a good long-term strategy. A manager would not think of cutting funding for confined space-entry equipment for public safety employees or training for its public works and utility employees. So why is it that so many local governments do little or

nothing when it comes to addressing their greatest liability risk? A visit to the Officer Down Memorial Page (ODMP; <http://www.odmp.org>) or a search of the Internet can reveal that too many officers and innocent residents are seriously injured or lose their lives in law enforcement-related collisions.

Whatever the reason, it's time to view driver training as an investment, not a cost. Being proactive in this area is much less expensive than paying for the aftermath of unnecessary collisions. There is more to police driving than meets the eye, and this article is intended to help busy managers learn more about this complex issue.

TAKEAWAYS

Readers will learn:

- › Surprising results of police collisions.
- › Conditions that frequently lead to vehicle-related injuries and fatalities for officers.
- › Manager's role in reducing police collisions, providing proper training for officers, and decreasing liability for their agencies.

Why Is Police Driver Safety a Critical Issue?

In our experience, here are solid reasons why driver safety is an issue:

In-the-line-of-duty deaths (LODDs). For 13 consecutive years, until 2011, ODMF reports that traffic-related fatalities were the No. 1 cause of LODDs for officers.

Career-ending injuries. These injuries occur at a much higher rate than LODDs. There are no official statistics kept on these injuries, but it is understood in the profession that serious injuries and career-ending injuries exceed fatalities.

Cost. Police-vehicle collisions often represent the greatest liability for local governments. Just one incident can result in a series of claims against an agency. For the approximately 350 police departments insured through the North Carolina League of Municipalities, for example, police collision claims are its most costly.

The league's risk management services branch reports that these four types of claims can derive from one accident: 1) workers compensation claim for an officer's injuries; 2) collision for damage to the patrol car; 3) damage to vehicle and other property; and 4) police professional liability, with lawsuits and claims for

negligence against the police department, the local government, and the department officials.

Credibility loss. In our observation of what happens with agencies in the aftermath of tragic accidents involving death or serious injury to officers, residents channel all attention and energy to dealing with the situation and negative publicity. The website at www.policedriving.com can be a reference source for this type of situation.

Why Accidents Happen

While a substantial number of factors contribute to police collisions, injuries, and fatalities, the three primary culprits are speed, seat belts, and intersections.

Speed. ODMF reports that most officer fatalities occur when speeds exceed 75 miles per hour. High speed makes avoiding collisions unlikely, regardless of driver skill. Surprisingly, most collisions occur when officers are running nonemergency calls.

The website also reports that single-vehicle collisions result in about half of the traffic-related fatalities in law enforcement. In these situations, officers' cars typically leave the road due to excessive speed. Resulting impacts with roadside obstructions are often career-ending or even fatal.

IT'S AMAZING THAT TREES AND POLES ARE LITERALLY KILLING MORE OFFICERS THAN PSYCHOPATHS—THIS SHOULD INFURIATE EVERYONE IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT MANAGEMENT AND LAW ENFORCEMENT PROFESSIONS AND SPUR US TO TAKE ACTION TO PREVENT THIS TREND FROM CONTINUING.

Again, the website along with clarification from the National Highway Transportation System Administration (NHTSA) point out it's amazing that trees and poles are literally killing more officers than psychopaths. This should infuriate everyone in local government management and law enforcement professions and spur us to take action to prevent this trend from continuing.

Seat belts. NHTSA's publication, "Characteristics of Law Enforcement Officers' Fatalities in Motor Vehicle Crashes," indicates that approximately half of officers involved in fatal vehicle collisions were not wearing a seat belt. Since 1980, about 750 of the officers who lost their lives in collisions were not wearing seat belts—19 percent were ejections.

Intersections. NHTSA data also provide that some 50 percent of police vehicle collisions occur in intersections. Residents frequently make unpredictable movements in their cars, including turning in front of a police car that's approaching with running lights and sirens. This often happens because residents are distracted, including talking or texting on cellphones.

Officers also must be aware of a critical phenomenon called "inattentive blindness." This is when people do not see something even if it's right in front of them because they are not expecting it.

Complex, Complicating Factors

Two main factors can enhance the risks a police officer faces when driving:

Risk homeostasis theory. Developed by Gerald Wilde, author and professor emeritus of psychology at Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario, Canada, this theory hypothesizes everyone has a level of risk that is acceptable in their daily lives. Fortunately for residents,

there are local government employees willing to run towards gunfire and into burning buildings.

In this case, police officers' comfort level with dangerous situations enables them to perform a vital job that most of the population would not consider doing. This is a double-edged sword in that officers can get too comfortable when it comes to taking unnecessary risks when driving a patrol car. Meaning, they can drive too fast for situations and not wear seat belts.

Physiological impacts on officers when driving. Driving the patrol car is just part of the story when it comes to the complexity of police driving. Engaging the sympathetic nervous system, as happens when officers are under stress when responding to a call, naturally results in adrenaline, hormones, and other chemicals being dumped into the body.

This severely diminishes officers' abilities to operate a vehicle. The resulting perceptual distortions during these times are well documented: tunnel vision, loss of peripheral vision, auditory exclusion, slowed reaction times, impaired ability to judge distance, deterioration of motor skills, and slowed cognitive processing.

These conditions help explain why officers can inadvertently drive too fast for conditions and/or make other deadly mistakes. Ironically, the same physiological responses that can save an officer's life in a violent encounter can cost the officer's life in a vehicle.

What Can Be Done?

We believe the challenges of police driving safety can be dealt with in nine ways:

Train. You do *not* need a multimillion dollar driving facility to provide effective

training. The classroom can be a powerful training tool. Conduct an annual review of emergency response and driving policies with officers. Doing "what if" scenarios during shift briefings or in the classroom is free, quick, and effective. As noted by Gordon Graham, a 33-year veteran of law enforcement and a risk management expert, "If it's predictable, it's preventable."

Train smart. Behind-the-wheel training is great, if done properly. If not, it can do more harm than good. A transition is taking place in emergency vehicle operations course (EVOC) training. The traditional method of skill-based training risks unintentionally increasing collisions by 1) creating overconfidence, 2) prompting greater risk taking, and 3) focusing on skills with a low success rate of avoiding collisions.

Advanced driver training emphasizes decision making, situational awareness, changing conditions, and exercising discipline in danger zones, which include entering intersections, turns, and hill crests in a controlled and cautious manner, especially at night. Scenario-based training that incorporates aspects of stress inoculation training can help officers combat the physiological changes that occur during high-stress situations.

Call attention to decision-making skills. A training program must condition officers to ask themselves, "Is the risk worth the reward?" If officers are going to pursue a suspected criminal by driving at high rates of speed, they need to make sure it's for a good reason. Due to the time lag of calls being dispatched and people having left the scene, speed rarely makes a difference in stopping a crime.

Target high-risk groups and individuals. Collision rates are highest among officers with 1 to 3 years and



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WHATEVER THE REASON, IT'S TIME TO VIEW DRIVER TRAINING AS AN INVESTMENT, NOT A COST. BEING PROACTIVE IN THIS AREA IS MUCH LESS EXPENSIVE THAN PAYING FOR THE AFTERMATH OF UNNECESSARY COLLISIONS.

12 to 18 years of experience according to ODMF. Thus, lack of experience and complacency are the likely contributors. Departments often know who the high-risk drivers are—those who have already had collisions or are regularly seen driving unnecessarily fast.

Pursue seat-belt compliance. Even after one major department suffered the loss of two officers who were not wearing seat belts during high-speed collisions, the department's wear rate for seat belts was just 50 percent. The chief wisely asked why and found out the most common answer was fear of ambush. His department responded by adopting a policy allowing belt removal at low speeds, such as when officers need to exit the vehicle quickly.

After enacting this practical policy, which matched what officers already were doing, the department started strict enforcement. It now has a high wear rate among officers. Talk to officers to understand their concerns when evaluating your department's compliance rate and developing solutions.

Update emergency response and pursuit policies. Vague policies do an injustice to officers. A typical generalized policy means one thing to a 21-year-old rookie officer and something else to a 45-year-old veteran. Physiological effects, divided attention, distractions, and multitasking put officers on sensory overload; therefore, it's imperative that policies give clear direction to officers.

Residents regularly pull out in front of officers even though the officer has a green light or a right-of-way. Hence, departmental policy can set such maximum safe speeds through an intersection as 35 miles per hour or the prevailing speed limit, even when running lights and sirens. Require officers to stop before

clearing an intersection with a red light or stop sign because people just don't see them coming.

Engage in meaningful conversations about speed and seat belts.

Saving lives ultimately comes down to officers in the field having "courageous conversations. The difficulty of dealing with the loss of an officer or bystander is compounded when fellow officers failed to confront the officer about not wearing a seat belt or simply driving too fast.

There is the saying that "Denial kills twice." The first death is failing to prevent a tragedy by not talking to your fellow officer. The second is living with knowing you didn't say anything. It's an enormous burden to carry.

Support "Below 100." This national campaign supports reducing in-the-line-of-duty deaths to less than 100 for the first time since 1944. It focuses on speed, seat belts, wearing vests, avoiding complacency, and focusing on WIN –What's Important Now.

The North Carolina Justice Academy has just taken the progressive step of making this required training for officers in that state. Training can be done in as little as two hours. Visit the campaign's website at www.Below100.com for more information.

Advocate leadership from local government managers. Managers need to understand they also share responsibility in addressing this nationwide problem. We have a professional obligation to ensure officers have the proper training and equipment to perform this incredibly important and dangerous task that occurs in our communities 24/7/365.

The law enforcement community is gaining momentum in addressing police driver safety with a variety of initiatives, such as the "Below 100" national campaign mentioned above; the

"Slower Is Faster" video from the North Carolina League of Municipalities; "SAFE Driving Campaign" from California's Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training; and projects from ALERT International (The Association of Law Enforcement Emergency Response Trainers); as well as others. Yet, there is still much room for improvement as few law enforcement agencies provide regular driver safety training for their officers.

There is clearly tremendous pressure on managers, police chiefs, and governing boards regarding the need to tighten budgets. In spite of limited resources, we are adamant about the need for leadership on this critical issue and ask you to pose these two questions in your community:

1. Is the police department adequately addressing its highest-risk operations (driver safety) by proper training, policies, and equipment?
2. Are the management staff and the governing board giving the police department the support it needs to manage these risks?

We implore managers and police chiefs to be proactive and gain a better understanding of the critical issue of police driver safety, which has been ignored and misunderstood for years. Remember, in police driving "success means that nothing happens."

As Sergeant Phil Esterhaus from the old television series *Hill Street Blues* used to say at the end of each roll-call briefing, "Let's be careful out there!" **PM**



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A New Transfo

The time has come for a more thoughtful, consistent approach

By Mike Letcher, ICMA-CM

The transformation of governance over the past 30 years has been remarkable. Geometric growth of technology, improved management practices, new approaches to civic engagement, strategic planning, and other changes have forged an excellent foundation for public management in the 21st century.

One key component missing in this foundation is a more strategic, at the local government level, thoughtful approach to public-policy development, according to author Brandon Bowman. “In the American political system, public-policy formulation is a fractured, complicated, and multileveled process characterized by competition among groups seeking to influence future policy, disagreements among different levels of government as to how a policy initiative should be crafted, and debates and compromises between politicians seeking to satisfy many divergent and sometimes contradictory political objectives,” writes Bowman in his article, “Problems With the American Public Policy Process.”

“The result of the policy formation process is often a policy that is considerably different than the one envisioned

by whoever first defined the problem as something needing government intervention,” he concludes.

The short- and long-range implications of poorly formulated public policy can have significant and sometimes catastrophic consequences for communities. Since public-policy formulation is one of the most important functions of a governing body, more strategic and systematic approaches need to be considered. The opening of the curtain on a new approach to public-policy formulation provides a great opportunity to correct issues stemming from current practices.

Need for a System

A review of the problems behind the curtain of public-policy formulation is essential for effective governance. This will not be an easy task, as Bowman points out. “Contrary to the popular belief of public-policy formulation as a clearly defined and straightforward process, government policy making is often rife with fragmentation, lack of coordination, and inconsistencies.”

Strategic policy development may offer a way to open the curtain and add more consistency and improved results for public-policy formulation. What does strategic policy development look like? Figure 1 provides an example.

The issue or need for the policy is the initial step in the process. This is followed by a determination of the policy model or models that best describe the

issue. The determination of the policy model is critical for the governing body and staff to clearly determine what is driving the need for this policy.

Theoretically, the goal of policy development is to reach a critical mass of policy models that are identified and can be applied to the issue. The more models that can be applied should result in a balanced, efficient, and result-oriented policy.

Once the policy is developed, metrics are identified for the governing body and staff to measure its effectiveness. Initially, the policy should be reviewed annually and then at least once every five years to determine if it is still achieving its intended results.

Figure 2 shows policy models that can be a key guidepost to strategic policy development. The policy models and subsequent definitions are not meant to be all-inclusive. The concepts or models can be adapted to meet the unique needs of the governing body and staff.

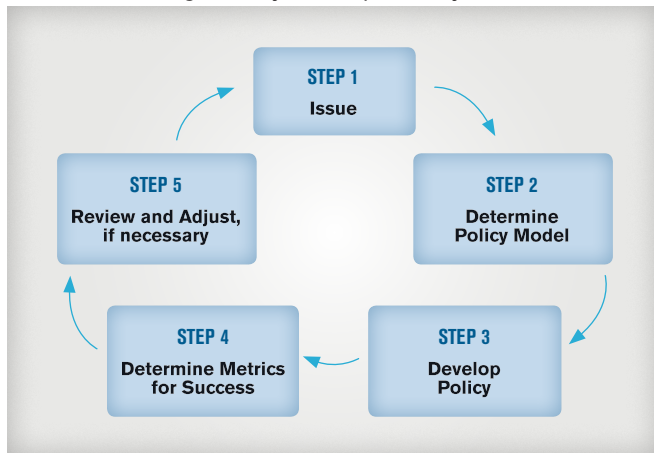
Components of the strategic policy development system can be changed and policy models altered to fit your particular needs. In my experience working with governing bodies for more than 30 years, these models represent the key components or drivers that create the push for public-policy formulation.

Compass approach. Policy development is based on community values, approved plan, or strategic approach.

Best-practice approach. Policy is based on best-practice principles.

Information

FIGURE 1: Strategic Policy Development System.



Source: Mike Letcher

FIGURE 2: Policy Models.



Source: Mike Letcher

Opportunity approach. Policy development is based on significant community and/or organizational benefit.

Politically based approach. Policy is based on narrow intent from special-interest groups or constituents.

Core business/staff-recommended approach. Policy is based on the requirement to run government's core business functions and is recommended by staff to improve services, internal operations, and policies.

In terms of policy models, more is better. Try out models and see how they work. Groundwork has to be done for strategic policy development to work. A number of critical issues also have to be considered:

- Time required, the more the better. Thinking ahead and developing an annual work plan is important to

provide the time to fully evaluate important policies that the governing board will consider.

- Staff capacities to effectively implement the policy. Are there enough worker bees to get the job done? This needs to be fully evaluated by the governing board and staff before time is spent developing the policy.
- Committee referral before consideration. This is a no-brainer. It always helps to have a committee recommendation.
- Communication of need and outcomes. Unfortunately, the clear and concise communication of the need for the policy is often overlooked. Get the sound bites determined before the policy-formulation process starts.

No Easy Answers

An approach and model for strategic

policy development is needed. The approach described in this article is based on experience and what I have seen work and not work behind the curtain of policy formulation. Managers know there are no easy answers or solutions to policy development.

But like all journeys, it begins with one step and the compass, map, or GPS to get you to the destination. Strategic policy development is that first step managers need to take. **PM**

ENDNOTE

1 Bowman, Brandon, 2009, *Problems with the American Public Policy Process*

2 ©BridgeGroup, LLC. <http://voices.yahoo.com/problems-american-public-policy-3879954.html>.



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BY IB ØSTERGAARD RASMUSSEN

CUTTING-EDGE RESIDENT SERVICES IN DENMARK

Personalized with telepresence technologies

This Danish city manager found inspiration on a visit to a U.S. company. As a result, the local government of Guldborgsund has since created a connected community using video for more efficient and personalized resident services.

By car, Guldborgsund is located one hour south of Copenhagen. It has 64,000 residents living in an area that covers 347 miles. During the past two years, the community was challenged to provide critical social services to residents despite migration towards the capital, the global financial crises, and the economic need to close local service centers.

Two years ago, some 55 staff members were employed in six service centers. These Danish municipal service centers deliver vital services to people of all ages, particularly the elderly.

I asked myself and the city's board of directors how could our community still deliver high-quality services without having staff working at each location? Two years ago, during a personal visit to California that included a stop at a company known for its state-of-the-art video solutions, the answer to our dilemma became clear.

The company's video solutions were inspirational to me. Entering the company's headquarters, I was bid welcome by a smiling receptionist on a telepresence flatscreen. Like a flash out of nowhere, I realized that such technology could replace staff in our service centers at home.

One year later, Guldborgsund unveiled the first video-enabled virtual resident center ever seen in Europe, and from what I understand, in the United States, too. From a central location, virtual staffs are available by high-defini-

tion video at libraries in rural districts of the Danish municipality.

How Does It Work?

When residents enter the video-enabled local service center they are greeted by telepresence technologies, including a staff member who actually sits 35 miles away. An online queue management system enables residents to select the service they require and receive a unique queue number.

While waiting in the reception area, they can see a displayed status in queue. When their numbers are called, residents meet with the remote central staff to solve their problems.

Special cameras installed in each center's roof enable residents to share documents with staff when necessary. The central staff member can work the camera remotely, as well as view documents and guide the completion of forms. In fact, the staff member and resident can work on a document together on screen. The staffer also can archive forms directly into the system and print pages locally as needed by a resident.

Being technology neutral and not requiring residents to use a keyboard or mouse, or switch on anything, was an integral part of the plan. With an aging population, it was essential that engaging services should be as easy as shopping in a local store. An efficient model for all 98 municipalities in Denmark, our virtual resident center could be implemented worldwide.

Easier, Efficient Access

A consultant conducted an evaluation based on such facts as the number of services in different categories before

and after implementation of the project. The evaluation was positive, and the overall conclusion was that residents did not run away from the services provided. Resident feedback has also been collected by interviews.

Cost measurement on salaries was done after one year to make sure the costs decreased. A cut in total salaries was an important part of the business case because salary reductions were to finance the investment in technology.

It has been nearly two years since implementation. Expertise still is available to all residents at multiple local service centers, with no center closures. The only change is that the expertise is provided remotely through video by one person in each center rather than two or three staff members.

People can now access the exact experts they need more readily and more frequently. Under the previous circumstances, if services were only available in person at the central location, citizens would have to make arrangements to travel to the nearby city center. Now a specialist is available by video as close as the local library.

During the exploration phase, a local seniors organization opposed the change, concerned about the quality of service provided distantly. The mayor and the city manager demonstrated the system, and the seniors later became involved in the training phase. Members of the seniors organization are now enthusiastic ambassadors when new centers are opened.

One more resident service center opened in Guldborgsund this past May. At the same time, four centers opened in another Danish community. It's fiscally possible to continue to open more centers because of the reduced administrative costs. The return on investment can be realized in some four to five months. **PM**

For more information, search Youtube: guldborgsund + cisco.



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BY MERRETT STIERHEIM

A SOBERING EXAMINATION

I felt a twinge of apprehension when I thought about writing a review of Michael Lewis's best seller *Boomerang: Travels in the New Third World*. Lewis' book is a sobering examination of the reasons for and the effects of cheap credit and greed that had its origin in unregulated Wall Street financial centers—a situation that led to the terrible recession the United States and Europe are still trying to get out from under.

The architects of those incredibly complex credit default swaps on the subprime mortgage bond market set in motion a system where a minority of knowledgeable investors bet against the market and made a fortune while certain countries, institutions, and small, unwary investors bought into a system that was, overtly or covertly, designed to fail—and in which they were destined to lose big time.

This includes, of course, hundreds of thousands of ordinary citizens who bought homes during the boom. Lewis examines in some detail the financial collapses, like dominoes, in Iceland, Greece, and Ireland, which were financed by trusting German banks who naively believed in the integrity of Wall Street.

This, of course, occurred during this country's residential housing boom and subsequent collapse. Having its inception in the United States, *Boomerang* ends in California, offering us more than a passing glimpse into the consequences of irresponsible, unsustainable political decisions without regard to the ultimate implications and cost of those decisions.

A Necessary Downer

My initial apprehension stemmed from a concern that I not put public manager colleagues into a downer when they, by and large, are already stressed out by vacant homes, declining tax bases, high unemployment, uninformed and unsym-

pathetic state legislatures, unfunded liabilities including pensions, and a host of other local challenges.

Upon reflection, however, I've concluded that the book should be read not only by managers but particularly by their elected officials, governors, and state legislators as well as the powers that be in Washington, D.C. If nothing else they should read the last chapter titled "Too Fat To Fly."

In the final chapter, Lewis has a fascinating interview with then-California Governor Schwarzenegger during a high-speed bike ride; moves to an enlightening interview with well-informed San Jose Mayor Chuck Reed; and ends in the bankrupt city of Vallejo, California, with Phil Batchelor, former interim city manager.

Lewis saved the worst for last. In Vallejo, when the day of reckoning finally occurred and bankruptcy proceedings concluded, the city's creditors received five cents on the dollar and employee pensioners, with liberalized pension provisions, received 20 to 30 cents on their pension dollar.

Internationally, the small country of Iceland went into a free fall when three Icelandic global banks went bust with \$100 billion in irresponsible loan losses. That was equivalent to \$330,000 for every Icelandic man, woman, and child, not to mention tens of billions in personal losses.

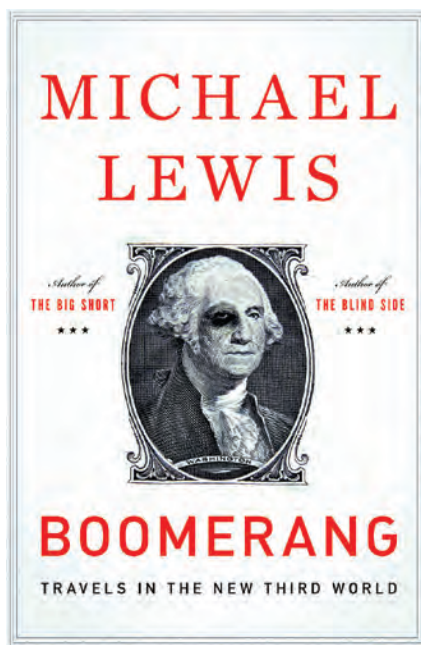
Like Iceland, three Irish mega banks also folded because of cheap credit and unjustified loan policies. Like giant pyramids of playing cards that were built on the euphoria of greed and fast money and lacked prudent financial justification, accountability, and regulation, the banks collapsed like Ponzi schemes ultimately always do, with great financial losses and personal suffering.

In Ireland, however, through a bumbling and questionable political decision, the Irish government took responsibility for that bank debt. Greece is another wild story, where tax evasion is a way of life, as are other egregious practices.

In an election year, for example, Greek tax collectors who try to do their jobs are reassigned into a back room so they can't generate adverse political consequences. The recent Band-Aid from the European Union hasn't solved Greece's fundamental problems, and we will continue to read about how this Grecian story unfolds, along with other shaky European countries that face serious financial challenges.

Dealing with the Dilemma

To his credit, Governor Schwarzenegger understood that California was the leading candidate for bankruptcy



Boomerang: Travels in the New Third World

By Michael Lewis, W.W. Norton and Company, Ltd., 2011, 224 pages, U.S. hardcover.

among U.S. states. Initially, he tried to deal with the problem through the state legislature but failing that, he put four items on the ballot that, collectively, would have had a positive impact on the state's financial dilemma. Schwarzenegger had faith in the people's judgment that elected him, with close to a 70 percent approval rating, but he was proved wrong when California's voters resoundingly rejected all four proposals.

The city of San Jose, which enjoys one of the highest per-capita incomes in America, had gone from 7,450 employees to 5,400 when Lewis interviewed Mayor Reed, who statistically predicted that the city would have only 1,600 employees by 2014 because of the city's employee pension requirements. He then extrapolated his forecast to only one employee at some point in the future.

Talk about a doomsday prediction on quality-of-life issues from an informed mayor! Currently, and quite

LEWIS'S BOOK IS A SOBERING EXAMINATION OF THE REASONS FOR AND THE EFFECTS OF CHEAP CREDIT AND GREED THAT HAD ITS ORIGIN IN UNREGULATED WALL STREET FINANCIAL CENTERS—A SITUATION THAT LED TO THE TERRIBLE RECESSION THE UNITED STATES AND EUROPE ARE STILL TRYING TO GET OUT FROM UNDER.

apart from *Boomerang*, there are initiatives underway in California that may have significance to the issues described that bear watching.

Somewhere, somehow, America and its states, including local governments, must come to grips with fiscal reality and fiscal responsibility. We don't know when or if this will happen, but Michael Lewis's book offers an educational vehicle to that awareness.

My suggestion to fellow managers is that they read the book and decide for themselves how best to use it—preferably

as an educational tool for their elected officials, legislators, governors, union leaders, and others. If nothing else, the last chapter may well help managers make relevant and specific points when discussing critical issues facing their own local governments. **PM**



MERRETT STIERHEIM, a lifetime city and county manager, is a trustee, Collins Center for Public Policy, Inc., Miami, Florida (mrstierheim@msn.com).

Author notes that since this review was written, Stockton, California, has filed for bankruptcy.

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BY MARC ROGOFF AND BRUCE CLARK

STAYING INFORMED OF SOLID-WASTE DISPOSAL OPTIONS

A brief primer on what managers need to know about new conversion technologies

Since 2004, new solid-waste conversion technologies have emerged that may be a game-changer in some locales for solid-waste disposal. These technologies are being touted by their developers with claims that they produce essentially zero air emissions; reduce greenhouse gases; incur costs that are similar to landfilling; produce energy and marketable byproducts; and offer opportunities to “mine” closed landfills thus reducing local liabilities.

When faced with such claims, public officials ask them themselves: Are these offers too good to be true?

This article provides an overview of new solid-waste conversion technologies as well as a methodology that public officials can use to preliminarily assess the feasibility of this type of project. The article also builds on the lessons learned from more than 50 feasibility assessments of new waste-conversion technologies and provides some basic guidance on the technologies themselves.

The Current Picture

Communities without mass burn, waste-to-energy (WTE) plants have become totally dependent on landfill disposal. At the same time, privatization of landfills is increasing and in many cases, with more costly long-hauls to remote facilities. Tipping fees (i.e., gate fee or what the landfill owner charges a customer, typically per ton) are rising. Local government budgets are tight and everyone is looking at ways to reduce costs. Onto this scene enters the developer for a new waste-conversion plant. The proposal to local officials typically involves no up-front costs and all of the other claims mentioned previously. Since this is all new, many officials have

no experience or road map to help them evaluate the claims.

Figure 1 provides a brief overview of methods that have recently been developed to use energy produced by converting solid-waste products. These methods are numerous and can be grouped in various ways.

Figure 1 also illustrates technologies that have been developed to try to extract different benefits from the processed waste stream, including these possible by-products:

- Gases for power production or feedstock for vehicular fuels.
- Basic chemicals for use as a raw feedstock.
- Compost and soil amendments.
- Slag (a hard material fused from inert materials) for road sub-base aggregate.
- Char or a charcoal-like substance from a pyrolysis process as a soil-building amendment.

Some of the common definitions for these new technologies are listed in Figure 2.

Key Feasibility Questions

A waste-conversion project can be one of the most complex public works projects considered by a community. Not unlike traditional, mass burn, WTE facilities, such projects should undergo a methodical feasibility assessment that seeks answers to key questions up-front.

This approach will assure the public and the decisionmakers that all relevant issues have been explored and a resolution reached before significant resources are expended on such projects.

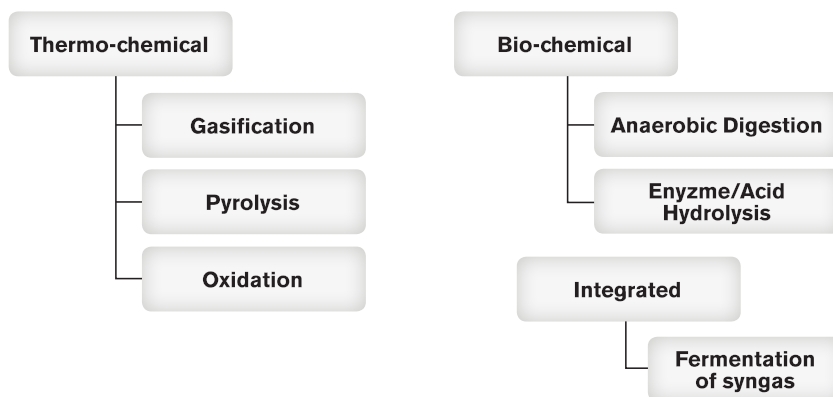
Does the technology work? Assess: annual operating experience; scale-up issues; need for preprocessing of the waste stream; reliability of disposal.

What is the strength of the company? Assess: its business strength to secure capital; its intellectual property and patent rights for the technology.

Does the project fit with the community’s current solid-waste program? Assess: recycling and disposal program; if a transfer system is needed; if modification of the solid-waste plan is necessary.

Can you provide waste supply for the project? Assess: legal or economic flow control; whether enough waste can be

FIGURE 1: Simplified Process Classification.



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FIGURE 2: Common Terms.

COMMON TERMS	BRIEF DEFINITION
Anaerobic digestion	A biological process that takes place in a closed reactor vessel and allows microorganisms to feed on the organic fraction of the waste producing a biogas and a by-product that can be turned into compost. The biogas is typically combusted in an engine to produce electrical power.
Autoclave	Mixed solid waste is fed into a vessel where it is subjected to heat, pressure, and agitation causing the organic fraction of the waste (food scraps, fiber/paper, and vegetation) to break down into a pulp-like substance that has energy applications.
Gasification	Segregated waste is fed into a vessel and is indirectly subjected to high heat and a small amount of air. A syngas is produced that has such direct applications as powering a turbine or an internal combustion engine.
Hydrolysis	A technique that can involve acids or enzymes that are mixed with water and the waste in a reactor. These agents break down the waste materials into sugar compounds and a byproduct from the plant fraction known as lignin.
Pyrolysis	Segregated waste is fed into a vessel and is indirectly subjected to high heat. Practically all air is excluded from the reactor vessel resulting in producer gas that contains methane, carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide, liquid (oil), and a solid char.

provided by the community; if waste imports are needed.

What are the project's siting needs? Assess: if land is available with the proper zoning and setbacks; if needed utilities are available at a reasonable cost; if there is public buy-in for the project.

What kind of permits will be needed? Assess: air permits, local and state zoning and plan amendments.

Are markets available for the products and energy? Assess: if there is sufficient information to predict plant outputs from the technology selected; if markets exist for by-products.

What are the costs? Assess: calculate the project's short-term and long-term economic impacts through Pro Forma modeling to develop accurate capital and operating costs for the project, to determine if funds are available to cover operating costs; and to determine if tipping fees are required.

Will there be financing risks? Assess: the role of government agencies in the process; whether taxpayers could be on the hook for risks of loan.

What happens if system fails? Assess: which local agency would control the solid-waste system; where waste would go if plant had to be shut down; who would be responsible for extra costs incurred in a system failure or extended shutdown.

What's Ahead

The market of new waste-conversion technologies is rapidly evolving with new facilities being announced and operating data on pilot facilities beginning to be received to fill in the current gaps with operating history. This will allow better due diligence.

By asking the right questions, decision makers can take steps to ensure that what is being promised is what they will receive. **PM**



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BY GENE STRICKLAND

DO'S AND DON'TS WITH ELECTED OFFICIALS

During my 34-year local government career, I learned quite a few lessons on how to work with elected officials. Here are my recommendations for managers, listed in no particular order:

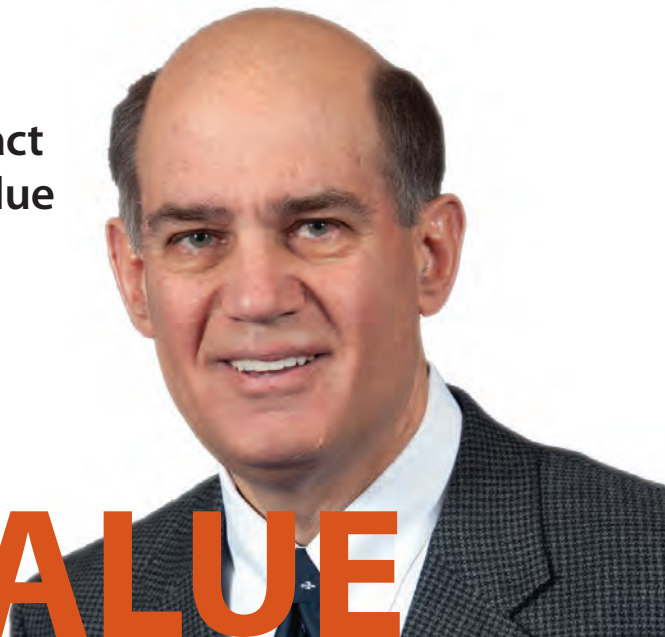
- Live inside the city or county limits.
- Respond in a timely way to requests by elected officials, no matter how trivial.
- Make elected officials look good.
- Understand clearly your role and their role.
- Remember that every retiree or terminated employee can become an elected official.
- Get your head out of the computer monitor and be accessible to the public, the employees working “out in the trenches,” and the administrative staff; consider doing your own work after 5:00 p.m. or on Saturday.
- Meet individually with each elected official no less than every two weeks.
- Ask elected officials to schedule an annual retreat.
- Ask for an annual job performance evaluation.
- Never allow a news story to surprise your community’s elected officials.
- Resist being the first to use technology and equipment because the first items issued usually have bugs to work out and cost more; capitalize on lessons learned from others.
- Mediate, as a last resort, between feuding elected officials; mediation can be tricky, so be careful as a high degree of diplomacy is necessary.
- Arrive 30 minutes before and leave 30 minutes after the regular working hours of employees.
- Remember, the chair that you are sitting in is only being lent to you.
- Respect elected officials and residents and serve them with honesty, integrity, and humility.
- Time your recommendations so they do not cause unfair political fallout—nothing controversial near an election.
- Never take sides in a local election.
- Never tell any of the elected officials, including your favorite one, that you plan to vote for them.
- Never make a derogatory comment about one official to another.
- Never violate your credibility because it’s easy to lose and difficult to restore.
- Never act like you know more than a resident or an elected official; discipline your ego.
- Never make changes as knee-jerk reactions.
- Never allow a news story to surprise the elected officials.
- Time your recommendations so they do not cause unfair political fallout; nothing controversial near an election.



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Photo by Joe Szurszewski

BY ANNA READ

PARTNERING WITH SOLAR PROVIDERS

Long-term partnerships offer financing and other benefits

When a local government begins considering a solar installation on a local facility or locally owned land, selecting a solar provider is an important first step. Because the life span of a solar system is now in the 25-year range and because many local governments are choosing to finance the systems through leasing or third-party power purchase agreements, rather than owning the system outright, local governments are entering into long-term partnerships with solar companies.

These partnerships can help local governments go solar by making new financing methods available. Leasing agreements and power purchase agreements (discussed below), can remove the risk associated with installing and operating a photovoltaic (PV) system, which the developer assumes.

Partnering with a solar company can also allow local governments to install larger installations than they would have been able to through direct ownership—for example, by including general funds or bonds as a loan to the developer in the financing package.

Benefits of New Financing Methods

Third-party financing models, including leasing and power purchase agreements (PPAs), allow local governments to effectively accelerate PV deployment, take advantage of federal tax incentives available for solar installations, and avoid paying the up-front costs for solar through partnerships with solar developers. Through a lease agreement, a solar developer makes lease payments to a local government for the use of land or facilities on which it is developing a solar project. The developer owns and operates the project.

Through a PPA, the local government enters into a long-term agreement

(generally 20 to 25 years, in line with the life of the system) to purchase the electricity that is generated by the PV system installed on the local government's land or facility.

The developer then manages the financing, installation, and maintenance of the system over the length of the contract. Currently, 21 states and Puerto Rico authorize PPAs, while five states disallow or restrict the use of these agreements.

Tucson Embraces Solar

Tucson, Arizona, is located in one of the most solar-rich locations in the county. Situated in the heart of the Sonoran Desert, the city receives 350 days of sunshine a year. Not surprisingly, given its solar potential, Tucson has emerged as a solar leader. Named one of the Department of Energy's 25 Solar America Cities in 2007, Tucson has completed a solar plan, updated its zoning ordinances to be more solar-friendly, adopted a solar-ready ordinance, and completed a number of installations on municipal facilities.

In 2008, the city issued a request for proposal for 1 megawatt (mW) of solar on seven sites. The city financed the installations with \$7.6 million in Clean Renewable Energy Bonds (CREBs), a tax-credit bond allocated by the Internal Revenue Service. SPG Solar, a San Francisco Bay Area-based company, was selected by the city and completed the installations, which included both rooftop and ground-mount solar tracker systems, in 2009.

In 2012, Tucson again partnered with SPG Solar to install 2.3 mW of rooftop and carport solar systems. These downtown systems include a 591 kilowatt (kW) installation at the Tucson Convention Center.



ABOVE: Tucson, Arizona's convention center includes a 591 kilowatt rooftop solar system. Photo courtesy of SPG Solar, Novato, California.

“We worked closely with the city to streamline the solar process, providing our expertise in design and engineering to meet the city's design requirements. It was a great partnership and is an ongoing partnership,” said Marissa Muller, senior manager of marketing at SPG Solar. “For cities, it is based around that partnership, realizing that solar is a long-term, performance-based asset. SPG Solar is committed to the city, providing our own monitoring software to ensure the system runs at peak performance for decades to come.”

With these latest installations, which bring Tucson's total installed capacity through the partnership with SPG Solar to 3.3 mW, the city is expected to realize \$6.2 million in net revenues over 25 years. The recent installations also created 60 construction jobs during the installation phase, including internships for solar installer students from Pima Community College.

To learn more about what Tucson and other communities are doing to advance solar, access ICMA's solar podcasts at www.icma.org/solarpodcasts.

ENDNOTES

1. U.S. Department of Energy. *Solar Powering Your Community: A Guide for Local Governments*.
2. Ibid.
3. DSIRE. www.dsireusa.org/solar.



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BY DECKER PLOEHN

TAKE A BUS, MAYBE!

Enjoy the lighthearted moments

From time to time, local government administrators come across an unsatisfied resident and occasionally this occurs at a council meeting. I've had such an experience that I'm glad to relate had one lighthearted moment.

Perhaps similar to council meetings in other communities, in Bettendorf we offer a "public request of council" section during our meeting, where anyone can address the council about a problem or grievance. On this particular occasion, a gentleman was dissatisfied because several of his family members had settled on a road project with a majority of the family in favor of the project. He, however, was not satisfied.

The road was built, and he objected to his share of the settlement. He also had objections to work that was not completed—from his perspective—and so was determined to tell the council he was not satisfied with this entire project, nor the way he was treated during the negotiations. He attempted to make the point that he is a taxpaying resident, and he wanted the city attorney to represent his interest in the matter against the city.

As you can imagine, the city attorney tried to help the gentleman understand that he represented the city, not the individual taxpayer.

This unhappy resident didn't seem (or want) to understand this concept and so became a little more belligerent and frustrated with the discussion, and it was obvious he was not going to give up his place at the podium. The mayor tried to instill reason in the discussion, but the resident was not deterred in getting an answer.

Finally, the mayor convinced him to meet with the city attorney and me after the meeting so that perhaps a solution could be worked out and brought back to council for resolution at its next meeting.

Offense and Defense

Our resident was not delighted with the city in this matter or with me in particular. The city attorney reminded him again that he was the city's attorney and couldn't, by law, be the individual's attorney, too. The attorney was honest and added that the individual would probably need private counsel in the matter.

This is not what the resident wanted to hear, and he again asked the city attorney to garner an opinion for him on the road issue. It was a heated conversation on the resident's part, to the point that everyone who remained after the council meeting was concerned about the volatility of the situation.

The city attorney continued with the same message—he could not represent the gentleman even though he paid city taxes, which was a big part of the resident's argument—that is, if the city attorney's salary was paid for with taxes and the resident paid taxes, then the city attorney could work for him.

Several more times, the city attorney attempted to calmly point out, "The taxes you paid have not been directed to any one department individually but rather to the city generally." The resident continued with the classic line we have all heard before: My taxes pay your salary.

The city attorney then changed tactics by stating: "Sir, the city council does not specifically allocate individual taxes to individual functions in the city. For all I know, the taxes that you pay went to the transit department."

The resident looked at both of us quizzically and me more pointedly and asked, "What is he talking about...transit? I don't even take the bus, and I've never used the bus!" The

city attorney's reply: "That's my whole point. The taxes you pay are paid to the city's general fund and not specifically directed to any one function. Therefore, perhaps you should be talking to the transit department as your tax dollars may have gone there."

Greater Good

It was a spectacular piece of disarmament! The gentleman was stunned and kept asking, "What is he talking about...transit?"

We weren't able to get our resident to any specific type of solution that evening, and he left the meeting, still a little disgruntled and definitely talking to himself. Occasionally, he comes back to council meetings, but he has not addressed the council formally since his original appearance. Apparently, we gave him way too much to consider, or we thoroughly confused him.

The moral of this story: The manager's job is serious enough as it is, so sometimes we should enjoy a lighthearted moment when one stares us in the face. And perhaps once in a while, take a ride on the bus! **PM**



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