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In the Zone: A Model for Managing Localities to Achieve

Do local governments become great by doing great things, or is it simply great governments that do great things? A certain amount of this line of thought is an attempt to understand and explain why seemingly similar local governments produce vastly different results, with some investing for the future and thriving even in difficult times as others simply exist or worse. What is at the core of these great communities that pushes them to succeed? How can a manager guide a community toward achievement and away from mere existence? The project capacity zone offers one way of framing the potential achievement of projects and programs.

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COVER STORY

In the Zone: A Model for Managing Localities to Achieve

by C. James Ervin

The project capacity zone offers one way of framing the potential achievement of projects and programs. What makes some local governments strive for and achieve excellence while at the same time others that appear to be similar fail to achieve the same results?

Do local governments become great by doing great things, or is it simply great governments that do great things? A certain amount of this line of thought is an attempt to understand and explain why seemingly similar local governments produce vastly different results, with some investing for the future and thriving even in difficult times as others simply exist or worse.

What is at the core of these great communities that pushes them to succeed? How can this be fostered in other communities? How can a manager guide a community toward achievement and away from mere existence?

Serving as a manager of a local government provides a chance to look at the question from a different perspective. The truth is at once more complicated and more elusive than a simplistic view of "great governments." Tossing about such words as great, excellence, success, and achieve is in itself an oversimplification, as these vary from locality to locality. Excellence for one local government may be limited growth with a sustained economy, while another may define it as industrial development and growth. The view of excellence has to be broad enough to allow for individual definition.

Many useful and creative leadership models connect the attainment of a desired goal or outcome of a local government to the leadership of the elected body and the manager. ICMA has been instrumental in exposing managers to those models through not only direct distribution of the author's work but also in encouraging those authors to translate their work to a form more relevant to the public sector.

The translation of Good to Great to the social sector by Jim Collins is a prime example. A missing element in the leadership equation is the actual mechanics and impact of a manager's and an elected body's leadership and the outcomes at the local government level.

Local governments have different capacities which manifest themselves over time in the output and actions of the community. Juggling and improving those capacities has proved to be one of the chief challenges of the manager and elected body and is a great way for a manager to make a positive impact on a community. Effective leadership invariably increases the capacity of local government.

Reader Reaction
If thinking about projects requiring varying local government capacities sparks an insight in you or you have other ideas, feel free to share them. Specifically: what have you done as a manager to improve the capacity of your local government?
Also, what issues are raised when looking at local government from this perspective? How effective is the model in connecting the dots between leadership models you are familiar with and the actual outcome on the ground in your locality?
Send your reactions for future publication to Beth Payne, editor, PM magazine, at bpayne@icma.org.

Two types of capacity control the outcomes from which great local governments achieve their goals: political capacity and fiscal capacity. In order to understand their impact on our communities, I propose a model that juxtaposes the two and from that vantage point suggests how a manager can expand the capacity of local government. The model proposes a mechanism whereby excellence in leadership at the staff and elected level creates excellence of outcome.

Political Capacity

A colleague in a nearby community recently remarked that he had a fairly inexperienced governing body due to having a majority of newly elected officials and that it was "hard for them to make difficult decisions." Though he was speaking from personal experience, he was hinting at a trend identified by ICMA where more and more governing board members are "activists who seek to tackle particular problems." Though these elected officials bring to the table a desire to serve the whole, they also arrive with a heartfelt desire to promote specific neighborhoods or projects. The end result is a diverse group of actors focused on short-term and individual projects.

Longer term projects or those that have even slight community opposition are difficult in this environment. The stereotypical "not in my back yard" is the ultimate expression of this arrangement's end result. Vocal actors in the community can stop projects that are otherwise generally supported. Political capacity, as used here, is the degree to which the governing body can cohesively take action even without full community support. Governments with greater political capacity can succeed in implementing projects with less broad-based support or more opposition than governments with lesser political capacity.

A classic example of this mindset recently surfaced in a conversation with a citizen. The question arose as to why the government would pursue a given project considering the opposition evident in the community. The philosophical question at hand was should the local government only undertake projects that were unanimously supported, or could the local government undertake projects that were opposed by a portion of the citizens?

The degree of tolerable opposition varies greatly from community to community. In the example of the colleague just mentioned, the newness of the elected officials, combined with the particular focus of each individual, created a scenario where the local government lacked the political capacity to pursue programs or projects that weren't generally supported. Over time, the capacity would change given the evolution of the staff and elected officials.

The implication is that there is a spectrum or range of political capacity. Picking a site for a new prison or landfill or implementing zoning in a previously unzoned area typically bring a significant amount of opposition to the table. Comparing these challenges to the more mundane tasks of recreation facility site selection or the development of programs to help seniors or low-income families shows the substantial variation in political capacity that is required for different governmental tasks.

Fiscal Capacity

At its most basic, fiscal capacity is a measure of what the local government can afford. A government with limited reserves and a high debt ratio in a utility fund lacks the fiscal capacity for a substantial water plant or infrastructure upgrade. If, like many governments in this recession, staff is being laid off to make the budget balance, it is unlikely that the government has the capacity to take on general fund debt for a significant project or to invest in needed capital.

Unlike political capacity, fiscal capacity is more easily measured. A review of a locality's comprehensive annual financial report, reserve balances, tax rate and aggregate property values can provide a quick overview of the likelihood of a given locality having the capacity to tackle such a significant project as a utility expansion, neighborhood renewal, or the development of a new industrial park or airport.

Fiscal capacity exists in a range, not only in the capacity present in each community, but in the capacity required for each project. The substantial difference between being able to replace 10 police vehicles a year versus constructing a $15 million recreation facility highlights the depth of that range.

Local Government Capacity Model

These two capacities, political and fiscal, and their underlying structures of community support level and cost come into play in almost any local government project. All local government actions or projects have a cost and a certain amount of public support. Each requires a certain capacity in order for the local government to bring the action or project into reality.

Some projects come with high costs and some present challenges to the political framework. Each project requires a certain amount of political capacity and fiscal capacity. Any manager who has tried to finance a significant utility expansion or site a new landfill in a community has explored the limits of the political and fiscal capacity of his or her community.

Figure 1. Support and Cost

Since each of these capacities has a range, they can be charted. However, in place of charting the capacities discussed, the easier task is charting the features that define the political and fiscal capacity in local government. For political capacity, the degree of support is charted and for
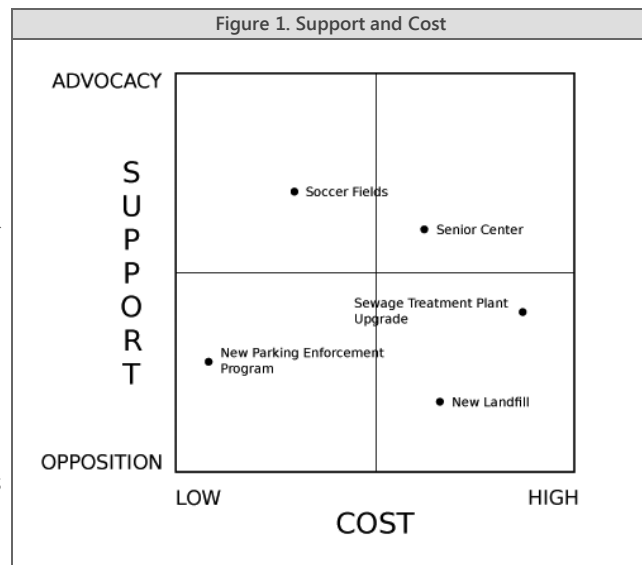
fiscal capacity the cost of a project is charted.

Charting them together produces an interesting interplay between the two concepts. The interplay creates a simple chart with a Y axis that tracks community support (from outright advocacy to significant opposition) and an X axis that tracks cost (from low cost to high cost).

Projects and programs then fall on the resulting grid based on associated costs and community support level (see Figure 1).

By way of example, consider the theoretical placement of a new landfill versus new soccer fields. The landfill is placed in the lower right quadrant of high cost/high opposition projects, while the soccer fields end up in the top right quadrant of lower cost, supported projects. Other projects have different cost and support paradigms. A new parking enforcement program that will cost little but is generally opposed ends up in the lower left quadrant.

Many communities would support a parking enforcement program while others would oppose it. Just as success is defined on a community-by-community basis, so too is the relative placement in terms of cost and support of each project.

The layout of the quadrants from "supported and low cost" to "opposed and high cost" are a natural fit with the capacity concept. As local governments develop political capacity, they extend the range of obtainable projects further down the Y axis.

Also, as they develop fiscal capacity, they extend the range of obtainable projects across the X axis. The capacity overlay on the chart corresponds to the intuitive fact that the most likely projects to succeed are the projects in the top left quadrant, those that are inexpensive and generally supported (see Figure 2).

The fiscal capacity and the political capacity form an area that bounds the projects that can be undertaken by the local government. This represents a theoretical area of possible action called "the project capacity zone." As local governments increase their fiscal capacity and political capacity, the size and shape of the zone changes.

Projects that lie outside the zone exceed the capacity of the local government in some way. They either cost more than the government can afford or are unlikely to garner enough support to be politically feasible. There can be many projects that

Figure 2. Projects and Capacity

are politically possible but out of the question financially. Examples can include large scale urban renewal, significant utility expansions, incentives for economic development, the construction of new business or industrial parks, or other similar items.

By the same token, there can be projects that are within the reach of the locality fiscally, but are not politically supported. Examples in this category can include zoning rules and regulations, traffic and parking enforcement, reductions in service to save costs, the sale of government-owned land, or similar cost-neutral projects. As above, these examples are purely theoretical and would vary by community.

Role of a Manager

This local government capacity model is a way of establishing where a particular community lies on the political/fiscal continuum regarding prospective projects and provides a framework for how community leaders—citizens, elected officials, and managers— can work to expand the boundaries within which projects can be guided to completion. Projects are not placed with such absolute precision as to imply a mathematical basis but are instead placed to reflect the relevance to a particular community at a particular time.

The model also hints at the mechanics connecting great leadership models with success in the local government setting. The value in thinking of projects in this fashion is the focus it places on how elected bodies and managers can work to create a higher capacity.

A local government manager has a significant role in not only moving projects within the zone itself, but in working to expand the zone completely. Furthermore, understanding the challenges that are presented by high-cost/low-support programs helps set the stage for effective manager/elected official teamwork in helping to build the capacity needed for these challenging projects.

Figure 3. Capacity
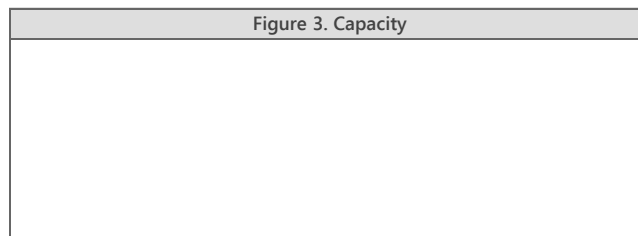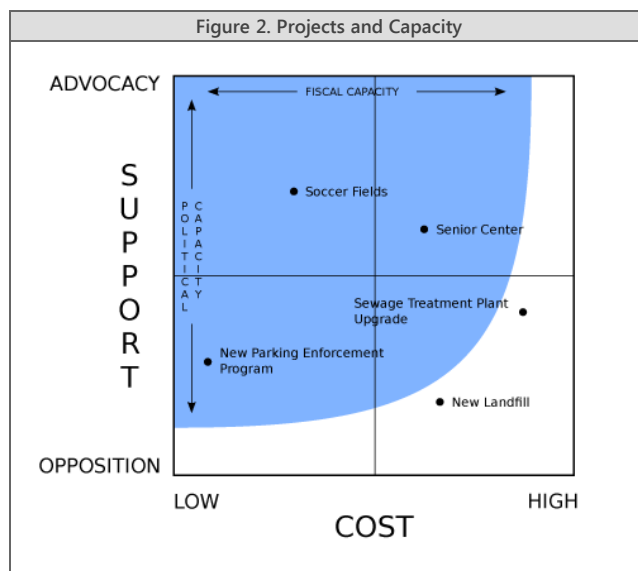
Moving projects within or into the zone is the subject of many of the ICMA Practices for Effective Local Government Management. Policy facilitation helps "community actors identify, work toward, and achieve common goals and objectives." Through the community leadership role, the manager can move projects from a position of less support to a position of more support, potentially within the political capacity of the local government. This isn't a process of advocacy but rather a process of community outreach, consensus building, and education. This is typified by the ICMA best practice of democratic advocacy and citizen participation.
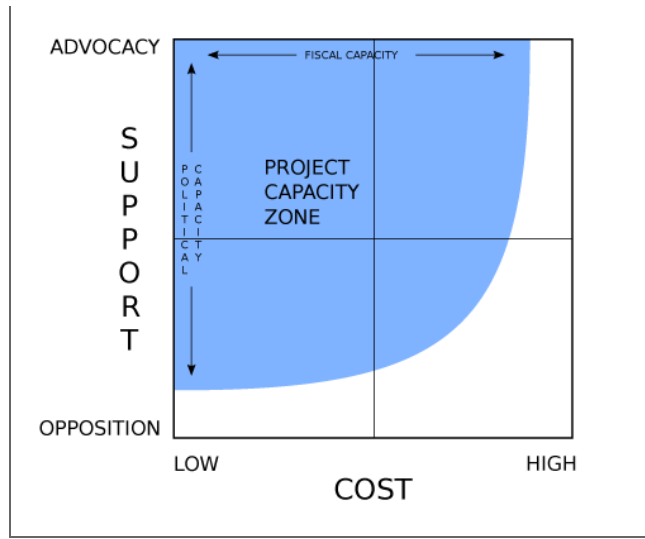
Projects can also be moved along the axis of fiscal capacity through the effective use of grants, regional cooperation, and special financing available to local governments. A new wastewater treatment facility may be outside the financial reach of a local government, but can easily be afforded by a group of governments cooperating regionally or if part of the investment is financed by state and federal grants.

Though the manager can act in many ways to move projects within or into the capacity zone of a local government, the real opportunity for success lies in working with the elected officials to expand the zone. This involves enabling the elected body and citizenry to undertake difficult decisions and to develop the financial capacity to tackle costly projects.

The very process of policy facilitation through retreats and vision development with the elected body creates a set of goals that acknowledge the desired shape and extent of capacity needed to meet the expectations of the community. The identification of these expectations and the capacities needed to meet them is part of the core mission of ICMA members and is the cumulative effect of community building, citizen facilitation, and the support and growth of the democratic process in our communities.

By excelling at the roles of staff effectiveness, policy facilitation, citizen service, democratic advocacy, and communication and by promoting citizen participation and diversity, managers enable the governing body to extend the political capacity of the government. Fiscal capacity extends through a mastery of the functional and operation aspects of government and by a clear understanding and a mastery of budgeting and financial analysis.

Each capacity is enhanced by the manager and the elected body being innovative and by possessing vision and creativity. These are all best management practices as promulgated by ICMA. The capacity model shows a clear connection between these practices and a local government's ability to achieve.

Alternatively, the model also exposes the ethical challenge implied by not working to move projects into the capacity zone or to expand the zone itself. Only tackling projects in the highly supported/low cost quadrant is the managerial equivalent of picking low hanging fruit. This is the inverse of the leadership models mentioned and is the scenario whereby nothing of any great value gets accomplished.

The capacities created and expanded by the leadership of the manager and the elected body are one way of envisioning a mechanical linkage between great leadership models and successes in local government. The proposed model outlines a clear connection between the practices of the manager and elected officials, and the ability of the local government to achieve.

Using the capacity model to revisit the question of how local governments become great, the real answer is that local governments achieve great results because they have the capacity to make difficult choices and the fiscal resources to pursue success. The expansion and development of this political and fiscal capacity is part of the role of the manager. Working with the governing body to extend these limits creates the ability to achieve.

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Preserving Community-Oriented Policing in a Recession

by Zach Friend and Rick Martinez

Widespread budget cuts have forced cities and law enforcement agencies to do more with less. Many police departments are doing something that hasn't been on the radar for years: laying off cops. Cities such as Oakland, California, have considered reductions of more than 15 percent to the force while others have eliminated all prevention and education programs. Often during times of retraction, it is easy to go after programs that consume time and resources regardless of the tangible results they yield.

Yet, even with a need to slash budgets, the question remains: can police agencies actually *afford* to cut community-oriented policing programs? For the Santa Cruz, California, Police Department, with fewer than 100 sworn in a town of 56,000, its established community policing program saved the agency from having to lay off cops; a dilemma faced for the first time in more than 140 years.

What exactly is community-oriented policing? Simply stated: it is policing that focuses on prevention, partnerships, and establishing trust. It empowers members of the community to become stakeholders in their own safety. It also transforms the image of the agency for those who support it financially and otherwise—local elected officials, community members, and the federal government.

In July 2009, the U.S. Department of Justice awarded more than $1 billion in American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funding for the COPS program. This money was specifically to hire, rehire, or retain officers—a three-year funding mechanism to insulate local law enforcement agencies against further budget cuts. But how does an agency tap into this type of funding? What mechanisms can an agency create to ensure that it is more likely to succeed when future funding opportunities arise? The first step is establishing a relationship with community organizations.

Executive Summary:
1. Community oriented policing can pay financial dividends.
2. There are four simple steps to improving community outreach.
3. Establishing a community oriented policing program builds trust with elected officials, local government managers, and voters.

Establishing Community Relationships

Public safety is both a primary responsibility of local government and a core expectation of community members. Santa Cruz Mayor Cynthia Mathews points out that "it is essential that the agency actively engage with the community to expand public understanding of services and procedures, gain firsthand knowledge of community concerns and perceptions, and cultivate citizen involvement." This allows agencies to "create personal relationships, build trust, and demonstrate responsiveness. Building these relationships increases both the quality of the agency's work and public support."

Mary Miller, who is on the board of Santa Cruz's largest neighborhood organization, Santa Cruz Neighbors, says that establishing a relationship with the police can be simpler than many think: "Begin by identifying several community-minded individuals who are interested in building strong ties among the neighbors and with law enforcement regarding issues such as a neighborhood watch program. These individuals can then reach out to other individuals and other neighborhoods and, with local law enforcement, begin to build the infrastructure for a strong community policing and neighborhood-involved program." Miller states that the framework for the policing model would be threefold: informational meetings to introduce beat officers to their area of responsibility, educational meetings to address specific localized problems, and management-level meetings to bring together community leaders and police management from a more macro perspective.

Often when you establish these community policing principles, such as holding regularly scheduled community meetings in each beat or participating actively in neighborhood group meetings, you will discover tangential benefits. Elected officials usually attend these events and can be significant allies in framing your image within the community. In addition, local businesses (often the lifeblood of a city tax base) are eager to partner with police agencies that emphasize this type of outreach.

"Strong, proactive, and positive relationships with the local business community and other key stakeholders ensure that local law enforcement are constantly in touch with the issues impacting local citizens," comments Kris Reyes, president of Kris Reyes Consulting, a Santa Cruz–based full-service communications and strategy firm. "It also humanizes the department in the eyes of most people. Officers become our friends, neighbors, and colleagues."

Reyes notes that the Santa Cruz Police Department has worked hard over the past few years to build relationships with all sectors of the business community. In turn, these relationships ensure that open lines of communication exist between both sides. "As a result, it is very easy to communicate with the department regarding issues that impact the local business community. Most importantly, the police do a great job of listening to local business owners and finding creative solutions to challenging issues."

Building Relationships with the Media

Regardless of what you may instinctively think, law enforcement and the media have a lot in common. Many journalists see their profession as a calling and as an essential element in public service. Journalists, much like cops, receive a significant amount of pressure and scrutiny from the public. But beyond the similarities, it is essential to build positive relationships with the media for two other reasons: their influence on public opinion and their influence on public policy.

There is no question that implementing a successful community-based policing model will be reflected in more community-oriented coverage. After all, when you speak to the media you are really speaking to the community at large. Mayor Mathews points out that media coverage of public safety issues exerts a powerful influence on public perception of community needs and police performance. The Santa Cruz Police Department has worked hard, through the establishment of a public information officer (PIO) position and media training for management staff, to communicate its message to the community effectively.

Creating a PIO will allow an agency to centralize its message and focus fully on communicating information to the public and media. This position, often an assignment within the department, will remove a great burden from the supervisory staff who are usually tasked with this function. In addition, the PIO will take the responsibility at crime scenes, allowing patrol staff to deal with the issue at hand.

"The American political system is very fragmented—by design," according to Joe Ferrara, associate dean, Georgetown Public Policy Institute. "Political power is constantly shifting, vertically and horizontally." He points out that community groups and the media play a large role in these ongoing shifts. "Public safety—probably more than most policy areas —operates in an environment of constant community and media scrutiny." In turn, he believes law enforcement agencies need to be sensitive to this dynamic and understand how community groups and the media can affect public perceptions.

Developing a Rapport with Elected Officials

Police agencies are quick to fall victim to the belief that engaging with elected officials somehow equates to being political. But the truth is that when you are the highest-profile department in a city government structure and you take the largest chunk of the budget you are by default a political organization. There is no reason to stand on the sidelines while political decisions are being made.

After all, the community holds elected officials accountable for all public services, including policing. Why would you allow elected officials to make budgetary decisions that can directly impact your operations or form opinions about the efficacy of your agency without taking the time to educate them? "In order to respond to public concerns and make sound decisions about public policy and budgets, elected officials need to have a solid, honest understanding of departmental strengths and challenges," according to Santa Cruz Mayor Cynthia Mathews. "This can only happen if there are solid relationships and open communication between the department and electeds, based on trust and shared goals."

How would a police agency develop these relationships? The key element is to be proactive and to invest a significant amount of time to establish a dialogue before there is a crisis or a major budgetary decision. Reach out to each of your local city council members, and assume that they do not have a strong understanding of your department. Mayor Mathews counsels that, whether or not you perceive certain elected officials will be supportive, you must take time to get to know each one individually.

For example, the mayor says, "What are their values, life experience, and background that will shape their perceptions of public safety issues and performance?" Departments need to "maximize the opportunities for interaction through proactive invitations to participate in roll call, departmental events, ride-alongs, and community meetings." Consequently, anything that develops background knowledge about your agency or creates a sense of shared mission and personal relationships will in the long run benefit the relationship with elected officials and ultimately your

department.

Preserving Community Policing After Cuts

In healthier economic times, the Santa Cruz Police Department staffed a community services unit with a manager, supervisor, three patrol officers, and three community service officers. During those fully staffed years, the unit was hosting or attending weekly community meetings and hosting three citizen police academies, one of which was designed solely for Spanish speakers. Today's budget constraints have forced the elimination of the unit. It did not, however, eliminate the department's community outreach.

The police department's community policing efforts are overseen by a handful of managers working out of the patrol division. Beats within the city have been divided into areas of responsibility for police managers in order to ensure there is a single point of contact for community members. To preserve some semblance of community policing in the department, managers partner with community groups to help conduct outreach efforts, mobilize neighborhoods, and facilitate community meetings. The partnership amounts to an ad hoc community policing partnership that has many strengths and replaces (although imperfectly) the former fully funded program.

Besides the obvious cost savings, the use of community groups to continue the community policing message helps to maintain a constant level of communication and partnership with the whole community. And, as many agencies transition from a traditional field training officer program to a police training officer (PTO) program, innovation gleaned from the PTO program can be integrated easily into the ad hoc community policing partnership.

With the national call for citizens to stepup and participate in public service, now is the time for community policing agencies to use the newly emerging resource. Agencies like the Santa Cruz Police Department, struggling to financially support a viable community policing program, are finding community policing partnerships to be the most effective way to maintain the level of service residents expect. The program has also demonstrated a commitment to the community-oriented policing philosophy that has greatly aided the department in receiving federal grant funds and insulated the police from local cuts.

Preserving community-oriented policing in a recession can be accomplished, but it requires changes to traditional outreach methods. Methods suggested in this article can be broken into four steps:

- Meet with community groups.
- Establish a PIO to improve media relations.
- Meet with elected officials; proactively invest this time before a crisis occurs.
- Implement creative procedures and policy changes that maintain community-oriented policing practices.

Without question, police agencies are being forced to make exceptionally difficult decisions during these times of tight budgets. Santa Cruz's emphasis on maintaining community policing partnerships has actually brought in financial benefits, however; in 2009 the department was awarded nearly $2 million in federal COPS grants, preserving five positions slated for layoffs. The city also has found that the department's relationship with the community has allowed for an environment more amenable to bond measures and greater support for tax increases that fund public safety.

Officers have also experienced a tangible improvement in their general working relationship with the community as they continue with community policing. Many officers report hearing "thank yous" more often from the community during their day-to-day patrols.

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Public Relations: Four Steps to Getting What You Need from a Public Meeting!

by Larry Dillon

Local governments have increasingly come under fire for many kinds of decisions: those that raise fees or rates in order to pay the increasing expenses of running a community, as well as for fairly routine decisions about cleaning up the community or expanding and providing additional services. The comments below appeared online and in the local press after some routine council actions:

- "I'm so adamantly opposed to a bunch like has been on the town's, now city's, boards since I moved out here in 1974 telling me what I can and cannot do and interfering with my plans."
- "Are you happy they shoved this down your throat?"
- "I absolutely think our so-called leaders are completely out of control."

We all realize that some of this comes with the territory of public service. But, how can local government managers and elected officials minimize or, better yet, control the comments and the situation better? That is, how can we make lemonade out of lemons? We have some options:

First, proper planning helps a lot. Any decision made off the cuff or without adequate review of the potential consequences, good and bad, is foolhardy. Engineering, police, fire, or legal input is essential for all decisions that impact or might impact those departments. This is critical. Managers should anticipate problems and have alternatives for elected officials to consider. Mitigate the impact whenever possible and add a little sugar to the lemonade! Don't be afraid to admit to and back off from a bad idea.

Second, communicate with everyone as much as possible. The mayor and city manager should be talking to as many civic organizations as possible and reading articles in the paper or postings on websites. Become involved in coffee talk at the local café, and establish a good working relationship with the local press before controversy hits. What you want is fair coverage by the press instead of an attack. The media are less likely to attack if you know them and they feel that you shoot straight with them.

Never lie to the public or the press. You will regret it. There is an old saying: "The truth hurts!" It may very well hurt but not as bad as being uncovered as a liar and having your credibility ruined.

Third, practice positive public relations. The biggest mistakes I see elected and appointed officials making are getting angry, taking comments personally, and talking down to people. Most don't realize this until afterward, and by then it's too late. Remember, you asked for the job. It might be personal between you and the individual talking, but you can't let it cause you to lose control of the meeting. You were a citizen before you got elected or appointed, and that is what you will be again when you are out of office. In short, a title does not make you better than anyone else, just more responsible and accountable.

Fourth, do the right thing. It's hard for some elected officials to do the right thing for the community because of pressure from friends, neighbors, and business associates with personal agendas or motives. If you cannot vote for or carry out what you know will benefit the community as a whole because you don't want to upset someone or have it negatively impact your business or personal relationship, you need to be big enough to step down and let them appoint someone else who can. City government is not for the indecisive or easily swayed.

Sometimes local governments must pass ordinances and regulations that many in the community disagree with or do not like. The result is the important thing. Making 10 citizens, or even 100, angry for the betterment of the entire community is sometimes unavoidable and a small price to pay. Some people will oppose any action, pro or con, just

for the sake of opposition.

Many citizens are well-meaning but misinformed. No assembly of citizens tasked with making an informed decision for the entire community has the time or resources to inform every citizen of all the facts, needs, and potential outcomes. That is why they were elected in the first place, to make the tough decisions. There is one truth in serving the public: Every decision will anger someone!

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PM*PLUS*

Balancing Ethics and Climate Change: A Framework for Decision Making

by Mary Walsh

In many communities around the globe, climate activists are raising the issue of climate justice. By doing this, they are, in part, framing the issue of climate change from an ethical perspective. Given the high profile of the climate change issue and the increasing demands of citizens to take action, it is worth considering how ethics and climate change may be related, and how ethical principles can contribute to your climate action planning and adaptation program development.

Global Ethics

One way to look at the climate challenge is from a global ethics perspective. Today's challenges, as we witness in the financial crisis and global climate change, force us to look outside our own boundaries. Our "group" is increasingly being seen as not just our local government, state, or even country but other human communities around the world to whom we must justify our behavior.

This growing knowledge that we are all linked in what physicist Fritjof Capra calls "the web of life"—the interconnection of all living systems—is made evident through a myriad of ways. Discoveries in quantum physics, for example, as well as the globalization of corporations, the ability to travel around the world, and the communications and computer revolution have all contributed to this sense of one world.

This notion of oneness has compelled ethicists like Peter Singer and Thomas Berry to imagine a new ethics. In his book, The Great Work: Our Way into the Future, Berry called on us to stretch our ethical values to consider the whole world. Peter Singer calls this concept "global ethics."

This idea of a global ethics is germane to our reflections on the ethics of climate change and what the ethical responsibility of public officials is to this global issue. In fact, Peter Singer states in his latest book, One World, that there can be no clearer illustration of the need for human beings to act globally than the issues raised by accelerating climate change.

To put it simply, as the former climate negotiator Raul Estrada-Oyuela has said: "We are all adrift in the same boat, and there's no way half the boat is going to sink."

Guiding Principles for Local Decisions

Climate change impacts must ultimately be managed at the local level because the consequences of droughts, sea level rise, increased storm intensity, and other climate impacts are played out at the local level. New Orleans, in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, is a terrifying example of this.

Just as the public manager's professional code of ethics serves as a guide for day-to-day management decisions, it can also be applied to decision making around the climate change issue. Protecting communities from harm, for example, has always been part of the professional manager's ethical responsibility. For many managers, protecting their communities from climate impacts is an integral part of that charge, just as environmental protection, public health, and emergency management programs are.

Leading-edge communities are developing climate mitigation and adaptation strategies to counteract climate change disasters. (For case studies of how cities are dealing with climate change, see the *IQ Report*, "Adapting to Climate Change: Strategies for Local Government," January 2009, published by ICMA.)

But where do ethics come to play in the decision-making process? Here are principles that can be applied to specific issues and questions that may be raised as you go through the process of designing and developing your climate action programs.

They offer another lens through which you can assess the importance of taking on the climate change issue for your community. For a full presentation of these principles see the "White Paper on the Ethical Dimensions of Climate Change" by the Rock Ethics Institute of Penn State University, available online at http://rockethics.psu.edu/climate.

Distributive Justice

The principle of distributive justice is concerned with the fair and equitable distribution of resources. It offers a guide for the equitable distribution of wealth. From the perspective of global distributive justice, the subject of climate change brings up that wealthier nations that have contributed the most carbon emissions (the global North) are responsible for assisting the poorer countries (the global South) as they adapt to climate impacts.

On the local level, an ethical question that might be raised in your community is who is responsible for paying for the damages of climate impacts and who is responsible for the costs of adaptation? Applying the distributive justice principle to the question, you will need to consider who may be the most vulnerable in your own community and to what degree they have contributed to the carbon (and other greenhouse gas) emissions in your community. Generally, those with the most wealth have a larger carbon footprint than their poorer counterparts.

Local climate adaptation plans focus on the vulnerabilities of the region and how different neighborhoods will be affected by anticipated climate impacts. As a manager, you would consider how individuals and communities are affected differently, usually in relation to how little or how much they contributed to the problem and how resilient they may be to climate stresses.

Intergenerational Considerations

Planning for the future is inherent in any climate action program. At a time frame of 20 years and beyond, intergenerational considerations force us to ask what sort of long-term burdens our actions are generating. A key ethical question that underlies any local climate change program is: What environmental devastation and debt are we leaving our children if we do not stabilize the changing climate?

Precautionary Principle

In the case of climate change, your staff and community members may resist taking action until there is far greater certainty about the expected severity of the impacts. The precautionary principle is a guide to take action to reduce serious risk in the face of uncertainties that the risk will actually occur.

In the case of climate change, there is a consensus among mainstream scientists that climate change is in fact happening now and the risks of dangerous, and even catastrophic change, are increasing at an accelerating rate. Governments, corporations, and individuals have often used scientific uncertainty about climate change impacts as justification for lack of action.

The precautionary principle in its most simplistic form suggests that we plan for worst-case scenarios in the face of high risks coupled with uncertainties. Perhaps New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani said it best when, in the aftermath of September 11, 2001, he stated: "We prepare for the worst and hope for the best." The main idea is that, when faced with taking risks (intended and unintended) that could affect a significant portion of the population or the natural environment, we proceed through the process cautiously and deliberately.

Regional and local climate data are strong enough at this point to support the need to face the potential of harm to communities, despite lack of total certainty. If governments wait until all uncertainties about climate change impacts are resolved and the consensus view of climate change science turns out to be correct, it is likely to be too late to prevent potentially catastrophic damages from climate change.

A recent historical example of the application of the precautionary principle is the no-smoking laws now in effect around the world. The United States was the first to recognize the consequences of smoking and that the link between tobacco and lung cancer as well as other catastrophic illnesses was strong enough to regulate the use of tobacco despite a lack of 100 percent certainty.

Human Rights

When your community is deciding what to do, if anything, about climate change, another ethical principle to be considered is that everyone has the right to life, liberty, and personal security as recognized by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on December 10, 1948. The UN predicts such impacts of our changing climate as desertification, food shortages, diminishing water supplies, and rising sea levels, all of which could contribute to millions of refugees worldwide over the next few decades.

The human rights principle can clearly be applied here. All people have the right to be protected from threats to their lives and health caused by others. Current and future climate impacts pose a real and serious threat to these rights.

Do No Harm

This principle applies to climate change largely because climate change will lead to serious harm to many people—as well as to animals and other biotic systems—who have not caused the problem. In addition, those humans most likely to be severely impacted by climate change—the poor, young, and elderly—do not have the wherewithal to prepare for, or adapt sufficiently for, the severe consequences of climate impacts.

A serious ethical question that managers have had to answer in relation to their local emergency management planning is: Will anyone be harmed if no action is taken? As you work to apply the do-no-harm principle to your local government climate efforts, the failure to develop effective climate adaptation and mitigation plans may in fact cause harm to citizens in your community.

In 2003, for example, Paris, France, suffered the shock of a severe heat wave consistent with what scientists tell us can be the result of the changing climate. The extreme heat led directly to the deaths of more than 12,000 elderly citizens in large part because of a lack of preparedness on the part of governmental agencies.

Guidance for Community Managers

Local government managers regularly use ethical principles and rely on their professional ethical code when deliberating about important decisions. It is expected by members of the community that ethical principles will be applied to tough decisions; that justice, fairness, and equity will be key perspectives guiding any problem-solving process; and that ethics will inform the decision-making process.

Climate change is a critical issue that has major ethical implications. Applying appropriate and relevant ethical principles is one way to frame the issue to help identify fair and equitable strategies to manage the consequences of this global challenge.

As local managers continue to grapple with climate impacts and develop action plans and programs, it may help to return to the ethical roots of public service: help protect citizens from harm and help guarantee the safety and security of all citizens both now and for the future.

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Ethics

Things to consider when first impressions are often lasting ones

Q. Who would imagine that a warm welcome to a community could be troubling to the new city manager? Within days of joining the city, individuals and organizations welcomed the manager and invited him to various functions in order to introduce him to the community. Several of the invitations raised concerns.

He and his spouse were invited to attend a pricey fundraiser at the boat club; leaders from the economic development council invited him to join their golf outing; and dinner with the former mayor, whom the manager had not met before, ended up taking place at a private club. Coming from a more modest environment, the manager recognized that some of his initial concerns were about the scale of the welcome. Is there a difference between dining at the home of an elected official versus dinner at a club?

But still he was bothered about the appearance of being wined and dined, and he was concerned that he was stepping into an unforeseen quagmire. Should the city pay for him to attend these events if this was the cost of doing business in this community? After all, the previous manager attended many of these events. Should community norms trump this professional's standards? Should his need to quickly build solid relationships outweigh his ethical concerns?

A. It's good that this manager's GPS was homing in on the ethical dilemmas because people will be watching and assessing his leadership and character from day one. In this economic climate, using public resources to attend social events is sure to draw criticism; and attending fundraisers causes added concern because it could result in public funds going to the organization's bottom line (as in the boat club example).

If the manager feels that the local government should pay the cost of his attendance at ticketed events, both a conversation with the governing body to outline expectations and a provision in the employment agreement confirming the arrangement are essential for transparency's sake.

In the alternative, the manager might consider accepting a few of these ticketed invitations, putting community-based organizations and events with a high "public good" factor at the top of the list. Decline certain invitations: from vendors; to exclusive, high-priced events; and, of course, to political party fundraisers. Have a conversation with your council about the approach so that there is mutual acceptance of the ground rules. Taper off the events as you get to know the community.

What's a preferred approach? Meet the leaders in the community for breakfast or lunch; offer to speak at civic, neighborhood, and church gatherings; and generally be visible. If invited to a ticketed event that serves a networking purpose, pay your own way. The benefit of this approach is that you are apt to be more judicious in how you spend personal funds and perhaps more accurate in assessing the public benefit versus the fun factor.

This is the most conservative approach, which enables you to build relationships without incurring criticism. And, frankly, anything that's fun—like those NCAA basketball tournament tickets—would raise an eyebrow with the public and should really be on your tab anyway. Be proactive in creating and implementing an outreach strategy that engages you with all segments of the community without the thorny considerations of who pays and who gains undue influence.

Q. During the amicable negotiations to bring the job offer to a close, a commission member offered to assist the new county manager with her search for a home. Although there are a number of real estate agents in the area, this commissioner has been in the business for a long time and has a large book of business.

A. It's not a violation of the ICMA Code of Ethics per se for members to hire an elected official in their jurisdictions to provide a personal service. It is generally advised, however, that you avoid doing so unless you are in a small market with limited choices.

If there is any tension with the house hunt or problem with the deal, it could affect your relationship with this

commissioner. Even absent a problem, doing personal business with one elected official may create the appearance that you are too friendly with one, to the detriment of your commitment to serve all equally.

Q. Given the challenges of the housing market, it took the county manager 10 months to relocate her family to the new community. When the costs for the sale of the old home, the move, and settlement in the new home were totaled, the manager realized that the amount she had negotiated for settlement costs wasn't sufficient to cover her actual expenses. Moving expenses turned out to be less than negotiated, so the manager wanted to know whether she could simply reallocate the funds or whether she needed approval to do so.

A. The terms of the employment agreement should be followed to the letter, always. All exceptions, changes, or areas of ambiguity should be addressed by formal action of the governing body. It is especially important in a new relationship for the manager to demonstrate that she is a stickler for the details, fairness, and process.

To that end, if the agreement delineated separate ceilings for relocation and settlement, the manager should not assume that savings in one area can be used to cover an overage in another. If the agreement provided a lump sum to be used for all relocation and settlement expenses, then the discretion about how to allocate those funds rests with the county manager.

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Walking Buses & Other Creative Routes to School

Out of all children in the United States ages 6 to 12, only 15 percent walk or bike to school—so most students miss an opportunity for daily physical activity. A new case study describes how Albany, Oregon, increased its Safe Routes to School infrastructure. Federal funding, community participation, and smart placement of new schools all played a part.

- icma.org/saferoutestoschool

Methane to Markets

A city administrator from Annapolis, Maryland, is sharing his city's expertise in landfill gas recovery with several cities in China through an ICMA Methane to Markets project funded by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The partnership draws on ICMA's resources designed to help local governments achieve sustainability and address climate change.

- icma.org/methane

Is the Stimulus Working?

More than $280 billion of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 is administered through state or local governments. ICMA suggests measuring the effects of the stimulus by using data most local governments already collect—in such areas as street resurfacing, crime, water and sewer service, and homelessness.

- icma.org/stimulusdata

Self-Assessment for Managers

Do you know and follow the 18 Practices for Effective Local Government Management? The practices, along with self-assessment tools, are available through ICMA University.

- icma.org/18practices

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Balancing Act

Setting Boundaries on Commitments

April is tax month and as the turn of the calendar forces us to do an inventory of 2009, so does doing our taxes. As you review your taxes you will see choices you made in 2009 that you may or may not want to repeat in 2010. Many relate to where you spent your money. In this column, we turn our attention to where we spend our time.

Key to this discovery is determining how to set boundaries on commitments. This is not rational, listing all you do on a balance sheet but rather, it requires revisiting ideas you have held close and private for a long time. Here is a fictional interchange with a tired village manager:

Daven: Tell me why you are feeling so tired. (Cell phone buzzes)

Manager: (looking at phone) Hold on, let me see who this is. Ok, that can wait. What did you ask me again? Oh yeah, why am I so tired? Was that it?

Daven: Yes, and turn that off, please.

Manager: Ok . . . (phone beeps off) I think I am so tired because I am overextended.

Daven: Tell me about a typical month.

Manager: Twice a month I have council meetings, which lately have been running over, sometimes until 2:00 a.m.! My council is dysfunctional; you should put them on the couch, doc.

Daven: Ok, what else?

Manager: Well, there is Rotary, the regular staff meetings, and the downtown project that keeps me busy. I am on a committee to find a new pastor for the church; a teacher's helper once a month; and my parents are trying to sell their home. I've been helping them move out and get their house ready to sell. I coach my girls' basketball teams.

Daven: Sounds like more work. Anything for fun - just for you?

Manager: I belong to a book club. My friends want me to hang out with them. I also go to the gym, when I can.

Daven: I'm beginning to understand why you feel so tired. What patterns do you see?

Manager: Hmm . . . as I list all of them to you, a lot of what I am doing is motivated by obligation—a sense of duty. (long pause)

Daven: What is it like to put those thoughts into words?

Manager: A relief to have a name, but worrisome as I don't know what to do.

Daven: Well, let's see what we can discover together.

For this manager, the underlying pressure was obligation, but it is not the only driver for managers. Others may be driven to be:

> *in on the gossip.*
> *the center of attention.*
> *in control and "on top of things."*
> *the one who saves the day.*

The path to how we got to "obligation" is important, too. There were many times in this dialogue where I could have been interested in all the ideas the manager brought up. Within each of these turns in the conversation was a chance to discover more.

The first one, who was calling on the cell phone, might have even been exciting. But because being tired was likely something personal, the challenge was to stay focused. Conversations can go off on tangents when they get close to

unpleasant feelings. In fact, many managers will gleefully change the focus and turn down another fascinating but superficial path. This leaves the manager comfortable, but the problem remains unsolved.

What I chose to do in the example relates directly to setting boundaries on commitments and managing how time is spent.

In the family I grew up in, there was a rule of thumb: every "yes" meant a thousand "no"s. For a child, there are real consequences to committing to piano or t-ball or even something fun like a birthday party. The challenge of the adult is more complex. That challenge is to say no to ideals we have of ourselves. Many are ideals that work reinforces: you as a colleague, motivator, achiever, thinker, and steady presence.

What lies beneath are the dreams of the child and adolescent that still reside in you and require you to revisit them. Did you once imagine yourself "the great:

> *Athlete.*
> *Novelist.*
> *Musician.*
> *Capitalist or*
> *Inventor?*

As you revisit each one you must do so respectfully, being thoughtful about which will be retained. What is more difficult, of course, is deciding to which of the many dreams you will give yourself permission to say "good-bye."

Perhaps most challenging of all is to determine how to leave a dream dormant in a way you can return to it later in your life.

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Retirement Strategies

Looking Forward with Health Reimbursement Arrangements

I continue to hear that one of the biggest challenges facing public employers is health care costs. With health care costs continuing to rise, one way employers can help employees and retirees prepare for out-of-pocket health care expenses is by providing such health care savings vehicles as a health reimbursement arrangement (HRA).

HRAs have been shown to be an effective method of providing current employees and retirees with access to a tax-protected pool of assets specifically designated for out-of-pocket medical expenses.

Here are some key features to keep in mind when implementing an HRA:

1. Plan contributions are made by the employer. All assets contributed to an HRA must be submitted directly to the plan provider as employer assets, but those assets do not have to be a direct employer contribution. In other words, assets cannot be submitted by a participating employee or on an after-tax basis to the provider. This attribute allows the HRA to retain its tax-advantaged status.

2. There is no reimbursement for anything other than medical expenses. All reimbursements from an HRA must be for qualified medical expenses as defined by the Internal Revenue Service and cannot be withdrawn for hardship or any other reason. Restricting asset use to medical expenses distinguishes the HRA from most other savings vehicles and ensures that the assets will be used for the directed purpose of health care expenses.

3. Assets carry forward from year to year. Unlike a flexible spending account, participants enjoy the benefit of asset carryover from year to year, meaning that unused assets simply roll over and are not lost. This is a valuable feature of the HRA, especially for younger employees who have a longer time horizon and can take full advantage of the opportunity for saving that exists here.

For employers seeking to structure their benefit packages more effectively and provide employees with a flexible retiree health savings vehicle, an HRA may be a good solution. With an HRA, employees have more control over how their assets are invested and eventually used to cover health care expenses.

These assets can be used to cover the health expenses of not only employees but their spouses and dependents, too. Providing this type of benefit for employees and their families is something worth exploring.

To learn more about ICMA-RC's retirement health savings plan, visit www.icmarc.org/rhs.

Joan McCallen
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Healthy Communities

Parsippany, New Jersey, Is Healthy, Seriously!

RESIDENTS HAVE FUN WITH THEIR HEALTHY EATING

Parsippany–Troy Hills, a diverse suburban community of 50,000 residents in northern New Jersey and one of Money magazine's 15 best places to live in 2008, takes healthy living seriously. The township's strategy has been to create policies and programs that promote healthy lifestyles through social experiences. Whether through gathering at the community garden or engaging residents in a countywide weight-loss challenge, Parsippany's healthy-community initiatives focus on bringing residents together and making healthy living fun.

The township's efforts to create a healthy community began with a community garden 15 years ago. The garden has 93 plots—all of which were reserved during the summer 2009 season—and is within walking distance of town hall and a number of Parsippany's apartment buildings.

Parsippany's former mayor started the project to give the many residents who live in garden apartments or in bungalows with small yards a place to grow fresh and healthy food and to bring the community together. The community garden has achieved these goals, and Parsippany residents regularly gather there to tend their plots, share gardening advice, and spend time with friends.

Parsippany also has started a small farmers market in the town hall parking lot, which is one of the town's more centrally located spots. The Friday afternoon market, which is run by the mayor's office and the township's environmental committee, is now in its second year and provides local farmers with an opportunity to sell fruits, vegetables, flowers, and honey. Approximately 200 customers visit the market during most weeks, and the township is considering expanding the market to include additional vendors selling baked goods and cheese.

WELLNESS CAMPAIGN

In 2006, Parsippany Mayor Michael Luther signed on to the New Jersey Mayors' Wellness Campaign. The statewide campaign is intended to provide mayors and other municipal officials with the tools they need to develop and implement active living and healthy-eating initiatives.

Parsippany is one of more than 200 towns and cities throughout the state participating in the campaign. Since joining, Parsippany has created a number of programs—many of them competitions—that engage residents and encourage them to eat a healthy diet.

Competitions began in 2007 with Employees in Motion. This program required participating township employees to keep logs of their daily physical activity, with the goal of being active for 30 minutes each day. The township also provided healthy breakfast and lunch options and motivational pamphlets. About half of the employees chose to participate.

In the spring of 2008, Parsippany hosted the Mayor's Healthy Cook-Off Challenge. Mayors from northern and central New Jersey gathered to cook healthy dishes, and their recipes were collected for a cookbook that was available for purchase. The event attracted more than 500 residents from Parsippany and surrounding communities.

Residents of Parsippany also had the opportunity to participate in the countywide Toxic Waistlines Challenge in the spring of 2009. The 100-day weight-loss challenge was open to all residents of Morris County, and it offered a prize to the winning town as well as three $1,000 prizes for the top three individual finishers. Not only did Parsippany win as a town, it also had two of the top three individual finishers. As part of Toxic Waistlines, two nutrition programs called Whole Grain Goodness and Good Fats vs. Bad Fats were held at the local ShopRite grocery store during the 100-day period.

INCLUDES THE ENVIRONMENT, TOO

Parsippany is extending its healthy-community efforts to the natural environment, recognizing that healthier environments lead to healthier residents. The township is participating in a Rutgers University study on rain gardens and installed its first rain garden adjacent to the town hall on September 26, 2009.

Parsippany's business administrator, Jasmine Lim, said the town is continuing the trend of bringing residents together around health-related goals. They invited community members to have lunch at town hall and then to help plant the garden. Everyone is "really excited about it," Lim said.

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