

## Building Strong Council- Management Relationships (or understanding any fatal flaws)

Ian McCormack  
President, Strategic Steps Inc  
Alberta, Canada

ian@strategicsteps.ca



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## Today's Agenda

- Great Expectations
- Importance of 'Tone at the Top'
- Clarity of Roles
- Principles of Good Governance
- Causes of Frayed Relationships
- What Works
- Building Lasting Relationships
- As Signs Emerge
- Summary of Key Messages




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## Credit to George Cuff

- Much of the content of today's workshop was provided by George Cuff
  - Author: Magazine articles since 1979; three books *Cuff's Guide to Municipal Leaders*, Volumes 1,2,3; latest book *Tales from City Hall* published in 2017; plus 3 books of articles
  - Reports for +500 organizations; +500 seminars



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## Great Expectations





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## Expectations of Senior Leaders

- Capability of finding quality people
- Judgment in knowing who fits, who doesn't
- Ability to inspire confidence in current mayor and council and subsequent ones as well
- Decisive decision-making
- Sensitivity to a mayor and council who wish to be informed and sometimes involved
  - *Fingers in and noses out*




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## Expectations of Senior Leaders

- Understanding of personal limitations
- Willingness to hear the voices from below
- Personal discipline and high ethical standards
- Candid, unfettered, apolitical advice
  - Understanding of political ramifications of decisions
- Support for second tier and junior staff even when errors may have been made
- Willingness to admit failure; accept blame




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## Tone Cascades



- Chief Elected Official and other council members are critical in setting the initial tone
- Examples include:
  - Decorum in Chambers
  - Council's regard for work of managers
  - Comments made publicly
  - Managers' comments to staff
  - Staff service to public
  - Website, newspaper columns, social media posts, speeches

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## What Sets the Tone?

- Confidence
- Respect for role separation
- Guidance in moving on key issues
- Apolitical advice
- Support for good management practices
- Support for necessary resources, going to bat for the community
- Display of respect for the public
- Low or no degree of role-based entitlement

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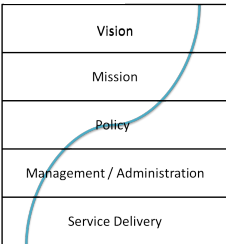
## Role Clarity




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## Spheres of Influence

Vision	
Mission	
Policy	
Management / Administration	
Service Delivery	


- **Council:**
  - Vision, Mission, Governance Policy Development
- **Administration:**
  - Administrative Policy Development, Management, Delivery

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## Council-Municipal/County Manager Role Clarity

- Impact of council-manager relationship
  - Role fulfilment and performance of the manager is critical to the confidence of the council and its members
  - Evidence of collegiality and respect between chief elected official and manager is important to wider audiences
  - Council members show respect for the professionalism and independence of the manager

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## Roles of Council

- **Leadership:**
  - Establish the vision, priorities
  - Identify the issues, review/refine/update/observe
  - Establish strategic or sustainability plan
- **Decision-making:**
  - Review policy options and consequences
  - Make sound decisions
  - Ensure governance processes suit this council
- **Public conduit:**
  - Identify administrative contact or right process

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## Roles of Council

- Dispute resolution:
  - Hear public complaints
  - Provide access, ensure information available
- Steward resources:
  - Set policies, monitor
  - Meet with auditor
- Community leadership:
  - Represent all, meet with community leaders, support their initiatives




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## Key Roles of the City and County Manager

- Advise council of:
  - Policy issues
  - New developments
  - Concerns in the community
  - Business plan
  - Legal ramifications of decisions
- Act on the resolutions of the council; ensure timely response to requests
- Assess the need for more resources; assess the responses of the public
- Attract and build a solid management team



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## Key Roles of the City and County Manager

- Professional policy advisor to council
- Team leader of the administrative body; represent and champion
- Conduit of council decisions to administration
- Approval authority for administrative actions
- Quality control of advice up and action down
- Partnership builder, building alliances as appropriate



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## Roles of Senior Management

- Overall coordination of vision, plans, projects, leadership to subordinates, guidance, supervision
- Quality control on key functions and advice to and direction from council
- Promotion of interdepartmental cooperation and cohesion
- Strategic thinking in league with and support to the manager
- Future needs assessment, strategic focus on succession planning, skill development
- Identification of risks and risk strategies



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## Principles of Good Governance




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## One Key to Good Governance

- The relationship of the council to its chief officer is one of the most significant keys to any system of governance. This **relationship must be founded on respect, trust, role clarity, open communication, transparency of decision-making and no surprises.**

G. Cuff




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## The Key Principles

- 1 Trust in the word of each other
- 2 Respect for the 'one employee' principle (or 'two-employee' if that's your case)
- 3 Concurrent information
- 4 Personal relationship to the manager
- 5 Complaints about behaviour of a council member

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## The Key Principles

- 6 No surprises
- 7 Current skill development
- 8 Regular briefing of all council members
- 9 Monitoring/updating council's agenda for their term
- 10 Urgency of action; cohesion of spirit

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## Characteristics of the Gold Seal

- Clarity of mandate and authority
- Focused orientations
- Clear decision-making processes
- Disclosure of full information
- Independence of council respected
- What happens around the council table is important
- Relationship between council and manager valued

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## Characteristics of the Gold Seal

- Policy oversight valued
- Clarity of vision
- Proactive public involvement
- Effective advocacy
- Ongoing fiduciary and risk monitoring
- Results measured and reported
- Ethical standards understood, promoted and lived

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## Frayed Relationships




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## Council-Manager Relations


- What causes the problems?
  - Lack of understanding that roles are distinctly different
  - Council members may believe their role is to 'manage' the community
    - To-do list from election
    - 'Change' as an end rather than a means
  - Government as zero-sum

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## Council-Manager Relations

- What causes the problems?
  - Council members bring their own expertise hat
  - Manager(s) attempt to keep council away from the action
  - Council members suspicious of powerful administration
  - Meetings reflect constant undermining of experts




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## Council-Manager Relations

- What causes the problems?
  - Personal friendships prevail
  - Believing the word on the street
    - Too much time spent on Facebook
  - Trying to get staff on-side with individual councillor
  - Adopting an unquestioning attitude towards reports



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## Tripping Points for Managers

- Sense of: "As the expert, *I am in charge here!*"
- Inability to manage upwards effectively
- Manager more powerful or visible than the chief elected official
- Limited respect between chief elected official and manager
- "*You are the newbies; I am the experienced professional!*"




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## Tripping Points for Managers

- Inability to manage change, not ready to greet a new chief elected official and council
- Limited involvement or connection to this council's business plan/priorities
  - What interests council should fascinate the manager
- Unwillingness to help council with its goals and objectives




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## Tripping Points for Managers

- Inability to develop and maintain a strong, balanced senior level team
- No focus on developing second tier so that any one of them could be the next manager
  - Formal or informal succession planning
- Lack of skills to find new senior managers; no willingness to recruit people potentially stronger than the manager
- Limited comfort with ambiguity




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## Tripping Points for Managers

- Inability to manage the 'basics'
- Limited to no training of what is meant by good management
- No attention paid to position descriptions, performance reviews, regular team meetings, monitoring of performance, reaching out to expert assistance
- "*I am a rock, I am an island!*"




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## Knowing Officials' Experience Governance vs Working Boards


- Understanding types of boards (if any) elected officials have worked on:
  - Board member role
  - Staff support role
- Focus of council is on governance responsibilities rather than on operational matters.
- Focus of an effective council is on results (outputs, outcomes), not inputs


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## Key Differences

Aspect	Working	Governance
Primary Focus	Doing: events, fundraising, managing	Guiding: vision, mission, policy
Leadership	Staff led	Board (Council) led
Planning	Staff provides strategic direction, board often does much of the work	Board (council) provides strategic direction. Staff provide operational direction
Recruitment	Board actively involved in recruitments	Board (council) is responsible for one (or two) employee


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## What Works





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## Keys to What Works In the Beginning


- The key lies in the beginning
- Managers sometimes miss the importance of comprehensive orientations and onboarding
- Roles need to be clearly described and understanding agreed to
- Distribute role descriptions in advance
- Reinforce throughout term of office


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## Keys to What Works Ties to Strategy

- Review orientation approach: is the focus on governance?
- Examine your reports, focus on council's governance choices. Are decisions based in strategic outcomes?
- Review strategic planning approach. Are council and management together?
  - Is the vision really an identification of an ideal future?
  - Are there goals, strategies, priorities, measures?
  - Are priorities regularly reviewed and updated


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## Keys to What Works Soft Skills


- Determine, then describe, then model values. Repeat
  - Plan, do, check, act (*Deming Cycle*)
- Develop quality friends and accountability partners
- Counteract any undermining of your staff
- Mentor learning and develop capacity and expertise in others


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## Keys to What Works Other

- Oversight role of governors respected
- Decision-making processes sound
- Community needs; not vested interests
- Adherence to a Code of Conduct
- Policymakers set the vision; stick with it

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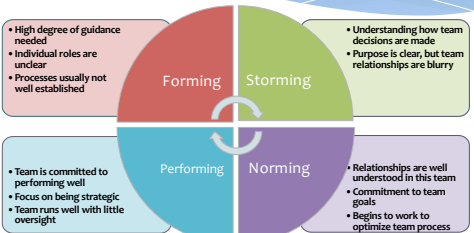
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## What Works Effective and Timely Orientation

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## A New Council is a New Group



**Forming**

- High degree of guidance needed
- Individual roles are unclear
- Processes usually not well established

**Storming**

- Understanding how team decisions are made
- Purpose is clear, but team relationships are blurry

**Norming**

- Relationships are well understood in this team
- Commitment to team goals
- Begins to work to optimize team process

**Performing**


- Team is committed to performing well
- Focus on being strategic
- Team runs well with little oversight

<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/tuckmans-guide-group-development-robert-knight/>  
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## Governance-Focused Orientation


- How and when to prepare for a new council
  - Begin Now!
  - Don't do it by yourself
    - Managers as subject matter experts
    - For some reason, experts are often from somewhere else
  - Focus on their role, not yours
  - Plan it comprehensively

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## Governance-Focused Orientation

- Preparing the new council:
  - Conduct within seven days of election
  - Before any committee appointments made
  - Talk about what worked and what did not last term
  - Explain governance; why it's important
- Realize much will be forgotten
  - Encourage and host regular professional development and refreshers on the basics

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## Effective Local Leaders

- As members of council
- As community leaders
- As regional representatives
- Effective Traits
  - Listen to understand
  - Decisiveness
  - Compassion
  - Thoughtfulness

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What Works

## Performance Agreements and Covenants



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## Performance Review

- *"The only man I know who behaves sensibly is my tailor; he takes my measurements anew each time he sees me. ... The rest go on with their old measurements and expect me to fit them."*
  - George Bernard Shaw, Irish playwright




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## Why a Performance Review

- This is THE critical, core internal relationship; it sets the tone at the top
- Important that chief elected official, council, and manager are all on same page
- Review needed to ensure consistency, results, and accountability




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## What Kind of Review

- Annual Review. Set schedule in advance
  - Consider a policy or a clause in the contract
- Review should be understood as a good governance practice
- Review ~~should~~ must involve all of council
  - Led by the chief elected official
- Format is critical
  - Lots of online information on best practices



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## Desired Results From Annual Review

- A healthy relationship with openness, candor, respect, mutual trust, and no surprises
- An apolitical administration
- A council supportive of its key employee
- A council that commits to its governance role
- Clear definition of success for the year (goals)




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## Council-Manager Covenant




MUNICIPAL DISTRICT OF GREENVIEW NO. 16

**Council - Chief Administrative Officer Covenant**

**PURPOSE:**

The purpose of this Council-CAO covenant is to formalize relational protocols to support respect for each other's functions. A Council-CAO Covenant commits both parties to seek clarity in the relationship, as well as emphasize the sincerity of undertaking their respective roles appropriately.

- Purpose, Principles
  - Council will:
  - CAO will:




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## A Council-Manager Covenant

- Document that stands apart from contract or annual review
- Based on sound principles that reflect the desire for shared success
- Power of visibility
- Chief elected official and councillors commit to respectful relationship; agree to protocols of how to access information and assistance
- Commitment to role of manager in his/her oversight of the organization


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## A Council-Manager Covenant

- Manager commits to respect all members of council
- Manager commits to no surprises, honest and timely information, and nothing of substance restrained
- Manager commits to high ethical standards, mentoring and expecting same of others
- Similar commitments from elected officials
- Formal document signed off by all of council and posted visibly
- Reviewed regularly


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## What Works Formality


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## Maintaining Formality


- If you have not used it, meeting formality is tough to get it back when you need it
- Chief elected official is the meeting chair
- Formality of title: mayor, chair, councillor, chief, manager, director
- Communication is through agenda item and as a delegation
- No public interaction within formal meetings


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## Meeting Decorum

- "Council shall, at all meetings, conduct themselves with decorum and professionalism" Town Council Team Charter
- Respect the institution of government and those who engage with it
- Listen to understand rather than waiting to speak
- Refrain from interjecting, interrupting or cutting speakers off
- Treat colleagues, administration and presenters how you would like to be treated
- Web or audiocasting meetings changes the dynamics


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## Building Lasting Relationships




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## Council's Levers of Power

- Legislative responsibilities and powers
- Representation of the public
- Council Vision, Mission, Values, Goals
  - Subset of high priorities
- Operational and capital budgets tied to priorities
- Policies, codes, and ordinances
- Manager (recruitment, contract, performance)
- Governance system


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## Relationship to Administration

- Respect each other
  - Trust but verify
- Role clarity - council legislates, administrators manage
  - Supported by administrative strength
- Council has one (or two) employee(s)
  - Hire, evaluate and replace the manager
  - Evaluate manager every year
- All other staff are led by the manager
- Council: *'keep your nose in and your fingers out'*


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## Expectations of Staff

- 'No surprises' environment for manager and council
- Stewardship of city/county resources – efficient operation of necessary services/programs
- Effective and timely reporting to/by manager:
  - Request for Decision (RFD) reports
  - Regular functional reports
  - Realistic timing for turn-around for information requests
- Service excellence that augments the city or county identity


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## Council and Management Relations

- Desire for each other to be successful
- Trust but verify
- Recognize different ideas, styles and talents
- Comfort with respectful disagreement on the issues
- Concern for different priorities based on a common vision
- Respect for the rules


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## Council and Management Relations

- Desire to serve the public
- Respect professional skills and experience
- Acceptance that senior staff report to the municipal/ county manager
- Relations friendly, cordial, respectful
- Prepared to ask questions
  - Pre-briefing on expected questions
  - Not looking for 'gotcha' moments


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## Council and Management Relations

- Recognition that these professionals serve the municipality or county, and not individual council members (or their specific agendas)
- Relationship not to undermine that of council-manager


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## Council and Management Relations

- Council's objective: we respect you
- Council's style: we seek your experience; value your expertise; recognize you are apolitical
- Council has one (two) employee(s); the manager; we respect that relationship


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## Council and Management Relations

- Council expects manager to be team leader, not dictator, not buddy
- Council will not do anything to undermine its relationship to their manager
- Council expects honesty/candour/team support


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## Elements of a Healthy Relationship


- Council sets the policy tone
- Manager sets administrative tone
- Respect for manager obvious; council agrees to certain protocols
- Council questions directed to manager


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## Elements of a Healthy Relationship

- Council accepts manager's advice on a regular basis, though not always
  - Desire for risk and innovation
- Council agrees they support a 'one/two employee' organization
- In council meetings, the chief elected official directs administrative questions to the manager
- Colleagues not friends


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## Keys to that Relationship

- Agreement to operating protocols at the outset
- Orientation that focuses on 'who does what'
  - Role clarity
- Council and manager have common agreement on 'success' for the manager each year
- Chief elected official and manager agree to meet regularly
- Manager briefs all of council quickly, fully and concurrently


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## Keys to that Relationship

- Council-manager covenant
- No silly games played
- Managers stay out of the politics, agree that their role is apolitical
- Respect, respect, respect!


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## As Troubling Signs Emerge



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## The Importance of Integrity

- Model expected behavior of the organization
- Code of conduct is important
  - Behavior must align
- Different generations have had very different socialization and expectations
- Discuss values, write them, post them, live them
  - Power in visibility
- Celebrate successful careers, reminders for all

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## Signals the Relationship isn't Working

- Conversations change when you approach
- Meetings held that do not involve you
- Evaluation either not conducted when that is normal practice or done with seeming alacrity when never discussed previously
- Advice consistently ignored or not asked

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## Signals the Relationship isn't Working

- Normally approachable chief elected official isn't
- Council convenes meetings off-site and you are not invited
- Council members drop in to office to see other staff

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## Signals the Relationship isn't Working

- Media (mainstream and social) seems to get inside stories before you do
- Elected officials reportedly speaking ill of you in public gatherings or on social media
- Unfriendly councillors looking like allies
- 'Star' department head buys new car/suit

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## Some Survival Strategies - Beforehand


- Ensure policy is in place and regularly reviewed:
  - Respectful workplace
  - Health and Safety
  - Performance reviews
  - Communication
- Ensure performance review is current
  - Goals for current year
  - Statement on achievement of last year's goals
- Ensure direct reports' reviews are current

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## Some Survival Strategies – In the Moment

- Approach your role with professionalism
- Approach your day with enthusiasm
- Manage the vertical relationship
- Encourage/mentor staff, release them to lead
- Deal promptly with problems
- Admit to human frailty


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## Today's Messages





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## Key Points to Ponder


- Clarity of role
- Focus council on governance
- Keep council and admin on separate but linked pages
- Determine, then describe, then model values
- Develop quality friends and accountability partners
- Counteract any undermining of your staff
- Mentor learning; develop others


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## Key Points to Ponder


- Understand what a council and chief elected official do
- Develop a first-rate orientation program
- Hire and retain quality staff
- Ensure all are well trained in mandates of various elected officials, including mayor and council
- Build and maintain a healthy relationship


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## Not Everyone Will Agree


- Not every council member will be willing to abide by the rules
- Dealing with internal council problems is not the task of the manager
- Manager should discuss with chief elected official
- Chief elected official discusses with individual, then council as a whole
- Discussions confidential


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## Not Everyone Will Agree


- Abusive behavior is not tolerated. The manager will defend staff
- Council defends the manager
- Follow Council's ordinance or policy
  - Motion of censure follows rebuke by chief elected official
- Press release follows motion of censure


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## What Works: Balance

- Ego Balance
  - Position often the most powerful in career to date
  - Role noted as 'servant leadership'
  - Ego and balance issues plague even strong leaders
  - Your current role is replaceable; your family is not
- So How Does this Apply to You?
  - Thank those who preceded you
  - Plan personal time into your schedule

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## Defining Success

- Open, healthy relationships with members of council and chief elected official
- Open, healthy relationships with members of the administration
- Rapport with the public
- Enhanced communication, reporting, delegation, leadership skills
- Career choices made by you!

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## Appendix: Decision Making Principles


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## Core Decision Making Principles

These could be part of a Council-Manager covenant:


1. The Council will **exercise its independent authority** with respect to setting the municipality's vision and priorities, assessing the manager, meeting with the external auditor, passing ordinances, policies, resolutions
2. Decisions will flow from a **sound understanding of Council's governance role** based on a thorough orientation
3. Elected Officials will voice their views before a decision is made and will **respect the results** of the democratic process

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## Core Decision Making Principles


4. Council will approach all decisions with an **open mind**
5. Decisions will be based on comprehensive, **apolitical administrative advice** from the manager
6. All members of Council will receive **access to concurrent information** on decisions and policy issues.

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## Core Decision Making Principles


7. All members of Council are **elected as co-equals**
8. No ABC will be **delegated decision-making authority** unless permitted by legislation and by Council resolution
9. Council's **decisions will flow from a policy** framework

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## Core Decision Making Principles

10. Decisions will be made in a **transparent manner** unless required to be otherwise protected by law (i.e. *in camera*)
11. **Public participation will be encouraged** in key Council decisions; all decisions will reflect "what is best for the community as a whole"
12. The Mayor/Chair will ensure **full Council awareness** of any proposed policy or public announcement; all Elected Officials will be uniformly well-informed




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## Core Decision Making Principles

13. **Chief elected official may be briefed first** but not in isolation of all others; all Council members briefed within 48 hours of the information being received
14. The **manager's authority over all staff will be respected**; questions to administration at Council meetings through the manager
15. Request for information from one Council member triggers a **response to all members**




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## Core Decision Making Principles

16. **Council will be briefed regularly** by the manager on progress on key issues
17. The chief elected official is regarded/respected as the **official spokesperson** on behalf of Council
18. All members of Council will respect the **primacy of the table**.

- *Thanks to George Cuff for permission to use these principles.*



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## Thank You

Enjoy being servant leaders to your citizens, organizations, businesses and colleagues

[ian@strategicsteps.ca](mailto:ian@strategicsteps.ca)



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