



mejorando group

FINAL REPORT

June 12, 2017

City of Amery



Organizational Assessment

Submitted By:

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June 12, 2017

Fran Duncanson
Acting City Administrator
City of Amery
118 Center Street
Amery, WI 54001

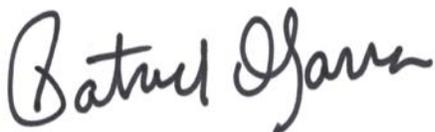
Dear Fran:

The Mejorando Group is pleased to provide our Final Report. As a result of the evaluation completed and the separate workshops recently held with the governing body and the Executive Leadership Team, specific recommendations are included that improve the performance of the City organization

The intent of this endeavor was not to reenact the “wash, rinse, repeat” approach that governments often do and which is the equivalent of replicating past solutions to address today’s issues. Quite the contrary, today’s challenges are truly unique and systemic thereby affording the organization’s leaders the opportunity to implement dramatic changes to areas that otherwise would be off limits. Consequently, our recommendations are both practical as well as imaginative. We are confident these recommendations will play a pivotal role in helping the organization’s leaders make targeted, prudent decisions affecting the community, the organization and its workforce in the delivery of high quality services and programs.

If you have any questions or need more information, please contact me at 925-518-0187.

Sincerely,



Patrick Ibarra
Co-Founder and Partner
The Mejorando Group



A. STATEMENT OF WORK

A. PROJECT SCOPE

The current economic and social environment is pushing governments to make transformational change. Governments are at a crossroads. To meet rising expectations with shrinking resources, they need to make a choice: cut services, increase the tax burden or pursue a more value-oriented agenda that will put them on the path to higher performance. We believe leading governments like the City of Amery will choose the last option – finding innovative ways to create greater public-sector value from their resource by delivering improved outcomes more cost efficiently.

To assist in addressing this challenging environment, the City of Amery requested the assistance of qualified consultants to:

- Complete a thorough review and examination of the Council-Administrator form of government with a concentration on the roles and responsibilities of the City Council and Administrator.
- Facilitate separate working sessions with City Department Directors and City Council in a workshop setting to review existing organizational conditions and set future goals for the City.
- Formulate a thorough report on all findings and present report to the City Council in a public meeting setting.

In brief, to obtain consulting services that were a blend of evaluating the current form of government, organizational performance along with enlisting via the workshops both elected officials and senior executives in co-creating a path forward to build a more effective organization and even stronger community.

B. PROJECT APPROACH

In order to improve organizational performance, it requires much more than simply moving boxes around an organization chart. The following framework was utilized to determine the appropriate mix necessary for optimal performance:

- Governance/Form of Government
- Strategy
- Service Delivery
- Fiscal/Budget
- Structure/Staffing
- Management Processes and Workplace Culture

The process to accomplish project objectives included a review and analysis of the following areas:

- Council-Administrator Form of government
- Organization and management structure from top to bottom
- Strategic Plan
- Mix of municipal services
- Operations including process efficiency, resources, etc.
- Use of technology
- Performance measures and applicable delivery standards

C. WORK PLAN

The Work Plan was built around six phases:

- 1) Project Launch
- 2) Collect Information on Current Practices
- 3) Perform Analysis
- 4) Design and Facilitate Workshops
- 5) Develop Recommendations
- 6) Prepare and Present Report

1. Project Launch

In this initial project phase, we coordinated our work plan with the Acting City Administrator's Office to help all participants gain an understanding of the desired project outcomes and tasks. We coordinated scheduling for stakeholder interviews and acquisition of relevant resources.

2. Collect Information on Current Practices

In this phase, how work is currently being performed was captured by evaluating priority-setting activities, interactions between elected officials and city staff, service delivery, performance standards and so forth.

- **Stakeholder Interviews:** Interviews were conducted with internal stakeholders to gain their input about the current situation and their ideas for potential improvements.

1. Mayor Kay Erickson
2. Council President Kris Vickers
3. Alderman Rick Davis
4. Alderperson, Julie Riemenschneider
5. Alderman, Dave Mayers
6. Alderman Tim Strobusch
7. Alderman Rick Van Blaricom
8. Fran Duncanson, Acting City Administrator
9. Dale Koehler, Fire Chief
10. Thomas Marson, Chief of Police

11. Allen McCarty "Bones", Public Works Director
12. James Nalen, Director, Amery Area Public Library
13. David C. Chanski, Management Analyst

- **Review of Key Resources:** Several documents including budgets, organization charts, work plans, etc. were gathered and reviewed.

3. Perform Analysis

The purpose of this phase was to provide a description of the existing situation, a composite profile of sorts that identifies gaps between existing practices and emerging/next practices being utilized to deliver high-quality services and programs, including:

- To what degree is the current form of government helping organizational performance?
- How healthy are the group dynamics/relationship between the governing body and the City Administrator?
- Is the City providing the right mix of services – anything missing or services that can be consolidated?
- Does the current organization of services under the departments involved follow proven practices seen in other similar jurisdictions, and/or are there operational changes that could be made that would improve service delivery?
- Are the existing performance measurements monitoring key services and helping with identifying areas for improvement?
- How is existing technology helping or hindering service delivery?
- How healthy is the workplace culture?
- How effective are those in leadership roles in enlisting department members and steering the department(s) toward the future?

4. Designed and Facilitate Workshops

Included in the Request for Proposal, was to design and facilitate separate workshops with the governing body (held June 1) and Executive Leadership Team (held June 2). The focus of each workshop was to review and discuss current practices identified in this assessment, and seek to identify areas for improvement.

5. Develop Recommendations

Following the evaluation of the existing form of government, services, processes, and practices, major themes were identified and specific findings that are either symptoms or causes which impact current performance. The focus was to develop recommendations which optimize people, processes and financial resources that best align with efficient local government service delivery and meet community needs.

6. Prepare Report

The project report provides a composite profile of current practices and detailed plan identifying recommendations to be implemented.

B. PROJECT RESEARCH – FUTURE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Prior to offering the analysis and series of recommendations, a brief background on the future of local government follows. This is based on various research completed over the last few years.

A new dawn is upon government, and local government is experiencing an unprecedented transformation about its role as a credible community builder. Blended from several sources, the following information is provided as an outline, a narrative of sorts, that describes the shifting terrain local government in general, and City of Amery may be experiencing. Many of our recommendations are consistent with this “new way of doing the public’s business” and we believe, transform the City of Amery as a pivotal partner in building a stronger, more vibrant community.

Big economic, technological and social mega-forces threaten the viability of local governments across the nation. The question “What’s the future of local government?” is not just a topic of academic interest but a critical business issue for public agencies. If a local government can create a vision or “story” about its future, it can help shape that future. Without a vision, a public agency will be reactive and forced to change, one crisis after another.

The traditional direct service model of local government is now seriously threatened. It is not just the budget, staffing and service cutbacks crippling local governments. A whole series of forces calls into question the traditional model, including:

- Escalating demands and mission creep. Over time, citizens/taxpayers have increased their demands on local government to respond to a whole variety of issues. Consequently, local governments have become full-service organizations that attempt to be all things to all people. To exacerbate matters, local government leaders have a heroic urge to respond to any new community problem or demand with a public service.
- Mandates without money. Local agencies have increasingly been mandated by state and federal governments to provide new services or enforce new regulations without sufficient funding, thus siphoning money from other more basic services.
- Static structures. The organizational structures, systems, processes and rules of local government are oriented toward a static world. Rigid job classifications, civil

service and hiring rules and purchasing and contracting systems are not aligned with a dynamic and disruptive world. For instance, a public agency cannot compete with a private corporation that can hire a soon-to-graduate student on the spot at a university career fair.

- Accelerating technology. Technology is changing all service delivery. As just one example, many local governments have launched smart phone applications so that residents can report potholes, graffiti, sidewalk damage, and other service needs. Several years ago, whoever would have guessed that public officials would be tweeting constituents about community issues?
- Out-of-whack tax system. The tax system funding local governments is often based on the old industrial economy. Local agencies generally receive tax revenue when a tangible good is sold. However, our economy is now service and knowledge-based. The provision of services or the creation of knowledge does not generate tax revenue to fund local government programs. While there seems to be little political will for modernization, the tax system needs to be better aligned with the new economy if local governments are to perform their historic role.
- Citizen mistrust. As the closest unit of government to the people, local governments in the past could rely on people's special allegiance. Now, local agencies are just another institution, just another service provider. Declining confidence in all levels of government, including local government, is based on a convergence of forces, including anti-government media, anti-government politicians who run against city hall and the county courthouse, an inability to effectively address the big issues confounding communities, and periodic scandals. Citizen mistrust is reflected in ballot-box initiatives and tax and fee restrictions, as well as the public's seeming unwillingness to work with local officials in making tough choices. To make matters worse, citizens do not understand how services are funded, thus creating a fundamental disconnect between the impacts of ballot-box budgeting and the continuing demands for services.

The Emerging Model

After decades of responding to new community, business and union demands, we have entered a new era. Given this new era, there are at least eight elements to an emerging model for viable local governments.

1. **More disciplined government, focused on its "core" businesses.** During accelerating and discontinuous change, most private, public and non-profit organizations are struggling to define "core" businesses. What is core and non-core for a local government depends on the community. To identify the core, local government leaders obviously need to have courageous conversations involving elected officials, management, and business and community groups. Once the core is defined (no easy task), then elected

officials and top management need to be focused on the core businesses and not get distracted.

2. **Demonstrating value.** As just another service provider, local government agencies will be required to deliver and demonstrate value. Local agencies operate in a competitive marketplace. Taxpayers/consumers are asking in increasingly strident voices if they are receiving value for their tax dollars. Reducing its cost structure, streamlining, performance measures and other accountability efforts are key initiatives as local government improves its value proposition.
3. **Integration of technology into all service delivery.** Obviously, technology has become an integral part of all service delivery and organizations must increase their investment of public dollars towards optimizing new technologies.
4. **Constantly morphing organizations and systems requiring ever-learning employees.** Local government agencies need to jettison rigid personnel systems and practices, as well as ossified purchasing and contracting processes. Constantly morphing organizational structures and practices will require flexible and ever-learning employees who will take on new challenges about which they know little, do some research, respond, make mistakes, and fix up their responses as they go along. The model of loyal, compliant civil servants needs to evolve more to knowledge workers who are self-motivated, change-proficient and adaptable. In this kind of dynamic environment, technical know-how quickly becomes obsolete. Learn-how becomes as important as know-how.
5. **Shared services.** Given the cost structure of local government, shared services (collaborative service delivery) will become a more prevalent approach for providing services to the public. Shared service approaches include:
 - a. Self-service
 - b. Contracting out
 - c. Regionalizing services
 - d. Leveraging assets
 - e. Partnering to co-produce the service
6. **Nongovernmental solutions.** Typically, local government is at the center of any problem-solving. People look to local government to solve all problems. This government-centric approach is no longer viable given constrained resources. Given the continuing limitations of public agencies, local government must put the issue (e.g., economic vitality, affordable housing, education achievement) in the center and become just one partner among

- many. With an issue-centric approach, local government leaders can better resist the heroic urge to take on every new challenge.
7. **Authentic civic engagement.** To address any significant challenge, local agency representatives need to cross boundaries. Local government is now just another player. To exert leadership in such a situation and address tough issues, local government officials must start conversations with other players, convene stakeholders, facilitate problem-solving, integrate the interests of other parties, and mobilize action. Only through this kind of authentic engagement can local governments turn stakeholders into partners.
 8. **Change in Workforce.** Even for the most sophisticated agency, all the above elements in the emerging model portend significant transformation of the local government workforce, especially moving away from traditional risk-adverse, seniority-based systems.

Promoting the Emerging Model

To promote the new model of local government in an era of take-aways appointed and elected officials need to engage in courageous conversations about limitations, expectations, and the “what” and “how” of government. While modernizing and reforming contracting, purchasing and civil service systems are essential elements of the emerging model, local governments will still be held to high standards. Citizens and their elected representatives will continue to require fairness, equity, accountability and transparency—key ethical values that are the hallmark of the public sector, especially local government. These changes will first require conversations with all parties to surface issues and obstacles and then ultimately political courage by local government leaders.

C. ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. CURRENT PRACTICES

1) Form of Government and Approach to Governance

The intent of local government is to serve as the advocate for improving the quality of life for its residents/taxpayers. A governing body’s responsibility is not just to make policy or vote on agenda items at public meetings. It is to determine and achieve citizens’ desires for the community’s future. Consequently, Amery governing body members can better fulfill their roles and maintain their overall control of service delivery by delegating the day-to-day management of the municipality to an appointed professional administrator.

This segment was the primary focus of the organizational assessment and based on information gathered and discussions held at the two workshops, over the recent past, the governing body has involved itself in the daily operations of City organization. Communicating individually with department directors about service issues that need resolution has been a common practice for some time. This practice was the result of the organizational structure not being responsive. Each governing body member expressed a stronger desire as not wanting this practice to continue. In short, the desire is, once a new City Administrator is appointed, to return to their main role as policy makers and expect that person to effectively oversee the organization's operations and services, while simultaneously being responsive to the needs of the governing body.

2) Organizational Strategy

Governing bodies and their administrative teams must accept responsibility for shaping the future of the community by expanding their mental horizons to identity and meet the challenges that must be addressed through decisive leadership and goals for the attainment of that future.

A strategic leader always comes at you from the future and takes you “back to the future” from the present. This leadership adventure starts with **vision**, and evolves to defining the strategic issues that must be mastered to achieve the vision. The next step is the development of long-range goals that address these strategic issues and which provide decision-making and budgetary focus for the successful implementation of these goals. Living from one annual budget to another, and from one meeting to the next, places your community and its future to happenstance and the type of thinking that befuddles governance and policy. For this reason, polls show an overwhelming majority of citizens want important issues affecting their lives to be decided at the local, “home town” level. Here, they expect leadership, sound thinking, decisive action, and accountability for results.

The City does not have a Strategic Plan, which typically includes a Vision, Mission statement, Goals and Objectives to guide the community and organization. A Community Investment Plan (CIP) that identifies projects, capital and operational, does exist which can be beneficial in guiding decision-making although the CIP should reflect the vision.

At the workshops, a discussion was held with each group about potential elements of a strategic plan and these included the creation of a formal strategic plan, industrial park development, recodification of city ordinances, economic development (including both housing and business/commercial activities), increased emphasis on community engagement and adoption and implementation of a marketing/branding strategy.

3) Organizational Structure/Staffing

Examining the existing structure was *not* a focus of this evaluation. Suffice to say the organization is flat with no middle management layer and that all employees are extremely versatile to provide quality services and programs.

4) Services

The mix of services delivered by departments is consistent with typical local government organizations and currently appear to be consistent with the needs of the community. It was noted during the workshops, however, that certain aspects of the community are evolving, most notably the area of demographic shifts, community engagement, technology/wi-fi availability and the city's role in marketing/branding Amery as a destination.

The planning and monitoring of service levels is essential to determine mid-course corrections and demonstrating the “return-on-investment” for taxpayers. It's also vital for managers and supervisors so they can adjust work schedules, satisfy deadlines and report accomplishments.

1. A framework of the characteristics which describe a high-performance organization is not evident as a gauge for efforts to improve effectiveness.
2. Determining priorities for several of the functions was difficult to evaluate since they do not exist, at least in written form. The flow of projects and priorities from the governing body seems to be steady but not recorded for evaluation purposes. While being responsive to needs defined as urgent is essential to demonstrate responsive local government, when these are excessive and sometimes unclear, it can create an “everything is a priority” mentality.
3. Each department director provides monthly service level reports that are included in Council meeting packet materials. These capture outputs such as calls for services, incidents reported, etc. The Library and Police Department(s) produce an annual report.
4. Annual goals are not set forth to guide department services and programs.
5. There is no listing of services included in the annual budget linking service levels with budget resources.

5) Fiscal/Budget

The purpose of a budget is to set forth community priorities and link dollars with services and projects that overall, creates a shared understanding about what and how the City is addressing citizen expectations. The existing budget does not demonstrate

that linkage, so priorities cannot be identified through reviewing the budget document. Moreover, the budget request form departments are required to complete and submit, lacks critical information related to goals and service levels.

6) Management Processes and Workplace Culture

Management processes are about the mechanics or the how of the work is completed within departments. There does not appear to be a foundation for how the organization determines the “best approach” to getting the work done.

Culture is defined as a system of collectively shared values, beliefs, traditions, and behavioral norms and is very important to employees within organizations. Employees’ preference for fundamental cultural values is emotional, not rational.

Workplace culture matters because it is a powerful, hidden and unconscious set of forces that determine both our individual and collective behavior, ways of perceiving, thought patterns, and values. Workplace culture:

- Represents “how things are around here.”
- Reflects the prevailing ideology that people carry inside their heads.
- Conveys a sense of identity to employees, provides unwritten and often unspoken guidelines for how to get along in the organization, and enhances the stability of the social system they experience.

Unfortunately, employees are unaware of their culture until it is challenged, until they experience the new culture, or until it is made overt or explicit through, for example, a framework or a model.

The culture seems to be rather casual and while that is often found in similar sized organizations, it can inadvertently create inconsistencies in the delivery of services and a sense of entitlement among certain employees.

B. RECOMMENDATIONS

Prior to offering my recommendations, it seems what may be beneficial to provide is a barometer to define what constitutes a high-performance public-sector organization. In the private sector, it’s primarily about market share, return on investment and profitability. Defining success in the public sector is not so quantifiable. Based on more than fifteen years working in local government management and consulting exclusively to counties and cities for the last fifteen years, combined with contemporary research, the following is provided simply as a framework the governing body may want to reference in achieving a higher level of performance within their organization.

A working definition of high performance organizations is necessary to describe its role: High-performance organizations are groups of employees who produce desired

services at higher *quality* with the same or fewer resources. Their productivity and quality improve continuously, day to day, week to week, and year to year, leading to the achievement of their mission. The major focus is on achieving desired outcomes, not simply producing more outputs.

The pursuit to becoming a high-performance organization requires clarity of purpose, investing in the workforce, understanding the environment, efforts to understand stakeholders, and the building of commitment to change. The process of transitioning to becoming a high-performance organization and of maintaining the change is people-centered. While processes, technologies and techniques are vitally important, the essential focus is on the people inside the organization and those on the outside with a vested interest in its performance. The processes, technologies, and techniques are tools to help them perform at a higher level.

The rationale for the recommendations is to help the organization attain its next level towards improving the delivery of public services. Enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of government is not simply about adding or subtracting employees as a method to improve government efficiency. The operation of local government is not arithmetic, but more like algebra. In other words, reducing the number of government employees does not lessen its purpose.

The recommendations proposed are based on our analysis blended with our expertise, experience of what works in other jurisdictions and what are considered generally accepted practices of efficient local government.

1) Form of Government and Approach to Governance

A Council-Administrator form of government empowers elected officials to provide leadership, develop a vision for the community, determine what services to provide citizens, lobby the state legislature on the community's behalf, and communicate and forge new relationships with constituents. The professional administrator/manager appointed by the governing body, oversees the organization's workforce, operations, service delivery and translates the Council's policy into action.

In addition – and uniquely in the public sector – democratic values matter. Professional city administrators/managers help in handling the increasingly complex arenas of policy interests, administrative practice, and democratic/community values. Their goal is to help build, maintain, and preserve communities that are economically and socially healthy and vibrant and that people regard with pride.

Successfully governing contemporary local government – government that earns and maintains citizen respect – requires an effective relationship between administrative and political leaders. Administrative leadership requires many skills, practices, and attributes.

Administrators are responsible for the operations of their municipalities. **It is their responsibility to bring coordination to the provision of municipal services.** They work to build a municipal team of department directors and other employees. They establish and enforce policies in the areas of personnel, purchasing, cash management, risk management, planning, and employee development to provide more efficient and effective government.

Having an administrator provides more direct accountability to the board or council for the proper operation of municipal services. Elected officials know who is responsible.

There was much discussion about this item at the workshop with the governing body with members expressing that once a new City Administrator is appointed, to establish a shared understanding about priorities, roles and expectations so success will be attained. A special emphasis will be placed on creating clarity about the Administrator's role, and the role of governing body members, to ensure the organization – department services and operations – are responsive to the preferences of the governing body.

Information that will assist in those discussions include:

- I. Local governments are complex organizations that require expertise in personnel, planning, finance, and intergovernmental relations and an administrative structure that provides coordination of municipal services.

Communities throughout Wisconsin are increasingly facing global economic competition. Their abilities to compete depend not only on private sector initiatives, but on sophisticated and aggressive public efforts as well.

The need for professional municipal administration is not a matter of the failure of local government, but rather of adapting to changing conditions by increasing the capacity of municipalities to provide effective and efficient services.

- II. Respect “shared constituency”

No city, town, county, local government jurisdiction or non-governmental community entity is an island. The actions and decisions of any one affects all others. But, there is an even more profound reality: most governmental jurisdictions and non-governmental entities overlap in representing and providing service to the same people, i.e., shared constituencies. For example, any given citizen is represented and served simultaneously by the federal, state, county, and city governments plus the school district, special purpose districts, neighborhood associations, chambers of commerce, newspaper publishers, non-profits, etc.

These governments and community entities usually see themselves as separate

institutions, often with conflicting and competing agendas rather than as components contributing in a coordinated and integrated manner to seamless service delivery meeting the citizens' needs. Frequently, local governments and community entities operate as special interests advocating their institutional needs and prerogatives. They fail to define how a public service category meeting the needs of a community of shared constituents (public safety, transportation, community development, human services, health care, education, etc.) is defined and functions in a seamless manner with each jurisdiction and entity ensuring its appropriate contribution to the effective and efficient performance of the whole service system.

An example of a service category system is roads. A citizen expects to be able to get from point a to point b on good quality roads that make this possible. That citizen does not want to think, nor cares about, "whose road am I on now; a federal, state, community or city road?" To that citizen "roads are roads" and it is up to all the government entities to make the system work! The same for public safety, and all services. When a sheriff's deputy cannot communicate with a city police officer due to different radio systems and frequencies, it is a service system breakdown which doesn't meet the citizen's need for seamless effective service.

Effective governing bodies recognize they must *horizontally* (local government with local government with community entities) and *vertically* (local government to federal and state government) coordinate and integrate to ensure citizens' needs are met. They also recognize that collaboration and integration work best if it originates at the local government, city and county, level. It is at this level where needs are best defined and responded to by service providers. , all government, as it touches peoples' daily lives and existence, is local.

III. Understand and Demonstrate the Elements of Teams and Teamwork

While all teams are systemic, relatively few are synergistic unless their members understand, master and demonstrate the fundamentals of teamwork which are:

- A clear sense of purpose and goals;
- Clearly define roles and relationships that unite individual talents and capacities into team performance;
- Integration of members who have basic technical, interpersonal, and rational decision-making competence;
- A commitment to team success and quality performance;
- A climate of trust, openness, and mutual respect;
- Clear standards of success and performance excellence;
- The support, resources and recognition to achieve success; and
- Principled and disciplined leadership.

Highly-effective governing bodies spend time building their sense of being a team and their skills for productive teamwork.

IV. Have Clearly Defined Roles and Relationships

Each team member's contribution to the team's efforts and success must be defined in terms of roles to be assumed (functions) and how that role is to be carried out through one's behavior (performance).

Role has two elements: *function*, the specific responsibilities of that role irrespective of incumbency, and *performance*, how one occupying the role is expected to behave and fulfill his/her responsibilities. Most governing bodies, whether through charter, statute or ordinance, have clear definitions of their function. The performance component must be defined within the team through discussion and mutual definition of those behaviors and practices expected of the governing body's members in the conduct of their duties and interactions.

V. Honor the Council-Staff Partnership

The Council-Administrator partnership functions best when it is vision-driven and goals based. Councils that accept and abide by this partnership focus their energy on establishing vision and goals, on good policy, and on empowering effective staff performance. Those that do not do this, frequently fall prey to micromanaging; that is, they will perceive a need to become involved in, or retain approval over, staff activity and plans.

A critical element and important board task in this partnership is the evaluation of the manager or administrator, based upon clearly defined goals, policies, and established guidelines on executive performance.

VI. Allocate Governing Body Time and Energy Appropriately

Boards, like teams, "play" in a number of settings or "arenas" to achieve overall, peak performance. There are four board-staff arenas, and each must be appreciated for its purpose and contribution to a board's effectiveness.

- Goal-setting (retreats or "advances")
- Exploration and analysis (study sessions)
- Disposition/legislation (regular public meetings)
- Community relations (interactions with constituencies and other jurisdictions and agencies)

All four arenas are essential to highly-effective governing body's fulfillment of its leadership, policy making, goal setting, and empowering responsibilities.

VII. Have Clear Rules and Procedures for Council Meetings

Council meetings exist for the purpose of doing council's business. Literature on how to conduct effective and productive meetings specifies the need for, and adherence to, clearly defined rules and procedures. Many councils, however, drift from these rules and procedures in pursuit of informality, collegiality, and "just being nice." They let their meetings drone on with lack of focus, redundant comments and endless discussions. Rules and procedures do not preclude citizen input, courtesy or sensitivity to public concerns and viewpoints. They respect all these elements and the necessity to conduct business in an orderly, disciplined and productive manner.

VIII. Obtain a Valid Assessment of the Public's Concerns and Evaluation of the Council's Performance

Highly effective councils seek feedback through a number of proven market research tools such as focus groups, surveys and questionnaires. Typically, the phone calls a council member receives, or the comments made in public hearings, are not valid or accurate reflections of the entire community's sentiments about issues and the board's performance. "Market research feedback", such as the recent community survey completed, should be ongoing and included in the annual goal setting retreat or advance.

IX. Practice Continuous Personal Learning and Development as a Leader

Leaders read, attend workshops, and constantly seek information, understanding and insight. Highly-effective governing bodies are comprised of members who honestly know they don't know it all. They take advantage of the myriad of opportunities to learn and perfect their skills by reading, attending workshops, and forums that can expand their skills to lead and govern well.

Highly-effective governing bodies also learn as a group. They assess objectively their performance relative to each of the ten habits. They also decide where gains can be made and set up the opportunity through board workshops to learn the skills to make these gains.

X. Communication and Problem Solving

Be attentive. Whether with an individual colleague or in council chambers before a packed house, paying attention to the speaker, the subject at hand and (as appropriate) the interpersonal dynamics involved will make you a more effective communicator and help you to be perceived as a respectful, effective colleague and public servant.

Ask clarifying questions. This shows a desire to better understand the speaker and demonstrates both attentiveness and an interest in learning more. Typically,

this is a better communication choice than a quick emotional retort or an immediate explanation of your own views. Asking clarifying questions helps increase the likelihood of a more productive conversation or exchange.

Let people know you are listening. Two very simple ways to do this include paraphrasing and using a perception check. Paraphrasing is repeating the essence of the speaker's remark, thus conveying that you've heard the substantive content of what he or she has said; for example, "So you're saying that you believe this would kill all the fish in the stream — is that right?" A perception check involves acknowledging the emotional content of a speaker's comment; for example, "I can hear that you're very worried about the safety of neighborhood residents if we remove that stoplight," or "I want you to know that I hear how angry you are about this and how important the issue is to you." Both paraphrasing and a perception check can be important communication tools for council members. Neither suggests you are necessarily agreeing with the speaker or expressing your own opinion on the issue at hand.

XI. Distinctions between Values, Interests and Positions

Your conversations with other individual council members or residents often concern topics that they (and perhaps you) feel very strongly about. It may seem there is no way to even begin to have a useful discussion about such topics. However, understanding the distinction between a value, an interest and a position can be helpful when tackling this type of situation. Consider these examples:

- "Children are our community's most important resource." This is a value;
- "I want a park and open space where our children can play." This is an interest; and
- "I want a park and skateboarding area at the corner of Palm and Main with the city contributing all the funds." This is a position.

Listen for and ask about values and interests that underlie speakers' expressed positions. People can more readily understand each other's values and interests than they can accept different positions. Typically, there are more ways to satisfy interests than to bridge conflicting positions. A conversation about values or interests can often reduce or clarify differences.

XII. Civility and Council Member Behavior

Much media attention has focused lately on the question of civility in public discourse, and many city councils are grappling with the challenge of how to ensure civility among council members in their own deliberations.

Highlighting the current interest in this topic, the New Jersey State League of Municipalities recently published an article titled "The Need for Civility in Local

Government Dialogue”. The article presents author John C. Gillespie’s 10 commandments of public civility, which include these admonishments:

- Thou shalt not allow legitimate critique of policy and practice to become a personal attack aimed at the person who devised the policy or implements the practice;
- Thou shalt not rudely interrupt a colleague midsentence nor “speak over” a colleague while he or she is speaking;
- Thou shalt not pretend something is much more important than it really is simply to score points with an audience; and
- Thou shalt always recognize that your colleagues were also elected, just as you were, and deserve the same level of respect for having run and won.

A growing number of cities are creating handbooks that help council members (and the public) better understand city government and council members’ roles and responsibilities. In addition, cities are adopting ground rules for council meetings that extend beyond procedural rules and address expectations and guidelines for council member conduct. One example of such rules comes from the City of Davis (CA):

“Council members should actively pay attention while others are talking. Council members should be aware that side conversations, note writing and nonverbal expressions made by council members can be distracting to the meeting. Be aware that other council members, staff and the public in attendance can hear and see these actions.”

XIII. Effective Public Engagement

The ability to effectively involve the public in decision-making is an essential skill for local officials. Many local agencies are facing serious challenges on issues ranging from budgeting and fiscal policy to climate change and public safety. Public engagement comprises a broad range of methods to inform members of the public about decisions that affect them and to invite their participation in the process. Such methods include but are not limited to public information and outreach efforts, public consultation and public deliberation

2) Organizational Strategy

The creation of a Strategic Plan will be extremely beneficial to translate challenges into opportunities in building an even stronger, more vibrant community. The development of a vision, mission statement accompanied by goals and objectives will help sharpen the organization’s focus. Efforts to begin the strategic planning process should be undertaken shortly after the City Administrator begins his/her duties.

3) Organizational Structure/Staffing

No recommendations are provided, though by improving the budget request submitted by department directors, with a particular emphasis on fortifying the linkage between services and staffing, the discussion which ensues should “shed a light” on when additional staffing may be beneficial.

4) Services

Organizations are often encouraged to institutionalize best practices, freeze them into place, focus on execution, stick to their knitting, increase predictability, and get processes under control. These ideas establish stability as the key to performance. As a result, organizations are built to support enduring values, stable strategies, and bureaucratic structures, not to change.

1. Local governments have always been served by a sizable number of professional associations committed to the improvement of local government services and the professional development of local government employees. These include national organizations, as well as state chapters. Beyond an emphasis upon improvements to services, they also stress official responsibility and accountability, employee professionalism, and personal responsiveness to citizen needs and concerns. Because such organizations are continually searching for better, more efficient ways of delivering local services, local government employees who are active members become the means by which new ideas are put into practice at the local level.

Additional investment towards active membership by department directors and their staff members is recommended.

2. The new City Administrator should conduct an in-depth examination of the mix of department services and programs and offer recommendations to the governing body.
3. Each year every department should create annual goals, capture previous year’s accomplishments and provide a list of upcoming capital projects.
4. Pursue the creation of a 3 to 5- year Technology Master Plan to move away from the annual discussions and consider a longer horizon, similar to the CIP. The use of technology will continue to increase and the need to plan on a longer time frame has become mission-critical. This Master Plan should include a needs assessment conducted of each department and a series of recommendations for investment and upgrades. There are several consulting firms that provide these types of services.

5) Fiscal/Budget

1. Modify the budget request form department directors complete, to include a section on services and how the budget request enables the delivery of those services.
2. Increasingly, communities are realizing that budgets should show what the local government proposes to do and are using budget formats that specify planned activities, projects, or goals. Begin including in the annual Budget document, text/narrative accompanying each department's expenditure plan that includes goals and services. Fortifying the linkage between budgeted resources with goals, services and accomplishments is vital to maintaining the public's trust and confidence.

6) Management Processes and Workplace Culture

The City is a multimillion dollar enterprise in which the taxpayers entrust and empower the governing body and the organization's workforce to be responsible financial stewards in meeting the community's needs and expectations, what is needed is a renewed emphasis on creating a more professional workplace culture that is consistent with principles of highly-effective organizations and good government.

There was much discussion at the workshop with the governing body about the City Administrator serving as the cultural symbol for the organization – values, principles and character. This topic should be examined extensively with candidates being considered and, made a high priority for the person selected to invest the time and effort necessary to establish a healthy and engaged workplace culture with members of the organization, and the governing body.