Council-Manager Form of Government

- Combines the strong political leadership of elected officials with the managerial expertise of a local government manager.

- Establishes a representative governance system where all the power to weigh competing community values and determine a defining direction lies with the council as a **body.**

- The governing body hires a professionally trained manager to oversee the delivery of services to execute that direction.

Good Governance

The effective and responsible management of an organization dedicated to considering societal needs while not allowing dominance by a single sector.

— Cambridge Business English Dictionary

Governing is not about finding right answers. It is more accurately described as forging alliances and compromises among advocates of different, often times, conflicting, values with the goal of [getting things done and] building and maintaining a sense of community.

— John Nalbandian

Good Governance: Council

A council is a collective body comprised of individual members. Council members were elected to a council, not to an independent seat.

Council members bring forward their ideas, suggest policy changes, express opinions, and defend or discuss policy matters.

Once a decision is made by the council, that action becomes the policy direction the staff is bound ethically to carry forward and implement it.

Poor governance disrupts the pursuit of the mission and reduces confidence in the local government.

Good Governance: Manager

Effective implementation of the governing body's policies by the organization.

Responsive leadership, management and service delivery by staff.

Directing public recognition to elected officials and not yourself or staff.

Apolitical stance/no involvement in political issues or gamesmanship.

Facilitation of council visioning and goal setting.

The Strategic Visioning Loop Provides Clear Expectations
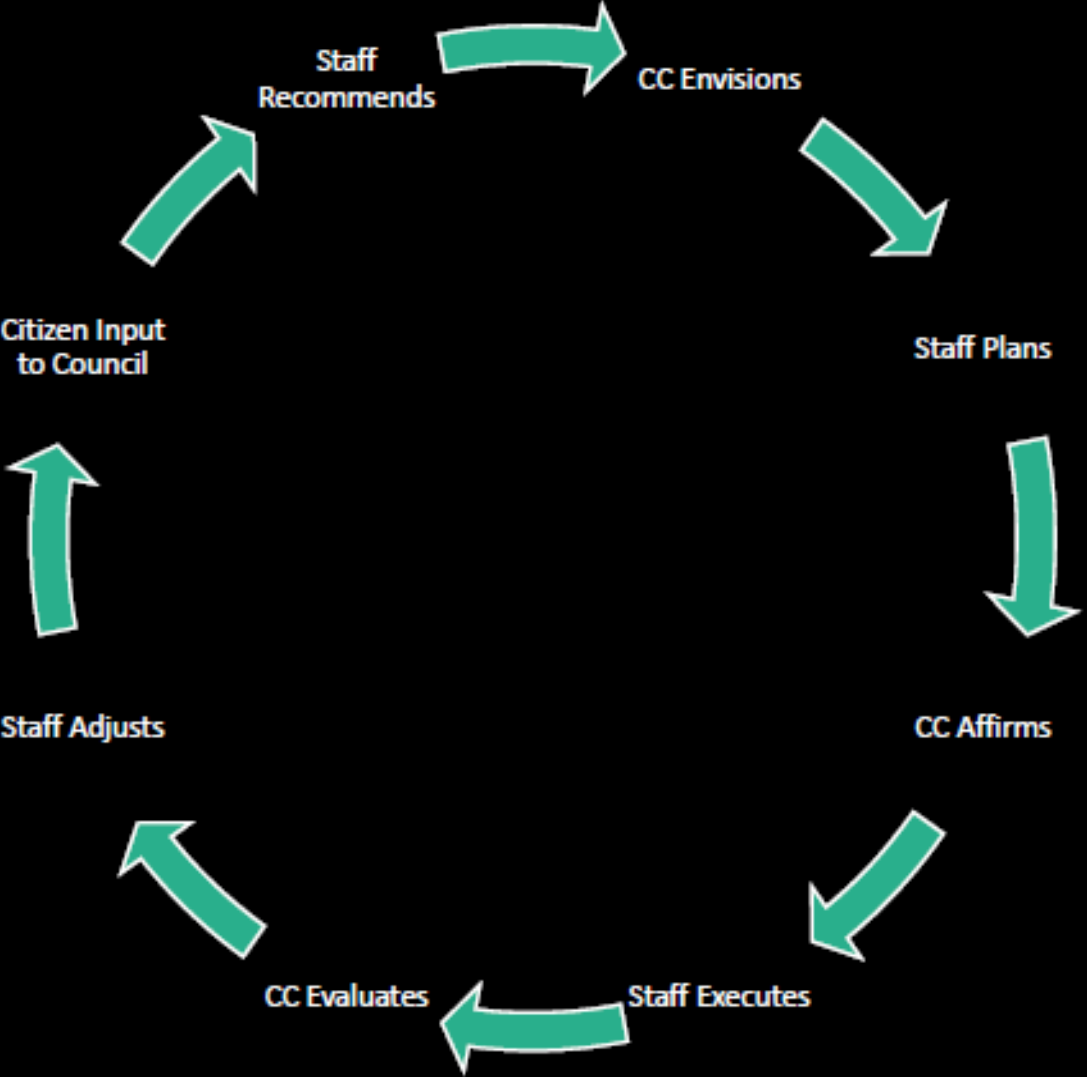
Mutual Respect

- Form relationships right from the start with structured and regular dialogue; ensure mutual communication and feedback loops.

- Dedicate the time necessary to proactively develop and maintain an effective relationship.

- No surprises.

- Be a servant leader.

Mutual Respect: Ethics

- ✓ Council members are subject to expectations beyond those of a private citizen.

- ✓ ICMA Code of Ethics.

- ✓ Saying no with empathy; look for other ways to address a request.

- ✓ Avoid making issues personal and focus on facts and professional judgment.

- ✓ Always best to work through the manager and not other staff, even though it might be more convenient.

Understanding of Roles: Council

- Formulating the organization's vision and goals

- Ensuring the financial health of the organization

- Promoting efficient and effective management and systems

- Ensuring quality of services

- Monitoring organizational effectiveness in advancing the mission and in making the vision a reality
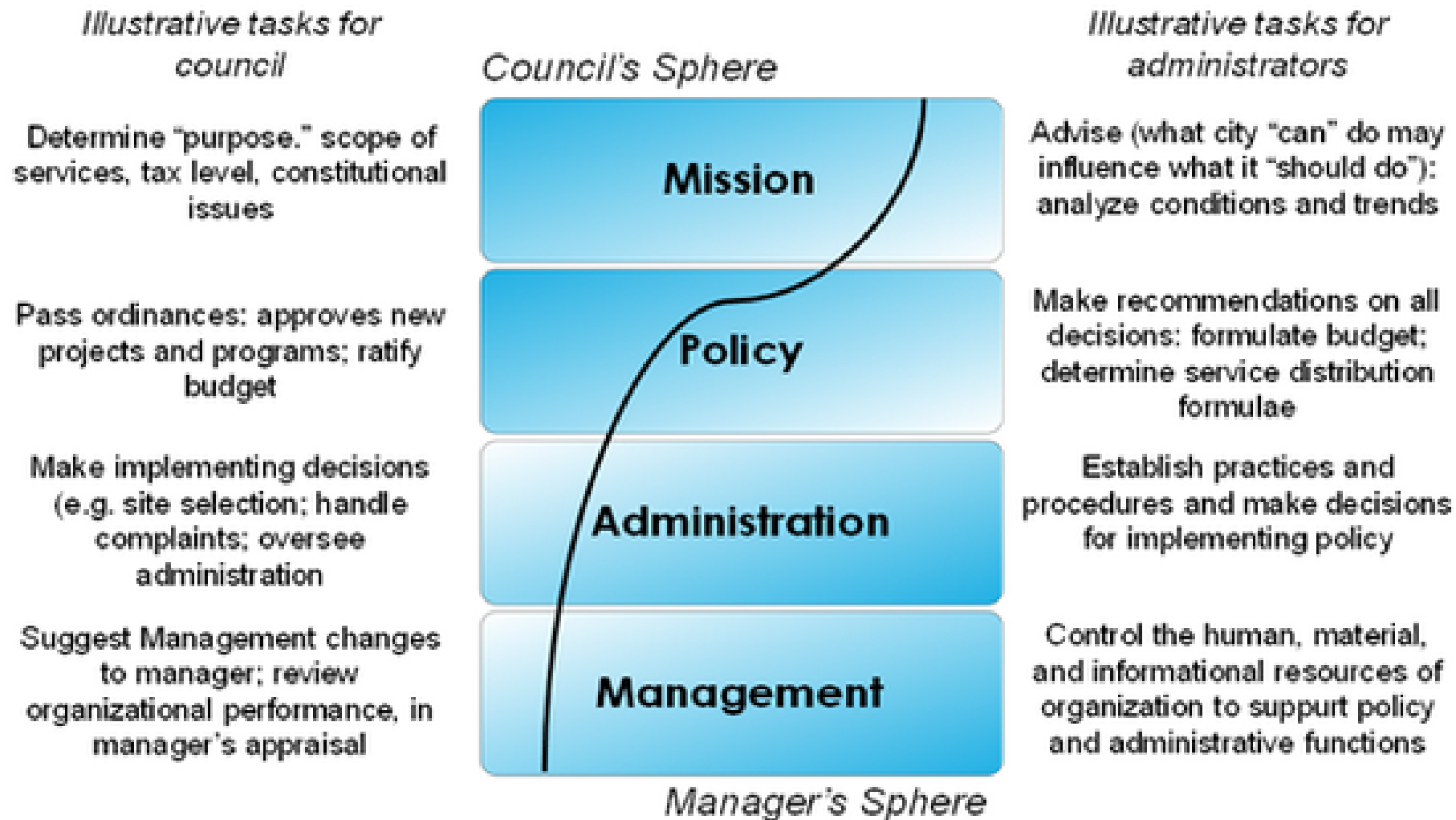
Understanding of Roles: Manager

- Effectively and efficiently carry out the council's policy direction

- Support the entire governing body to be productive and successful

- Help each council member succeed as an effective elected official

- Work collaboratively to keep the council focused on priorities and make progress

- Guide and develop staff and organizational culture

- Engage the community to build trust and confidence in local government

Policy or Administrative?

You know it's a political issue (or the job of an elected official to decide) when after all the facts are known, we can legitimately disagree on the answer to the problem. More information is not going to solve the problem.

– John Nalbandian

Dimensions of Governmental Process

Illustrative tasks for council

Council's Sphere

Illustrative tasks for administrators

Determine "purpose," scope of services, tax level, constitutional issues

Mission

Advise (what city "can" do may influence what it "should do"): analyze conditions and trends

Pass ordinances: approves new projects and programs; ratify budget

Policy

Make recommendations on all decisions: formulate budget; determine service distribution formulae

Make implementing decisions (e.g. site selection; handle complaints; oversee administration

Administration

Establish practices and procedures and make decisions for implementing policy

Suggest Management changes to manager; review organizational performance, in manager's appraisal

Management

Control the human, material, and informational resources of organization to support policy and administrative functions

Manager's Sphere

The curved line suggests the division between the council's and the manager's sphere's of activity. The division presented is intended to roughly approximate a "proper" degree of separation and sharing.

Source: The Effective Local Government Manager

Open Communication

CLEAR expectations

Staff shares information with ALL council members, even if just requested by one.

What about communicating directly with staff or department heads?

Seek staff input/clarification on speculation or rumors.

Okay to tell constituents "I'll get back to you".

Trust

✓ Trust is a crucial characteristic in a successful relationship and open communication is essential for fostering trust.

✓ Tendency is to avoid communicating to avoid conflict.

✓ Failure to communicate to avoid conflict provides short term peace, but long term significantly increases the conflict.

✓ Regular, professional, and planned communication is essential to success.

✓ Avoid fear or favor thinking in staff recommendations.

Cycle of Trust Building

- Connection
- Intent
- Character
- Competency
- Communication
- Affective Trust
- Track Record
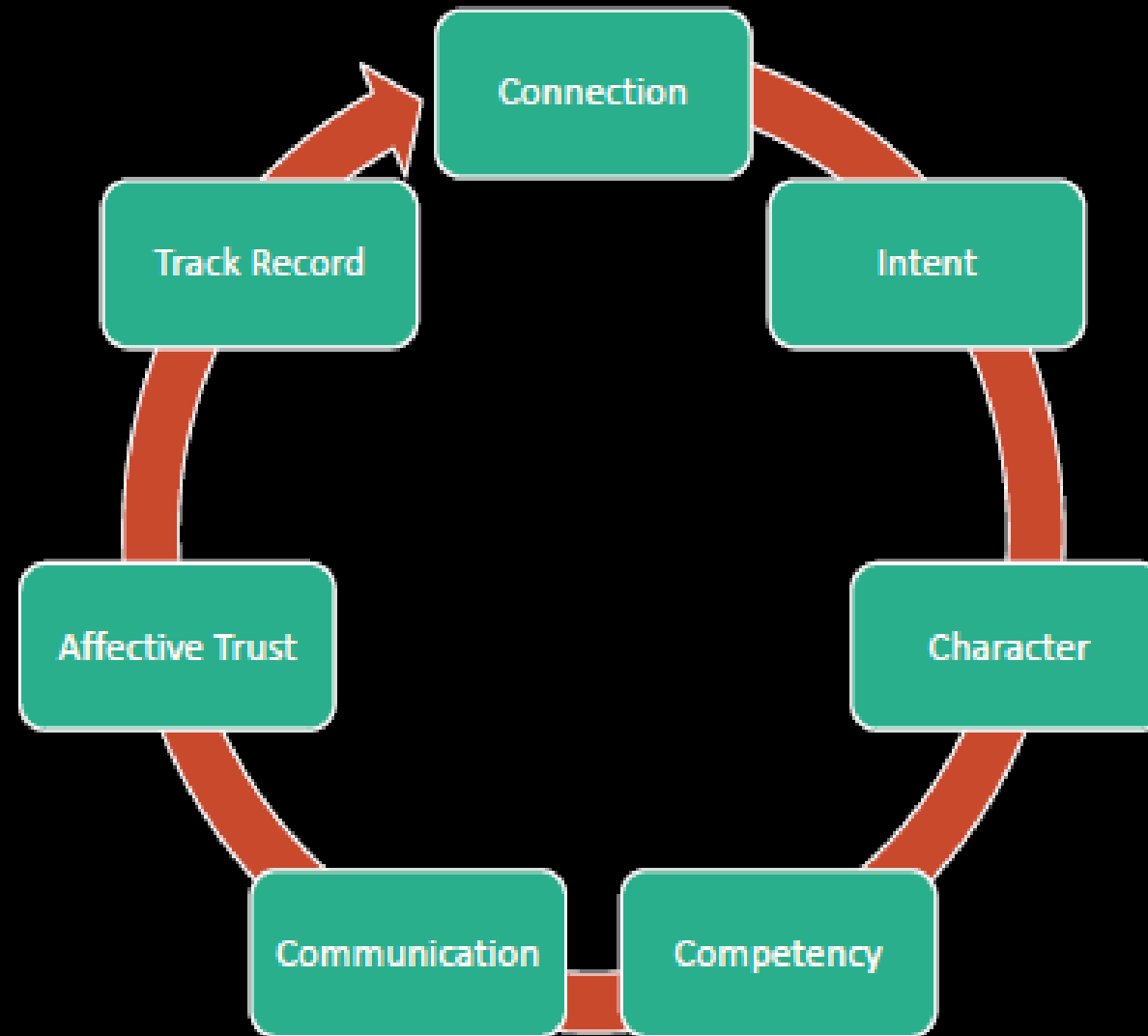
Signs of Ailing Relationships

- Communication stops

- Members stop spending time with each other and/or manager

- Eye contact becomes rare (before, during or after meetings)

- Team members badmouth each other

- Conversations stop when others enter the room

- Council members begin to meet in small groups

- Council stops or delays hard decisions

- Council doesn't speak with one voice after votes are taken

- Council stops relying on staff recommendations

- Council will not defend or support the action of manager or staff

- Team members "throw each other under the bus" when tough decisions are necessary

Finally…just keep in mind you're a leader

It is a difficult job, so give grace.

Your job is to lead and make good decisions for the entire community.

As a council person, one of your hardest jobs will be to base your decisions on the overall good of the community, not just the squeaky wheels. That is a lot easier said than done.

12 RULES FOR ELECTED OFFICIALS

Base my decisions on the next generation more than the next election, committed to the ideal that my loyalty must be to the entire community (both now and in the future) and not merely to my supporters.

• • •

Focus on mission, vision and values as the benchmark for my decisions and recognize that my responsibility is the pursuit of the greatest good for the entire community and not the satisfaction of any particular group's agenda.

• • •

Make decisions based on fact based evidence and not allow myself to be manipulated into bad decisions for the future based on the decibel level of critics.

• • •

Recognize that "it takes a smart man to know where he is stupid" and have the wisdom to be smart. Accordingly, I will value those who have the courage to tell me what they really think and will listen sincerely to those who disagree with me to truly understand their perspective, recognizing that understanding other perspectives makes me a better leader.

• • •

Embrace my responsibility to govern rather than to manage; recognizing that if I am doing staff's job I am not doing my job, while also understanding and embracing the appropriately exercised governance role of holding staff accountable.

• • •

Place a greater emphasis on solutions than on problems; while refusing to offer solutions before I understand the problem.

• • •

Understand that mutual trust is the foundation for everything and that if I refuse to trust others they will be unable to trust me.

• • •

Protect the integrity of the process more than the rightness of my position; I will fight hard for my issue but then unify behind the governing body when the decision is made because the decision was made with integrity of process, even if I disagree with the outcome.

• • •

Understand that my deeply held beliefs, values and positions will be strengthened, not compromised by courteous, respectful and civil discourse. I will not treat someone as the enemy just because we disagree.

• • •

Treat everyone with dignity and respect because of who I am as a leader... not because of how they treat me or what I think about them.

• • •

Be a role model for civility. I will not treat my colleagues or staff in any way that I would be embarrassed if my five year old child treated someone the same way.

• • •

Never Forget - it is not about me - it is not about now - and it never is.

SGR

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