

MEMO

To: Mayor Tuck, Vice Mayor Gray, and Members of the City Council
Mary Bunting, City Manager
From: Julia D. Novak
Date: November 12, 2020
Re: Retreat Preparation

My colleagues Dr. John Nalbandian and Catherine Carter and I look forward to being with you on Wednesday, November 18, 2020. The primary purpose of the retreat is to acknowledge and integrate a new member of the Governing Body and develop a solid foundation for Governing Together.

Preparation

A couple of agenda items will require some advance preparation by the Council. Thank you for spending a few minutes considering the following prompts.

Contemporary Trends and Council-Manager Government

Attached is a PowerPoint on Contemporary Trends in Local Government for your review. Dr. Nalbandian will discuss this during his workshop.

Governing Together

Attached is a document explaining forms of government. Each member of the Governing Body is asked to share their thoughts on “Governing Together” in response to the following questions:

- What does good governance look like to you?
- What values are important to you in governing?
- What is important to remember when your position is the prevailing decision, and what is important to remember when your position is not the prevailing decision?
- What type of relationship do you hope to have with your colleagues on the Governing Body?
- What type of relationship do you hope to have with the City Manager and Staff?
- What do you hope this governing body will be known for?

Operating Norms

During the 2019 retreat, the Council discussed expectations that they had for one another, the Mayor, and the Staff. Those detailed notes are attached. During our time together this year, we will work to refine those into Operating Norms for the governing body.

Logistics

Location: Northampton Community Center, 1435-A Todds Lane

Time: 9 AM to 4 PM – Lunch will be provided

Norms

- Listen with respect
 - Let others finish before you start talking
 - Be attentive to the speaker
 - Disagree agreeably
- Be:
 - **BOLD**
 - positive and realistic
 - candid and honest
 - patient and self-aware
 - engaged and fully present
- Strive for consensus
 - Look for opportunities to agree
 - Remember the power of “if” and “and”
- Have fun!

Agenda

Introductions

- Welcome and introductions
- Agenda review
- Norms and expectations for the retreat

Contemporary Trends and Council-Manager Government

- Dr. Nalbandian will present a workshop that explores the disruptive forces that affect contemporary local government and share insights into how the roles, relationships, and responsibilities of the executive and legislative functions are intended to work in the Council-Manager form of government.

Workshop Debrief

- After hearing from Dr. Nalbandian we will discuss key takeaways to establish a foundation for our governance discussions.

Governing Together

- We will explore a series of questions sharing your individual thoughts on what it means to govern well together.

Operating Norms

- We will review and discuss the expectations articulated in 2019 and use that information to develop operating norms for the Hampton City Council.

Parting Thoughts/Adjourn

- As the retreat comes to a close, each participant will be asked to share a parting thought on how they feel about the work done during the retreat.

Attachments

Disruptive Trends and Leadership Challenges in Local Government

John Nalbandian

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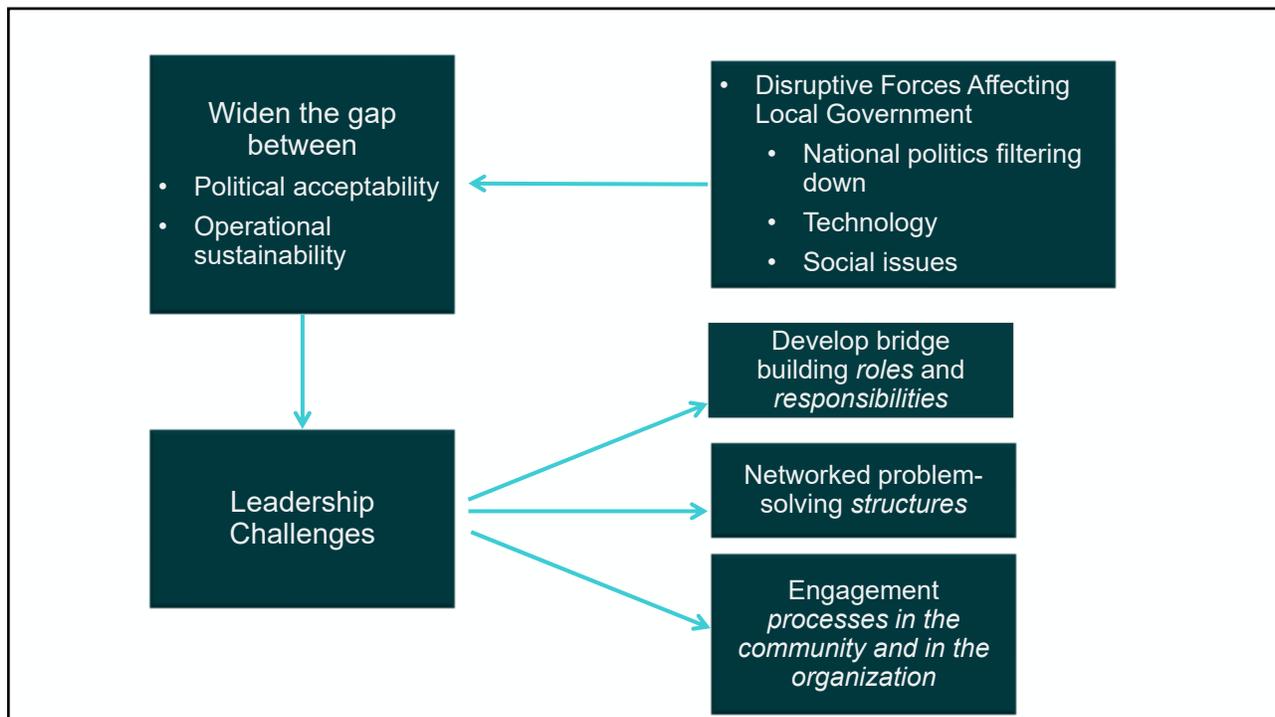


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Goals

- Explore disruptive forces that are affecting contemporary local government and widening the gap between what is politically acceptable (what we want to do) and what is operationally sustainable (can we do it?)
- Describe the challenges associated with bridging the gap between political acceptability and operational sustainability
- Identify attitude/mindset/actions to deal with the challenges

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Challenge 1 – Roles and Responsibilities

- As the gap grows, staff in addition to the CM are drawn onto the bridge. Are they prepared?
- How to create effective/sensitive “bridge building” responsibilities
 - › *Without becoming politically captured and inappropriately intruding on the political (caution for staff on the bridge)*
 - › *Without inappropriately entering into administrative realms of formal responsibility (caution for elected officials on the bridge).*
- How does the staff bridging role connect with role of staff as advocates for unspoken values?

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Discussion Questions for Working in the Gap

- As governing body members, is the concept of the gap useful in helping you understand and describe an aspect of the relationship between governing body and staff?
- Can you identify an issue where the gap was present and effectively bridged?
- From your example, can you generalize about what it takes for the governing body to help bridge the gap between what is politically acceptable and operationally sustainable without “getting into the weeds?”

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Issues Related to the Structural Challenge

- As the gap increases, other entities are invited and invite themselves onto the bridge and in a positive sense produce...
 - › Shared services between jurisdictions and within communities
 - › Regional authorities emerge
 - › Cross-sector partnerships, contracting out, privatization
- Using COVID-19 as an example...
 - › Does effectiveness/efficiency at scale challenge identity? Why is a community's identity important?
 - › How do you manage problems that require interjurisdictional problem solving while maintaining individual jurisdiction identity?

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Examples and Questions

- Provide an example where a problem/service delivery challenge affecting multiple jurisdictions has been addressed successfully through collaboration
- Provide an example of a problem affecting an area of multiple jurisdictions where the local boundaries have impeded problem solving/service delivery
- Why do you think some regional problems are successfully addressed and some are not?

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Leadership/Management Considerations

- Existing boundaries come into question and managing boundaries becomes a new leadership/management concept
- Government becomes enabler as well as provider
- Managing in networks as well as hierarchy
- Engaging the fears of losing identity as well as the gains of expanding boundaries

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Issues Related to Process Challenge

Engagement becomes an imperative as political acceptability and uncertainty become an issue in an age of the “assertive citizen”

- More avenues for political expression emerge – and the concept of the assertive versus the allegiant citizen is accentuated by access to social media www.iap2.org
 - › And by expectations for service delivery that are patterned after the private sector?
- Internal organizational engagement/listening becomes important as disruptions affect employee mental well being

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Process Challenge

- Developing forums for deliberation as well as expression of voice
- In the engagement process, who will speak to the unspoken value(s)?
 - Private sector is profit driven
 - Non-profit sector is mission driven
 - Public sector is values driven (if government shrinks, who will bear the values challenge?)
 - Where do anchor institutions/leadership fit?
- Extending Emotional Intelligence in the organization

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Summary Challenges

- A. Roles and Responsibilities: Political and administrative actors moving into the gap (without inappropriate political involvement or administrative compromise)
- B. Structures: Developing skills/mindset where the problems to be solved drive pol/admin work and jurisdictional and/or departmental boundaries adjust – acknowledge challenge to identity/issues of loss
- C. Processes: Imperative for engagement that incorporates public values and deliberative processes and fosters respect for Emotional Intelligence

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Questions

- As a governing body member, which of the challenges is most relevant to you and the city of Hampton?
 - › Roles and responsibilities
 - › Structure
 - › Process
- What is one step the governing body can take in the bridging function?

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Forms of Government

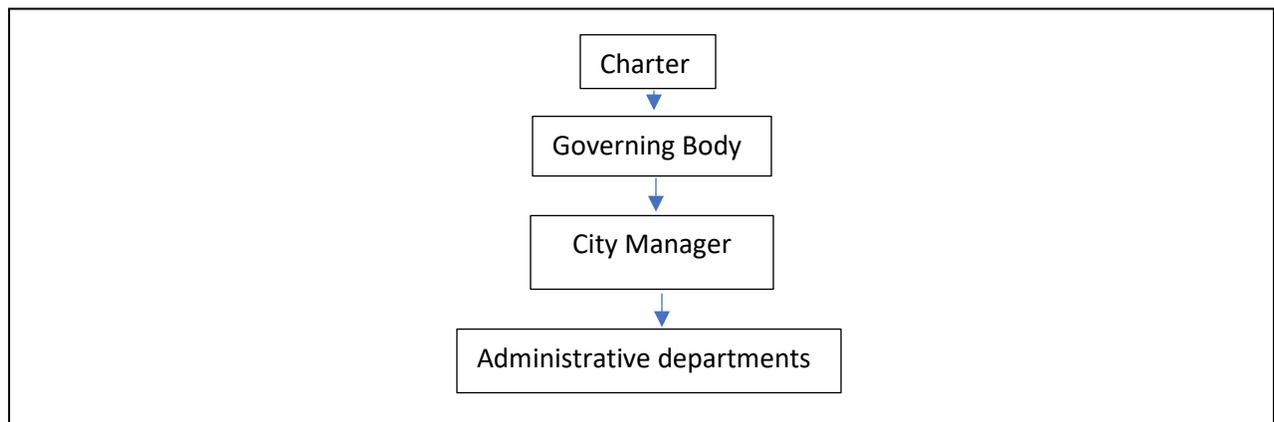
With this short document, I want to contrast the structures of the two basic forms of city government. The elements of each set out roles, relationships and responsibilities of executive and legislative functions. In addition, the mindset associated with each differs.

The two forms are:

- Mayor-Council
- Council-Manager

The Mayor-Council or “strong mayor” form is patterned after state and federal government structure. It is characterized by a **separation** of legislative, executive, and judicial authority. The branches are separated in the sense that members of one branch do not serve at the pleasure of authoritative figures in another branch unless some type of legislation would authorize that. This form of government is designed to prevent “bad” things from happening. *Thus, the concept of checks and balances.* If you work for state government, you likely work for a state agency whose director might be part of the governor’s cabinet. You do not report formally to a member of the legislature. Your civil service classification is further protection from undue political influence. This document also includes an organization chart from the city of Houston where you can clearly see a separation of legislative and executive powers.

This is the same form that also describes the federal government, AND it is one that most citizens are familiar with and frequently attribute to local governments—which is a mistake—at least for a local government like Hampton. Your structure embodies the council-manager form. The majority of city governments in the U.S. have adopted some version of the council manager form.



What we have here is a “unification” not “separation” of legislative and executive powers. A professional city manager or chief administrative officer reports to a governing body and the administrative apparatus reports to the city manager. In a formal sense, the city manager is the link between political and administrative functions. Thus, by design, the governing body does not have direct control of the administrative departments, and the administrative departments report to the city manager not to the governing body. But, in order to ensure accountability to the governing body, the city manager serves “at the pleasure of the governing body.”

In contrast to the separation of powers which is designed to prevent bad things from happening through checks and balances that result from its structure, the council-manager form was designed structurally to make good things happen.

Council-manager government was a product of a reform movement in the early 20th century. It was designed to eliminate inappropriate political influence over administrative decisions—like hiring and contracting. Governing body members were to be elected at large and in non-partisan elections; instead of large legislative bodies there were only to be five governing body members, and the members of the governing body were to select their mayor AND the governing body was to select the city manager. Members of the administration reporting to the city manager were to be selected on the basis of merit.

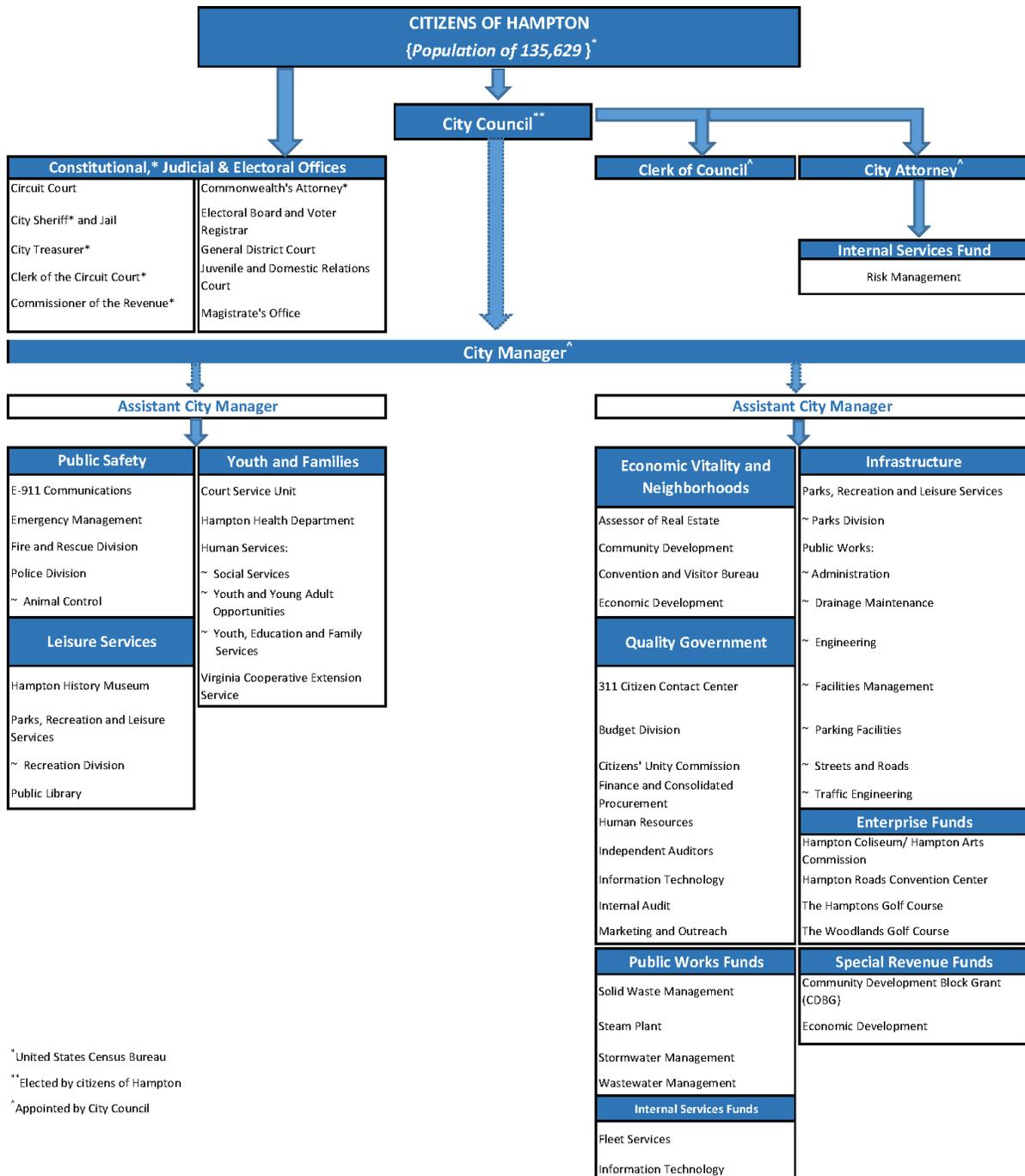
Many adaptations to the form have occurred over time. But what remains constant is the newly conceived position of a “professional” city manager, who was to be selected on the basis of merit not political affiliation. Thus, the council-manager form was seen as combining both efficiency and morality in the spirit of the reform movement!

Because federal elected officials and strong mayors of big cities get a lot of publicity, it is not uncommon for council members to come into office with a “checks and balances” mindset. However, council-manager government works best with a collaborative mindset even though one function of the governing body is oversight since the city manager reports to the governing body and serves at its pleasure.

Below are organization charts for Hampton, a council-manager city, and Houston, a strong-mayor city.

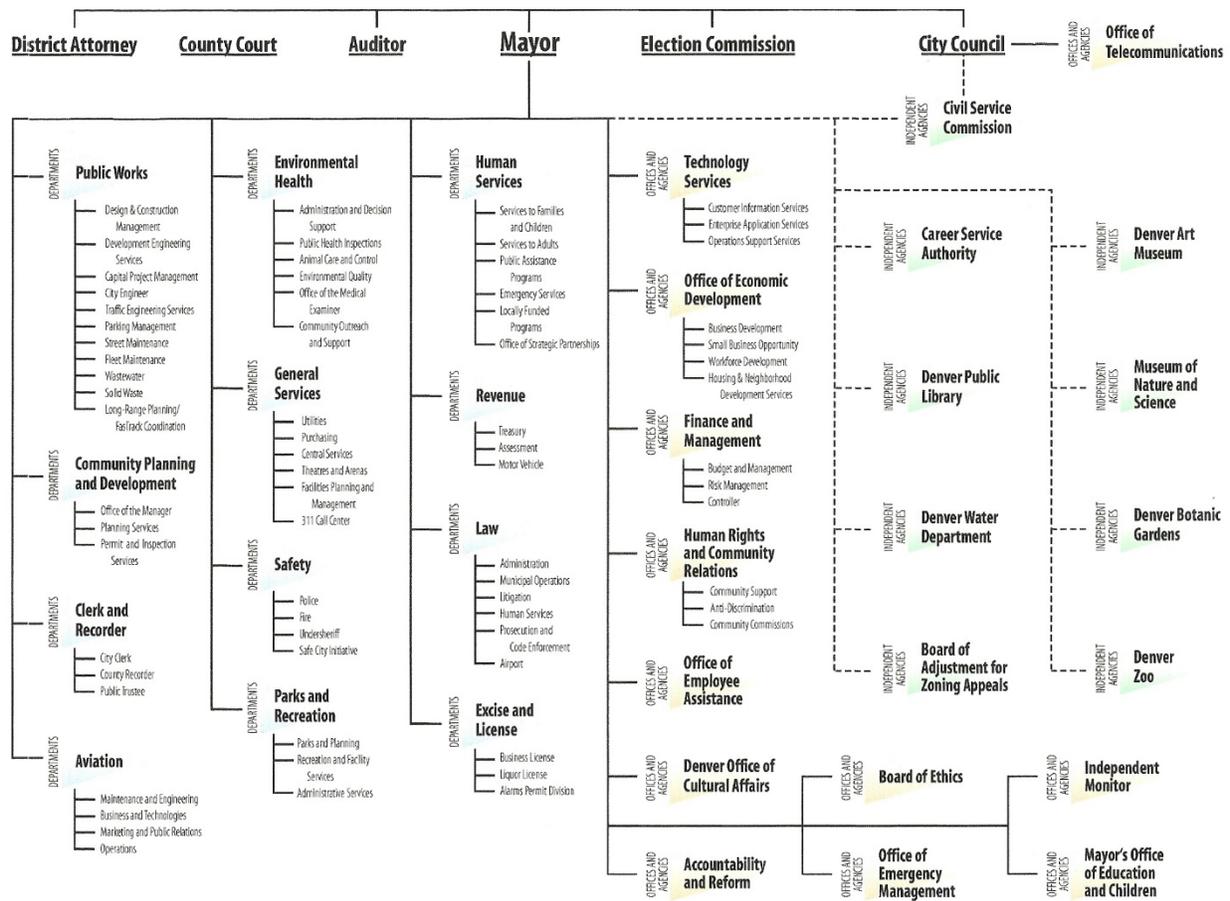
City Information

Organization Chart



* United States Census Bureau
** Elected by citizens of Hampton
^ Appointed by City Council

City of Houston, Texas



Categorized Expectations for the City of Hampton

Note: These are categories mentioned at least twice.

What does the Council expect/need from their Council colleagues in order to be effective?

- Clear, honest communication
 - Information sharing
 - Honest feedback
 - Transparency
 - Communication of vision
 - Communication of expectations
 - Active listening
- Collaboration and team building
 - Collegial atmosphere
 - Sharing of ideas
 - Opportunities for Councilmembers to get to know each other
- Respect
- Timely responses

What are Council members willing to give their colleagues?

- Input and feedback
 - Benefit of their expertise
 - Honesty
 - Sharing of Councilmembers' passion and vision
- Listening and consideration
 - Active listening
 - Respectful discussion
 - Understand of others' positions
- Collaboration and support

What does the Council expect/need from the Mayor in order to be effective?

- Respect
 - Allow Councilmembers to finish and not be cut off prematurely
 - Extend the same courtesy to everyone
 - Respect for the position of Mayor
- Well-run meetings
 - Allow enough time for a robust discussion
 - Ensure everyone can provide input

What is the Council willing to give the Mayor?

- Support
- Represent the City
 - Participate in regional meetings
 - Represent the Council where necessary
- Honest feedback
- Respect

What does the Council expect/need from the staff to be effective?

- Information and analysis
 - Timely information
 - Comprehensive information
 - Concise information
 - Analysis of expected outcomes of decisions
- Understanding of issues
 - Knowledge of other activities happening in the City
 - Understanding of the Council's role
 - Understanding of the bigger picture
- Responsiveness
 - Timely responses to the Council
 - Timely responses to stakeholders
- Preparation
 - Anticipate questions that the Council may ask
- Problem solving

What is the Council willing to give the staff?

- A clear vision and clear direction
- Honest feedback
- Support
- Resources
- Trust
- Understanding
 - Understanding of employees' concerns
 - Understanding of departments' internal visions

What does the staff expect/need from the Council?

- Clear expectations and a clear vision
 - Clear direction
 - Clear expectations for staff
 - Well-defined strategic priorities
 - Comprehensive direction
 - Consistent direction
 - Incorporation of core values in decision-making
- Appreciation of resource limitations
 - Prioritization
 - Realistic expectations
 - Understanding that there may be growing pains
- Defined roles of the Council and of staff
 - Limit the Council to a policy role, rather than providing operational direction
 - Focus on the big picture
 - Engage with leadership, not lower-level staff
 - Limit involvement in personnel issues
- Trust
 - Trust staff expertise
 - Allow staff to try new things
 - Have confidence in staff recommendations
- Engagement

- Be visible to staff
- Engage with staff in setting City goals
- Be willing to listen
- Engage in dialogue with staff
- Support
 - Show appreciation for staff
 - Be a public champion of decisions
 - Support departments' internal goals
- Patience
 - Recognize that the Council sometimes plays a role in why a project is delayed
- Advance communication
 - Communicate any questions or comments to staff before a meeting
- Understanding of the issues
- Equal treatment of all staff

What is the staff willing to give the Council?

- Information and analysis
 - Updates on departments' activities
 - Detailed reports
 - Analysis of potential outcomes
 - Details of community feedback
- Respect
 - Treat the Council as a partner
- Support
 - Support the Council's decisions and direction
 - Advocate on behalf of the Council's vision
 - Trust the Council
 - Conduct outreach to the community in support of the Council's policies
- Options
 - Provide options for various decisions
 - Be open-minded
- Policy implementation
 - Accurately carry out Council direction
 - Implement policies in a timely manner
 - Recognize when policy has shifted
- Recommendations and guidance
- High-quality performance and dedication
- Engagement with the Council
 - Dialogue with the Council
 - Sharing of issues facing departments
 - Responsiveness
- Defined roles of the Council and of staff
- Engagement with the community
- Understanding of the issues
- Creative ideas