



# City Council Retreat

January 15, 2026





# WELCOME & OPENING REMARKS

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Mike Letcher



# AGENDA



## Morning Session

- Governance and High Performing Board
- Governance Relations System

## Afternoon Session

- Council Operations
  - Rules of Procedure
  - FAIRs
  - Boards and Commissions
- Budget Check-In

+  
○ • Flagstaff City  
Council Workshop



# Outcomes for Today

Discussion Outcomes for Today

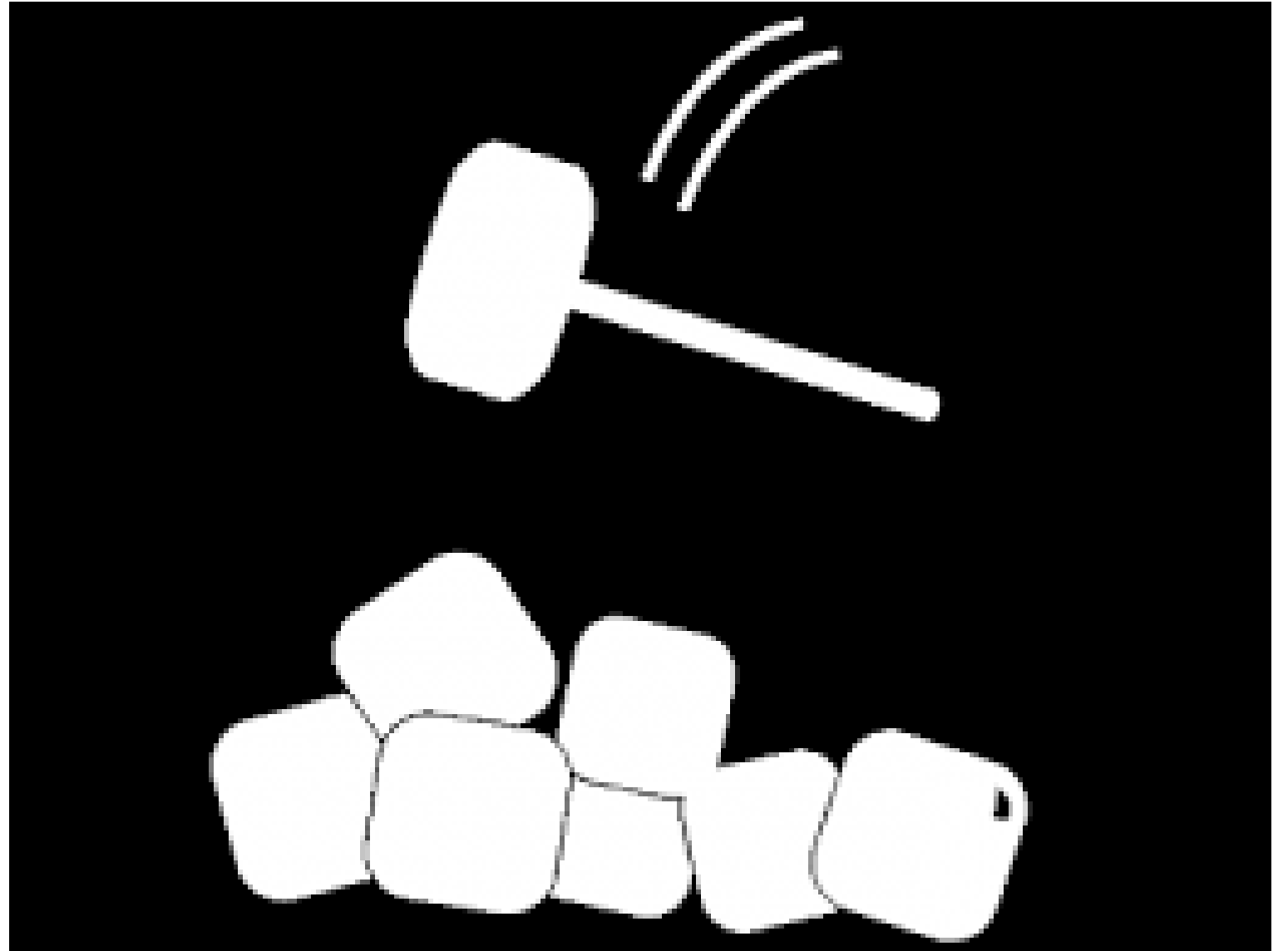
Icebreaker Exercise

Level 6 Governance Survey Results

High Performance Board Survey Results and  
Effective Council Principles

Overview of Governance Relations System and  
Workshop 2 Expectations

# Icebreaker Exercise





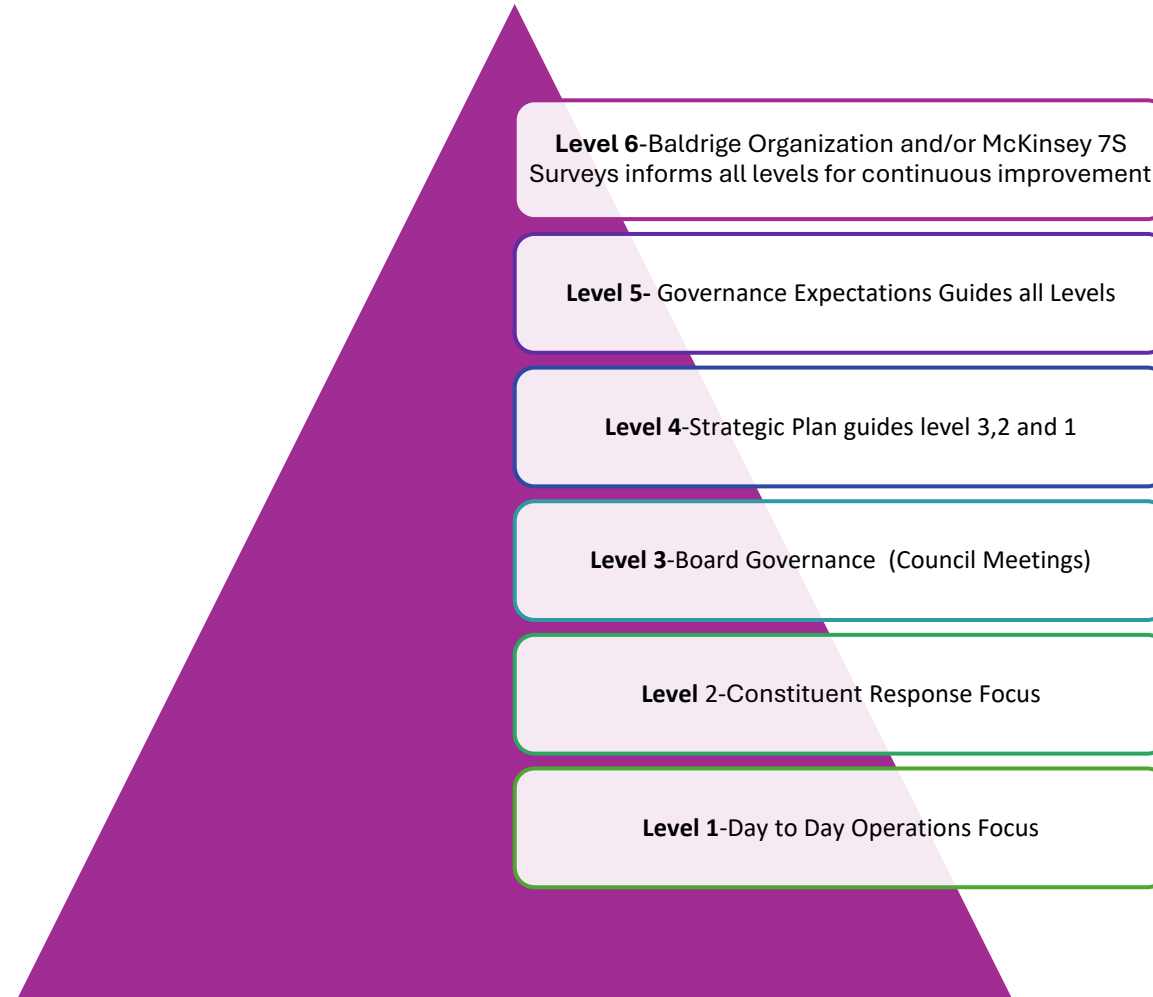
**Let's**

**Talk**

# The Council Determines Level of Priorities and Focus for City



# Level 6 Governance





# Survey Results Discussion



# STARTING THE JOURNEY TO BUILDING A HIGH- PERFORMANCE BOARD



# HIGH PERFORMANCE BOARDS (HPB)

## *Teamwork*

The Board works together effectively and addresses any issues that impede collaboration.



# HIGH PERFORMANCE BOARDS (HPB)

*Expectations for Executive  
Leadership, Operations,  
and Board Support*

The Board has identified key day-to-day and leadership expectations for the manager and how they will support them.



# HIGH PERFORMANCE BOARDS (HPB)

## *Strategic Focus*

The Board, in collaboration with the manager, has developed a strategic plan. More importantly, they follow the plan as intended.



# HIGH PERFORMANCE BOARDS (HPB)

## *Evaluation of Board and Executive Effectiveness and Results*

The Board annually evaluates its HPB efforts and, if necessary, makes adjustments to improve its governance.





# Survey Results Discussion



The background of the slide features three wooden oars lying on a sandy beach. The oars are arranged diagonally from the top right towards the bottom left. The sand is light-colored and textured, with some shadows cast by the oars. The overall tone is muted and natural.

# Council Effectiveness Principles

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Rowing Together

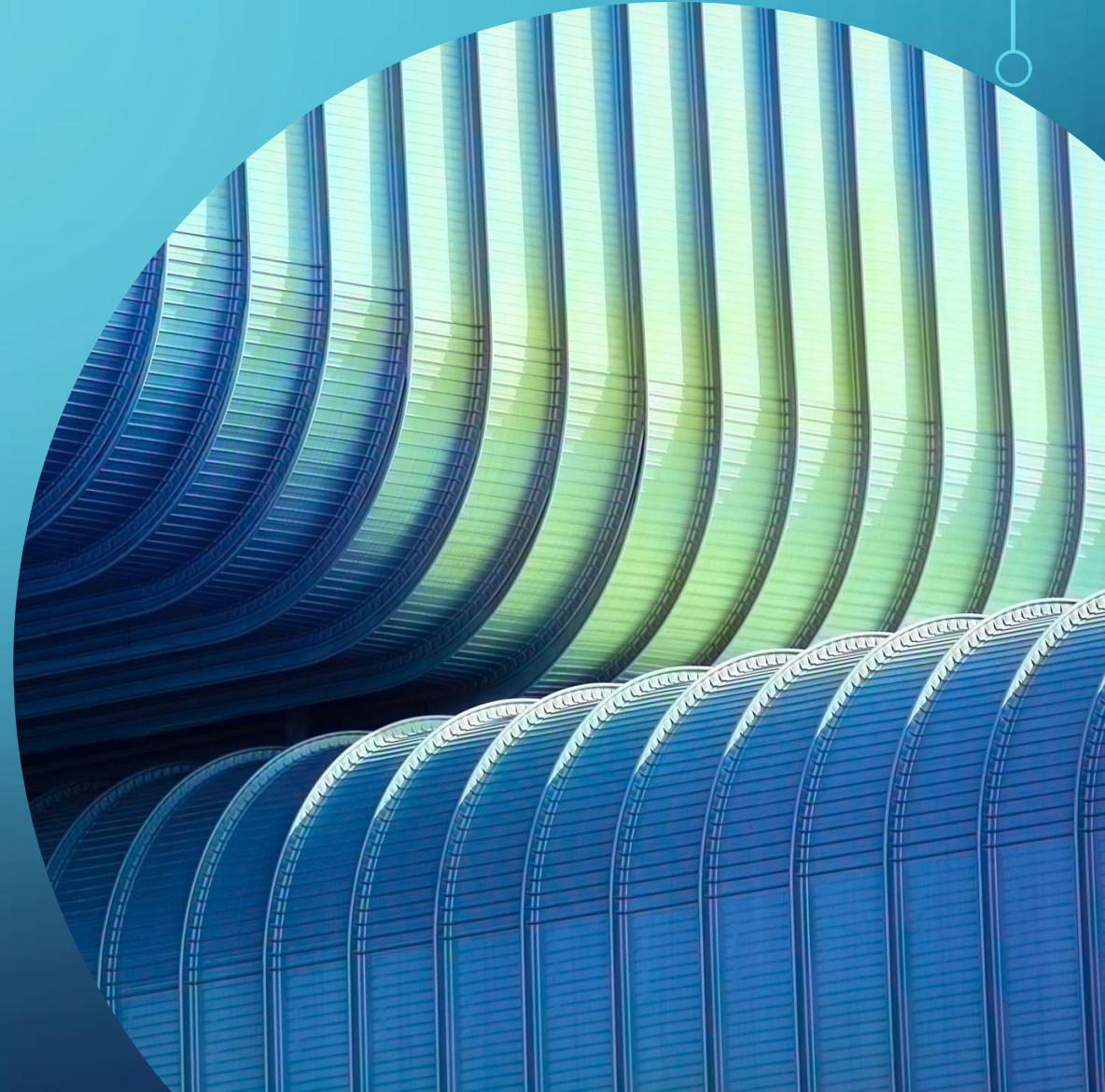
# THE ROLE OF THE COUNCIL

Council governs on behalf of the community.

Establishes policy direction and protects community interests.

Evaluates organizational performance.

Defines strategic outcomes and why they matter.



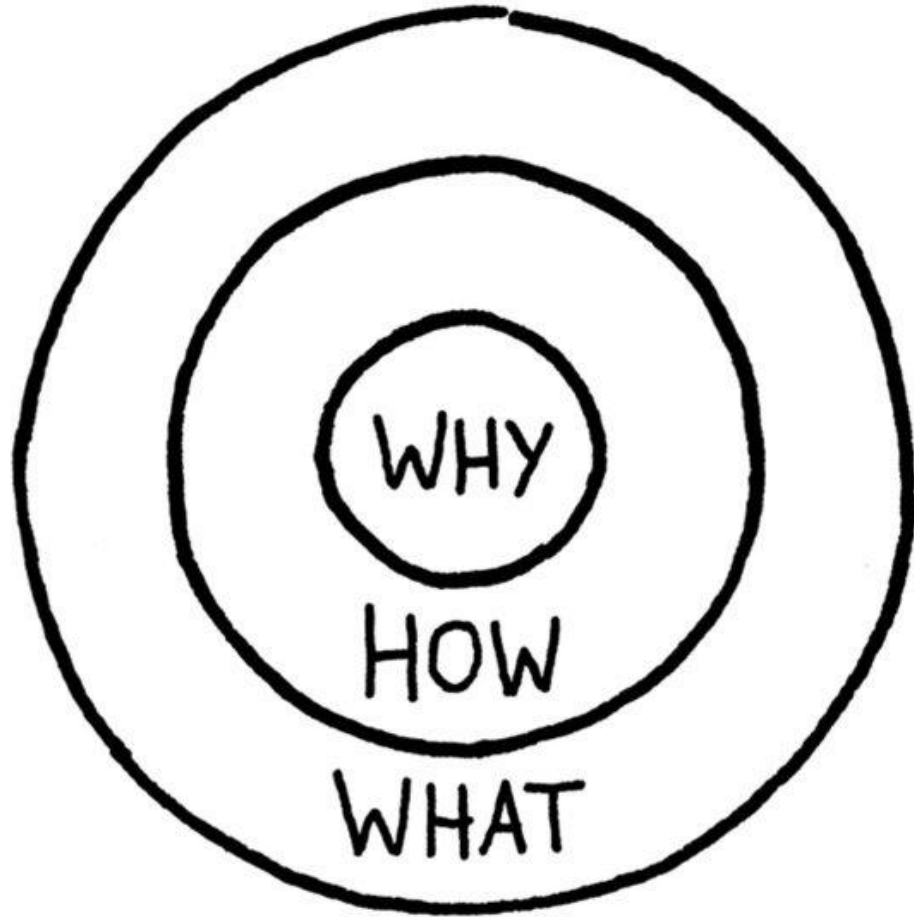
# COUNCIL AS THE COMMUNITY'S VOICE

Translates residents' values into priorities for Council.

Sets policies reflecting long-term vision.

Ensures financial sustainability.

Protects assets for current and future for City



### **What**

Every organization on the planet knows WHAT they do. These are products they sell or the services they offer.

### **How**

Some organizations know HOW they do it. These are the things that make them special or set them apart from their competition.

### **Why**

Very few organizations know WHY they do what they do. WHY is not about making money. That's a result. It's a purpose, cause or belief. It's the very reason your organization exists.



WHAT DOES  
“WHY”  
MEAN FOR  
THE CITY OF  
FLAGSTAFF?

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**Why = Governing Purpose**

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**What = Actions as a Council**

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**How = Results and Impact on  
Community Needs**

# STRATEGIC POLICY MODEL

**FIGURE 2:** Policy Models.



Source: Mike Letcher



# WHAT A CITY MUST DO- NEEDS

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Protect public health and safety

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Fulfill core municipal responsibilities

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Often legally required

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Direct city control and accountability

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## **Examples**

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Police, Fire, EMS

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Water, sewer, and stormwater systems

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Roads and basic infrastructure

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Code enforcement and compliance



# WHAT A CITY MAY CHOOSE TO DO-WANTS

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Enhance quality of life

---

Discretionary spending decisions

---

Community-driven priorities

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Flexible timing based on resources

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## **Examples**

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Parks and recreation upgrades

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Community events and festivals

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Public art and placemaking

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Streetscape and beautification projects



# WHAT A CITY CANNOT CONTROL- NATIONAL/ WORLD POLITICAL ISSUE

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Outside municipal authority

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No local implementation power

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Often ideological or partisan

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Indirect or symbolic local impact

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## **Examples**

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Federal immigration policy

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National elections

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Foreign policy

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Congressional legislation



# WHEELHOUSE FOCUS FOR COUNCIL

**FIGURE 2: Policy Models.**



Source: Mike Letcher

# HOW DOES A POLITICALLY FOCUSED POLICY ADDRESS THE WHY?



Why = Governing Purpose



What = Actions as a Council



How = Results and Impact on Community Needs

FIGURE 2: Policy Models.



Source: Mike Letcher





# WHEELHOUSE FOCUS FOR COUNCIL

**FIGURE 2:** Policy Models.



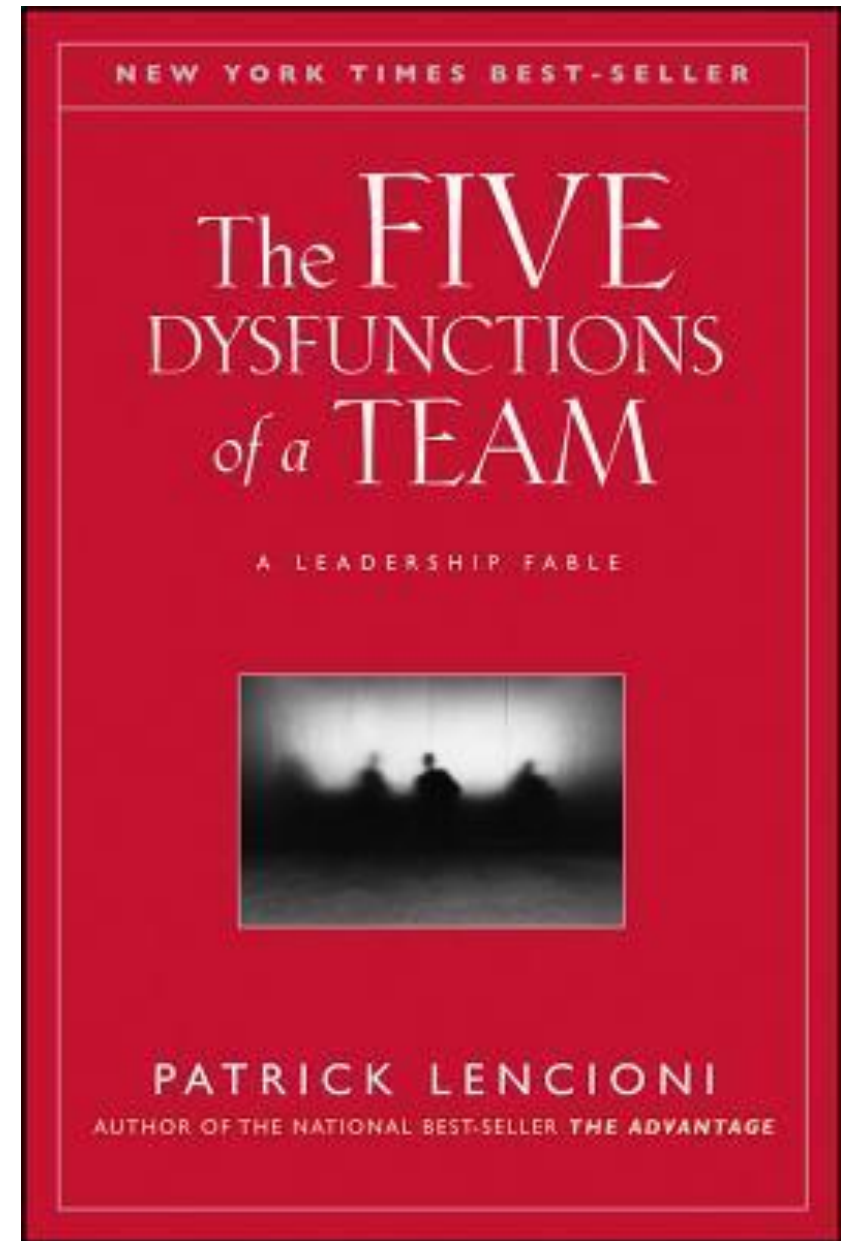
Source: Mike Letcher



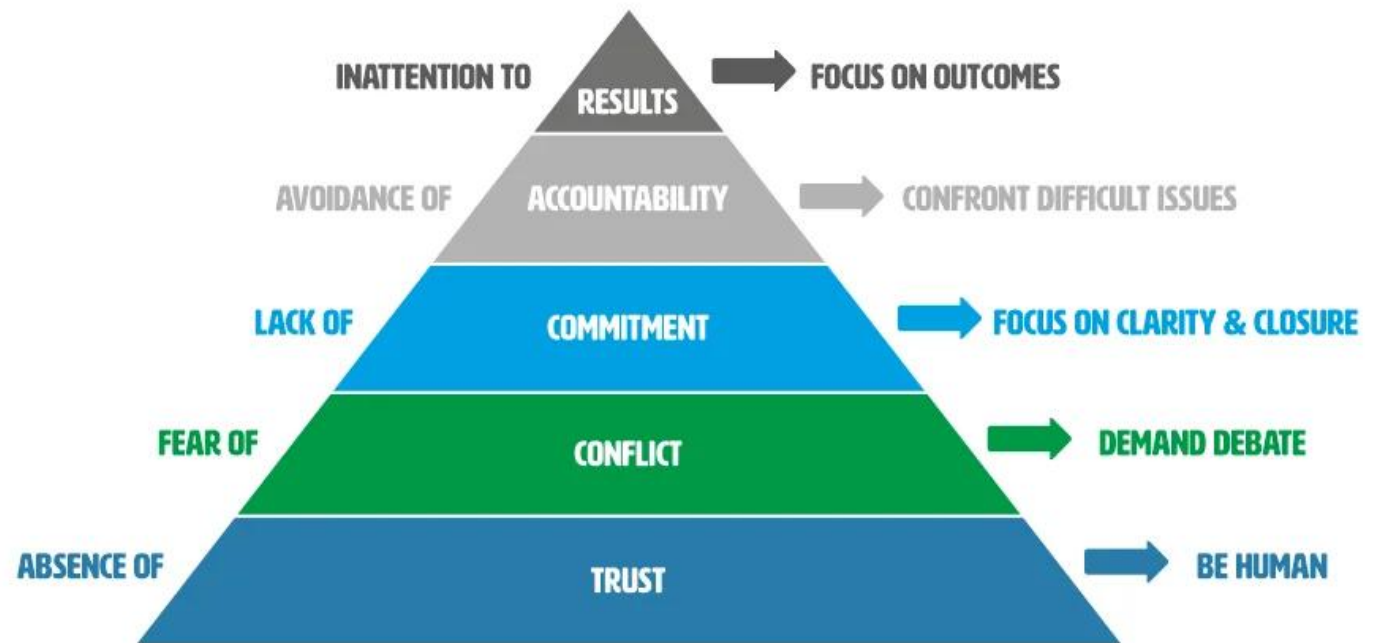
**Let's**

**Talk**

# Creating Council Teamwork



# Five Dysfunctions of a Team



## Survey Scale

Low- Less than 3

Medium- (3-3.99)

High- (4+ & Above)

# TRUST is the Foundation

Teams with an absence of TRUST...

- Are unwilling to be vulnerable within the group
- Conceal their mistakes and weaknesses
- Hesitate to ask for help
- Hesitate to provide constructive feedback
- Jump to conclusions about the intentions of others
- Fail to recognize and tap into one another's skills and experiences
- Hold grudges
- **Engage in Under-Ground Conversations**

Instead:

Teams need to TRUST one another by...

- Admitting weaknesses and mistakes
- Asking for help and input
- Giving each other the benefit of the doubt
- Taking risks and offering feedback and assistance
- Appreciating each others' skills and experiences
- Offering and accepting apologies without hesitation
- **Engaging in Common-Ground Conversations**



# Survey Results Discussion



# Conflict

## Teams who fear Conflict...

- Are incapable of engaging in unfiltered and passionate debate of ideas
- Resort to veiled discussions and guarded comments
- Create environments where back-channel politics and personal attacks thrive
- Ignore controversial topics that are critical to team success
- Fail to tap into all the opinions and perspectives of team members

## Instead:

## Teams who engage in healthy Conflict...

- Have lively, interesting meetings
- **Engage in Battle-Ground Conversations**
- Extract and exploit the ideas of all team members
- Solve real problems quickly
- Minimize politics
- Put critical topics on the table for discussion



# Survey Results Discussion



# Commitment

## Teams who fail to Commit...

- May pretend to agree at meetings
- Create ambiguity about direction and priorities
- Waste time excessively analyzing causing unnecessary delays
- Lack confidence and fear failure

## Instead: Teams who can Commit...

- Have clarity around direction and priorities
- Align the entire team around common objectives
- Develop an ability to learn from mistakes
- Move forward or change direction without hesitation



# Survey Results Discussion

# Accountability

## Teams who avoid Accountability...

- Hesitate to call their peers on actions and behaviors that seem counterproductive to the good of the team
- Create resentment among team members who have different standards of performance
- Encourage mediocrity
- Place undue burden on the team leader as the sole source of discipline

## Instead:

## Teams who can hold one another Accountable...

- Ensure poor performers feel pressure to improve
- Identify potential problems quickly by questioning one another's approach without hesitation
- Establish respect among team members who are held to the same high standards
- Avoid excessive bureaucracy around performance management



# Survey Results Discussion



# Results

## Teams not focused on Results...

- Stagnate and fail to grow
- Lose achievement-oriented employees
- Encourage team members to focus on their own careers and individual goals
- Are easily distracted

## Instead: Teams who focus on collective Results...

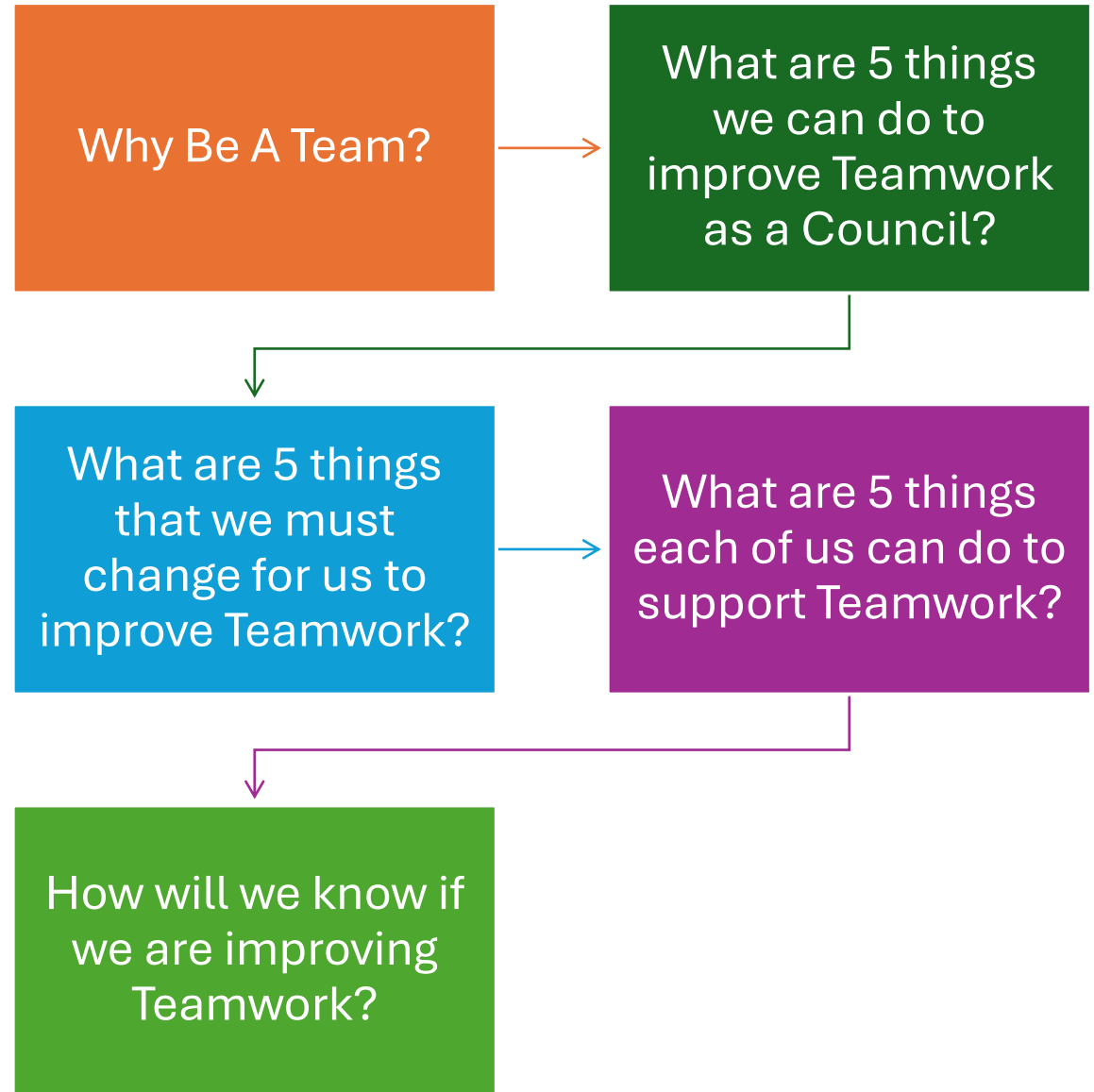
- Retain achievement-oriented employees
- Minimize individualistic behavior
- Enjoys success together
- Benefit from individuals who set aside their own goals for the good of the team
- Avoid distractions



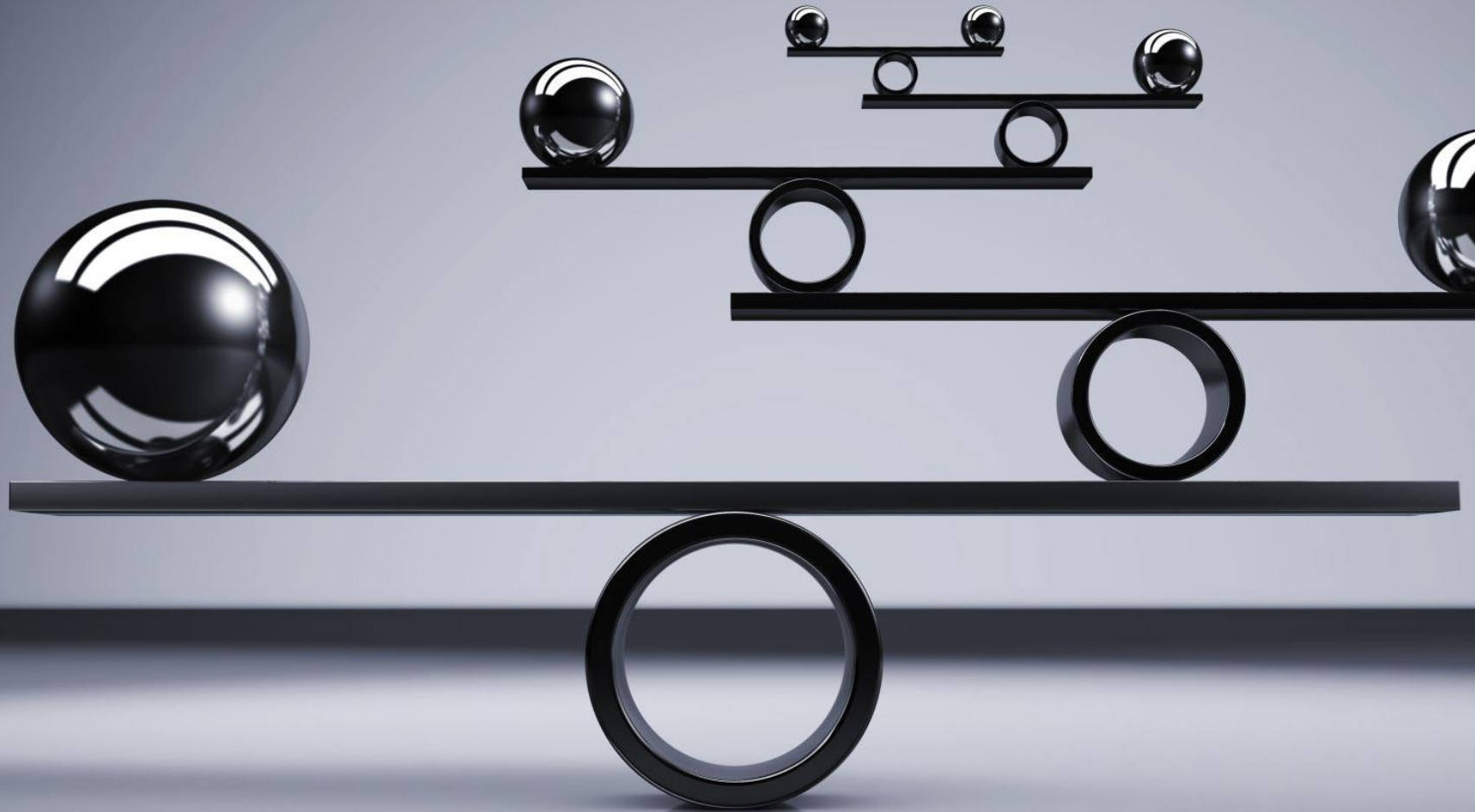
# Survey Results Discussion



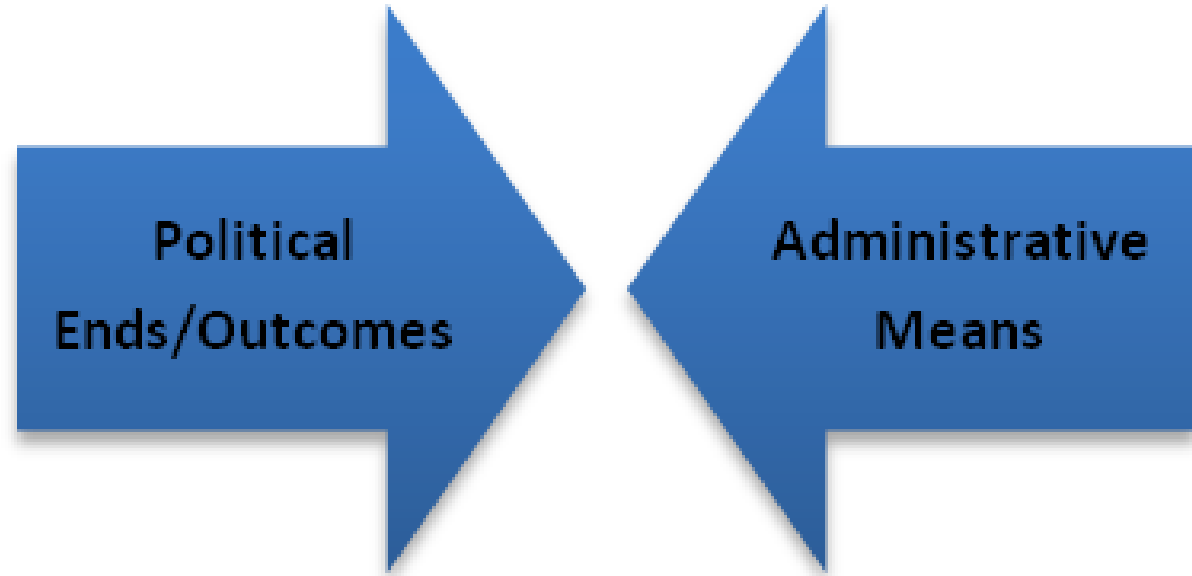
# Teamwork



Alignment of  
Roles and  
Responsibilities  
Overview of  
Workshop 2



# Governance Expectations



Board defines success (Ends-Goals)

Staff determines implementation (Means-Goals)

## WHY THE GRS?



How can a Board work effectively with each other AND the Manager without having expectations for themselves and the organization?

Are the Board and management expectations for the City consistent with one another?

# ORGANIZATIONAL EXPECTATIONS

- Executive Management Team is committed to the developing and empowering employees
- Focus on developing a learning organization
- Continuously improve internal processes and procedures



## CEO EXPECTATIONS

- Any written information provided to one Board Member will be provided to all members
- Plan ahead, anticipate needs, and recognize potential problems
- Ensure attention to detail to avoid errors or things “slipping through the cracks”



## BOARD EXPECTATIONS

- Focus on outcomes and not positions
- No operational interference
- Disagree with the vote, but do not undermine the will of the Board
- Do your homework
- No public criticism of staff at meetings



# CUSTOMER SERVICE AND CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT EXPECTATIONS

- Civic Engagement
- Educate members on services
- Timely responses



# Shared vs. Individual Board Expectations



Shared  
Expectations

The diagram features two large, dark blue arrows pointing in opposite directions. The arrow on the left points to the left and contains the text 'Shared Expectations'. The arrow on the right points to the right and contains the text 'Individual Expectations'. The two arrows are connected at their inner ends by a white, curved line that resembles a page fold or a ribbon, creating a central space between them. The background is white with light blue geometric shapes in the corners.

Individual  
Expectations



# Next Steps Workshop 2 GRS

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**Let's**

**Talk**



# COUNCIL OPERATIONS

## Council Rules of Procedure

“The Council shall determine its own rules and order of business,....”

(Charter Article II, Section 14)

- Govern Council operations and meeting protocol
- Updated periodically as requested by Council or staff.



# COUNCIL OPERATIONS

## Council Rules of Procedure

- Meeting dates, times, and locations
- Order of business and how agendas are structured
- Future Agenda Item Request (FAIR) process
- Rules of order and decorum among Council, staff, and citizens
- Provides guidance on motions, amendments to motions, point of order, etc.
- Details the citizen petition process



# COUNCIL OPERATIONS

## Council Rules of Procedure

- Discussion
  - Review of Draft Agenda
  - Public comment?
    - Proclamations/Recognition
    - To/From
  - To/From section of agenda
  - Public commenters announcing their address/city of residence
  - Legislative activity and media requests



# COUNCIL OPERATIONS

## FAIR PROCESS

- Requested during To/From at City Council Meetings
- Placed on an agenda under “Future Agenda Item Requests” for consideration by Council
- Requires three members of Council (requester + 2 others) to support placing it on a future agenda for discussion and direction
  - If supported, it goes into discussion queue for staff to prepare a presentation.



# COUNCIL OPERATIONS



## FAIR PROCESS

- Discussion
  - Disjointed format
  - Duplicate efforts
  - Timing



# COUNCIL OPERATIONS



## Boards and Commissions

- 26 Boards and Commissions
- Staff Commitment
  - Most meet at least monthly
  - Program Management
- Appointments
  - Rotation of Councilmembers for each commission
  - Frequent vacancies

City/Town	Total	Population
Tucson	57	547,239
Phoenix	55	1,650,070
Chandler	30	280,167
Tempe	28	189,834
Flagstaff	26	76,586
Peoria	21	198,750
Scottsdale	21	244,394
Glendale	18	253,855
Mesa	18	511,648
Yuma	17	100,858
Sierra Vista	15	44,431
Surprise	15	158,285
Avondale	14	93,545
Casa Grande	14	63,743
Gilbert	14	275,411
Goodyear	13	111,805



# COUNCIL OPERATIONS



## Boards and Commissions

- Discussion
  - Number
  - Purpose
  - Consolidation
  - Sharing information



# Council Operations

## Media Requests

- Official Point of Contact
  - Sarah Langley, Public Affairs Director
- When requests come in
- City representative



# BUDGET UPDATE

## Upcoming Retreats

- February 5 and April 23/24
- Discussion
  - What would be helpful information
  - Are there desired materials