

# Effective Council Techniques



# A Council . . .

- Is a decision making body
- Made up of a small number of people
  - People with personalities and preferences

# Personality Types

- According to some theories, our personality is a 'given'
- Personality helps define how we like to engage the world
- Each personality 'type' has strengths/advantages
- Each personality 'type' has weaknesses/disadvantages

# Personality and Destiny

- Personality 'type' may help explain
  - How we tend to do things
  - How we tend to see things
  - Our sense of comfort/discomfort in various situations
- Personality, however, is not an excuse for bad behavior.
  - Every 'type' can learn to do things differently
  - Doing things differently may come at a greater personal cost

# Leadership and Personality: Key Lessons

Accept differences

Understand differences

Adapt to differences



QUESTIONS?

# RUNNING AN EFFECTIVE MEETING

A photograph of a conference room. In the foreground, a long wooden conference table is visible. Three dark brown leather chairs are arranged around the table. On the table, there are three nameplates. To the left of the table is an American flag on a stand. To the right is a Florida state flag on a stand. In the background, there is a plain wall and a closed door.

# Agenda

- Make the volume of work match the time available
- Put the most important work first
  - Councilmember's perspective
  - Staff perspective
- Make time to talk
- Hold yourselves to your time
  - You can always continue a discussion to another day

# Turn Taking

Presiders Should Honor:

- Order of requests for recognition
- Fair and balanced participation

Members Should Honor:

- Role of president
- Fair and balanced participation

# Motions

- The presider should not make a motion
- When possible, the presider should wisely choose the motion-maker
  - The leading advocate?
  - The skilled wordsmith?
- At need, the presider can invite a specific motion
  - “I’ll entertain a motion to . . . .”

# Motions and the Regulation of Debate

- Parliamentary procedure requires a motion be moved and seconded before a subject can be discussed
- Most councils ignore this requirement

# Motions and the Regulation of Debate

- Advantage
  - Fosters more free exchange of ideas in an environment where we cannot have such exchanges except at meetings
- Disadvantage
  - We can spend hours discussing something on which no one actually is willing to make a motion
- Recommendation
  - Allow informal discussion up to a point
  - When the discussion becomes cyclical or too time-consuming, require a motion and second for further discussion



QUESTIONS?

# WORKING WITH STAFF

# How We Like To Work

A blurred photograph of a conference room. In the foreground, a long wooden table is visible with several chairs tucked under it. On the table, there are nameplates and some papers. In the background, there is a door and two flags: the United States flag on the left and a blue flag with yellow and white patterns on the right. The overall scene is dimly lit and out of focus.

# Four Leadership Orientations

- Structural
  - Emphasis: rational analysis of information
  - Prefer to build structure/systems
- Human Resource
  - Emphasis: people
  - Prefer to build relationships
- Political
  - Emphasis: advocacy and struggle
  - Prefer to build bases of power
- Symbolic
  - Emphasis: vision and inspiration
  - Prefer to tell stories, provide meaning

# Be Empowering and Supportive

- Let staff help you do your job
- Express appreciation
- Keep your word
- Raise grievances in private
- Raise morale in public
- Take the bullets for the team

# Solve Personnel Problems Professionally

- Get the facts
- If there is a private path to resolution, use it
- If the only path available is public, use it with discretion and sensitivity
  - No witch hunts or lynch mobs
  - Professional, factual, and not personal

# Cultivate a Culture of Service

Model it

Talk about it

Reward it



QUESTIONS?

# WORKING WITH THE EXECUTIVE

# Two Models

## Partners

- Executive and Council share common goals
- Differences are opportunities to improve
- Executive and Council support and assist each other

## Rivals

- Executive and Council have different goals
  - Policy
  - Politics
- Differences are battles to be won
- Executive and individual councilmembers attempt to bestow favors or impose sanctions



QUESTIONS?

# BECOMING YOUR IDEAL COUNCIL

# Two Core Functions

## Representative

- Communicating citizen needs/concerns
- Ensuring a diversity of perspectives
- Assuring citizens that the city works for them

## Governing

- Making good public policy
- Overseeing effective implementation of policies
- Ensuring accountability to the public and the public good

# Three Orientations to Office

- Delegate – Do what the people want
- Trustee – Do what is in the people's best interest
- Politico – It depends . . . .

# When It Can Be Good

- Model what you want your council to be like
- Seek common ground
- Praise persons; critique ideas
- Stay focused on goals
- Respond to immediate problems
- Use 'we'
- Accept 'defeat' graciously
- Support the work of the council

# When It Can't Be Good

- Do everything you would do if things could be good, plus . . .

- Acknowledge fundamental disagreements with regret
  - If it's about ideas, stick to the ideas
  - If it really is about persons, be clear about the problem, and continue to show respect

# Fundamental Political Truths

- Politics is the art of the possible Otto Von Bismarck
- There is no virtue in political ignorance Scott Paine
- One should be a person of principle
  - But not every issue is a matter of principle Anonymous
- It's amazing what you can accomplish when you don't care who gets the credit Harry Truman

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