

Roles and Responsibilities of Council and Staff

Walt McBride
GMA Annual Convention
June 28, 2022

THE HAROLD F. HOLTZ MUNICIPAL TRAINING INSTITUTE

Elected Officials and Staff Relations

This course explores the unique perspectives of local government elected officials and staff and how a greater understanding of each other's perspectives can reduce friction and misunderstanding and result in improved public service delivery. The distinction between policy making and administration and other elected officials-staff related issues are explored using exercises, case studies and group discussion.

THE HAROLD F. HOLTZ MUNICIPAL TRAINING INSTITUTE

What do you see?



THE HAROLD F. HOLTZ MUNICIPAL TRAINING INSTITUTE

Why do elected officials & staff see the world differently?

THE HAROLD F. HOLTZ MUNICIPAL TRAINING INSTITUTE

Why do elected officials & staff see the world differently?

- Different values embedded in local politics
- Different constituencies
- Different responsibilities/expectations/roles
- Different time frames
- Generational Issues
- Different ways of evaluating “success”

“Good Politics” is about values, not right answers.

THE HAROLD F. HOLTZ MUNICIPAL TRAINING INSTITUTE

What is Politics?

- Empty promises and speech-making
- Pay-offs and unethical activities
- Accommodation and compromise
- Saying one thing and doing another
- Taking care of your friends and not the general public
- Doing what you have to do to get re-elected
- Getting people to do what you want them to do
- Abuse of power

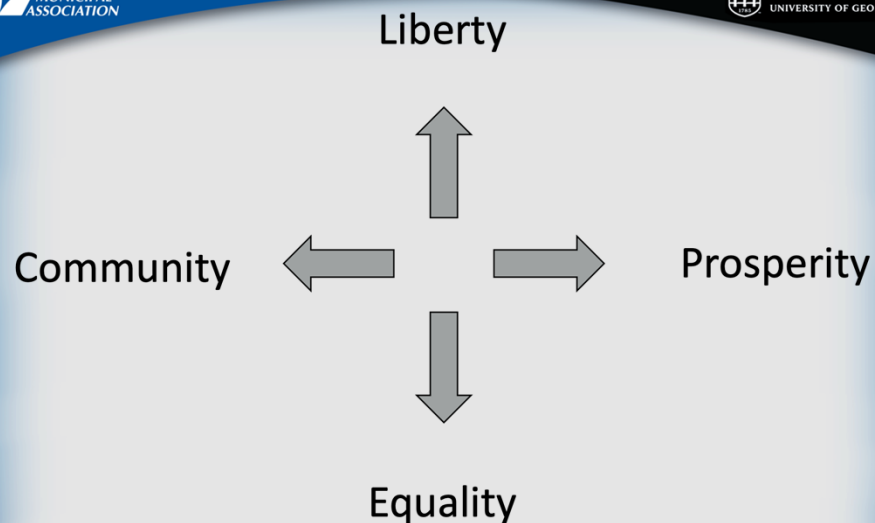
THE HAROLD F. HOLTZ MUNICIPAL TRAINING INSTITUTE

What is Politics?

Defined(1): *Competition between multiple interest groups or individuals for power and leadership in a governmental or other group*

Defined(2): *Choosing between competing public values*

THE HAROLD F. HOLTZ MUNICIPAL TRAINING INSTITUTE



Boyle, P. 2001. "Public Problems, Values, and Choices." *Popular Government*. (Fall 2001). 18-23.

THE HAROLD F. HOLTZ MUNICIPAL TRAINING INSTITUTE

Political Values

- Security (safety) & Community Cohesiveness
- Efficiency, Professionalism & Productivity
- Social Equity
- Freedom & Liberty (individual rights)

What do you Value Most?

THE HAROLD F. HOLTZ MUNICIPAL TRAINING INSTITUTE

Role of Elected Official

“The voters selected us because they had confidence in our judgment and our ability to exercise that judgment from a position where we could determine what were their own best interests, as part of the community’s interests. This may mean that we must on occasion lead, inform, correct, or ignore constituent opinion, if we are to exercise fully that judgment for which we were elected.” -- -John F. Kennedy

What do you think?

THE HAROLD F. HOLTZ MUNICIPAL TRAINING INSTITUTE

Councils and Staff

- **Assumptions & Assertions**

The chief role/responsibility of the governing body is community building and achieving its broad-based strategic goals

The chief role/responsibility of the staff is modernizing and shaping the organization so that it can be responsive to city goals

Why do local governments hire managers or administrators and other top level positions?

THE HAROLD F. HOLTZ MUNICIPAL TRAINING INSTITUTE

So ... what do you think?

- In your groups, discuss the appropriate roles of:
 - Mayor and Council
 - Executive staff
 - Employees
- Who are the elected official's constituents?
- Who are staff's?

THE HAROLD F. HOLTZ MUNICIPAL TRAINING INSTITUTE

Keys to developing a better relationship

- **Understand the Form of Government (City Charter or State Statute)**

- Sets out legal authority of city
- Defines authority of city council, mayor and city manager or administrator
- Defines services of the city organization
- Defines roles and responsibilities of officials and staff

THE HAROLD F. HOLTZ MUNICIPAL TRAINING INSTITUTE

Forms of Government

- Strong Mayor
 - Council serves policy-making role
 - Mayor serves executive role
- Weak Mayor
 - Mayor & Council share policy-making role
 - Mayor serves as executive; though primarily ceremonial

THE HAROLD F. HOLTZ MUNICIPAL TRAINING INSTITUTE

Forms of Government

- Council-Manager
 - Mayor & Council share policy-making role
 - Mayor serves as chairperson of meetings
 - Manager implements policy, oversees HR, develops budget and administers contracts
- Important to note that these are three distinct forms of government, but there are many variations

THE HAROLD F. HOLTZ MUNICIPAL TRAINING INSTITUTE

Recognize Today's Challenge for Local Government

- Closest to People
- Issues more complex
- High expectations with lack of resources
- Technology and Information Flow Changing
- Intergovernmental Relationship critical to service delivery

THE HAROLD F. HOLTZ MUNICIPAL TRAINING INSTITUTE

Recognize Today's Challenge for Local Government cont.

- More special interest groups and those with personal stakes
- High level of cynicism of Public
- More division among the public and Councils as to what the role of the city government should be in their community

THE HAROLD F. HOLTZ MUNICIPAL TRAINING INSTITUTE

Realize the Importance of Relationships

- Today relationships are critical and require skill in how to get along with others
 - Governments
 - Private Businesses
 - Non Profits, churches, and other community groups
 - Citizens

THE HAROLD F. HOLTZ MUNICIPAL TRAINING INSTITUTE

Aligning Expectations and Contributions

What does the
Council
expect from Staff?



What does the
staff expect from
the Council?

What will the
Council
contribute to staff?



What will the staff
contribute to
Council?

THE HAROLD F. HOLTZ MUNICIPAL TRAINING INSTITUTE

- **Mayor & Council's expectations of staff:**

- courteous and professional service
- serve the entire council as a whole
- honesty and loyalty
- develop ideas and recommendations

- **Mayor & Council's contributions to staff:**

- provide adequate resources
- provide clear expectations & goals
- be available, respect & trust the staff
- no micro-management; follow chain of command

THE HAROLD F. HOLTZ MUNICIPAL TRAINING INSTITUTE

- **Staff's expectations of the mayor & council:**

- consistent treatment; encouragement
- trust and value the staff's work product
- fair compensation
- provide necessary resources to do job
- feedback about what citizens want

- **Staff's contributions to the mayor & council:**

- professional and courteous work
- support the council's decisions
- well thought-out & honest work
- same information to all council members

THE HAROLD F. HOLTZ MUNICIPAL TRAINING INSTITUTE

What Are Some of the Unspoken Concerns Elected Officials Have About Staff?

- They aren't telling me everything I need to know
- Staff has their own agenda
- Staff should be able to handle maverick council members
- Others?

THE HAROLD F. HOLTZ MUNICIPAL TRAINING INSTITUTE

What Are Some of the Unspoken Concerns Staff Have About Elected Officials?

- They don't know what is really going on
- Their personal political gains get in the way of good decision making
- They don't understand what their role is
- Others?

THE HAROLD F. HOLTZ MUNICIPAL TRAINING INSTITUTE

Build a Positive Image of the City

To be effective, today's Local Government must build a sense of community and a real belief in the value of the city which requires:

- An atmosphere of trust and commitment
- A feeling of belonging especially something more than an individual
- Foreseeing a sense of bonding and connection among citizens and nurturing a feeling of civic pride
- Creating a feeling of being rooted to the community through involvement with schools, neighborhood, and civic associations
- Creating a positive feeling of being active in community by volunteering

THE HAROLD F. HOLTZ MUNICIPAL TRAINING INSTITUTE

Acknowledge Working Together is Critical

- There are three primary groups involved in operation of City government
 - Elected Officials
 - City Manager or Administrator
 - Professional Staff
- The success of a municipality depends on the ability of these three groups to work together as a team for the benefit of the community

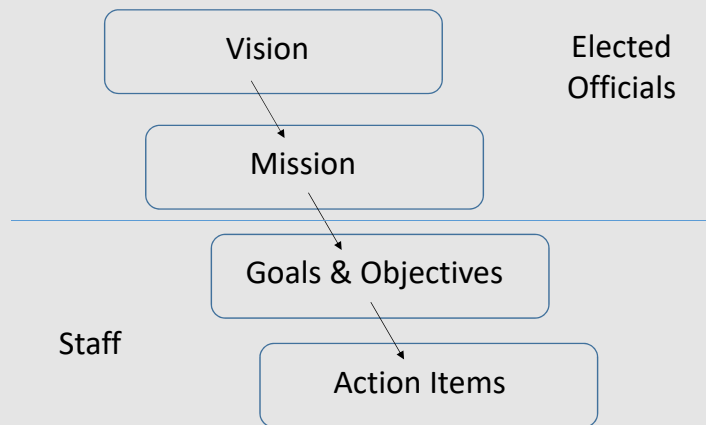
THE HAROLD F. HOLTZ MUNICIPAL TRAINING INSTITUTE

Traditional Idea



- Like unto a cruise line ...
- Council owns the ships
- Council hires professional staff to run it

THE HAROLD F. HOLTZ MUNICIPAL TRAINING INSTITUTE



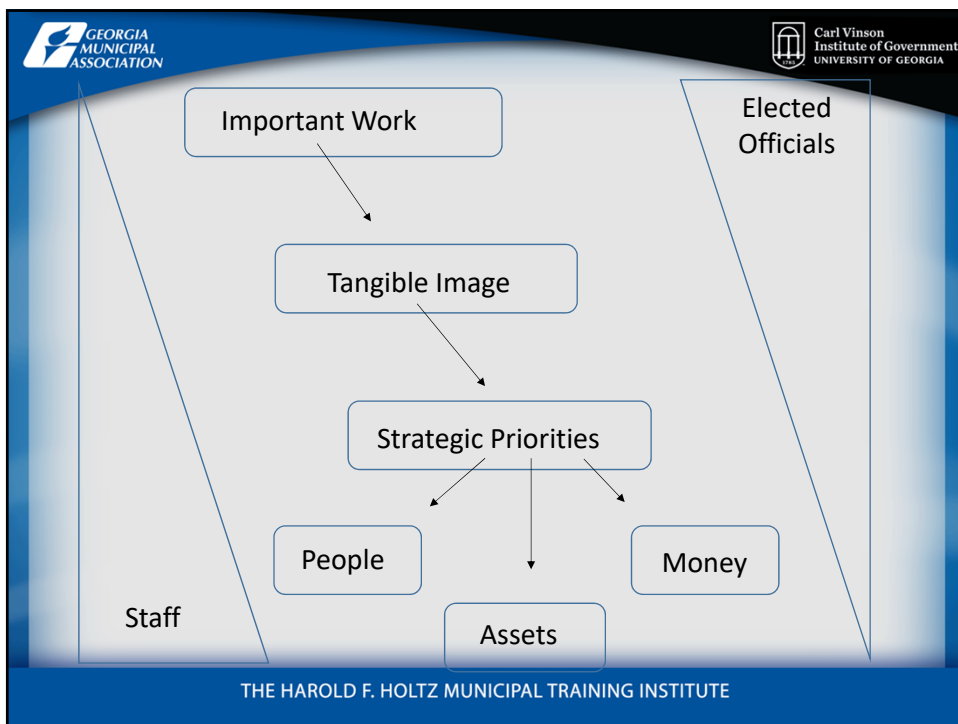
THE HAROLD F. HOLTZ MUNICIPAL TRAINING INSTITUTE

More Modern Idea



- More like being in a boat paddling together
- Staff participates more in determining direction and actually helps to steer

THE HAROLD F. HOLTZ MUNICIPAL TRAINING INSTITUTE




GEORGIA MUNICIPAL ASSOCIATION

Carl Vinson Institute of Government
UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

Politics & Administration

- How would you describe “politics” to an alien who landed and asked you to “Take me to your Leader?”
- How would you describe “administration” to him, her ... it?



THE HAROLD F. HOLTZ MUNICIPAL TRAINING INSTITUTE

The acceptability of public administration principles is dependent upon their consistency with and contribution to those democratic values which the community is determined to preserve at all costs.

Marshall Dimock

THE HAROLD F. HOLTZ MUNICIPAL TRAINING INSTITUTE

Role of the Mayor

- Chair council meetings
- Serve as primary contact between management and council
- Encourage communication with citizens, the media, staff and council to keep agenda moving
- Represent local government in a variety of settings
- Facilitate action
- Help create, maintain & strengthen effectiveness
- Encourage and support community during crisis

THE HAROLD F. HOLTZ MUNICIPAL TRAINING INSTITUTE

Role of the Council

- Establish community vision
- Develop long-term goals, priorities, objectives
- Adopt policies to guide local programs and services
- Enact ordinances (local laws)
- Communicate with citizens
- Review and approve annual budget
- Oversee management performance
- Respond to citizens – coordinate with staff
- Represent the local government in the community

THE HAROLD F. HOLTZ MUNICIPAL TRAINING INSTITUTE

Role of the Manager or Administrator

The Manager is ultimately responsible for the day to day operations of the City

- Assist the Mayor and Council to develop good policies including providing policy alternatives to support council action
- Carry out policies adopted by the elected officials
- Oversee enforcement of city ordinances
- Manage all city services and oversee the delivery by city organization
- Insure city adheres to national, state, and local laws and requirements for the city

THE HAROLD F. HOLTZ MUNICIPAL TRAINING INSTITUTE

Role of the Manager or Administrator

- Prepare the annual operating budget and ensure fiscal responsibility
- Recruit, hire, train and supervise workforce
- Assist in the preparation and review of materials for council agenda
- Develop long-range operating plans for general service functions (police, fire, park, recreation etc. and city operated utilities)
- Final approval authority for administrative actions
- Coordinate information sharing and action among council
- Represent the city to other organizations and the community

THE HAROLD F. HOLTZ MUNICIPAL TRAINING INSTITUTE

Successful Managers Understand that the City Manager or Administrator functions in three major categories

- Administrative head of organization
- Staff of the Council
- Representative of the City to other governmental groups, non-profit groups, private sector businesses and ultimately the community

THE HAROLD F. HOLTZ MUNICIPAL TRAINING INSTITUTE

Best Practices for professional managers for carrying out their role:

- Establish procedures for elected officials' interactions with professional staff
- With the Council and professional staff assess the need for services and programs, understanding the impact on city resources and demands of the public while balancing the ability of the community to pay for them
- Follow through on all requests of the council members making sure they are implemented in a timely manner and reporting back to the council periodically on the status
- Avoid public surprises keeping the council and staff apprised of issues which could have policy, media, or public interest
- Give visibility and credit to the mayor and councilors for their leadership and respect their role in the operation of the city

THE HAROLD F. HOLTZ MUNICIPAL TRAINING INSTITUTE

Best Practices for professional managers for carrying out their role (cont.):

- Provide budget priorities and fiscal boundaries outlining potential impact of decisions or sustainability
- Attract and build a solid management team and delegate authority appropriately
- Ensure quality control of staff services and ensure staff feels engaged and appreciated
- Understand the importance of building partnerships, and building alliances when appropriate with the public, private businesses, and nonprofit organizations both inside and outside the community

THE HAROLD F. HOLTZ MUNICIPAL TRAINING INSTITUTE

Best Practices for professional managers for carrying out their role (cont.):

- Emphasize communication and high standards for the city staff and hold the organization to good customer service standards
- Keep the city staff members informed about community and council concerns and actions by insuring involvement of the managers in citywide leadership meetings
- Translate for the Council, technical information from staff and vice versa

THE HAROLD F. HOLTZ MUNICIPAL TRAINING INSTITUTE

Role of the City Staff

- Provide different types of professional and technical expertise in the delivery of day to day services
- Respect the Manager/Administrator, Mayor and Council and follow the direction given and provide technical and professional advice
- Be part of a functioning team with the City Manager, Council and Mayor with the city's interest as the highest priority
- Follow City ordinances, and where needed and appropriate, propose changes to them
- Assist the City Manager to enable the Council to make good decisions and carry out the Council goals and priorities

THE HAROLD F. HOLTZ MUNICIPAL TRAINING INSTITUTE

Role of the City Staff (Cont.)

- Commit to help the city be operated in an effective, efficient, accountable, and equitable way for the community
- Assist the Manager/Administrator to consistently communicate issues, successes, and failures to the Mayor and Council and community in a timely fashion
- Assist the City Manager to develop and execute a working relationship between the City Manager, staff, Mayor and Council through:
 - Open communication;
 - Clear operating guidance;
 - Mutual respect; and
 - A commitment to working together for the good of the community

THE HAROLD F. HOLTZ MUNICIPAL TRAINING INSTITUTE

Critical Characteristics for Professional Managers

- Managers should focus on:
 - Communication – (both inside and outside the organization)
 - Competency – of all employees
 - Respect – Mayor, Council, Staff, and public
 - Integrity
 - Honesty
 - Risk taking and innovation – (should be encouraged)
 - Responsiveness
 - Anticipation
 - Celebration

THE HAROLD F. HOLTZ MUNICIPAL TRAINING INSTITUTE

Recognize the Value of Legacy and Long Range Plans

- Make progress on Multi-year Projects
- Find ways to succeed even at small steps and celebrate successes

THE HAROLD F. HOLTZ MUNICIPAL TRAINING INSTITUTE

Utilize Important Tools

Use diversified approaches:

- Team Building Exercises such as retreats
- Work/study sessions
- Develop and use formal agreements and communication
 - Ground rules for behavior
 - Expectations of Council/Manager/Staff
 - Formal staff reports and media policies
- Develop and Use Informal agreements and communication
 - One on One
 - Telephone
 - Email
 - End of week summary

THE HAROLD F. HOLTZ MUNICIPAL TRAINING INSTITUTE

Organization must develop trust by:

- Not interfering with others roles
- Making sure written protocols are in place
- Understanding “good governance”
- Support good management; including effective, efficient, accountable, and equitable delivery of services
- Insuring a sense of respect for the public and openness to public input
- Willingness to move on key issues
- Operate under a comprehensive strategic business/planning process

THE HAROLD F. HOLTZ MUNICIPAL TRAINING INSTITUTE

Organization must develop trust by:

- Respecting each other
- Holding honest and open communication
- Agreeing on roles and responsibilities
- Establish ground rules to work together
- Demonstrating a strong commitment to work collaboratively
- Following through with commitment to hold regular and timely reviews and feedback on programs or services

THE HAROLD F. HOLTZ MUNICIPAL TRAINING INSTITUTE