

Building and Managing Relationships
 Between board members, management, and staff




Neil Emory, Kimberly Nelson, Carl Stenberg, Avril Pender

ESSENTIALS OF COUNTY GOVERNMENT




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The New Board

-  Even if you have only one new member, you have a new board
-  Dynamics will change
-  Understand that each member has one vote and that majority rules

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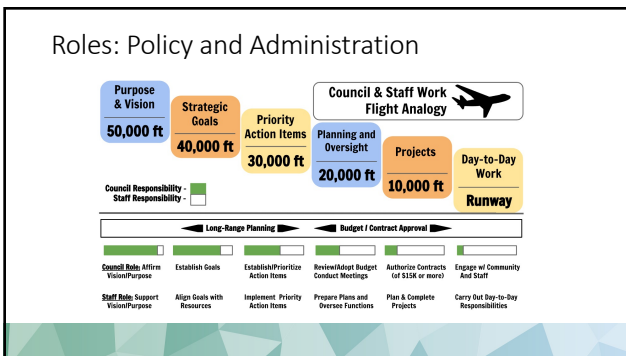
Building a positive board culture

- Demonstrate mutual respect
- Don't make conflict personal
- Welcome differing opinions
- Listen and engage
- Do your homework
- Stay on topic and time
- Focus on interests not positions

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Board Chair	Board of Commissioners	County Manager
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Serve as the presiding officer Vote on measures before the board Call special meetings Use authority to direct persons who disrupt a meeting to leave Assume other duties conferred by the board of commissioners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create, change, and consolidate county government services Change the composition and manner of selection of boards, commissions, and agencies Promote orderly and efficient administration of county affairs, subject to limitations Hire professionally trained manager, responsible to commission for efficient, effective administration Contract with an approved auditor for annual audit Hires Attorney, Clerk and Tax Assessor. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hire and fire all employees within chain of command and supervise all departments Uphold county and state laws and regulations and execute commission policies Serve as budget officer and prepare and submit the annual budget for entire county Report on and manage finances and administrative activities Perform other duties required or authorized by the board of commissioners

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Scenarios

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Relationships among Board Members

Scenario 1: "From Campaigning to Governing"

Scenario 2: "Establishing the Board Culture?"

Scenario 3: "Be Prepared"

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From Campaigning to Governing

Commissioner Jordan ran his campaign primarily on the issue of improving the quality of the county jail. Commissioner Smith was most concerned with reducing property taxes.

During Board meetings, the two consistently clashed when discussing potential funding increases for the jail that would require an increase in the property tax levy. The disagreements eventually led to name calling, eye rolling, and other signs of disrespect by both commissioners.

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Establishing the Board Culture

Commissioner Chatterly dominates Board meetings, talking at length about every agenda item and often interrupting other commissioners. Two other members, frustrated, approach the Chair for help.

"Why don't you just gavel him down?" Commissioner Pushing suggests, Yeah, good idea!" Commissioner Goody replies.

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Be Prepared

At Board meetings, Commissioner Rogers asks a lot of questions on every agenda item. Most of the questions were answered by the documentation provided by the manager in the agenda packet. Commissioner Rogers' questions are causing the meetings to run later than necessary and the other commissioners are starting to become irritated.

When the Chair asked why he didn't read through the agenda packet, Commissioner Rogers complained that he did not receive the email early enough to be able to adequately prepare for the meetings.

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Board-Manager Relations

Scenario 1: "Chain of Command"

Scenario 2: "Providing Feedback"

Scenario 3: "Checks and Balances"

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Chain of Command

Residents have complained to board members that the utility billing department provides poor customer service. Reports of incorrect billing and rude customer service when paying bills in person make up most of the complaints.

The commissioners discuss the issue and direct the manager to fire the Director of Utilities.

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Providing Feedback

In the board's monthly meeting, the chair proposes instituting a formal evaluation process for the County Manager. The manager has held the position for 10 years, and this is the first time a formal evaluation was proposed. The issue wasn't listed on the agenda. From the startled looks on everyone's faces, nobody expected the issue to come up, including the manager.

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Checks and Balances

The board votes to approve a pool of money to be delivered to staff as merit bonuses. The bonuses are to be given out at the county manager's discretion. There is no written policy about how the funds are to be spent. What is the board's responsibility in a situation like this?

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Relationships with Staff and the Public

Scenario 1: "Noisy Neighbors"

Scenario 2: "Making Promises you Can't Keep"

Scenario 3: "Dealing with the Sheriff"

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Noisy Neighbors

Commissioner Jones gets a call from a resident complaining about the noise coming from the neighbor's house. The teenager living there has a garage band and they play loud music all day long. Commissioner Jones tells the resident not to worry because the county has a noise ordinance that applies to these types of complaints, and she would take care of it.

As soon as the call ends, Commissioner Jones calls the sheriff and tells her to issue a citation for a noise violation to the neighbor of the complainant.

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Making Promises You Can't Keep

A neighbor of Commissioner Bridges approaches her and explains that her daughter will be getting married at one of the county parks. The neighbor then complains that the lighting is inadequate for the evening reception and asks whether the commissioner can request additional portable lighting for the park. Commissioner Bridges replies, "of course, that won't be a problem at all. I've always thought we needed more light in the park."

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Dealing with the Sheriff

The county has a written policy to address how overtime work should be handled. Sheriff Andy Taylor consistently disregards this policy. Who should speak to the Sheriff Taylor about this and what should that person say?

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Take-aways

- Only the board can govern the board
- Responsiveness and respect -- a two-way street
- The manager reports to the board, not to individual commissioners
- Staff are partners in governing
- Commissioners' behaviors have consequences
- Majority rules
