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Psychological Contract examples taken from work with various cities also attributes of high-performance council¹

This document results from work with elected officials and city managers throughout the country. It includes various examples of expectations and obligations between governing body members as a group and governing body members and the city manager and senior staff. Also included are attributes of a high performing council as well as expectations/obligations in citizen engagement initiatives.

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Council

Council expects/needs from one another in order to be successful as a governing body:

1. Respect each other's opinion and do not speculate on the motives of others. Disagree with respect and don't put down others based on your more extensive knowledge of a subject.
2. Do not pigeon hole others or expect another person's vote. Respect the unexpected vote or position.
3. Strive to have a good understanding of the other person's view before critiquing it.
4. Don't speak ill of your colleagues. Be cautious about criticizing other council members behind their back.
5. Convey to others, whenever possible, when there is no compromise for you on an issue. There is no need to prolong an issue in hopes of changing another's committed views.
6. We are elected at large; we each represent the entire city and should make our decisions based on what we believe is good for the city as a whole.
7. Respect each other, staff, the public, and the process, especially in a public setting.
8. Don't interrupt.
9. After an issue is settled, don't continue to bring it up.
10. If a vote doesn't go your way, try to find ways to support some aspect of the issue.

¹ *I want to thank city managers Kevin Burke, Mark Danaj, Debra Figone and the council members in various cities that have produced these examples.*

Mayor and Council

Mayor Expects/Needs from the City Council

- Feedback from individual council members on meeting management
- Appreciation/respect for the mayor's role and responsibilities
- Support mayor's attempt to facilitate meetings
- Work to foster collaboration and respect among one another
- Be prepared
- Give the Mayor a "heads up" on an agenda item or something you are going to bring up at a Council meeting. No surprises or ambushes.

City Council Expects/Needs from the Mayor

- Facilitate meeting; help move the governing body to a decision/issue resolution in a timely manner; manage the time; focus the council on important issues; try to finish discussion of most important issues by 9:30 in the evening of the council meeting
- Act as ambassador representing whole council at public events and meetings
- Recognize issues that require total governing body action versus those which are subject to mayoral discretion
- Work with staff to manage agenda
- Differentiate in public when speaking for the governing body versus speaking as an individual
- Support council and staff
- Set the tone for the council—follow Roberts Rules of Order
- Respect public comment but do not engage it at council meetings; council meetings are not the time for Q and A between citizen and council/staff that turn into extended back and forth that adds to the meeting time.
- City council members need discretion to make motions when they feel appropriate

Psychological Contract between Governing body and City Manager

Governing Body Expects/Needs from the City Manager in Order for Governing Body to Do Its Work Effectively

- Overall, accountability, transparency, results
 - Take initiative for managing/leading staff
 - Reward results
 - Focus on goals/objectives
 - Insure right people are in right places
 - Follow the code
 - Keep us fully informed; present fair and complete options
 - Reach out to community/active in community
 - Open channels of communication with council, staff, and public
 - Meet with us individually
 - Facilitate council discussions/decision making
 - Nurture hard work, pride and integrity as an organizational culture; focus on customer service
 - Tell us what we need to know, not what you think we want to hear
 - Keep council informed about breaking news

What the Governing Body Will Provide to the City Manager in Order for the City Manager to Do the Job Effectively

- Leadership and unified direction
- Not micro manage staff; work through the city manager
- Be available/provide time
- Trust and support
- Act in a non-partisan fashion
- Seek professional advice and keep an open mind
- Provide introduction/access to community members
- Encourage and provide opportunities for success in his professional development
- Show respect in public and disagree respectfully; do not set up for failure
- Be prepared for council meetings
- Provide institutional knowledge and history as appropriate
- Give credit; develop a culture of praise/recognition
- Be willing to accept critique; being open to feedback
- Be genuine/honest with city manager; share motivations; transparent relationship of mutual trust with city manager

- Be mindful of staff workload
- Permission for city manager to speak truth to power

What you can count on me to do as city manager (*I am human. If you don't see this behavior, please give me the benefit of the doubt and then talk to me about it.*):

- Treat you with respect.
- Tell you the truth.
- Treat you as partners as well as my employers.
- Establish individual relationships with you to help each of you to be effective Council Members, while remembering that I work for the Council body.
- Help you to be effective collectively as a City Council.
- Act within my comfort zone on Council requests and advise you when a request should go to the full Council.
- Communicate with you to keep you as equally informed as possible.
- Listen to you; seek to understand you, your role and needs.
- Give you the “straight scoop.”
- Practice my management tenets (attached).
- Do my personal and professional best.
- Respect your Council-to-Council and Council-to-Constituent relationships.
- Be politically astute but not political.

As City Manager what I would like from the Mayor and City Council for me to be optimally effective:

- Respect that we have a Council/Manager form of government.
- Allow me to assist in translating your policy interests and priorities to the organization to achieve action.
- Be clear on your direction as a Council body.
- Feel free to interact directly with Senior Staff or their designees on City matters. They are instructed to keep me informed of such contacts and I ask that you do the same. Please do not direct them. (Note: Department Heads are agents of the City Manager, not free agents).
- “Fix the problem-not the blame” to help create a no-blame culture. Acknowledge disappointment in public constructively (scolding occurs out of public view).
- Be sensitive for the need to pace the organization and to focus progress by managing priorities, workload and expectations. Use City processes to add issues and advance interests.
- Help me to know how to best communicate with you as a body; as individuals. These need to be compatible.

- Don't focus on the marginally significant to the detriment of the broader policy discussion and/or implication.
- Trust me to take care of the peripheral items.

Attributes of High Performing Governing Body

Attribute
Listen as customer service representatives; but act as trustees
Council members listen to each other and talk with each other at council meetings; "it is our business meeting"
Having process/forums for identifying most important issues and process for dealing with them; set priorities
Work as a team within council and between council and staff
We are clear on what our work is
Accomplish work efficiency and effectively
We respond to most important issues
Professional demeanor; no rolling eyes, pot shots. Non verbals and body language reinforce team concept
Hold city manager accountable for results
Effectively and prudently engages citizens in decision making, policy making, priority setting
Balance competing interests; compromise

<p align="center">Expectations and Obligations Governing Body</p>	<p align="center">Senior Staff</p>
<p>I. Expectations elected officials have of staff. What does the governing body expect of/need from staff?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Keep in mind that each of us (as well as citizens) comes from different backgrounds and experiences. We are not experts. 2. Have the complete financial information for an issue under consideration (e.g., costs, financial impact, compare with other options). 3. Provide unbiased, objective options (more than one). 4. Present options with data and consequences on those issues that don't have one "correct" solution. No recommendations on judgment issues. 5. Don't assume that our questions are a sign of distrust or disrespect. 6. Staff as experts may have an agenda, but temper it. 7. Don't manipulate or maneuver the council. 8. Distinguish between your personal views and as a representative of the city (you as a community member vs. city role). 9. Don't bad-mouth the council. 10. Familiarize yourself with the political environment surrounding City business and agenda items. 	<p>II. Expectations staff has of elected officials. What does staff expect of/need from the governing body?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Trust us (our expertise, passion, commitment to the community). Allow us to educate & respond. 2. Clearly define the problem & direction. Specificity not generalities. 3. Provide reasonable and adequate lead time to explore requests. 4. Speak to us directly for clarification (not through blogs & social media). Double check facts. 5. Don't use staff to strengthen your political positions/views. 6. Respect that staff cannot execute minority positions. 7. Recognize that research, presentations, CCRs, etc. are a lot of work & preparation. Show attention, interest, and respect. 8. Adopted future agenda items will go to the bottom of the work plan unless a majority of Council re-prioritizes it differently.

III. Obligations of the governing body to staff. What will the governing body give/contribute to staff?

1. Treat staff with respect & acknowledge their expertise.
2. Value staff's commitment, dedication, & expertise. Express our appreciation.
3. Give staff clear direction.
4. Acknowledge their information, even if we may not like it.
5. Not bad-mouth staff in the community.
6. Keep commitments made (e.g., in the budget), but still retain our right to ask questions when a single issue comes up.
7. Come to the meetings prepared. Will read the packet ahead of time and get questions to staff.

IV. Obligations of the staff to the governing body. What will the staff contribute/give to the governing body?

1. Not become involved in political partisanship, but be aware of community challenges that council members face.
2. Provide complete, timely information and options, including background and context for accurate, full disclosure. Providing recommendations are part of staff's role as subject matter experts, but will not lobby or fight for a specific outcome and will support the decision.
3. Keep informed of key issues & consequences.
4. Be open-minded & empathetic to change & new ideas.
5. Provide early notification on sensitive issues/problems (no surprises).
6. Listen fully to their concerns and requests; then follow up with appropriate formal or informal tools (don't presume we know). Will not take it personally when asked questions for understanding.
7. Provide realistic options.
8. Publicly support council's goals.

Developed by MPA students at the University of Kansas, Spring 2013

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Expectations and promises between city and citizens in an engagement effort that goes beyond exchange of information*

City Expects of Citizens	Citizens Promise to City
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attendance • Broad representation/participation • Civility and respect (including respect for data) • Honor agreements that are made • Citizen input is informed; open to persuasion • Citizens share their expectations, goals, vision • Respect benchmarks and deadlines for progress • Participate in ongoing evaluation and review of the engagement effort 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To participate and share opinions • To devote some of their own time, talents, and energies to problem-solving efforts • To consider impact on others, environment • To be informed and respect one another and city staff • To be committed to shared goals and decisions • To be willing to acknowledge cost
Citizens Expect of City	City Promises to Citizens
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen actively without preconceived views • Be actionable/follow through • Provide multiple engagement opportunities and encourage diverse representation • Provide support to citizen teams and volunteer groups who are taking action as a result of their engagement • Provide education and information and resources that facilitate engagement process • Transparency in decision making processes • Recognize sustainability • Continuous evaluation and solicitation of feedback on engagement processes • Ongoing participation • Mutual respect 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilize a variety of methods to identify, recruit, and invite diverse stakeholders to the table • Remain unbiased • Insure that engagement efforts have adequate resources (staff, facilitation, meeting rooms) possibly in cooperation with other supportive organizations • Provide information and professional experts • Respect for requests • Communicate parameters –expectations of the process and outcomes • To make clear the goals of the citizen engagement process and decision making authority • Fair and open process (abiding by laws) • Research and history

Any relationship can be viewed within a framework of expectations and promises (obligations). At its heart, negotiating a successful relationship involves agreement on what each party expects (wants) of the other and what each party is willing to give (promise) to the other in return. In this instance, we have tried to specify expectations and promises in an ideal engagement relationship that involves more than the simple exchange of information. Search “The Spectrum” produced by www.iap2.org for functions of engagement.