



I'm Not in Charge: How to Get Things Done

League California Cities - Annual Conference

September 8 2022; 4:15-5:30pm Session

Long Beach Convention Center

What We Will Cover in this Session

- Speaker Introductions
- Different Forms of Local Government-Respecting Different Roles
- Policy Making and Administration of Operations
- Councilmember Experiences
- Q&A

Brief Overview of Session and Why it is Important

I'm Not in Charge: How to Get Things Done

- “Excited, energized, and passionate newly elected council members want to dive into city work. However, excitement can turn into frustration, when they hear “you can't do it that way,” “it's not in the budget,” “you need council approval,” or “we don't do it that way.” This session will review city governance models and discuss the roles of officials and staff. Elected officials will share their experiences and explain how they creatively get work done while balancing policies and rules. There will be a special emphasis on what motivates these elected officials to work outside of city hall and serve constituents most in need of services.”



Why Did you Seek Election to Local Public Office?



- Most often, people run for office because they are deeply committed to their city or town and want to influence the community's direction.
- At times, people run for local office because they are passionate about a single issue or problem.
- A single controversy – such as a land use or zoning decision – could dominate an entire election campaign.
- Some want to seek higher office and see local government as the first step.
- Some think they can change “how” local government operates.
- Why did you seek public office? What do you want to accomplish and why?

I Was Elected, Now What?

- Once the election is over, things change.
- Candidates who have won an election based on their position on a single issue soon discover that they are responsible for a much broader array of challenges.
- The platform they ran on may not even be on the council's agenda.
- Achieving a goal will only be possible if they are willing and able to work cooperatively with other members of the council, many of whom will have their own issues to champion.



Policy Making and Administration

Policymaking vs. Administration

- Councils are legislative bodies – that is, they are elected to make major policy decisions and pass budgets. The basic job of councilmembers is to find the balance among themselves that represents the best interests of the majority of residents, while respecting the rights of all.
- Councilmembers make policies, but mayors (in mayor-council cities) and city managers (in council-manager cities) are responsible for their implementation and administration. Learning the difference between these key functions – policymaking and administration – and respecting the boundaries between them is critical to a well-run, and high achieving government.

The Different Forms of Local Government

Respecting Your Role and the Roles of Others

Respecting Your Form of Government

- You have to know the rules and understand the process to accomplish your goals
- City Manager
- City Administrator
- Strong Mayor
- Common Council
- Build Bridges and Cultivate Resources



Discussing Councilmember Experiences

What We Can Learn From One Another By Telling Our Stories

Councilmember Damon Alexander

- City of San Bernardino
- Elected in November 2022
- Experience with Federal Government
- Addressing Homeless Impacts
- Building Non-Profit Partnerships
- Working with Staff
- Working with the County
- Getting the job done

Mayor Pro Tem Phil Bacerra

- City of Santa Ana
- Elected in November of 2019
- Experience with Local Government
- Addressing Nuisance Impacts in Business Districts to Sustain Tax Base
- Coordination with Constituents
- Interacting and Encouraging Staff
- What More Needs to Be Done

Councilmember Steve Lustro

- City of Pomona
- Elected in November 2018
- Former Community Development Director and City Planner
- Community Clean-Up Operations
- Independent Volunteers Coordinating with City Staff
- Making a Difference by Modeling Good Citizen Behaviors

Moving Forward

- Holding a public office is an act of service to the public – that is, service to all the residents of a city or town, not just those who share your views or those who voted for you. It is a challenge that requires every office holder to rise above the fray, to reach beyond comfort zones, and to work with others with whom they may have significant differences.
- It is hard work and sometimes you have to roll up your sleeves and just get it done!





Questions?

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