

Council-Manager Relationships

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Understand the Employment Landscape

- High demand for talented managers (low supply due to retirements and smaller number of people interested)
- Significant increases in local government manager salaries. You are hiring a CEO.
- Fewer professionals are entering the local government profession due to political instability, incivility, social media, decreasing job security, and increasing private sector salaries





How to Retain Your Manager

- Understand elected officials and governing board role:
 - Focus on long-term issues/goals and less on day-to-day things
 - Ask for training about the council-manager form of government
 - Don't make promises that do not have the support of the governing body
- Have agreement with the manager about how direct staff contacts will occur
- Annual performance evaluation
- Set clear goals that are achievable so that both the council/board and the manager understand what success looks like
- Make investments to impact your community positively– managers enter this profession to make a difference
- Recognize and honor that the manager's time is very valuable, both in terms of cost and scarcity.



How to Retain Your Manager

- Treat your manager and staff with respect
- Understand that the storm is often not the manager's fault, but they are your ship's captain
- Be mindful of the manager's work-life balance
- Recognize the public sector must deal with things the private sector does not (tragic events that leave scars, public expectations over decisions, life in a fishbowl etc.)





How to Retain Your Manager

- Address problems without high emotions.
- It is up to the board/council members to address behavior issues of individual elected officials – don't ask your manager to do that
- Be clear about expectations around how the manager interacts with the Board.
 - If you expect the manager to interact with every board member rather than with chief elected officials recognize the additional time that takes and understand the trade offs.





When Parting Ways with a Manager



Sometimes you must make tough decisions and managers understand their tenure isn't permanent



If you have attempted to reconcile differences and have been unsuccessful, quietly communicate with your manager the desire for a change



Managers are professionals and do not want termination



If you desire change, let them know and give them time to find another position whenever possible



When Parting Ways with a Manager



Firing a manager should be a last resort because it will negatively affect your applicant pool



Keep in mind that local government managers often talk to each other



Avoid a contentious relationship so you don't damage your local government's reputation among potential applicants (candidates will talk to people in your county/community, review your minutes, board meeting videos, news articles, etc.)



Expect the change to affect other staff and expect turnover



Pay your severance agreements or candidates will think you do not keep your word



How to Attract a New Manager

- Position your local government to be attractive to potential managers
- Project an image of a politically stable community as much as possible
- Maintain solid financial health
- Retain quality department heads and staff
- Avoid hiring family members of elected officials or politically connected staff
- Understand the role of the manager as CEO. If you project micromanagement during interview process, you will lose high quality candidates.





Recruiting Process for a New Manager



- Use a third party to manage your search, like Central Pines Regional Council – our search costs about \$10,000 - private consultants charge \$25,000 to \$35,000 for the same process
- Expect fewer applications and less experienced candidates
- Confidentiality is critical and can be a personal liability for board/council members when violated
- When considering candidates, think about who will be best on day one and who might be better 2-3 years into the position
- Avoid split board votes on hiring a new manager; most candidates will decline an offer under those circumstances



In Conclusion

- If you appreciate your current manager, make sure they know it!
- The strategies of this presentation intend to enable your local government to retain and attract the best talent for managers in a competitive market
- Individual local governments can't change the market conditions but do determine whether they are competitive for the best talent
- Although these issues and strategies are oriented regarding managers, they will enable your community to attract better talent for many other key positions