

**Mayors and Council  
Members Academy**

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LEAGUE OF  
**CALIFORNIA  
CITIES**

Strengthening California Cities  
through Advocacy and Education

# **Developing an Effective City Council and City Manager Team: The Key To Good Governance and City Success**

**Pat Martel, West Coast Regional Director, ICMA  
Hon. Tyller Williamson, Mayor, Monterey  
Hans Uslar, City Manager, Monterey**

**“Coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success.”** -Henry Ford



# Welcome to Your New Role

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- Congratulations!!
- An Honor and a Responsibility
- Not Necessarily an Easy Adjustment
- It Takes Time and Effort

## Session Overview

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- Establishing appropriate roles, purpose, communication and mutual respect build a foundation for effective governance
- Elements of successful City Council/City Manager relationships
- Strategies and best practices to strengthen communication, relationships and a cohesive Council/Manager team
- Mayor and City Manager Perspectives- Panel Discussion
- Audience Q & A

# Panelists:

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- Hon. Tyller Williamson, Mayor, Monterey
- Hans Uslar, City Manager, Monterey
- Moderator: Pat Martel, ICMA West Coast Regional Director, Retired City Manager

# Good Governance is About...

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# Governance Requires Building Relationships Through:

- Effective leadership by the Mayor and City Council
- Responsive management and leadership by the City Manager
- Meaningful communication: honest, direct, respectful, proactive
- Understanding roles and fulfilling expectations
- Fostering mutual respect and building trust
- Ethics





# Attributes of High Performing Councils

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- True partnership between Members, City Manager and staff
- Clarity and respect for roles and responsibilities
- Civility and respect for all
- Conduct effective meetings
- Hold each other and City Manager accountable
- Practice continuous learning

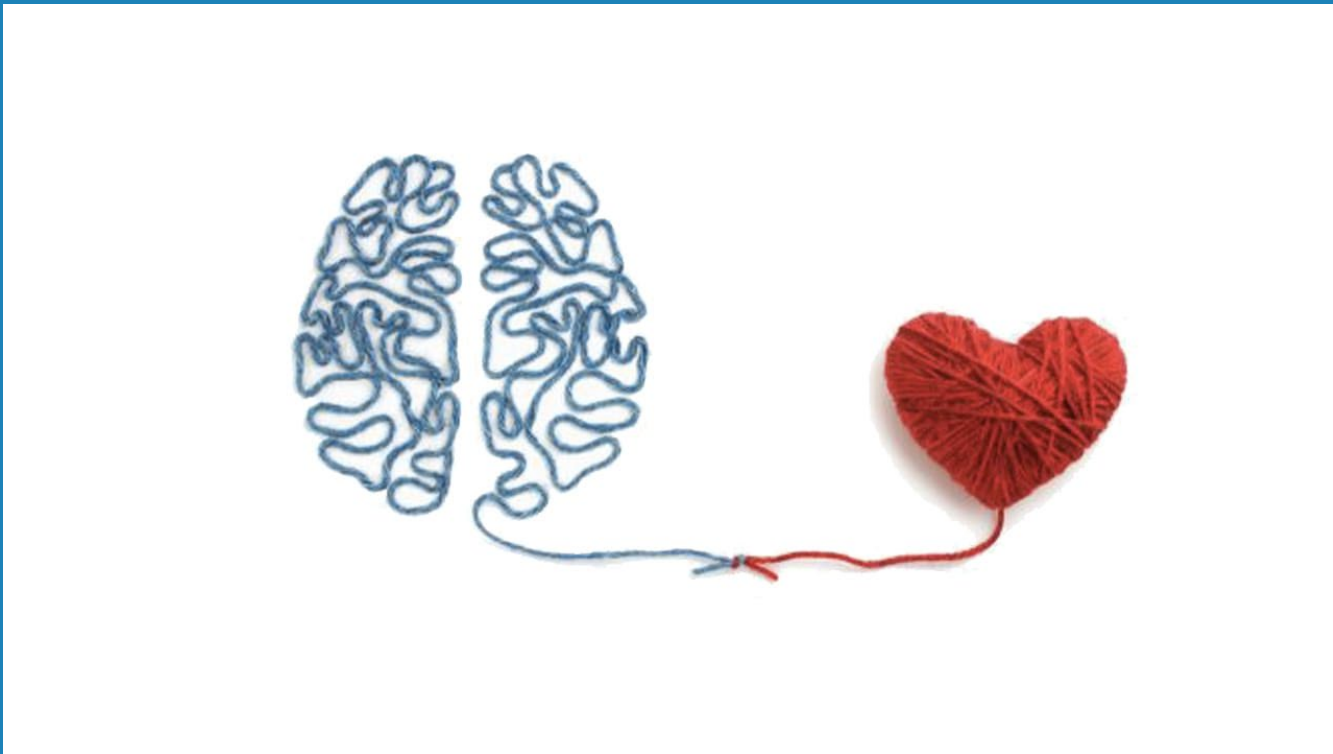


# Elements of Successful Council/Manager Relationships

- Mayor, councilmembers and city manager develop a sense of team, working together in furtherance of common purpose
- The team values diversity of leadership style and perspective
- Clear and mutual understanding of respective roles, responsibilities and stated expectations
- **Develop and sustain effective communication** between the chief executive and governing board
- Trust is a crucial characteristic in any successful relationship and **communication is essential for fostering trust**

# Your soft skills are your hard skills

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# It's All About Communication



Make time for council/manager conversations and meetings



Clearly define communication expectations



Communicate consistently and equitably



Baseline information provided to all



Clear guidelines for council/staff communications

# Final Thoughts on Communication

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- Delivering “bad news”
- Reestablishing communication expectations whenever the council changes
- Poor communication often cited as cause of city council dissatisfaction with city managers

- **Effective Communication = Trust**

**Trust = A Successful Relationship**

# Councilmember Commitments

- Mayor and Council hold the city manager accountable for achieving Council goals, priorities, and implementing directives.
- Governing Board provides direction to the city manager; and he/she directs staff- simple chain of command.
- Crossing the line when you direct staff to work on individual projects or priorities.
- Avoid public criticism of the city manager or staff- discuss your concerns privately. Fix the issue, not blame.



# Mayor's Role in Leading the Team



Councilmembers meet with the Mayor routinely to discuss ideas or concerns



The Mayor works closely with the city manager to move council goals forward, anticipate issues on the horizon, and manage the action at council meetings



All of this works most effectively if the Mayor understands council concerns and shares this feedback with the city manager

# Councilmembers Should

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- Meet routinely with the City Manager to establish a close working relationship
- Understand that the City Manager can be your greatest asset in reaching your goals
- Ask the Manager, not staff, when you want to get things done (it's about accountability)



# Successful Council/Manager Relations Delivers Positive Results

- Mutual success and fulfillment
- Organizational effectiveness
- Positive staff morale
- Heightened accountability
- Enhanced community confidence
- Successful community outcomes



# City Manager Commitments

Support	Support the entire governing board to be productive and successful.
Help	Help each councilmember to succeed as an effective elected official.
Collaborate	Work collaboratively to keep the council focused on priorities and make progress.
Guide and Develop	Guide and develop staff and organizational culture.
Engage	Engage the community to build trust and confidence in local government

## Contacts

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- **Tyller Williamson**, Mayor, Monterey  
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[pmartel@icma.org](mailto:pmartel@icma.org)

# RESOURCES

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- Duggan, K., Conduff, M. (2016). Making It Work: The Essentials of Council-Manager Relationships. Retrieved from URL <https://www.icma.org/council/relations>
- Institute for Local Government. (2016). Attributes of Exceptional Councils. Retrieved from URL <https://www.ca-ilg.org>
- Institute for Local Government. (2015). Board/Executive Staff Communications Strategies. Retrieved from URL <https://www.ca-ilg.org>

## Organizational Resources:

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- **Cal Cities:** [calcities.org](http://calcities.org)
- **ICMA** (International City/County Management Association): [icma.org](http://icma.org)
- **ILG** (Institute for Local Government): [ca-ilg.org](http://ca-ilg.org)

# Additional Resources

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- Institute for Local Government. (2015). Leadership & Governance: Tips for Success. Retrieved from URL <https://www.ca-ilg.org>
- Michael, D. (2016). Navigating the Ups and Downs of the Council-Manager Relationship. Retrieved from URL <https://www.westerncity.org>
- O'Connell, G. (2007). Council-Manager Relations: Finding Respectable Ground. Retrieved from URL <https://www.icma.org/councilrelations>

# Leading Your Community

A GUIDE FOR



LOCAL ELECTED LEADERS

ICMA

National League of Cities



# ICMA

INTERNATIONAL CITY/COUNTY  
MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION