

ROLES, RESPONSIBILITIES & RELATIONSHIPS in a Local Government

Union of Municipalities of New Brunswick
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ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

Presentation Outline

- Roles and Responsibilities – Mayor and Council
- Role of Council and Staff – Who Does What?
- Conflict Situations in a Municipal Setting

ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES MAYOR AND COUNCIL

Overall Council Responsibilities...

Essentially provides **policy direction, oversight and guidance** through:

- **Making decisions** for the benefit of the whole community
- **Being a voice** for and of the community - reflecting and considering community views
- Ensuring municipal services are being effectively and efficiently delivered **through policy decisions**
- **Reviewing and enacting by-laws** authorized under the *Local Governance Act* and its regulations, ensuring they are current to the municipality's needs
- **Approving and reviewing municipal policies and procedures** that accurately reflect the corporate administrative and operational structure of the corporation

ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES MAYOR AND COUNCIL

More specifically, Council is a collective decision-making body that...

- Determines services to be provided
- Approves by-laws and amendments
- Authorizes the signing of agreements , contracts, deeds or any document to which the municipality is a party to (Mayor and Clerk)
- Sets the annual budget (operating & capital) and tax rate
- Reviews and approves borrowing requirements
- Sets strategic direction for the municipality
- Provides direction to Chief Administrative Officer who provides direction to staff

All powers of a municipality are vested in Council



ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES MAYOR AND COUNCIL

Role of the Mayor...

- Presides at all meetings of the municipality
- Provides leadership to the municipality
- Communicates information (acts as spokesperson) of the municipality and facilitates directions of Council
- Subject to the direction and control of the municipality Council and shall abide by all decisions of Council
- Ceremonial role
- Oversight role (in collaboration with rest of Council members)
- Key signing authority for the municipality (along with Clerk)
- Other duties as approved by Council



ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES MAYOR AND COUNCIL

Role of the Mayor...

The mayor may also have responsibilities assigned to him or her via the municipality's procedural by-law or by way of policies adopted by resolution of council.

An example of what might be included in a procedural by-law in terms of the mayor's role is the nominating of council members to committees. Such a role might also be outlined in a municipality's policy manual.

ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

MAYOR AND COUNCIL

Role of the Deputy Mayor...

- Acts in place of Mayor when mayoral seat is vacant or mayor is absent or unable to act - has all powers and duties of the mayor
- Legislation requires that members of Council must elect a Deputy Mayor and stipulate the duration of the term. The procedure for election and term of the Deputy Mayor must be detailed in a municipality procedural by-law. (48(3) LGA)
- Vote by secret ballot is not permitted under legislation (66(1) LGA)



ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES MAYOR AND COUNCIL

Role of Councillor... *(48(6) LGA)*

- Considers the welfare and interests of the entire municipality when making decisions
- Brings to the attention of Council matters that may promote the welfare or interests of the municipality
- Participates in developing and evaluating policies, programs and by- laws to ensure they continue to meet the needs of the municipality and its citizens
- Attends all Council meetings, council committees and any other body to which he or she has been appointed by Council
- Participates in the annual budget process
- Other duties as approved by Council

ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES MAYOR AND COUNCIL

Best practices as a member of members of Council...

- Commitment – time and energy
- Ability to work as part of a team – Council members, staff, agencies and volunteer organizations
- Willingness to learn, listen and give opinion
- Openness to hearing and accepting other views
- Willingness to make difficult decisions
- Accepting a decision of Council, once it is final
- Being open and accountable to the public
- Recognizing that you just can't please everyone



ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

ROLE OF COUNCIL AND STAFF

Who Does What? Some general guidelines and best practices...

- Council is responsible for decision-making
- Administration carries out the decisions / directives of Council
- Staff advises Council and Council provides direction to CAO
- Day to day administrative operations are CAO's responsibility
- Communication with Council and CAO essential – no one should be working independently
 - **Share credits for good ideas**
 - **Build respect by listening to one another's views**
 - **Keep everyone informed on community issues**
 - **Work through solutions together**



ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

ROLE OF COUNCIL AND STAFF

Who Does What? Some general guidelines and best practices...

- The line between Council and staff can be and is often blurry. They have to work at this and it takes time
- Council must respect and value the role that staff plays and staff must respect the decision-making role of Council
- A healthy relationship between the Council and staff is essential for the effectiveness of a municipal government



ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

ROLE OF COUNCIL AND STAFF

How do you build teamwork?

- A good understanding of roles and responsibilities
- Respect for one another and their role in the municipality
- Roles of Council and staff should compliment one another
- Communication and openness is the key to a good working relationship and environment
- A Council cannot be effective without a supportive staff and staff cannot be effective without a supportive Council



ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

ROLE OF COUNCIL AND STAFF

Suggestions for Strengthening Relationships Among Council Members...

- Council must focus on mandate and ensure decisions that are made serve the municipality's best interest as whole
- Council should see themselves as a **TEAM** and work for the betterment of the community
- Schedule occasional Council/staff retreats and/or planning sessions, possibly with other stakeholders in the community to share and explore ideas in a more relaxed setting
- **NO DECISIONS ARE MADE**



ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

ROLE OF COUNCIL AND STAFF

How to Strengthen Council /Administration Relationship...

- Recognition of the role that the elected officials have in local government
- Respect that administration are not the policy-makers but to provide professional advice and support required for Council members to make well, thought-out decisions.
- An “Open Door” policy by the CAO for Council to inquire or respond to any questions or concerns will go far to keep the lines of communication open
- CAO being willing to respond to and follow up on Council directives in a timely manner will go a long way to strengthen trust and overall relationship between Council and administration



ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES CONFLICT SITUATIONS

Conflict Situations in a Municipal Setting...

- Opposing views among Council members - difficult for CAO to be caught in the middle of debates between two sides
- Continually voting with a particular side on Council could hurt the municipality in the long run – media and public scrutiny
- Deep divisions on Council can become an obstacle to the municipality carrying out its mandate and reaching its potential
- Examples of potential sources of conflict include:
 - sustaining from voting on controversial matters (against legislation)
 - unclear understanding of the municipal operating structure and reporting relationships
 - personality conflicts
 - anti-administration bias on Council; conversely, existing staff may be carrying an anti-Council bias



ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES CONFLICT SITUATIONS

Conflict Situations in a Municipal Setting...

- Council members must recognize that there will sometimes have to be a compromise to get things accomplished and see itself as a team that is working for the betterment of the municipality
- Common courtesy should prevail; Rules of Order (stated in Procedural By-law) need to be followed and good conduct should be understood by a new Council.
- The willingness of Councillors and staff to reason and cooperate with each other leads to the development of positive, goal-oriented working relationships

**FOCUS ON COUNCIL'S MANDATE – TO SERVE THE MUNICIPALITY
AND MAKE DECISIONS THAT SERVES THE BEST INTERESTS OF THE
WHOLE COMMUNITY**



ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES CONFLICT SITUATIONS

Resolving a Conflict in a Municipal Setting...

- Deal with the matter immediately
- Have a good discussion between the affected parties, preferably with a third person non-partisan facilitator, who can assist in reaching the root of the conflict
- When there is mutual understanding, and communication lines are open between the affected parties, misunderstandings, personal slights, and power struggles can be identified and consequently reduced.



ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES CONFLICT SITUATIONS

What are some sample relationship problem areas?

- Misunderstanding of each other's role
- Unclear understanding of the operating structure
- Tensions between Council and CAO, or between Council members
- Misunderstanding on who speaks on behalf of Council;
- Mayor and/or individual councillors making decisions or statements that have not been sanctioned by Council
- Poor communication
- Lack of trust and respect
- Lack of identifiable goals/vision, strategic plan for the community



QUESTIONS?