



**City of Santa Clara**  
**Council Workshop on Governance**  
**Held December 13, 2018**

**January 2019**

**Management  
Partners**





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## Workshop Report

The City of Santa Clara held a City Council retreat on December 13, 2018 from 9:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers. This workshop was an opportunity for the Council members and executive staff to discuss what it takes to be a high performing government, take stock of what the new district election system means for the City, and enhance and strengthen the teamwork between the Council and staff. This report contains a summary of workshop discussions.

Jan Perkins, Senior Partner with Management Partners and Dr. John Nalbandian from the University of Kansas facilitated the workshop.



## ***Workshop Overview***

### **Agenda**

- Welcome from the Mayor
- Public comments
- Comments from the City Manager
- Bridging the gap between political acceptability and operational sustainability
- Consensus on how we will govern
- Wrap up and next steps

## Overall Workshop Objectives

- Create a shared understanding of high performance governance and what it means for the City of Santa Clara.
- Establish a consensus on how we will govern within the new district election system.
- Strengthen the teamwork of Council and staff.

## Council's Goals for the Day

- Clarity of how we will govern – clear consensus
- Practical guidelines including details
- Refresher of our protocols so we all know what continues and what changes
- Recognize we are one city
- Recognize we still have a Council-Manager form of government
- To know we will have the tools to be successful representatives of our districts *and* of the whole city
- Understand what level of staff support will be available
- Assume we are all trying to do what is best for Santa Clara
- Improve working relationships on Council



## Workshop Participants

### *Members of City Council*

**Mayor  
Lisa Gillmor**



**Vice Mayor  
Kathy Watanabe**



**Council Member  
Debi Davis**



**Council Member  
Theresa O'Neill**



**Council Member  
Patricia Mahan**



**Council Member  
Karen Hardy**



**Council Member  
Raj Chahal**

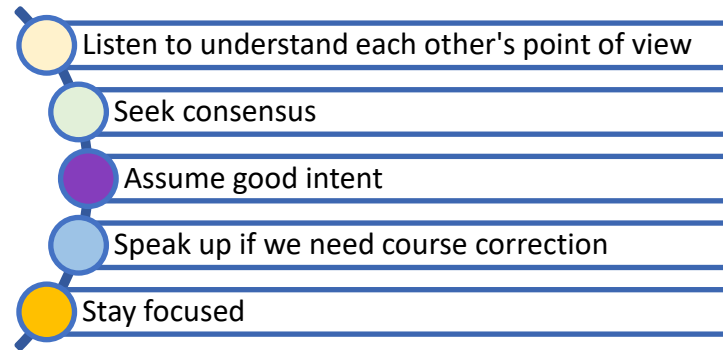


### *Executive Staff*

- City Manager Deanna Santana
- City Attorney Brian Doyle
- Chief Operating Officer Walter Rossmann
- Assistant City Manager Nadine Nader
- Assistant City Manager Manuel Pineda
- Assistant City Manager Ruth Shikada

## Workshop Ground Rules

At the start of the workshop, Jan suggested several ground rules to help the group have a successful workshop and achieve the results they intended to achieve through their time together.



## Workshop Preparation

To prepare for the workshop, facilitator Jan Perkins conducted individual interviews with each Council member. Jan, along with John Nalbandian met with the City Manager to discuss the desired outcomes of the workshop. A PowerPoint presentation and agenda were prepared.

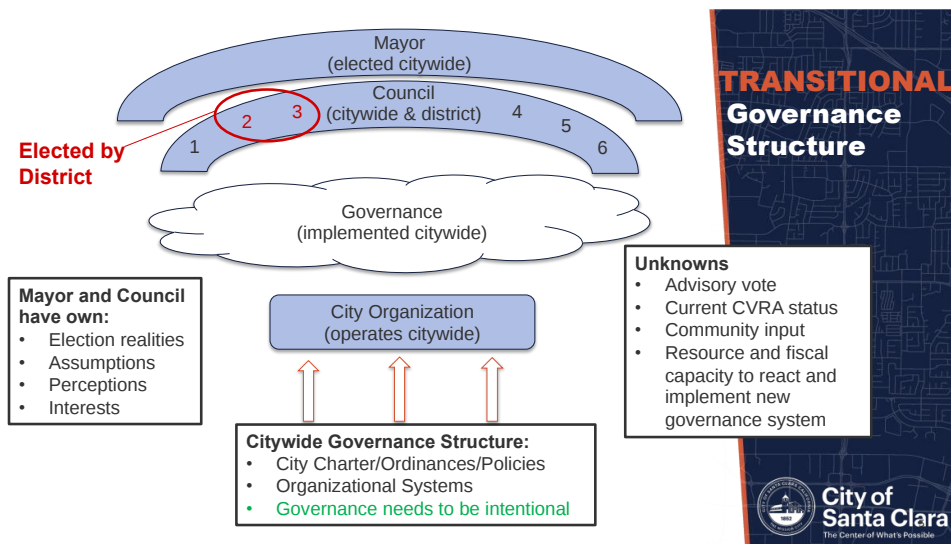
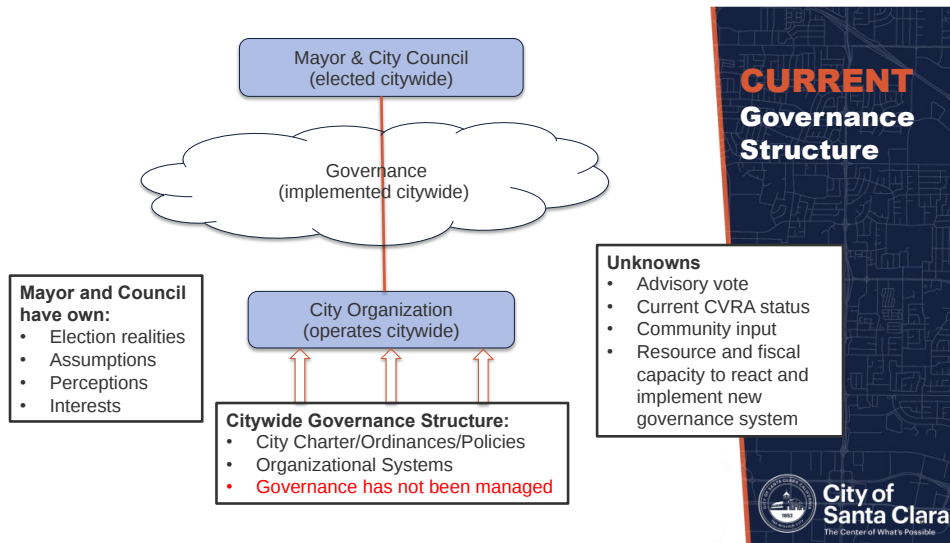
## Welcome and Opening Comments

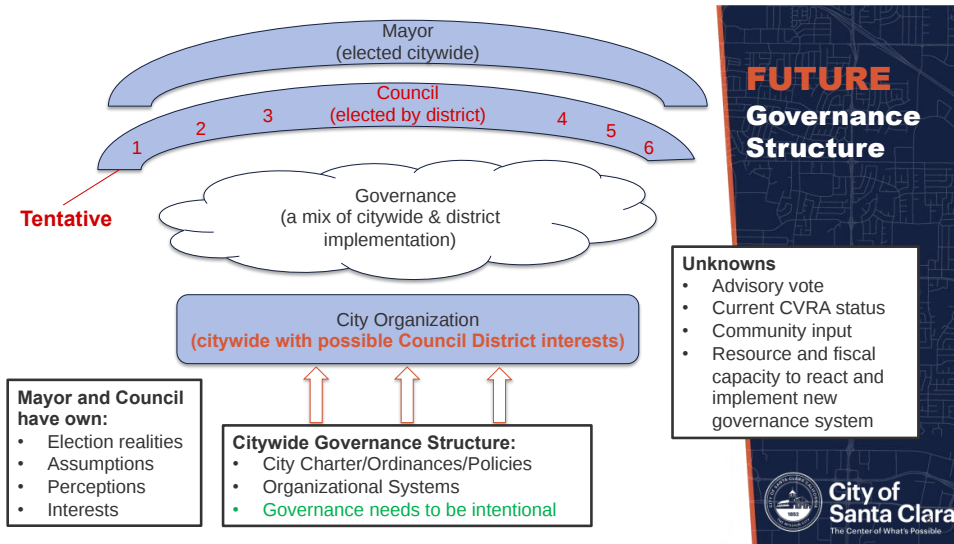
**Mayor Lisa Gillmor** opened the workshop with a call to order, City of Santa Clara Council meeting opening protocols, and welcome to the public.

**City Manager Deanna Santana** provided opening comments about why the day was important and what she hoped the participants would accomplish during the workshop. Key points offered included:

- ✓ Staff wants to serve the Council well.
- ✓ Our focus is on serving the entire community of Santa Clara and preparing strategically for the City's future well-being.
- ✓ Our strategies, resource allocation, organizational systems, and service delivery models are structured with a city-wide focus.
- ✓ We hope to end today with some principles for governing that could be placed into a resolution.
- ✓ Transformation is dynamic and takes regular check-ins to protect our values towards change and to lead with intention.
- ✓ Better implementation of Council/Manager form of government since transferring all Council requests through the City Manager.

Ms. Santana presented the following three slides showing the current, transitional and future governance structure.

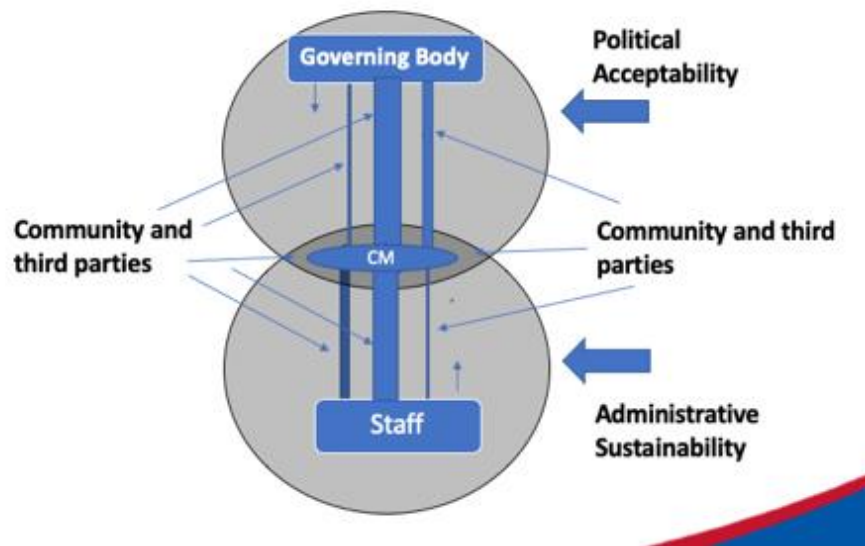




## ***High Performance Governance: Bridging the Gap between Political Acceptability and Operational Sustainability***

Dr. John Nalbandian led the workshop participants in a discussion about what high performance governance is, including the roles of elected and appointed officials, and how elected and appointed officials can all be the bridge-builders. He presented the following points:

- A gap exists between what is politically acceptable and operationally sustainable. Bridging the gap is essential to effective governance – credibility and trust.
- Bridging the gap is facilitated by those who:
  - Understand that politics involves choices among conflicting values – no value profile is best, and
  - That politics and administration involve more than different behaviors – they are different ways of thinking.



Attachment A contains the slides presented by Dr. Nalbandian.

### ***Council Discussion About Governance***

The purpose of this discussion was to reach agreements about how the Council and executives will operate under the new district election system. Jan led the group in determining what will be the same, and what should change.

#### **High Performance Principles and Practices**

The group offered ideas about what principles and practices in the current government system have helped the City of Santa Clara be a high-performance city. The comments that were provided are listed below.

- We listen to the community
- Communicate with everyone
- Do our analysis
- Work effectively with staff
- Prioritization
- City manager makes sure we all get the same information at the same time
- Communicate with the city manager
- We have a process for everything
- We've improved our transparency
- We understand internal and external factors (what we can control and cannot control)

- Council is mindful of staff workload
- Strong sense of partnership between council and staff
- Improved coordination between city attorney's office, city clerk and city manager's office
- Council gives heads up to city manager; helps her be more politically astute
- Valid information to council
- Staff competence
- Trust from council to city manager
- Council trusts information from staff

### **Community Expectations**

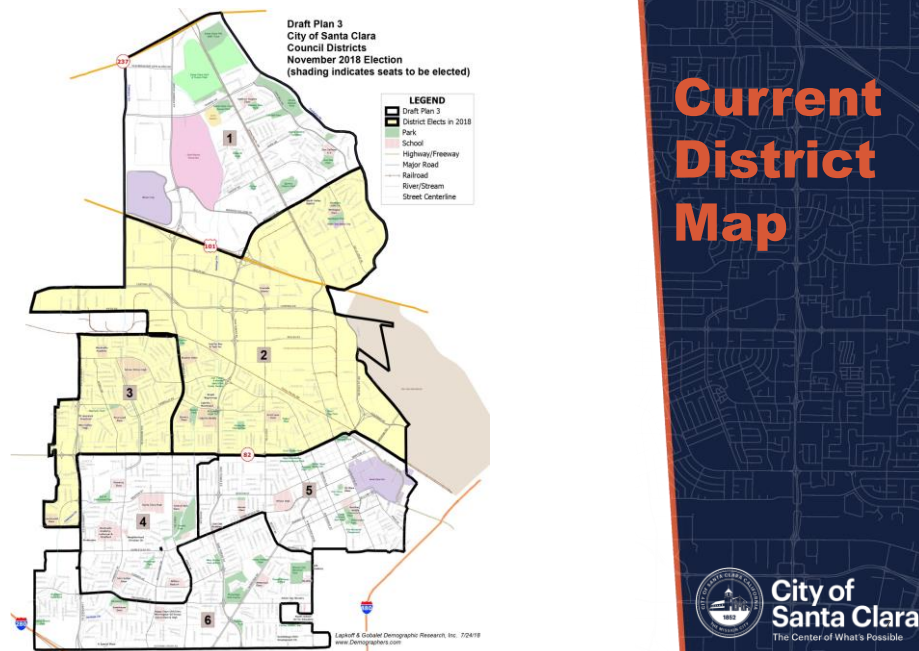
The group discussed what community members may expect from Councilmembers elected by district. Comments offered included:

- Residents have high expectations and sometimes think we have powers that we don't
- Some people may view us as "mini mayors" for our districts
- Some may fear loss of representation of Council – "now I only have one"
- We need to be clear that many issues are citywide and regional
- People don't know what district they are in
- Worried about vote-trading

### **What May Be Improved with Districts**

The group identified what might be improved within city government due to the new district election system. Comments offered included:

- Better representation
- Easier communication between Councilmembers and community
- Higher accountability for Councilmembers
- More diversity on the Council



## ***Guiding Principles and Specific Protocols***

### **Principles**

The group discussed principles to guide governance and the following overarching principles were agreed to:

- *We all care about and will govern for the entire Santa Clara community.*
- *We will follow our Santa Clara ethical values.*
- *We will follow our council-manager form of government.*

### **Protocols**

A number of specific questions about protocols or procedures were posed during the individual Councilmember interviews prior to the workshop. The questions that were posed along with the key points made during the discussion are provided in Table 1 below.

In addition, there was a robust discussion of the issue of the potential of “vote trading” between districts, as observed in other jurisdictions, the importance of governing for the benefit of the entire community.

Table 1. Council Protocol Questions and Discussion Summary

| Question                                                                                              | Discussion Summary                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| What constitutes a “district issue?”                                                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Geographic boundaries (something in the district)</li> <li>Land use issues</li> <li>Neighborhood or individual issue</li> <li>City systems are not set up to focus on districts</li> </ul>                                                                   |
| How will staff route calls from residents?                                                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue current practice</li> <li>Systems do not allow to identify which district someone lives in</li> <li>Councilmembers will tell staff if it is in district; will let the councilmember know</li> </ul>                                                 |
| How will staff prioritize requests from Councilmembers?                                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue existing process</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Will the City Manager continue to provide information to the entire Council?                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Yes; current practice will continue</li> <li>When a councilmember asks for a report, Deanna sends to full city council</li> </ul>                                                                                                                            |
| If someone calls me and they are in another district, can I help them?                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Accept the call; give the councilmember a heads up – transparency – <i>“We all work together”</i></li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                 |
| Can a Councilmember have monthly meetings open to anyone in the community?                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Yes (this is without staff assistance)</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| How will staff handle it if Councilmembers want to have “town halls” in their districts?              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Discuss this question during January 2019 priority setting session (e.g., how often, what topics, put districts together, or not when to conduct, logistics, staffing, should Mayor lead the meeting, etc.)</li> <li>Concern about staff capacity</li> </ul> |
| On NextDoor, should Councilmembers only communicate with the people in their district?                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No; continue current practice</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Should the Mayor call on the Councilmember from a district where a project is located to speak first? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Optional based on the Councilmember’s preference</li> <li>The Councilmembers is to let the Mayor know if he or she wishes to speak first</li> </ul>                                                                                                          |
| How can the Mayor help individual Councilmembers?                                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Be accessible and available</li> <li>Accompany councilmembers in districts</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Does the city council want to be reflected by district?                                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Yes; a plan for this (e.g., stationary, printed materials, agendas) will be prepared by staff</li> <li>Add district numbers to plaques on the dais</li> </ul>                                                                                                |

**Discussion comments:**

- We represent the entire city
- We will govern with common sense
- Consistency is important
- The City Manager’s blog is helpful for getting accurate information out
- The City Manager’s guidelines apply citywide regardless of districts
- When political realities set in – how will things really be?
- In the future could consider a structure to discuss protocols, such as a rules committee

- Public calendars will help transparency of who is meeting with whom, as well as disclosures
- Mayor can play a larger role because she is citywide
- Priority setting meeting can be used to surface service level needs both in districts and citywide
- Benefit to continually communicate with each other
- Need to communicate with the public how priorities for services are set citywide

### Implementing Guidelines

There was a discussion about next steps regarding the guiding principles and any specific protocols. It was suggested that a six-month check in should occur, which would provide an opportunity to see how things are actually working, make adjustments as needed, and then determine if a formal Council policy is needed.



### Wrap Up

Each member of Council and staff were invited to offer a comment in response to the question, “*What was important about today to you?*” A summary of responses is shown below.

- Exchanges between Council were valuable, open and honest
- Interesting to see how we are starting from scratch with our district system
- Enjoyed the Council dialogue
- Elected by districts but govern with open mind
- We are on the right path
- We are ready for the journey; six month check in will be good
- I feel more comfortable; better road map; Councilmembers have good intentions of looking at the whole; we want to keep it that way; managing expectations
- Good to hear Councilmembers talk about what district elections mean
- Appreciated Deanna’s list of what staff is looking at

- Important to see the six other perspectives of Councilmembers; we're more alike than different; important to hear staffs' viewpoint
- City Clerk brought much to the conversation
- Appreciated everyone's time on this topic, and staffs' ability to speak with the Council - unique opportunity
- Liked the Council's observations
- Similarities between Santa Clara and Lawrence, and we can learn from other cities; ideas to make town halls better

### ***Next Steps***

- Management Partners to prepare a workshop summary to be provided to the Council.
- Six-month check-in will be scheduled to discuss governance.

**"The future is not some place we are going, but one we are creating.  
The paths are not to be found but made. And the activity of  
making them changes both the maker and the destination. "**

-John Schaar, futurist, *Loyalty in America*



## Attachment A – John Nalbandian's Presentation Slides

1/8/19

High Performing Governance: Bridging  
the Gap between Political Acceptability  
and Administrative Sustainability

John Nalbandian  
University of Kansas  
Nalband@ku.edu

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Themes from Executive Leadership Team Meeting  
October 25, 2018

- The Team acknowledged and supported that Council-staff engagement has been improved and the objective of no Council interference has been achieved with the transition of the new City Manager (e.g. less Council direct contact with staff).
- They also identified the following expectations:
  - Leadership team members need the following from each other:
    - Good, frequent, honest communication
    - Helpful, working with each other towards solutions
    - Confidentiality

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**Themes from Executive Leadership Team Meeting  
October 25, 2018**

- City Manager needs the following from the leadership team:
  - Realization that City Manager is managing change in a low-trust, high-risk environment (leadership implications)
  - Ongoing information and communication
  - Reliable data to accompany decisions
  - Champion professional development
  - Understanding that many City systems do not support modern service
  - Workload > Capacity (fragile condition)



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**Themes from Executive Leadership Team Meeting  
October 25, 2018**

- Leadership team members need the following from the City Manager:
  - Continued transition of Council interference to the City Manager
  - Accountability with clear expectations
  - Awareness of department capacity; balance workload
  - Support innovation and risk-taking



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### Themes from Executive Leadership Team Meeting October 25, 2018

- The Executive Leadership Team also identified some issues/examples that may arise in this new governance system, including:
  - How will this impact budget and resource allocations? By district or citywide?
  - How to address the difference in the way each District Councilmember engages staff on questions and requests (e.g. potential inequity in staff attention)?
  - Will there be less incentive to look at issues from a citywide perspective?
  - Will this create "competing coalitions" within districts?
  - How will this impact land use decisions and will decisions become district-focused instead of citywide?
  - How do we acknowledge our city-wide structures in an environment where more Council District focus may arise?

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### Themes from Quarterly Management Team Meeting October 26, 2018

- The City Manager asked about current Council-staff engagement, and the Team acknowledged that the objective of no Council interference has been achieved with the transition of the new City Manager (e.g. less Council direct contact with staff).
- Additional key themes from this meeting are as follows:
  - Transition to district elections may lead to changes in community needs, staff workload, demand for resources, resident engagement, and requests for information.

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### Themes from Quarterly Management Team Meeting October 26, 2018

- Additional key themes from this meeting are as follows:
  - Emphasized the importance of internal collaboration and communication, information-sharing, and having a shared understanding of priorities city-wide.
  - These changes may be viewed differently by staff, City Council and residents, but it is important to discuss those views and expectations in order to continue providing the same high-quality services to the community.

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### Themes from Quarterly Management Team Meeting October 26, 2018

- The Management Team also identified some issues that may arise in this new governance system, including:
  - Development of “mini-mayors”
  - Potential competition between the districts of the Councilmembers for resources and possible inequity
  - How data is collected and distributed and whether it will be by district or continue citywide?
  - Will the City develop different policies for different districts, such as watering/drought, traffic, noise, etc.?
  - Will this change how we prioritize infrastructure improvements and make land-use decisions?
  - Interest in City Manager affirmatively answering and advancing solutions – shared responsibility of how we resolve.

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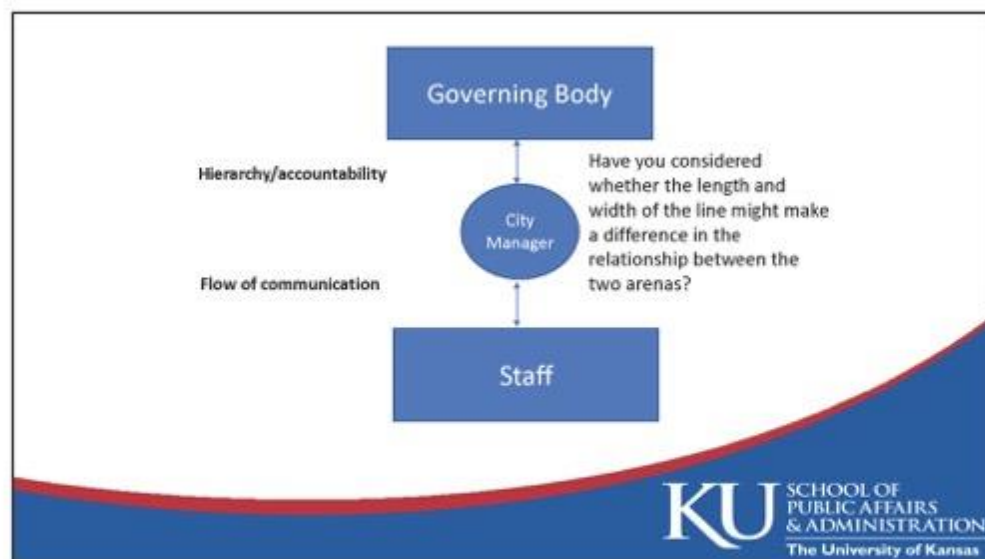
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### Outline

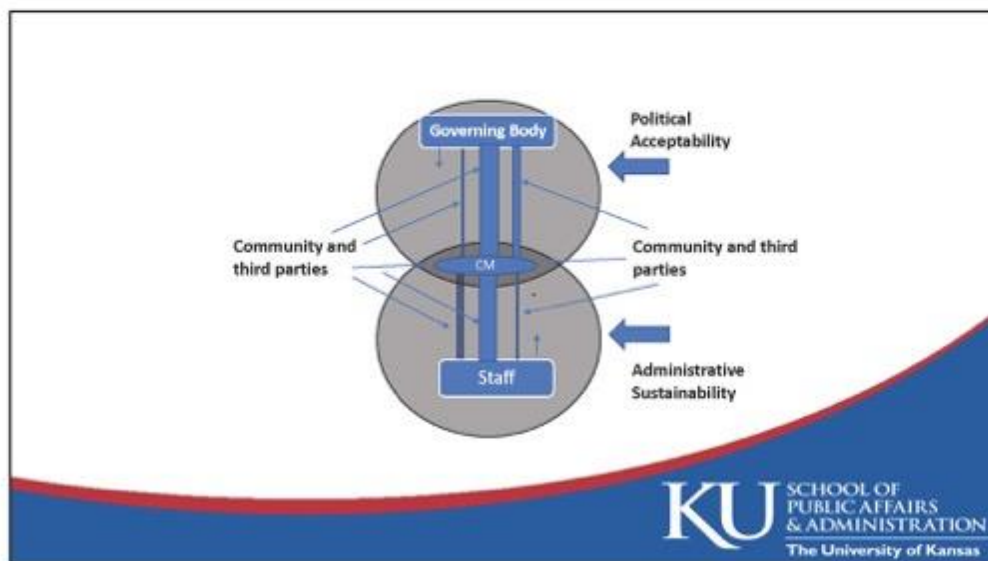
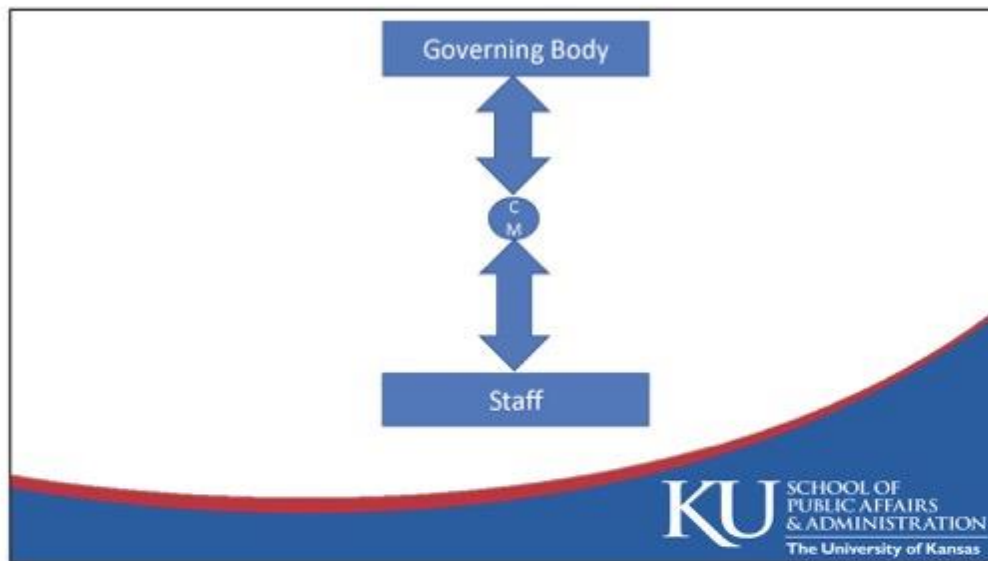
- A gap exists and is growing between what is politically acceptable and operationally sustainable
  - Bridging the gap is essential to effective governance—credibility and community trust
- Bridging the gap is facilitated by those who:
  - understand that politics involves choices among conflicting values—no value profile is best
  - and that politics and administration involve more than different behaviors; they are different ways of thinking



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## Values

**RESPONSIVENESS =**

- Representation/Participation +
- Efficiency/Professionalism +
- Social Equity +
- Individual Rights
- Citizens with cups



## Characteristics of Politics and Administration

| Characteristics | Political acceptability ← → Operational sustainability    |                                                       |
|-----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
|                 | Politics                                                  | Administration                                        |
| Activity        | Game/allocation of values                                 | Problem Solving                                       |
| Players         | Representatives/trustees                                  | Experts-trustees                                      |
| Conversation    | "What do you hear?"<br>• Passion<br>• Dreams<br>• Stories | "What do you know?"<br>• Data<br>• Plans<br>• Reports |
| Pieces          | Intangible:<br>Interests and symbols                      | Tangible:<br>Information; money, people, equipment    |
| Currency        | Power (stories), loyalty, trust                           | Knowledge (deeds)                                     |
| Dynamics        | Constructive conflict, compromise, change                 | Predictability, cooperation, continuity               |

CAO and Senior Staff in the GAP  
 ← →  
 Elected\*



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### The Bridge Builder

**Works the gap by:**

- Understanding that efficiency is one of four values if community building is the goal—cups matter
- Politics and administration are more than different roles, behaviors, and responsibilities—they are mindsets



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### Summary

- Bridging the gap is essential
- Cups matter
- Good politics is about values not right answers—stories matter (convey values)
- Do not ignore any value over time
- Democratic process is “messy”
- Politics/administration=ways of thinking
- Role of translator/bridge builder is critical
- Aligning governing body/staff expectations is crucial
- Difference between “representative” and “trustee”



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