

Navigating the Waters Between Elected Officials and Staff

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James L. Banks, Jr.

City Attorney, Alexandria, Virginia

Council v. Staff Responsibilities

- “[A]ll matters of policy shall be vested in the council.”
- Staff, however, through the City Manager “shall be responsible to the council for the proper administration of all affairs of the City.”

What Does That Mean?

- A **policy** is typically described as a principle or rule to guide decisions and achieve rational outcome(s).
- Administration is often thought of as the performance or management of daily operations.

OK.....In Practical Terms What Does That Mean???

- Well.....it depends!
- Well.....it's kind of “squishy”.
- The difference between overall guidance or “policy” and daily operational “administration” is not always clear.
- That's why it should be collegial, recognizing the interdependent nature of the two functions.

Practical Reminders For Council

- Council acts as a body not as individuals.
- Individual questions about “Council’s Position”.
- Interact with the staff through the City Manager as much as possible.
- Councilmembers should refrain from getting involved in administrative functions.

Practical Reminders For Council (Cont'd)

- Councilmembers should avoid burdensome individual research and/or informational requests.

Practical Reminders For Staff

- Respond to Council questions as fully and quickly as is practical.
- Respect the role of Councilmembers as policy makers for the City.
- Provide your best professional recommendations.
- Give Council viable choices.

Practical Reminders For Staff (Cont'd)

- Absolutely, positively do not try to “manage” Council.
- Don't differentiate between Councilmembers in the information provided.
- Don't filter information in an effort to drive the decision to your own preferred result.

Jim's 3 Rules For Interacting With Elected Officials.

1. Always say yes.....until you must say no!
2. Show the road to no!
3. Give authority for your no!

Elected Officials and Staff, We're All In This Together!!!

- If we want to do it well, we can only do so together!!!

Further Discussion

- Questions and/or comments????