

# Productive Relationships: Boards and Administrators

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U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; or

**fax:**  
(833) 256-1666 or (202) 690-7442;

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## Plan for Today

- Promising Practices in Board/Administrator Relationships
  - Governance Models
  - Academic Literature
  - MSU
- Small Group Discussions
- Tying it all together

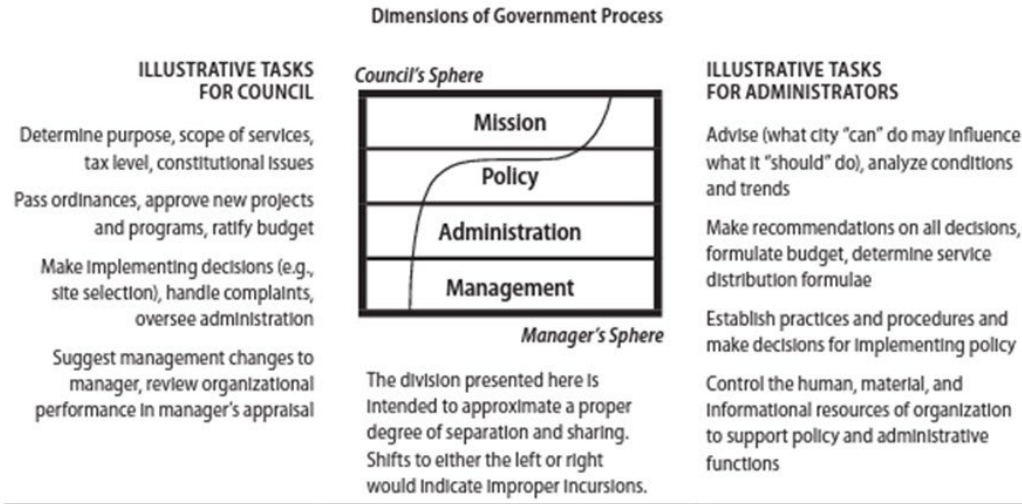


## Disclaimer...



# Clear Roles

**Figure 4.1 Dichotomy-Duality Model**  
*Mission-Management Separation with Shared Responsibility for Policy and Administration*



Source: Taken from James H. Svara, "Dichotomy and Duality: Reconceptualizing the Relationship between Policy and Administration in Council-Manager Cities," *Public Administration Review* 45 (Jan./Feb. 1985), 228.



## “Constructive partnership” between board, management, staff, and volunteers



Clearly defined roles that both board and staff understand and honor, working together to accomplish the mission.



“Working Board” v. “Governing Board”



Almost no boards operate at the ends of this spectrum, and therein lies the challenge.



## Habits of Highly Effective Governing Bodies

- Thinking and acting strategically and with a vision for the community's future
- Respecting the shared constituency with citizens and in their relations with other governments and organizations
- Demonstrating teamwork
- Mastering small group decision making, including adhering to rules of procedure, time allocations, and meeting agendas
- Honoring the board-staff partnership





## Habits of Highly Effective Governing Bodies

- Using governing body time and effort appropriately in 4 key areas
  - Goal-setting retreats
  - Study sessions
  - Regular public hearings and meetings
  - Community relations
- Having clear rules and procedures for board meetings
- Obtaining feedback and conducting regular assessments of policy and implementation performance
- Practicing continuous personal learning and leadership development of individual elected officials



## Common Problems

- Lack of clarity over who does what between the board and staff on the dimensions of the policy process
- Disagreement over who is in charge (particularly when presiding officer's authority is limited – as is the case of the county board chair)
- Members focusing on individual campaign positions instead of community interests
- Members not prepared for meetings, either by not doing homework, or not understanding staff reports/data
- Micromanagement of staff and operations by elected officials and bypassing the administrator



## Communication

- Make time for your elected officials
- Develop an understanding of their expectations regarding communication
- Adjust communication techniques to the needs of individuals
- Establish a “floor” of information you make available to all
- Be sensitive to how/when you communicate “bad news”



## Communication

- Develop clear guidelines regarding communication between elected officials and staff
- Communicate consistently with all board members
- Reestablish communication expectations whenever the board changes
- Encourage/promote effective communication among elected officials



## MSU Board of Trustees Governing Commitments

- Align and support Code of Ethics and Conduct
- Signed in partnership with new University President





## A few other things...

- New Commissioner School
  - Frankenmuth – 12/2
  - Shelbyville – 12/3
  - Grayling – 12/9
  - Escanaba – 12/10
- Needs Assessment Survey
- New Administrator Program



# Questions?

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