

Improving Council-Staff Relations: Working Together to Build a Better Community

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David Siegel
Professor Emeritus of Political Science
Brock University
dsiegel@brocku.ca

My goal for today

To provide a framework to help staff members understand the roles of council and staff so that administrators can work with councillors in the interest of their municipality.

Shared overarching goal, but . . .

- Begin by focussing on areas of agreement
 - Improve the quality of life for residents in the municipality
 - Ensure the sustainability of the municipality
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. . . different perspectives

Councillors

- Assist constituents' interactions with the municipality
- Maintain a positive public image
- Get re-elected

Staff

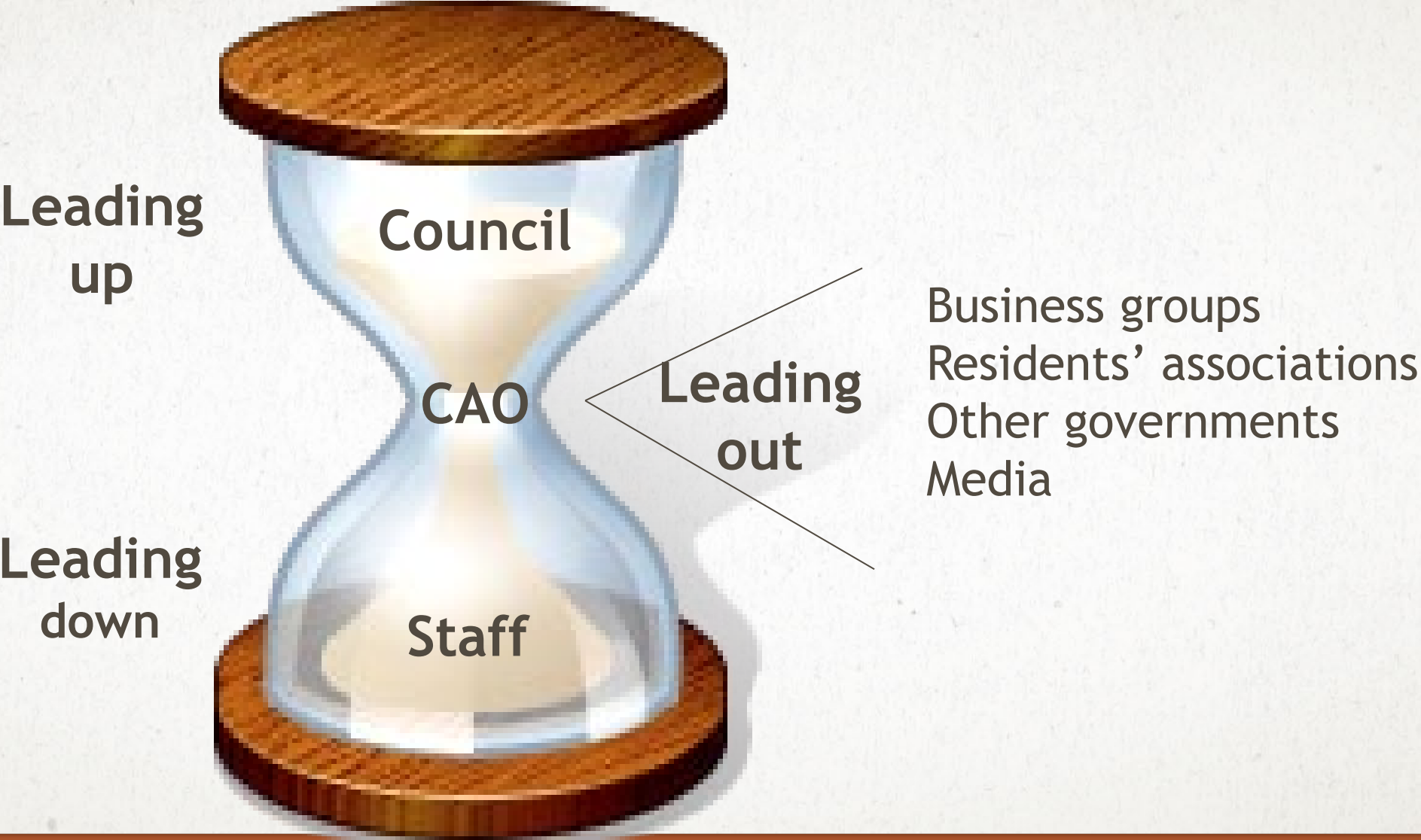
- Provide high-quality service in an equitable manner
 - Focus on economy, efficiency, and effectiveness
 - Focus on long-term perspective
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Overview

- Leading in three directions
 - Role of council
 - Role of staff
 - Council-staff relations
 - Public service bargain
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**Leading in three
directions**

CAOs must lead in three directions



Leading down

- Manage staff
- Maintain morale
- Balance interests of departments

Leading down - skill set

- Power through authority
- Supervisory skills
- Motivation
- Collective agreement

Leading out

- Business groups
- Residents' associations
- Media
- Other governments

Leading out - skill set

- Power through influence
- Negotiator, broker
- Inspire confidence
- Guide groups
- Proactive position with media
- Proactive with other governments

Leading up

- Managing the relationship with council
- Two-way transmission point between council and staff

Leading up - skill set

- Most difficult
- Power through influence
- Political acuity
- Mediator, negotiator
- Inspire confidence
 - Expertise
 - Objectivity
 - Professionalism

Leading in three directions

- Use as a check list
- Decide on priority, level of involvement, and strategy
- Assess your skill set
- Strengthen your weaknesses

Role of council

Role of council - Saskatchewan Municipalities Act

Section 92 - Councillors have the following duties:

- a) Represent the public and the interests of the municipality
 - b) Participate in development of policies, services, and programs
 - c) Attend council and related meetings
 - d) “to ensure that administrative practices and procedures are in place to implement the decisions of council”
 - e) Maintain confidentiality
 - f) Ensure financial integrity
 - g) Perform other functions conferred by statute or by-law
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Role of council - what council actually does

- Place shaping
- Understand the local political culture
- Deliberative body
- Make policy decisions
- Oversight of administration

Role of staff

Role of staff

Section 111 - Duties of administrator

- 1) Maintain books, documents, and records
 - 2) Maintain minutes of meetings, ensure financial integrity, advise council of its legislative responsibilities, maintain by-laws
 - 3) “The administrator is responsible for the hiring, suspension and dismissal of all employees of the municipality, unless otherwise provided by council”
 - 4) May witness oaths
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Role of staff - what staff actually does

- Provide policy advice to council based on professional, technical principles
- Implement council decisions conscientiously and loyally
- Deliver services with proper regard to economy, efficiency, and effectiveness

Council-staff relations

Roles of councillors and staff

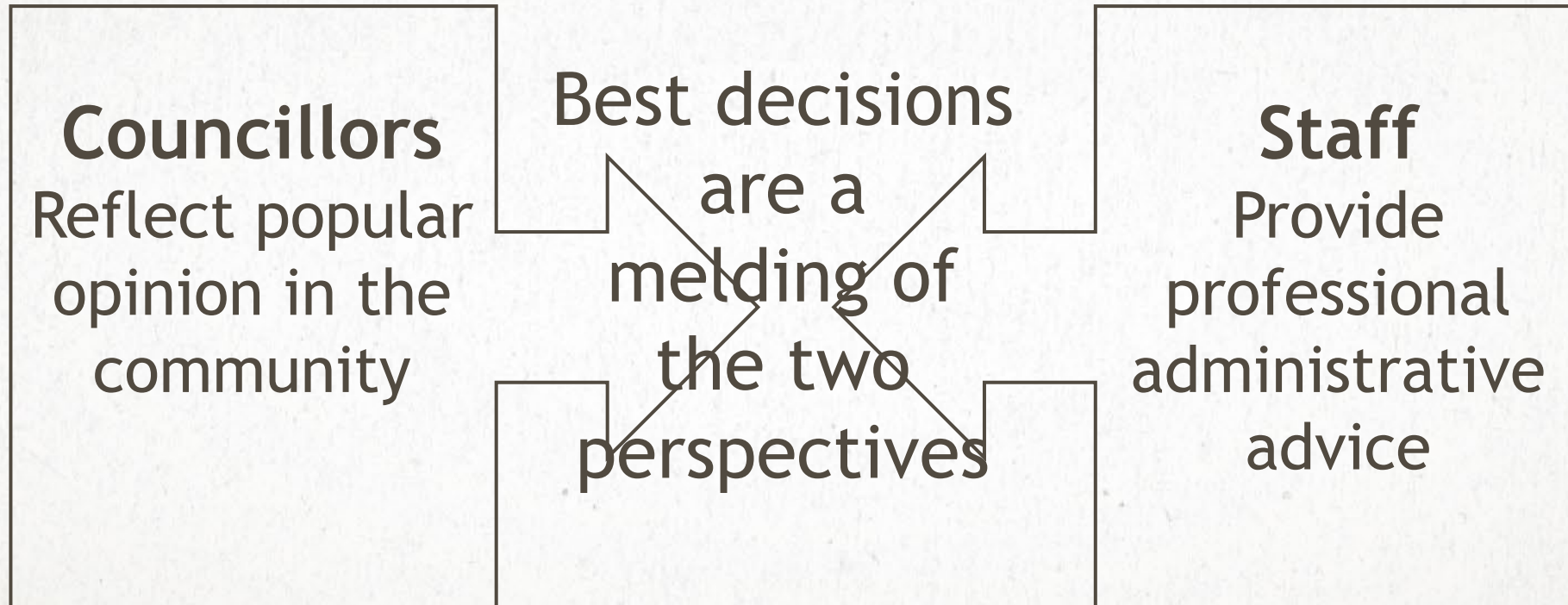
Councillors

- Representatives of the community
- Sensitive to local political issues

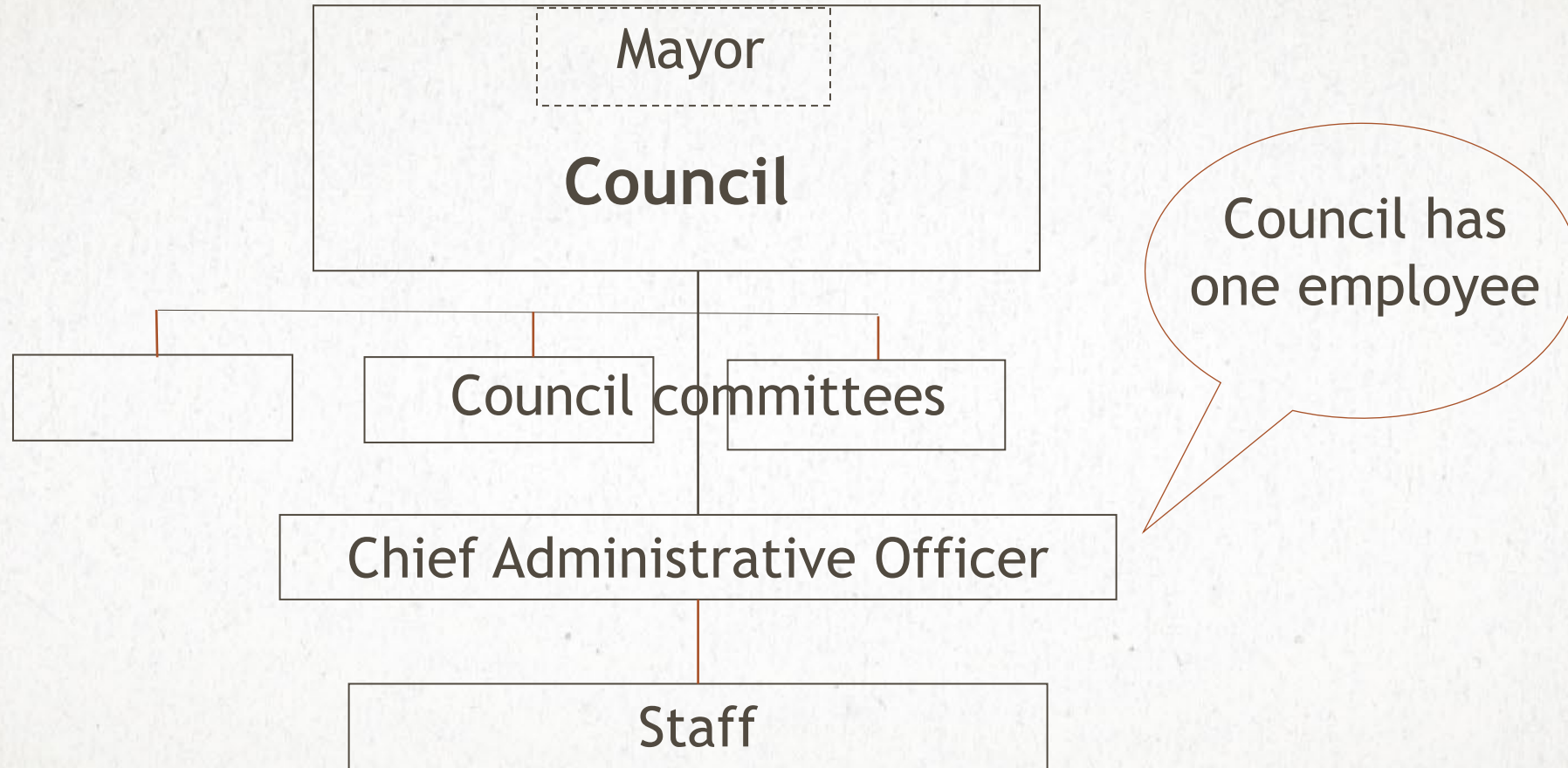
Staff

- Substantive technical knowledge
- Professional experts

Complementary roles of council and staff



Council-CAO structure



Staff works for council

Principles of council-staff relations (Council-CAO system)

- Staff works for council
- Staff implements policies of current council conscientiously and loyally
- Staff shares information equally with all members of council
- Staff avoids preferential relationships with any member(s) of council

Council-CAO structure

- Council does what it does best - deliberates and makes policy
- Council communicates that policy to its one employee
- CAO ensures that policies are coordinated across departments
- Council can hold its one employee accountable for service delivery

The public service bargain

The public service bargain

- Bargain between council and staff
- Establishes rules of interaction
- Creates mutual expectations
- Implicit bargain - avoid legalisms
- Each side gives up something in exchange for gaining something else

Council-staff bargain - condition precedent

Proactive

Reactive

Staff brings new issues to council even if not requested

Staff responds to council request to provide broad policy advice including options council had not considered

Staff provides advice on the policy options discussed by council

Staff provides information about the administrative implications of policy that council is considering

Staff implements council decisions, but does not offer any advice on policy

The policy advice bargain

Staff members will provide their best professional, administrative advice without regard to the political implications of that advice.

Council will consider staff advice in a respectful manner. If council chooses to reject that advice, it will do so without public, personal criticism of staff.

Importance of the policy advice bargain

- Best policy decisions are made when each side fulfils its role
- Council needs honest professional, technical advice
- Staff must feel comfortable providing professional, administrative advice

The management bargain

The CAO will have reasonably complete authority to manage the public service including the ability to supervise, hire, promote, discipline, and fire staff on a merit basis.

Council can hold the CAO accountable for the efficiency and effectiveness of the public service, but council refrains from becoming involved in managing the public service.

Importance of the management bargain

- Council has one person who is responsible for quality of management
- Council does not need to become involved in details of management
- Council can focus on policy-making
- CAO has authority to build an effective management team reporting to CAO

The overarching bargain

Staff will be loyal to the current council, provide professional advice, and carry out the instructions of council in a conscientious and loyal manner.

Council will consider staff advice carefully, treat staff with respect, and provide staff with security of tenure based on proper performance of duties.

Importance of the overarching bargain

- Council benefits from a high-quality, professional staff that carries out council directives in a conscientious and loyal manner
- Staff members benefit from working in a respectful environment where they can present their advice without fear of unfair criticism
- The result is good decisions that are reflective of both the local political culture and professional, technical advice

Conclusion

What's in it for council

- Loyal and efficient public service
- Good policy advice
- Good service delivery

What's in it for staff

- Hiring and promotion on merit
- Positive sense of accomplishment
- Security of tenure

Summary

- Complementary roles of council and staff
- Each side sticks to its side of the bargain
- Necessity of good public service bargain

Additional reading

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