Navigating Staff-Board Relationships -- handling tough issues with elected officials

**Webinar** 1:00 – 2:30 p.m. PT, Wednesday, February 27, 2013

Cal-ICMA Coaching Program in partnership with Arizona, Colorado, Illinois, Michigan, and Oklahoma City-County Management Assns.

*** Advance registration required for this no-charge webinar: [https://www1.gotomeeting.com/register/300210793](https://www1.gotomeeting.com/register/300210793)

Presenters:
* John Nalbandian, Professor of Public Affairs & Administration, University of Kansas
* Mike Conduff, ICMA Senior Advisor for Governance, and former City Manager
* Craig Rapp, consultant, former Director of ICMA Consulting, and City Manager

Panel Discussion Topics:
1. How do you deliver bad news to elected officials, especially if a varied response is predictable?
2. What is the role of staff who report to the CAO in communicating with elected officials who have a challenging relationship with the CAO?
3. What are some techniques for dealing with surprise attacks from individual elected officials during public meetings?
4. How should managers deal with elected officials who involve themselves in organizational personnel matters?
5. How should managers deal with unethical elected official behavior?

Audience: all employees

1. Register in advance for the webinar:
   There is no charge for participating in the webinars, but each requires advance registration.
   *** Advance registration required for this no-charge webinar: [https://www1.gotomeeting.com/register/300210793](https://www1.gotomeeting.com/register/300210793)

2. Connect with the webinar and audio:
   Use your logon information from the email confirmation you receive via email from GoToWebinar. We recommend the telephone option dial-in number provided by GoToWebinar for sound quality. Depending upon your internet connection, VOIP option for audio (computer speakers) can have delays or sound quality issues.

3. Ask questions:
   You may submit questions anonymously via email to [Cal-ICMA@DonMaruska.com](mailto:Cal-ICMA@DonMaruska.com) in advance or via the webinar during the panel discussion. As moderator for the session, Don Maruska will pose the questions.

4. Presenters’ presentation materials:
We post these with the agenda at “Live Audio & Archives” tab of www.cal-icma.org/coaching. The PPT will be available about 2 hours before the webinar.

After a webinar occurs, a digital recording along with the PowerPoint materials and results of the polling questions will be available after 24 hours at the "Live Audio & Archives" tab of www.cal-icma.org/coaching.

Post-Webinar Group Discussions

Many agencies are organizing groups to participate in the webinars (live or recorded) and discuss the topics among themselves after the webinars. Some are summarizing their discussions and distributing them to managers throughout their organizations. Use the Cal-ICMA Coaching Program as an effective way to enhance professional development in your agency. Here are some discussion starters for this session.

a. Where are staff-board relationships most important—what topics, situations, etc.?  
b. What are some rub points in our staff-board relationships where improvement is desirable?  
c. What can we take from today’s webinar to enhance staff-board relationships?  
d. What guidelines or protocols would serve our community well?

MORE RESOURCES--See the "Coaching Corner" at www.cal-icma.org/coaching for valuable resources to boost your career. Sign up for the complimentary email list to keep informed of future sessions and resources at www.cal-icma.org/coachingList.

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Platinum Sponsors: CA Communities Joint Powers Authority, Chevron, and Pacific Gas and Electric Company  
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Enjoy the resources and support to thrive in local government.

Don Maruska, MBA, JD, Master Certified Coach  
Director, Cal-ICMA Coaching Program  
Author of “Take Charge of Your Talent” www.TakeChargeofYourTalent.com
John Nalbandian, Ph.D., Prof., School of Public Affairs & Administration

John has spent 12 years as department chair at the University of Kansas. The School specializes in training students for careers in local government, and US News and World Report has rated it as the number one local government graduate academic program in the country. In addition to his faculty position at KU, beginning in spring 2013, he will serve as a Courtesy Professor of Practice at Virginia Polytechnic and State University (Virginia Tech). In addition, he presently serves as an International Scholar in Armenia.* From 2007-2010 he served as the initial Greg and Emma Melikian Scholar of Urban Affairs at Arizona State University.

In addition to his academic appointments, from 1991-1999 John served as a member of the Lawrence, Kansas (pop. 100,000), city council including two terms as the council’s mayor. John has been recognized both as an “Elected Official of the Year” and as “Public Administrator of the Year.” And the Lawrence Chamber of Commerce named him and his spouse, Carol, as public service citizens of the year. In 2008 he and Carol were named “Educators of the Year” by the National Forum for Black Public Administrators.

John has been recognized several times nationally for his research, teaching, and service to the university and for the advancement of professionalism in local government. His co-authored text: Public Personnel Management: Conflicts and Compromise is in its 6th edition (Pearson Education, 2010). He and Carol frequently consult with local governments nationally and John has spoken to groups of local government professionals and elected officials throughout the United States, in Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia, and in his ancestral home, Armenia.

At KU, John has been named a Man of Merit by the Emily Taylor Women’s Resource Center. He has received a university wide Kemper Award for teaching excellence and also recognition for graduate teaching by the Center for Teaching Excellence. In 2012 he was honored by the University of Kansas Endowment Association’s Chancellor’s Club with its lifetime teaching award.

*International Scholars are named by the Academic Fellowship Program, Higher Education Support Program, Open Societies Institute, Soros Foundation.

School of Public Affairs and Administration: www.publicadministration.org
Nalbandian web site: www.goodlocalgovernment.org
Mike Conduff, ICMA Senior Advisor for Governance

Mike Conduff is the President and CEO of The Elim Group – Your Governance Experts, a leadership training, motivational speaking and organizational governance and consulting firm headquartered in Denton, Texas. Mike is a gifted speaker, multiple time bestselling author, and corporate coach, and has extensive leadership, management and governance experience.

During his 30-year career in local government, he served as the City Manager of four different University communities in the United States. He also served on the Board of Directors of the International City/County Management Association, and is a Fellow in the prestigious National Academy of Public Administration® and the Senior Advisor for Governance for ICMA, where he writes a regular Governance Column for PM Magazine.

Mike is the Past Chairman of the Board of the International Policy Governance Association, a worldwide organization of leading governance practitioners. His books on governance have been widely recognized and his book, The “OnTarget Board Member – 8 Indisputable Behaviors,” now in its third edition, has been nominated for numerous awards.

Considered a master of motivation, his three-plus decades as an employee, supervisor, City Manager, speaker, and consultant provide a unique background of learning experiences that he will enthusiastically share with us today as he explains his belief that we can create and nurture excellent relationships with our elected official partners in good governance.

Craig Rapp, Owner & President, Craig Rapp, LLC

Craig is a nationally recognized speaker, a former city manager, and the former Director of Consulting for the International City-County Management Association (ICMA). Craig speaks, conducts workshops, and consults throughout the United States on a wide range of subjects including: leading in difficult political environments, effective governance, performance excellence, authentic leadership, and living your true purpose.

He has thirty-five years’ experience as a senior executive in the public, private, and non-profit sectors, including city manager in three cities, senior director at a regional council, and vice president of a local government consulting firm. He is Senior Associate at the Center for Governmental Studies at Northern Illinois University, is a Credentialed Manager, and has completed the Senior Executive Institute. He has a master’s degree in public administration and a bachelor’s degree in urban studies.
Coaching Program: 10th year
Preparation the Next Generation Committee

Platinum Sponsors:  CA Communities Joint Powers Authority
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Overview of Session

1. How do you deliver bad news to elected officials, especially if a varied response is predictable?
2. What is the role of staff who report to the CAO in communicating with elected officials who have a challenging relationship with the CAO?
3. What are some techniques for dealing with surprise attacks from individual elected officials during public meetings?
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John Nalbandian, Professor of Public Affairs & Administration, University of Kansas

Mike Conduff, ICMA Senior Advisor for Governance, and former City Manager

Craig Rapp, consultant, former Director of ICMA Consulting, and City Manager

Don Maruska, Director, Cal-ICMA Coaching Program

…and polls and questions along the way.
Polling Question #1

Which of the following issues regarding Staff-Board relationships are of concern to you?
Navigating Staff-Board Relationships

John Nalbandian
University of Kansas
nalband@ku.edu
Overview

• Politics and administration are ways of thinking as well as acting
• The logic of politics and administration are different and translators are essential
• While administrative integrity requires “protection” from politics, nothing major gets done that is not politically acceptable
### Characteristics of Politics and Administration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Politics</th>
<th>Administration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Activity</strong></td>
<td>Game/allocation of values</td>
<td>Problem Solving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Players</strong></td>
<td>Representatives</td>
<td>Experts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Conversation** | “What do you hear?”  
  - Passion  
  - Dreams  
  - Stories | “What do you know?”  
  - Data  
  - Plans  
  - Reports |
| **Pieces**      | Intangible: Interests and symbols | Tangible: Information; money, people, equipment |
| **Currency**    | Power (stories) | Knowledge (deeds) |
| **Dynamics**    | Conflict, compromise, change | Predictability, cooperation, continuity |
Activity

• Game v. problem solving
  – 4-1 council can say outrageous things
  – 2-2-1 must be reasonable
  – 5-0 Staff can take initiative
  – 2-2-1 Staff must be cautious
Players

• Representatives and experts
  – Understanding consequences is more important than understanding the details of the options
Conversation

- Passion, dreams, and stories v. data, plans, and reports
  - Political stories based on single incidents that confirm beliefs
  - Administrative stories illustrate an analysis
Pieces

• Intangible v. tangible
Currency

• Power v. Knowledge
  – Do people listen to your stories?
    • Change positions and people still listen?
  – Administrative currency based on your knowledge; reputation based on accomplishments
Dynamics

• Conflict, compromise, change v. predictability, cooperation, continuity
  – Swearing in story
Takeways

• Understand that the logic of politics and administration are not the same—viewing the other through your lens leads to frustration
  – (If you genuinely want to know, don’t be afraid to ask, “Why did you vote that way?”)

• Working the gap between politics and administration is crucial to department head success
  – Think in terms of problems not departments
  – Think in terms of management team not silos
  – Remember, develop political sensitivity without becoming politically aligned
Polling Question #2

How many people are participating at your location?
Survey of Councils’ Effectiveness

Council effectiveness as decision making body

- Highly effective
- Effective
- Moderately effective
- Marginally effective
- Not effective

Source: ICMA State of the Profession survey, 2006; 2776 agencies reporting
Polling Question #3

How would you rate your Council’s effectiveness as a decision-making body?
Navigating Good Governance

What Every Council MUST Do

The OnTarget Board Member

8 Indisputable Behaviors
Democracy at the Doorstep

What You Do Makes Democracy Work!
Performance Time vs. Practice Time

Sports Teams Practice
Armies Drill Emergency Ops Do Tabletops
What about YOUR Team?
Council / Staff
Think of it as a Council Job Description

Where Else Would We Allow Total Inexperience?

17 to 25% Brain Power — What is Coming Next
Power of Relationships

Money in Your Pocket

Five Senses – Use Them!

Investment – Not An Expense

Succession Planning

Your Coaching Op
The REAL Meeting!

“There being no further new business the meeting adjourned to the parking lot, where the members said what they really meant!”
Policy Decisions

Choose the Destination
Choose the Arrival Time
Choose the Cost

Who Will Pilot?
Clear Purpose

Vision

Targets

Outcomes

Understood & Accepted!

THE BEST THING YOU CAN DO IS GIVE UP SMOKING, DRINKING AND FRIED FOOD

WHAT'S THE SECOND BEST?
Elected Education

Presume Good Intentions

League of California Municipalities

NLC

Don’t Point and Tell, Go and Show!
Council Retreats

Plan the What, Not the How
As Long a Time Horizon as Practicable
Use a Facilitator So YOU can Participate
Inculcate it as Part of the Culture
Candidate Orientation

After Filing Deadline
Before Elections
Non Partisan
Education Only
Provide Avenue for Fact Checking While Campaigning
New Council Orientation

As Soon As Practicable after Elections
Conducted by Current Mayor / Electeds

Council Process Manual

Practical Stuff – iPads, iPhones, Mailboxes

Policy Stuff Too!
Use or Create Citizen Academies

Where Does the Next Generation of Electeds Come From?
How Many of You Have Internal Succession Training?
Police or Fire Academies?
Your Own Citizen Academies?

Welcome to the City of Daly City, California

City Hall

Daly City Seeks Citizens Academy Candidates

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 25, 2008
Press Contact:
City Clerk
(650) 991-8127

Daly City is seeking applicants for the inaugural class of the Daly City Citizens Academy. The seven-week course kicks off Thursday, October 16 at City Hall with an introduction to the workings of local government. The class will meet from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. each Thursday evening through December 4 (except for Thanksgiving). Different City representatives, including the City Manager, will serve as faculty for the Academy.
Stay Current

Sharpen Your Own Saw
Best Practices
If You Represent the Brand, Make Sure it is a Good One
Social Media? Traditional Media?
Polling Question #4

Which of the following is your agency doing to enhance your board’s effectiveness?
Navigating the Council-Staff Relationship

Start with Your Half
“Before you can lead others, you must be able to lead yourself”

-Bill George
Just Three Things

• Know Yourself
  (Self-Awareness)

• Know your Environment
  (Situational Awareness)

• Know How to Act/React
  (Emotional Awareness)
Know Yourself

“Self-Awareness”

“My one regret in life is that I am not someone else”

-Woody Allen
Self-Awareness

• Sum total (thus far)
  – Setbacks, triumphs, family, school, jobs

• Style, Fears, Strengths
  – Charisma, conflict avoidance, blunt

• Peer group, therapy, 12-Step
  – Assessments
Know Your Environment

“Situational Awareness”
“The secret to managing is to keep the guys who hate you away from those who are undecided”

-Casey Stengel
Dysfunctional vs. Tough Politics
Tough Politics

• Characterized by Rules – explicit or implicit – but understood by all

• Relies on political process – wins by “having the votes”

• Can be emotional – but is not personal – respect remains intact

• Playing to win – pushing exclusive agenda, freezing out the other side...
Tough Politics

• Maximizes political advantage – programs, personal profile, reelection

• Depending upon form of government – can involve high level staff

• Predictability, consistency, reliability

• Things get done
Dysfunctional

• Not Getting Critical Tasks Accomplished
• Not Making Decisions Efficiently-or at All
• Not Setting or Following Goals/Priorities
• Council/Board don’t trust each other & disrespectful to each other
Dysfunctional

• Council/Board not respectful to and distrustful of staff

• Manager attacked / not trusted by Council faction

• Manager attacked by community faction

• Community factions creating continual roadblocks/ discontent, attacking Council/staff
Dysfunctional vs. Tough Politics

**Tough**
- Respect/Trust
- Political Process
- Rules
- Reliable
- Accomplishments
- Play to Win

**Dysfunctional**
- Disrespect/Distrust
- Disruption/Attacks
- Chaos
- Unpredictable
- No Decisions
- Play to Harm
Know How to Act/React

“Emotional Awareness”
“Would you rather be right—or Effective?”
Emotional Awareness

• **Thick Skin**- it does a body (and soul) good

• **Humility**- if it’s a foreign concept- be careful

• **Stress Reactions**- fight or flight?

• **Assessments**- EQI, Style types, VIA
Crucial Conversations/Confrontations
Crucial Conversations & Confrontations

• Communicating when the stakes are high
  – Shared pool of meaning
  – Identify what you want
  – Safety- Signs of Silence/Violence
  – Master your stories
  – State your Path
  – Your style under stress
Crucial Conversations/Confrontations

• Governing Board Dynamics
  – Internal/External
  – Board-Manager/Staff
  – Self-management & accountability
It’s Art AND Science

• Professionalism
  – Policy / Administration
  – Ethics
  – Evidence based recommendations

• Gray areas
  – Politics, Micromanaging
  – Where is the line?
  – Your ethical boundaries

• Prepare BEFORE you face the situation
“If absolute power corrupts absolutely, does absolute powerlessness make you pure?”

-Harry Shearer
Polling Question #5

In which areas do you think your agency's staff might enhance its skills to work better with electeds?
Contacts for Today’s Session

- **John Nalbandian**, Professor of Public Affairs & Administration, University of Kansas, [nalband@ku.edu](mailto:nalband@ku.edu)
- **Mike Conduff**, ICMA Senior Advisor for Governance, and former City Manager, [mike.conduff@theelimgroup.com](mailto:mike.conduff@theelimgroup.com)
- **Craig Rapp**, consultant, former Director of ICMA Consulting, and City Manager, [craig@craigrapp.com](mailto:craig@craigrapp.com)
- **Don Maruska**, Director, Cal-ICMA Coaching, [Cal-ICMA@DonMaruska.com](mailto:Cal-ICMA@DonMaruska.com)
Polling Question #6

How was the webinar of value to you?
Go to “Live Audio & Archives” tab at website for recordings of this webinar and other professional development resources.

www.cal-icma.org/coaching

Next webinar: “Managing Employee Compensation” 1-2:30 p.m., Wed., Mar. 20

Follow us online
Other states: Are you interested in an ICMA Coaching Partnership?

Some opportunities for State Associations:
1. Plug into proven infrastructure to serve you.
2. Suggest topics and invite volunteer presenters for participation in co-sponsored webinars.
3. Use template for state Coaches Gallery.
4. Use template for speed coaching at association and area managers’ meetings.
5. Customize with your own YouTube channel.

share your thoughts on the post-webinar survey.
### The Model Relationship between Council and Staff

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What the governing body expects from the staff</th>
<th>Obligations of the staff to the governing body. What will the staff contribute to the governing body?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Make sound recommendations (reliable, professional, factual, unemotional)</td>
<td>• Do our job skillfully and with integrity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Demonstrate commitment to the organization and the community</td>
<td>• Provide the best professional recommendations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Be conscious of community values and sensitive to them</td>
<td>• Encourage community input</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Understand the value of citizen trust of our local government</td>
<td>• Maintain a professional demeanor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Communicate in lay terms</td>
<td>• Maintain a professional demeanor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• No surprises</td>
<td>• Demonstrate our commitment to the city and community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Loyalty to elected officials and respect</td>
<td>• Identify policy issues and take them to the governing body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Be responsive to governing body needs and requests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Provide best practices and benchmark with high quality peer institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Provide a range of options and explain consequences of policy recommendations</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Educate the council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What the staff expects from the governing body</td>
<td>Obligations of the governing body to the staff. What will the governing body contribute to the staff?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Speak as a body and provide broad policy direction as opposed to involvement in day-to-day decisions</td>
<td>• Communicate our priorities as a body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Respectful consideration for professional judgment and the staff personally</td>
<td>• Trust staff’s recommendations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Trust that staff’s motives are oriented towards the public good</td>
<td>• Respect staff expertise, training, and knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Provide freedom and resources to carry out our mission</td>
<td>• Back up the staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Provide latitude in carrying out goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Educate the community</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Polling Results from “Navigating Staff-Board Relationships” – webinar

February 27, 013

317 locations; 834 participants in live audience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>[CLOSED] Which of the following issues regarding Staff-Board relationships are of concern to you?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>58% Delivering bad news to electeds, esp. if mixed response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54% Role of staff other than CAO in communicating with electeds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55% Dealing with surprise attached from electeds in public meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61% Handling electeds involving themselves in org. personnel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66% Addressing unethical elected official behavior</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[CLOSED] How many people are listening on your line?

- 67% 1 – just myself
- 21% 2-5
- 9% 6-10
- 3% 11-20
- 0% 21 or more — please send number using Question on webinar

[CLOSED] How would you rate your Council's effectiveness as a decision-making body?

- 12% Highly effective
- 47% Effective
- 29% Moderately effective
- 10% Marginally effective
- 3% Not effective

[CLOSED] Which of the following is your agency doing to enhance your board's effectiveness?

- 36% Written council process manual
- 49% Outside education for electeds
- 61% Council goal-setting retreats
- 69% Candidate/council orientation
- 26% Citizen academies

[CLOSED] In which areas do you think your agency's staff might enhance its skills to work better with electeds?

- 62% Self-awareness -- understanding personal dynamics
- 67% Situational awareness -- sorting out tough vs. dysfunctional
- 72% Emotional awareness -- choosing how to respond
- 2% Other -- please send in your ideas

[CLOSED] How was this webinar of value to you?

- 78% Provided framework for understanding staff-board differences
- 84% Delivered suggestions to improve Council effectiveness
- 80% Identified ways to increase staff skills with electeds
- 80% Stimulated thinking about what our agency can do
- 2% Other; send via Question tool on webinar
Notes about Self-Assessment Instruments

In response to the questions from the audience about self-assessment instruments, we received the following comments.

From John Nalbandian:
On instruments, check out the strength deployment inventory (www.personalstrengths.com) if not already familiar with it. Also, might add a note of caution that many instruments should be guided by facilitator.

From Craig Rapp:
The assessments I use in my consulting practice are all coordinated with my business partner, Dr. James Lynn- a psychologist. As John pointed out yesterday, it's important to place a caveat with these resources alerting the folks to the fact that trained professionals are best approach for connecting them with resources, and then interpreting them during follow-up. In my case, we are working with City Managers who have developed IDP's and are in a process. My partner creates a tailored report and then meets with the managers individually. We then incorporate the results into the IDP and any peer group work we might be doing with them.

Here are the assessments we use most often:

- EQi 2.0- the latest Emotional Intelligence assessment- based upon the Bradberry and Greaves work-- good for the emotional awareness
- MBTI Step II - the latest and enhanced version of the Myers-Briggs - a good assessment for self awareness, style, etc.
- True Colors personality Test- based upon Don Lowry's work- for self awareness, other awareness, social interaction
- Strong Interest Inventory - developed by psychologist John Holland-the "Holland codes"- indicating career preferences. We use this in conjunction with some Life Purpose work we do using the approaches and theories of best-selling author and purpose guru-Richard J. Leider- who trained me and Dr. Lynn- good for self awareness and understanding your core purpose/true calling
- Values in Action (VIA)-character strengths assessment- developed by the originator of positive psychology- Dr. Martin Seligman. Free online assessment- but best used in conjunction with a psychologist - particularly one conversant in positive psychology. We use this with our advance group that does deeper dives into who they are and how they operate in the world.

John's strengths deployment inventory is also great- and having personally been part of a group where he and Carol administered this- I can attest to its relevancy and usefulness

Other assessments that are popular that I've used in the past but don't use much today are:

- DISC profile- good, simple- self awareness
- Strength Finders-based upon Marcus Buckingham's- "Now Discover Your Strengths"- again, online, easy and fun to do= self awareness.

I didn't put websites here because each of the instruments has a myriad of consultants who administer and support these. Participants should become aware of the resources and then follow-through with a trusted professional.