

Americans love the quick fix. We want to take a pill and lose 20 pounds. We would like to buy one lottery ticket and become millionaires overnight. And we would like to change city hall into an organization that instantly can reduce crime, create jobs, and enable us to live happily ever after.

Unfortunately, life is not that simple. No magic diet pill can take off 20 pounds. Only one lottery ticket in 16 zillion ever wins. And switching to the **strong mayor** system of government will not solve all of our local governments' problems. In fact, it may make things worse.

Form-of-Government Debate

Rob Gurwitt's article in the July 1993 issue of *Governing* magazine, entitled "The Lure of the **Strong Mayor**," examines some of the discussions taking place on the subject of U.S. local government structure. Gurwitt suggests that "boosting the powers of the **mayor**" through a change to the **strong mayor** system can help larger communities to deal more effectively with their complex problems. He writes:

It may not be possible to end poverty, house the homeless, disband gangs, replace corroding streets, find the money to revive a withering economy, or put an end to civic squabbling. But one thing citizens clearly can do is re-fashion local government with the hope that someone--a **mayor**, an elected county executive--someone--can assemble the political authority to grapple better with those problems.

What is the "**strong mayor**" form of government that proponents feel gives a local government the political leadership necessary to make things happen? Under this type of charter, the **mayor** has the authority to hire and fire department heads, prepare the budget for council consideration, administer it after adoption, and veto acts of the council, which can override that veto only by an extraordinary majority. That is concentrating a tremendous amount of power in one person! And it can go even further. In the consolidated city/county of Denver, Colorado, the **mayor** can:

- Award any contract up to \$500,000 without reference to the city, council.
- Remit any fines or penalties levied under any ordinance passed by the city council. The only requirement is that the **mayor** must notify the council of the remittance and the rationale behind it.
- Submit an annual budget to the city council, in which not one line item can be changed without a two-thirds vote of the council.
- Appoint the heads of all administrative departments (some 50 in number), the county judges, and all boards and commissions under his or her jurisdiction. No city council advice or confirmation is provided for any of these appointments.

Gurwitt argues that to exercise political leadership, a **mayor** has to have administrative authority similar to that described above. In contrast to the council-manager form of government, the **strong mayor** form relies on a single, powerful leader who often forges coalitions by exchanging benefits for support and uses his or her power to gain leverage over opponents.

This approach has build-in limitations. There are too many actors whom a **mayor** can not control and too little power and too few resources to compel or buy support predictably. Leadership that uses power to forge coalitions is not necessarily responsive, particularly to those outside the ruling coalition.

On the contrary, a number of highly regarded American **mayors** have demonstrated that **mayors** can achieve political clout without being granted administrative responsibility. Two outstanding examples from large council-manager communities come immediately to mind: former San Antonio **Mayor** Henry Cisneros, who possessed the **strong** leadership skills necessary to become Secretary of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development; and former Charlotte **Mayor** Harvey Gantt, who continues to reside in that city and runs his own architectural firm.

Two Case Histories

When Cisneros took office as **mayor** of San Antonio in 1981, he inherited a sleepy, lower-income city with major problems in its educational system. Cisneros envisioned San Antonio as an international economic and tourist attraction, however, and he worked tirelessly to achieve that dream.

Although he had no responsibility over the city's public or higher educational system (in Texas, school boards are elected separately and are responsible for their own budgets), Cisneros recognized that education was the key to the realization of his vision. He unceasingly lobbied the University of Texas System and the State College Coordinating Board to locate an engineering school at the University of Texas at San Antonio, and he pushed the Texas legislature for more money for public education. He then went on the road to sell San Antonio as a biomedical headquarters.

His efforts to attract tourism also succeeded: San Antonio became only the fourth site in the country to boast a Sea World. His mayorship culminated in a drive to build the domed sports stadium that opened this summer to capacity crowds for the U.S. Summer Olympic Festival.

Cisneros also possessed the leadership skills to build consensus among highly divergent city factions. He used a series of bond elections and other strategies to bring together the city's business community and Hispanic neighborhoods.

Strong leaders such as Henry Cisneros realize that they are most effective when they are supported by an effective professional manager. Cisneros has said that San Antonio's greatest successes "can be attributed directly to our council-manager form of government, characterized by topflight professionals with a corruption-free, fiscally sound administration."

Harvey Gantt's record in Charlotte as the city's **mayor** from 1983 to 1987 is no less impressive. He was instrumental in the construction of the 24,000-seat Charlotte Coliseum and helped the team owner win an NBA franchise for the new

facility. He also spearheaded the construction of a performing arts center in downtown Charlotte in partnership with Nations-Bank's construction of its new 60-story corporate headquarters.

Through the city's neighborhood, small area, and district land planning processes, Gantt provided citizens with a voice; he also led the creation of a public-private housing partnership that leveraged private-sector funds to increase Charlotte's supply of affordable housing and promote home ownership.

Gantt is clear about his views on the different forms of government:

The council-manager form of government is absolutely the best form. . . particularly because it leaves the **mayor** and council free to focus on the big policy issues. The day-to-day operations of the city do not distract the **mayor** from this focus; they are left to a professional city manager and professional staff. Therefore, the council-manager form is a better and cleaner form because roles are clearly defined.

Other Erroneous Assumptions

Rob Gurwitt makes a second assumption, namely, that the council-manager form of government is outdated because it can not respond to the new demands of highly diverse communities. In speaking with citizens in Dallas, Texas, however, a different story emerges--that what ethnic minorities really want is more participation in the process, not politics as usual. Gurwitt assumes that political clout and responsiveness can and should come from only one individual, rather than from the entire city council or county commission.

Reformers always intended that the council-manager form would strengthen the quality and responsiveness of service delivery and would address basic citizen needs. The council-manager form is not less responsive; indeed, the strongest examples of citizen participation can be found in council-manager communities. The city of Dayton, for example, was the first large city to adopt the council-manager form, and it remains a **strong** advocate of professional local government management. For years, Dayton's neighborhood boards have been cited as models of citizen involvement. Similarly, the city of Cincinnati has a long, distinguished history of neighborhood activism.

And remember the David and Goliath story about how the city of Alexandria, Virginia, went up against Virginia Governor Doug Wilder and Washington Redskins owner Jack Kent Cooke? The city had other plans for the land that Cooke and the governor wanted to use for a football stadium. **Mayor** Pat Ticer successfully worked with the city staff and citizens to fight the plan to move the stadium to Alexandria.

Gurwitt goes on to suggest that the council-manager form means "leaderless" government, that "the more hands on the tiller, the harder it is to steer." He discusses the perceived lack of tools that a **mayor** in a council-manager community possesses to bring people together toward a common purpose--particularly people of widely diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds. Gurwitt argues that council-manager **mayors** have only "facilitative" leadership to fall back on, and that this type of leadership is insufficient to deal with today's heterogeneous communities.

But do we really want a **mayor's** leadership tools to comprise trading votes for services? Political leadership should not be confused with reactive, demand-responsive leadership. Too often, the political leadership in **strong mayor** governments encourages conflict among elected officials, which, in turn, produces political gridlock and a reliance on short-term coalition building. As a result, officials in **mayor-council** cities are more likely to avoid making hard choices. An article recently published in the Toledo Blade, for example, assesses the current condition of Rochester, New York:

[S]ince Rochester adopted the **strong mayor** form of government in the mid-1980s, council allocated to itself a growing amount of resources to place a check on the power of the **mayor**. That figure has loomed as high as \$500,000, or about .002 percent of its annual budget.

The council-manager form, on the other hand, uniquely blends political and professional leadership. Although political supremacy of the **mayor** and council are assured, the elected officials empower the manager with the independence needed to make sound recommendations to council, and to manage the local government organization using the highest professional standards.

In closing, Gurwitt implies that communities can switch to a **strong mayor** form of government and still retain the level of professional management that citizens have come to expect in council-manager cities. One of the big differences in the two forms, however, is the fact that in council-manager communities, the manager is appointed by and responsible to the entire governing body. Under the **strong mayor** form, any chief administrative officer who may be appointed responds solely to the **mayor**. The council has little input in that individual's selection or supervision. Although some CAOs may have served previously as managers in council-manager communities, the average tenure of a CAO in a **strong mayor** city is much shorter in comparison and may undermine the city's continuity.

To be sure, council-manager communities also experience turnover. But in most cases, these communities hire experienced managers to replace experienced managers. Marvin Andrews, for example, retired from Phoenix, Arizona, after serving as the city's manager for 14 years. Rich Helwig recently finished his ninth year as Dayton's city manager. And in Charlotte, North Carolina, Wendell White has served an even dozen years in that capacity. This kind of continuity is less likely to occur in **strong mayor-council** communities, where a single individual frequently chooses a CAO based on political loyalties rather than professional management abilities.

Professional managers not only have the capacity to serve different types of governments; they also attract other top executives to administer their governments' functions and activities. Today, the complexity of service delivery calls for individuals with superb organizational skills, a good sense of strategic management, and the ability to communicate effectively with disparate city factions--not inexperienced political loyalists.

In a 1992 issue of Public Administration Review, author Irene Rubin examined the adoption of new and innovative budget techniques in six major U.S. cities over the past 20 years. Of the six cities--Dayton, Phoenix, Rochester, Tampa, Boston, and St. Louis--the more politically reformed were likelier to adopt budget reforms quickly and were more receptive to trying new approaches. The less reformed cities, on the other hand, incorporated budget reforms that "enhanced central control over departmental operations." For the purpose of her article, Rubin defined politically reformed communities as those that operated under the council-manager form, held at-large council elections, and had a weak history of employee patronage.

It is no accident that for the past two years, most winners of the National Civic League's All-American Cities competition have been council-manager communities. This year, seven of the 10 honorees were council-manager communities. It also is worth noting that of Financial World's nine best-managed communities, three of the top five, including Dallas at No. 1 and Phoenix at No. 2, operate under the council-manager form.

[A Closer Look at Dallas](#)

Because Gurwitt showcased Dallas as a long-time council-manager city that has considered a change in its form of government, it seems appropriate to take a closer look at that city's political situation. Lori Palmer, a former Dallas councilmember who represented an inner-city district, describes the impact such change would have on the city:

If a **strong mayor** form of government were instituted, the real loser would be all 14 of Dallas's councilmembers. First, council members necessarily would lose their power and see it transferred to the **mayor**. Second, councilmembers would lose their access to the city administrators and department heads, who would be responsible and beholden only to the **mayor**, who would have the sole authority to hire and fire them.

The bottom line [would be] that Dallas's councilmembers, by having to give up both power and staff access, would become less rather than more effective in representing and serving their diverse constituencies. In the end, the citizens would be the final losers.

In many council-manager communities, Hispanic and African American activists have realized that for the first time they are being represented on the council in numbers that reflect their communities' diversity. As Gurwitt reported in his article, "The talk of moving to a **strong mayor** looks a lot like a ploy by the Old Guard to shift power away from the newly diverse council."

Al Lipscomb is an African American businessman and long-time civil rights leader who also was, until June 1993, **mayor** pro-tem of the Dallas city council. Both he and Lori Palmer "retired" from the Dallas council this spring after serving the maximum number of consecutive terms allowed by the city charter. Lipscomb opposes changing the Dallas form of government and observed that "every time minorities get into the loop, the rules are changed under some pretext or through some slick scheme."

At one time, Dallas's current **mayor** pro-tem, Domingo Garcia, thought he could support a move toward a **strong-mayor** government. Today, however, he states that "North Dallas has the economic and political clout to continue to elect a **mayor**, and under a **strong mayor** system, we would be left out. We finally are getting on the city council, and I want to increase the power and authority of the council, not decrease it as [a move to] a **strong-mayor** system would do."

[Some Concluding Thoughts](#)

To summarize, then, the stressful challenges facing today's urban communities definitely call for **strong** political leadership. As National Civic League President John Parr says, however, "Looking for political leadership does not need to mean getting rid of the council-manager plan or decreasing the role of the professional manager. This is not only a time of new partnerships across old political and geographical boundaries, but a time of new partnerships within local governments as well."

But what of the challenge of providing leadership within a metropolitan or regional framework in which units of government may number in the hundreds and special districts also abound? In such situations as these, is it not true that communities need a really **strong mayor**, who not only has a vision and can build consensus but who also has the authority to fix things, to make and enforce decisions, and to "twist tails" if necessary?

In his new book *Citistates*, Neal Peirce notes that "in some cities, there's still a nostalgia for the brand of decisive leadership exerted by a few exalted power brokers." He cites the work of banker Richard King Mellon and **Mayor** David Lawrence in Pittsburgh, who together spearheaded a renaissance in that city in the 1940s. Peirce notes that:

Today, the Mellon-Lawrence Act can be seen as heavily elitist, a relic of the time when small power cliques controlled each American city and brooked little opposition. The old titans, the small bunch of senior white males that met in exclusive clubs to make decisions that swayed cities' whole futures, are a virtually extinct species. Power in American communities seems to have been atomized by the rise of fresh power groups: upstart industries and businesses, powerful developers, ethnic alliances, organized blacks and Hispanics and Asians, environmental and women's and social service groups, and many more.

Today's city or citistate leadership can not be one of power but rather one of consensus building and facilitation. Gurwitt fittingly quotes Dr. James Svara of North Carolina State University, who has studied the roles of **mayors** in both forms of government extensively over the past decade. Svara argues that the pressures of civic diversity will produce facilitative **mayors** who "lead by empowering others--in particular the council and the manager--rather than seeing power for himself or herself."

Under the council-manager form, the effective **mayor** is a leader who not only contributes to the smooth functioning of government but also provides a general sense of direction. These individuals enhance the influence of elected officials

by unifying the council, filling the policy vacuum that can exist on the council, and guiding policy toward goals that meet the needs of the community. They are actively involved in monitoring and adjusting relations within local government to maintain balance, cooperation, and high standards. Contrary to the view of some that **strong mayors** are harmful to the manager, effective **mayors** enhance the performance both of the manager and of the council. In the final analysis, what really is needed in today's urban communities are **Strong mayors, Strong councils,** and **Strong** managers. No two of the three concepts are mutually exclusive; they can and do work together today in many of the country's successful council-manager local governments.

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By Terrell Blodgett

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Year 1949

# Leadership Functions of the City Manager

These comments on specific problems will help guide city managers and councils in determining proper relationships.

**2006 Comment:** In 1949, a group of managers and others familiar with council-manager government responded to the enduring questions about proper roles and responsibilities of city managers. Their personal views, reprinted here, provide the context for an insightful and candid observation by Donald Price: "I think that the fundamental principles of the council-manager plan permit the city manager to do quite a few things which might get him fired."

—John Nalbandian and Shannon Portillo

**T**o what extent and in what ways should the city manager be a leader in his community? Specific suggestions on this perplexing problem were outlined in the presidential address which C. A. Harrell, city manager of Norfolk, Virginia, delivered at the 34th annual conference of the International City Managers' Association at Mackinac Island, Michigan, in September 1948, and which appeared in *Public Management* for October 1948.

His address was based in part on the suggestions of several specialists in the field of public administration to whom he had sent a questionnaire in the summer of 1948. The replies of five city managers and of two well-known authorities on the council-manager plan are reproduced with permission. Replies to seven of the 13 questions appear in this issue, and the remaining replies will appear in a future issue.

1. *Should the city manager influence policy by offering a positive program for council's approval, or should he merely present alternative solutions?*

**John H. Ames** (city manager, Ames, Iowa, since 1927, and president of the International City Managers' Association): I prefer to present alternative solutions with supporting data to the council rather than make a definite recommendation concerning a matter of policy. In a few instances where no alternative solution seems possible, I have recommended a definite course of action. If requested by the council, I do submit a definite recommendation as to the solution I consider most desirable.

**Louis Brownlow** (formerly city manager, Petersburg, Virginia, and Knoxville, Tennessee, and for many years director of the Public Administration Clearing House, Chicago): Certainly, he should submit a policy program. However, he should make

his recommendations in such a way as to leave the council free from pressure, and if the council adopts a policy at variance with his recommendations, he should then submit a revised program in accordance with the action taken by the council.

If that action is such that he cannot in good conscience conform to it, he should resign. In any event, his advice to the council should be definite, and he should not put the council on the spot by asking it to choose among alternatives submitted to it by him, without indicating his own preference by positive recommendation.

**L. P. Cookingham** (city manager, Kansas City, Missouri, since 1940, and formerly city manager of Clawson, Plymouth, and Saginaw, Michigan): The manager should influence policy by offering a positive program for council's approval. In most cases the positive program should be directly related to administration. In cases where the proposed policy affects the conduct of individual citizens, such as regulatory ordinances, perhaps alternate suggestions may be desirable. The individual situation confronting me would be the determining factor in my recommendations, that is, I would decide on either one recommendation or alternate plan on the basis of the problem before me.

**Russell E. McClure** (city manager, Dayton, Ohio, since 1948, and formerly

city manager of Wichita, Kansas): There is no categorical answer. Many times, on a basis of his knowledge and experience, the city manager has strong convictions that certain policies will best meet the needs of the city, and in these instances a positive program should be recommended to the council. In other instances, such as an activity that involves a new field in which authorities differ, the city manager should present alternative solutions with his views as to the probable results.

**Don C. McMillan** (city manager, Pasadena, California, and formerly manager of Ventura and Alameda, California): The manager should, in my opinion, offer positive programs for approval, but in all instances where there would be some controversy he should have alternate programs for the council's approval.

**Lyman S. Moore** (city manager, Portland, Maine; formerly assistant to the city manager of Kansas City; and assistant administrator of the National Housing Agency): He should certainly offer a positive program; that is almost his most important function. As to specific problems, most of the time he should offer a single positive recommendation. Occasionally, there may be alternate solutions between which he has no choice, in which case he might offer both.

**Don K. Price** (associate director, Public Administration Clearing House, and in 1937 was one of three persons who made a nationwide study of the operation of the council-manager plan): I think he should do both. On the one hand, he should not put the council on the spot by putting up his own recommendation in such a way that the councilmembers have to take it or repudiate him publicly.

On the other hand, they ought to have the benefit of his definite advice. This would take the form of a straightforward recommendation, with a statement of the possible alternatives and the pros and cons of each. He should, I think, maintain a close understanding with his council so as to be aware of their general attitude, since he certainly cannot expect to be a city manager and carry on active

opposition to the main policies for which the council stands.

*2. In your opinion, should a city manager ever attempt to mold public opinion concerning a particular issue prior to any deliberation on the part of council? If so, when or under what conditions?*

**Ames:** I believe the city manager should not attempt to mold public opinion concerning a particular issue prior to the deliberation on the part of the council. He is an employee of the council and as such will be called on to administer whatever policy the council may determine.

If he has attempted to mold public opinion along a certain line and the council adopts some other policy, he is in a very embarrassing position in securing its satisfactory execution. It is not always possible to avoid discussions with citizens on future matters of policy of the council. The manager should be quite careful in discussing matters of that kind with citizens to warn them that the council has not considered the matter, and, until it has been, he should not be quoted.

Also, they should not assume that the discussion will in any way affect the carrying out of any policy which the council might adopt. I find it difficult to avoid situations of this kind where individuals whom I have known for many years come to me to discuss something which they would like to see the city do but which has not been definitely before the council for consideration. I try to give such individuals any information that I have that would have a bearing on the matter but avoid, insofar as possible, indicating to them what policy I thought the council should follow.

**Brownlow:** It depends on the character of the issue. If it is one of major importance, he should of course wait until he has the knowledge gained, perhaps informally, of the attitude of the council before he does anything of the sort. On minor day-to-day issues he cannot avoid saying things that will have the effect of influencing public opinion. For instance, he could not give out a statement on public health matters without influencing opinion.

In major issues where the council has taken formal action it seems to me his active intervention is indicated.

**Cookingham:** I do not know of any case when I would attempt to mold public opinion concerning a particular issue without prior discussions with the city council. I am very particular to discuss matters of policy with the city council before I discuss them publicly. It is possible that the manager might drop a hint to a newspaper man or to an individual councilman on an issue which he has in the back of his head before formal discussion by the council, but in these cases he should keep in the background.

**McClure:** No, he should first obtain the views of the council, and its members should assume responsibility for molding public opinion.

**McMillan:** No, definitely the city manager should not attempt to mold public opinion without first having the approval of the city council. Matters of policy are definitely under the city council and the city manager in my estimation has no right to supersede his council in this matter.

**Moore:** Hardly ever.

**Price:** On major issues I think the city manager should informally find out the general attitude of at least the leading council members before attempting to mold public opinion on an issue. I do not believe he is obliged to wait for a formal action or deliberation. On subordinate issues I should think he could be much more free.

On an issue on which he thinks it probable that the council would disagree with him, I do not believe it is unethical for him to try to persuade the public to adopt his point of view; he should, however, be aware of the risks of such a procedure and be prepared to take the consequences.

For example, a city manager, ethically speaking, should be perfectly free to tell the public that it needs to spend more money on public health services, even though he knows the council does not want to do so; he ought not to feel surprised or hurt, however, if he gets in trouble for such a course of action. I think that the fundamental principles of the council-manager plan

permit the city manager to do quite a few things which might get him fired.

3. *Would it be desirable, in your opinion, to attempt to combine in the city manager the community leadership features of the strong-mayor plan along with the technical efficiency of the manager plan?*

**Ames:** In my opinion, it would not. Under the strong-mayor plan the mayor is an elective officer responsible to the electorate directly and this is not true of the manager. I believe it would be very unfortunate for the manager to attempt to assume such community leadership.

**Brownlow:** The manager has his place as a community leader, as has been demonstrated in many cities, but it perhaps differs from the type of leadership exerted by elected mayors under strong-mayor charters. The essential difference is that the manager is responsible to a group of the elected representatives of the people, while the mayor is responsible directly to the electorate, frequently through a party or factional organization. As the city manager and the strong mayor do not meet in the same city at the same time, this differentiation of the type of leadership need not cause much worry. In any event, the personal qualities of leadership will show through no matter what the framework of the structure.

**Cookingham:** I do not think it would be advisable to attempt to combine in the city manager the community leadership features of the strong-mayor plan because this defeats the basic principles of the city manager plan and certainly would involve the manager in political discussions. I believe the manager, however, can provide community leadership if his leadership is within the bounds of administrative policy which has been adopted by the council.

For instance, he could assume some leadership in the promotion of a bond program after approval by the council, or on any other matter on which the council asks him to do some promotional work, I believe, however, it would be very bad for an attempt to be made to combine over-all community

leadership in the administrative head of the city government.

**McClure:** Not if this implies that the city manager is to assume responsibility for policy decisions. I feel that the city manager must continually recognize that his position is one of a technical advisor for those who provide the community leadership, and that he can best perform his service by stimulating his mayor and council to advocate, determine, and defend policies that will best meet the needs of the community.

**McMillan:** No. I definitely feel that the manager's position is to operate the city as efficiently as possible and that the obligations of the elected officials definitely should be to furnish the community leadership.

**Moore:** I think this has to do with the function of the mayor under the council-manager plan. In the bigger cities I feel certain that the manager must be backed by a "strong" mayor who exerts positive political leadership and that these two functions cannot be combined in a single individual.

**Price:** I think that the better city managers ever since the plan began have been community leaders in one way or another—some by very unobtrusive tactics, others by public speaking and a more conspicuous role. On important municipal policies I think they have probably been no less effective as community leaders than mayors, even though they have generally not taken public positions in electoral campaigns. I do not think that the public should always expect the city manager to be the principal community leader, but that the proper balance should be worked out in each case by the manager and his council.

4. *Do you think that, while refraining from public discussion of pending councilmanic matters, the city manager should point out publicly various desirable ways of improving community life which have not yet come before the council?*

**Ames:** I think it is possible in some instances for the manager to bring to the citizens' attention certain desirable improvements which would affect community life. He must weigh

carefully his remarks as indicated by my answer to the second question. It has been my own experience that the council has never resented my offering suggestions before groups for ways in which community life could be improved as long as such suggestions were not the subject of public controversy or matters upon which the council or members thereof had taken a very definite stand.

**Brownlow:** The manager should be frank in talking with individual citizens and with bodies of citizens, but he certainly should not attempt to build up sentiment in favor of a program which he himself intends later to try to persuade the council to adopt. It would be folly to try to answer this question by laying down a strict rule of conduct. The manager ought to have common sense and good taste; if he has, then there will be no trouble with this question.

**Cookingham:** I see no reason why the manager could not talk in general terms about the over-all improvement of community life, but the basic principles which he is promoting should certainly be concurred in by the council. In the final analysis the manager cannot promote policies or programs which in any way violate or do not coincide with the thinking of the legislative body.

**McClure:** Again, I believe that any matter worthy of a public statement by the city manager is of sufficient importance to discuss with the council first to obtain at least its informal approval of any views he may desire to present publicly.

**McMillan:** No, I feel that the manager should have a clearance from the city council before undertaking any public expressions of improving the community.

**Moore:** The manager cannot help but discuss the city's future but he can always do so in such a manner as to avoid committing the council in advance on specific projects.

**Price:** In answer to this question and question 5, I do not believe that managers need follow any absolute rule. I think that they should not be prohibited from discussing with private citizens and groups of private

citizens all aspects of possible community improvement. At the other extreme, I do not believe they should attempt to bring about such improvements by supporting one or another individual or faction in the election of councilmen. Between these two extremes they have to handle matters with tact and judgment, respecting the position of their councils but exercising their right to discuss the whole range of municipal problems on appropriate occasions.

5. *In your opinion, would the council-manager movement profit or suffer if managers suggested publicly the existence of various desirable goals prior to presenting them to council?*

**Ames:** In my opinion, the council manager movement would suffer if the manager did attempt to influence public opinion in matters which are properly of council concern.

**Brownlow:** A manager should set for himself, for his council, and for his city, certain long-range goals of community betterment. He should be known as an expositor and an advocate of these goals. The particular short-range approaches to these several goals are matters with which he should keep in step with his council—neither running ahead nor lagging behind.

**Cookingham:** I do not believe the city manager movement would suffer if managers publicly suggested desirable goals before presenting them to the council, provided such goals were not of the type which would arouse the ire of the council or be contrary to the views of the residents of the community. We do this in the preparation of a master plan which embodies or should embody all phases of community life, including the physical, the cultural, economic, etc. I still feel, however, that the manager must know pretty definitely the attitude of the council concerning the over-all program before he does much promoting of it.

**McClure:** If these goals were expressed in other than the general terms of the city charter and the previous acts of the governing body, I believe the city manager movement would suffer. Any new goals or any

new specific action within existing goals should certainly be presented first to the council.

**McMillan:** No.

6. *Considering the fact that administration is about 90 percent of city government, should the city manager assume the responsibility for developing popular support of the government?*

**Ames:** Directly no, indirectly yes. There are many ways in which a city manager can support good government without doing so through the press or through public addresses. The most important way is to have a well-administered city which in itself will develop popular support. I think if the manager does his job properly in administering the city, there need be no great concern on his part as to the support of the public for good government, and I do not feel it is the duty of the manager to try directly to sponsor such support.

**Brownlow:** If administration be 90 percent of city government, and if the manager is a good administrator, it would be difficult in my opinion for him to avoid trying to get the public support for the government. Doing the 90 percent which is entrusted to him, and doing it well, could hardly be hidden from the public. If the government is attacked, as it frequently is, because of improvements in administration, then the manager should lead in defense of what is being done, and in the attack on those who would subvert it.

**Cookingham:** Popular support of a government in my opinion can be accomplished through a good public relations program. Public relations is certainly a management function, and the city manager should assume responsibility for a good public relations program. I have often told the city employees that they are salesmen of municipal service. We have 4,400 of them, and they should be able to do a good job of developing popular support for the program.

**McClure:** Yes, keeping in mind the basic fact that good public service is the first prerequisite to popular support. Factual reports about the performance of the municipal services

within the policies established by the council are the responsibility of the city manager and his administrative staff. It should be recognized by the council, however, that its members also have a very important part in the public relations of the city.

**McMillan:** I do not believe that this is the sole responsibility of the city manager but is the duty of all city employees. The city manager of course should play his proportionate part in the work.

**Moore:** He cannot take the responsibility but almost everything he does bears on popular support—his budget, his handling of complaints, his public contacts, his employee relations, etc., etc.

**Price:** In answer to this question and questions 7 and 8, the more help the city manager can get from the council in supporting and defending the conduct of the administration, the better. Generally, I think he should avoid irreconcilable stands on those public policies that are likely to be campaign issues, even though this may not always be avoided. He ought not, however, to avoid taking a public stand in defense of the basic principles of the council-manager plan, including the city manager's responsibility for administration.

7. *Should the city manager publicly defend the legally enacted policy or should he leave this task to the council?*

**Ames:** Largely the council should defend their own actions, but it is inevitable that under certain conditions the manager will be called upon to defend the policy of the council because the administration of the policy is usually involved. We have had situations of that kind occurring in this city in which the city council has taken some legal action establishing a policy which proved to be unpopular.

In such instances, I have attempted to administer the policy in such a way that there could be no reflection upon the administration of the activity, but I have not sought to mold public opinion in favor of or against the policy as adopted. In some instances, I have been personally opposed to the

policy which was adopted, yet have made a sincere effort to administer it as I thought the council desired.

**Brownlow:** Both the manager and the council should defend. However, if the defense of such a legally adopted policy becomes an active issue in a campaign for election of members of council, then the manager should be silent. Even in this event, however, he should not remain silent with respect to the basic principle of the council-manager plan, including the acceptance of responsibility for administration by the manager.

**Cookingham:** I see no reason why the city manager should not publicly

defend a legally enacted policy. In most manager charters the manager is entitled to a seat in the council and entitled to debate in it, and therefore almost becomes a member of the council. He is certainly looked to by the public as the one who is informed on policy, and there seems to be no reason why he should not defend the policy legally adopted. He may not agree with it *in toto* but he would be disloyal to his council if he did not uphold the policy.

**McClure:** One of the basic principles of the council-manager plan is that it is the responsibility of the council to defend its policies. Certain-

ly the city manager should assist by providing any information that may be needed, but the public defense of a policy should rest with the council.

**McMillan:** The city manager is appointed to uphold the policies and carry out the policies of the city council. If he cannot defend legally enacted policies he should not burden himself upon the community. I feel that he definitely has a responsibility to defend any policy the council has taken providing of course that the policy is honest.

**Moore:** He should expect his council to defend publicly a policy which may be under attack. But often he must do so too.

Year 1959

# Perspectives in City Management

Address delivered at the annual banquet of the 45th annual conference of the International City Managers' Association in St. Louis, Missouri, on October 28, 1959.

by Arthur W. Bromage

**2006 Comment:** As indicated in the editor's note following this article, Professor Bromage served as both councilmember and political science professor. His remarks, offered in 1959 following the large-scale adoption of council-manager government after World War II, shed light on the issues of that time.

We see evidence that by 1959 the prominent role of the city manager that Dr. Hatton suggested in 1927 had become suspect, perhaps owing to the increasing popularity of council-manager government and the commensurate visibility of city managers in policy making. Bromage painstakingly tried to educate his listeners by posing what had become by that time the prevalent issue: How can a manager lead without stepping into the council's arena?

It is difficult to imagine that so much had changed since Hatton's time in actual council-manager relations to warrant Bromage's attention. Hatton wrote in 1927 that the manager would formulate, suggest, recommend, and

*continued on page 33*

**P**erspective means the interrelationship in which the parts of a subject may be viewed. The capacity to see things in their relative importance is becoming more necessary in looking at city management as its individual aspects increase. We cannot see the city manager as he really is by looking down upon him from cloud 47. Nor can we gain perspective by being constantly at the level of operations.

One reason for annual conferences is that they enable us to get a broader view of the situation. City management has always to deal with

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# **Matching City Power Structures and City Managers' Leadership Styles: A New Model of Fit**

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San Diego, March 20-22, 2008.**

## **Abstract**

The question why the turnover rate of city managers is relatively high has generated a steady stream of research and several explanations. Although not mutually exclusive, the reasons can be roughly divided into external, political forces and internal, personal choices that lead chief administrative officers to move on. However, in analyzing the political context, the research of the last 30 years has ignored the findings from the community power literature, which offers a nuanced, historically grounded view of local politics. By including the different types of community power constellations in the analysis and by probing the interaction between the political climate and the city manager's leadership style, this study obtains additional explanations for substantial variations in turnover rates. With this knowledge, cities can seek out managers with compatible leadership styles and skill sets; and vice versa, city managers can search for cities with an agreeable political climate.

The job of the city manager is a difficult one and made even more difficult by the constant threat of termination. According to various calculations and definitions, the mean length of service of the appointed chief executive is less than seven years and the median tenure is five years (DeSantis and Newell 1996, 5; Renner 2001, 39; Ammons and Bosse 2005, 65). Interviews reveal that the threat of dismissal is a constant subtext in the city manager's daily activities. This precarious situation has intrigued researchers and practitioners for a long time and generated several studies with a variety of explanations.

Although not mutually exclusive, the explanations for the high turnover can be divided into external, political forces and internal, personal reasons. Since city managers usually are at-will employees, they can be pushed out when the majority on the city council wishes to exercise this prerogative. Conversely, city managers can be pulled elsewhere by a job offer that promises personal career advancement and greater job satisfaction. The external and internal reasons cannot always be clearly distinguished, because managers may be quietly forewarned about a likely termination and encouraged to seek employment elsewhere. When responding to surveys managers may claim personal reasons and downplay the push factor.<sup>1</sup>

Studies analyzing the external, political reasons have identified unstable, fractious political conflicts in the jurisdiction as inimical to a long tenure for city managers. When no stable voting block controls the city council and when each election can change the balance of power, appointed executives are in constant danger of removal. However, some managers do survive adversarial politics, while others lose their jobs under less trying circumstances. Indeed, analyzing data from the International City/County Management Association (ICMA), Feiock et al. (1999, 9) found substantial variation in tenure from less than one year to 39 years. Ammons and Bosse (2005, 66) found a similar range in their sample.

This study explores the possibility that an additional political variable may contribute to the city managers' different length of service. The variable is the prevailing power constellation in the community, as reflected in the composition of the city council. The hypothesis is that each power constellation requires a specific leadership and management style and that a good fit will lengthen the city manager's tenure. The community power structures and the compatibility issue have received scant attention in the literature of the last 30 years. This may be due to the increased specialization among researchers. Leadership and management approaches are covered in the public administration literature and organization theory, whereas community power is the subject matter of political science and urban politics. This article crosses the divide between the two fields to argue that retention may be contingent on the proper fit between the political culture and the city manager's preferred leadership or management style.

The study, like others on retention, assumes that most chief administrative officers favor job security. Being fired is seldom a pleased experience, especially when the job change disrupts the lives of family members. In contrast, council members have had little reason to worry about a high turnover rate, because the constant playing of musical chairs ensured a steady stream of applicants. However, the ranks of city managers, like other professions, are graying, and a jurisdiction that can promise stability will have a competitive edge in attracting a strong performer from the next generation (Benest 2003; Blumenthal 2007).

A high turnover rate can have long-term negative effects on the city in other ways. Research indicates that instability in the executive office delays important policy decisions and raises the transaction costs of major contracts with outside providers (Feiock and Stream 2002, 118). These tendencies can have an especially detrimental effect on such critical urban policy areas like emergency preparedness and infrastructure planning. Succession planning in the crucially important mid- and upper-level management ranks will also suffer, when there is no chief executive promoting the process in a sustained way.

In the following, the article first reviews the research analyzing reasons for the variations in the tenure of city managers. The study then describes the major community power constellations discussed in the urban politics literature, followed by a summary of executive management styles identified in the business administration and public administration literature. In a fourth step, the analysis matches the management types with power structures, identifying compatible and incompatible relationships.

The findings derived from an analysis of the published research were field tested using the multiple case-study approach (Yin 1989). To capture the complexity of local politics, community power researchers have relied primarily on the case study method (Christensen and Hogen-Esch 2006, 263), and this study follows that tradition. The findings were further refined in interviews with a dozen present and former city managers, as well as in discussions with other observers of local politics. Their insights added substantial nuances to the argumentation. Since I promised confidentiality to the interviewees, their comments are woven into the text without attribution.

### **Research on City Managers' Retention Rates**

Through its periodic surveys of local governments, the ICMA has tracked the turnover rates by asking city managers about the years of service in their current positions. Surveys in 1984 and 1989 found the average length of service was 5.4 years. A 1994 study revealed that about one quarter (24.5%) had less than three years of service in their current position, and nearly 60 percent (59.7%) had served less than seven years in the same position (DeSantis and Newell 1996, 5). Table 1 presents the frequency distribution in greater detail.

[Table 1 about here]

The comprehensive 2000 survey of cities and counties revealed an increase in the average length of service in the current position to 6.9 years (Renner 2001, 39). But this statistic varied somewhat by the size of the jurisdiction, as shown in Table 2. City managers in the smallest communities (< 2,500 residents) had the shortest average stay (4.9 years), and managers in jurisdictions with 10,000 – 24,999 residents on the average had the longest tenure (7.8 years).<sup>2</sup> In analyzing the staying power of long-serving city managers (20 years and more), Watson and Hassett (2003) also found size (< 30,000 residents) to be an important factor.

[Table 2 about here]

Ammons and Bosse (2005) made an important point concerning the operational definition of “tenure” or “length of service.” The surveys conducted by DeSantis and Newell in 1994 and by

Renner in 2001 asked sitting city managers for the “length of service in their current position.” This approach does not capture information about completed terms, and the definition should not be mistaken for the “total length of service in the same position.” To measure total length, Ammons and Bosse (2005) conducted a longitudinal study, from 1980 – 2002, and excluded the city managers’ current term in office. Despite the different definitions, the averages ended up to be the same, 6.9 years. Ammons and Bosse (2005, 65) also demonstrated that the median was the better statistic to measure the central tendency than the arithmetic mean because the average got distorted by a few long-serving managers. The median year was only 5 years, which meant 50 percent of the city managers in their study had stayed less than 5 years in the same position and 50 percent had served for more than 5 years. Table 3 summarizes the findings.

[Table 3 about here]

Compared to the corporate sector, the city managers’ turnover rate is not high. But in the public sector, administrators are expected to serve longer terms in order to provide stability and continuity as counterbalance to the relatively short attention span of elected officials. The expectation of a long service goes back to the founding years of the civil service. The job of the professional city manager emerged in the United States with the progressive movement and municipal reform movement, which wanted a public workforce that was competent, stable, politically neutral, and provided public service without favoritism. Keeping public administration apart from politics was a way to promote neutral, professional competence (Wilson 1887). However, following the corporate model of the chief executive officer, the city manager would be exempt from civil service rules, especially job security (Stillman 1974, ch. 1).

In the 1950s and 60s, it was recognized that the politics/administration dichotomy was not reflecting reality, and academics as well as the professional community extensively debated the policymaking and political roles of city managers. The short tenure of CAOs was also noted and researched. According to a study by Kammerer et al. (1962, 6), the average years of service in Florida in the years after WWII were 3.66 years and in Virginia 5.49 years. Kammerer and her co-investigators (1962) examined the effects of four variable clusters on manager termination rates in the state of Florida, (1) institutional-structural aspects, such as elections and appointment procedures; (2) personal characteristics, such as the manager’s educational background; (3) nonpolitical community factors, such as population growth; and (4) political factors, such as the political stability of the community and political style. The political factors are of greatest interest to this study, because they were an early effort to relate retention rates to political power structures.

Based on previous community power studies, Kammerer et al. (1962, 23) developed a tripartite typology. Depending on the “degree of competition between or among leadership cliques,” they labeled city politics as monopolistic, oligopolistic, or competitive. From the totality of Florida cities with a council-manager form of government, ten cities were selected to study the power structure in detail using the case-study method. A not-surprising finding was that in competitive cities electoral considerations determined most of the involuntary terminations, and in monopolistic cities the power of the mayor had the greatest influence on the likelihood of termination.

Bollens and Ries (1969, 21-33) developed a more complex typology of community power structures to examine appropriate leadership styles. The typology included three variables: (1) the distribution of citizen contributions to political decisions, (2) the congruence of the values of political leaders with those of the general citizenry, and (3) the prevailing functions of the city government. The resultant typology identified various consensual or conflicting situations that required different managerial skills, ranging from expertise in managing growth, ability to provide routine municipal services efficiently, to alliance building and arbitration skills. As can be expected, Bollens and Ries (1969, 26-32) found that the city manager could expect the greatest job security in cities with a consensual political culture that required traditional professional and technical skills. Conversely, the tenure was likely to be short when competing elites and shifting alliances dominated local politics.

Other research teams followed in examining the policymaking and political roles of city managers. One group worked in the San Francisco Bay Area (Loveridge 1971), and another one studied city managers in Oklahoma (Hough, Bawell, and Morgan 1973). The general conclusion was that city managers had to be good politicians to stay in office. However to lengthen their tenure, they should not draw attention to that fact, but maintain a low public profile (Mosher 1982, 6-8; Ammons and Newell 1989, 44-45). In subsequent years, researchers lost interest in examining the nexus between city politics and the city manager's roles. This discontinuity may have been due to the increased specialization of academics and the widespread splitting of the public administration field from political science.

Svara (1990) renewed scholarly interest in the politics/administration dichotomy. He clarified the dividing line between the city council's and the manager's proper sphere of influence by expanding the dichotomy to four concepts – mission, policy, administration, and management. He found substantial agreement between council members and managers over the shape of the boundary separating the responsibilities. In a more recent study, however, Svara (1999) observed an increased blurring of the lines. He did not address the issue of political climate, which would have added even more uncertainty to the manager's expected area of operation.<sup>3</sup>

In researching the variables influencing the relatively short tenure of local government executives, DeHoog and Whitaker (1990) discovered that political reasons or push factors explained about half of the turnover, while professional advancement and other pull factors accounted for the other half. However, the line could not be clearly drawn due to the practice of allowing chief administrative officers to resign rather than being dismissed by the city council. Experienced city managers pass on the advice “get out before they fire you” (Montgomery 1988, 25). The 2000 ICMA survey found that only 10 percent of the managers who had changed positions in the previous year had left voluntarily. Of the 90 percent who had left involuntarily, 10 percent had been fired, 20 percent had been forced to resign, and 70 percent had been under pressure to resign (Renner 2001, 39-40).

Kaatz, French, and Prentiss-Cooper (1999, 162, 168) probed the association between political conflicts or policy conflicts on the city council and the city managers' degree of burnout and the desire to leave their positions. They found that about 58 percent of the 168 managers participating in the survey were experiencing a low level of burnout, 14 percent a transitional form, and 28 percent a high burnout phase. In addition, the researchers discovered that the

relationship between political conflict and high burnout was moderately strong, while the association between policy conflicts and high burnout was inconclusive.

Feiock and Stream (1998, 124-125) used regression analysis to test the possible impact of twelve internal and external factors on the tenure of city managers. Among the professional indicators, they found an MPA degree lengthened retention by about one year, while community conflict shortened it by about six months. In a subsequent study, Feiock et al. (1999, 10) found perceived role conflicts between the city manager and mayor as well as between the city manager and council to be statistically significant predictors of length of service. In a third study, the return rate of city council members emerged as the strongest predictor of the city managers' turnover rate (Feiock and Stream 2002, 121-122). In addition to council member turnover, short-term or long-term economic change can also impact turnover (McCabe et al. 2008).

Hanbury, Sapat, and Washington (2004, 568-569) also used regression analysis to examine the impact of several internal and external variables on the city manager's length in office. The subtitle of their article, "The 'Fit Model' of Leadership," gives the impression of similarity with this study, but a closer look shows important differences. To operationalize leadership style, the authors used a tool called the Leader Behavior Analysis II-Self Instrument, and the personality dimension was captured using the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator. To assess the city managers' perception of fit, the respondents were asked to compare their personality type with the expectations of the city council. The perception of the city council was obtained from the performance evaluation of the city manager. Other variables included in the model dealt with the city managers' personal characteristics, as well as the demographic and economic characteristics of the jurisdiction.

Some variables were statistically significant. For instance, managers in wealthier cities could enjoy longer tenure. However, some of the findings were perplexing. Experience, calculated as the years of previous service, was negatively related to longevity. Homogeneity, in terms of the percentage of the white population, was also negatively related to tenure; but so was diversity, determined by the percentage of foreign-born residents (Hanbury, Sapat, and Washington 2004, 572).

The contradictory and counterintuitive findings justify investigating other factors that may explain a poor or good match between the city council and the city manager. Considering the tenuous political foundation on which city managers build their professional career, it is appropriate to analyze the political environment in greater detail to find additional indicators for retention and to lower the probability of turnover. In the 60s, researchers developed their own typologies of community power to examine appropriate city managers' roles and reasons for high turnover rates. In contrast, this study uses types of power structures found by researchers of urban politics over the last 50 years. The next section describes seven types.

## Theories of Community Power Structures

According to the urban politics research, control of city hall can range from highly concentrated to highly dispersed. The argumentation in this study focuses on seven major community power constellations: (1) the political machine, (2) one elite in charge, (3) competing elites, (4) partnership regime, (5) political pluralism, (6) hyperpluralism, and (7) network governance.

The power structure of a jurisdiction can be called a **political machine** when it exhibits the following characteristics (Kweit and Kweit 1999, 176-181):

- Political power is in the hands of a clique, which controls the majority party and dominates the mayoral election as well as city council races.
- Government jobs and city contracts are used to reward political loyalty.
- Leaders and followers come from a relatively humble background and use political power to enrich themselves and improve their socio-economic standing (Bridges 1997).

Political machines gained influence in cities in the later part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In subsequent decades, they waxed and waned depending on the strength of countervailing good-government forces. At the present time, investigations by district attorney offices and the FBI point us to cities where public corruption has become part of the political culture.

When an upper class controls a community, the resulting power constellation has been identified as **elite politics**. It has the following properties (Hunter 1953, 102):

- Political power is dominated by a stratum of like-minded, well-off people, who hold influential positions in business, government, and cultural institutions.
- They hold a stable supermajority on the city council and control the election of the mayor.
- The policymaking process emphasizes efficiency and effectiveness over democratic inclusiveness.

Evidence in support of elite theory has been gathered interviewing knowledgeable individuals in communities, using the so-called reputational method. A second method involves studying the socio-economic background of persons in positions of power, and a third approach involves analyzing policy outcomes (King and Margetts 1995; Domhoff 1998).

As the analyses by Molotch (1976) and Logan and Molotch (1987) have shown, power in local jurisdictions may oscillate between two types of economic interests leading to a situation identified as **competing elites**:

- National or international corporate interests are competing with local real estate interests, the so-called growth machine, which includes developers, construction companies, banks, realtors, and unions in the building trades.
- Corporate interests seek jurisdictions with cheap land and low operating costs, while the local growth machine attempts to maximize its financial gain.
- The national and international investment interests seek jurisdictions with low taxes, while the local economic interests accept a certain level of taxation to strengthen the infrastructure and maximize the value of the land.

No representatives of corporate interests may actually sit on the city council. Their policy preferences, despite their disagreements, may be promoted by the local growth machine because it seeks to maximize its profits by attracting the investment wealth of large corporations (Domhoff 1986). Depending on historical circumstances, other types of competing interests can dominate the local scene, e.g., big-box retailers in the suburbs versus small retailers on Main Street or environmentalists and smart growth advocates versus pro-growth business interests

(Dreier, Mollenkopf, and Swanstrom 2001, 164-171). Elites can also break up into a liberal and conservative camp.

**Partnership regime** refers to a situation where a relatively stable coalition has been created between a minority-controlled city hall and a white-controlled business sector (Elkin 1987; Stone 1989a; Keating 2001; Mossberger and Stoker, 2001; Stone 2005):

- In some cities economic power is controlled by whites, while political power and the majority vote are in the hands of African-Americans or Latinos.
- There is a balance of power between the two sides, of which both interests are aware. When investor interests are threatened by city hall, finance capital and jobs may leave the city; and when citizen interests are ignored by the economic elite, voters may shift to the opposition or simply not vote.
- Coalition politics is used to accommodate both camps and achieve a balance of power.

In cities like Atlanta, the partnership can be relatively stable and long lasting. However, it may not lead to equal gains for both sides. As Keating (2001) points out, poverty and segregation have persisted in the Black communities of Atlanta's south side.

**Political pluralism** describes a situation where power is dispersed among several major groups in the community. It is associated with the following conditions (Dahl 1961; Polsby 1980; Judge 1995):

- Mayoral and city council elections are contested among diverse economic, civic, and demographic interests, with no foregone conclusion as to which voting bloc or coalition may win.
- The dispersion of power and the lack of a stable governing coalition can also be observed during the policymaking process. There is not one group or coalition dominating all policymaking activities.
- After due deliberations, under the guidance of elected and appointed government officials, compromises are achieved and policy decisions are made.

The pluralistic sharing of political power is supposed to lead to a somewhat equitable distribution of governmental benefits and burdens.<sup>4</sup>

A community power structure may be identified as **hyperpluralistic** under the following circumstances (Wirth 1974; Yates 1978; Waste 1986, 122-124):

- Many factions are jostling for political attention and governmental benefits, but no faction or coalition of factions is strong enough to get the city council to agree on important policy decisions.
- The disparate factions create temporary coalitions to block major programmatic decisions, but they cannot agree on an alternative course of action.
- These negative coalitions paralyze the policymaking process, and important city projects remain stalled.

In cities where several demographic groups are at odds with each other, but also with traditional business interests, unions, or environmentalists, the hyperfragmentation of political power can lead to an unending stream of policy demands and few tangible improvements in quality of life conditions.

Heinz Eulau (1986) was an early proponent of empirical research into community power hypothesized as networks. In more recent years, however, **network governance** has been discussed more in the public administration field than in urban politics (Frederickson 1999). The traditional community power research analyzes cities as islands or freestanding entities. In contrast, the focus on networks sees cities in an intergovernmental and intersectoral web of

policymaking and service delivery. The networked governance model has some of the following characteristics (Considine and Lewis 1999; Goldsmith and Eggers 2004; Freyss 2004, 19):

- A centralized government bureaucracy is replaced or supplemented by a network of partnerships with other jurisdictions, for-profit enterprises, nonprofit organizations, and citizen groups.
- Government agencies may function as facilitators and guarantors of service delivery, but not be the actual providers.
- High-quality outcomes are promoted through networks of professionals, who share a common vision of best practices.
- The power of the city council may vary depending on the ability of council members to understand the emerging network structures, provide appropriate policy guidance, and exercise effective oversight.<sup>5</sup>

Network governance is especially appropriate in metropolitan regions, where it can ensure a seamless, area-wide infrastructure despite a crazy quilt of jurisdictional boundaries. When functioning well, the networked approach can be low key and non-controversial, and it may therefore not be perceived as an exercise in community power. But an analysis of city managers' turnover rates needs to include networks as possible power structures, because a breakdown in intersectoral and interjurisdictional collaboration can lead to governmental paralysis and put the city manager in the hot seat (Christensen 1999).

The literature indicates that city managers' tenure is the shortest one under hyperpluralistic conditions, because elected officials use the manager as scapegoat for their failure to achieve lasting improvements (Whitaker and DeHoog 1995). While therefore most managers may want to stay away from a highly fragmented jurisdiction, it offers challenges that some executives are willing to confront. The next section describes executive management styles in general, followed by a section in which the various styles are matched with the seven community power patterns.

### **Theories on Executive Management Styles in the Public Sector**

The public administration and business administration literature makes a distinction between management and leadership (Ammons and Newell 1989, 10; Vasu, Stewart, and Garson 1998, 92). Leaders are supposed to generate visions, identify missions, set goals, and provide the resources that will enable the organization to realize its goals. In contrast, managers are expected to use the resources and take the necessary actions to achieve the expressed goals.

City managers are supposed to rely on elected officials to provide the vision, mission, and goals, as well as the resources. However, as the community power research indicates, the leadership capacity of the city council varies, which requires flexible responses on the part of the chief administrator, ranging from low key to strong presence. The discussion of executive management styles in this section is by no means exhaustive. Emphasis is placed on those executive roles that yield a match with a community power structure.

Changes in our understanding of proper administrative styles have paralleled the shift from the patronage system to the merit system. The former system conjures up the image of a poorly prepared, but loyal yes-sayer, caretaker or conserver (Downs 1967). This image stands in stark

contrast to the neutral competence of the professional administrator selected under merit system principles.

The political neutrality of the professional administrator is predicated on the politics-administration dichotomy or separation of powers, with the political side making public policy, while the administration executes it. The first ICMA Code of Ethics, issued in 1924, states that council members “primarily determine public policy.” However, the code does call upon the manager to “exercise *his own judgment* as an executive in accomplishing the policies formulated by the council” (emphasis added). Fourteen years later, a revised Code expresses the dichotomy in even stronger terms. The preamble of the 1938 Code sets the guideline that in the council-manager form of government, “policy shall be determined exclusively by the council,” and the main part of the Code asserts that “the city manager is in no sense a political leader” (Svara 1998, 55).

When the politics/administration dichotomy came under attack after World War II, the ICMA responded by revising the Code of Ethics in 1952 and casting the city manager in the role of a community leader: “The city manager as a community leader submits policy proposals to the council and provides the council with facts and advice on matters of policy to give the council a basis for making decisions on community goals” (Svara 1998, 56).<sup>6</sup> In their critical analysis, Bollens and Ries (1969, 20) also concluded that the many resources under the control of city managers gave them the status of a community leader. Other observers of local government noticed that when the dividing line between politics and administration collapsed conceptually, city managers were told to be politically savvy without revealing this competence (Nalbandian 1995).

The emerging image of the city manager resembled that of an acrobat, who was able to walk the fine line between inadequate and too much involvement in the political battles of the city. It was a precarious position to take, and other styles were recommended. Pluralist democratic theory introduced the image of government as the umpire ensuring fair play as competing political interests bargained and compromised over the distribution of public benefits and burdens (Dahl 1961). If the community needs more than a referee, the role of head coach or team builder has been suggested (Wheeland 1994, 291; Neu 2003).

More recently, the concept of the power broker has surfaced and been embraced as an appropriate role for managers to play in cities with major factions. City managers, uncomfortable with the notion of brokering political power, may instead embrace the role of the mediator. It implies a level-headed person who can listen to all sides and get them to agree on a fair allocation of governmental benefits and burdens. Facilitator and negotiator are other terms used in this context (Denhardt and Hammond 1992, 142; Morgan and Watson 1995, 76).

Some researchers cast the chief administrative officer in the role of a community builder, catalyst, innovator, pioneer, or policy entrepreneur. Such a person can communicate a vision and mobilize needed resources (Mulrooney 1971, 12; Henry 1971, 25; Luke 1986; Nalbandian 1999; Kazman 1999, 17). However, such a role can expose appointed executives to unwanted public attention and shorten their tenure. Svara (1995) therefore cautions city managers not to exceed the role of a “comprehensive professional leader.” Camille Cates Barnett apparently overstepped

that line and therefore lost her job as city manager of Austin in a relatively short period of time (Barnett 1994a; Barnett 1994b).<sup>7</sup>

Moore (1995, 17, 20) gives the idea of the comprehensive professional leader a more concrete understanding. He argues that public managers should not only be oriented downward, toward their subordinates and the control of bureaucratic operations, but also upward, toward political superiors and policymaking, as well as outward, toward citizens and valued outcomes. This orientation sees the public manager as explorer and as leader of an on-going discovery process. The strategic perspective helps the manager to be proactive and to anticipate political conflicts, changing public needs, and internal organizational weaknesses. The notion of a three-dimensional realm of work acknowledges the complexity of the manager's job, and the idea of explorer casts the manager in the role of an inquisitive master student, who is a quick study and ahead of the learning curve of elected officials, subordinates, and citizens.<sup>8</sup>

But being a quick study may not be the deciding quality for city managers to keep their jobs. This study argues that the seven community power constellations, as reflected in the composition and actions of the city council, require different combinations of administrative and leadership skills on the part of city managers, if they want to maintain a good rapport with the city council and keep their jobs.<sup>9</sup>

### **Matching Community Power Structures and Executive Management Styles: The Model and Related Case Studies**

The analysis suggests that machine politics demands the greatest secrecy and behind-the-scene-maneuvers on the part of the city manager, while hyperpluralism requires the greatest public engagement and political involvement. Table 4 shows the proposed matches in schematic form.  
[Table 4 about here]

A city dominated by a **political machine** is likely to have an unreformed city charter and unlikely to have a council/manager form of government. However, if it does, the manager is not expected to exercise sound professional judgment in administering the city, since personnel decisions, procurement, and other important managerial functions are manipulated to serve the political machine. Accordingly, the best image that comes to mind to identify the appropriate managerial style is that of the **caretaker**. Such a person will do what he or she has been told to do and will not question the propriety of the directives given by the council and other influential individuals. On the contrary, as caretaker, in the literal sense, the city manager will protect the interests of the entrenched machine. In this way, he or she may enjoy job security as long as the machine is in power.

South Gate (pop. 96,400 in 2000) and Compton (pop. 93,500 in 2000) are two cities near Los Angeles that exemplify this match. When indignant voters in South Gate recalled an apparently corrupt faction on the city council, as well as the elected city treasurer, the city manager helped the outgoing officials loot the city coffers. As a subsequent investigation revealed, the treasurer and the city manager “spent 90% of the city’s \$8.9 million emergency reserve, most of it going to attorneys,” in the last seven months in office (Marosi and Morin 2003, B1). In Compton, both

the mayor and the city manager were sentenced to three years in prison on felony corruption charges (Pang 2004, B3).

The corrupt or corruptible caretaker style contrasts sharply with the image of the **professional chief administrator**. CAOs are supposed to be well educated and skilled in managing the city efficiently, effectively, and quietly. The professional style is favored by the **power elite**, which may apply a similar approach as CEOs in the business sector. City politics under elite control is relatively stable, and a competent city manager can remain in office by staying “above politics” (Hassett and Watson 2002, 624).

The city of Temecula (pop. 57,700 in 2000) provides an example of this council/manager match. For California and even for U.S. standards, the city is quite homogenous. It is 78.9 percent white (U.S. 75.1%), and only 5.6 percent of the families live below the poverty level (U.S. 9.2%). In contrast, the city council appears quite diverse – four males, one female; three of European background, one of African and one of Arab ancestry. And some observers of local politics have identified the power structure as resembling the partnership regime. But the socio-economic background of the council members and newspaper articles suggest a different picture. Four of the five council members belong to the local growth machine (2 bankers, 1 realtor, 1 developer), and the fifth one is a retired police officer. Newspaper stories on election campaign contributions confirm the strong influence of growth machine interests on local politics (Bennett 2003).

The chief administrative officer of Temecula, first appointed as acting city manager in 1999 and as city manager in 2001, is apparently well matched with the interests the council members represent. In the local newspaper he is described as flying “under the radar much of the time” and “knowing when to involve the elected officials and when not to.” However, the article goes on to describe the city manager not as a puppet of local interests, but as a professional with clear standards. As the mayor expressed it, “He’s not afraid to look a council member in the eye and say, ‘That’s not a good idea’” (Hunneman 2005, 27).

When the local power structure breaks apart into **competing elites**, the city manager has to get immersed in politics. The chief administrator now has to play the role of **power broker**, **mediator**, and premier problem solver (Bollens and Ries 1969, 36). This requires gaining the trust of both camps, bringing both sides to the table, and getting them to agree on compromises (Fisher and Ury 1991, 40-55).

As the review of several case studies from around the country shows, the arrival of a big-box retailer like Wal-Mart can cause the emergence of two opposing political camps. On one side is the local growth machine welcoming Wal-Mart. On the other side a coalition of small retail businesses, labor interests, and environmentalists may try to block the development. City managers, too much identified with one side, may fail, as it happened in the city of Rosemead, CA (pop. 53,500 in 2000). When a majority on the council, supported by the city manager, voted for Wal-Mart, an energetic and media-savvy opposition emerged. It could not stop the construction, but it mobilized a recall election and drove the city manager out of office (Kosareff 2006).

The city of Vermillion, SD (pop. 9,800 in 2000), exemplifies a case where compromises were hammered out between competing interests before a Wal-Mart was approved (Lias, 2004). The community changed city managers during this time. The new one was seen as a good fit because of his management style, described by the mayor as a “soothing, mediation type of management and personality.” “We had some tough issues on his first week, but we were very pleased by his ability to put both sides at ease and arrive at a solution which would work for everybody” (Dockendorf 2005, 31).

A **partnership regime** also requires the skills of a **power broker** or **mediator**. However, under the partnership arrangement, one camp consists of powerful minority interests, who can control the majority vote on the council; while the other camp consists of investment interests, which may leave the jurisdiction if their economic demands are ignored. The city manager succeeding under these political conditions must gain the trust of the minority groups, while also enjoying the support of corporate interests. A personality type with a knack for brokering or mediating may prevail in such a political culture (Ghori 2001).

Studies of successful mayors provide examples of masterful brokers and mediators. Banfield (1961) described Mayor Richard J. Daley as a skillful broker in various community conflicts and as a “master broker between Chicago’s tradition-minded inner wards and its modern-minded outer wards” (Stone 1989b, 136.) More recently, Antonio Villaraigosa, the first Latino mayor of Los Angeles in modern times and a former union official, used his mediating skills to resolve a bargaining impasse between white hotel owners and the minority-controlled hotel workers union. The disruptive forces of a strike and lockout could have been crippling for the local tourism industry and the local economy in general (Finnegan and McGreevy 2005).

Under **classical pluralist conditions**, power is dispersed among several political interests. Since the power of individual factions is supposed to be kept in check by competing ones, the city manager is needed less as a power broker or mediator than as an **umpire** in the field. In this role, the government executive is expected to ensure that the various political groups play by the rules of the game, which means being willing to communicate with opponents, as well as being willing to bargain and to compromise. The city manager can act as the facilitator by listening to the various grievances, bringing the different interests to the table, ensuring that all major voices are being heard, and that compromises are fair. To facilitate cooperation among the various groups, the chief executive may also play the role of head coach or team leader (Neu 2003).

Keith Mulrooney, past city manager of Claremont, a university town 30 miles east of Los Angeles (pop. 34,000 in 2000), testified to the nature of his work under pluralist conditions: “Confronting antiwar demonstrators, holding council meetings in Chicano houses, sitting with hippies in a park discussing last week’s narcotics bust, bargaining against a labor pro, or contracting with the Black Student Union ... all seem a little far removed from POSDCORB ...” (1971, 6). Mulrooney survived in the role of a hands-on umpire or coach for eight years. One could also argue that the many factions threatened to sink the city into hyperpluralism, which Mulrooney averted by gaining the trust of disaffected segments of society and acting as community builder.

The more recent globalization and multicultural trends can also push the city manager into playing the role of umpire or guardian of written and unwritten rules. Self-confident, but relatively recent, immigrants serving on the city council may want the administration to adopt practices and customs of their home countries, unaware that the actions are illegal or inappropriate in this country.

When political interests break apart into many factions that refuse to compromise, community politics can lead to **hyperpluralism** and stagnation. City managers who like to get things done quietly and efficiently will be very frustrated in such a tense situation (Golembiewski and Gabris 1994). A person who thrives on controversy, a **community builder** type, may be a better match. The community leader has the charisma to lift the factions above their fragmented demands by sharing a common vision that a majority on the council and in the community can embrace. Such coalition politics tends to be unstable, but at least it offers temporary solutions to the political paralysis created by hyperpluralism. Sometimes the public leader can also give the appearance of unity and success by effectively manipulating politically charged symbols (Edelman 1964). Villaraigosa, the mayor of Los Angeles, is a master of this tactic, which some political observers see as quite appropriate considering the city's recent history, while others criticize the approach as grandstanding.

Under chaotic or highly complex conditions that defy simple solutions, public executives can also adopt the role of change agent, turn-around artist, or catalyst (Golembiewski and Gabris 1995). They may have driven, Type A personalities, like Mary Suhm, city manager of Dallas, who was quoted saying "There's just something in my DNA that makes me really want to tackle the tough stuff" (Ramshaw 2006, 1). Another type of city manager who can act as turnaround artist is semi-retired and financially secure. They may be empty-nesters and bored with the retirement lifestyle. A long and respected career in public service may give them the stature to rally a majority on the council behind them.

The role of educator has also been proposed to cope with hyperpluralistic times. Analyzing various failures of American political institutions, including failures in political leadership due to the power of factions and ignorance of voters, Behn (1998) calls on public managers to lead and to inform: "Educating the public about the broad mission, specific goals, and latest accomplishments can only help to improve governance" (p. 218). The city as a learning community is an extension of Senge's (1993, 14) idea of the corporation as a learning organization, which continuously adapts to survive as well as expands its capacity to create its future.

In the face of political gridlock, Rhyhart (1993) also proposes the city manager assume the roles of community builder and educator. In addition, in light of inadequate council and popular oversight, he calls for a revival of the classical role of trustee. When democratic controls fail, managers should continue the democratic tradition by reminding themselves of their fiduciary responsibilities toward the public. In the end then, the city manager's decisions should be guided by professional standards, not by concerns for job security. The role assignment of trustee echoes Terry (2002), who argues that top-level administrators should see themselves as conservators of agency mission, values, and resources.<sup>10</sup> On his website, Gary Milliman (n.d.) casts himself in this role as the new city manager of South Gate.

The complexity of **network governance** calls for a city manager who can assume the lead as **hub manager**, the thoughtful role of a master student, the exciting role of an explorer, or the steady role of a team player. The city manager, as hub manager and important node in the network, can promote the strategic and synergistic use of the resources available, be they in the government bureaucracy, in the political structure, in corporations, in small businesses, or community organizations (Mouritzen and Svava 2002). The master student does not imply to know it all and invites others to assume the role of educators. Such a posture can disarm critics and raise the level of civic discourse. The explorer or pioneer type, rather than being intimidated by complexity and uncertainty, feels challenged and invigorated by the unknown. Seemingly intractable social and economic problems require a mix of public, business, and nonprofit solutions. A networked approach can make use of the strengths of the different sectoral entities. Network governance also needs reliable team players, who do their homework, show up for meetings, pull their weight, and get things done.

However, the myriad interests in a network can also pull the joint projects in unforeseen directions, and the CAO as the trustee of the public interest has to exercise strong oversight “at every stage of the process, from initiation to the ongoing management of the network” (Goldsmith and Eggers 2004, 89, 157, 181.). The multi-faceted role requires strong executive skills – from subject matter competence to personal integrity and interpersonal sensitivity. When done poorly, the city manager may be quickly out of a job. But the career prospects can also be positive. Being an effective network leader and hub manager may ensure job security in one’s present job or advancement to a more desirable position.<sup>11</sup>

Metropolitan regions offer good examples of city managers who practice network management. Some have the support of their city councils and are successful, and some are misunderstood by their elected superiors. The city of San Gabriel (pop. 39,800 in 2000) east of Los Angeles leverages its resources through collaboration with various community partners. The city manager has been a catalyst in the process, supported by a city council that has kept him in office for 14 years. In contrast, the former city manager of Riverside (pop. 255,200 in 2000) apparently encountered insurmountable opposition when he took on the role of hub manager (Carvalho 2004).

But role congruence or incongruence cannot be considered the sole reasons for the city managers’ length of employment. As other research has found, several push and pull factors can come into play.

## **Conclusions**

This research adds a piece to the puzzle that seeks to identify the causes of city managers’ variable length of service. By drawing on the community power literature of the last 50 years and creating a community power typology and by matching the types with appropriate leadership or management styles, the study refines approaches going back 30 – 40 years. In the early sixties, Kammerer et al. (1962) created a tripartite typology of community power – monopolistic, oligopolistic, and competitive – to find patterns in the external influences on turnover rates.

Bollens and Ries (1969) developed another typology, using citizen participation, value congruence, and the perceived role of city government, to discover regularities between political culture and length of service.

Subsequent researchers on turnover rates, up to the present time, have tested a variety of variables that could serve as proxies for the political context in which city managers operate. While regression analysis is a valuable tool for testing the possible impact of various push and pull factors on turnover rate, the need to enter quantifiable variables into the model limits the nature of the variables tested. The case study method supplements the statistical approaches and adds a nuanced and historically grounded understanding of the interaction between city councils and city managers.

The findings have not only theoretical implications, but also practical ones. Master of public administration programs may want to take notice that urban administrators not only need subject matter competence, but also proficiency in the analysis of community power structures. Moreover, training in interpersonal skills and conflict mediation may require strengthening (Hansell 2002, 190).

Some academics, consultants, and professional organizations have started the process. The ICMA and National League of Cities have developed a guide to help elected and appointed officials establish effective working relationships (Kazman 1999, 1). Based on years of practical experience, Pammer et al. (1999) offer a conflict resolution framework that combines features from strategic planning, alternative dispute resolution, nominal group process, and team building to align the perceptions of council members, the city manager, and key administrators. The new model of fit, proposed in this study, offers a conceptual framework that can lead to more effective training outcomes, in that leadership advice or conflict resolution strategies can be presented with greater specificity when the council members' power base and the city manager's preferred performance style are known.

Changing jobs has been an easy way for city managers and city councils to resolve their differences in the past. But that practice may not be the best one any more given the increased complexity of urban communities and heightened responsibilities for urban administrators. As research has shown, stability in the executive office improves the capacity of cities to move forward and tackle critical planning issues, such as upgrading the infrastructure, ensuring safety and security, as well as sustaining succession planning.

## Notes

1. Whether push or pull factors are at work also depends on the city manager's employment contract. The contract may provide for severance pay in the case of a termination, but not in the case of a resignation.
2. It needs to be noted that the 2000 ICMA data not only include municipalities, but also counties. The cutoff point for counties was 2,500 residents. In the case of municipalities, the survey included communities with fewer than 2,500 residents that ICMA recognized "as having a professional management position in their jurisdiction" (Renner 2001, 36).

3. Practitioners point out that the blurring of lines is not only due to city managers' actions, but also due to mayors and council members with a bend for micromanaging.
4. Community power studies, especially elite theory, have been criticized for their methodologies. Critics have charged that the research method chosen will lead to certain findings (Presthus 1964, 3-31). This study does not resolve the dispute. Instead it uses elitism and pluralism as possible patterns of community power.
5. Long-time observers of local politics fear that elected officials are less and less able to exercise effective policy guidance – not only due to increased complexity, but also due to changes in the type of person willing to run for public office.
6. The latest Code, revised in 2004, does not refer to city managers in particular and instead talks about “professional local government management.” ICMA Code of Ethics with Guidelines, retrieved 8/29/05 from <http://icma.org/main/>.
7. The degree of public attention depends to some extent on the media market in the region. If the city is the center of a radio, TV, or newspaper market, reporters may call regularly and the city needs a media-savvy spokesperson. This advice comes from Matthew Kridler (2002), city manager of Springfield, Ohio.
8. For managers in transition to a new job, city manager Bill Kirchhoff (1994) adds a fourth and fifth management dimension, your past workplace and the media, both at your old city and new place.
9. Some observers suggest candidates look at the leadership style of the previous city manager – and avoid it, since council members often seek a fresh face and a new start.
10. Some experienced city managers see the roles of community builder, educator, etc., that are matched with hyperpluralistic conditions, as too optimistic. In their view, to survive in a dysfunctional or toxic jurisdiction, city managers are inclined to become defensive – they “duck and cover” and become caretakers.
11. Network governance can go hand-in-hand with hyperpluralism or weak council leadership, in that networks of professionals may continue to do their work despite political turmoil and lack of policy direction from the top (Meek, Schildt, and Witt 2002, 145). We may see a politics/administration dichotomy in reality, even though it has been declared a myth in theory.

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| <b>Table 1: City Managers' Length of Service in Current Position, 1994</b> |            |              |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|--------------|
|                                                                            | <b>No.</b> | <b>%</b>     |
| Less than 3 years                                                          | 64         | 24.5         |
| 3 – 6 years                                                                | 92         | 35.2         |
| 7 – 10 years                                                               | 59         | 22.6         |
| 11 – 15 years                                                              | 30         | 11.5         |
| Over 15 years                                                              | 16         | 6.1          |
| <b>Total</b>                                                               | <b>261</b> | <b>100.0</b> |
| Source: DeSantis and Newell (1996, 5)                                      |            |              |

| <b>Table 2: City Managers' Length of Service in Current Position by Size of Jurisdiction, 2000</b> |              |                        |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|------------------------|
| <b>Population</b>                                                                                  | <b>No.</b>   | <b>Mean No. of Yrs</b> |
| over 1,000,000                                                                                     | 9            | 6.1                    |
| 500,000 – 1,000,000                                                                                | 20           | 6.7                    |
| 250,000 - 499,999                                                                                  | 42           | 6.8                    |
| 100,000 - 249,999                                                                                  | 136          | 7.2                    |
| 50,000 - 99,999                                                                                    | 241          | 6.8                    |
| 25,000 - 49,999                                                                                    | 400          | 7.4                    |
| 10,000 - 24,999                                                                                    | 721          | 7.8                    |
| 5,000 - 9,999                                                                                      | 617          | 6.9                    |
| 2,500 - 4,999                                                                                      | 614          | 6.6                    |
| under 2,500                                                                                        | 337          | 4.9                    |
| <b>Total</b>                                                                                       | <b>3,137</b> | <b>6.9</b>             |
| Source: Renner (2001, 39)                                                                          |              |                        |

**Table 3: City Managers' Total Length of Service in the Same Position, 1980-2002**

| <b>Population</b> | <b>No. of Cities</b> | <b>Median</b> | <b>Mean</b> | <b>No. of City Managers</b> |
|-------------------|----------------------|---------------|-------------|-----------------------------|
| More than 200,000 | 20                   | 5.3           | 6.2         | 72                          |
| About 200,000     | 20                   | 6.3           | 7.8         | 50                          |
| About 100,000     | 20                   | 5.0           | 6.9         | 62                          |
| About 75,000      | 20                   | 5.3           | 6.4         | 69                          |
| About 50,000      | 20                   | 5.0           | 8.0         | 51                          |
| About 25,000      | 20                   | 4.6           | 6.3         | 60                          |
| <b>Total</b>      | <b>120</b>           | <b>5.0</b>    | <b>6.9</b>  | <b>394</b>                  |

Source: Ammons and Bosse (2005, 68)

**Table 4: Matching Community Power Structures with Appropriate Executive Management Styles: The Model**

| <b>Community Power Constellation</b> |   | <b>City Manager's Administrative Style</b>                                       |
|--------------------------------------|---|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| machine politics                     | → | caretaker                                                                        |
| one elite in power                   | → | chief executive                                                                  |
| competing elites                     | → | power broker, mediator                                                           |
| partnership regime                   | → | power broker, mediator                                                           |
| classical pluralism                  | → | umpire, facilitator, coach                                                       |
| hyperpluralism                       | → | community builder, catalyst, change agent, turn-around artist, educator, trustee |
| network governance                   | → | hub manager, explorer, master student, team leader                               |

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government that must be fought and refought. The manager is inextricably caught in these stresses and is made a scapegoat for the pains of change.

We do not exercise an adverse judgment against the explicitly political role the manager is compelled to play. Even in our most unstable cities persons interested in public policy development will be impressed by the concrete achievements that can be attributed to manager leadership.

Undoubtedly there has been lost motion, human waste, and sacrifice of good men as managers in all the turmoil of municipal instability in Florida. But most of our cities have been better cities because their city managers have been willing to assert political leadership when councilmen

frequently have been unwilling or unable to do so.

<sup>1</sup>David Easton, *The Political System* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1953), pp. 106, 129.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 128.

<sup>3</sup>Quoted by Paul Kelso in *A Decade of Council-Manager Government in Phoenix, Arizona* (Phoenix: City Council, 1960), p. 14. See also C. A. Harrell, "The City Manager as a Community Leader," *Public Management*, October 1948, pp. 290-94, and Charles R. Adrian, "Leadership and Decision-Making in Manager Cities: A Study of Three Communities," *Public Administration Review*, Summer, 1958, pp. 208-13.

<sup>4</sup>See Robert A. Dahl, *Who Governs?* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961),

pp. 89-220.

<sup>5</sup>Leonard D. White, *The City Manager* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1927), pp. 299-303.

Editor's note: In 1962, Gladys M. Kammerer was a professor of political science, University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida, and director of the Public Administration Clearing Service. She was the coauthor, in 1961, with John M. DeGrove, of *Florida City Managers: Profile and Tenure*. Her Ph.D. was from the University of Chicago. This and the following article have been condensed from addresses presented on November 29, 1961, at the 47th annual conference of the International City Managers' Association held in Miami Beach, Florida.

Year 1962

# Is the Manager a Political Leader?—No

The city manager's job involves developing plans and proposals for the city council, not involvement in partisan political issues.

by H. G. Pope

**2006 Comment:** H. G. Pope acknowledges Professor Kammerer's facts but draws different conclusions. Pope distinguishes between policy making and electoral politics when describing the manager's political activity. The former is appropriate; the latter is not, he states.

In earlier years, the Kammerer-Pope debate would have been regarded as less important because in earlier times the word "politics" meant partisanship—participating politically during and after elections to support candidates and award jobs and contracts on the basis of political preferences. Council-manager government was designed as a force to eliminate such partisanship from city government.

Because that was the context of early city management, it was a virtual contradiction for a person to be seen as a professional city manager *and* *continued on page 40*

**D**r. Kammerer says the manager is a political leader but avoids a judgment as to whether he should be. I say he is *not* a political leader and freely offer the judgment that he *should not* be.

A subject such as this tempts one to use the available brief time to quibble over definitions of a political leader. Were I addressing people without official responsibility for government, or a direct personal stake in it, I might do so. Here, however, I am talking to people who have, in

be political. Unequivocally, city managers were not political leaders. Pope's article helps distinguish among administrative leadership, community leadership, and political leadership.

The Kammerer-Pope debate anticipates the contemporary issue of whom these two are trying to convince or, at least, whom they see as their audience. We know the following: the more knowledgeable an audience is about a subject, the more sophisticated the argument that can be set before them. We suspect that Pope's argument met with nods of approval from city management audiences; Kammerer's would have had more appeal to political scientists and possibly to the general public.

—John Nalbandian and Shannon Portillo

the course of their careers, repeatedly sweated out political campaigns and election nights.

By this time, you know what a political leader is and have become radar-equipped to detect him. Similarly, though less expert, the citizens in the small town where I live know who their leaders are and, at least biennially, are vigorously reminded of who their political leaders are.

The same situation prevails even in Chicago, a city almost a thousand times the size of the town where I live. Its three and one-half million people know what a political leader is, and, I might add, they even know who he is. As long as the voters, in whom the ultimate political power resides, have their own notions about what and who their political leaders are, any definitions we technicians and theoreticians may devise become relatively academic.

I do not quarrel with Dr. Kammerer's classic definitions any more than I would quarrel with a philosopher's concept of the universe. I simply can't accept her definitions for this discussion any more than, were I an astronaut, I could use the philosopher's concept of the universe for interplanetary navigation.

### **KINDS OF LEADERSHIP**

I do say that, as commonly understood and practiced under the council-manager plan, administrative leadership, general community leadership, and political leadership are not one and the same.

Political leadership is invariably aimed at controlling governmental

policy and of-ten governmental patronage. Unlike general community and civic leadership, it cannot limit itself to influencing decisions on selected questions. It will be forced by circumstances to undertake more broadly based activities, including electioneering. Factional political structure and process are not confined to particular municipalities or particular subjects. Rather, these particulars are part of the whole fabric of political structure—city, county, state, and federal.

It would be naïve to theorize that effective political leadership, with its ambitions, obligations, and rewards, can be contained within a particular municipality, or limited to a specific issue, or turned on and off like a spigot. Effective political leaders must play for keeps on a court whose boundaries are not neatly outlined by specific issues, and always with an eye to the rewards and retributions that are part of the entire political process.

I am not among those who, as Dr. Kammerer says, define politics as merely "dirty business." I am well aware that the United States Constitution makes no provision for political parties, that so distinguished a person as George Washington admonished us against them, and that they are anathema to many reformers. Nevertheless, I feel that our history demonstrates that political parties are a requisite of democratic government on a large scale.

### **ROLE OF POLITICAL PARTIES**

In the United States, parties are essential to the selection of alternate policies or alternate groups of leaders.

Without them it would be difficult, perhaps impossible, to nominate candidates and conduct contests that insure that the most relevant, as well as many irrelevant, facts and views are presented to the voter for consideration and choice. Political parties also do much to give the citizen a sense of participating in the enormous complex of government.

Again, it may be argued that political parties contribute some needed coordination and cohesion to our federal system of a national establishment, 50 sovereign states, and innumerable local units, including home rule or otherwise partially autonomous entities. And last but not least, without organized partisan political parties, bureaucratic power might so extend itself that we would be governed by a bureaucracy rather than democratically.

Collectively, these arguments persuade me that the practice of politics should be improved and enlarged and its leadership strengthened. It does not follow that, in municipalities, this political leadership can or should be furnished by the city managers.

I know that there are those who hint that the efficiency in municipal services attributed to the council-manager plan is ignoble and that a more important reason for the existence of municipal corporations is the strengthening of our state and national political machinery. Certainly a lively citizen interest and participation in local government will strengthen democracy generally and without regard to level of government.

Admittedly, federal and state action through grants in aid, regulatory measures, and otherwise have great impact on local government and with interlocking political implications. It does not follow that the political structures and processes we use for policy decision should be monolithic from bottom to top and that city managers should be the operators of the local units.

I consider it unlikely that it will become fashionable for politicians to hire outsiders to do their political chores. Also, of the hundreds of managers that I

have known, relatively few have had the equipment to deliver a political clout. And, if a manager has it, one could not expect it to be readily transportable from one community to another—any more than one would expect Mayor Daley, a highly effective administrative, legislative, and political leader, to get the same comfortable majority in another city that he gets in Chicago.

Most managers would shy away from extracurricular political activity, which would have to be personal rather than official, and most would expect that, if they made personal forays into the political arena, they could not enjoy the privilege of retreat into the sanctuary of professionalism when the going gets rough.

### **POLICY AND ADMINISTRATION**

Discussion of political leadership must include a word on the distinctions between policy determination on the one hand and policy execution on the other. Clearly, the two require different kinds of judgments and actions, arrived at differently and employing different kinds of resources and considerations. Consequently, a sensible case can be made for some reasonable measure of separation of policy determination from policy execution, with advantage to both.

Yet, it is impossible to establish a sharply defined line between policy and administration. Instead there is an area in which the interdependence which typically characterizes the two becomes an intermingling that requires a close working relationship between the executive and legislative branches.

As a practical matter, an effective city manager has a significant influence on policy decision, and an effective council has a significant influence on administrative action. Also, argument about the line between policy and administration can easily be pursued past the point of diminishing returns since it is irrelevant to much of a city's business.

Most municipal business is characterized by routine made possible by the mutual confidence between manager and council and by established

patterns of legislative and administrative practice resulting from a combination of law, habit, and practical requirements. This is, of course, among the reasons that effective municipal government is entirely practical in many communities without highly organized political factions.

### **PROFESSIONAL ADMINISTRATORS**

I am fully aware of the importance of the municipality in our social and political scheme. Also, I would be the first to insist that the city manager is something special among the professional public administrators appointed to administer our governmental affairs. However, there are entities within our governmental structure that are *not* cities, and there are appointed professional public administrators who are *not* city managers.

We can, in some measure, determine the propriety of political leadership by the manager by relating this concept to these other appointed professional officers. I shall choose only a few of the many examples from government to make this point.

For example, I expect top professional soldiers, educators, whether state university presidents or local superintendents of schools, health authorities, engineers, and others with important roles in the present-day scheme of things to exercise full executive leadership with respect to the men or functions under their direction. I expect these top professional people, who normally have devoted a lifetime to their respective professions, to plan for their programs and to present to policy makers considered views on what is needed and how it is to be employed. I expect them to be positive, even vigorous, in the presentation of judgments to the policy makers.

Otherwise, how can the average legislator know what he needs to know in order to make responsible policy determinations in these fields? Additionally, these administrators have general leadership obligations in the communities with which they are identified. This obligation for community leadership does not mean,

however, that they should be partisan political leaders, and when they do so it is to the discomfort and even dismay of others in their professions.

This particular standard of proprieties, developed to help make our democracy work, is not limited to government. Rather, it is almost a part of our national manners. In most private corporations there would be an inclination to frown upon an appointed executive who bypasses his board of directors to indulge in factionalism among stockholders. The pastor who assumes leadership of a clique within his congregation may well find himself in an untenable position.

To take an example closer to home, I might note that my experience of more than 25 years of membership in this association leads me to believe that its members would frown if their director were to assume a leadership role in relation to factions that might, as sometimes happens in organizations, develop over important issues. These are roles for members of the governing boards to assume in our private institutions, just as they are appropriately roles of elective officials in our governments.

### **ROLE OF THE MANAGER**

It may be worth while to remind ourselves that the council-manager plan was developed to eliminate the intermingling of administrative and political leadership. The stature and effectiveness of the manager depend in no small part on his earning and maintaining an image of integrity, competence, and objectivity. These qualities must, of course, be exercised with an awareness of and a sensitivity to the realities of political conflict but without direct personal factional involvement.

Even those who are disappointed in the council-manager plan and propose the alternative of a chief administrative officer responsible to the mayor do not suggest that the chief administrative officer should exercise political leadership. Instead that officer is justified on the grounds that he will improve administrative performance without impairing the political leadership exercised by someone else.

A sound organization requires that everyone be responsible to someone. City managers commonly expect that department heads should recognize their responsibilities to the manager. Similarly, the manager must recognize his responsibility to the mayor and council. In doing so, he forgoes the privilege of political leadership, which automatically implies involvement in factionalism among citizens to whom the mayor and councilmen are responsible.

To grant the manager a license to use his administrative resources for political partisanship would be intolerable. Since elections are related more often to candidates than to issues, there would quickly be created the deservedly unpopular picture of the manager selecting his own council. Once this notion, even though distorted, has been sold by enemies of the council-manager plan, the plan's greatest persuasion would be gone.

This persuasion lies in the fact that the council-manager plan, while centralizing administrative authority, remains safely democratic—since the

manager serves only at the pleasure of a council elected by the people of the community without political leadership on the part of the manager. Should it become fashionable for the manager to assume political leadership responsibilities and prerogatives, it would, indeed, become hard to answer the cry of dictatorship now so popular with enemies of the plan.

This does not mean that the manager is free from politics. What he does will always be political news, and whether he is the man who should fill the position will often be the principal political issue in a municipal election campaign. He may create political issues through his work in preparing a budget or in recommending particular courses of action for decision by the community's policy makers.

However, it is one thing for a manager to develop and present proposals, plans, and solutions to his council, sometimes with alternatives and projections of their probable effects, and to discuss and support his views. It is something else for him to assume political leadership among the voters

and to be identified with and particularly responsive to selected special-interest groups.

Participation by the manager in partisanship, an essential to honest, effective political leadership, would not merely modify but would basically change and destroy the council-manager plan. This would be unfortunate because the proof of council-manager government lies not only in its theory but in its results, and these results have been good enough to warrant continued growth of the plan until a better one is devised. Such growth cannot be expected if the managers violate the proprieties our society has established for professional appointive executives.

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Editor's note: H. G. Pope was executive director, Public Administration Service, Chicago, Illinois, when this was written. Mr. Pope held engineering and law degrees and had earlier served as city manager of two Michigan cities. He joined the staff of Public Administration Service in 1939 and was appointed executive director in 1943.

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## EDITORIAL

## BIZ BUZZ

## So you think we're not positive enough

Two weeks ago in this space, I wrote about trying to keep a positive attitude in *Inside Tucson Business'* opinion pieces. Our online poll even asked whether readers thought we were being too negative.

Judging from the response to the column and the poll results, a fair number of people agreed that we've veered to the negative too often, although it was far from unanimous.



DAVID HATFIELD

Most often, people told me we had been especially harsh about how the City of Tucson was being run. Less than two weeks before it happened, there was not a majority on the Tucson City Council to vote to get rid of City Manager Mike Letcher, despite the fact that evidence of his incompetence was mounting.

Who knows how much impact Joe Higgins' and Chris DeSimone's column suggesting Tucson may be America's worst-run city had in tipping that scale?

Sure, Tucson was nowhere near as bad as Bell, Calif., as one letter-writer wrote, and others cited examples of other poorly run cities. But nobody suggested Tucson should be put on any list of well-run cities.

But now that's water under the bridge. Letcher is gone and opportunity awaits for improvement in governance from City Hall, especially when it comes to promoting a business environment.

Another letter-writer said *Inside Tucson Business'* negativity had been a concern and she felt she would have been ignored if she had brought it to my attention. That one bothers me.

More than anything else, I'd like to see our opinion pages filled with all kinds of different views. I'm one of those who believes we learn from others' opinions. It might even help close the gap on partisan extremes. If nothing else, we learn what the other side is thinking.

Another letter writer said he appreciates the variety of opinion. "So long as we understand that collectively it is our decision to make. To trust that those looking in will also view this as a good thing."

That gets to the point. *Inside Tucson Business* is a news publication. We need to inform our readers — business leaders and owners — of the important events affecting them. We could be a publication that reports only stories about how bright the sun is shining on Tucson without mentioning it gets hot here and sometimes the sun causes melanoma.

You wouldn't respect us if we took such a "Pollyanna" approach.

*Inside Tucson Business'* success is directly tied to the success of businesses in the Tucson region. We are owned by a Southern Arizona-based company. Our news and features are generated entirely from within the region.

We'd like to have even more news and features filling our pages and I'll pledge to do my part to look for positive angles.

But, please, I ask that no reader ever lets something to me go unsaid. And if it's an opinion you'd like us to print, send that in too.

Contact David Hatfield at [dhatfield@azbiz.com](mailto:dhatfield@azbiz.com) or (520) 295-4237.



## EDITORIAL

## We need to talk about pros and cons for a strong mayor for Tucson

Here's a question for you: What do nearly two-thirds of major American cities — those with populations of 250,000 or more — have that Tucson doesn't?

The answer: A strong mayor. As in a form of city government, not necessarily the personality.

We've heard before how the woes at Tucson City Hall could be fixed if voters would approve changes to the 1929 city charter to alter our form of government.

Last November, voters rejected a ballot proposition by the Southern Arizona Leadership Council that would have given the city manager, an unelected bureaucrat, even more authority while weakening the authority of the council. Post-election analysts concluded the proposition was voted down due to huge pay hikes it included for the mayor and council members. That may be, but there were other issues, including a likely backlash from the city sales tax hike that was on the same ballot and was rejected by an even larger majority.

Tucson hasn't been alone in looking at the structure of government.

Last year, San Diego voters permanently ratified a five-year pilot strong mayor government structure and even made the mayor's position even stronger, requiring a two-thirds majority of the council to override a mayoral veto. Voters initially approved the pilot in 2004 after San Diego's credit worthiness had been downgraded, faced huge budget shortfalls, had more than \$1 billion in deficits in the pension fund, and a federal investigation was underway over errors in documents sent to investors who buy city bonds for public works projects.

Fourteen other cities have switched to a strong

mayor system over the last decade, including Miami, Fla., and Oakland, Calif. The International City/County Management Association says the nation's largest cities — New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Houston and Philadelphia — all use it.

Also in 2004, Tucsonans could have looked to the east to El Paso, where voters took the opposite tack and opted to dump the strong mayor for a system where the city council with a weak mayor hires a city manager as the CEO. From most outward appearances it has served El Paso well, especially if longevity counts. Joyce Wilson, who was hired from Arlington County, Va., is El Paso's first and only city manager. El Paso has some unique issues, including the fact that its mayor and council serve two-year terms. They had six different mayors in the 15 years previous to 2004.

There are other examples of successful cities run under the council-manager model, including Phoenix, the largest city in the country using the system. Voters in Dallas have rejected measures to try to switch that city's government away from it.

So the debate goes on. Strong mayor and council versus weak mayor and council with a city manager. Many instances also have their own nuances to suit local circumstances.

Tucson would benefit from a full-on airing of the pros and cons of a strong mayor form of city government that would come from a package of ballot measures. Something that doesn't need to be included are salaries. Whether it's a strong mayor or a city manager, let the person prove their worth first.

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## The Revolving Door of the Mayor's Office

It is no secret that the winner takes all in American politics, but there is some question about the prize when the game is played in the mayoral division. These days the chances are that the winner gets a bankrupt city.

In the sixties he won other things: riots, unemployment, problems of welfare and schooling, rising crime, auto-

immobility and the additional bonus of having the opportunity to rule by crisis. Many mayors weary of the task. The president of the U.S. Conference of Mayors, Terry D. Schruck, said that in 1968, 39 mayors were designated to sit in places of leadership in the organization. In 1969, half of them were out of office or going out . . . "most of them by their own decision not to run again."

Yet, in Cleveland, every two years, a goodly number of candidates stand in front of Tom L. Johnson's statue on Public Square to have their pictures taken while they announce their candidacies.

Not only are many politicians, civic leaders and average citizens ready to run for mayor but there are always people ready to listen to them. Lincoln Steffens came to Cleveland a doubter and went away a devotee. He wrote, "There is something good in Cleveland. The citizens know how to vote here. They have a public opinion and they make it count." A local philosopher more recently observed that Cleveland is the campaigningest city on earth!

That's a major part of a mayor's job—campaigning. There are some critics who claim that in Cleveland, government is one continuous campaign. General Benjamin O. Davis, who was Safety Director under Mayor Carl Stokes for a brief time, observed that the campaign started the day after election and he could not sanction that kind of life for himself.

Others have found it exciting. Carl Stokes, former mayor, is the eternal campaigner. In 1967 he admitted he loved to go before an audience. "I draw something from an audience. I get a kind of sustenance." He told one reporter it was like going to church. Judge Ralph Locher, another ex-mayor, recently expressed a little sorrow over the fact that no one had run against him in his judge's race. "I was looking forward to campaigning," he said wistfully. Mayor Ralph Perk campaigned three times for the mayor's position.

Locher, Stokes, and Perk, three completely different personalities, as observed by the local media, all worked hard for the job of mayor during what The New York Times, described as the slum decay of the sixties, when the winds of Cleveland, irregular at best, had become turbulent and bitter. Neighborhoods were reduced to ashes, and the smoke above the skyline was not the emblem of a prosperous industry. Yet Locher and Stokes will stand by their records today, and Perk, as recently as February 26, expressed confidence that he can solve the city's financial problems. "It's only a one-year problem," he said.

Besides the ability to campaign, then, clearly optimism is a valuable asset to bring to the job of mayor of a large city, But after the campaign is over, the optimism has been justified, at least this one time, by victory, what does the job require of a man? When it has finished with a mayor, Cleveland tends to consign him to limbo. Many Cleveland mayors have attained some measure of acceptance and success for a time while they were in office, but the recent ones have all been made to look like losers in the end. Some have gone on to other office, but in recent years it has become increasingly difficult, if not impossible, to leave the City Hall stage with the audience crying and clamoring for more. What manner of man, if any, could succeed in the sixties and seventies? What manner of man would it take to sit in the Mayor's office for two or three terms and then be propelled into a larger constituency and a bigger job in government? Or, alternatively, to make the Mayor's office really his, so he could be confident, term after term, of being reelected and becoming an institution in his own city, in his own time? If Socrates himself came to us today, would we, too, wind up handing him the cup of hemlock?

The people who founded this city had to be stubborn to survive. Is it this inherited stubbornness that presents the problem? Is it the structure of the city and how it grew; is it the rules we play by or the leaders we produce that eventually bring deflation or defeat to our mayors?

Possibly we shall never know for certain, but a look at the rules of city government in Cleveland, and at the diverse personalities and characters of our three most recent mayors suggests that, while the opportunity is there, it is a rare man indeed who can put a lock on the job because of its complexity.

It doesn't appear that the rules—the City Charter—can be blamed. Like many other cities of its size, Cleveland has a strong mayor/weak council type of government.

Its modified federal form of government, in which the functions of the legislative, executive and judicial are theoretically separate, is fairly typical. The mayor and the judicial officers are elected at large, but the 33 members of

Council are elected by wards.

Four-fifths of American cities of more than 500,000 population are managed by a mayor-council government. With each city the strength of the mayor varies, although the strong mayoralty is the general rule. In New York the mayor is restricted in his powers by a Board of Estimate, which contains the five borough presidents. In Chicago the power of the mayor is diluted because of the many agencies involved in decision making. Yet Mayor Daley, because of his control of the party machine, has a strong hold not only in the city but on state and federal officials as well. In Los Angeles some city departments have control of their own budgets and are left independent of the Mayor. In Minneapolis, the only office the mayor can fill without the approval of council is that of his own secretary. People there elect a total of 49 officials and the mayor can remove only the police chief and the director of civil defense.

Cleveland's mayor has powers of appointment and removal of all subordinate directors and commissioners, plus the power of appointing most of the members of various policy boards and commissions. Although the latter are appointed to serve designated terms, the mayor may remove anyone "for cause." Furthermore, the mayor has a right to attend all council meetings, to initiate legislation, and to participate in all discussions of the council. He also has veto power over acts of the council. Under this strong mayor form of government the legislative branch may either become a "rubber stamp" for the mayor's policies or act as adversary. While council has the authority to initiate legislation, this power is not used to its fullest extent by most Cleveland councils because of the difficulty of finding time to act as a fact-finding body and to avail themselves of expert advice or researchers.

Cleveland's mayor, meanwhile, has considerable powers of reward and punishment in addition to his duly constituted powers. Bronis Klementowicz, Law Director during the Locher administration, observed that the mayor has a lot of "green stamps to give, from school guard jobs up to the top." Therefore, negotiation between the executive and individual members of the legislature usually favors the executive, who has more to bargain with, such as services and projects for the councilman's ward. If a councilman won't support the mayor's legislation, he runs the risk that the potholes will grow deep and the garbage will be piled high in his ward. But every Monday night on the council floor, he has the chance to become the mayor's public adversary and inform his people that the fault lies not with him but with the administration.

Ralph Locher conceded that "Councilmen, like Congressmen, must always be yapping and they've got to pick on the administration. They can't say the administration position is great and expect to become re-elected. We just ought to expect that. I did and that's why it didn't bother me." It has bothered other mayors, especially when the rhetoric became divisive. Before his last term was finished, Stokes walked out of council meeting one Monday night, never to return while he was Mayor. But it is generally agreed that the rhetoric at council meetings during the Stokes administration was more personal, more divisive and more image-destroying than at any other time in the history of the city.

Though Locher faced fewer confrontations with his council, he had more than his share with the community and the media. And clearly a mayor's job extends beyond his audiences with council and his cabinet. He must walk out of City Hall and into the sun, though in the sixties he was more often greeted by threatening clouds. In the sixties Clevelanders were caught up in the social changes of the era and they feared for the future of their city. Cleveland was part of a much bigger scene, and while Locher was busy balancing his budget the distant thunder of Birmingham shook the foundations of the nation and the vibrations were felt in Cleveland.

"Black Power," Locher recalled recently. •It was not to be denied. It was extremely potent, as I found out. There were confrontations then that you couldn't gloss over but which I am pleased now that I handled the way I did. I feel that to have capitulated and to have just caved in would have been shockingly wrong. I tried to be fair— fair but firm." And Locher went into his office and hung on the wall the words of Benjamin Franklin: "Those who give up essential liberty and purchase a little temporary safety deserve neither liberty nor safety."

Nonetheless, Locher, who had won in the past on the basis of his unchallenged honesty, faced a divided community and a critical press. Thomas Vail, publisher of The Plain Dealer, said in 1967: "It was my feeling that Locher had come to the end of his real usefulness as far as a leader in the community was concerned." Out-of-town reporters became harsh and spoke of failures at City Hall. John Skow, writing in the Saturday Evening Post, called Locher an amiable and ineffective time-server. But Skow did not interview Locher for this article and it was accepted that national reporters

picked their clues from the nation's capital.

And that is still another extension of the mayor's role—national politics.

Locher thought that in Washington Vice President Hubert Humphrey, Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Robert C. Weaver and President Johnson were in communication with candidates Carl Stokes and Frank Celeste and with Ralph Besse, president of Cleveland Electric Illuminating Co., a powerful figure in local politics.

Locher said: "I did feel that the Weaver-Humphrey—in some degree, Johnson-Stokes, Besse-Celeste camaraderie brought about a political move out of Washington which, I think, was reprehensible but which really wasn't as severe as it was made out to be. It did cut off some further downtown funds and some in the Hough area, but it was done purely as a political move. They were playing 1968 politics in 1967."

Locally, a political writer for The Press agreed that Washington was playing politics: "It was put to Stokes bluntly. Run as a Democrat and we'll support you," wrote Richard Maher.

And it seemed that the media in Cleveland fell into line with the movement for change and with the national trend. Although Locher's relations with reporters were excellent, and included such things as daily, informal press conferences and occasional outings to ball games, in the end this cut no ice with the editors and publishers when they decided it was time for a change at City Hall.

An unsympathetic press at any level is to be reckoned with by mayors of big cities. Arthur Naftalin, ex-mayor of Minneapolis, chose not to run after the press failed to endorse him in his previous election. He felt that while the electronic media were needed for presenting the personality to the public, the newspapers were needed to keep the citizens informed and to support the mayor's proposals, or at the least, present them to the public. Klementowicz claimed the newspapers did not present Locher's program to the people, at least not during the 1967 election. Alexander Ostrow, Stokes's public relations man, agreed with Klementowicz that Locher presented an excellent defense of his administration but the papers didn't print it.

But a great deal depends on how a story is told. Locher's record of accomplishments, even today, is a sheaf of mimeographed pages stapled together—very different from Stokes's well-designed and illustrated 40-page magazine. That was part of Locher's problem—public relations techniques. Mayors in major cities today face audiences who are fed messages through many media. Where Locher simply wrote the names of the buildings in Erieview, Stokes added pictures. Both claimed the Erieview projects and, in truth, both administrations contributed to their completion. Actually Erieview, not yet finished, was conceived in the late fifties by Mayor Harold Burke.

That's another dimension of the mayor's job—not to obstruct the dreams of other administrations, to carry through when government moves slowly, to persevere. The task was easier for Locher than for other mayors because he was part of a dynasty that had begun with Mayor Frank Lausche and there were relatively few cabinet changes. "We were a family," said Klementowicz, who served as Councilman, Utilities Director and Law Director during those years.

"The dynasty of Crown and Klem had the lowest rates in the city of Cleveland and was the most dependable utility in the whole nation," Klementowicz recalls. "Fewer outages than gas companies, telephone companies. No strikes. We made money and we paid our bills. And we had a cabinet. If Edward J. Knuth told Locher or Celebreeze that 'this will not be done because I don't have the money' that was the end of the discussion. That simple."

That was the job, according to Locher. A full day at the office, evenings in the community, sometimes a ball game with the press. No strikes, except the ones he hoped the Yankees would make. No overdue bills. "Perseverance and honesty," said Locher and no one ever challenged him or denied him those words.

But a mayor has another obligation to the job: he must have good timing and he must be a man of the times. During the years when emotional rhetoric resounded from coast to coast, policy debaters gave way to the men who had style. It was the era of the Kennedys, the Reagans, the Lindsays. Onto this stage stepped Carl Stokes. "We had the man and the moment," said Thomas Vail, astutely, in 1967. Charisma was the key that opened the door between the liberals and conservatives in Cleveland. And no matter what history decides happened in the Stokes administration, it will always

record that Carl Stokes was the first black mayor of a major American city and Cleveland was that city.

Another part of the mayor's job is to build the city's image. The simple fact that Cleveland elected a black mayor improved its image nationally. Carl Stokes could sell the city to the nation. He was at his best on a platform, before a television camera, in the political arena. By his own statement he is revitalized before an audience, especially a friendly one. Also by his own admission, he is no administrator. At a luncheon at Cleveland State University for Julian Bond, then a young, black southern politician on his way up, Stokes arrived late. He immediately apologized and began to charm the audience. Bond remained reserved. The talk turned to the presidency and the two men were asked whether they aspired to it. Bond shook his head. Stokes said he did not seek it. Besides, Stokes said he felt a black woman would have a better chance.

"Not me," he laughed, "I'm no administrator. When I was elected in '67 I didn't know what to do first." It was said in a joking manner, but the truth of the statement gave the audience pause.

Thomas Guthrie, editor of *The Plain Dealer*, remarked that things would have worked if only Stokes had had Perk on Stokes: His tax maneuvers left the city poor and made the Board of Education rich — a political adviser, a strong administrator as his right hand man to take over when he was out of town. Certainly part of the eventual dissatisfaction with the Stokes administration was that the men in key positions constantly embarrassed their boss, or, frustrated in their inability to work with him, simply left him. Locher had one police chief;

Stokes had four. The turnover at City Hall caused one politician to remark that every day was amateur day there.

But the election of Stokes motivated the black community to participate actively in local government. The record shows that there were more blacks at City Hall during the Stokes administration than at any time in history. The opportunity for blacks to elevate themselves through civil service examinations was greatest at that time. Two hundred sixty men and women with salaries over \$10,000 a year made more than \$3,000,000 . . . dollars that were poured into their neighborhoods, dollars that improved the tax duplicate and raised the economic position of the black community. The successes and failures of the Stokes administration were detailed in newspapers and magazines. They are too involved to be reviewed quickly here. There was bitterness near the end of his term and the man who was supposed to be so good at public relations seemed not to care.

The turning point was the shooting in Glenville between black militants and police. It put an end to many things, especially to a project called *Cleveland: Now!* This project originally proposed an investment of \$90,000,000 in neighborhood housing rehabilitation, \$60,000,000 in accelerated urban renewal construction, the creation of 16,000 jobs, aid to small business, 20 welfare and child day care centers, recreation programs for youth and the construction of Camp Cleveland for disadvantaged youth. A grant of \$10,000 of *Cleveland: Now!* Money given to Ahmed Evans by the Hough Area Development Corporation later backfired and destroyed the whole project when Evans was convicted of murder. The money stopped coming in and, worse, the stigma of mismanagement was attached to the project.

The mayor and the militants were constantly discussed. Stokes tried to explain that there was a difference between one black nationalist and another. He argued that black nationalism wasn't any different from white nationalism. He argued this in a city where 33 Councilmen represented as many different wards and cultures.

Like so many others in the U.S. Conference of Mayors, Stokes decided not to run again. As Locher had been defeated by social changes, so an embittered Stokes found his diminished leadership inadequate to the task of solving the city's financial problems.

Perk having campaigned on the promise not to increase city income taxes, not only inherited Stokes's financial problems, but some observers feel he has locked himself in. Perk, however, sees it this way: "The three per cent increase for police and firemen didn't amount to that much. Don't forget that this city operated the year 1971 with an operating deficit of \$27,400,000. They're in debt \$462,000,000 and \$21,600,000 of that money is in the general funds that pay the salary of the police and firemen. The reason is that Carl Stokes, in an effort to get more money out of the taxpayers by submitting an income tax increase, submitted at the same time the argument that he was dropping the 5.8 mill tax renewal, which the people had been paying for years and probably would have voted to continue. By submitting the increase in the income tax and dropping the 5.8, the Board of Education picked it up and sold that 5.8 mill levy to the

people . . . transferred in effect \$18,000,000 of income from the city over to the Board of Education. While it made the Board of Education rich it made the City of Cleveland poor."

In these changing times, not all problems are transferable from one administration to the other. While Perk claimed that Stokes's gamble with the 5.8 mill levy left the city with a large deficit, he did not feel he was left with a polarized city.

"Now we've come to a point where the problem of polarization is disappearing, I think," he says now. "I believe that when Carl Stokes announced that he was not going to run for Mayor that the city began to unpolarize itself. The blacks began to get friendlier with the whites. The whites became friendlier with the blacks. I cannot tell you why."

Although that is an optimistic view, a recent article in the National Observer asserts that confrontation politics is fast losing ground to the legislative process in government. There is a quiet about the country today—a weariness perhaps. Government by crisis cannot long endure. The people get tired of it—

It denies them the right to be rational.

And the mayor's job in the last analysis is determined by the people he represents, because as President Andrew Johnson said many years ago, "The people are the source of all power."

In Cleveland today, a mayor's job includes being a legislator, administrator, and campaigner, it extends beyond City Hall, where he sits and where he must have lines of communication to the press, the nation, the political parties and to all segments of the community. It is a complex job and the images of our past mayors have indicated that they were complex men. Which was the real Carl Stokes, the man romping in Lake Erie with young people or the marcher with militants? Was Ralph Locher the fumbling mayor unable to operate during the crisis years, or was he the efficient administrator and honest politician? Will Ralph Perk tend to housekeeping, or will he, too, have dreams for future mayors to bring to fruition?

One thing is certain. As Locher recently stated, "The city of Cleveland will never regain the clout that it once had." When the ring was drawn around the city and the suburbs grew, it became just a fraction of the county. It began to lose its tax base every time the court of tax appeals reduced taxes on businesses downtown. Every time hundreds of buildings were razed and demolished because they'd been gutted and vandalized, every time the people moved farther out, it lost power and subsequently its leadership. The present mayor of Cleveland is no longer the strong, strident voice that the mayors of Cleveland once were. Years ago, said Locher, "When you spoke for Cleveland you did speak for the whole county.

Nonetheless, one thing is certain: there will always be men who covet the mayoralty in Cleveland, and when election time rolls around again, the line-up will be large. In a city where the numbers and bingo thrive, certainly the game of politics will have many takers. It's a gamblin' town.

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