

Building Successful Relationships Between County Boards and County Administration

WCA Annual Conference
September 19, 2021
County Administrator Adam Payne



The following are some best practices and approaches to developing and nurturing a successful relationship between the County Board and Administration.

Guiding Principles

- Work for and on behalf of the County Board – help them and the county as a whole be successful.
- Earn their TRUST
- Treat people as you want to be treated
- Build your Team and foster teamwork
- Relationships Matter

Best Practices

1. Listen and Learn – early in my career, I attended as many liaison committees as I could – and planted myself at the table with them, rather than sitting behind them.

- Arrive early and stay for a little while afterwards
- Go on Transportation Committee tours

2. Schedule one-on-one meetings with each Supervisor

- Get to know one another and develop a good rapport

Best Practices

3. You absolutely must develop a good rapport with your County Board Chair/liaison Committee

- Don't get too far out in front of the people you work for/keep them informed
- Be inclusive and aligned on topics
- Don't publicly disagree
- Focus on common ground and what is in the best interest of the organization
- Keep politics out of it!
- I have worked for seven County Board Chairs, strong Rs and Ds, and developed a good rapport and friendship with them all

Best Practices

4. People want to be part of a winning team. Praise the Board and your staff, and instill pride in collective accomplishments.

- Simply give credit where credit is due.

5. Keep the Board well informed, particularly the Chair and your liaison committee, and strive to avoid surprises.

- Routine County Administrator's report on County Board, Executive, and Finance Committee agendas

Best Practices

6. Clarify Roles and Responsibilities

- Policy versus Administration
- Employee matters such as hiring, performance evaluations, discipline, and termination.
- Annual County Board Leadership Forum
- Orientation for new board members
- Encourage WCA and other educational/professional development forums

Best Practices

7. Budget Development Process – Collaboration Key to our Success

- County Administrator Statutorily required to develop the annual budget, but it's a TEAM approach
- Shared Goals – levy, department targets, with Exec and Finance
- Annual County Board Leadership Forum
- Strong Committee process
- Encourage engagement and ownership
- Include Committee Chairs in budget review with Dept. Heads
- County Board meetings generally less than 45 minutes. There is an expectation amongst the board that if you wanted something incorporated or changed in the budget, you should have raised it during a liaison committee meeting.

Best Practices

8. Collaboration, Teamwork and Celebrating Success

- Engage the Business Community; SCEDC
- Heads of Local Government
- Celebrate Success – Annual budget bust up party
- Positive News Releases and Guest Editorials
- WHBL
- Public Television
- Share successes, credit the County Board, team, and build pride
- New Board Reception following elections

Best Practices

9. Don't Burn Bridges

- Don't make it personal
- Pick your battles, and keep in mind, there will always be the next issue
- Encourage Input and Questions, and follow up timely with information
- Keep an Open Mind - Strive to help new Board members with a chip on their shoulder (i.e. or agenda that they are going to cut all the fat), to become a productive member of the team.
- Sometimes those “horrible” board members can help pull the rest of the board together. (F.U.)

Best Practices

10. Deliver – Get the job done!

- Your actions and track record matters

Thank You

