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The Port
OF HUENEME
Oxnard Harbor District



ASSOCIATION OF
PACIFIC PORTS

From Stem to Stern: Proper Roles on Board your Agency's Ship

APP Winter Conference 2024

Presenters



Mary Anne Rooney

Commissioner

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Mary Anne Rooney was elected to the Board of Harbor Commissioners for the Port of Hueneme in 2010, the first woman in the 80-year history of the Port. Her service and leadership roles in the global arena include: Past President of the Association of Pacific Ports (APP); Economic Development Committee Member for the American Association of Port Authorities (AAPA); Executive Director of the World Affairs Council, California Central Coast Chapter; Delegate on a Leadership Mission to Taiwan in 2013, Past Secretary of the Ventura County Special District Association, and Past President of the Oxnard/Ocotlán Sister City Committee.



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Managing Partner of the firm's Ontario office, Ruben Duran represents exclusively public agencies in the Municipal Law and Government Policy & Public Integrity practice groups of Best Best & Krieger LLP. With an emphasis on open government and transparency and complex conflicts of interest issues, as well as elections law, land use and planning issues, Ruben also provides special counsel to many of the firm's clients. He serves as city attorney for the cities of Ontario and Fontana and general counsel for the Oxnard Harbor District, which owns and operates the commercial Port of Hueneme in Ventura County, and the Crescent City Harbor District at the Oregon border.

Best Practices



“A method or technique that has consistently shown results superior to those achieved with other means, and that is used as a benchmark.”-
Businessdictionary.com

Our goal today: overall best practices for your board and CEO to build a strong and cohesive high-functioning port.



Roles of Board Member vs. Roles of Staff



the “What”



the “How”

Commissioner/Board's Role – the What



- Commissioner/Board Member:

- § Represent the citizens
- § Ask questions
- § Stay informed
- § Know the rules

- Board as a Whole:

- § Debate and Set Policy
- § Set the priorities for the agency
- § Make rules for the agency to live by
- § Hire the CEO & Legal Counsel
- § Responsible for fiscal sustainability of organization
- § Create and maintain an active mission statement and strategic plan

Staff's Role – the How



- Staff Member:

- § Inform and educate the Board
- § Ensure transparency so that Board members can carry out Board responsibilities
- § Treat Board members equitably and fairly in the dissemination of information

- § Facilitate policy implementation
- § Make priorities into a reality
- § Run the agency day-to-day

Put it Into Practice



- Initial request goes to CEO
- Don't go directly to staff member to research an issue for you and then spring it on the other board members.



"Helen, you're the Team Leader, why don't you jump first?"

- Example:
 - § 2 days before Bd. Mtg., member asks staff to prepare a report on consent item
 - § Doesn't share report with other members but pulls item from consent and seeks to debate.
- Best Practice:
 - § Everyone should have the same information so all are prepared.
 - § Don't use staff to make your colleagues look bad; don't play "gotcha!"

Board Evaluation of CEO Performance



- Limited to how the CEO performs and manages her staff.
- Best practice is to conduct annually.
- Set out tangible and measurable goals.

EVALUATION

| | |
|--------------------------|----------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Outstanding |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Very Good |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Satisfactory |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Marginal |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Unsatisfactory |



"I don't have time to write performance reviews, so I'll just criticize you in public from time to time."

DO NOT PUBLICLY CRITICIZE AGENCY STAFF.

- Example:
 - § Budget adjustment due to lost customer or tenant moving. May cause cuts that will increase the time it takes to serve constituents. Board member publicly condemns the staff for deciding to take these steps to adjust the budget.
- Best Practice:
 - § Staff are experts when it comes to running the day to day aspects of the agency. Criticizing the staff publicly for making the difficult decisions they must make to keep the agency running is not a good way to promote a good relationship between the two.
 - § Undermining the staff's knowledge in public serves no other purpose than to create public distrust toward all of government. Provide constructive criticism privately.

Role of Board Member vs. Role of Staff – Takeaways



- Board Members and Staff Members have different roles
- Board Members should not micro-manage
- Staff must not overstep and attempt to set policy
- There must be transparency, integrity, and trust for Board and Staff to carry out their roles



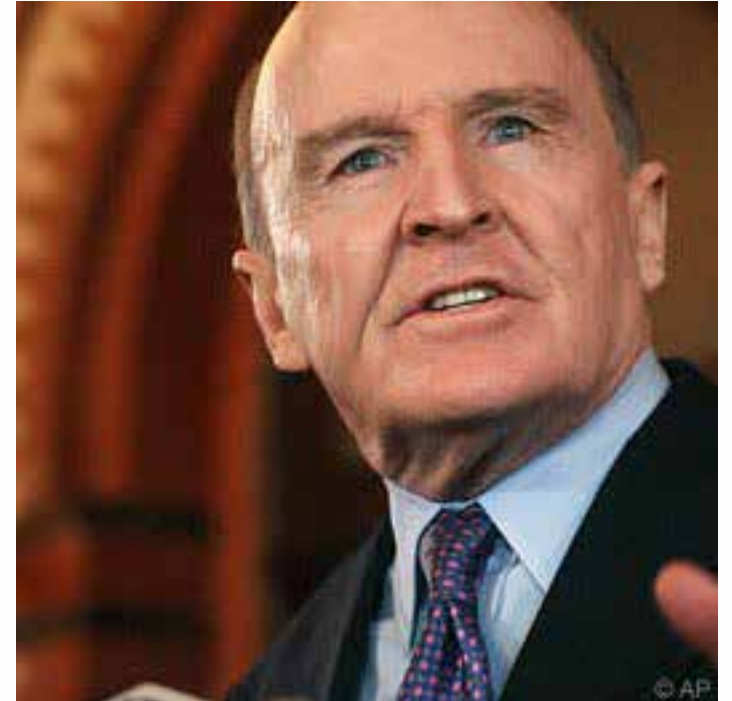
Role of CEO/General Manager

CEO/General Managers



- § Oversee all administrative tasks necessary for agency operations
- § Hired by, and under the direction of, the board
- § Advises board
- § Supervise agency departments and oversee staff
- § Implement policies adopted by elected officials
- § Develop, oversee, maintain budget
- § Bring concerns and requests of community to government

- “If you pick the right people and give them the opportunity to spread their wings...you almost don’t have to manage them.”-Jack Welch, Former Chairman and CEO of General Electric



Role of CEO/General Manager – Takeaways



- The GM is the gatekeeper between the Board and agency Staff
- Keeping a good candidate in place involves respecting his or her management style and giving deference to new or innovative strategies
- Best Practice: Hire a good Manager and give them room to manage
- Remember open government/sunshine rules regarding staff briefing and answering questions



Best Practices: Communication and Problem-Solving



Communication



- “Being President is like running a cemetery: you’ve got a lot of people under you and nobody’s listening.”-President Bill Clinton

Effective Communication



- Learn best practices to:
 - § Communicate and problem-solve with colleagues
 - § Maintain collaborative relationships between staff, board members, and general manager
 - § Interact with local officials and the community
 - § Design inclusive processes to engage the public



Communication Basics – Best Practice Tip



- Be attentive: Whether a one-on-one conversation with a colleague, or in a board meeting with a full house, pay attention to the speaker and the subject matter. This will improve your communication, and foster mutual respect.

Communication Basics – Best Practice Tip



- Ask questions: This will allow you to better understand the speaker and show your interest in the subject matter.
- AKA “Reflective Listening”

Collaborative Problem-Solving (from “Getting to Yes” by R. Fisher and W. Ury)



- Separate the People from the Problem:
 - § Work with each other to solve a problem, instead of against each other.
- Focus on Interests not Positions:
 - § A discussion about interests is broader and can appeal to everyone
- Invent options for Mutual Gain:
 - § Instead of “making your case” create new ideas together
- Use Objective Criteria:
 - § Agree on a common standard or result



Final Takeaways



- An organization where everyone understands their roles and stays within them is a well-functioning organization
- CEO/General Manager oversees and directs staff; not the Board or any individual member
- Board evaluation of staff performance should be limited to CEO/General Manager and how he or she manages other employees
- Board should rely on staff to help accomplish the organization's goals
- Effective communication is essential to a successful team
- Board can rely on legal counsel to help guide the organization through the legal framework so that goals are achieved and risk is eliminated or at least minimized



- “Trust, but verify.”
-President Ronald Reagan



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Questions?

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