



CHARTING THE COURSE

Roles of County Commissioner

Strategic Leadership – Key Roles

- County Vision/Culture
- Constituent/County Representative
- Fiscal Responsibilities
- Set Clear Organizational Goals
- Plan for the Future
- Approve Organization Policies



Charting the Course vs. Steering the Ship

- Leadership Role of Commissioners
- What is micromanagement?
- Leadership Misalignment



A Houleism to Consider.....

“

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”

Different Sized Counties.....



.....Same Principles

Staying on Course

Successes in Leadership

- **Speak from the same page** – If you, your fellow commissioners, your administrator, your leadership team, and staff speak using the same shared vision and goals it instills confidence in the work of the county
- **Focus on outcomes** – Boards that ask questions and focus on impacts and results outshine those that get stuck in the details and micromanagement
- **Celebrate successes** – county leadership and staff deal with a wide range of issues. Celebrate the wins and successes and look for opportunities to learn from efforts that miss the mark. Focusing too much on shortcomings will stifle innovation.

Lost in the Storm

Unintended Outcomes

- **Just trying to “think it through”** – Thinking out loud at Board meetings, even when intended as nothing more than that, can be construed by staff or citizens as more.
- **Just trying to connect with staff** – Realize that any conversation you have with staff will carry with it meaning based on your position and title. This can lead to mixed messages between your leadership team and staff.
- **Just wanting to “push”** the organization to greatness – Every comment you make has the potential to lift up or bring down moral. Be thoughtful as you critique and challenge.

Testing the Waters

What would you do?

- Staff Call
- Press Interview
- P&Z Permit Complaint



Testing the Waters

What would you do?

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Staff Call

Shortly after taking office, a long time mid level county staff person contacts you and asks to meet with you directly because "You need to know what's REALLY going on around here."

- A. Thank them for reaching out and set up a meeting time.
- B. Try to gather more information about what they want to talk about before agreeing to meet.
- C. Tell them to take up their concerns with their supervisor or department head and leave you out of it.
- D. Immediately inform the department head that staff is seeking out a commissioner to engage directly on an internal issue.

Press Interview

A member of the press contacts you regarding a controversial bill introduced in the MN Senate. What do you say?

- A. This bill lines up with your personal political beliefs so you say, “I’d be happy to.”
- B. You refer the reporter to the County Administrator or Communications Director.
- C. You explain to the reporter that you cannot speak on behalf of the Board because this issue has not been discussed locally and the Board has not taken a position.
- D. You explain to the reporter that as a County Commissioner your position is non-partisan and therefore you have no official comment.

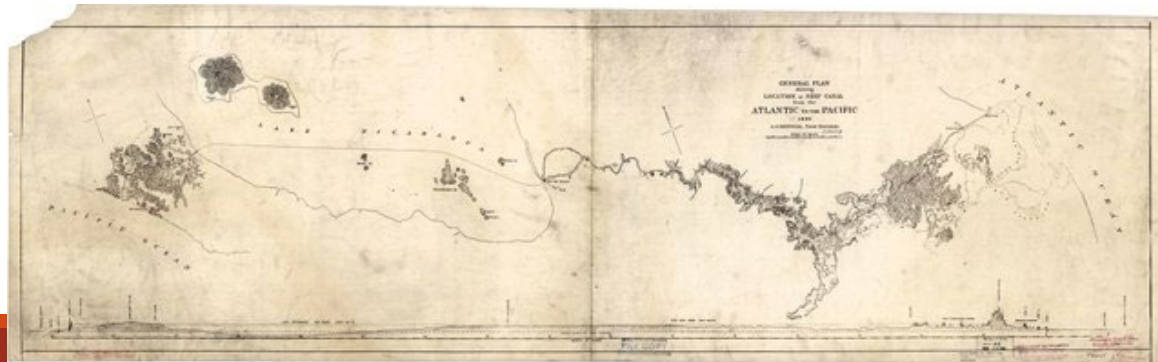
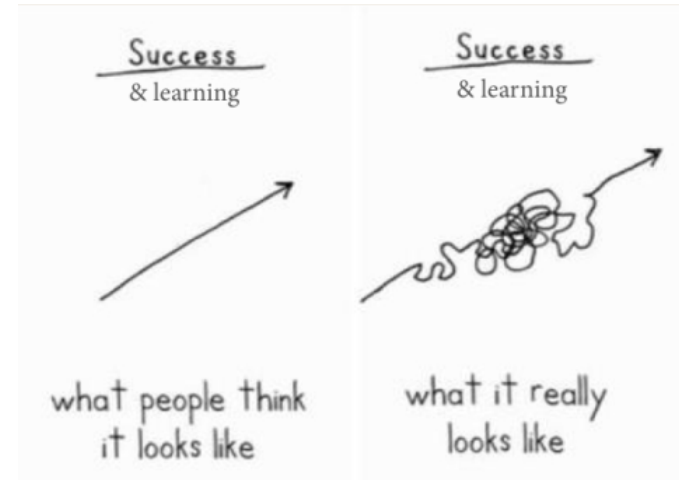
Planning & Zoning Permit Complaint

A citizen contacts you after meeting with Planning & Zoning staff. They are upset with the requirements needed to complete the permit process and demand that you intervene on their behalf. What do you do?

- A. Gather all the information you can from the citizen and present it at the next county board meeting for discussion.
- B. Tell the citizen that the process is there for a reason and they'll just need to accept it.
- C. Get contact information from the citizen and let them know you will refer their question to the department head, as an expert in the process, who will be more than happy to address concerns.
- D. Find out which staff member spoke to the citizen, visit their office to demand that they reconsider the decision. We are hear to serve the public after all.

Enjoy the Journey

- We are learning every day
- Successful organizations learn and grow – they aren't perfect and people still make mistakes
- Have patience/grace with yourself and others
- Appreciate the lessons learned in difficult situations
- Listen to others around you – there's a wealth of talent around you supporting your journey
- This is going to take time



Presenters

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