

Council Orientation: Planning for a New Term

Make Orientation Day Memorable for Councillors and Staff

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Overview of Session

Part One:

- Before the Election – ensuring your candidates are engaged
- Ensuring Staff Buy-in

Part Two:

- Getting your Plan ready
- Determining what to include

Part Three:

- Thinking “outside the box”
- Tips and Tricks to make your Orientation a success
- Discussion



Before the Election
PART ONE

Why Even Have an Council Orientation?

- Being an effective Council Member is challenging, as the public sector is very different than private enterprise.
- People may get elected without completely understanding how they fit into the municipal environment.
- Start the term afresh, with a renewed vigour in Council-staff relations.
- Provide a clear overview of the legal responsibilities.
- Review priorities, successes and challenges for the upcoming term.

The Work Starts Early

- Start by engaging candidates to ensure that they understand what they are getting themselves into.
 - Liaise with different stakeholders
 - Hold Information Sessions
 - Don't focus on election, but on issues that are important to the municipality
- Ensure that Staff are on Board.
 - Determine which department is in charge of Orientation
 - Start discussions with the Senior Management Team to ensure that they will participate

Remember, engaged candidates make engaged Politicians!



Get Your Plan Ready

PART TWO

Plan your Logistics

- Determine appropriate locations for the sessions as well as the days and times that they will be taking place.
- Finalize your logistics.
 - Set a menu, finalize seating, book transportation
- Ensure that you communicate the dates and times of the Orientation to all candidates!
 - There should be an understanding that the Orientation Session is important for Council planning.
 - Give candidates time to book the day or days off, if necessary.

Finalize Your Format

- Ensure that the Orientation “fits” with your organization.
- Some factors to consider are:
 - What percentage of the Council is new, versus old?
 - Who are the key players? What is your organizational structure?
 - How have Council-Staff relations been in the past, versus how you would like them to be. Be specific!
 - Is your community a growth community? What challenges do you foresee in the next 10 years?
 - What is your municipality's financial condition? Your staffing condition?

Do Your Research!

- Determine the issues that need to be a part of the Orientation Session:
 - Survey Councillors and ask them specifically; or
 - Conduct in depth interviews with a veteran Councillor and a new Councillor to determine what type of information they are looking for from the session.
- Talk to the Senior Management Team and determine what kinds of issues they want to address during the session.
- Look at lessons learned from previous terms, and determine how you can approach challenges.
- Review literature. Take courses. **BE PREPARED.**

Determine What to Include

- Make sure you identify what the goals of the Orientation are, right from the beginning.
- Make a list of content you want to communicate.
- Determine who will deliver the presentations.
 - Should be an mix of internal and external presenters

Items to Include in the Orientation

Some topics to include are:

- Roles and responsibilities
- Decision making process
- Legislative Environment
 - Procedure By-law
 - Code of Conduct
 - How Matters are Heard at Council
- Organizational Structure
- Human Resources Policies

Items to Include in the Orientation (con)

- Budgeting and Finance
- Leadership Skills
- Engaging the Public
- Public trust and transparency
- Working with the media
- Fostering strong Council-Staff relations
- **And the list goes on!**

Strong Content, Strong Council

- The Council Orientation is an excellent opportunity to build bridges, brainstorm ideas and educate Council members on specific matters that are important for the municipality.
- Ensure that all content is finalized and reviewed by Senior Management.
 - The Communications Department can provide assistance with the “look and feel” of the presentations and hand out material.
- Create a “critical documents” binder that includes all of the pertinent information supporting your sessions, as well as any other information Councillors may need to review.
 - HR Policies, By-laws, Code of Conduct
 - Strategic Plan
 - Financial Information
 - Asset Management Plan



Thinking Outside the Box

PART THREE

How Can You Make Your Orientation Session Appealing?

- Keep it simple...and short.
- 2-3 days with 4 hour sessions each day. Or 2 days with 6 hour sessions.
- Don't overwhelm Councillors with information.
- Provide a mix of learning and interactive exercises.
 - Don't keep them in their seats.
- Ensure that you are available for any follow-up, if necessary.
- **Keep communication channels open!**

Think Outside the Box

Some suggestions for making the Sessions more appealing:

- Interactive role-playing or videos for Meeting Efficiencies or Legislative training
- Jeopardy Style Quiz on Municipal Government (with prizes!)
- Opportunities for ride-a-longs with By-law or Animal services
- Municipal Facilities Tour
- Department “Speed Dating”
- Teambuilding exercises to build trust and comradery

An Out of Box Experience: Departmental Speed Dating



An Out of Box Experience: Departmental Speed Dating (continued)



To Recap

- Engage early
- Get Staff Buy-in
- Determine your Plan
- Plan your logistics
- Finalize your Format and Content
- Don't be afraid to take risks!

Remember, it's a team effort!

Discussion

- Ideas for what type of items you would want to include in your Orientation Session?
 - Council with newer members
 - Council with incumbents
- How would you engage Staff and ensure buy-in?
- Addressing Council-staff relations?
- How do you keep the momentum going after the Orientation is over?

Questions?



Debi Wilcox and Shrishma Dave

THANK YOU!