



LEADING IN SMALL PLACES: ROLE OF THE CAO

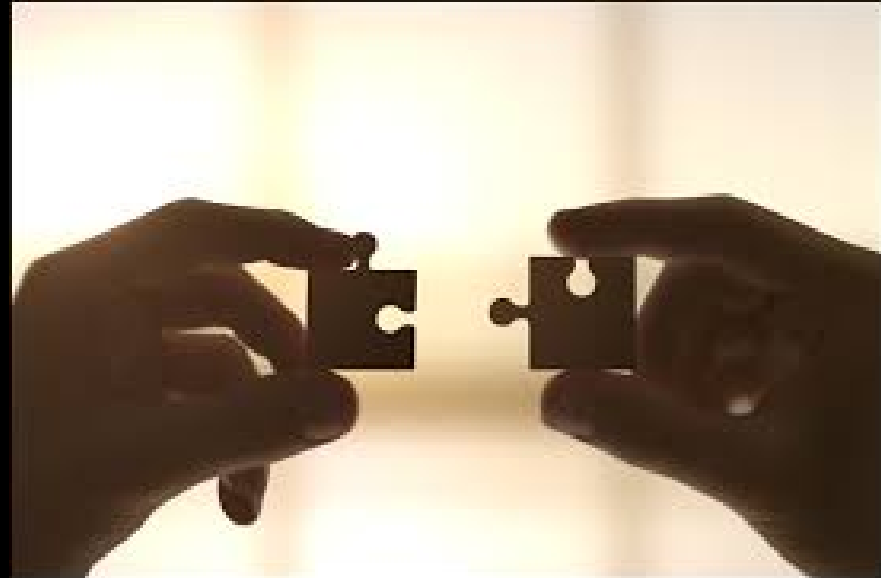
Fall 2019

Robert Tremblay, Chief Administrative Officer

Township of Whitewater Region

WHAT WE'LL COVER

- Some Theory
 - Siegel's Leading Up, Out and Down
 - Siegel's Public Service Bargain
 - Mintzberg's Leading on the Edges
 - The Politics/Administration Dichotomy
 - Van Wart's Transformational Leadership
 - Capacity & Autonomy
- What the Municipal Act Says ...
- Practical Application





- 18 years experience in local government
- 5 years as a Department Head & Clerk
- CAO in WWR since December 2016
- City of Ottawa – 10 years
- School Board Trustee – 2 terms, Association President
- AMCTO Vice President
- CMO, AOEMC
- Diploma in Municipal Administration
- Undergraduate degree in social sciences
- Masters in Public Admin – Local Government Program

LEADING UP, DOWN & OUT

- Up
 - Council
 - “Power flowing from influence”
 - Trust = competency, action and communication
- Down
 - Staff: CAO as Council’s one employee
 - Compliance (rules) & Coordination (hierarchy)
 - Managing resources (\$\$\$ & human)
- Out
 - Relationships with the outside world
 - Media, partners, other municipalities, community
 - Negotiation skills & Issues Management



SUCCESSFUL CAO PER SIEGEL

- **TRAITS:** Integrity, Respect, Energy, Resilience, Passion, Humility (rather than charisma)
- **SKILLS:** Emotional intelligence, Politically sensitive (but not politicized), Confidence grounded in hard work and preparation (not in hubris), Don't micromanage (but support staff), Good communications skills (including listening), "Cool as a cucumber", Build on your strengths & strengthen your weaknesses

BEHAVIOURS:

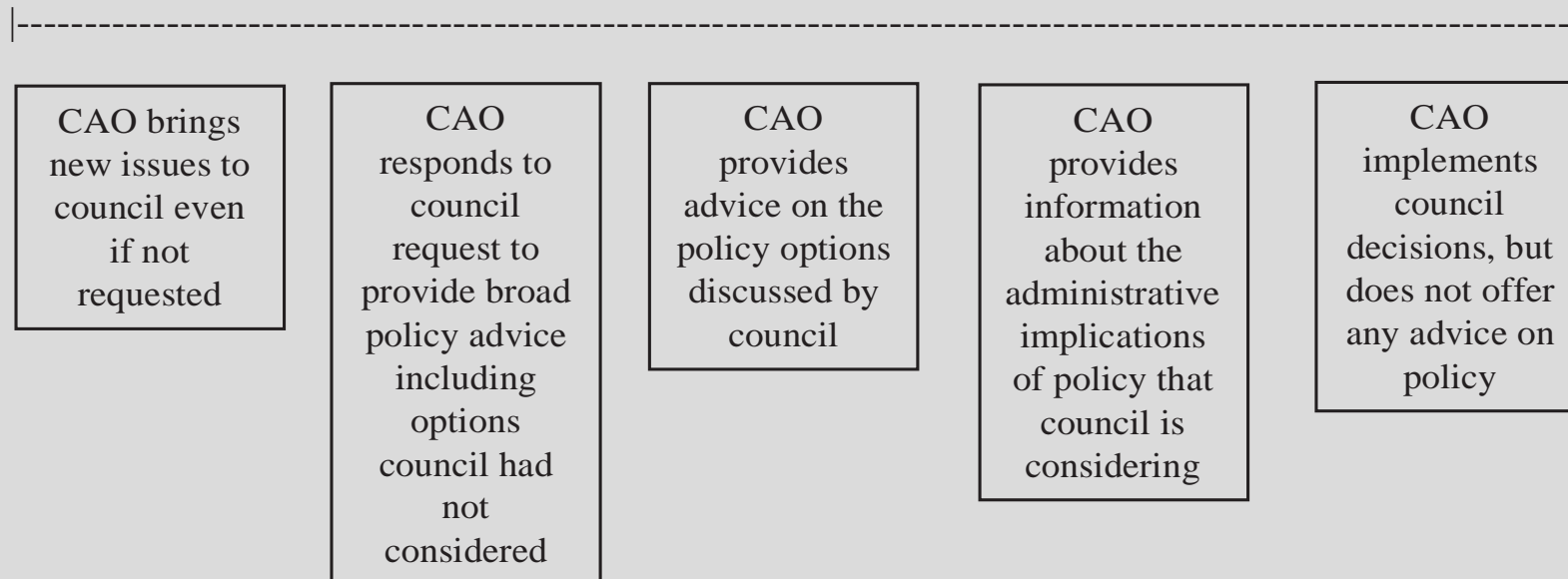
Adapt to your environment; Be changed oriented; Make changes carefully; respect local customs; Councillors are in charge, but sometimes they need professional assistance; Always be grounded in rationality; Build teams; Surround yourself with great people (if you do not have them, develop them); Promote training and development opportunities; Tear down silos; avoid turf talk; You are not the municipality (you are the temporary hired help); There's life outside your own municipality; Respect the work-life balance

PUBLIC SERVICE BARGAIN

- Ad hoc - trial & error - based on loyalty & competency
- Accountability
 - Politicians – to electors
 - Public service – advice & implementation

Figure 1. *The Role of the CAO with Regard to Council*

Proactive Reactive

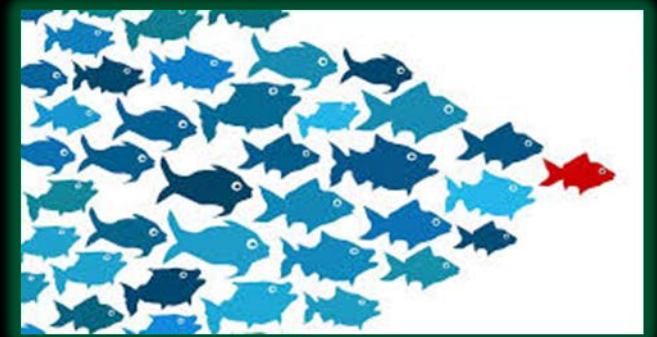


LEADING ON THE EDGES

- Three levels: action, people & information
- Three edges: political (up), stakeholder (out), operating (down)

“At the centre sits the person who comes to the job, bringing a set of values, experiences, knowledge and competencies. The person in the job creates a frame, which includes the purpose of the job, a perspective on what needs to be done, and a specific set of strategic positions for doing it” (Mintzberg, 1997, p. 132).

- Roles: seeking and getting information, using it to control work, leading and managing people, networking with contacts, and supervising action



POLITICS/ADMINISTRATION DICHOTOMY

- Early Reform Movement still relevant today...
- Council-Manager Plan: small council; Council roles; full-time staff; budget preparation vs. adoption; ceremonial duties of Mayor
- *“The complementarity of politics and administration is based on the premise that elected officials and administrators join together in the common pursuit of sound governance [...] Complementarity stresses interdependence along with distinct roles; compliance along with independence; respect for political control along with a commitment to shape and implement policy in ways that promote the public interest; deference to elected incumbents along with adherence to the law and support for fair electoral competition; and appreciation of politics along with support for professional standards” (Svara, 2001, p.179).*

TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP

- | | |
|------------------------------|--|
| Management by exception | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Deal with low-performing employees• Avoid technical mistakes and blunders• Deal with performance lapses• Stabilize organization if needed |
| Contingent reward | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pay• Life-work balance |
| Individualized consideration | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Coaching• Delegation• Training opportunities |
| Idealized influence | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Model exemplary behavior• Avoid personal scandal• Use of charismatic communication |

TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Inspirational
commitment

- Gain commitment in the work and the profession

- Teamwork

Intellectual stimulation

- Ensure the need for change

- Provide a plan

- Build internal support

- Ensure top management support

- Ensure external support

- Provides resources

- Institutionalize changes

- Pursue comprehensive change

CAPACITY & AUTONOMY

JACOB ET AL. (2008)

Capacity:

- Management
 - Strategic planning
 - Citizen participation
 - Expertise
- Money
 - Revenues

Autonomy:

- Initiative (formal power)
- Immunity (survival)

WHAT THE MUNICIPAL ACT SAYS ...

Council

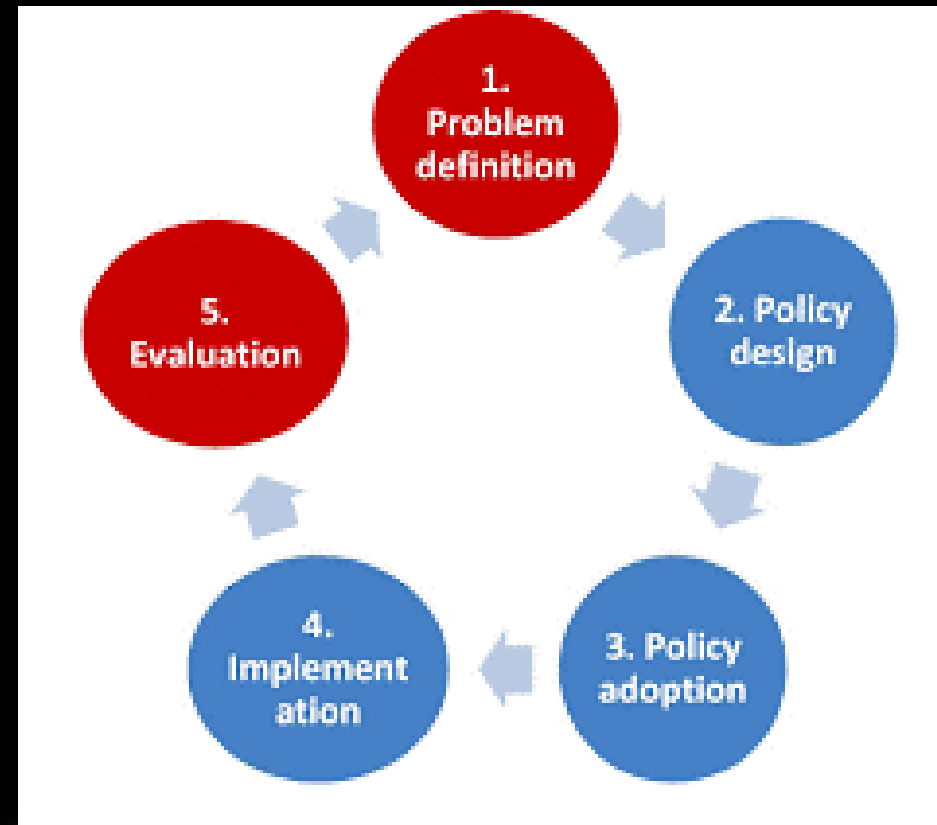
- Represent the public and consider well-being
- Develop & evaluate programs & policies
- Determine services
- Provide oversight and controllership
- Ensure accountability & transparency of the operations
- Maintain financial integrity

CAO & Officers

- Staff are to implement Council's decisions and establish administrative practices and procedures
- Undertake research and provide advice on policies and programs
- CAO: exercise general control & management of affairs = efficiency and effectiveness of operations

POLICY-MAKING

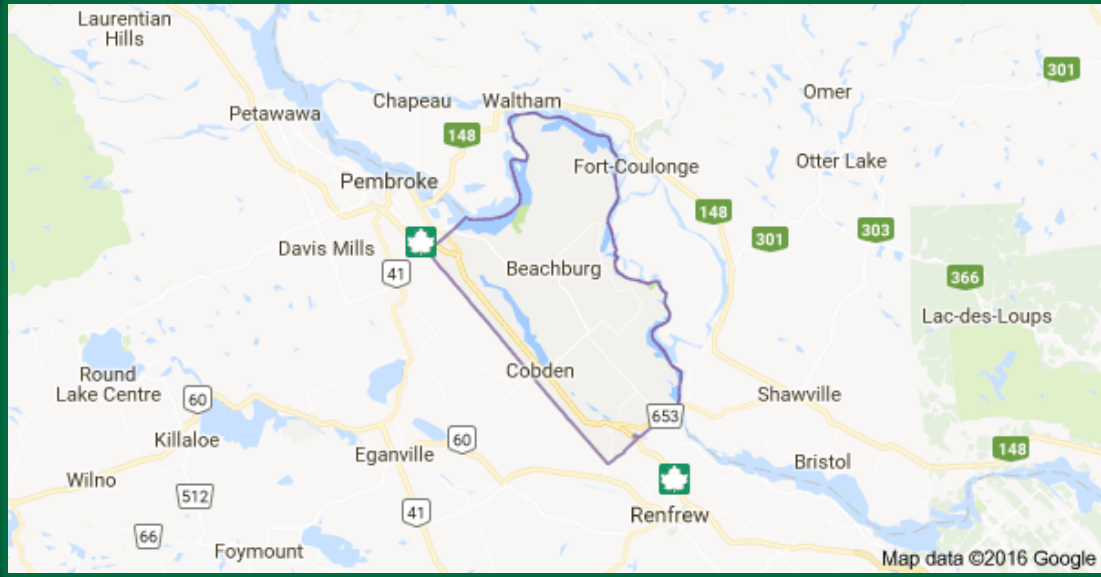
- Required by Municipal Act:
 - Sale & disposition of land
 - Hiring of employees
 - Procurement of goods and services
 - Notice
 - Accountability & transparency
 - Delegation of powers and duties
- Policy vs. procedures
- Important space for both sides



// THE CONTEMPORARY MUNICIPAL CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER MUST REMAIN SEPARATE FROM ELECTORAL POLITICS, BUT BE OPERATIONALLY ORIENTED, POLITICALLY SENSITIVE, AND DEFINITELY INVOLVED IN THE POLITICS OF GOVERNING SOCIETY. //

"The usual prescription of contingency theory is that an organization must find the type of leader that fits its **current needs**."

"Although the CAO has an important role to play in leading out, the special nature of that role can be quite **ambiguous**. The mayor and councillors should take a strong role here, and the CAO must be careful not to be too far out in front of her or his political masters." (Siegel, 2015)



MOVING A MUNICIPALITY FORWARD

Strategic Thinking

Continuous
Improvement

Incrementalism

- Change to structure and team
- Studies and plans
- Dealing with reality
- Respecting the past



Mission & Vision

- Commitment to quality municipal services and welcoming community
- Growth, sustainability and vibrancy

Values

Integrity

Respect

Community

“Doing the right thing even when no one is looking.”

SOME PRACTICAL THOUGHTS



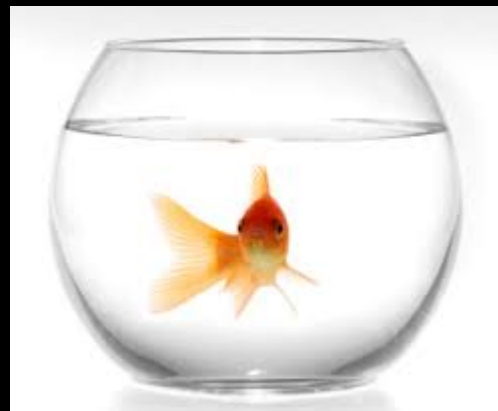
Truth is Truth
even if no one believes it
a LIE is a LIE
even if everyone believes it



Maybe the biggest
business mistake ever
made...



SOME PRACTICAL THOUGHTS



SOME FINAL THOUGHTS

Being a CAO in a smaller place is a rewarding experience, with opportunities to bring about change, and to deal with constraints that include resources.

“Be committed and passionate about advice giving and sometimes that advice is not always welcomed but accept it and still embrace everything every day. Public service can be harsh; change is inevitable; people can be critical.”

Michelle Casavecchia-Somers

Mayor David Mennill commented: “Taking on the CAO role in any municipality can be taxing, dealing with the public who often only show up if they are angry. It takes a special skill to deal with people. You must be a people person. There are some rewards, such as making a difference, because you can lead improvement.”

QUESTIONS

