

MEMO

To: Wally Bobkiewicz, Session Convenor, City Administrator of Issaquah, Washington
Meeting Delegates

From: Julia D. Novak, Facilitator and Executive Vice President - Raftelis

Date: September 13, 2024

Re: A National Conversation – The Manager’s Role in Community Leadership – Round Two

My colleague Nancy Hetrick and I look forward to being with you in Pittsburgh to facilitate this second round of discussions regarding the Manager’s Role in Community Leadership. In the past year many states have picked up where we left off in Austin and we will use our time together to develop recommendations for the next iteration of this conversation.

The purpose of this memo is to share the agenda and important logistics for our session, as well as provide some reading that will be foundational to our conversation.

Logistics

Saturday, September 21

Meeting: 1:30 pm to 4:00 pm
Location: David L. Lawrence Convention Center
1000 Ft. Duquesne Blvd. – Room 325

Preparation

Please refresh your memory regarding the conversation held in 2023 and any activities your state had to further the conversation. For your convenience, we have included the notes from each of the State Association conversations. The following Findings and Recommendations come from the review of those documents.

Findings and Recommendations

Findings

1. Local government managers are called upon to be **courageous** in their difficult role of providing leadership in their organizations and communities.
2. Local government managers play a critical role in building and maintaining **trust** among staff, elected officials and members of the community.

3. Skills in **facilitation, mediation and convening** are critical for local government managers to work with staff, elected officials and community partners when discussing community challenges.
4. Being a skilled **communicator** is essential for community leadership. Managers must develop and maintain good regular avenues of communication with their elected officials (individually and as a group), staff and members of the community. **Listening** is a key element in communication.
5. Local government managers have an obligation to foster regular **goal setting** with their elected officials and the identification of organizational and community **values**. Managers must help ensure that all voices in the community are heard during discussions of goals and values.
6. Local government managers must understand and embrace their role in **presenting data** and advocating for policy direction as **neutral leaders**. Managers have responsibility for developing complete **definitions for complex problems** and **understandable language** to explain different policy options.

“The manager should know what the issues are, what issues are coming, and how to creatively and efficiently deploy the resources of their community to solve problems and create scenarios where the community can thrive.” **Alabama discussion**

Proposed Recommendations

Recommendations to the ICMA Executive Board

1. Convene a Task Force to update the Declaration of Ideals to provide guidance to Managers as they navigate the policy/administration dichotomy as community leaders.
2. Convene a meeting with leadership of the National League of Cities and National Association of Counties to discuss the findings and recommendations of this project and develop strategies to share these issues with NLC and NACo members.

“The old prototype of a City Manager is no longer relevant. Big change in the career and life of a City Manager versus what it was a few decades ago. Dual career households, unwillingness to move family frequently, healthier balance, resistance to toxic work environments, mental health etc. are all being negotiated and a heroic city manager putting job on the line and leading change is not as easy, or common by those now in and our considering our profession.” **Kansas discussion**

3. Develop training for Manager's who enter professional local government administration from other professions that highlight the uniqueness of Council-Manager governance; their role and the history of the profession.

4. Request the ICMA Senior Advisors to initiate a dialogue in the profession on the role of courage in being a local government manager. Much is asked of a local government manager and it is important that ICMA support individual managers as they are asked to make courageous decisions. Request the Senior Advisors to report the Executive Board on these discussions at the 2025 ICMA Annual Conference.

5. Request the 2025 Conference Planning Committee to consider additional training on facilitation, mediation and convening skills at the 2025 Annual Conference and Regional Conferences.
6. Request the ICMA staff to devote a 2025 issue of Public Management magazine to the topic of community leadership.

Recommendations to State Local Government Management Associations

1. Create a task force to consider the findings and recommendations of this initiative to consider strategies that could be used in the state to further these conversations.
2. Convene meetings with leadership of state leagues of cities and counties to discuss the findings and recommendations of this project and develop strategies to share these issues with their elected members.
3. Develop sessions at state association meetings specifically to address the role of local government managers of being courageous and fostering trust in their organizations.

Agenda

Welcome and Introductions

- Agenda review
- Norms
- Introductions

Setting the Stage and Advancing the Conversation

- Wally Bobkiewicz will provide an overview of what has happened to further this conversation since the group met in Austin in 2023 and review the proposed recommendations

Group Discussions

- We will break into groups to review the recommendations, discuss why they are important, and determine the appropriate next steps.

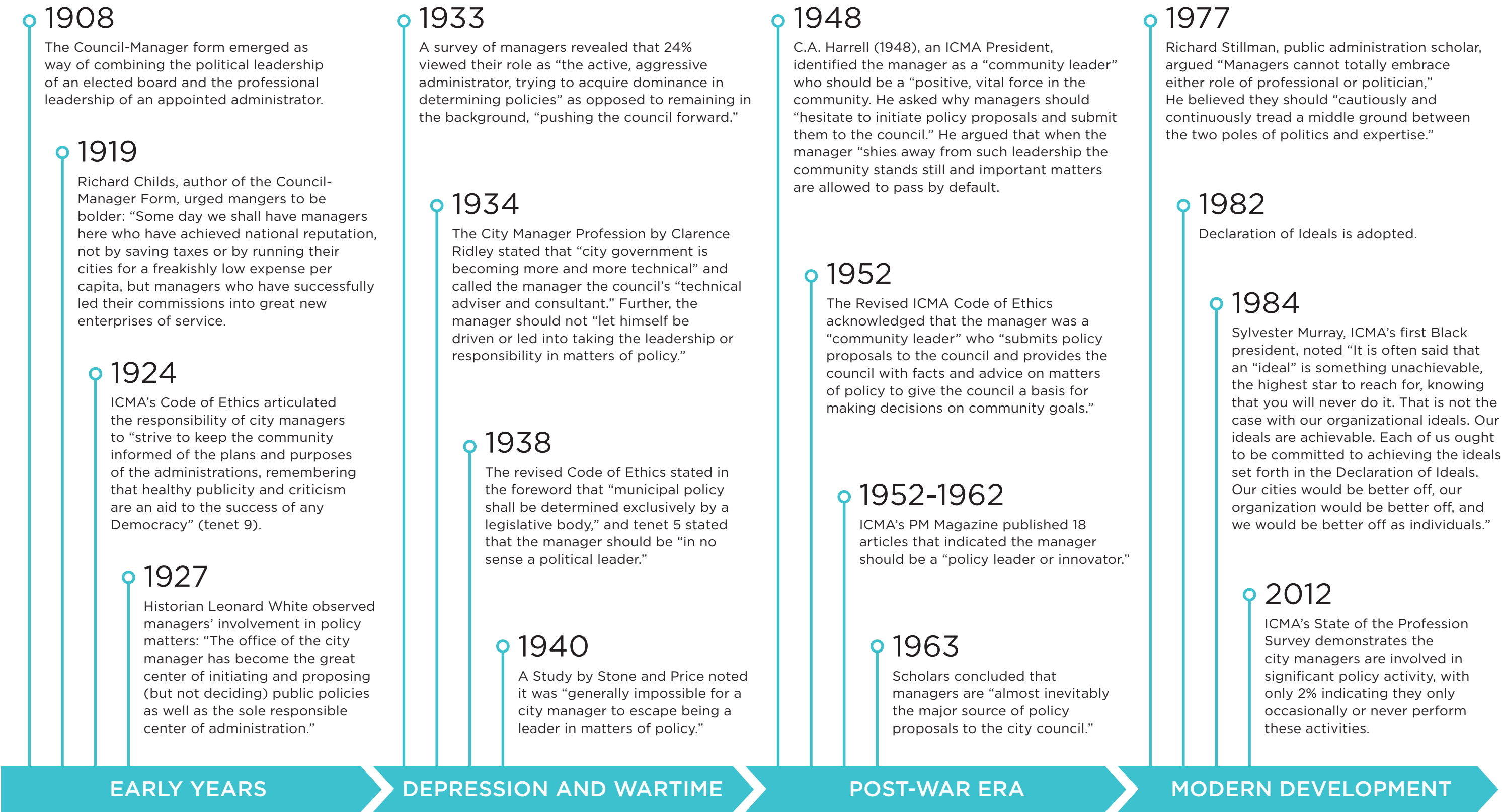
Next Steps

- We will summarize next steps so there is clarity around what happens next.

Closing

- Closing remarks and reflections

A Look at the Role of the City Manager



Declaration of Ideals

Members of the International City/County Management Association dedicate themselves to the faithful stewardship of the public trust and embrace a shared ideal of management excellence.

The International City/County Management Association (ICMA) was founded with a commitment to the preservation of the values and integrity of representative local government and local democracy and a dedication to the promotion of efficient and effective management of public services. To fulfill the spirit of this commitment, ICMA works to maintain and enhance public trust and confidence in local government, to achieve equity and social justice, to affirm human dignity, and to improve the quality of life for the individual and the community. Members of ICMA dedicate themselves to the faithful stewardship of the public trust and embrace the following ideals of management excellence, seeking to:

1. Provide an environment that ensures the continued existence and effectiveness of representative local government and promotes the understanding that democracy confers privileges and responsibilities on each citizen.
2. Recognize the right of citizens to influence decisions that affect their well-being; advocate a forum for meaningful citizen participation and expression of the political process; and facilitate the clarification of community values and goals.
3. Respect the special character and individuality of each community while recognizing the interdependence of communities and promoting coordination and cooperation.
4. Seek balance in the policy formation process through the integration of the social, cultural, and physical characteristics of the community.
5. Promote a balance between the needs to use and to preserve human, economic, and natural resources.
6. Advocate equitable regulation and service delivery, recognizing that needs and expectations for public services may vary throughout the community.
7. Develop a responsive, dynamic local government organization that continuously assesses its purpose and seeks the most effective techniques and technologies for serving the community.
8. Affirm the intrinsic value of public service and create an environment that inspires excellence in management and fosters the professional and personal development of all employees.
9. Seek a balanced life through ongoing professional, intellectual, and emotional growth.
10. Demonstrate commitment to professional ethics and ideals and support colleagues in the maintenance of these standards.
11. Take actions to create diverse opportunities in housing, employment, and cultural activity in every community for all people.

Notes



The Declaration of Ideals approved by ICMA in 1982 gives voice to the aspirations of the profession in many aspects of the manager’s activities. These statements do not, however, go far enough in describing the responsibilities of the manager as a comprehensive professional leader in city government.”

James Svara,
Ideal and Practice in Council-Manager Government

GET IN CONTACT



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