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The Challenge of Management and Leadership in the Public Sector

By: Dave Woglom, Associate Director, Lafayette College Meyner Center



Effective and productive management is a critically important aspect of every well-run municipality. Municipal managers need to know and understand the principles of such skills as leadership, communication, and delegation of authority. Management in the public sector is uniquely challenging because—unlike in the private sector where profit is the ultimate motive—a municipality's main goal is to provide the "highest quality of public services at the lowest possible cost." Understanding their environment and the culture of local government are critical components that all effective municipal managers must need to understand and apply every day.

Managers are the CEO of their corporation; they are responsible for day-to-day management of the staff, overview of financial affairs, assessing both short- and long-term needs, and providing public services to residents, business owners, and visitors. They are also the crucial link to the elected Board, acting as the facilitator, educator, and organizer to help the Board in their governing role. The most effective function of any Council-Manager form of government is where the Board and Manager view themselves as partners, not us and him (or her). The Manager is the person assigned the responsibility of running the business of government and communicates with the Board to keep them informed. He (or she) and the staff provide the public services of the government. The only difference is that the manager is the only person in the partnership who does not vote on issues.

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Solar Project in Lansdale



In 2018, Lansdale was awarded a grant of over \$585,000 from the Commonwealth Financing Authority through the Solar Energy Program to be used for a solar project at the Lansdale Utilities Complex. The project proposed construction of a 509 kilowatt (kW) solar array. Lansdale chose to install highly efficient dual axis trackers, making it the largest dual axis solar array on the east coast. Dual axis tracking means the panels will not only follow the sun across the sky throughout the day, but will also change angles with the seasons, following the sun as it shifts in height through the sky.

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Management and Leadership (continued)

The International City and County Managers Association (ICMA) identifies seven core values of all excellent leaders: honesty, ethics, trust, efficiency, productivity, accountability, and selflessness. Excellent leaders follow and expect all of their management personnel to adhere at all times to these principles. Knowing that their management staff are motivated differently, good leaders treat their staff “the same, but different.” All staff are expected to adhere to the core values, but the manager deals with each department head slightly different according to what inspires or motivates that person.

Excellent leaders must have a vision of the goals of the municipality, be able to manage change, be excellent decision makers, maintain a knowledge of best practices in municipal government, have a passion for their work, understand the principles of delegation of authority, and be willing to attend training programs to refresh their skills. However, no skill is more important than communication. Excellent leaders understand that communication is both a science and an art that is never mastered; rather, it is always a work in process. It is best done in formal (meetings) and informal (simple conversations) ways. Being transparent and approachable; defining short-and long-term goals; being tolerant and patient, but only to a limit; being willing to clearly review poor performance and identify what went wrong and how to address this in the future; and understanding that the manager sets the example every day by what he says, does, and even the tone of his voice and the body language he or she presents.

Effective management in the public sector can be challenging and frustrating, but rewarding and enjoyable. The best managers understand that it all starts with building relationships with elected Board members, the staff, and the residents of the community. Trust and respect are always earned, not simply given to any leader. Day-to-day, week-to-week, the best leaders are always willing to prove themselves over and over.

Lansdale Solar Project (continued)

Dual axis tracking systems allow the largest output of electricity generation by getting the most direct sunlight possible every day.



Image 1: Close up of dual axis tracking solar panel array.



Image 2: Close up of dual axis tracking solar panel in the snow.

A total of 1092 solar panels were installed, divided between 26 dual axis trackers, with 6 trackers located next to the Lansdale Electric building, and 20 trackers spread out around the Wastewater Treatment Plant. Each panel generates 460 watts (W), with a total system load of 509 kW. Each dual axis tracker stand is impressive in size, measuring over 40 feet long, 15 feet wide, and 12 feet tall. The 6 tracker stands outside of the electric department power the building first, and all the excess electricity generated gets pushed back out into our grid. With the Wastewater Treatment Plant’s intense and extensive systems, the electrical need is high, and the 20 tracker stands there will service most of their electrical needs.



Image 3: Dual axis tracking panel array next to Lansdale Electric Department building.



Image 4: Fixed solar panel array on top of Borough Hall.

In addition to the solar panels installed around the Utilities Complex, 288 panels were installed on the roof of Lansdale Borough Hall. As opposed to the Utilities Complex array, this array is made of panels that are fixed, and do not move to follow the location of the sun. These panels generate 375 W each, for a total of 108,000 W, powering most of Borough Hall, which houses the administrative offices, the Code Enforcement department, and the Police department.

By installing these solar panels, in addition to the 8 electric vehicle charging stations installed in 2019, Lansdale continues to become more eco-friendly. The solar panel array allows the borough to not be as reliant on outside power suppliers. This means that Lansdale will save money buying electric from power suppliers, and those savings can be reinvested in improving the future of Lansdale. Like any other town, Lansdale always has infrastructure projects on the to do list; road projects, updating curb ramps to be ADA compliant, replacing centuries old clay sewer pipes with more resilient PVC pipes, to name a few. By using the savings brought about by the solar array on projects like this allows for the Borough to strategically plan for future capital outlay.

Grove City Hosts Engineering Students

The Borough of Grove City recently provided an opportunity for the electrical engineering students of Grove City College to visit their borough substation and learn about municipal electric system operations.

The two-session presentation began with a virtual presentation on municipal power supply planning including information about transmission costs and descriptions of installed capacity components and how peak shaving reduces utility costs. The virtual presentation was led by Mike Migliore of AMP and included examples of how the delivery of power to Grove City Borough is affected not only by energy costs, but also transmission and reliability charges. Students learned how their degree in electrical engineering can be combined with a business degree for a career in the utility power supply & planning sector.

During the second presentation, Norm Baron from Utility Engineers, PC led an in-person tour of the Grove City substation. Students were provided a one-line diagram of the facility and gained insight into the working environment of the power utility sector. Students saw how theories learned in the classroom are used to solve real life problems and gained a better understanding of a public power utility and the types of work encountered by an electrical engineer.

The substation tour began with safety tips on the do's and don'ts when entering in and walking around inside a substation. The students learned about the various components of a substation and their applications. System loading and system power factor was discussed, and Norm explained how the loads and power factor affect the type and capacity of equipment selected. The students questioned the purpose of having two (2) transformers in the substation. Norm explained that it was important for Public Power Systems to have redundancy built into the substation for reliability

and continued electric service. Other items discussed included safety measures designed into the substation, the various protection schemes used to protect equipment and distribution circuits, the need for voltage regulation and the importance of a battery system in a substation.

Electric Superintendent Jeff Badger, a thirty-nine-year veteran of the Borough's electric department, showed the students examples of lineman safety equipment and tools in his demonstration of how distribution system work is accomplished.

Professor James Brooks, PhD, and Borough Manager Vance Oakes plan to continue the collaboration between Grove City Borough and Grove City College so that future classes can have hands on opportunities with the Grove City Electric Department.



Summerhill Electrician Retires with 50 Years of Service

Summerhill Borough officials recently honored Robert “Bob” McCormick for his more than 50 years of dedicated service. “It was a privilege, not a job”, said McCormick when asked about his time with the borough.

McCormick served on council and was the chief electrician for Summerhill Borough Electric. Borough council presented him with a plaque to be placed in the council meeting room and named the borough's electric substation building in his honor. *Pictured from left to right:* County Commissioner President Tom Chermisky, Bob McCormick, borough secretary Laura Penatzer, Mayor Eric Summerhill, and State Representative Jim Rigby.

** Thank you to Summerhill Borough and The Dispatch From Mainline Newspapers*



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