



The Changing Political Environment: Impacts on Your Leadership

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City of Suwanee

Presentation Outline

- **Define** the “Changing Political Environment”
- Discuss **why** it’s important to managers
- Best Practices for working with **citizens**
- Best Practices for working with **council/commissioners**
- **Q&A**

So what *is* this “Changing Political Environment?”

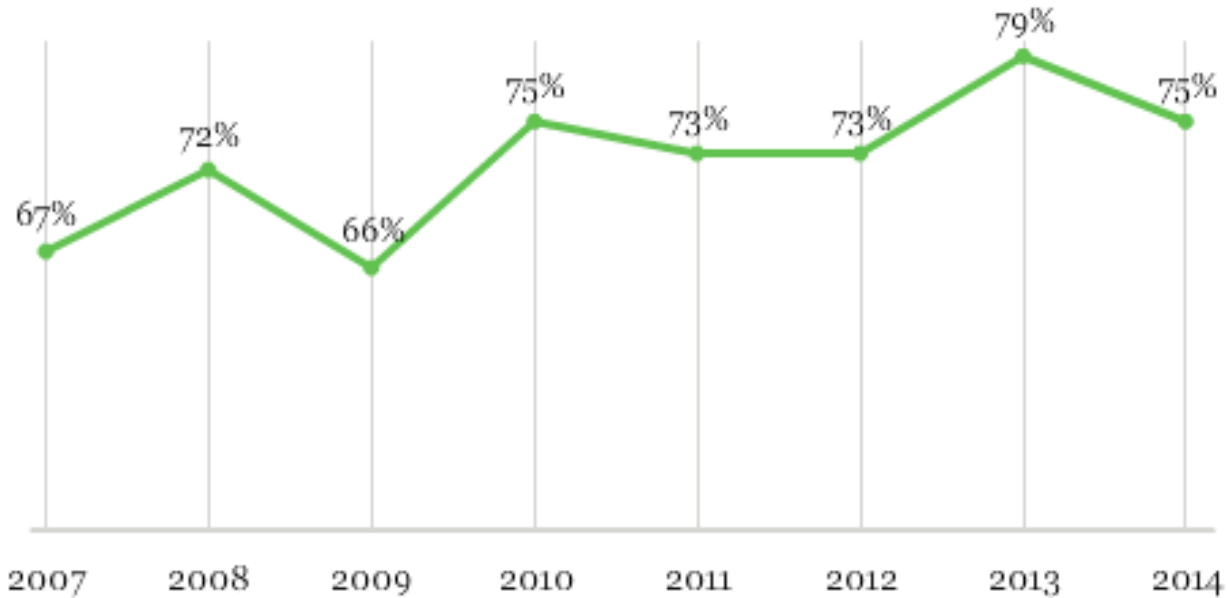
- Rise of populism – left and right
- Increasingly contentious, adversarial, partisan, and polarized
- Increasing skepticism of institutions and mistrust of authority
- Impatience

75% believe government is corrupt

Is corruption widespread throughout the government in this country, or not?

Asked of U.S. adults

■ Yes

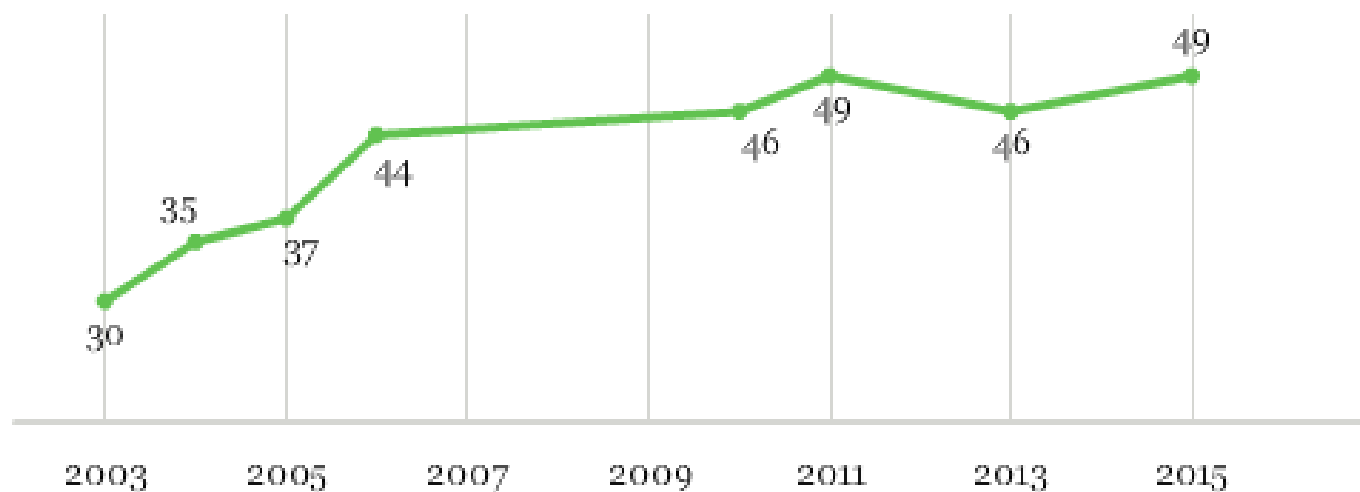


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49% believe government poses a threat

Do you think the federal government poses an immediate threat to the rights and freedoms of ordinary citizens, or not?

■ % Yes, immediate threat



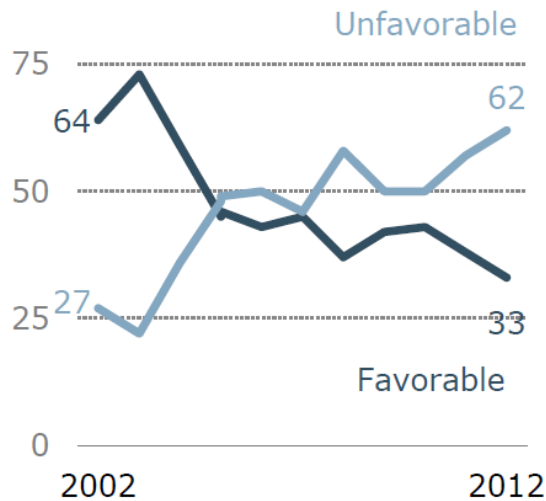
In Sept. 8-10, 2003, and May 20-21, 2013, polls, question was asked of a half sample.

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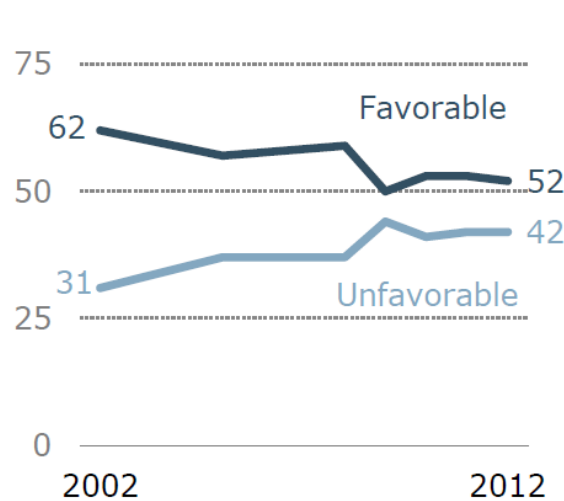
Local Government fares significantly better

Views of Government: 2002-2012

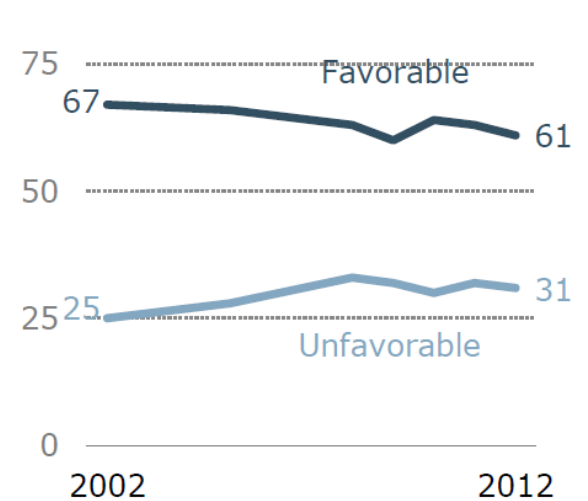
**The federal government
in Washington**



**Your
state government**



**Your
local government**



PEW RESEARCH CENTER Apr. 4-15, 2012.

Changes in our political environment influences our interactions with....

- Citizens
- Council/Commission members
- Staff
- Others



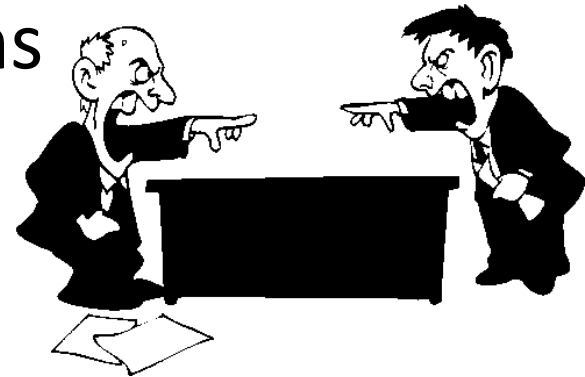
Citizen Interactions

- Arriving with certain beliefs of they way things run (mistrust of government)
- Learning political “behaviors” and norms from television



Newly Elected Council/Commission Members

- Arriving with certain beliefs of the way things run (mistrust of government)
- Learning political “behaviors” of politics from television and national campaigns



What does this *mean* for managers?

- We must manage an erosion of confidence
- We must deal with the mistakes of others – Ferguson, Flint, etc.
- Things take more time and resources to accomplish
- Building consensus is difficult
- Contention creates cautiousness and anxiety in the system

So what is a manager to do?

*“Under pressure, you don’t rise to the occasion,
you sink to the level of your training.”*

- Anonymous

Council-Manager Form of Government

Born in the early 1900's out of an ongoing crisis in confidence in government on many levels

ICMA began in 1914 to serve this emerging profession

ICMA Code of Ethics – 12 Tenets

- Be dedicated to the **concepts of effective and democratic local government** by responsible elected officials and believe that professional general management is essential to the achievement of this objective.
- Affirm the **dignity and worth of the services rendered by government** and maintain a constructive, creative, and practical attitude toward local government affairs and a deep sense of social responsibility as a trusted public servant
- Be dedicated to the **highest ideals of honor and integrity** in all public and personal relationships in order that the member may merit the respect and confidence of the elected officials, of other officials and employees, and of the public.

- Recognize that the chief function of local government at all times is to **serve the best interests of all people.**
- **Submit policy proposals to elected officials; provide them with facts and advice on matters of policy as a basis for making decisions and setting community goals; and uphold and implement local government policies adopted by elected officials.**
- **Recognize that elected representatives of the people are entitled to the credit for the establishment of local government policies;** responsibility for policy execution rests with the members.

- **Refrain from all political activities** which undermine public confidence in professional administrators. Refrain from participation in the election of the members of the employing legislative body.
- Make it a duty continually to **improve the member's professional ability** and to develop the competence of associates in the use of management techniques.
- **Keep the community informed** on local government affairs; encourage communication between the citizens and all local government officers; emphasize friendly and courteous service to the public; and seek to improve the quality and image of public service.

- Resist any encroachment on professional responsibilities, believing the member should **be free to carry out official policies without interference**, and handle each problem without discrimination on the basis of principle and justice.
- Handle all **matters of personnel on the basis of merit** so that fairness and impartiality govern a member's decisions, pertaining to appointments, pay adjustments, promotions, and discipline.
- Public office is a public trust. A member **shall not leverage his or her position for personal gain or benefit**.

Best Practices - Working with Citizens

- **Listen** earnestly
- **Agree** when possible
- Find **common ground**
- Be **transparent**
- Be **patient**
- Be **thick-skinned** to criticism
- Remember, each citizen can one day be your **boss**

Best Practices - Working with Councilmembers

Onboarding new Council/Commission

- New Council/Commission **Orientation**
- **Educate** on Council-Manager form of government and promote your professional role – Important!
- Incorporate into **culture** (Code of Conduct, Protocol Manual(s), Operational Norms)
- Allow for “**elegant outs**”
- Remember that they lack historical context – **you** must provide it

Best Practices - Working with Councilmembers

Ongoing relations

- Build and maintain **trust**
- Listen **earnestly**
- Remember your **role**
- **Clear** communication
- Share the **same information** with everyone
- Facilitated **retreats**
- Build **personal relationships** with everyone (drinks after meeting(s), lunches, whatever.....)

Best Practices Cont.

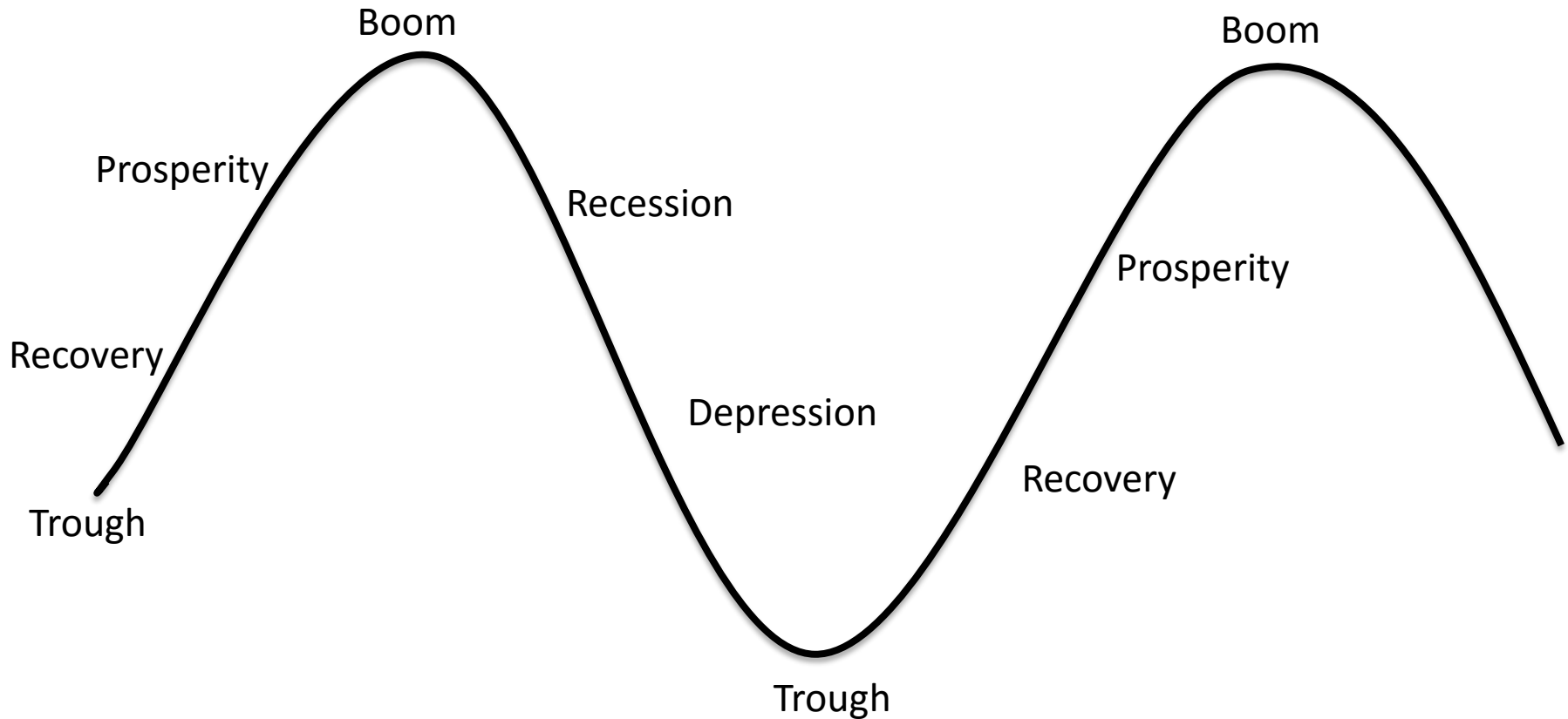
Ongoing education

- Stay sharp and evolve

Seek assistance with issues or challenges

- Peers
- ICMA Knowledge Network
- ICMA Ethics Director

Finally, remember that things tend to go in cycles



Suwanee's Council Code of Conduct

WHAT WE COMMIT TO EACH OTHER...

- *We will listen to each other objectively and openly.*
- *We will be informed prior to our debate.*
- *We will disagree with passion and respect.*
- *We will stay focused on the overall and long range good of the city.*
- *We will take our action, lay aside our differences, and move forward.*
- *We will support the actions of the council even though we may continue to disagree.*
- *We will seek to build a culture of trust.*



Quirky Bold
Exceed Expectations
"Culture eats strategy for lunch."

Ambitious Different
High Standards
Culture
Remarkable Visionary
Extraordinary Anchors Cool
Artsy
Lasting Eye-catching Suwanee
Unusual Unique
Special Risky Quality

Innovative
CITY COUNCIL
PROTOCOL MANUAL
SUWANEE, GA

adopted 8.23.11

"This protocol manual is designed to assist the City Council, staff, and others by memorializing existing policies, procedures, and the general ways of doing things."



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Stan Kelley, Lumpkin County Manager

March 24, 2016

Be Prepared

- Plan Ahead
- Prepare Staff Early On
- Know Your Enabling Legislation/Charter and Policies

Communication

- Commissioner Orientation
- Manage Expectations
- Listening and One on One Communication With Newly Elected Members

Stay Mission Focused

- Keep Staff on Task
- Picking Your Battles or When do You “Fall on Your Sword”
- Not All Change is Bad

Transition

- From Campaigning to Governing
- Don't Take "Knowledge Level" for Granted
- Learn From Mistakes and Prepare for Next Election

Questions?



Thank You!

Marty Allen, City Manager

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