

**IOWA MUNICIPAL  
MANAGEMENT INSTITUTE  
MARCH 15, 2018**

**“YIKES, I’VE BEEN FIRED  
WHAT’S IT LIKE OUT THERE”**

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# Callahan's Career

- **City Government – 4 Cities – 23 years**
- **Municipal Consulting – 2 Times – 21 years**
- **Institute of Public Affairs – 1993 to 2005**

# General Overall Session

- ① **“Today’s” City Council**
- ② **“Candidate’s Market”**
- ③ **Impact on the Profession**
- ④ **Tips & Suggestions**

# ICMA Range Riders' Observations

- ① **Smaller cities – Don't understand the CM Plan**
- ② **Smaller cities – lack of training**
- ③ **Not funding professional development**

# ICMA Range Riders' Observations

- ① **“Tough cities” – Same percentage as past?**
- ② **More demands from citizens**
- ③ **Resistance to taxes**

# ICMA Range Riders' Observations

- ① **More regulations = more costs**
- ② **Greater litigious environment**
- ③ **General distrust of government**

# ICMA Range Riders' Observations

- **Hostile state officials**
- **“Attacks” on Iowa Home Rule**
- **Council – Represent “the people”**
- **More division – consensus is difficult**

# City Councils – Good & Bad

1. You are not “their person”
2. Just want to “change”
3. Fired for “just cause” in their opinion
4. No two councils are the same



# City Openings – Callahan's Observations

- ◎ **Cities – Fewer candidates –  
Re-advertise?**
- ◎ **Search firms – dilemma**
- ◎ **Lower expectations**
- ◎ **Reconsider salary ranges**

# Record Number of Openings – Why?

1. The “Gray Tsunami”
2. Private sector competition
3. Financial constraints

# Record Number of Openings – Why?

4. Living in the “Fish Bowl”
5. Two career households
6. “It just ain’t worth it”

# Council Surprises

- ① **Why did so few people apply?**
- ② **Our town is great – right?**
- ③ **“Sticker shock” – Compensation packages**

# Council Reactions

- Reluctantly – pay more
- More Open to candidates in transition
- Openness to younger candidates

# Council Reactions

- ① Overlook lack of experience
- ① Overlook lack of MA degree
- ① Desire to know reasons for a dismissal

# City Council – Appraisal of Candidates

- **Appreciate honesty & integrity**
- **Like enthusiasm for their community**
- **Impressed by your research or previous site visit**

# City Council – Appraisal of Candidates

- ⦿ **Personality is everything**
- ⦿ **Impressed by any local or regional connections**
- ⦿ **Expect an explanation of any “issue” in your past**



# What does this mean for you?

- **It is a “candidate’s market”**
- **Expect more openings**
- **Lower expectations on the part of councils**

# What does this mean for you?

- **More opportunities**
- **Faster career path**
- **Higher salary ranges**

# Callahan's Suggestions

1. **Keep your resume up to date**
2. **Be honest and transparent**
3. **Assume that they know your “issue” from their google searches**

# Callahan's Suggestions

4. **City Dilemma – Publicly address your “issue” or assume the local newspaper will**
5. **Try not to sue your previous city**
6. **Follow the ICMA Code of Ethics**

# Callahan's Suggestions

- 7. Do your homework on the city & community**
- 8. Discuss your professional development**
- 9. Stress any local ties & connections**

# Callahan's Suggestions

- 10. Provide “work related” references**
- 11. Read the Consultant's memos and directions**
- 12. Follow the instructions – Councils will ask**

# Impact on the Profession

- 1. Difficult to predict**
- 2. More city clerks transitioning to city administrator positions**
- 3. Less experienced people being appointed**

# Impact on the Profession

4. **Social media impact**
5. **Enhanced role for the mayor?**
6. **More retirements – younger age**



# Comments & Observations

- ① **What are your observations?**
- ① **What is the long term impact?**

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