

Data & Resources

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10 traits of effective leadership

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Want a fresh perspective? Read these 10 traits of effective local leadership.



1. Know the rules of road. Understand the State Constitution and relevant RCWs.

This helps shape certain city decisions and relationships. Take advantage of Jurassic Parliament and dig into Roberts Rules. It's healthy to understand and review annually, especially with new councilmembers.

2. Listen and learn. When we're elected, we think we know it all. Listen to staff, fellow

councilmembers, and community members. Talk to smart people who care and they will tell you the truth. Attend the planning commission meetings – you'll learn something.

3. Persuade two to three people to agree with you and you get something done on council. Craft your argument to reach your council. Keep it short and to the point.

4. Learn how to be a good winner and loser. Residents expect us to work together. Refuse to demonize people who don't support you. Build relationships with all sides.

5. Appreciate the separation of powers. This is basic but extremely important. Understand what you can and can't do.

6. Stick with the highest standard. Stand by your ethics. You have every right to speak to your city attorney about concerns. Always err on the side of checking.

7. Respect everyone. Respect staff. They want to help. We all need to hold ourselves to a high level of civility.

8. Be responsive and get back to people. Don't pass on blame. You represent the city and if you don't know the answer, don't wing it.

9. Pitchforks and torches. Sometimes you aren't popular with council or community. Don't let yourself go into a negative trajectory when making a difficult decision.

10. Take care of yourself. Study emotional health. Get sleep. Try a 20-minute walk or run every week with a community member. You can't take care of the city if you don't take care of yourself.

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