

Unsolicited Legal Advice from a Municipal Solicitor

1. The purpose of municipal government is to create and maintain a community in which people want to live. The role of Council is to:

- (a) set budget and policies;
- (b) appoint the Auditor, Clerk, Manager and Solicitor; and
- (c) to decide, with advice from the Administration.

The role of the Administration is:

- (a) to administer the Corporation in a business-like manner, within the budget and policies set by Council; and
- (b) to advise Council.

2. Keep an open mind.

3. Don't shoot the messenger. Council will be ill-served if the Administration is afraid to provide unpalatable or unwelcome advice.

4. If you want respect, show respect, especially at Council meetings. Even if you may not respect the speaker, show respect for the Chamber by your good behaviour.

5. Time is limited. Use it well. Beware of the inverse proportion rule: the time spent by Council on an item is sometimes in inverse proportion to its value.

6. You are a conduit of information to and from the public and municipal government. You are in a position to clear up misunderstandings. There are at least two sides to every story. You will receive complaints from the public. Get all sides before making up your mind. Don't assume your administration is at fault.

7. If the municipality can't afford it, don't do it. People appreciate quality services and products, even if they cost more than inferior work. It costs money to provide quality public services. If you want to provide good service, fund it. Underfunded services produce poor morale and consumer complaints. Municipalities have limited means. They can't be all things to all people. Choose wisely.

8. Don't measure cost by monetary expenditure only. Time and ability of staff are limiting factors. Use their limited time to best effect for the community.

9. It's alright to say "no". Just because Council can do it doesn't mean it should.

10. Beware of over-regulation (corollary of "It's alright to say no"). Don't pass a regulatory

bylaw if you aren't prepared to see it enforced against yourself and your friends.

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