

PEOPLE TO PEOPLE

2401 GRAND AVENUE
KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI 64141



"A voluntary effort of private citizens to advance the cause of international friendship"

—DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

April 1, 1965

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L. P. COOKINGHAM
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear John:

I have just learned from Jerry that you have been appointed the first City Manager of North Richland Hills. Congratulations! It was a pleasure to have you associated with me in my work at Fort Worth, and I hope the knowledge you gained there will be most helpful to you, not only in your first job, but in those to come later.

Although by training and experience you are perhaps better qualified than many of the veteran managers were when they assumed their first job, I know there will be many times when you have to draw upon all of your training and experience to solve a particular problem or meet a specific situation.

Over the years I have developed a number of guide-posts which have been helpful to me in dealings with the City Council, the public, my fellow city employees, and others which I should like at this time to share with you. I have found them helpful, and I hope you will also.

Never forget that the Council, to the best of its ability, expresses the will of the people. There will be times when you will not understand why the Council takes certain actions, but you will find that the Council is generally right and that the members reflect public opinion as they learn it from their constituents.

Formal acts of the Council become public policy, and you as City Manager must always do your best to translate these policies into action. You should do this in a manner to best express the intent of the Council. In some cases you may not agree with the policy, but it is your duty as City Manager to carry out the policy to the best of your ability, unless, of course, it is illegal or fraudulent.



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Lead those whom you contact -- members of the Council, subordinant employees, and citizens -- into the proper channel by tactful suggestion rather than by too persuasive argument. They must feel that they have had a major part in making the decisions and in establishing the policies which you deem to be in the best interest of the individual and the government. Give credit where credit belongs, and always give the Council members all the credit you can. They have to be re-elected.

Work hard to gain and keep the full confidence of the Council and the respect of your department heads, and your job will be easier. The confidence of the Council in you and your staff is of utmost importance to a successful job.

Keep your eyes and ears open and your mouth shut as much as possible during Council meetings. This is one of the most important principles in the field of Council-Manager relations. I have known more managers who have talked themselves out of jobs than into jobs. The members of the Council are elected by the people and know something about the business of municipal government and the desires and needs of these constituents. When they want information from the Manager, they will ask for it, and it is well to have the information when requested.

Remember that the average fellow with whom you talk, whether he is a member of the Council, one of the city's staff, or a citizen, does not know as much about the job of municipal administration as you know; so don't get too far beyond him, for he will not be able to follow you.

Be as humble as the humblest with whom you deal, and subdue by your patience those who are inclined to be arrogant. You must give as much



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time as is necessary to the person who is slow in understanding, and you must be patient with those who may be impatient with you.

Treat everyone in the city, friend or foe, as if your success depended on the manner in which you handled his problem. I have often told my employees to consider everyone with whom they talk to be a member of the City Council, and by doing this, they will give their best to all.

Never forget that you are a servant of the people, and instill that philosophy in each of your employees. If you find one who cannot understand this philosophy, remove him, for he will be no good to you or to the city. If you ever get the idea that you are ruler, you, also will be no good to the city or to the form of government.

Don't let the "cranks" worry you too much, for if you do, they will outlive you.

Be sure to develop good press relations; give all the time necessary to help the press, radio, and other media to keep the public informed, because any one of them can ruin your program or even your career with very little effort.

Always take the chip off the complainant's shoulder before you let him go. This will be a hard task in some cases, but use every resource at your command to make friends out of potential enemies.

Always think of the city in which you work as your favorite city. Participate in civic movements for its betterment, and above all, believe in your city.

You have to "give and take" all along the way, but when you must give ground to the "left",



be sure that, when you return toward the center, you go to the "right" as far as possible. In "giving" never do anything which may be illegal or which is contrary to the basic principles or ethics of the City Manager profession.

Don't let any problems frighten you, for there is a logical solution to each one you have to face. If they seem too tough for today, let them go until tomorrow whenever possible, for then they may seem simpler. The problems which concern you today may be completely forgotten in a week or two.

Get acquainted with your employees as rapidly as possible, and take time to let them show you what they have in their departments, and how they do their work. (If you do not approve, go slow in making drastic changes -- the results will be much better and the improvements more lasting.)

Don't pursue your program at a faster pace than the Council, the employees, or the public can follow. You will always see plenty of things to do and have plenty of changes to make, but be sure that your associates and the public understand your program, and how it will benefit the city or its government.

Always remember that you will never get in trouble or be embarrassed by doing what is right. You may lose your job for standing up for what you know to be right, but you'll always get another and better job. Besides, you will be able to sleep soundly every night.

Keep your personal contacts with other City Managers. The greatest compliment you can pay them is to ask how they handle a problem which may be bothering you.

Keep a framed copy of "The City Manager's



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Code of Ethics" in your office. Read it once in a while, always abide by it.

Upon assuming your duties as City Manager, you become eligible for membership in THE L. P. COOKINGHAM ALUMNI SOCIETY, which was organized by a group of City Managers who received their training in cities which I have served. I know the forty-two other members will welcome you heartily. Your membership certificate in this association is enclosed.

I earnestly hope that in the years ahead you will enjoy many successful assignments and that you will contribute greatly to the cause of "good government" in the cities which you will have the privilege of serving.

With best personal regards to you and your pretty wife and best wishes for a most successful career as a City Manager, I am

Sincerely,


L. P. Cookingham
Executive Director

LPC:A

Mr. John P. Hall
City Manager
City Hall
North Richland Hills, Texas