

information that the problems remain unsolved. Nor is it because organizational arrangements are defective. Rather it is because people have differing opinions and interests, and therefore opposing ideas about what should be done.⁸² (emphasis added)

Obviously, urban managers do not grapple continuously with “big” issues such as crime, race, and poverty. Administration, planning, budgets, day-to-day service delivery—all are time-consuming aspects of urban management life. But even in these less-critical areas, urban managers often face obstacles that are essentially unrelated to their technical knowledge of the problem. Municipal budgeting is an example.⁸³ Practical analysis can show where a city needs to spend more money on infrastructure repairs to meet more severe needs and where spending is less critical, but budgeting more money to one neighborhood over another for such capital projects can lead to protracted political battles. The response of urban managers is often to allocate their budgets equally across a city’s political units (districts, wards), knowing that city council support is easier to find when every area is treated in a similar fashion.

In short, the values that the community holds dear often dictate the nature of policy, both for big (nonroutine) and small (routine) issues. This is not to suggest that community values cannot be changed, if need be—one of the many jobs of the urban executive is to adapt and institutionalize community values through his or her leadership. These core values, once articulated, adopted, and acculturated, serve to define and shape the local political culture.

INSTITUTIONAL INERTIA

As we discuss in much greater detail in Chapter 4, city workers (bureaucrats) are comfortable with routines. This fact should come as no surprise, since most of us prefer an environment in which we are not constantly forced to adapt to the vagaries of change. Rules, regulations, and established procedures accumulate as organizations mature. Organizational inertia, bureaucratic infighting, agency imperialism, goal displacement, and other forces complicate the task of enlarging the management capacity of city government. A successful city manager *must* be a student of bureaucratic politics and *must* understand organizations both as structures and as webs of human activity. (Chapter 8 discusses both organizational theory and behavior.)

THE POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT

Read any public management textbook or ask any person who has worked in both the world of government and that of corporate America—either will tell you straight out that one of the big differences between public and private management is the degree to which public managers must operate within a political environment: No matter how good the management techniques and no matter how much money is available, the solutions to most complex urban problems require political judgment.⁸⁴ Priorities must be assigned,

levels and types of taxes must be determined, and resources must be allocated. In the final analysis, these decisions involve judgments about what is best for the people. Under our form of government, these are political decisions, and no amount of improvement in management capacity can change that fact.

Conflict is anything but unusual in city government. After all, one of the two basic purposes of government at all levels is to *manage conflict*. Urban administrators must be prepared to manage pressures and demands emanating from a variety of sources, some of which are internal to the municipal organization, others external to it. To survive, much less be effective, urban managers must be politically sensitive and skillful. No matter how good their administrative abilities, successful managers must learn the art of the possible—how to bargain, how to compromise, and how to negotiate what may appear to be irreconcilable conflicts among competing interests. In the broadest sense, that is what this book is all about: improving the management of city government from both a technical and a political perspective.

LEADERSHIP QUALITIES

Finally, we must consider managers' personal characteristics. No amount of managerial knowledge can take the place of basic leadership resources such as intelligence, perseverance, adaptability, desire to excel, and humor.⁸⁵ And we might throw in intuition and luck for good measure. If this list gives the impression that good urban managers must be some sort of superpeople, that is not altogether wrong. Our cities have enormous problems. Although improving managerial skills may help to solve them, we need very special people as well. Fortunately, for us and for you, we have them.

THE PLAN OF THE BOOK

This book is organized in four parts. The first part, *The Environment of Urban Management*, begins, of course, with the chapter you have just read. This first chapter provides a context for all that follows, establishing the importance of financial and demographic changes, management practices and theories, and the impact of environmental influences, such as citizen participation and technology, on urban political management. Here also, the entire study is placed within the context of systems analysis and politics. Prospective managers must know what seasoned pros know—that they can be excellent administrators, but they must also understand politics and systems. Prominent among the external forces that impinge on local systems are various governmental entities—the federal, state, and other local governments. Chapter 2 places the management of American cities within the system of intergovernmental relations. In Chapter 3, we consider the political world of managers from the vantage point of local governmental structures. Research suggests that the supports received by and the demands placed on local political systems vary according to governmental structures, including forms of government, ballot types, electoral systems, home rule, and direct democracy. In order for elected and appointed local officials to gain a

proper perspective on how they can manage local political systems, they must understand these governmental structures.

The four chapters of Part Two, *Managing Conflict and Delivering Goods and Services in the Modern City*, provide detail about the two major functions that city governments perform: managing conflict and delivering goods and services. Both functions are managed through the formulation and implementation of public policies. In Chapters 4 and 5, we examine local policymaking from a macro perspective. Chapter 4 explores how local policies are made and who makes them. We generally discuss policymaking from a systems perspective and as a rational, orderly process, although alternative models are also offered. The roles and functions of official policymakers—city executives (including city managers and mayors), city council members, and local bureaucrats—are analyzed, and, since all that city officials do is ultimately for the citizenry, we build upon our discussion, presented earlier in this chapter, of citizen participation. In Chapter 5, the focus is not on policymaking in general but specifically on the developmental policies of urban planning and economic policymaking. More and more, communities have begun to realize how much their progress depends on strategic urban planning and the vitality of the local economy.

Policymaking is closely tied to another basic management function, decision making; managers, above all, are decision makers. While policymaking is usually broad in scope, decision making is more operational—more micro in nature. In order to implement a specific policy, a number of decisions may need to be made and executed. In Chapter 6, we first discuss well-known and established decision-making approaches; then we identify “tools” or decision-making aids, both simple and sophisticated, to make the decision process as systematic as possible; and, finally, we introduce the use of such analytic tools as management information systems and geographic information systems to make more effective decisions. Next, we have to ask: What does the policy process and all the decision making produce? At the local level the answer is services. Citizens demand and deserve excellence in service delivery. Chapter 7 explores the range of service functions provided at the local level and key features of urban service delivery. Services must be delivered efficiently, effectively, responsively, and equitably.

Part Three, *Internal Management Processes*, consists of three chapters devoted to the primary functions of urban appointed and elected officials: managing programs, human resources, and finances. In Chapter 8, we discuss general program management by examining four topics. First, we cover the basics required to understand the nature and meaning of modern organizational theory and behavior. In order to understand modern open systems theory, we introduce readers to the classical and behavioral schools of organization thought. Next, we focus on the concept of leadership. Above all, urban managers must be leaders. In the third section, we discuss management strategies, old and new, that emphasize the importance of managing for results. Finally, we offer caveats about the introduction of management techniques new to a city.

THE ENVIRONMENT OF URBAN MANAGEMENT

Nothing gets done without people, of course. In Chapter 9 we address the issue of organizing for human resource administration and consider the common personnel functions in cities. In addition, we discuss a number of personnel issues, such as equal employment opportunity and affirmative action, employee selection and the law, comparable worth, sexual harassment, managing diversity, and accommodations for disabilities. The chapter concludes with a section devoted to labor-management relations. Next, in Chapter 10, we consider the vital areas of urban finance and budgeting (operational and capital). Among the questions addressed in this context are these: Where do the funds come from to operate city programs? What are the prospects for expanding the revenue base? All managers worry about how revenue is raised and spent, and the process by which funds are allocated—the budget—looms large as well.

The last part of the book is *The Urban Future*. In Chapter 11, we assess what is good, what is problematic, and what is uncertain in the twenty-first-century city. We look closely at the job of the urban manager today and the ways in which education may help. And, once more, we consider the pervasiveness of politics in urban management. How can managers enhance their capacity to operate effectively in a thoroughly political environment? Surely, management skills are crucial, but learning the political ropes may be just as important to a manager's ultimate success. Next, we examine concerns about prescriptive management reforms. Managers must be wary of any management strategy that offers a "one best way." Managing urban America is just plain hard work. Also in this final chapter, we address the issue of administrative ethics. Urban managers absolutely must understand both the consequences of their own behavior and their responsibility to foster the values of honesty and integrity in city government. Regardless of the job they perform, city workers operate in a fish-bowl environment, where they must take care not to lose the confidence of the people they serve. Finally, we place the twenty-first-century city in the post-September 11 environment. Cities have always been vulnerable, but they have also always been resilient as well. Given the consequences of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the devastation of New Orleans as a result of Hurricane Katrina, and the BP Gulf of Mexico oil spill, we conclude the book with a discussion of managing man-made and natural disasters.

SUGGESTED FOR FURTHER READING