THE SMALLER COMMUNITY—THE UNIQUE ROLE OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT LAWYER

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Principles to keep in mind:

- Every local government is unique
- Size matters
- In small jurisdictions, democracy is a very immediate thing

The local government attorney is a jack of all trades

- Conflicts between governmental representation and remainder of practice
- Unavailability of backup
- Need for backup in specialized areas

Multiple hats of the local government attorney

- Acting administrator
- De facto personnel manager and city planner
- Trainer
- Public relations point person
- Hearing officer
- Prosecutor/judge/public defender

Recurring problem areas

- Funding unavailability
- What you don’t know will hurt you
- Newly elected officials
- Records maintenance and response to requests

Changes in state legislation; new court decisions

Suggestions

Office hours

Annual training sessions with governing body and boards and commissions

Encouraging attendance at state municipal association functions and conventions

Provide copies of recent court decisions with a ***short*** synopsis

Provide outlines of deadlines and instructions

Provide sample notices

Get sociable