

Governance Roles

Elected officials are expected to play multiple roles in their service to the community. We will discuss the six governance roles that Julia Novak and Dr. John Nalbandian, Professor Emeritus from the University of Kansas have developed and how these roles influence effectiveness. An introduction to the six roles and how they are described follows:

- **Strategic/ Vision – Big Picture Thinker**
 - Focus here is on decisions that can have significant impact on the City. Can be long-term or short-term.
 - Often focus is on the future and what might make a significant difference.
 - Seeing possible connections and relationships.
 - Thinks beyond present data and constraints.
- **Trustee –Steward**
 - While listening and respecting constituent views, the Trustee feels responsible to the City as a whole and to future residents.
 - The trustee will make uncomfortable decisions that may run counter to constituent wishes because the decision is in the greater good.
- **Representative – Constituent Advocate**
 - In this role, the council member acts as a “customer service representative.”
 - The council member is a conduit between citizens and City services.
 - Often, citizens see this council member as most responsive to their individual concerns.
- **Community Builder – Bringing People Together**
 - In the Community Builder role, the council member focuses on relationships and consensus building.
 - The Community Builder fosters relationships and is able to work through differences.
 - Community is not just a casual word to the council member who gravitates to this role.
- **Decision-Maker**
 - The Decision-Maker sees his/her role much like a judge.
 - Information is presented, and the Decision-Maker votes it up or down.
 - This is not an easy role, but often it is a fairly passive role in contrast to that of the Community Builder.
- **Oversight**
 - In this role, the council member retains a measure of distance from the staff.
 - The focus is on accountability of staff to the City Council.