

Ten essential practices of effective elected officials

AWC Annual Conference
Spokane, WA
June 22, 2023
Presenter: Jon Mutchler

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Intro: About Jon

Seven children, three sons-in-law



Four grandchildren &
38 years of marriage



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Jon's Education and Professional Experience

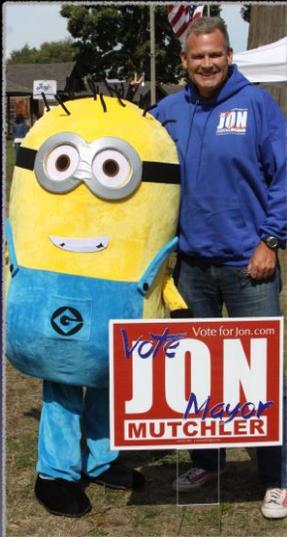
- Associate of Science, Olympic Community College (Bremerton)
- B.Mus, Western Washington University (Bellingham, WA)
- Master of Divinity, Regent College (Vancouver, B.C.)
- Ordination, The Christian and Missionary Alliance
- Founding and lead pastor, Ferndale Alliance Church (1988-present)
- Professional pianist and piano teacher (1975-present)



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Jon's Political Experience

- Ferndale City Council (2010 - 2015)
- Whatcom County Charter Review Commissioner (2015)
- Ferndale City Mayor (2016-2019)
- Ferndale City Council (2022-present)



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Ferndale is a Code City with the Council-Mayor form of government [RCW 35A.12]

“Strong mayor” / “Weak mayor” (1999)

“Executive mayor” / “Ceremonial mayor”

Ferndale, WA: Pop 15,500

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Why do we do this? Why do we run?



- Fame
- Prestige?
- Money?
- Influence?
- Power?
- Status?
- Ambition?
- Duty?
- Vision?
- Anger?
- Revenge?
- Legacy?

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Hopefully, we have a bigger vision than Mr. Hanscom:

Russell L. Hanscom
9523 S. 237th Place
Kent, WA 98031
(253) 859-9567
russ_hanscom@hotmail.com
www.russellhanscom.us



Education: Bachelor of Science, Walla Walla College Master of Health Administration, University of Washington
Occupation: Executive Director, Elder Services, Puyallup Tribe of Indians
Statement: Frankly, I'm not really sure I want this job. The pay is crummy, it takes time away from my family, and it's pretty thankless a lot of the time.
However, my lack of enthusiasm does not diminish my competence or honesty.
I'm writing this statement on August 4 and I'm right in the middle of starting a business. If the business takes off like it's supposed to, between now and November, I sincerely doubt I'll have enough time to be an effective representative for your concerns.
I honestly don't know what else to say. This is the reality I'm facing today.

2017

Kent City Council

Position 6

Voter Guide

Candidate Statement

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“Frankly, I’m not really sure I want this job. The pay is crummy, it takes time away from my family, and it’s pretty thankless a lot of the time.



“However, my lack of enthusiasm does not diminish my competence or honesty.

“I’m writing this statement on August 4 and I’m right in the middle of starting a business. If the business takes off like it’s supposed to, between now and November, I sincerely doubt I’ll have enough time to be an effective representative for your concerns.

“I honestly don’t know what else to say. This is the reality I’m facing today.” (Russell Hanscom)

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Mr. R. Hanscom had which result in the November 7, 2017 General Election?

- A. Less than 30 %
- B. Between 30-40%
- C. Between 40-50%
- D. More than 50%

Place your bets.
Choose one:

City Of Kent Council Position No. 6

Candidate	Vote	Vote %
Brenda Fincher	12,654	73.97%
Russell L. Hanscom	4,453	26.03%
Total Votes (not including write-ins)	17,107	

Brenda Fincher

327 2nd Ave S
Kent, WA 98032

(253) 946-8288
info@brendafincher.com
www.brendafincher.com



Education: Associate of Arts Degree, Riverside Community College; Scripture and Leadership Training Certificate, Seattle University

Occupation: Kent City Council Member; Parish Administrator, Holy Spirit Parish

Statement: I'm working to make sure every Kent resident feels safe and has the opportunity to thrive.

Keeping Kent affordable is a priority. I voted against raising your taxes and funded parks by using our money more efficiently. I've worked to proactively manage growth to keep rents from skyrocketing like we've seen in other cities.

I'm the only candidate in this race who has consistently shown up for votes and voters. I'm accessible and accountable to everyone. You've seen me in our neighborhoods, events and meetings almost every day - and not just in election years.

Diversity - in all forms - strengthens us. Every Kent resident should feel welcome and respected.

I unite people and get results. I'm supported by leaders in both parties, our mayor, fellow councilmembers, business owners, neighborhood leaders, police officers, firefighters and our sheriff.

It's an honor to serve you. I ask for your vote.

And the winner is...

Trait #1: R.E.S.P.E.C.T. — And NOT just a little bit



- Your opponents
- Your fellow elected officials
- Your mayor/executive
- Business owners/leaders
- The voters
- The citizens
- City staff
- Even hostile citizens



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Trait #1: R.E.S.P.E.C.T. — And not just a little bit

If you become your opponent;
if you behave like your enemy;
They have won!

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Trait #1: R.E.S.P.E.C.T. — And not just a little bit

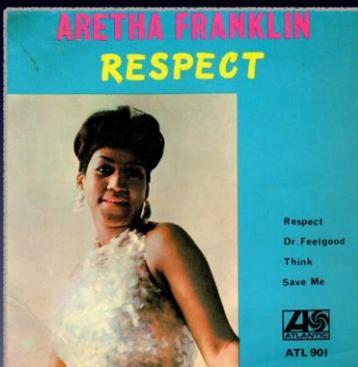
You gotta be
thick skinned.
Or you won't
last!



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Trait #1: R.E.S.P.E.C.T. — And not just a little bit



Simple Tips You Already Know:

- Never make it “personal,” — even if provoked
- Listen to Mom: “If you can’t say something nice about someone ... ”
- Make sure you can articulate the other side of an argument and in terms that your opponent will agree and know that you understand him/her

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Trait #1: R.E.S.P.E.C.T. — And not just a little bit

12. DECORUM

The City Council will treat City staff and members of the public with a high level of professionalism and respect, and Councilmembers require City staff and members of the public to extend the same courtesy. Differences of opinion, values, and perspectives are expected, and it is essential the atmosphere and tone of Council meetings be professional and respectful, to foster public trust, confidence, and participation by citizens.

Personal attacks, insults, interruptions, inflammatory language, and profanity are not permitted. Nor are remarks that disparage groups or individuals because of race, religion, sexual orientation, age, or gender....

Councilmembers have the primary responsibility to assure that these guidelines are understood and followed, so that the public can have full confidence in the integrity of their local government. These guidelines are intended to be self-enforcing, thereby requiring an ongoing commitment by Councilmembers to faithfully honor the trust and dignity bestowed upon them as elected leaders and community role models. [From Ferndale Council Rules of Procedures]

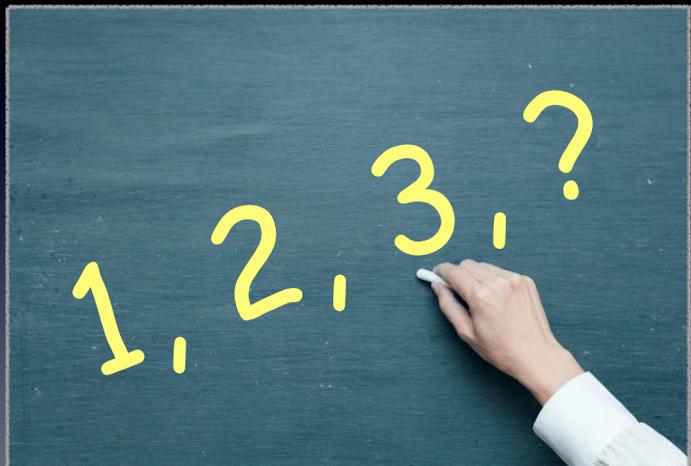
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Trait #2: Be Able to Count to 4

It comes down to
this one task:

To get anything
done you need to
convince **just three
other council
members** to agree
with you.



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Trait #2: Be Able to Count to 4



Record-Journal
January 27
WEDNESDAY 1 2010
VOL. XXXVIII
No. 13
75¢
SERVING FERDALE, CUSTER AND NORTHWEST WHATCOM COUNTY SINCE 1885

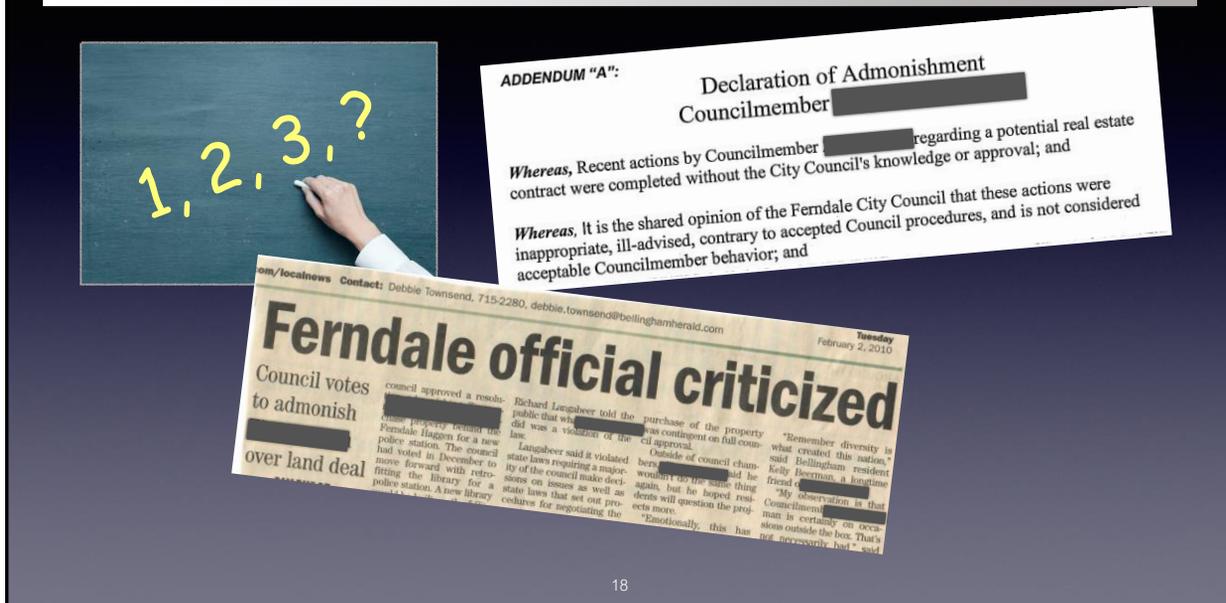
Councilman signs land purchase agreement without city consent
Mayor asks [redacted] to resign due to the \$1 million agreement, which was not completed

[redacted] gets 'slap on the wrist' from council
Councilman did not get city consent before signing a \$1.08 million contract as a city representative

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Trait #2: Be Able to Count to 4



ADDENDUM "A":
Declaration of Admonishment
Councilmember [redacted]

Whereas, Recent actions by Councilmember [redacted] regarding a potential real estate contract were completed without the City Council's knowledge or approval; and

Whereas, It is the shared opinion of the Ferndale City Council that these actions were inappropriate, ill-advised, contrary to accepted Council procedures, and is not considered acceptable Councilmember behavior; and

Ferndale official criticized
Council votes to admonish [redacted] over land deal

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Trait #2: Be Able to Count to 4

You need to know well your fellow council members to be an effective influencer:

- Their pet projects and concerns
- Their biases and values
- Their political philosophy
- Their “hot buttons”
- Their strengths and weaknesses
- What part of your argument will appeal to each member?

NOTE: Don't rely upon party affiliation and labels to always help

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Trait #3: Know the Rules of the Road



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Trait #3: Know the Rules of the Road



*The more you know,
the more effective
you become. Those
that know well the
rules have a
superior advantage*

The Washington Constitution: Notably, Article 8, Section 11 on “public gifting”

RCW 35 and RCW 35A [Especially 35A.12 and 35A.13]

The Open Public Meetings Act (OPMA)

Public Records Act (Watch those text messages, personal email)

MRSC / AWC Resources: *Mayor and Councilmember Handbook* (most recent edition)

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Trait #3: Know the Rules of the Road

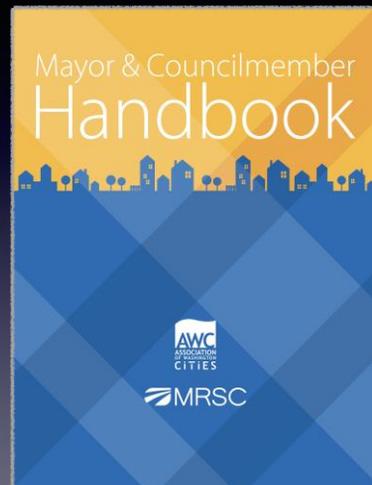
MRSC / AWC Resources: *Mayor and Councilmember Handbook*

Can be found easily online.

Read/study quarterly

Make sure you have current edition.

Frankly, this is pure gold!



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Trait #3: Know the Rules of the Road

*The more you know,
the more effective
you become. Those
that “know the
rules” have great
advantage*



Jurassic Parliament (Ann Macfarlane)/Robert's Rules

Your specific Council Rules/Procedures/Ethics

Your city's Municipal Code

Your city's web site

Your mayor's policies on access to staff

City Attorney

Mentors

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Trait #4: Don't Be a K.I.A.



**Know
It
All**



“Allow me to tell you everything about everything...”

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Trait #4: Don't Be a K.I.A.

Be brief, succinct, and accurate. Don't hog the mic.

Okay to say, "I don't know...but I'll find out."

Bragging and gloating don't win votes

Don't embarrass or shame a colleague who may not know something. Don't "Stump the Staff."

It is doubtful your long, personal anecdotes and stories will persuade your fellow council members

No filibustering/grandstanding

Write out your argument and edit ahead of time. Read it.

Sometimes those that say the least accomplish the most



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Trait #5: Stay in Your Lane

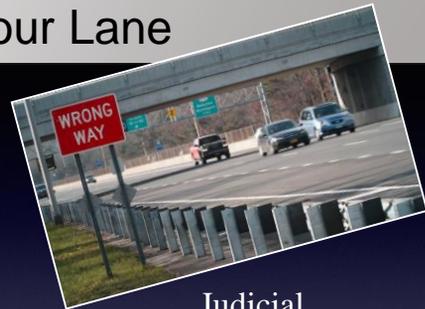


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Trait #5: Stay in Your Lane

Separation of Powers



Executive



Mayor (City Manager)

Legislative



Council

Judicial



Courts/Hearings Examiner

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Trait #5: Stay in Your Lane

Tips to Council:

- Do not direct or order city staff/employees
- Do not interfere with police/law enforcement
- Follow mayor protocols to access staff for info/help
- With caution, you may avail yourself of City Attorney
- Don't throw staff "under the bus."
- Ask MRSC [They are fantastic!]
- Be comfortable and cautious in the gray zone



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Trait #5: Stay in Your Lane

“The Council has reviewed an investigation of an employee grievance filed by [STAFF MEMBER] against Councilmember X for discriminatory, harassing and retaliatory behavior.

“The City has an obligation to take appropriate steps to prevent and/or remedy potential discrimination, harassment and/or retaliation, whether the source is a co-worker, supervisor, City official or others. Such behavior is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. I [Mayor Pro-tem] make a motion that the Council determines that Councilmember X engaged in discriminatory, harassing and retaliatory behavior against [STAFF MEMBER] that could constitute a hostile work environment if allowed to continue, and direct staff to draft a public declaration of admonishment for Council to read into the record at the next Council meeting.”

“Councilmember Y seconded the motion. Motion carried 6-1, Councilmember X opposed.” [9/6/2019, Ferndale Council]

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Trait #6: Be Both a Good Loser & Good Winner (Statesmanship)



You're going to win some, and lose some.

Always conduct yourself with class, dignity, and statesmanship.

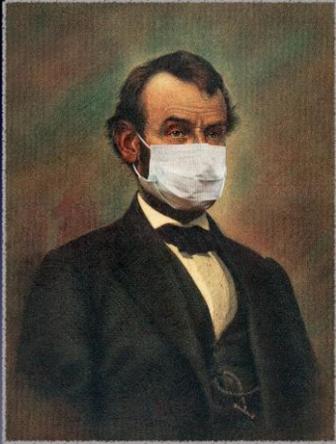
No pouting...or gloating



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Trait #6: Be Both a Good Loser & Good Winner (Statesmanship)



“I am loath to close. We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained it must not break our bonds of affection. The mystic chords of memory, stretching from every battlefield and patriot grave to every living heart and hearthstone all over this broad land, will yet swell the chorus of the Union, when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature

– *President Lincoln, March 4, 1861*

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Trait #6: Be Both a Good Loser & Good Winner (Statesmanship)

Always be **gracious**

*What's that look like **in others**? Is that you?*

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Trait #7: Prepare for Pitchforks and Torches



It will come, so be ready: That “impossible” decision and vote that you know is right and best for your City, but despised and misunderstood by the public; and even by supporters and friends.

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Trait #7: Prepare for Pitchforks and Torches

*Are you driven by politics...
or by what's right and best for your city?*



Some comments about:

- *Social Media*
- *Polls and surveys*
- *Public Comment*
- *Crowds*
- *“Democracy”*
- *The silent majority*

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Trait #8: Answer that Email! Pick up the phone!



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Trait #9: Integrity



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Trait #9: Integrity

Conflict of interests
Potential conflict of interests
Appearance of Fairness Doctrine
Recusal
Using your position or stature for gain
Ex parte conversations/Quasi-judicial hearings
Promises, promises, promises...
Undue influence
Ask MRSC/City Attorney

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Trait #9: Integrity

Undo Influence: Cringeworthy Videos:

“Do you know who I am?!?”

Misuse of your influence and position

Search:



“You know who I am?!?”: [Congressional candidate Martin Hyde](#) threatens cop's career during traffic stop

[Port Authority Caren Turner commissioner](#) confronts police during N.J. traffic stop

[School Board member Stephanie Lawson-Muhammad](#): “I’m on the school board”

[Rutgers-Newark Chancellor Nancy Cantor](#) yells 'I'm the chancellor!' at campus cops in accident dispute

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Trait #10: Take Care of Yourself

“Today, I am resigning from the Ferndale City Council. While I have tried for more than seven years to support the needs of our residents, it has become painfully obvious I no longer have the ability to affect change as a Councilmember. I also don’t have the energy to continue fighting, knowing I will always be one of two ‘no’ votes on too many important issues where I think the City [Council] is out of sync with the desires of its residents” [Ferndale, April, 2019]

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Trait #10: Take Care of Yourself

*Health: Body, Mind, Spirit
Family, Work, Friends, Hobbies*



*Don't let politics become
too important
For God's sake, take care
of yourself*

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Trait #10: Take Care of Yourself

Learn from your mistakes
Listen to others
Don't beat yourself up
Family and friends
Get feedback ("spotters")
Recreation, exercise, spiritual, mental
Have boundaries

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Trait #10: Take Care of Yourself

Dear Mr. _____:

1. Regarding matters related to City of Ferndale business, I direct you to our city web site, CityofFerndale.org. Ferndale does an exceedingly good job at posting nearly all documents related to Council and City business. If you need assistance I would encourage you to speak to the City's communication's officer.

2. Public (non-confidential) matters related to my public service are available in the appropriate places which you are free to access. I am in full compliance with with public disclosure (PDC) requirements for an elected official.

3. Matters of private, family, or personal business nature are just that: private and personal.

There are very few citizens I choose not to meet with. For the time being you are one as I see no benefit for the City or for you in our discussions.

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The End

Your (brief) tips and ideas to help us do our jobs better?

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Thank you!

Jon Mutchler

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