Engaging Your Elected Officials in the Fair Health Movement

Thoughts from a Former County Commissioner

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Why did I become an elected official? What did I accomplish?

- Community Development
  - Infrastructure
  - Economic development
  - Long range land use planning
Overlap of My Focus and Social Determinants of Health

- Infrastructure
  - Water
  - sewer,
  - Drainage
  - Roads
- Land Use
  - Sector Plans
  - Land Use Decisions, e.g. permitting, zoning
- Air Quality
  - Promote regional perspectives on air quality
  - Increasing clout of unincorporated areas with Air Quality Board
Community Influence on My Policies

- Design of Infrastructure
- Community Based Economic Development
- Air quality
- Long range planning processes
- Constituent services
- Land Use Decisions
- Provision of services and amenities
Worst and Best Experiences Dealing with Community

Worst:
- Encountering harsh judgments based on “rush to judgment”
  - Where people didn’t get their facts straight
  - Where people judged harshly and inappropriately
  - Where people did not attempt to understand complexities of the issue

Best
- Building Relationships:
  - Where exchange was genuine
  - Where there was mutual respect
  - Where there was cooperative effort to develop solutions
Build Rapport and Ongoing Relationships

- Show Respect
- Don’t put them on defense – unless necessary and part of conscious strategy proved effective
- Don’t be unnecessarily abrasive
- It is about building relationships
Build Your Credibility

- Have your facts straight and present them with a good logical analysis
- Understand the complexities of the issue
  - With what obstacles/constraints does the elected official have to deal, e.g. fiscal or legal
  - Who are the competing stakeholders? What are their interests?
  - What are the competing perspectives that elected official must consider?
Provide the Solution that You Seek – and its Rationale

- Be Clear on the Outcome that You Seek
- Give Elected Official a Solution that is Implementable
- Provide a Set of Actions as a Starting Point
- Provide Reasons Why These Actions Will Address Your Concerns
- Provide Reasons Why These Actions Will Serve the Interests of the Elected Official
- Be Ready to Negotiate