A HANDBOOK FOR CITY OFFICIALS OF THE FIFTH AND SIXTH CLASS CITIES OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649392070

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

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SECOND EDITION

By Wm. J. Locke
Executive Secretary
LEAGUE OF CALIFORNIA MUNICIPALITIES

1921

PUBLISHED BY
A. CARLISLE & CO.
SAN FRANCISCO

EXPLANATORY.

This handbook is issued by the League of California Municipalities for the purpose of enabling the officials of our cities and towns to obtain a better understanding of municipal government.

It comprises a collection of those sections of the constitution and general laws which concern municipalities, also that portion of the municipal corporation act which constitutes the basic law under which our fifth and sixth class cities are governed. In addition thereto, it contains much valuable information for the officials of newly-incorporated towns, including a number of model forms and ordinances.

Each city and town belonging to the League of California Municipalities is entitled to one copy of the book free of charge, but it is suggested that necessary additional copies be procured for use of the attorney, clerk, engineer, recorder, street superintendent, and each member of the board of trustees. These additional copies may be obtained from the publishers, A. Carlisle & Co., of San Francisco, at a nominal cost.

Any amendments to the law made by the next legislature will be printed on slips which may be pasted in the book over the amended law. These amendments will be published and distributed by the League free of charge.

Wm. J. Locke
Executive Secretary
LEAGUE OF CALIFORNIA MUNICIPALITIES

THE LEAGUE OF CALIFORNIA MUNICIPALITIES.

"Two years ago a special committee of the National Municipal League gathered the reports of all the leagues of municipalities, conferences of mayors and similar organizations, and also various other information regarding the activities and history of these organizations.

"It was the opinion of the committee that the best and most effective league was the California League of Municipalities, and that it constituted the highest development of such organizations yet seen in the United States."
—Clinton Rogers Woodruff, in "The American City," June, 1914.

One day in December, 1898, a handful of men assembled in the City of San Francisco and formed the organization that has proved such a great factor in the growth and improvement of the cities and towns of California. At that time municipal government in the United States was in a deplorable condition. Bryce in his "American Commonwealth" had referred to it as "our one conspicuous failure." Graft, bossism and inefficiency prevailed in nearly all the great cities of the country, and a cry had been raised throughout the land for municipal reform.

This was the situation when the suggestion was made for the organization of state leagues. The idea appealed so favorably to those interested in the movement in California that a meeting was called which resulted in the organization of the League of California Municipalities. The success of the organization is evidenced by the fact that at this writing, out of the 250 incorporated cities and towns in California, 240 are members of the League.

Prior to the formation of the League no record was kept of municipal work and improvement. Each city and town was completely in the dark as to what the others were doing. There was no incentive to do very much.

With the formation of the League all this was changed. An official organ, giving accounts of the various municipal improvements going on throughout the state, was published monthly and distributed free to the officials of the cities and towns belonging to the League. These accounts of what some of the cities were doing stirred the others to action, and new life was injected into municipal affairs. Comparative tables are published from time to time, showing work under way, and calling attention to the cities and towns which are making the greatest progress.

At the annual meetings the city officials attending are called upon to tell of the achievements of their respective municipalities during the preceding year, and their plans for the future, and these accounts serve as a stimulus to further progress.

However, the principal value of the annual meetings lies in the fact that they serve as a clearing house of ideas and experiences, where officials may report the results of tests and experiments

and thus enable the others to profit by their experience. Outside the formal discussions much good is accomplished by private talks between the delegates. During recesses, at meal times, wherever and whenever two or more officials get together the discussions are continued and extended. Everybody talks "shop." A person attending one of these conventions would be amazed at the almost total exclusion of private affairs from the conversation of the delegates.

A stenographic report of the discussions is subsequently published in the official organ and distributed free to the officials of the cities and towns belonging to the League.

The membership of the League is confined to the incorporated cities and towns and all city and town officials, appointive as well as elective, are invited to attend the meetings and participate in the discussions. Frequently an entire city council will attend a convention.

The annual dues range from $10.00 to $60.00 per year according to population. The fact that the membership has increased every year and that a town rarely surrenders its membership is proof that the organization has justified its existence.

The League's publication, (Pacific Municipalities), is issued monthly and sent free to the officials of the cities belonging to the League. Its columns are devoted to articles by city officials and experts who are recognized as authorities on municipal problems, besides containing accounts of what the cities are doing, lists of new ordinances passed during the preceding month, latest court decisions of concern to municipalities, etc.

The League maintains a headquarters and Bureau of Information in San Francisco, and city officials are encouraged to make liberal use of this feature. Replies to inquiries are sent without delay and, in the majority of cases, by return mail. Among other things, the League collects copies of new ordinances, specifications, legal opinions, pamphlets and other literature relating to municipal affairs, which are carefully indexed and loaned to city officials upon application. The advantage of this feature to a city attorney, when called upon to prepare an ordinance on any given subject, is very great. For a two-cent stamp he can write to the League headquarters and secure by return mail half a dozen of the latest ordinances on the subject.

The League has also concerned itself very largely in matters of legislation, the main objects being to secure (1st) more power to municipalities, (2nd) to simplify procedure, and (3rd) to oppose any threatened legislation violating these principles. A committee is on hand at every session of the legislature.

THE ADVANTAGES OF INCORPORATION TO SMALL TOWNS.

The question is frequently asked: Of what advantage is it to the people of a small town having a population of from 500 to 1,000 to incorporate as a municipality?

Among those who ask the question are many who are inclined to measure any advantage that might be gained in dollars and cents and then offset it by the dollars and cents they would have to pay as municipal taxes.

It is impossible to measure the advantages of incorporation in the terms of finance, just as it is impossible to measure the value that education confers upon the human race by the cost of maintaining schools. It is not a matter for comparison.

It is a well-known fact that the bringing together of a number of people in the form of a social body begets certain necessities which are peculiar to that very circumstance. One man does not require a sewer system, but such an institution becomes a necessity when a community is established and a great many people begin living together in close physical relationship. Neither does a small community require a transportation system, a necessity, however, when the small town becomes a large city.

This illustrates the point that must be kept in mind, to-wit: that a community is like an organism, an entity having its own existence to take care of irrespective of the individual wishes of its constituent members. Its needs must be satisfied, otherwise it will cease to thrive and grow. It will become anaemic, so to speak, and finally retrograde, just as the human body will retrograde if its demands are not satisfied. The question then for a community to determine is this: Are our community necessities being fully satisfied?

Let us analyze these necessities. The first need of a community is a highway, a means by which one inhabitant may reach another inhabitant. Two families may require a connecting pathway only, whereas one hundred families will need a street system. Then follows another question: Is our street system maintained as we want it? That is to say, Are the streets properly graded, drained, paved, sprinkled, and lighted at night, and are there proper sidewalks and crosswalks? Are there trees along the streets? Do things commend themselves to our senses? If not, then the inquiry is made—Who can do those things for us? Can the county supply those needs? The answer will be that the county is organized for serving a rural community and not an urban center. If you want those things you must get them yourselves. In this situation a trial is often made to secure such needs by voluntary co-operation. This method may be partially

successful for a time, but it soon develops that voluntary contributions for the public good are unsatisfactory. The public spirited and generous will contribute more than their share, while others equally able will give little or nothing.

Therefore, it is to secure community necessities at an equality of cost that municipalities are organized as political bodies. They are vested by law with the power to do the things that the community desired to have done, and to distribute the cost equitably over the entire community by the power of taxation. No other form of government can serve it so completely or satisfactorily.

The things which a municipality may do are many and their powers are sufficiently extensive to include not only the things required by a small community, but all those that may from time to time be demanded by reason of its growth. A community does not have to be very large before it requires improved sanitation. It needs sewers and health regulations which only a municipality can provide. At the same time it must have an ample water supply. The time is now at hand when private capital cannot be relied upon to properly safeguard the public interest in this respect. A municipal water supply means an abundance of pure water for domestic purposes, also for sewer flushing, street sprinkling, the irrigation of lawns and gardens and the consequent improvement of the town generally.

There is a great satisfaction in having a town look attractive, with neatly kept streets, bordered with ornamental trees, flowers or grass. Besides, it is a great factor in enhancing the value of real property, for the reason that other people will want to make their home in such a town.

Then there are many other "community needs" such as a fire department, public library, police protection, perhaps some means of recreation like a park or playground, and possibly a public meeting place such as a town hall. These things can be secured only through the instrumentality of a municipal corporation. And if a community aspires to future growth, if it is ambitious to be a factor in promoting civilization, it must satisfy these community needs. The earlier it commences to do so the more rapidly it will grow.

The method of incorporating a town is provided by law. It is a legal procedure and should be conducted by a lawyer, as the requirements of the law must be carefully observed, as errors sometimes produce serious consequences. The lawyer selected to conduct the proceedings should be one who has had previous experience or be in a position to consult with one who has had such experience. The law requires a municipality to have at least five hundred inhabitants.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF MUNICIPALITIES AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT

In the progress of man four chief stages of development may be noted: First, the hunter; second, the nomad; third, the settler, or commencement of agricultural life, when actual civilization begins; and fourth, the town or city dweller.

The nomadic pastoral life of ancient nations is well illustrated in the Book of Genesis and the account of the wanderings of Abraham and the other Hebrew patriarchs; also in that of the Bedouin Arabs of our own day in the deserts of Arabia and Northern Africa.

The building of cities was the decisive step towards civilization. The greater the development of trade, transportation, and commerce, the more populous they became. The city brought with it new demands in the art of government by creating a changed condition of society.

FIRST MUNICIPAL INSTITUTIONS.

It is agreed that the seeds of civilization were planted first in the fertile valleys of the great rivers of the East. Here the abundant supply of water and the richness of the soil afforded advantages not possessed by the mountain slopes and flat plains. Thus we find in the valleys of the Nile, Euphrates, Tigris and Indus, the first municipal institutions established by the human race. Here powerful nations developed, flourished and passed away.

THE ANCIENT CITIES.

Cities have existed since the earliest period of recorded history. The necessity of protecting life and property from the depredations of wandering tribes was the main cause of uniting together in small communities, which constituted villages and from which sprang cities. Security from attack was the chief end sought.

A walled place where men dwelled was usually termed by the primitive races a city. The word "city" has also been defined to mean a meeting place of men, flocks and herds, of caravans and great routes of travel. In historical usage it includes everything from the most insignificant village to Jerusalem.

Semitic cities are distinguished from towns, villages and hamlets; the latter had no walls, but the cities were surrounded by a wall and frequently by a moat. The city gates were closed from sunset to sunrise and were provided with a watchman stationed near the gate to announce approaching danger.

Within the city and near the gate were open places where all kinds of business was transacted, public meetings held, and judicial proceedings conducted. What we now call streets were mostly crooked and narrow passages from one quarter to another.