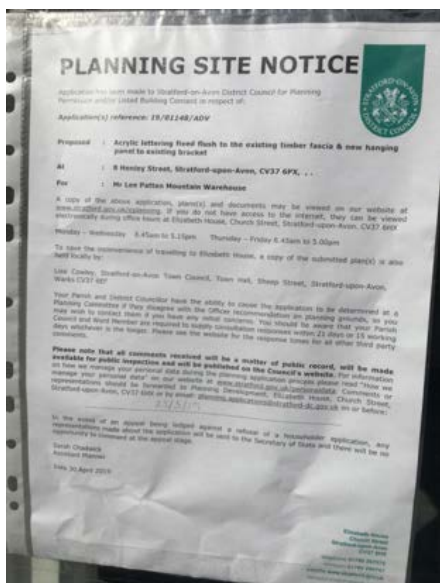


2019 IIMC Study Abroad and Symposium Broadening Your Horizons, An International Perspective on Citizen and Community Engagement

By Tami Kelly, MMC, City Clerk, Grove City, OH
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The International Institute of Municipal Clerks 2019 Study Abroad and Symposium Program, that occurs every 2-3 years in different locations throughout the world, was held in England this June. Previous Study abroad programs have been held in Montreal, Scotland, South Africa and Wales. There were 38 US and Canadian attendees for the Study Abroad portion of the program and 100 plus Clerks at the Region XI Symposium that was held in Stratford-upon-Avon.

The Program began Monday, June 3 with a privately led tour of Parliament in London. Our guide was Hywel Williams, Member of Parliament (MP) representing the Arfon constituency in Wales. We were given a special look at Parliament with many interesting stories such as the basis for the term “lobbying” - members must leave the chamber, line up in the lobby to vote and be counted. (Can you imagine if our Congress had to clear out of their Chambers and line up in the lobby to be counted for a vote?) The phrase “it’s in the bag” refers to petitions introduced on the floor - if they’re accepted- they are literally placed into “the bag” behind the Speaker in the House of Commons. How does any work get done in the UK? Well, Brexit is a great example of how it’s really not getting done isn’t it? It was also loosely explained to us that the Prime Minister can call for an election of



Members of the House of Commons any time he chooses. I wonder how Congress would like to have to run for office at the whim of the Speaker. We were also treated to a look at the “Moses Room” that is a small conference room used by the House of Lords and is not on the regular tour. This room seats about 40 people – tightly – and is covered in an opulent velvet & gold leaf wallpaper. This was a very interesting tour and the history behind how the UK Parliament operates is fascinating.

Our hotel was in Windsor and Windsor Castle was literally across the street. It is a beautiful town and it has a “homey” feel, just like Grove City, OH. We had the evening to explore and dine on our own. As we walked along the street, what most people would look right past I had to take a picture of. Here, thousands of miles away, the Town posts notices about planning changes – just like our Development

Department has started doing here. This was posted at the bottom of an existing sign post, but it was visible and did the job.

The next stop on this program was to the City of Bath, 97 miles west of London. We were scheduled to have a meeting with the Mayor of Bath, but duty called elsewhere and this was cancelled, unfortunately. The City became a World Heritage site in 1987 because of its ancient ties with the Holy Roman Empire. The City was known as Aquae Sulis in Roman times and is known for the hot spring baths. People would come from all over to convalesce and enjoy the baths, theater and entertainment found in this City. There was also a temple next to the Bath Houses. The Tour of the Bath's is remarkable and at the end you can drink the waters that were supposed to cure all your ails. It tastes like well water - salty and full of iron. Bath is also known for its architecture. John Wood, the elder, designed and built The Circus structure in 1754. It is the first Georgian Style building in the UK. His son, John Wood, the younger, designed and built The Crescent in 1767. Both are still in use today and are quite impressive.



Again, in the evening we had time to explore and some of us signed up for the Bizarre Bath Comedy Tour. It was a bit hokey, but we were escorted to parts of Bath we would not have seen otherwise. It was also a good opportunity to bond with colleagues on the Study Program.

The final stop was the Region XI Symposium in Stratford-upon-Avon. The Symposium consisted of two days of plenary and breakout sessions engineered for not just Clerks, but anyone that works in Public Service. The following is a synopsis of the sessions I attended:

1. After Brexit – Jonathan Carr-West, Chief Executive LGIU

In case you don't follow World News, in 2016, the UK voters approved a Referendum to withdraw from the European Union. This was supposed to have been completed in March 2019. However, Parliament has yet to come to an agreement, so the deadline has been extended to October 2019. This session was a discussion about the "need for more effective participation of citizens in local governance and in the design and delivery of local services." Our Speaker, Jonathan Carr-West, said this concept relies on trust in our public leaders. However, he sees a crisis of trust in political and public institutions around the world. Addressing the trust deficit is the critical task for public leaders. A real collaboration and conversations that include the public is one step to rebalancing the trust deficit. He said it starts at the local level, as it is easier to converse about what you need in your local area rather than what the Country needs. He suggested it would be easier if the Power was Local and items were pushed up to the next level of government, rather than Central Government deciding what bits they will give. There was an interesting discussion at my table with representatives from England, Holland, Belgium and the United States. Certainly, the concept of State government telling Local government what, where, and

how dense they must build in their community is foreign to me, and the representative from England doesn't know any different. Mr. Carr-West stated that successful innovation doesn't happen by one person creating something new. It's local government working together with its residents and residents adapting. He said atmosphere is key – with increasingly polarized, hardened views and residents saying no to old politics, the focus must be on atmosphere and everything else will follow. There is a shift from institutions to



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2. Leadership and High Performance – Speaker Dr. Cath Bishop, Olympic Silver Medalist for the UK in rowing and Conflict Diplomat

Dr. Bishop shared “The High-Performance Process” or going for that long win. First, Clarity- why does this goal matter. She asked, “What gets you moving in the morning?” “What matters to you and what does your team uniquely bring?” “What can we do to have a bigger impact.” She asked, “What is Success - What does winning look like.” She asked “What makes the boat go faster” question and how? “What experience do you want (others) to have?” “What culture do you want to create and how do you want to work together?” Secondly, you must have a Constant Learning and be proactive in trying out new things. She said to think about the mindset you bring to practice or a meeting – “what is the opportunity today?”; Reflect and review your own performance and use those marginal gains to make that big change. Lastly, have Collaboration and always get to know the person behind the role. She asked, “who can help add value to what we do?” Don't assume people just know what you are trying to achieve – be clear about the service you are providing and what you want to achieve. Separate the performance from the results/outcomes. It's not about being President/On Top, it's about how you treat people – “How do you make the boat go faster?” Use feedback to proactively improve performance – it is more powerful to go get the information you want, then reflect and review the performance. “What worked and what could you do better?”

This program explained the concept of marginal gains: “The principle that if you broke down everything in a process and then improved it by just one percent, then you will get a significant increase when you put them all together.” – Sir Dave Brailsford. She asked, “What are the small things you can do to make a difference?” The one percent add up to provide larger gains and “move your boat forward.” She said there must be Psychological Safety – an environment where one will not be punished or humiliated for speaking up with ideas, questions, concerns or mistakes. Frame the issues as a learning experience and show your vulnerability. To be effective under pressure, there needs to be a Supportive environment: flexible & adaptable; self-awareness under pressure; authentic collaboration – get to know the person; listen more than speak; and find what you have in common. Finally, tell stories. Share stories to achieve what you want.

3. Celebrity Experience - Nigel Risner, author of the Impact Code

This session was about creating an IMPACT; discovering the gap in your service and making a real difference for the way you serve:

I - In the room. You must be in the room – be present. You can't be trapped in your own mind or stuck on fearing the future; or on your cell phone.

M - Model from the best. Model your behavior on your personal role models, your heroes who have made the kinds of positive changes to create a good experience.

P - Passion & Purpose - People with passion go the extra mile. Surround yourself with helpful, positive people. Find out what your team's passion is. Know where you're going, write out your game plan and develop the goal points that will help you get there.

A - Action - Get off your bum and DO IT. Be purposeful. Do something.

C - Communication and Comic Relief: Speak in the other person's language. Have some fun. Socialize a bit and get to know your team.

T - Trust: Learn to trust your co-workers/team members. Show others that you are reliable and establish an atmosphere of honesty.

One exercise categorized people in a fun way:

- **Monkeys** – Sociable, witty and quick with ideas, they are direct and move quickly. They shoot from the hip, make estimates and act. To get along with monkeys, make your interactions pleasant and fast paced. They're creative so invite them to brainstorm with you.

- **Lions** – They like to be in control. They multitask and survive by focusing on results. When you communicate with lions, be direct, but brief: Cut to the chase.

- **Elephants** – They are "indirect and guarded." They focus on process and often solve problems through persistence. They can be touchy and perfectionist, and feel they have to be right. Elephants move through the world cautiously, working on things slowly and gathering information. When you talk to elephants, speak softly and provide a lot of detail.

- **Dolphins** – Dolphins are warm and friendly. They are flexible and want to get along with everyone. They can be overly accommodating and slow to take a stand. They tend to procrastinate, because they want to check out where others stand, emotionally, before they do anything. Dolphins hate conflict and will sometimes go along with something with which they don't agree just to avoid a clash. When dealing with dolphins, emphasize your relationship, speak in terms of the team and use the word "we."

Other points from this session included: Point Your Feet Forward – you can't change what you said, but you can be better in the future. Don't keep looking back and hold on to things that were said or done in the past. "Feet Forward" Make Meetings Impactful. Forty minutes is the maximum amount of time to keep people engaged; Listen like a Coach – what can you take away from the conversation. Ask the right question when they are in front of you, "Do you want fries with that?" Most ideas can be implemented in a minute if you didn't have to go to a committee.

4. Managing the Pace - Sue Keogh, Consultant for the Association of Democratic Service Officers (ADSO)

This session was a new take on Time Management and Recognizing the Signs of Stress. Takeaways from this program were simple and straightforward: Prioritize your workload- differentiate between urgent and important. Urgent items have an absolute deadline, Important items are high value tasks. Also, a little stress is good and can provide the sense of urgency to get a task finished. Constant stress can make you ill. Practice the six principles of resilience: A Sense of Purpose – Positive Mental Attitude – Connect with Others – Determination – Taking Control – and Looking After Yourself. Manage pressure by

balancing between work and play. Get a good sleep – if you travel, take your pillow or blanket: Eat well; Have the right clothes; Stay healthy.

5. Roundtable Discussions – In the afternoon, there were five tables set up for discussions on a variety of topics.

Your Clerk was asked to facilitate the table discussion on Building Effective Leaders. To my surprise, the table was full. We had a nice discussion about what we had learned from our speakers in the morning and what tips we could apply in our offices. My role was to keep the conversation on point and continuing, so I asked the group a few questions to do just that. I brought some leadership sheets that I use when facilitating Athenian Dialogues for IIMC to help me keep the discussion on topic. It was nice to have Clerks from around the globe ask for copies of that information. The delegates had nice takeaways and some suggestions for respective Associations, which I passed along to the appropriate representative. All-in-all, it was a very good roundtable.

6. Lost in Control – Refocus on Purpose – Dr. Marius Buiting, Director Dutch Society for Supervisory Boards in Healthcare Organizations

Dr. Buiting's presentation was a bit gloomy. He took us through a bit of history about governments in the post second world war period; the seventies and eighties; and today. He said we need to reflect on what we do and see what we can do better. He said schools teach obedience. This must be untaught and students need to learn reflection. He said the public is angry because politicians cannot deliver on the promise of Healthcare – especially in the future. He said standardization + bureaucracy does not work to fix healthcare. In the Netherlands, healthcare now means healthy urban living, good roads, parks and green space, etc. Meetings were held with the public and public engagement was taken to shift the meaning. He explained the shifting paradigms of governance in society. Instead of an Ego system (one for all), society wants an Eco system (all for all). He said the fight between Social and Liberal kills a community, but the community is still there. If you build the community with an Eco system, you reduce the society/liberal fight. Today, systems must be set better for the future. He suggests less reporting – more talking; less Chronos – more eye for Kairos; less time-money-perspective – more value driven- perspective; less compulsion – more invitation; less 'streetlights' – more 'campfires'; less standardization – more variation. Using what is around you, neighbors/community, makes you creative.

7. Digital Devolution or Actual Revolution? The relationship between digital services and democracy - Dr. Catherine Howe, Director of Design, Delivery and Change at Cancer Research UK

An expert in digital innovation that focuses on the area of digital democracy and social change, Dr. Howe posed a dilemma: "If your digital people aren't driving a revolution then they are the wrong people; If your digital people are driving a revolution then what does it mean for your democracy." Essentially, she said that technology can drive change, but we should be cautious about letting it shape the change. Democracy must adapt or digital platforms will evolve beyond it.

Dr. Howe said we are seeing the end of the Industrial society and shifting to a Technological society. She said we must be careful not to leave people behind. There are two groups trying to fix the Democratic society without talking to each other. If the digital people are driving your revolution, they are not thinking of your democracy. Governments must link up with them. Social media should NOT be the only way the public gets their information from the City. Social Media can be misleading and altered by opinion that changes the facts (Fake News). She said this is bigger than Fake News. Big social groups are having a lot of impact with the lack of governance and organization over social media. Without organization, they are disruptive. It is important to utilize social media but it cannot be the only driver.

Politicians need to be more comfortable & confident in the social media arena. She explained that currently, the digital people/social media gets your attention, keeps your attention, makes you buy more stuff, brings you together with like-minded people = polarization. We need to create spaces that bring people together with different views = democracy. The digital minded people have the ability to work with networked and hierarchical people. She said to let them out of the technology box and into the organizational space. Dr. Howe explained the New Economic Organizers are: the market is the organizational force of economy, but it doesn't take into account real life; institutions need to understand what makes the public trust them; complexity drives a need for deliberation. She said to "Put your faith in humans" – start building the "user center data people" with citizen center users; give power to the people with the knowledge; replace hierarchies with networks; create forums for deliberation; create a network of community spaces to collect ideas/solutions for issues. To avoid the Technology Chicken, you need the Socialist Egg.

8. How can Local Democratic Innovation overcome the Global Democratic Recession? - Dr. Oliver Escobar, Lecturer in Public Policy at the University of Edinburgh.

The session was on the decline of democratic systems around the world and an increase in authoritarian values, particularly among young people. The situation presents a challenge for democracies, but also presents the opportunity for change. It was this session that the discussion on inclusion and diversity were said to be crucial for legitimate and effective participation. Deliberative engagement was about assessing evidence, hearing and scrutinizing different views, then making informed decisions. Dr. Escobar suggested: 1. Lower the bar so those who don't know how to be loud and powerful on social media can be heard; 2. Have "mini-publics" – randomly selected residents to participate. He shared examples, like the Melbourne Citizens' Panel on Local Finances and Citizens Juries in Scotland. He said we need to think about what kind of citizens we are asking our residents to be. If we create a space for creative thinking, citizens will adapt to the space. The conclusion was that participation thrives when important issues and resources are at stake and citizens feel their contribution can make a difference. Legal and administrative professionals have a crucial role in the development of a more participatory

democracy to improve local governance and as public servants, we can help to make space for democratic innovation.

Traditional leader	Facilitative leader
Hierarchies	Networks
Certainty (knows everything)	Openness (constant learning)
Leads others	Helps others to lead themselves
Good at talking	Good at listening
Knows the direction	Helps others to work out the direction
Commanding and controlling	Facilitating and mediating
Builds alliances to win policy battles	Builds alliances to find workable policy agreements and solutions

As you can see, there is plenty of information from this program that can be utilized on your own. Municipal Clerk training programs are not generally all about parliamentary procedure and how to run meetings or store records. We are trained on many levels, with information that is meant provide a well balanced education for all areas of governance. (I have access to full power points to any of these presentations if interested.)

After the first day of the Symposium, we were taken to a Gala dinner at the Warwick Castle - one of the best-known castles in central England. Created on the location of the medieval wooden military fortification, it received major upgrade to the stone fortress under the William the Conqueror, and was adapted into stone castle during 12th century.

It is used today for banquets and has daily tours/shows. We were treated to one of those shows before dinner, complete with a duel and a tour of the castle. It was a beautiful place and a lovely evening.



Our final evening was “on our own”. Since Stratford-upon-Avon is the birthplace of Shakespeare, you have to attend the theater. The Royal Shakespearean Theater has its home here and before we left, I coordinated an evening to see “As you Like It” for anyone who wanted to join my roommate, Kary Tillmann, CMC, City Clerk, Zimmerman, MN and me. What started out with five people quickly grew to 22 people by the end of the week. Dinner was top of the theater and they moved us to The Round Room after the party grew. It was a great way to end the week with colleagues and friends.

So friends, make an IMPACT, encourage residents to participate in our local government functions; balance your life; and make a few small changes. Thank you for this opportunity.

