

Introduction And Welcome

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Seminar for New Town Attorneys

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On behalf of the Connecticut Association of Municipal Attorneys, I'd like to welcome you all here this morning. CAMA is a group of some 150 lawyers practicing in the area of municipal law. We run several seminars on municipal law topics each year. Our members, especially our Board members, are always available to help you. We maintain a website and a LISTSERVE that we think is a great resource for all of us.

I like to think of municipal law and being a Town Attorney as the place where "the rubber meets the road." In my view, it's where the real action is. I say this because, as a Town Attorney, you will practice more law--- and in more subject areas--- than you ever thought possible. Congress and the State Legislature and your own Town Councils and Boards of Selectmen are passing new laws every day---tons of them—and it is your job to figure out what they mean and how to apply them in real time. This is the job where

you will learn to interpret statutes and to draft ordinances. One day you will be figuring out how to deal with the person who has 100 cats and dogs in his house and the next day you will be trying to negotiate a multi million dollar energy performance contract along with its associated financing. Another day you will be working with an environmental consultant to evaluate whether a contaminated property can successfully be re-used as a school or as parkland. You will be asked whether lots shown on a “paper street” –a street that exists only on a 1915 “subdivision map,” for example, are nevertheless “building lots” and whether the current owners have access to a public highway. You will review trash contracts, consultant contracts, construction contracts and cell tower leases. You will be asked to referee disputes between your First Selectman or Mayor and the Board of Finance, Planning Commission or other board (also your clients) who want him investigated (or even incarcerated!) for allegedly violating the Charter. And remember that—unlike a lawyer for a private client--- you will perform your job under the glare of public scrutiny. There is virtually no such thing as confidentiality. Your work is done in public and for the public and your opinions, emails, correspondence will often end up in the newspaper or on the internet with the lighting speed of a single computer keystroke.

I love the job of Town Attorney. You are a problem solver and you have the opportunity to do much good for the community, to accomplish great things. The professional rewards, satisfaction and professional and personal challenges are enormous. But don't get too used to being the Town Attorney. Because just when you get really good at it, you will probably be replaced!

We have some great panels and panelists here today. We have tried to highlight the important issues in the broad subject areas that we all grapple with. I attended this program when I first started out- and every two years since. I have always found it valuable and I hope you will too. We will have plenty of time for questions.