

President's corner

By Curt Boganey, President, City Manager, Brooklyn Center

It is amazing how fast 2010 disappeared. Each year passes more quickly than the last (yes, I am old). Well, the MCMA Board and Committee members have been working diligently on our behalf; the Mid-Winter Seminar looks exciting and the Annual Conference is shaping up to be one of the best ever! Hopefully, all of you will be able to make the short drive to Milwaukee for the ICMA Annual Conference in September. We have welcomed two new Range Riders, and the ICMA Affiliation Agreement has been executed. I would like to use this opportunity to highlight a few aspects of the Affiliation Agreement.

Affiliation Agreement

I believe that the adoption of the affiliation agreement with ICMA is a major milestone for MCMA. It reinforces the significance of our relationship with the premier professional local government management association in the world. It helps to align the vision, mission, and core beliefs of State Associations and the International. In my view ICMA has no peer; as stated in the agreement, ICMA is the standard bearer for ethical conduct and a national advocate for professional local government management and council-manager government as the preferred local government structure. For these reasons among many, I am very pleased to support the implementation of this agreement. Over time there will be a need to tweak and improve the agreement, but philosophically this is a major step forward in my opinion.


Credentialed Manager

I wish to draw your attention to Section 2: Professional Development of the Affiliation

Agreement that states that MCMA will set a goal of increasing the number of Credentialed Managers in Minnesota by five (5) individuals per year. In reviewing this commitment my initial thought was perhaps we had bitten off more than we could chew, but on reflection I have no doubt this goal is indeed achievable. In fact, I believe that we can and should exceed this goal.

Now some of you may be wondering if I had too much funny egg nog over the holidays, but I assure you I drank no more than usual. I did a little research and put together the following comparison regarding the percentage of Credentialed Managers to Chief Administrative Officers in various states (see below). On a percentage basis Minnesota is in last place by a wide margin. I have done the math for you (pre-egg nog).

The CM program may be criticized but it continues to evolve. But, how can Minnesota on a percentage basis have less Credentialed Managers than Iowa! I am not advocating that you become a Credentialed Manager just so we can beat Iowa. That is simply the primary reason; in addition I encourage you to do so because I believe it works. Most of us need an incentive to consistently invest in our ongoing professional development in a focused manner. When we get busy it is so easy to pass on that training seminar, reading that leadership book, or avoid the 360-degree feedback.

So let me appeal to your personal pride and sense of competition—let's beat Iowa! Rather than five new CMs in 2011, let's shoot for no less than 10. The application deadlines are January 1, April 1, July 1, and October 1. I will see you at the finish line! 

*The Professional
Association
of Appointed
Administrators
Serving Local
Governments
in Minnesota*

	Indiana	Illinois	Missouri	Iowa	Ohio	Wisconsin	Michigan	Minnesota
Chief Administrative Officers	14	254	86	87	107	119	259	245
Credentialed Managers	7	88	28	27	30	33	62	36
Percentage of Credentialed Managers	50.0	34.6	32.6	31.0	28.0	27.7	23.9	14.7

**Your
Range
Rider
is here
to help:**

Bill Bassett
(507) 243-4346

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Next Generation Committee sets aggressive agenda for 2011

By Bart Fischer, Committee Chair

At the Oct. 5 meeting of the Next Generation Committee, we set an aggressive agenda for 2011. With the direction from the MCMA Board in mind, the Committee established the following 4 concentrations, with each Member volunteering to assist with at least one of the objectives:

Work with the Educational Initiatives Committee to help reach young people for and create diversity within the profession.

Reach out to universities (both under-grad and grad), professors, and get into classrooms throughout the state to promote the profession.

Enhance and expand the MCMA Mentoring Program by making a more conscious effort to link the hundreds of students looking for real-world experience with mentors.

Develop promotional materials and attend a couple of school/job fairs throughout the state in an effort to market the profession.

At a recent MCMA Board and APMP Board Meeting, Committee members were able to present the promotional materials as well as a conservative budget to Board members of each organization who graciously funded the marketing efforts.

In addition, as chairperson of this committee, I have challenged each committee member to visit at least one classroom this year in an effort to promote our profession. I would also like to issue that same challenge to all of you! Whether it be your child's elementary, middle or high school, or an undergraduate or graduate program/classroom, please help us spread the word on how rewarding a career in public administration can be!

If you have questions, would like a copy of the promotional brochure we have created or have any other needs regarding the Next Generation Committee, please contact Chairperson Bart Fischer at (952) 227-7529 or bfischer@chaskamn.com.

I am proud of each and every member of this Committee as they have all stepped up to the plate to promote and market our profession to our next generation! ◻

Appointments and other professional news

- **Winthro Block**, former City Administrator, Rushford, has been appointed City Administrator, Clara City.
- **Sarah Friesen**, former City Administrator, Spring Park, has been appointed City Administrator, Minneota.
- **Larry Thompson** has been appointed City Manager, Winona.
- **Chuck Whiting**, County Administrator, St. Croix County, WI, has been appointed City Administrator, Fairbault.
- **Heather Worthington**, former Assistant City Manager, Edina, has been appointed Deputy County Administrator, Ramsey County.

Reaching the MCMA Secretariat

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You can also contact Rebecca Erickson, Administrative Assistant (rerickso@lmc.org), or Jim Miller, Executive Director (jmiller@lmc.org).

All can be reached at (651) 281-1200.

APMP Update

*By Dave Schaps, President, APMP;
Assistant to the Administrator, Oakdale*

The Association of Public Management Professionals (APMP—the assistants' group!) is pleased to report a strong year in 2010. The group is dedicated to providing meaningful networking opportunities and shared learning through monthly lunch meetings and strong coordination with MCMA, the Next Generation Committee, and the Metro Area Managers Association.

In the past few months, the group has worked diligently to expand the awareness of the membership through events and speakers that have included: Dave Horsager on building trust in organizations; Senior Judge Jim Morrow on the role of the judiciary in Minnesota; learning more about performance measurement from Matt Stemwedel; and hosting an "interim manager panel" consisting of Heather Worthington, Bart Fischer, Dan Tesch, and Todd Gerhardt.

The APMP is extremely grateful for the support MCMA continues to provide to our organization, and we look forward to strengthening our partnership in the coming year. As always, if you have or you are an assistant, department head, staff person, or intern that needs a place to "break into the profession," please let them know about APMP and support them in joining our organization.

The group also provides a wonderful opportunity for interested students to start the process of networking with individuals who in large part have recently joined the profession, and who can provide great perspective on career planning and skills development. This is a critical role in a dynamic field that continues to see change at a rapid pace, and our membership has worked to expand our outreach to this talented pool of future public administrators.

In addition, as cities and counties continue to see tight budgets, the group provides those looking to enter public service with insight on potential internships and job shadowing opportunities. APMP members also serve as a helpful sounding board and resource for those seeking a career in local government management. If you know of any person who might benefit from the networking and skills development provided by APMP, please encourage them to check our Facebook page or contact me at (651) 730-2722 or dave.schaps@ci.oakdale.mn.us. ☐

Sparks and Thistle: New Range Riders for Minnesota

By Kevin Frazell

For many years, Bill Bassett, former city manager of Mankato, has worked diligently as Minnesota's lone Range Rider. However, as a part of its effort to expand our support of members, MCMA received approval from ICMA to expand our core of Range Riders up to five. ICMA pays half the costs of the Range Riders.

We are extremely pleased to let you know that two stalwarts of the profession, Paul Sparks, former city manager of Albert Lea, and Bob Thistle, former city manager of Coon Rapids, have been appointed by the MCMA Board to two of those new positions.

The MCMA Board wants to fill at least one, if not both, of the other positions with retired members from the northern part of the state. If you know of someone who would make a good Range Rider "up north" please contact Kevin Frazell at kfrazell@lmc.org.

In the meantime, we heartily welcome Paul and Bob to the program. Under our new job description, Range Riders will be more proactively in reaching to new members, and to those experiencing difficult times in their local government.

Bill, Paul, and Bob are also all happy and eager to take your phone calls or e-mails asking for their confidential advice and assistance, and even arranging a visit to your city or county if necessary. Below is their contact information. ☐

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Recognition and Membership Committee Report

By Mark McNeil, Committee Chair

The R&M Committee has been pursuing a couple of activities:

Expanded Range Rider Program—The MCMA Board was pleased to receive five applicants who expressed interest in serving MCMA members as part of an expanded Range Rider program. Two applicants—Paul Sparks of Albert Lea, and Bob Thistle of Maple Grove—were selected at this time to join continuing Range Rider Bill Bassett of Mankato. Those three individuals will seek to be in contact with newly appointed managers, and will continue to be available to any MCMA member needing assistance on a variety of challenges. Applicants from northern and northwestern Minnesota are still being sought. If you are aware of a retired manager who might be interested in serving one of these areas, please forward that information to Kevin Frazell.

Managers In Transition (MIT)—The Committee continues to search for ways to assist and support MIT's during their periods of transition between jobs. This could include such things as additional outplacement services, resume writing assistance, practice interviews, and training. The MCMA Board recently approved lodging stipends of \$200 for MITs wishing to attend the MCMA Annual Conference.

The Committee will meet again in January for further action. Current or former MIT's who would be interested in lending practical advice are invited to attend. Again, please contact Kevin if you would like to be involved. ◻

State affiliate agreement with ICMA

By Kevin Frazell

At a ceremonial signing event in San Jose, CA, Minnesota became the 22nd state association to enter an affiliate agreement with ICMA. Each state is free to negotiate its own terms with ICMA.

Highlights of the Minnesota agreement include:

- Joint responsibility for advancing and enforcing the Code of Ethics.
- Support for members in addressing the issue of environmental, fiscal, and community sustainability.
- Next Generation efforts.
- Offering ICMA University workshops in the state.
- Increasing the number of ICMA members in MN by 2 per year.
- Increasing the number of ICMA credentialed managers in MN by 5 per year!
- Contributing at least six documents per year on topics like innovation and leading practices for inclusion in the ICMA Knowledge Network. ◻

Board Meetings Recap

By Kevin Frazell

The MCMA Board met on October 1 in Fergus Falls and on December 17 in Brooklyn Center. Highlights from those meetings include:

- Approving portions of the Managers-in-Transition program, including posting the new MIT manual prepared by Dan Donahue on the MCMA website. Also approving housing stipends of up to \$200 for MIT's to attend the MCMA Annual Conference.
- Appointing Paul Sparks, former city manager, Albert Lea, and Bob Thistle, former city manager, Coon Rapids, as Range Riders.
- Approving a state affiliate agreement with ICMA (see additional article).
- Approving \$1,300 to support the work of the Next Generation Committee in reaching college and high school students.
- Initiating a review of the long-term finances of the Association.
- Meeting with members in northwestern MN to discuss current issues of the profession and the Association. ◻

Follow-up from winner of the Teacher Achievement Award

We got the note below from teacher Andrew Mendez following his receipt of the 2008 Teacher's Achievement Award.

It is with great pleasure that I accept this honor from the Minnesota City/County Management Association. It has always been one of my long-term goals in teaching to demonstrate the relevance of course content.

In the case of my American Government course, the challenge is apparent in teaching my students the significance of citizenship. By the time they graduate, I want students to internalize the importance of civic participation. I want these young people to recognize the value of what local government does for them, that it is only as effective as the quality—and quantity—of citizens who contribute to it.

My class is not the totality of dry, lifeless platitudes regarding civil rights, shackled to dusty tomes relating to the three branches of government. Instead, students explore the essentials of government through engaging simulations and meaningful discussions.

When I have people like Mike Ericson come to my classroom to share how valued young people are in society, it reminds me why I do what I do for a living. I enjoy helping young people realize how important a role government plays in their lives, that its success is dependent on their civic engagement.

I am glad to do my part in passing on the flame of this wisdom to future generations. ☐

*Andrew Mendez
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Mid-Winter Seminar: Civics and motivation

By Kevin Frazell

It's just about time for the 2011 Mid-Winter Professional Development Seminar and networking event, where a relatively small but determined and engaged segment of the MCMA membership will gather for a time of learning and networking with colleagues and families. This year's seminar is February 4-5 at Arrowwood Conference Center in Alexandria.

We'll have a two-part educational program this year. Friday afternoon will feature citizen engagement as an emerging skill for the local government manager. Sean Kershaw, Executive Director of the Citizen's League, has agreed to lead and facilitate this highly interactive session that will include case examples of work being done in the cities of Brooklyn Park, Crosby, and Hastings.

Saturday morning is being devoted to a group book-club-type discussion of the book *Drive* by best-selling author Daniel Pink about what really motivates you and your employees. Pink's provocative ideas are sure to elicit some lively discussion and maybe even debate among MCMA members and their partners!

Further information, event registration, and housing information can be found on the MCMA website at www.mncma.org. ☐

Pride in public service: Redux

By Craig Waldron, Oakdale City Administrator

Once again, I am sitting here approaching the “boiling point” as I listen to the attack on public employees.

For those of you who were around during my presidency of the MCMA, I made “pride in public service” and “making a difference” my general theme. I spent a substantial part of my time pointing out that, as public administrators, maybe it is not “better” to run our governments like a business. (Would you prefer the British Petroleum model or the Bear Stearns model at this point?)

Now, I have sat here and listened to an ongoing bashing of our alleged overpaid, bloated bureaucrats who will be easily floating through their retirement life on big, fat, public pensions. I can take it no more!

I believe that it is time for a little truth serum and a little fact-checking, as opposed to simple platitudes. Unlike many of today’s pundits, I will actually offer some citations and research behind my statements!

Myths and Realities

- **Myth #1:** Working in the private sector requires much more education and training than is required to work in the public sector.

Reality: Not so—only 23 percent of private sector employees have completed college as opposed to 48 percent in the public sector. Additionally, 70 percent of the public employees are defined as “knowledge workers” as compared to only 32 percent in the private sector. So much of what we do is based on our competency and advanced degrees such as masters, certificates, credentialing—even doctorates—which demonstrates that public employees are highly competent in their field. (Source: Center for State and Local Government Excellence.)

- **Myth #2:** Public sector employees make far more in wages and salaries than comparable private sector employees.

Reality: Not so—when actual comparable earning determinants such as education and experience are utilized, state workers actually earn 11 percent less and local public workers earn 12 percent less than their private sector counterparts. Plus, we ask our public sector employees to do difficult and dangerous jobs like those of police officers and firefighters. (Source: Center for State and Local Government Excellence.)

- **Myth #3:** Well, okay, maybe public employees do make less, until one adds on the “lavish” benefits such as health care and pension. Then, public employees net out much more compensation than do employees in the private sector.

Reality: Not so—even though benefits do make up a slightly larger share of public employees’ compensation, even after accounting for the value of the respective benefits, state employees earn 6.8 percent less and local public employees earn 7.4 percent less than private sector employees. (Source: Center for State and Local Government Excellence.)

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MCMA Annual Conference

By Erin Stwora and Melinda Coleman,
Conference Planning Committee Co-Chairs

Mark your calendars for the MCMA Annual Conference “Annual Checkup—The Doctors Are In.” This three-day event, to be held May 4-6, 2011 in Nisswa, has been carefully designed by the very diligent Conference Planning Committee.

The Committee has reviewed last year’s evaluations, and although it was one of the most highly rated conferences, we are working to make improvements. The co-chairs are exploring alternatives to the current housing registration system with Grand View Lodge and are determined to find a way to get you into appropriate accommodations.

The program will help us renew and refresh both professionally and personally, and will help us make time and space for the things that matter most. Speakers will include Dr. Edward Creagon of the Mayo Clinic and author of *How to Not be my Patient*; Dr. Richard Swenson, author of *Margin*; and Dr. Mitchell Kusy and Elisabeth Holloway, authors of *Toxic Workplace*. As always, there will ample time for networking—be sure to check out the conference brochure for new activities. Plus, a special treat: former Minnesota manager and current ICMA President, Dave Childs, will be Thursday’s keynote speaker.

New this year will be a pre-conference workshop, *Effective Council/Staff Relations*, presented by Craig Rapp, on Wednesday afternoon.

We acknowledge that these are trying times, and travel and training budgets are tight. We hope you will look back at past conferences and remember the valuable ideas and applications that were returned to your communities and counties. Sometimes the best ideas come forward over a simple conversation or meal. Priceless!

Please continue the annual tradition of the MCMA spring conference by attending and furthermore, contributing to our profession. The program will help us tune up management “mojo” and prescribe techniques for taking care of our communities and ourselves in this ever-changing time. We look forward to seeing you there! ○

ICMA 2011 Annual Conference

By Mark McNeill, Shakopee, and
Melanie Mesko-Lee, Hastings

The 2011 ICMA Annual Conference will be held almost in our own backyard—in Milwaukee City/County, Wisconsin—September 18-21. This Midwest location is shaping up to a great conference site, and will offer MCMA members an opportunity to take advantage of a quality international conference at a regional, low-cost price tag.

From a logistics standpoint, Milwaukee is just a 5½ hour drive from the Twin Cities area. MCMA is looking into the cost of chartering a bus to make transportation costs even more affordable. The Frontier Airlines convention center in Milwaukee is fairly new and is designed with integrated art. Additionally, all of the hotels are walkable to the convention center. Hotel pricing is currently being negotiated.

The Milwaukee Host Committee has done an exceptional job with fundraising, and is working hard to make the event great. The Tuesday night activities are being set up as the one ticket will get you to two events via shuttles. They are aiming for a \$25-\$30 price that will include bus transportation, live bands, and admission to both the world famous Harley Davidson museum as well as Discovery World, a 120,000-square foot facility that includes interactive science, technology and freshwater exhibits, learning labs, theaters, television and audio studios, and fresh and saltwater aquariums. All this, plus a full, sit-down buffet meal is planned to be offered.

The conference content is beginning to take shape, with significant and thoughtful discussion by the Conference Planning Committee about not only the topics to be covered, but how better to engage all attendees to step into the conference experience. There will be many great topics relevant to the issues we at the local government level are facing, including rightsizing our organizations, leading with intent and excellence, issues relevant to small communities, and the overall fiscal constraints that transcend layers of public service.

Not only will the content be pertinent, but the Committee spent significant time discussing different ways to engage attendees. From breakout session formats to different forms of technology that can be implemented, there is a broad desire to reimagine the conference format to achieve these goals.

With all of the work going into the conference by the Host Committee, the Conference Planning Committee, and ICMA staff, 2011 attendees will find a well organized, financially affordable, and friendly conference experience. Make plans now to attend! ◻

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- **Myth #4:** Private sector employees are simply much more efficient than public employees.

Reality: Not so—since 2002, local property taxes in Minnesota, inflation adjusted, increased by \$1.7 billion while state aid declined by \$2.6 billion. Miraculously, local government public employees were able to find \$900 million in new efficiencies! This is truly a group that has developed the ingenuity and capacity to do more with less. (Source: Jeff Van Wychen, Minnesota 2020.)

Additionally, while public employees in Minnesota were effectuating these new efficiencies, state and local government revenue dropped as a percentage of one dollar of income: in 1996, 17.7 cents and in 2009 down to 16 cents. (Source: Minnesota Department of Finance.)

- **Myth #5:** Well, we know there's been a huge growth in the number of public employees in Minnesota as the bureaucracy continues to explode.

Reality: Not so—as a percentage of employees per 1,000 general population, the total number of state and local employees in Minnesota has declined by 3.4 percent over the past few years. (Source: Census Bureau.)

- **Myth #6:** Cities just keep spending money and refuse to consider cost-effective approaches and reasonable cost-cutting strategies.

Reality: Not so—public per capita spending in Minnesota has dropped while it has increased nationwide. In inflation adjusted dollars, Minnesota expenditures have declined by 10% from 2002 to 2007. This is 5.5% below the national average. (Source: Census of Governments 2002 vs Census Bureau, Jeff Van Wychen, Minnesota 2020.)

Once again, as I did a number of years ago, I urge all of you to continue to take great pride in the work that you do in your chosen profession and do not hesitate to periodically “punch” back at those who choose to rail against the public sector and all that we do. You are making a positive difference each and every day—I continue to salute all of you for doing so! ◻

Memorandum from the edge

Jon Hohenstein, Community Development Director, Eagan

In the years before Mary Tyler Moore left Dick VanDyke and moved from the New Rochelle to Minneapolis and the Coen brothers began to work out their childhood issues on film, *The Rocky and Bullwinkle Show* was one of the few programs to reference Minnesota in entertainment media.

Originating from Frostbite Falls, a fictitious Minnesota town that was on the air at least a decade ahead of *Lake Wobegon*, the show followed its hosts, a flying squirrel and an addled moose, through one misadventure after another as villains, Boris Badenov and Natasha Fatale, plotted big trouble for them.

When *Rocky and Bullwinkle* were catching their breath between adventures, they would make way for segments starring another anthropomorphic talent named Mr. Peabody, a talking dog in a tie, and his pet boy, Sherman, whose WABAC Machine stories always ended in an excruciatingly delicious pun. The Elephant Gerald episode is one of my favorites.

Two other segments, *Aesop and Son* and *Fractured Fairy Tales*, retold the value-based stories we learned growing up, like the tortoise and the hare, the boy who cried wolf and the ant and the grasshopper. As with Mr. Peabody, these segments relied heavily on puns for punch lines, but otherwise stayed pretty true to the original plot line, as when they took on the Emperor's New Clothes.

You will remember the emperor's subjects were so taken by his position and apparent authority, that they believed whatever he told them. So when deceitful tailors take advantage of the emperor's vanity by telling him that they have made the most beautiful clothes in the world, so beautiful that only the most discerning people can see them, the emperor buys it hook, line, and sinker.

He immediately pantomimes putting on the clothes and then parades around the palace and through the town to show them off. To make it suitable for children's television, the animators used a number of the same techniques Austin Powers did years later to conveniently hide the private emperor parts.

Every member of the court and everyone on the street fawns over the emperor and raves about how beautiful the non-existent clothes are. Everyone, that is, except a boy about the same age as many of the television viewers who believes his own senses instead of what he's been told to believe.

Then something interesting happens. As soon as he points out that the emperor is not wearing any clothes, everyone else realizes the truth, too. It takes two seconds for the emperor to go from resplendent to red-faced as he struggles to cover himself and race back to the castle to put on some clothes people can see.

The message was pretty straightforward. Don't buy something just because someone tells you to. Don't let someone get you to believe things that are contrary to the evidence. Don't let emperors or anybody else convince you of the rightness of the fantastic, fanciful worldviews they create. Best of all, if someone does fall for something, as soon as some kid comes along and points out the flaw, things will come clear to everyone else and the house of cards will tumble.

More and more today, it seems that the moral of this story is an impossible ideal and not a clear and obvious truth. Instead of being ashamed and retreating to find some clothes, today's emperors seem to know no shame. Today, if the same boy were to point out that certain of our opinion leaders have no clothes or have flawed positions or philosophies, I suspect the boy would be attacked as a member of the hated opponents of the emperor. The blogosphere would light up with postings about his stupidity, poor hygiene, and adherence to failed policies of the past. After all, the extremist brat only said what he said because he hates the emperor and can't get over his candidate losing in the last emperor election.

Okay, I made that last part up. You don't elect emperors. They rule by divine right. You can vote for someone else for emperor all you want, it won't matter. It's not even subject to a recount.

It's unfortunate. I don't remember a single children's story that placed a value on arrogance, ignorance, intolerance, dishonesty, disrespect, or any of the other behaviors that seem so prevalent in the public arena today, but it seems that someone must. In a time of economic uncertainty, deficits and debt, global tensions, and a host of other challenges, there are some very good lessons to be learned from fables and fairy tales. Lessons about pride, selfishness, stewardship, foresight, saving for a rainy day, simplicity, and honesty.

Compared to some of the things on television to day, *Rocky and Bullwinkle* were pretty smart. ○

**Be sure to
check out
MCMA's
web site:**

www.mncma.org