

## President's column

By Melanie Mesko Lee, MCMA President, City Administrator, Hastings

First of all, let me say thank you once again for the opportunity to serve as your MCMA president—it truly is an honor. We recently had our first board meeting of the year, where I was able to host the board in our beautiful historic Hastings City Hall, which has an enviable view of the Mississippi River and a striking visual of the new bridge being constructed adjacent to the new bridge. This view seems a fitting analogy of our communities as well—striking a balance between the past and the future. As our communities and society continue to evolve, so does our profession.

As you may recall, earlier this year the association hosted a nice dinner to recognize recent retirees and their contributions to local government. In attendance was but a snapshot of those who have served and paved the way for current and emerging leaders, and a fitting recognition to all the work that has been done. There remain many others who continue to serve with courage, empathy, and foresight of the issues that continue to evolve with serving the public. Thank you for your service to the profession.

I recently read the book *Lean In*, by Sheryl Sandberg. In summary, she takes the view that female professionals ought to “lean in” to leadership roles and that there are rightful places for women in high levels of organizational leadership. I found myself relating on some level with her (no, I haven't discovered lice in my kids' hair while riding on E-bay's personal jet, but I have felt guilty that I'm not doing it all “right”) in that the path to a leadership role isn't laid out like a recipe. We each have a different journey and, while there may be some outside barriers, there are also internal conflicts that may influence which direction our paths take.

I grew up in a home with a strong mother who was a leader in every sense of the word. She instilled in me that being a female is not a drawback in any way, shape, or form, but rather that I could do whatever a boy could do. It may take hard work, persistence,

and a willingness to go beyond my comfort level, but if I truly wanted to do something, it was within my reach. I had teachers and coaches who pushed me, encouraged me, and saw in me what I didn't necessarily see in myself. I have had tremendous professional colleagues and mentors (although I don't know that I've ever necessarily referred to them with that term) who have taught and challenged me to be more understanding and patient, and to continue to stretch my abilities. I married a true partner who is my biggest cheerleader, and I have the three greatest little people who I hope to show that leadership is about being gracious, kind, and being an appropriate risk taker.

Yet, with all of these support systems in place, I have still had some missteps and misstatements, and I have not always hit the mark with what I've intended. More than I would care to admit, to be honest. Male or female, I don't think I'm alone. I'm sure I will continue to make mistakes, although I hope that it will be with less frequency. I think that is the true evolution of a leader. While my current position may put me in a leadership role, which I embrace, I believe that my role as a leader—in my organization, within our profession, and just as importantly within my personal life—will continue to evolve. I am excited about the opportunities we have in local government and the professionals with whom I have the chance to work. At times our profession is trying and tiring, but never boring. I wish the best for each and every one of you as you strive to find balance and your own evolution as a leader in your own life.

Keep up the good work and continue to lean in ... reach out to your colleagues, support those in need, lend a hand to our new leaders in the profession, and don't lose sight of the positivity that we are working to achieve. Together, we are much stronger than we are as individuals. I hope to cross paths with you soon and share stories and lend support for the good work that we all try to accomplish. ☐

# New board member profile: Scott Neal

Scott Neal is a native of Independence, Iowa, and a graduate of Iowa State University with a bachelor's degree in economics and a Master of Public Administration (MPA).

He began his city management career five days after receiving his MPA in 1988 as the city manager of Norris, Tenn. From Norris, Scott moved on to the city administrator position in Mt. Pleasant, Iowa, from 1990-1996. Scott moved to Northfield in 1996, and served as the city administrator there until 2002, when he moved on to become the city manager of Eden Prairie. Under his leadership there, the city was recognized in 2010 by Money magazine as the #1 Most Livable Community in America. In 2010, Scott said farewell to Eden Prairie and moved on to his current job as city manager of the lovely city of Edina.

Scott married his high school sweetheart, Deedee, in 1983. They celebrated their 30th wedding anniversary in August. Deedee is the director of The Fraser School in Richfield. Scott and Deedee have three sons: Toby, 28, who is married to Marlene, and lives in Vienna, Austria; Turner, 26, who lives in Bloomington; and Ethan, 23, who lives in South Minneapolis "temporarily" with his folks.

Away from the office, Scott enjoys soccer, travel, and good beer—three things that often go well together. Cheers! ☐

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# Are you interested in adjunct teaching?

*By Mitchell Berg, member in transition, Associate Professor at Minnesota State University, Mankato, and Adjunct Faculty Member at Argosy University Twin Cities*

Since I have been a member in transition, I have met a number of colleagues who have shared with me their desire to go into teaching. For some of us, teaching is a way to give back to the profession or to help groom the next generation of practitioners. The benefit of teaching also can bring a certain level of prestige to both you and your city.

When I started teaching back in 2008, I was with the City of Mahanomen, and they were very excited to have a city administrator who also taught at a college. In fact they were so accommodating they allowed me the flexibility to teach down at Minnesota State University, Mankato (MSU).

In addition, the skills you obtain from teaching can help you become a better administrator. For example, teaching is a great way for you to hone in on your public engagement skills and to learn the latest and current best practices in city management. Mark Nagel, another practitioner who also teaches, says that teaching gives you the ability to connect with other generations and enhances your technology skills. Specifically, he mentions that the ability to interact with people of different backgrounds, cultures, and ages can better prepare you to connect with those you supervise in the workplace and with the public.

For me the path into academia started back in 2001, when I approached the University of Minnesota Duluth (UMD) to become a member of the Alumni Association Board of Directors. Over time, I asked for and got the opportunity to guest lecture for several of the Urban Studies courses being taught at both UMD and MSU, the schools I received my undergraduate and graduate degrees from.

Being a guest lecturer allowed me to know if I truly wanted to teach and introduced me to the professors of the university. Having the professors see me guest lecture for them allowed them to provide feedback on my classroom speaking skills. In addition, the more that I taught the more professors I met, which allowed me to expand my network. The more my network grew, the easier it would become for me to get my foot in the door with a teaching position at a university.

After I left Mahanomen, I was invited to teach at Bemidji State University (BSU), Argosy University (AU), and again at MSU. I got to teach at BSU by introducing myself to one of the professors there who taught public administration. I got to teach at AU because of a reference from a friend and academic colleague who knew that I had an interest in teaching. Therefore, it was my network that I established that has helped me find new teaching opportunities. Presently, I am an adjunct professor at Argosy University and a fixed-term instructor with MSU in the Urban and Regional Studies Institute.

While there are more and more opportunities for adjunct professors, some of them will only accept adjuncts with masters or doctorate degrees. Don't let this discourage you, if you truly have a passion for getting involved in an academic environment. For example, according to Nagel, do not discount teaching at a two-year community college or teaching a different subject matter, such as business management or political science.

If you can't commit to teaching due to time constraints, you might want to consider one or more of the following options:

- Serve on a volunteer alumni board or committee. At the collegiate level many programs will also have their own alumni or scholarship group and/or committee.
- Participate on an academic advisory committee, or volunteer to help with a student organization. Many programs will have a committee of practicing alumni who are asked to meet with the faculty whenever they want to introduce or change a part of the program's curriculum.
- Mentor or hire an intern and help a student learn about the profession.

More information about teaching will be available at the 99th ICMA conference. On Sept. 23, 4-5 p.m., there will be a session entitled "Managers as Faculty" that you might want to consider attending.

Also, the MCMA, ICMA, and NASPAA have additional online resources for you, should you wish to further pursue a career as a teacher or simply desire to mentor a student as an intern. For additional information, contact me at [mitchell.berg@mnsu.edu](mailto:mitchell.berg@mnsu.edu) or Mark Nagel at [mnagel@ci.enm.mn.us](mailto:mnagel@ci.enm.mn.us). ◻

## Appointments and other professional news

- **Laurie Ahrens**, city manager, Plymouth, has retired.
- **Abraham Algadi**, city administrator, Pine Island, has been appointed economic development director, Worthington.
- **Jim Antonen**, city manager, Maplewood, has retired.
- **Brian Beeman**, former city administrator, Melrose, has been appointed economic development coordinator, Elk River.
- **Brian Benson**, administrator, Sherburne County, is retiring.
- **Mitch Berg**, formerly MIT, has been appointed associate professor of public administration, MSU-Mankato.
- **Melinda Coleman**, city administrator, North Oaks, has been appointed assistant city manager and community development director, Maplewood.
- **Dan Donahue**, city administrator, Corcoran, has retired.
- **Matt Fulton**, formerly MIT, has been appointed city manager, West St. Paul.
- **Patti Gartland**, city administrator, Sartell, has resigned to become executive director, Greater St. Cloud Economic Development Corporation.
- **Steve Helget**, city administrator, Montgomery, has been appointed city administrator, Norwood-Young America.
- **Scott Huizenga**, city administrator, East Grand Forks, has been appointed budget officer, Kansas City, Mo.
- **Brad Martens**, city administrator, Winsted, has been appointed city administrator, Corcoran.
- **Logan Martin**, community development specialist, Oakdale, has been appointed city administrator, Bayport.
- **Melanie Mesko Lee**, assistant to the city administrator, Hastings, has been appointed city administrator there.
- **David Murphy**, city administrator, Belle Plaine, has been appointed city administrator, East Grand Forks.
- **Paul H. Pocsobut Jr.**, city manager, Orland, Calif., has been appointed city administrator, Ada.
- **Sunny Bjorklund Schultz** is in transition from Starbuck.
- **Mike Robertson**, formerly MIT, is serving as interim city administrator, North Oaks.
- **Jason Zeimer**, city administrator, Maple Plain, has been appointed city manager, North St. Paul.

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## Save the Date: Alumni Event

The Urban and Regional Studies Institute at Minnesota State University, Mankato, will hold an Alumni Event on Oct. 4 at the university. It will begin at 2 p.m. with a reception in the Heritage Room.

More information will be posted soon on the website at <http://sbs.mnsu.edu/ursi/>. You may also contact Missy Manderfeld at [elizabeth.manderfeld@mnsu.edu](mailto:elizabeth.manderfeld@mnsu.edu) or (507) 389-1714 for more information. ☐

# Memorandum from the edge

By Jon Hohenstein, Community Development Director, Eagan

My father passed away in 1998, and my mother in 2012. So for the past year, I've been adjusting to being an orphan and to the realization that most of us end up being that kind of orphan somewhere along the line. Until now, I had held the traditional view of orphans, characterized in western culture by the likes of Harry Potter, Oliver Twist, Frodo Baggins, Tom Sawyer, and Little Orphan Annie, foundlings who rose from their unfortunate conditions through magic, good fortune, engaging in quests, or endearing themselves to Daddy Warbucks, the quintessential compassionate conservative.

I encountered orphanhood later in life than they did and, being a skeptic about spells, lottery odds, and the likelihood that I could captivate a balding billionaire with my cheery disposition and curly red hair, I realize that my sole options are questing, continuing on my current life's journey of public service, being a smart aleck, or some combination of those things. I have not decided which it will be yet, but when I do, it will probably justify an article or two.

Regardless of the future, life transitions make us take stock, look back, and appreciate what we may have taken for granted. So here are some things to know about my mother, Deloris. She was born in 1924. To put that in perspective, that was two years before the Mendota Bridge was completed. Her parents, Henry and Frieda, were farmers by then, but had spent time between World War I and settling down touring Montana on a motorcycle. When I met them in my youth and their old age, you could not have convinced me of that fact with any number of photos and sworn affidavits. Perhaps it could have happened in another dimension or on another planet, but not here.

Deloris was born in Backus, Minn., where Henry and Frieda had gone to farm and evangelize among the Native Americans. I don't know which of those didn't pan out for them, but after a few years they had moved back closer to their families and bought a farm near Vernon Center, Minn., a place that is north of Iowa, but not by much. That is where Mother grew up and learned her values.

The family was Missouri Synod Lutheran, which means that they were not as far removed from Roman Catholicism as they believed themselves to be. In the 1960s, when the Catholic Church began to say Mass in the vernacular, many Lutherans were shocked to find they had been saying virtually the same things on Sunday mornings in different

languages, ever since Martin Luther marched up to All Saints Church in Wittenberg with his hammer, nails, and theses in the 16th century.

In that context, Mother grew up with and passed on a grace-based theology that was balanced by a clear expectation of straight and narrow behavior. It was a kind of belt and suspenders approach to salvation. We are justified by grace through faith, but watch yourself, just in case we read that part of Paul's letters wrong.

She also grew up with an expectation she would work outside the home. She studied to be a teacher, attending classes and student teaching in Hutchinson in the 1941-42 school term. My father and mother's families were friends, and they had known each other from the time they were small. After Mother passed away, we found a box of letters they had written to each other during that time. In addition to revealing that the people who raised my brother, sisters, and me were once avid practitioners of young love and infatuation, the letters also provided a look into real-time hopes, fears, and questions about the bombing of Pearl Harbor and the entrance of the United States into World War II.

My parents married in 1943 and began farming, first on his parents farm and then on their own. Mother quit teaching and probably described herself as a housewife from then on. Even so, she did farm work as much as anyone else in the family other than my father, working in the field and doing chores while at the same time raising children, cooking meals, washing clothes, cleaning the house, gardening, and everything else involved in that generation of homemaking. She volunteered for any number of church and civic organizations, and sold flowers and other produce to people traveling up and down Highway 169 past our house. Basically, she continued to work in and outside the home her whole life.

My mother and father spent over 55 years together in a very devoted and caring marriage. They were an example of love and commitment through thick and thin, for better or worse, in sickness and in health. Although she enjoyed life, family, and friends after his death, there probably wasn't a day in the 14 years after that she didn't think of him and wish they were together again. Last year, by grace through faith, she got that wish. And me? I'm adjusting to being an orphan, appreciating the memories, and expecting to do just fine. ◻

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

[www.mncma.org](http://www.mncma.org)