

President's column

By Phil Kern, MCMA President, City Administrator, Delano

As a junior in college, a friend and I decided to have a non-traditional spring break experience. Instead of traveling south to enjoy the sunny beaches of Mexico or Florida, we decided to conquer the complete opposite. A late winter/early spring mountain climbing expedition into the Grand Teton Mountains.

We researched as best we could in year 7 BG (Before Google). We assembled as many camping, hiking, and winter clothing supplies as we could. After the 14-hour drive west, we picked up snowshoes in Jackson, Wyo., and pulled our five-day hiking/camping permit from the ranger station. Seeing this obvious pair of ragtag explorers, the ranger questioned if we had the appropriate ice picks and avalanche gear. Fearing he would end our mission if we said "no," we fudged and answered, "Of course!" At the time, we were thankful he didn't inspect our hodge-podge gear. We were set to go, yet appropriately fear was starting to creep into the place once occupied by excitement.

The story of the next 24 hours (notice I didn't say five days) could be a short story itself. The full, gory details are irrelevant to the purpose of this newsletter, but let's just say we were fortunate to make it back out. Some of the highlights included falling into a 10-foot snowpack, trying to figure out how to get out without getting buried, failing to make the designated camping area on our first day, and having to settle into a wooded area with little protection and no food storage lockers. Having no place to secure food, wolves decided to visit overnight and inspect our rations—thankfully not us.

A strange Charles Manson look-a-like drifter came by our makeshift camp an hour before nightfall, stating that a Chinese satellite was projected to crash to earth that night, somewhere in this area of Wyoming. He told us not to worry; he'd be out all night and keep an eye on us. Lastly, by morning, we began to experience the telltale signs of hypothermia after a

night spent below zero with less-than-proper winter camping supplies.

As I look back on that trip, I see many parallels from this experience that apply to a career as a local government manager. Thankfully, we enter our professional challenges with greater education and awareness of the task at hand. Yet, despite the educational background and experiences we bring to our positions, the pitfalls and challenges are still there. There are many times we experience a fall through the snowpack and have to figure out how to get out. Wolves and crazy drifters can be out there. And often thinking 24 hours at a time, while keeping a long-term perspective, is necessary.

These pitfalls, at least in my experience, provide the tremendous opportunity, but also the scary part of the career expedition we all decide to take. I believe there are at least three key ingredients to success in this environment: continued learning, street smarts, and professional networks. In our case, MCMA, MACA, APMP, and the many organized and informal regional groups around the state provide those connections.

Several years ago, MCMA reestablished its strategic objectives to include: (1) professional development, (2) member support, and (3) civic engagement. This fall, MCMA will revisit these principle directives and reestablish the organization's plan for the coming years. The Board and committees are going to actively tackle topics that can make the organization stronger, and provide the forum for its members to help each other. There is a vast amount of knowledge and experience in our midst, and we need to continue improving the forums to share it with all, particularly the next generation of managers as they begin their expeditions.

The more knowledge our profession can share, the better equipped our members can be to navigate the pitfalls and challenges they face. Too bad a couple decades ago there wasn't an AYMC—Association of Young Mountain Climbers! ◻

MCMA Board meetings recap

The MCMA Board met at Grand View Lodge in Nisswa on May 2 and at Delano City Hall on July 13. Highlights of those meetings were:

- Meeting with David Limardi, new Midwest Regional Director for ICMA.
- Approving a new state affiliate agreement with ICMA, which sets goals for membership, credentialing participation, educational programming, ethics, and use of the Knowledge Network.
- Reviewing outcomes of the 2012 annual conference; the conference earned a net profit of over \$9,700.
- Reviewing the results of the member survey on professional development needs and strategic priorities; survey results are included in the Spring 2012 MCMA newsletter.
- Combining the Educational Initiatives and Next Generation committees into one new committee named Education and Outreach.
- Adopting a fiscal year budget of \$80,175, which includes the educational costs of the annual conference. ○

**Your
Range
Riders
are here
to help!**

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Erin Stwora, City of Dayton

Steve Taylor, Carver County

Kurtis Ulrich, City of Ramsey

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New state affiliate agreement with ICMA

By Kevin Frazell, MCMA Secretariat Officer

As an MCMA member, you certainly understand the value of not only the profession of local government management, but the benefits of membership in our organization. MCMA offers professional development, ethical support, and educational resources to communicate the value of professional local government management. As an affiliate of ICMA, our organization benefits from a symbiotic relationship by working together to create excellence.

In 2010, MCMA formally partnered with ICMA when we adopted the affiliate agreement. Essentially, the agreement seeks to solidify the mutual goals between our organizations through collaboration and using resources more effectively. At its July meeting, your MCMA board reviewed the agreement and approved renewing the affiliate agreement with ICMA. Some highlights of the agreement (which are available on the MCMA website) and how it may translate to you as an MCMA member are:

- **Educational initiatives.** The board recognized the importance of supporting ongoing, relevant training for MCMA members, including ICMA priority issues such as sustainability and ethics. Additionally, ICMA University offers targeted training, and MCMA can partner with them on this. These topics and training options may be coming soon to an MCMA conference near you! And, of course, there is always the Fall ICMA conference, where you have the opportunity to hear from national speakers and learn about what's happening in local government management in other states and around the world.
- **Knowledge sharing.** Together, we possess vast amounts of knowledge and experience and what better way to learn than to share with those in similar situations? ICMA has an online forum called the Knowledge Network, which is rich with content and knowledge exchange. MCMA President Phil Kern has convened a volunteer committee to work to meet our commitment in submitting content to share with our peers throughout ICMA.
- **Credentialed Managers.** The ICMA Voluntary Credentialing Program recognizes professional local government managers qualified by a combination of education and experience, adherence to high standards of integrity, and an assessed commitment to lifelong learning and professional development. MCMA has made a commitment to encourage members to become Credentialed Managers (CM) and a goal to have two new CMs per year. Not sure if credentialing is right for you? Forty-one of your Minnesota colleagues are ICMA Credentialed Managers—check out the list at <http://webapps.icma.org/credentialed>, and contact any one of them with questions!
- **ICMA membership.** Finally, about two-thirds of the members of MCMA also belong to ICMA, but nearly 80 of you do not! If you're in that latter group, why not go to the ICMA website—www.icma.org—to check out the additional benefits of being part of your national association. ○

Appointments and other professional news

- **Susan Harper**, former City Administrator, Cohasset, has been appointed City Administrator, Gilbert.
- **David Minke**, Deputy County Administrator, Anoka County, has been appointed County Administrator, Pine County.
- **Chuck Whiting**, City Administrator, Faribault, has been appointed County Administrator, Polk County.
- **Mike Robertson**, former City Administrator, Otsego, has been appointed City Administrator, Prescott, Wis.
- **Mike Ericson**, former City Administrator, Hugo, has been appointed Economic Development Specialist, Maplewood.
- **Dan Vogt**, City Administrator, Brainerd, has retired.
- **Bob Derus**, City Administrator, St. Michael, has retired.
- **Richard Johnson**, County Administrator, Hennepin County, has announced his retirement for the end of 2012.
- **Craig Waldron**, City Administrator, Oakdale, has received the Economic Development Association of Minnesota's 2012 President's Award for serving as a model to the economic development profession.

Reaching the MCMA Secretariat

For MCMA Secretariat services, contact:

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

Meet your new MCMA Board members!

MCMA recently elected three new members to its Board of Directors: Erin Stwora, Steve Taylor, and Kurt Ulrich.

Erin Stwora is the assistant to the city administrator for the City of Dayton, where she has worked since 2005.

Erin grew up in Maple Grove, Minn., and attended Hamline University for both her undergraduate and graduate studies, graduating with a BA in political science and urban studies and a master's degree in public administration. While working on her undergraduate studies, Erin was the community development intern with the City of New Hope—an experience that cemented her career path in local government.

Erin worked at the City of New Hope for two-and-a-half years, and then moved on to the City of Lakeville as associate planner for two-and-a-half years. After that, she joined the City of Dayton.

As an MCMA Board member, Erin looks forward to working with her fellow Board Members and the MCMA membership on what lies ahead for the profession.

Erin currently resides in Champlin with her husband Joe and their prized pup Murphy. They enjoy traveling, gardening/landscaping, entertaining family and friends, and spending time up north.

Steve Taylor has served as the assistant county administrator of Carver County for seven years. He provides direct management of several county departments with a staffing complement of 95 employees and operating budget of slightly more than \$11 million.

Prior to joining Carver County, Steve worked for an agency at the City and County of Denver as a director of finance and administration. Previous work experience includes working for the City of Denver's Budget and Management Office, providing oversight and fiscal management of approximately \$82 million in agency budgets as well as holding senior financial management positions with Douglas County, Colorado government, the Department of the Navy, and Lockheed Martin in Washington, D.C.

Steve enjoys playing an active role in his community. This inspired him to chair a 500-unit homeowner's association, sup-

port and coordinate public bond projects through public forums, and work on various community level committees. Additionally, he graduated from the Leadership Denver program and served as a director and executive committee member for Easter Seals of Colorado. Steve is a member of MCMA, APMP, and ICMA, and is an ICMA Credentialed Manager.

"I hope to contribute in many meaningful ways to MCMA's Board of Directors as well as to continue my growth and development as a public administrator," Steve said.

Steve received a BA in psychology and economics from the George Washington University in 1984 and a Master of Public Administration, also from George Washington University, in 1990. He has been married for 22 years and has two sons and a daughter. His interests include tennis, reading, and being a dad.

Kurt Ulrich is the city administrator for the City of Ramsey, a position he has held since 2007.

Kurt was born in Brainerd, grew up in Duluth, and attended undergraduate school at the University of Minnesota, Duluth, obtaining a degree in urban studies. After undergrad, he attended the Urban and Regional Studies Institute at Mankato State University, graduating with an MA degree.

While at Mankato, Kurt had the good fortune of joining the City of Eagan internship program with Eagan City Administrator Tom Hedges. Kurt later completed his Master of Business Administration at the University of St. Thomas. This led to a series of professional jobs including: planner/administrative assistant in Oakdale, community development director and city administrator in Champlin, assistant commissioner at the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, city administrator in Mounds View, and his current job in Ramsey.

Kurt resides in Champlin with his wife Cindi and two grown daughters, Angie (25) and Megan (21), who are pursuing degrees in public health/epidemiology and teaching, respectively. In his spare time, Kurt enjoys going to the cabin with his family, and recently finished Duluth's Brewhouse triathlon, combining the immortal challenge of beer and fitness. ◻

MCMA celebrates 10-year anniversary of Swedish exchange

By Mark McNeill, MCMA Past President, City Administrator, Shakopee

This year marked the 10-year anniversary of the MCMA city/county management exchange to the County of Skane, in southern Sweden. The exchange was initiated by MCMA member Matt Fulton, and we had a reunion party in June.

From May 25 to June 1, 2002, 20 MCMA members and six spouses traveled to Sweden, and were hosted in the homes of several Swedish city managers. Because of the overwhelming participation from Minnesota, other non-municipal hosts also were recruited to open their homes to the American visitors.

The Minnesota delegation was treated to tours of a school, city halls, redevelopment sites, castles, a national park, and a city council meeting, all of which were part of an exposure to Swedish life and local municipal administration.

Later that year, nine Swedes returned the exchange and visited Minnesota for several days. They toured the Minnesota State Capitol, the LMC building, the Swedish-American Institute in Minneapolis, and attended a Minnesota Twins baseball contest and a Minnesota Wild hockey game. Later, they traveled to the ICMA Conference in Philadelphia.

I have stayed in close contact with my Swedish host family, Stig Alund and Evy Arvidsson of Klippan, Sweden. When that couple informed us that they were planning to visit the United States in June of this year, we invited the American alumni of the 2002 trip to a reunion party at my home, with Stig and Evy as the guests of honor.

The reunion was held June 16. The highlight of the event was a round-robin tournament of the game of Kubb, which is a Swedish version of lawn bowling. Stig brought greetings from several of the 2002 host families.

Twenty people attended the reunion. We were pleased with the turnout, considering that three members of the original delegation have since moved out of state, and others have retired. Those in attendance are looking forward to the 20-year reunion in 2022! ◻

MCMA dinner at ICMA Phoenix conference

The MCMA group dinner will be held on Monday, Oct. 8 at **1130 The Restaurant**, which is easy to walk to from the convention center and all of the major hotels. Social hour will begin at 6 p.m. with dinner at 7 p.m. Please visit the homepage of the MCMA website at www.mncma.org for more information, including registration.

ICMA 2013 Midwest Regional Summit to be held in Minnesota

Every spring ICMA holds an educational and regional summit in each of its regions. We are very pleased that Minnesota will play host to the 2013 Midwest Regional Summit, scheduled for April 4-5 at the brand new Radisson Blu hotel next to Mall of America.

Mark your calendars now and watch for further program and registration information from ICMA around the beginning of the year.

Memorandum from the edge

Jon Hohenstein, Community Development Director, Eagan

My family owned pretty basic cars when I was growing up. My father's philosophy was the more options a car had, the more things there were that could break. The corollary to that philosophy was when things broke, you would only fix things that were really important. Things like flat tires, radiator leaks, and fuel pumps you would fix. Less important things, like dome lights, radios, and the handle for the rear passenger window, you wouldn't. In addition to the notion that those things weren't all that necessary in the first place was the inarguable fact that if you fixed them today and totaled the car tomorrow, the money would be wasted.

So it has been with that foundation that I have gone through life. The problem has been that I have been less willing than my father to live without the basics and I have coveted more than a few options. The challenge has been how to fix the less important things at a price where I wouldn't feel cheated if I totaled the car the next day. Let me tell you a story as an example.

A fold out cup holder in my car had broken. I could have just shoved the parts inside and closed the lid. We didn't use it that much, but on the few occasions we wanted to, I would pull it open and the parts would pop out and dangle uselessly from the opening. I went to the dealer and was horrified by what they felt comfortable charging for a few pieces of molded plastic and a spring. I went online and determined that it must be the rarest aftermarket part in the world, because it wasn't posted for sale anywhere.

It was then that I turned my father's logic on its head. Maybe someone out there who had a working cup holder assembly had indulged in an unnecessary repair of their car and totaled it the next day. Somewhere in a salvage yard, a wrecked cousin of my car was waiting for me with an intact cup holder assembly.

That is what led me to U Pull R Parts in Rosemount. For the uninitiated, U Pull R Parts is a self-service salvage yard. For a modest cover charge that can be applied to any purchase you make, you can take one of their wheelbarrows and your own tool box out behind the building and search their inventory of vehicles in various stages of deconstruction. It looks like the set of a post-apocalypse movie, but one where the maniacal aliens have lined the wrecked cars in rows so the carnage has some order to it. Help-

ful signage guides you to areas labeled GM, Ford, Chrysler, Foreign, and Pickups. After that, the organizational system is a crap shoot. You are left to go up one aisle, down the next and up another to try to find the right car with the right interior color.

On the way, you get to see a lot of people who are very adept at locating and removing parts ranging from mirrors and trim to entire engine blocks. Some would literally crawl into engine compartments feet first and torque frozen bolts from parts of all kinds. As they stacked geegaws and doohickeys into their wheelbarrows, you were forced to the obvious and unsettling conclusion that they would repeat the entire exercise in reverse when they got home to the car they were planning to fix. Holy cats! They have that same car at home. Imagine that! God bless them, though, I bet they would get it to run.

I am not as sure about two people there that day, though. I had nearly given up finding my cup holder when I saw them. Or heard them actually. One was named Mojo and the other was named Stink. I know this because they had become separated from one another and they were trying to reconnect through the Marco Polo location method. Mojo would walk down one aisle and yell, "Stink!" Off in the distance in another part of the yard, you would hear Stink yell back, "Mojo!" Mojo would look in the general direction of the sound, walk a few yards and yell, "Stink!" And on and on they went.

I don't know about Stink, but based on Mojo's apparent aural detection skills, I suspect he was deaf in one ear. He never quite walked in the exact direction of the sound. He kind of tacked toward it like a large, greasy sailboat. The back and forth went on for the longest time and they were still calling for each other when I finally gave up my hunt and headed back to the parking lot.

In the end, I went back to the dealer and paid the exorbitant price they demanded for the part. But I have decided the cost was justified by the story I got out of it. It was the price of admission for the Mojo and Stink Show. Two of the best names ever, shouted repeatedly from one end of a scrapyards to the other. As inventive as I like to think I can be, I could never make that up. Better still, I haven't totaled the car yet. ◻

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

www.mncma.org