

## President's corner

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

First, let me say how thrilled I am to be writing this as the 2011-2012 MCMA President—or, as my father from Iowa used to say ... the “Big Bale of Hay”. MCMA is a wonderful organization full of really smart and talented people, and I am truly honored to be at the helm for these 12 months.

I extend my thanks to Curt Boganey, my immediate predecessor. Through Curt's leadership, among other things MCMA has established financial policies which should serve the organization well for years to come. Curt and the Board recommended, and you as a body affirmed at the Annual Conference, a 2011-12 budget which allows MCMA to live within its means. It was done through a series of added revenues (which included a dues increase for the first time in most peoples' memory), and service cuts.

Yes, it was done in a balanced manner—a combination of reductions, and increased revenues. Imagine that!

To provide some background, since the 2005 ICMA conference in Minneapolis, MCMA has been living in part off the remaining balance from that conference's fund raising efforts. However, that available balance has dwindled, and it was time to revamp the MCMA financial model.

The result is that we won't be able to do everything that we once did.

For example, for the first time in several years, MCMA will not be subsidizing a paid local government internship. While this has been a very worthwhile venture and has provided two young people with footholds in the profession, the \$5,000 annual cost was just not something that could continue.

Other “niceties,” such as the MCMA funding of a dinner for the Minnesota ICMA

conference attendees, has also gone by the wayside. Even our committee structure will be leaner—the Board has decided to eliminate the Civic Engagement Committee, and is exploring the possibility of merging the Next Generation, and Educational Initiatives Committees.

However, so as to continue to support our national organization, at its July meeting the Board did vote to support the ICMA “Life, Well Run” campaign by making a contribution to come from the aforementioned ICMA Conference fund balance. \$28,000 was the amount suggested by ICMA and approved by the Board, and was based on the size of the membership of our state organization. This one-time contribution brings Minnesota in line with the efforts of other state associations in the Midwest.

Even after this contribution, for the next five years the MCMA fund balance is projected to be above the minimum amount of 25 percent which was set in the recently adopted financial guidelines.

In closing, this is going to be an eventful year. The highlight will likely be the ICMA Annual Conference being next door in Wisconsin in September. I hope that you are planning to attend. It will not be closer or more affordable, at least until Minnesota (or Des Moines) is again the host.

These are interesting and challenging times to be in our profession. But they present a great opportunity to grow in our knowledge and skills, and make lasting contributions to our communities.

I look forward to working with you! ◻

# Board meeting recap

By Kevin Frazell

The MCMA Board met on May 4 at Grandview Lodge in Nisswa and on July 15 in Shakopee. Highlights of Board actions include:

- Adoption of financial policies to guide the association, including maintenance of a minimum 25 percent fund balance.
- Adoption of a FY 2012 budget of \$76,000, \$36,000 of which is the annual conference
- Recommendation of a 20% dues increase, which as subsequently approved by the members at the annual meeting.
- Pledge of \$28,000 from designated fund balance to the ICMA Life Well Run campaign
- Approval to move ahead with exploring the possibility of having patrons/vendors at the annual conference.
- Elimination of Civic Engagement Committee and consideration of possible merge of Educational Initiatives and Next Generation Committees. ◻

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

## MCMA Officers/Board Members

### President:

Mark McNeill, City of Shakopee

### First Vice President:

Phil Kern, City of Delano

### Second Vice President:

Melanie Mesko Lee, City of Hastings

### Secretary/Treasurer:

Tim Houle, Crow Wing County

### Directors:

Bart Fischer, City of Chaska

Brian Gramentz, City of New Ulm

Lisa Henning, Dakota County

Shaunna Johnson, City of Waite Park

Barry Stock, City of Savage

## Ex-Officio Members

### Immediate Past President:

Curt Boganey, City of Brooklyn Center

### APMP President:

Matt Stenwedel, City of Woodbury

### LMC Executive Director:

Jim Miller

### AMC Executive Director:

Jeff Spartz

### Range Riders:

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## Board member profile: Bart Fischer

Bart Fischer is the current Assistant City Administrator for the City of Chaska and was recently elected to the MCMA Board of Directors.

Bart was born and raised in Rosemount, MN, and attended Northwestern College in Roseville, MN, obtaining a degree in Social Science/History. After graduating, he took a job at the Minnesota State Senate first in the Sergeant at Arms Office and later in the Secretary of the Senate's Office.

While at the Senate, Bart was strongly encouraged by Secretary of the Senate Pat Flahaven to go back to school for his Masters Degree at Metropolitan State University. While there, he met Craig Waldron (Oakdale) and became one of Craig's infamous interns. After the Metropolitan State and Oakdale experiences, Bart realized that local government was where he wanted to be.

Bart served five years as the Assistant City Administrator/Economic Development Director in the City of Newport and has held

the same position for the past 2.5 years in Chaska. He has been an active member of MCMA as well as the APMP where he served terms as a Board Member, Treasurer and President. He has also been Chair of the MCMA's Next Generation Committee for the past two years.

As an MCMA Board Member, Bart is excited to give back to the profession and looks forward to working with MCMA Members on the challenges and tasks ahead for the organization with an emphasis on the Next Generation of City/County Managers.

Bart currently resides in Cottage Grove with his wife Tammy (13 years), sons Drew (7) and Cam (3), and daughter Kate (5). They all enjoy entertaining/socializing, attending sporting events and the kid's activities! Bart personally enjoys fishing, hunting and golf, none of which he excels at. ☺

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

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

### Reaching the MCMA Secretariat

**For MCMA Secretariat services contact:**

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You can also contact Amy Mansager,  
Event Coordinator (amansager@lmc.org),  
or Jim Miller, Executive Director  
(jmillier@lmc.org).

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

# Become a mentor to aspiring local government managers

By Susan Arntz, City Administrator, Waconia;  
and Chad Adams, City Manager, Albert Lea

The MCMA Mentoring & Coaching Program is a branch of the organization's Next Generation initiative aimed at recruiting, encouraging, and supporting those who aspire to move into chief administrative officer positions with cities, counties, and other local governments.

One component of the program involves matching volunteer coaches—seasoned veterans of the profession—with those who aspire to advance their careers as local government managers. Coaches will share their one-on-one time and professional expertise to support the professional.

Through a volunteer network of experienced local government executives and senior assistants serving as coaches, our Mentoring & Coaching Program aims to:

- Support the professional and personal development of new and aspiring managers.
- Encourage an ethos of mentoring and coaching at all levels in the local government management profession.
- Provide opportunities for successful local government managers to share their expertise in ways that are effective, efficient, and personally rewarding.

For more information on the program, visit the MCMA website at [www.mncma.org](http://www.mncma.org) and click on the "Mentoring" on the left side of the page. There you'll find a variety of resources for establishing a mentoring relationship, including an updated list of those who have volunteered their time and skills to be mentors and coaches.

## Need help finding a coach that would be a good fit?

We know that it can be difficult to take the first step and call someone up. For assistance, contact:

- Chad Adams, City Manager, Albert Lea, [cadams@city.albertlea.org](mailto:cadams@city.albertlea.org), (507) 377-4330
- Susan Arntz, City Administrator, City of Waconia, [sarntz@waconia.org](mailto:sarntz@waconia.org), (952) 442-3100

## Would you like to be a mentor/coach?

Thank you for sharing your gifts and talents. To sign up to be a mentor/coach, contact Chad Adams or Susan Arntz at the numbers above and we will get you added to the Volunteer Coaches list. Then, be ready to make your connection with prospective mentees.

Please consider seriously the opportunity to take advantage of this important MCMA program, either by signing up to partner with a mentor/coach, or to be a mentor to another. ☺

## Appointments and other professional news

- **Jack Davis**, Public Works Director, East Bethel, has been appointed City Administrator there.
- **Scott Johnson**, City Administrator, Big Lake, has been appointed City Administrator, Medina.
- **Brad Martens**, Recreation Facilities Manager, New Brighton, has been appointed City Administrator, Winsted.
- **David McKnight**, City Administrator, Mendota Heights, has been appointed City Administrator, Farmington.
- **Mike Mornson**, City Manager, St. Anthony Village, has been appointed City Manager, Hopkins.
- **Joel Peck**, City Administrator, Crosby, has been appointed City Administrator, St. Croix Falls, WI.
- **Charlene Stevens**, Assistant County Administrator, Sedgwick County, KS, has been appointed City Administrator, Willmar.

# Memorandum from the Edge

By Jon Hohenstein, Community Development Director, Eagan

"May you live in interesting times."

For years I believed this to be a Chinese curse. That is, until I started writing this and bothered to check and found the *Yale Book of Quotations* casts doubt on that saying that "no authentic Chinese saying to this effect has ever been found." Darned Yalies! They should just mind their own beeswax.

Regardless of the origin, the meaning is clear. It means I wish you a life of change and uncertainty. A life in which things are neither predictable nor secure. A time of transformative change.

If it was not obvious that we are living in interesting times, it should have become clear over the last several months as we have experienced both a state government shutdown and a federal credit limit cum deficit showdown in close order. In both cases, the disagreement seemed to revolve around resources, but the real issue lay somewhere else.

The situations and the approaches the sides took brought to mind the book *Authentic Leadership*, by the late Dr. Robert Terry, in which he outlined the "Action Wheel Leadership Process." I remembered that he spoke at an MCMA conference once and that I still have a kind of a flashcard in my wallet that he handed out.

The Action Wheel approach holds that the bases for difference occur at the levels of: Existence, Resources, Structure, Power, Mission, and Meaning. He suggested that it is common for people to identify the source of a disagreement at one to two levels below where it actually exists and that the typical response is to attempt to address it yet another level below that.

So, for example, someone might perceive the problem to be one of structure (like an unsustainable system of programs and commitments) when it is more likely a matter of power or mission (what we are working toward or how to achieve it), but they try to address it by limiting resources (controlling the means to do anything). Boy, that sounds familiar, doesn't it?

Terry taught leaders to use the tool to better identify the actual source of differences and to apply appropriate solutions at that level. You might conclude from Terry's hierarchy and his directional prescription for resolution that it would be rare that the real issue might actually be about resources.

Frankly, his model held that the six elements were circular, such that Meaning and Existence were adjacent on the wheel as well. So an apparent dispute about meaning could in actuality be one of existence or resources, but that part makes my brain hurt and I'm pretty sure that was not what was going on in St. Paul or Washington in July.

Now, assiduously avoiding taking sides in either fracas, one can only imagine how Dr. Terry would look at the entrenched brinksmanship that defined both. I suspect that he would suggest that all parties would do well to do what authentic leaders do and begin to look higher on the list to begin to address the challenges we face as a state and nation in finding shared values a strong majority of us can support.

Admittedly, it is a stretch for any of us to wrap our minds around meaning, much less come to agreement on it, but the notion of our shared mission could and should be something leaders should want to define.

No one can expect truly transformative change to be easy, but it is in all of our interests for it to be far sighted and ultimately constructive. Nor can we force our leaders to be authentic, but to the extent we lead in each of our organizations, we can model what we expect of them.

We can work from the level of meaning and purpose to give direction to discussions of changes in structure and resources. It feels a little lofty to quote Gandhi, but probably the best we can do is be the change we want to see in the world.

We are by definition living in interesting times. It would be good to figure out how to row in the same direction. ◉

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