

President's column

By Tim Houle, MCMA President, Administrator, Crow Wing County

As I sit writing this, I look out my window to see the early arrival of what would appear to be another long winter. I think we might all agree that the previous two winters we came through were also two of the toughest winters, back-to-back, as we've seen in decades. So imagine how thrilled I am that we are starting at the prospect of yet another. I am currently testing the theory that anyone who says they love winter must not be the person in their household who shovels the driveway and the sidewalks—I'll keep you posted on the results, but it looks promising so far.

Last year, during that tough winter, a frequent question we got from local news media was how that was affecting our budget, as if when we hit a certain amount of expenditures, we'd have to quit plowing. The truth, as you all know, is that this isn't our first day at the rodeo and we budget for the longer view. The truth, as you all know, is that we routinely provide great public services with high efficiency. The truth, as you all know, is that we add value to the communities we serve, helping to provide the foundation for our civilized society. The problem is that these truths are too often only well known to us.

In Crow Wing County, for the calendar year 2013, it cost every household in the county a total of \$32.69 for all of the county roads to be plowed and sanded during the entire, difficult winter. Most people living in the rural area paid more than that to have their driveway cleared once. That's value! In total property taxes paid by Crow Wing County property owners, the average tax paid per household was \$107.31 per month. That's less than most people's cell phone or cable TV bill. And, for that price we provided a safe and effective transportation infrastructure, public safety infrastructure, protection of natural resources, social safety net for those most vulnerable in our community, and funding for our system of governance. That's value!

Our mission is to serve well, deliver value, and drive results. I would argue it is always and has always been about the value proposition.

What value does the public perceive in what we do? Is it any wonder that the perception is low when we rarely tell them how we do? To be sure, we can and should have vigorous debates about the size and scope of local government and, I believe, decisions about that are properly left to the purview of those who stand for and win elections.

But, once that size and scope is determined by the policymakers, can't we agree that everyone should be equally committed to carrying out that mission with a zealous commitment to excellence? And, if we truly subscribe to that and practice it in all of our affairs, wouldn't you want your constituents to know more about it?

For example, only \$32.69 per household in Crow Wing County to plow and sand all the roads for the calendar year 2013—we decided we do want them to know about that—and other values we bring! And, to that end, Crow Wing County publishes an annual People's Report, which you can check out at www.crowwing.us/DocumentCenter/View/7193. This is our attempt to tell our story. We try to make it interesting, interactive, and graphically attractive. We try to present our story in the kind of bite-sized chunks people are accustomed to receiving information in these days.

How would you reply to the question of whether there is already anyone in your community telling your story? Is it being told at the local tavern? Is it being told at cocktail parties? Is it being told in the local newspaper? Is it being told by neighbors over the fence line? We should all rightly be proud of our communities and the work we all do to advance them. That's a good story to tell. I hope in checking out how we tell our story that it might motivate you to think of how you might best tell yours. The one thing I can guarantee you is that someone (more probably, lots of people) is already telling your story in your community. The only question is whether their story is the same as yours. So, the only real question is, who do you want telling your story? ○

What's in a name? Range Riders now Senior Advisors

The discussion regarding the name of the ICMA/MCMA Range Rider Program has gone on for numerous years over the Internet and at national conferences and state association meetings. The substance of the issue has been whether the name accurately reflects and conveys the role and responsibilities of the position. The issue had a lot of passion associated with it as some saw it reflecting the image of the "Texas Ranger" riding to the rescue. For others, it was a by-gone image that no longer had relevance. As of Sept. 14, 2014, the rangers' boots were retired and the program became the Senior Advisor Program of ICMA.

The more substantive discussion centered on the role and responsibilities of the Senior Advisor. In addition, ICMA developed a consistent management procedure for the program, creating and standardizing the entire program, including establishing standards for who qualifies to be a Senior Advisor. Bringing consistency among the various state associations, regarding outside activities that Senior Advisors could undertake and still remain in the program, were at the core of the effort. Such activities as Senior Advisors engaging in interim management positions, doing private consulting, teaching and a variety of other related service were defined.

Standardizing the management of the program was also included in the effort. Standardizing reporting formats for ICMA rather than different formats from each of the state associations was accomplished through the restructure effort.

The most important outcome of the review is that the services of the Senior Advisor are still the same. Senior Advisors are still available to provide advice and counsel, in a professional, non-judgmental, confidential manner regarding professional and private matters that a member is facing. It is the opportunity to discuss issues with those who have weathered many of the same trials and issues in their own careers. We don't always bring the wisdom of Solomon but we do always bring the wisdom of Job. And the price is still right ... free.

So, what's in a name? A rose by any other name would still smell as sweet. For the entire report on State Sponsor Range Rider Program Policy, visit http://icma.org/en/icma/members/benefits/senior_advisor_program.

It's worth the 10 minutes it will take to review. And, by the way, MCMA Secretariat Officer Kevin Frazell chaired the ICMA Task Force that produced the recommendations and report.

MCMA is currently in the process of recruiting two additional Senior Advisors. ◻

Minnesota State Senior Advisors are:

Bill Bassett
wbassett@hickorytech.net
(507) 382-3963

Robert Thistle
R.thistle@comcast.net
(612) 867-0504

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145 University Avenue West
St. Paul, Minnesota
55103-2044

Contact: Kevin Frazell,
Director of Member Services
kfrazell@lmc.org
(651) 281-1215
Fax: (651) 281-1296

MCMA Officers/Board Members

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Senior Advisors:

Bill Bassett
(507) 243-4346
wbassett@hickorytech.net

Bob Thistle
(763) 755-3563
r.thistle@comcast.net

**Your Senior Advisors
are here to help!**

2015 Mid-Winter Workshop

By Brian Gramentz, MCMA Second Vice President, City Manager, New Ulm; and Kevin Frazell, MCMA Secretariat

With a nod to something quite different, the Professional Development Committee has planned a Feb. 12-13 Mid-Winter Workshop you won't want to miss. Both the content and the setting will expand your competency and warm up your winter!

The program

The program is a timely and boundary-stretching one dealing with the increasing diversity in both your community and your organization. On Thursday, Feb. 12, Penh Lo of the Hennepin County Office of Diversity will talk about what it means to be a culturally competent manager and leader in local government. The afternoon will continue with a Pillsbury House Theater performance of "Breaking Ice," followed by an audience-participation discussion. This one will push your buttons, but is sure to make you engage new thoughts!

On Friday, Feb. 13, Julie Nelson of the Local and Regional Government Alliance on Race and Equity will talk about practical and applied approaches to address inequities in our communities, especially in the delivery of local government services. Julie is the former director of civil rights for the City of Seattle, Washington, and has been working with local governments and non-profits around the country, including in the Twin Cities, to apply strategies that proved successful in Seattle. Following the break, Julie will moderate a panel discussion with staff from Brooklyn Park, Mankato, Ramsey County, and Austin.

Location and social event

OK, this program seemed to call for more than just the usual hotel conference room with a rubber chicken dinner. So our workshop location this year will be the funky HUGE Improv Theater at Lyndale and 31st in Minneapolis, with the Thursday evening dinner just a few blocks away in the wine cellar of Amore Victoria restaurant. As in the past, we'll be inviting MCMA members who retired over the past year, along with their partners, to be our guests at dinner. And you can spend some time in Uptown by arriving early, meandering to dinner, or staying Friday afternoon.

Hotel

Although none of the workshop events will be held at a hotel, a block of sleeping rooms at \$99 per night has been reserved at the Sheraton Minneapolis Midtown, which is located next door to the fun Midtown Global Market.

More information

For more information, including registration, visit the MCMA website at www.mncma.org. ○

ICMA 2015 Midwest Regional Summit

This year's Midwest Summit will be held Thursday, April 2 and Friday, April 3 in Evanston, Illinois. As in the past, the Summit will be preceded by the Emerging Professional Leader's Institute on Wednesday, April 1, and the morning of Thursday, April 2.

For more information or to register, visit the ICMA website at www.icma.org under the Events tab. ○

APMP update

By Laurie Hokkanen, APMP President, City Manager, Victoria

The past few years have been a very exciting time for APMP and our members. We've had strong participation in our association at our meetings and conferences, we've seen many new members join, and we've seen many members promoted on to new roles and positions to achieve their professional goals.

The official partnership with MCMA has now been in place for a year. Through the partnership, the APMP President serves a one-year term on the MCMA Board, enabling better communication and coordination between the two groups. I'd like to thank all of the members of MCMA for the support that makes APMP, and this profession in general, such a rewarding experience. Let me give you just three big reasons why you impress me so very much.

Reason #1: You freely give of your time and talent.

When our group brainstorms ideas of topics that will help our membership achieve their professional development goals, we often think of the expertise that one of you can provide. You are always willing to be a speaker or help connect us with an expert.

We know you are busy, and we appreciate you taking the time to help us grow.

Reason #2: You go out of your way to support the next generation.

A quick perusal of the MCMA website and the Board's Strategic Plan make it obvious that there is great support for those who are just starting out in the profession. A whole committee dedicates their work to Next Gen initiatives. Many of you volunteer to serve as a mentor or coach. When someone new to the profession shows up to a conference or event, you go out of your way to introduce yourself and get to know each other.

Reason #3: You celebrate success with us.

Many APMP members aspire to be a city/county manager or administrator. When one of us achieves that goal, you take the time to send a note or an email or pick up the phone to offer congratulations, words of wisdom, and to promise your support in the future. I can't think of another profession that is so supportive of each other.

In short, you are an amazing group of people. On behalf of APMP, I thank you for including us in your circle. ◻

Board meetings recap

By Kevin Frazell, MCMA Secretariat

The MCMA Board of Directors met on Aug. 15, Oct. 17, and Dec. 12. Highlights of those meetings included:

- Reviewing plans for the 2015 Annual Conference.
- Reviewing member usage of the Cal-ICMA programs and affirming MCMA's continuation.
- Continuing the partnership with ICMA to recruit new members to both associations.
- Meeting with Committee Chairs to review strategies and tactics toward achieving the association's priorities.

Reaching the MCMA Secretariat

For MCMA Secretariat services, contact:

Kevin Frazell, Director of Member Services
League of Minnesota Cities
145 University Avenue West
St. Paul, MN 55103-2044
(651) 281-1215 • Fax: (651) 281-1296
kfrazell@lmc.org

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.

A fond farewell

By Helene Johnson, GTS Executive Director

The 2015 MCMA Annual Conference is shaping up to be another excellent educational and networking event. It will be especially meaningful to me because it will be my last. I am retiring from my position at GTS at the end of July.

I have been the conference planner for MCMA for three plus decades, and it has been one of my favorite activities. There are so many reasons why that's the case.

Because I am an executive director reporting to a Board of Directors, many of the leadership and management topics covered have been directly applicable to my situation (although, thankfully, I don't have to deal with the "fishbowl" effect). Conference planning committee meetings have been informative, very interactive, sometimes challenging, but almost always fun. Committee members seem to enjoy the opportunity to take charge and delegate to someone else in the staff role.

There have been awesome presenters like Layne Longfellow and Ed Nichols (who gave us good deals, by the way), and some that didn't quite live up to expectations. There were surprises such as the time the Brainerd Police Chief rushed in looking for a nefarious city administrator hidden in our ranks, or the time MCMA decided to actually move from Cragun's to Grand View after so many years of debate.

I count myself lucky to have so many city and county manager friends. Many of us have grown up together, with all the ups and downs that life and careers can bring. The conferences enable us to catch up and share a wide range of experiences. Of course, high on my list is the time I won the trophy in the women's tennis tournament. (There were no other women who played in the MCMA tournaments, but Craig Rapp was willing to let me beat him so that it could be earned!) At the other extreme, I will always remember the support I received after my husband's untimely death.

Although I passed the Rule of 90 a while ago, my passion for my work at GTS has continued. What's better than the opportunity to help those who provide services to Minnesota citizens and communities gain the knowledge and skills needed today and tomorrow? However, at 67, I decided I should probably retire while I still have the energy to continue my current volunteer activities in Golden Valley as well as the health to travel and explore other interests.

I am very glad that I have one more MCMA conference in my future. See you in May! ☐

Appointments and other professional news

- **John Chattin**, city manager, Bemidji, has retired.
- **Craig Clark**, city administrator, Worthington, has been appointed city administrator, Austin.
- **Melinda Coleman**, assistant city manager, Maplewood, has been appointed city manager there.
- **Mike Ericson**, recently in transition, has been appointed city administrator, Centerville.
- **Larry Hanson**, city administrator, Stillwater, has retired.
- **Laurie Hokkanen**, assistant city manager, Chanassen, has been appointed city administrator, Victoria.
- **Matt Hylan**, former city administrator, St. Francis, is in transition.
- **Matt Jaunich**, county administrator, Sibley County, has been appointed city administrator, Hutchinson.
- **Dallas Larson**, city administrator, Centerville, has retired.
- **Mark McNeill**, former city administrator, Shakopee, is in transition.
- **Justin Miller**, city administrator, Mendota Heights, has been appointed city administrator, Lakeville.
- **Jennifer Nash**, deputy clerk, Howard Lake, has been appointed city administrator there.
- **Matt Skaret**, city administrator, Milford, Iowa, has been appointed city administrator, Springfield.
- **Jamie Verbrugge**, city manager, Brooklyn Park, has been appointed city manager, Bloomington.
- **Robert J. Wolfington III**, has been appointed city administrator, Tyler. He is the son of "II," who continues as city administrator, Benson.

Memorandum from the edge

By Jon Hohenstein, Community Development Director, Eagan

I'm torn. I don't know whether to Let It Go (Queen Elsa) or Shake It Off (Taylor Swift). Which carefully drawn, fictional character should I listen to? It reminds me it wasn't that long ago when the guy with the Curious George hat (Pharrell Williams) told us we were Happy and that made us happy, too. Where did all the baggage we're supposed to dispose of come from since then?

The simple answer is, it was always there. It's just that this year's Grammys can be expected to be more confrontational than last year's were.

It also reminds me that song writers are often mental health counselors who kept taking piano lessons after the rest of us chose other majors. There are certainly examples to the contrary. For years, the FBI tried to figure out what Louie, Louie (The Kingsman/Richard Berry) meant and whether it was subversive or obscene.

But there are lots of examples that support the assertion. While I view country music like horseradish, something best taken in small amounts, accompanied by red meat and Scotch, I agree with those who hold that it is largely Three Chords and the Truth (Sara Evans/Sara Evans et al). Music can let you know you are not the only one with a broken heart wanting to have One for My Baby and One More for the Road (Frank Sinatra/Harold Arlen and Johnny Mercer), although it prescribes self-medication over more healthy coping strategies. It can encourage persistence and High Hopes (mostly Frank Sinatra/Jimmy Van Huesen and Sammy Cahn). It can suggest thoughtful career planning so you don't end up only longing for Glory Days (Bruce Springsteen/Bruce Springsteen).

Some of the most insightful songs, though, focus on gratitude. I say this because gratitude is one of the things that can get me out of a funk. In this case, I mean the mood and not the genre—Get the Funk Up Out of My Face (Brothers Johnson/Johnson Brothers and Quincy Jones), Funkytown (Minneapolis' own Lipps, Inc./Steven Greenberg), and anything by Funkadelic/Parliament/George Clinton. Oddly, it was not the genre of Grand Funk Railroad, which like

the Holy Roman Empire, was none of those things. They had some good music, but they were really more of a blues/rock group. Funk music cheers me up, too, but it makes me want to dance and when I dance to funk, I look silly and I'm stiff for days afterward.

Songs about gratitude come from odd sources, but share a common theme. When you are tempted to ruminate about your problems, worry about the future, or wallow in self-pity, list the things you are thankful for and focus on them instead. Not complicated, but more effective than you might expect. White Christmas features Count Your Blessings (Rosemary Clooney/Jule Styne and Sammy Cahn) for those who are troubled and cannot sleep. Early in The Sound of Music when the children are frightened by a thunderstorm, My Favorite Things (Julie Andrews/Richard Rogers and Oscar Hammerstein) provides comfort and perspective. Not to argue against my point, but later in the movie when the Nazis threaten the family, the message is to stop singing and run. Que Sera, Sera (Doris Day/Jay Livingston and Ray Evans) is out of place in the Man Who Knew Too Much, but fits right into Please Don't Eat the Daisies where a commuter marriage, four kids, and a sheepdog aren't susceptible to micromanagement, but are manageable if you are grateful for what you have.

Of course, the anthem of gratitude is Thank You (Sly and the Family Stone/Sylvester Stewart), the complete title of which is Thank You Falettinme Be Mice Elf Again. I bet you didn't know that. I sure didn't. I think we all know of songs whose lyrics we or others have misunderstood and then sung along with the radio at the top of our lungs. Mistaken recitation of words or lyrics has a name. It is a mondegreen, like Olive, the Other Reindeer or Our Father who art in heaven, Harold be thy name.

So to come full circle, we have a funk song about gratitude that will get us all out of a funk. If that's not enough coincidence for you, on Sly's album Fresh, Rose Stone sings a very funky version of Que Sera, Sera. All of which means Don't Worry, Be Happy (Bobby McFerrin/Bobby McFerrin). Be purposefully, deliberately grateful and happy. ◉

**Be sure to
check out
MCMA's
website:**

www.mncma.org