

President's column

By Bart Fischer, MCMA President, City Administrator, Oakdale

As I thought about and prepared to write the president's column for this edition of the MCMA Newsletter, I reflected on the recent Thanksgiving holiday and looked forward to the upcoming holiday season. A season and time set aside to connect with family and friends. A time that I enjoy because it builds upon personal relationships and creates lasting memories.

It reminded me again of the importance of connections in our personal and professional lives—connections, whether at the cultural, community, team, or individual level, that are important to who we are and what we do in our profession. It is also a good reminder of how intentional we must be when building these bonds with our families, friends, and colleagues.

Over the past several months, the MCMA Board have been encouraging ourselves as well as others to be intentional about reaching out. Whether it be an individual meeting with a colleague, attending group events related to the profession, or writing a short email or note of encouragement, we all can do the small things which promote the human connection that we all need to survive in our profession.

As I've had the opportunity to lean in and have deeper discussions with family, friends, and colleagues regarding the importance of connections, it has become clear that knowledge and skills are important for

achievement but relationships and connections are also needed to truly help us succeed.

An interesting observation is that most training and professional development opportunities are based on enhancing knowledge and skills. We sit in chairs and in rows receiving information from the person at the front of the room. What if even a small portion of our learning efforts could be shifted

to being in interactive groups, both small and large, while learning from others about our common challenges and triumphs? Learning how we can better support each other ... building a connection. The roundtable "artifact" discussions at last May's MCMA Conference is a prime example of this, as I know we will not soon forget the stories our colleagues shared and the connections we made.

As we continue to move through the year, the board and I will continue to look

for ways we can reach out and help enhance connectivity. If you have a regional group of managers/members that gets together, we would love for you to let us know so that we can join you. I look forward to working with all of you on intentionally building the connections that matter so much.

"Sometimes our light goes out, but is blown again into instant flame by an encounter with another human being." —Albert Schweitzer

Best wishes to you and your families this holiday season! ◻

Contact Fischer at bart.fischer@ci.oakdale.mn.us.

“We all can do the small things which promote the human connection that we all need to survive in our profession.”

Appointments and other professional news

- **Craig Dawson**, research and monitoring director, Minnehaha Creek Watershed District, has announced his retirement.
- **Angela Gorall**, village administrator, Bellevue, Wisconsin, has been appointed assistant city administrator, Woodbury.
- **Nick Johnson**, former city administrator, Marshall, has been appointed city administrator, Fairfax.
- **Robin Leslie**, city administrator, Wells, is in transition.
- **Mike Lyonais**, finance director/treasurer, Crosslake, has been appointed city administrator there.
- **Jenny Max**, business manager, Pequot Lakes School District, has been appointed city administrator, Nisswa.
- **Kim Moore**, previous city administrator, Gaylord, has been appointed city administrator, Amery, Wisconsin.
- **Tim Murray**, city engineer, Faribault, has been appointed city administrator there.
- **Aaron Parrish**, city administrator, Forest Lake, has been appointed assistant city administrator, Rochester.
- **Dave Perrault**, finance analyst, Arden Hills, has been appointed city administrator there.
- **Aaron Reeves**, assistant city administrator, Rochester, has been appointed city administrator, Cloquet.
- **Cassandra Torstenson**, who has several prior positions in North Dakota state government, has been appointed city administrator, Brainerd.
- **Jason Ziemer**, former city manager, North St. Paul, has been appointed city planner and community development director, Rogers. ○

MCMA Newsletter

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**Your
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are here
to help!**

MCMA Women's Task Force update

Charlene Stevens, City Administrator, Cottage Grove

The MCMA Women's Task Force is entering its second year, and we thought it was a good opportunity to share some more information about our efforts to date and new initiatives to look for in the coming year. The Women's Task Force began under former MCMA President Shaunna Johnson and focused on how to improve the numbers of women serving in the chief administrative officer (CAO) position in local government. While the statistics can vary, the national average is generally accepted at 13-15 percent. Minnesota is a bit ahead of the curve with approximately 26 percent of women holding the CAO position. Still, it's a long way from 50 percent.

The task force has been working on encouraging more women by creating mentoring opportunities and bringing awareness to the barriers that women may face in moving up in their careers. Two mentoring groups have started under the name of "Careers and Coffee." Currently, there is an East Metro group and a West Metro group, which meet regularly and gives women and anyone else who is interested an opportunity to network and learn from peers. For the upcoming year, the task force is looking at starting a Careers and Coffee in Greater Minnesota and/or a Virtual Careers and Coffee.

Members of the task force have also presented at two League of Minnesota Cities conferences. In 2016, the topic was "Who Wants to Be Your Next City Manager" and in 2017 it was "Recruiting the Next Generation of City Managers." In both cases, panelists made the case for recruiting and hiring a diverse staff, both by gender and ethnicity.

The task force has also sponsored a pre-conference session at the Annual MCMA Conference: "De-Mystifying the Recruitment Process," and will be sponsoring another pre-conference session in 2018 with a topic soon to be determined.

In 2018, the task force will continue to offer Careers and Coffee in the east and west metro, as well as working on combined event where east can meet west. The group is also committed to starting some additional networking opportunities for those in Greater Minnesota, where travel time can be a barrier. The task force is considering virtual meetings as a way to bridge the gap. Finally, the task force is looking at how to host an event at the LMC Conference that might connect with elected officials, such as Women in Government.

The task force is open to new ideas and opportunities, so if you would like to connect, please reach out to anyone on the task force with your suggestions or questions. ○

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Winter Workshop

If you haven't already registered, be sure to check out the program for the 2018 Winter Workshop being held Feb. 8 and 9 in Rochester. With a theme of "Finding Resiliency," you'll find help for both your community and for yourself!

On Thursday afternoon, state climatology and climate adaptation officials will help you think about the implications of climate change on our state, and how your city or county may need to prepare. And on Friday morning, look forward to turning attention to your professional resiliency—how to traverse and even thrive in circumstances of adversity, trauma, and tragedy.

And as a bonus, arrive a little early on Thursday for a special lunch, sponsored by the MCMA Women's Task Force, on how we can all build connections across the state that support and develop our professional competence.

For more information, registration, and hotel reservations, visit the MCMA website at www.mncma.org. See you in Rochester! ○

Board meetings recap

The MCMA Board of Directors met on Oct. 5 in Minnetonka and Dec. 1 in Eagan. Highlights of those meetings included:

- Continuing review of the secretariat agreement with the League of Minnesota Cities.
- Interviewing and endorsing Woodbury City Administrator Clint Gridley as candidate for the position of ICMA Midwest vice president. Gridley will be interviewed by the Midwest Nominating Committee in March.
- Reviewing and approving a proposal from Sand Creek Employee Assistance program to manage professional services for managers in transition.
- Approving increase in speaker budget and \$5 increase registration in fee for the 2018 Annual Conference. ○

2018 Annual Conference: mark your calendars!

By L. Peyton Mastera, City Administrator, Dilworth

Winter is upon us which means a committee of our colleagues is diligently working on finalizing an agenda and securing speakers for the 2018 Annual Conference at Grandview Lodge (for the 12th consecutive year), slated for May 2-4, 2018. The Annual Conference is the premier event of MCMA. It gives us a chance to escape the office for a few days and reflect and learn about our past, present, and future journeys in the city management field.

We once again are working with GTS to provide content that will be meaningful and interactive for the membership. In spirit of that, Dr. Alan Zimmerman has been selected as the Thursday keynote speaker. Zimmerman brings a diverse background in leadership training, allowing audience members to take from his presentations valuable communication tools for an ever-changing environment. We are fortunate to have him with us for the entire morning on Thursday, as well as for a roundtable session Thursday afternoon. More information on Dr. Zimmerman can be found at www.drzimmerman.com.

In reviewing the survey results from last year, the service project and Thursday evening artifact exercise went over tremendously, so this year's committee is looking to build off that success. A sub-committee has been formed to enhance the service project, working with local institutions to better serve the needs of the area. The committee is also working on another engaging "exercise" so that we can bolster the connections we have with membership.

Again, mark your calendars for May 2-4, 2018. For any questions or suggestions about the conference, please contact Conference Chair Jackie Schwerm (assistant city administrator, Waconia) or Vice-Chair Peyton Mastera (city administrator, Dilworth). ◻

Contact Mastera at peyton.mastera@ci.dilworth.mn.us.

Winter 2018 APMP update

By Jackie Schwerm, APMP President, Assistant City Administrator, Waconia

APMP's annual Fall Conference, which took place on Oct. 5, focused on critical communications and media relationships. It was a jam-packed day, filled with interactive and informative presentations. We also saw record conference attendance with nearly 50 attendees! A special thank you to our great presenters, as well as Richfield City Hall for hosting the event.

APMP's November session focused on leadership academies. Special thanks to the cities of Cottage Grove, Woodbury, and Mankato for speaking to the group on their leadership academies. It was a very interesting session, great questions were asked, and our members got a lot of takeaways.

The MAMA/APMP Happy Hour on Dec. 13 was held in lieu of a December APMP meeting. In January, we will pick back up with Jeanette Grace, from Expressive! Communications, who will do a leadership training with the group.

We are still finalizing our presenters for the remainder of the spring, but plan to have topics on League of Minnesota Cities services, negotiating a city manager contract, and a leadership session with Dr. Richard Fursman. Check out our Facebook page for more information on upcoming meetings and the schedule for the remainder of the year, and thank you to everyone who has attended our meetings up to this point! ◻

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Be sure to check out MCMA's website:
www.mncma.org

Planning ICMA 2018 Annual Conference in Baltimore

By Steve Taylor, County Administrator, Sherburne County

I arrived in Baltimore, Maryland on Nov. 17 not knowing how on earth an ICMA Planning Conference Committee was going to put together a 3+ day conference for nearly 4,000 members and spouses.

On that Friday, the Planning Conference participants discussed what made the ICMA Conference in San Antonio successful and perhaps what could have been made better. What we know for sure is the number of members attending (over 2,800) made San Antonio the No. 1 attended conference ever.

Some other facts from the 2017 conference include:

- 25 percent of attendees represented cities/counties with populations less than 10,000.
- 70 percent of attendees represented populations that are less than 50,000.
- 23 different countries were represented by approx. 300 people.

Some of the things we brain-stormed as a planning committee included better defining what exactly is the definition of a small community. Is it a population of 10,000 residents, or more like 5,000—or even less? This becomes important as we develop session content best suited to the different community sizes.

Another area discussed was having slightly shorter sessions and allowing greater interaction between the speakers and the audience.

On Saturday, the real work started (see photo). The group addressed the broad questions of what do we, as community leaders, need the answers to now and what are the future challenges? The committee broke into smaller groups to focus on local leadership challenges and opportunities.



Later on Saturday afternoon we took a one-and-a-half hour bus tour of downtown Baltimore and spent time in the convention center (consisting of 1.2 million square feet) looking at our space for exhibitors and sessions. ICMA's space will be on three floors, but all in the same general area. The Hilton Hotel is attached to the convention center via a skyway.

On Sunday, our last day, we were tasked with several things:

- Identify an overall theme for the conference ... a tag-line. The best one was "Dredge the Harbor, Drain the Swamp—How to Lead into the Future."
- Fine-tune educational sessions content—we broke into groups again to flesh out additional content.
 - Marketing! What would be the best way to market the conference—YouTube, Facebook or Facebook Live, a one-page summary of the program, etc. Several people spoke up about emphasizing the return on investment and the "what will you take home" aspects of the conference to help encourage attendance.
- Other ideas from committee members were to move the keynote speaker a little later in the morning, getting rid of the podium and include circle discussions to allow more interaction.

Overall, even though Delta lost my luggage (checked at the gate on a non-stop flight!), it was a fun, fascinating, and enjoyable experience, especially meeting so many city/county managers across the country.

Thanks go out to the ICMA team including Ross Hoff, Felicia Littky, Martha Perego, as well as the host committee staff.

Keep the Baltimore conference on your radar for 2018, Sept. 23-26! ☐

Contact Taylor at admin@co.sherburne.mn.us.

Reflections on the future of local government management

Laurie Hokkanen, City Manager, Victoria

At the 103rd annual ICMA Conference in San Antonio, Executive Director Marc Ott spent an hour with a full house of attendees gathered for a discussion about the future of local government management. The issues of today certainly challenge the way we are taught to think about management.

There are times when you attend a session, and you leave with information and answers. This session was not one of those. This session was the kind where you leave with lingering questions—questions that you want to keep talking about with your colleagues and friends. Questions that you ponder on your commute to work and during quiet times of the day. I have always loved our profession because it is evident that for most of us, public service is a calling. You'll rarely find a city/county manager who merely thinks of their work as a job. Knowing that, I think you'll be interested in considering these questions too.

The questions about how we will lead in this age of innovation, disruptive technology, and political discord are big ones. Marc articulated frequently that there is power in asking questions. Even when we don't know the answers. And Marc was clear on that point—he doesn't know the answers. But he is using his platform to ask the important questions.

Does the City Manager Model still work today?

We were brought up to never get in front, to follow the lead of the elected officials. Can we do that in these times? Or are there times when we need to be more assertive about stepping into the void? How do we remain relevant as leaders for our communities?

We know that as local government professionals, we make a difference every day. We affect the health, safety, and welfare of the folks who live in our communities. We provide services that meet their daily needs, like transportation, water, and public safety. We provide services that enrich their lives like parks, recreation programming, and community events. But recently, local governments have experiences that might require us to rethink our role. What's different today? People are not asking our permission to make change in our communities.

Are the tools of the "manager toolbox" still relevant in the era of disruptive innovation and technology? To illustrate, Marc talked about issues that were major battlegrounds in Austin, Texas during his time as city manager: Airbnb and Uber. Marc observed that the sharing economy is not concerned with local government process. They are not seeking permits and code amendments. They're just showing up. Instantaneous communication has changed our world. The city first opposed Uber/Lyft and Airbnb operating in Austin before

eventually arriving at a point where the services are now available. The observation that really stuck with me was, "We thought we were doing what we needed to do to make people feel safe. But people weren't looking at us to make them feel safe."

Are the tools we have preparing us for embracing diversity? Marc asked us to think about what we mean when we say diversity. He hoped that conversations about women would include men. He asked that we worry not about diversity itself but about what will be sacrificed in terms of innovation if we don't embrace diversity. Marc suggested that we can start by valuing employees, not just in the context of the particular thing you hired them to do, but also for their values and their background. Try asking employees to bring all their value to work every day and see how things that seem insurmountable will seem possible.

How will we lead in age of increasing political discord? Questions from audience members raised issues about how local governments and local government managers could/should have influence on the big issues of our day. The quickly brainstormed list was long—Brexit, climate change, social justice, North Korea. ... Members noted that managers and cities are often in a position to confront and promote change. They were keenly interested in the inherent tension between our ICMA model and the idea of confronting. Jim Biddeford, former ICMA president, wondered, "What can we do to support our members in that position?"

An hour is a short time for such an impactful and sophisticated conversation. That's why I hope that you'll take some time to think over the important questions yourself. Marc Ott couldn't offer a neat wrap-up to conclude the session because he acknowledged repeatedly that he doesn't know the answers. He did have some parting thoughts that I would like to leave with you.

These conversations and questions about our model and our leadership are important and we need to have them. These are **our** problems and **our** accomplishments. Things that change start with a conversation. He compelled us that all the good things that can be done, must be done by us. We can do it, and we have to do it.

If you want to take a deeper dive into this content or get to know Marc Ott better, I encourage you to access the archived session from the ICMA Conference or tune in to Episode #156 of the ELGL GovLove podcast. **O**

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