

President's column

By Phil Kern, MCMA President, City Administrator, Delano

On Monday, Nov. 19, my phone and email box lit up around 10 a.m. Former teammates and friends were reaching out to share the news. St. John's football coach John Gagliardi was announcing his retirement after 60 seasons.

John announced he's leaving a football program on top, much in the way every one of us would like to leave our county or city. He's leaving with almost 500 victories and a program that has reflected positively on the St. John's community. And, he's been credited with continually reinventing his approach and finding unconventional ways to succeed in the game of football.

As a player for John years ago, it was evident he was a genius with the X's and O's of football. More impressively and importantly, however, John has a remarkable ability to know people. He knew how to get the most out of his players and get them to buy into the mission of the team over their own interests. Whether John ended up a football coach, business owner, county administrator, or city manager, I believe this skill would've resulted in similar success in whatever profession he chose.

There are many stories I could tell of my interactions with John and lessons learned. In many ways, I learned as much or more from him as I did any other experience. The one that rolls around in my head most often, however, is something he said quite often. Greatness is not as hard as it seems. In fact, to accomplish great things one only needs the following formula: Ordinary people, doing ordinary things, extraordinarily well.

Success, he stated, doesn't take superhuman abilities, nor does it take accomplishing

something extremely difficult. Rather, it takes extraordinary performance of everyday tasks by regular people, and doing it over and over and over again. For his players, he took the fear that success was reserved only for the privileged and crushed it.

On the football field, John made this point by demanding the simple blocks or tackles be made perfectly every play, and he'd notice the one time it wasn't. Every player received his attention. Praise for a job well done, and being held accountable for any play where effort or performance was in question. He didn't require superstars and he didn't demand exceptional plays, rather, he demanded consistent, extraordinary performance.

As a public administrator, I can't think of a better lesson in leadership. Many think the public administrator needs to be some sort of Superman or Wonder Woman. I believe John would say that's not necessary nor is it going to happen. Rather, he'd point to the greatness that exists in the performance of ordinary people who seek greatness day after day, leading by example and demanding excellence.

It means following the lead of Jack Schmalenberg in Polk County, Tom Hedges in Eagan, Bob Derus in St. Michael, and many others this year that, like John, will be retiring from our profession after decades of great leadership. It means focusing on the tasks at hand, however seemingly small and insignificant, and performing them to the best of one's ability. It means continuing to raise the bar for public management and performance. Ordinary people doing ordinary things extraordinarily well. ◻

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MCMA Board meetings recap

The MCMA Board met on Oct. 25 at the League of Minnesota Cities building and on Dec. 7 at the Ramsey City Hall. Highlights of Board action were:

- Developing a new three-year strategic plan.
- Approving co-sponsorship, along with the League of Minnesota Cities, of a proposal to host the 2016 Alliance for Innovation Transforming Local Government Conference in St. Paul.
- Approving changes to strengthen the format and content of the Mid-Winter workshop.
- Directing preparation of a new Secretariat services agreement with the League of Minnesota Cities, as the current agreement expires in July 2013.
- Approving a lead sponsorship opportunity of \$1,500 for the 2013 annual conference.
- Endorsing Tanya Ange, Mankato assistant city manager, and Steve Taylor, assistant county administrator of Carver County, as candidates for the ICMA Midwest vice president seat. ◉

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

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APMP President:

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LMC Executive Director:

Jim Miller

AMC Executive Director:

Jeff Spartz

Range Riders:

Bill Bassett

(507) 243-4346

wbassett@hickorytech.net

Paul Sparks

(507) 377-0449

ptsparks@charter.net

Bob Thistle

(763) 755-3563

r.thistle@comcast.net

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League of Minnesota Cities, 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's new three-year strategic plan

By Phil Kern, MCMA President, City Administrator, Delano

The MCMA Board has approved a new strategic plan to guide the work of the association over the next three years. The priorities adopted reflect both the input of the members in prior surveys and also our responsibilities under the new ICMA state affiliate agreement. The plan provides three primary and four secondary priorities.

The number one priority of the plan is to promote ethics, civility, and civic engagement. While this may seem like a broad category combining several distinct issues, the board felt that they all relate to the goal of maintaining dignity and civility in how our cities and counties are governed. Issues under this priority will range from ethics training for members to building bridges with elected officials to dealing with the civic impacts of online technology. Tasks and working objectives of MCMA under this priority are expected to evolve over the coming months and years.

The second primary priority is to enhance member access to online resource databases and also to facilitate dialogue with one another. This involves our contributions to the Knowledge Network and seeing if we can strengthen our current listserv/forum capabilities and other online tools to allow members to better connect with one another.

The Board established its third priority as continuing to prepare the Next Generation of local government professionals. This entails both reaching high school and college students with information about local government management as a career and continuing to offer professional development and mentoring opportunities to our own members.

In addition to these three primary goals, the Board reaffirmed the importance of continuing its commitment to the Manager-in-Transition program, support for sub-groups of managers, promotion of the ICMA Credentialed Manager program, and a strong Range Rider program. ○

Appointments and other professional news

- **Jeff Dahl**, former City Administrator, Osseo, has been appointed Assistant City Administrator, Chaska.
- **Brian Anderson**, City Administrator, Newport, has been appointed City Administrator, Faribault.
- **Larry Kruse**, former City Administrator, Albertville, has been appointed City Administrator, Thief River Falls.
- **Roshanda Smiley**, Chief Administrative Officer, Austin Resource Recovery, Austin, Texas, has been appointed Director of Public Administration of Duluth.
- **Chuck Whiting**, City Administrator, Faribault, has been appointed County Administrator, Polk County.
- **Mike Robertson**, formerly City Administrator, Prescott, Wis., is in transition.
- **Theresa Goble**, Finance Director, Brainerd, has been appointed City Administrator there.

Several MCMA members have recently retired or announced their pending retirement:

- **Bill Burns**, City Manager, Fridley
- **Tom Hedges**, City Administrator, Eagan
- **Craig Ebeling**, City Manager, Burnsville
- **Wendell Sandy**, City Administrator, North Mankato
- **Dan Vogt**, City Administrator, Brainerd
- **Richard Johnson**, County Administrator, Hennepin County
- **Bob Derus**, City Administrator, St. Michael
- **Dave Bovee**, City Manager, Dawson

ICMA Midwest Summit and Young Professionals Leadership Institute in Bloomington

Minnesota is honored to be hosting the 2013 ICMA Midwest Summit April 3 and 4 at the brand new Radisson Blu hotel connected to the Mall of America in Bloomington. Colleagues from Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin, Missouri, and Iowa will be joining us for learning, networking, and celebrating the profession!

The Summit begins early Thursday afternoon with an ICMA University course—Great by Choice—led by ICMA Executive Director Bob O'Neill and based on author Jim Collins latest book, which he discussed at the national conference in Phoenix. Networking and a dinner to celebrate the contributions of local government professionals will top off the first day. On Friday morning there will be a time for open discussion with Bob O'Neill, followed by the regional meeting of Midwest offices, including interviews of candidates for the Midwest seat on the ICMA Board.

Prior to the Summit, ICMA will bring its Young Professionals Leadership Institute, also an ICMA University offering, to the Radisson Blu. Topics like effective managerial and supervisory styles, maintaining life balance, and a conversation with Bob O'Neill will all be on the agenda. ICMA keeps the price of this workshop very affordable, so if you are "young," you can't afford not to be there.

ICMA has negotiated an astounding room rate of just \$99 at the hotel, so plan to come, learn, connect with colleagues, have some fun, and maybe even squeeze in a little shopping at MOA!

For further information and registration, visit www.icma.org or www.mncma.org. ○

ICMA Conference Planning Committee report

By Melanie Mesko Lee, MCMA First Vice President, Assistant City Administrator, Hastings

Beantown, the Cradle of Liberty, the Olde Town, America's Walking City, City on a Hill ... BOSTON! Mark your calendar for Sept. 22-25, 2013, to attend the 99th ICMA Conference. Representing our fine organization and state, I had the distinct privilege to participate in the Planning Committee for next year's conference and I can unequivocally say that it will be an amazing experience.

With ICMA President Bonnie Svrcek in attendance, the committee was tasked with making Boston/New England 2013 "the best conference ever!" The committee took that to heart, and spent a weekend in November brainstorming about how to meet that goal. If you've ever had the opportunity to participate in a conference planning process, you are quickly reminded of the diversity within our organization and the challenge to creatively meet attendees' professional development needs. Of course we will have keynote speakers, and it was agreed that the quality and message of the keynotes is a critical component to the conference. In fact, the committee is recommending that "mini keynotes" be incorporated into the conference to support even more robust discussion on evolving and emerging trends.

Speaking of trends, the topics of civility, technology, engagement, and the interconnectedness of our profession emerged as program subjects. The energy of the committee led to suggestions about incorporating different presentation styles (be gone, PowerPoint!) and layouts into sessions to more effectively engage members in the conference experience.

Additionally, the concept of a hack-a-thon gained some momentum: how can we implement this model into our conference? Don't know what a hack-a-thon is? In a nutshell, coders, developers, problem-solvers, and designers are enlisted in problem solving to help improve the experience of residents, visitors, and businesses in our cities. Think mobile apps. Google it—a super cool concept!

The conference will be at the beautiful Hynes Convention Center, located in Boston's Back Bay. The conference hotels are all

within close walking distance, and Boston is tremendously walkable, with many historic and interesting sites. The subway ("T") is also clean and user-friendly. By all accounts, the conference will be held during a beautiful time of year, and the compactness of New England may tempt you into extending your trip to enjoy this gorgeous part of the country!

The Host Committee has done a wonderful job preparing for the conference. The Saturday evening reception will be at the Top of the Hub Restaurant, offering a truly spectacular view of Boston from atop the Prudential Building. Our Monday night association dinner is also being planned—hundreds of walkable choices make it hard to narrow the location down. But rest assured, that Monday evening will be a memorable time to share with your Minnesota colleagues. And last but not least, for the Tuesday evening event, Fenway Park is where it's at! Details to come, but plan to enjoy a night at the oldest Major League Baseball stadium currently in use.

The planning has started, but there is still a lot of work to do to pull the conference together for next year. It is in good hands with the Host Committee, the Planning Committee, and ICMA staff. On behalf of the committee and our organization, I encourage you to consider attending the 2013 Boston/New England ICMA Conference! ☐

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.

Mid-Winter Workshop, Feb. 21-22: New topics, new days, same location!

One of MCMA's annual events, the Mid-Winter Workshop, is fast approaching and the 2013 version will bring some significant changes consistent with the request of members and the work of the Professional Development Committee to make it more relevant and substantive.

Days of the week—We're abandoning our previous Friday afternoon to Saturday afternoon timeframe because many of you said this was creating conflicts with family weekend obligations. Instead this year we'll be meeting from noon on Thursday, Feb. 21 through noon on Friday, Feb. 22.

Program—Historically the Mid-Winter has featured a lighter personal development type topic meant to be relevant to MCMA members and their partners alike. But many of you asked that we get a little more substantive, so we are! Thursday afternoon we'll hear from Federal Reserve Economist Joe Mahon about conditions in the upper Midwest economy. Then Susan Brower, the new state demographer, will give us her views about trends in our state.

Starting later Thursday afternoon and continuing Friday morning, Cheryl Hilvert, director of the new ICMA Center for Management Strategies, will lead us through "Moving Your Organization Toward Higher Performance." In the best of our inclusive tradition, Cheryl has agreed to make the workshop applicable to partners as well as MCMA members.

Location—Well, that's the one thing not changing. Last year's Mid-Winter at the Depot Renaissance Hotel in downtown Minneapolis proved to be very popular, so we're headed there again.

And Club Frazell?—Yes, Kevin and Terri will once again host the Thursday evening after-party at their condo down the street, both for those who want to just hang for the evening, and for those looking for a night cap after a show at the Guthrie and whatever other fun they have found in the 'hood!

More Information and Registration—on the MCMA website at www.mncma.org.

See you Feb. 21-22 in Minneapolis' Mill City District. The weather will be spectacular. Well, maybe!?!?!?!? ☺

APMP to MCMA: “Will you hold our purse?”

By Logan Martin, APMP President, Community Development Specialist, Oakdale

It was a very successful fall season of the Association of Public Management Professionals of Minnesota (APMP), as many positive events and initiatives continued forward.

APMP annual conference

In August, the group hosted its annual conference, where we featured Craig Rapp doing a take on his "Ethical Survivor" presentation (as seen at the 2012 MCMA conference). We also heard from a great panel of real estate experts regarding business attraction and what it takes to finally land that sought after restaurant or shop.

Other meetings included a panel on media relations (featuring Dean Lotter, Clark Arneson, and Terry Schwerm), a discussion with Dr. Richard Fursman on the findings of his retirement study as well as his dissertation topic, and a presentation from Lisa Lynn on achieving a rewarding work/life balance.

Next Generation Initiative

Another task shared by APMP and MCMA is the Next Generation Initiative, specifically including the presence of our groups at various job and career fairs in the area. This fall, APMP and MCMA were represented at the University of Minnesota Government Career Fair, where a number of quality connections were made with students regarding the rewarding careers that we have all selected. We also plan to be at two more fairs in the coming months. Needless to say, it's been a great end to 2012 and APMP looks forward to continuing this success in 2013.

Fiduciary partnership

One important initiative that you will continue hearing about in 2013 is APMP's formal request to MCMA to become our fiduciary partner. APMP's current financial structure is somewhat informal, and the membership agrees that it is time to formalize the financial aspect of this group to ensure its vitality into the future.

Much legal legwork has already been completed for this task, and MCMA membership will have an ability to formally vote on this partnership at its conference in May. APMP would respectfully ask for your support of this endeavor, as it seems logical to solidify the great partnership between these groups that has been established over the past number of years. Please feel free to contact me directly if you have any questions about this process.

Also, please continue to suggest participation in APMP's monthly lunch meetings (third Thursday of each month) to any interns, students, assistants, department heads, etc., in your organizations. We'll even accept managers at our meetings, and we promise to put down our iPads long enough to say hi! ☺

When Government Goes Terribly Wrong

By Kevin Frazell, MCMA Secretariat Officer

Last May I left the MCMA annual conference early Friday morning to catch a flight south. I was about to fulfill a lifetime goal—a tour of key sites of the civil rights movement of the 1950s and '60s. Starting at the Lorraine Motel in Memphis, which is now the National Civil Rights Museum, the next week would take Terri and me to the Mississippi cities of Clarksdale, Money, Greenwood, Oxford, and Jackson; the Alabama cities of Selma, Montgomery, and Birmingham; and then, finally, to Atlanta, Ga.

The trip was profoundly moving. Even as I am committed to professional local government management, I am humbled by grassroots democracy and the ability of everyday citizens to turn history in a better direction. Textbook treatment of the civil rights movement tends to emphasize the high visibility work of people like Martin Luther King, Jr. and Rosa Parks. But just as important to the movement were the brave efforts of more obscure citizens like Amzie Moore, Fannie Lou Hammer, and Robert Moses, along with the young students, both black and white, who sat at the lunch counters, desegregated interstate buses, ran the freedom schools, and registered voters. The price they paid was often steep—bombings, beatings, economic retribution, eviction. Building democracy is always a messy and expensive work in progress.

I, of course, focused on the complex role that governments had played both in maintaining and in dismantling segregation. State and local lawmakers didn't just ignore the discriminatory acts of others; they mandated and enforced it by law and by force. In Montgomery, municipal laws specified segregated seating on the private bus system. In Georgia, restaurants that wished to serve both white and black customers had to provide separate entrances and physical walls of separation. In Jackson, protesters were herded into cattle pens at the state fairgrounds and in Birmingham, teenage marchers protesting discrimination in downtown stores were met with fire hoses and police dogs. Civil rights activists were detained in local jails until Klansmen could be in place as they were released.

Few of these southern cities and counties of the time were managed by local government professionals. From what I could learn, most were either commission or mayor-council forms. A few have since adopted the council-manager plan. But I couldn't help but wonder how a city or county manager of that time would have handled the situation. What would have been the consequences of speaking up, advocating for equality, or even of ensuring that basic municipal services were in place for all? Even with our

commitment to ethics and equality of treatment, how many of us could truly have stood up in opposition to institutionalized repression?

As much as we complain about “unfunded mandates,” the role of the federal government, often to the dismay of federal lawmakers, was essential in forcing southern state and local governments to change their ways. Rulings of the U.S. Supreme Court and of brave district court judges like Frank Johnson, Jr. established the legal basis from which to attack segregation laws. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 and especially the Voting Rights Act of 1965 changed southern segregation forever, particularly when the federal government dared to actually enforce the laws.

When talking about my trip, one of the frequent reactions I get is, “Well, is it really any different there today?” The answer is, unequivocally, “Yes!” To say otherwise would dishonor the many heroes, both black and white, from the South and from the North, who bravely challenged the status quo and changed systems of oppression in just a few years.

In restaurants today, everyone seems to mix comfortably, and previous all-black businesses, like Gus' Fried Chicken in Memphis or the blues “juke joints” of the Delta attract an equal mix of black and white customers. Check the websites of many of the cities and counties that were sites of some of the most infamous incidents of the civil rights movement and you will see that they are now often governed by mayors and city councils with African-American majorities. Mississippi has more black elected officials than any other state. And the sites of famous civil rights events are now identified and celebrated by government-placed markers. Local visitor's centers offer guides to civil rights tours.

Problems persist, to be sure. There is shocking poverty and deplorable housing conditions. But there are also upper middle income African American neighborhoods that surpass anything we have in Minnesota. The South has a complicated racial heritage with which it continues to grapple. But, beyond a surface politeness, I would be hard pressed to argue that we in the North have been much more successful at true integration or in addressing the contemporary issues of justice.

In both regions, blatant racial prejudice and segregation enforced by law and contract have been replaced by the problems of a smaller but perhaps even more marginalized lower class that suffers economic isolation, educational disparities, and grossly different rates of incarceration. Who knows what bravery it may require to start changing those outcomes as well! ◻

Memorandum from the edge

Jon Hohenstein, Community Development Director, Eagan

There really hasn't been much written about Abraham Lincoln lately... in a parallel universe where Steven Spielberg directs traffic instead of movies and where vampires are tedious and unattractive and not the latest embodiment of immortal love. In our world, there hasn't been so much attention paid to the man in decades. The only thing missing so far is merchandising. I'm waiting for the Lincoln logo wear and action toys to be set up between the Batman and Iron Man sections at the discount retailers. Stovepipe hats, chin whiskers, rail splitting kits and everything else your kids need to play 16th President games with their friends.

For my money, the producers of "Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter" missed the boat when they cast Mary Elizabeth Winstead as Mary Todd Lincoln and not Sarah Michelle Gellar. For authenticity, I admit you need an actress who has three names, but why Winstead? I think it would have lent some serious credibility to the film if they had chosen Gellar, who has legitimate vampire slaying experience.

I have similar issues with Sally Field as Mary in Spielberg's "Lincoln." Growing up, I remember her for her exceptional, Brando-like method acting in shows like "Gidget" and "The Flying Nun." Her extraordinary performance as Carrie, the runaway bride in "Smokey and the Bandit," made me want to grow a mustache, become a smart aleck, and drive a Trans Am, and I am a solid one out of three.

After that, she started taking roles in forgettable movies like "Norma Rae" and "Places in the Heart," and pretty much dropped out of sight entirely until Spielberg decided to throw her a bone. It's sad and, to top it off, Daniel Day Lewis' take on Lincoln pales in comparison to Stephen Mines' portrayal of Moondoggie.

I will give the real Abraham Lincoln this, though. He understood better than a lot of people the role of values in public service. There is the story, which may be apocryphal and that is the best kind, about Lincoln attending a prayer breakfast with a group of ministers. One of them commented that they should pray that God would be on their (the Union's) side. Lincoln is supposed to have

replied that we should pray that we are on God's side.

Setting aside the messy argument as to whether God is on either side in a war, the thing I take away from the story is that it is very tempting to believe that once we've considered something and come to our conclusions about it, we must be right, and we must be right not only in an intellectual sense, but in a moral one, too. From that self-important perch, it isn't much of a leap to think a higher power should be persuaded to the same conclusion.

Insisting that our individual perceptions are philosophical absolutes leads to entrenchment, intransigence, and the dismissal of ideas that don't align with yours as "non-starters" rather than alternative perspectives. If there is room for other thoughtful ideas, and not just my right ones and your wrong ones, there may also be room for better ideas that we both can find to be more right than wrong.

In local government, there are rights and wrongs about how we serve the public. They're defined by statutes and codes of ethics. But there are few absolutes when it comes to policy. In much of our area of responsibility, it is about helping councils or boards to decide among possible solutions. In many cases, there is a range of good outcomes and ultimately that which is best is determined by a vote of our decision makers. Sometimes, the decisions are harder and there can be some pretty poor options in the mix. Then we need to provide the insights we can to help those councils and boards make the best decisions they can. And those are the times when it is okay to hope and pray, if that is something you do, that all of us are on God's side, namely that we have the interests of the people we serve at the heart of the decisions, and that we keep aspiring to that.

Because I think it is better to aspire to become right than to think we have achieved it—and that brings me back to "Gidget." Gidget and Moondoggie always wanted to surf the best wave. But no matter how good the last wave or the last ride, there was always another wave and another ride. So they kept on surfing. Now there's an idea for a movie—"Abraham Lincoln: The Big Kahuna." Get me Steven Spielberg on the phone. ○

**Be sure to
check out
MCMA's
web site:
www.mncma.org**