

## President's column

By Bart Fischer, MCMA President, City Administrator, Oakdale

I would like to start my first President's Column with a "thank you." Thank you to all of you, the membership of MCMA, for your confidence in electing me as president this year. I am honored to have your support and am excited to serve you. I would also like to thank Brian Gramentz for his leadership this past year, and all of the board members for their continued dedication to our organization and profession.

Throughout the conference in May, it was the goal of the Annual Conference Planning Committee to focus on the theme of connectivity. Connections, whether at the cultural, community, team, or individual level, are important to who we are and what we do in our profession. This work and this theme are central to who I am as a person and a leader.

**So why do connections matter?** Our profession is a calling. We talk about it and we live it every day. The calling is to build and strengthen the connections of our communities, our councils, our staff, and each other.

**We are better able to lead.** When we know one another, when we are connected to one another, when we are champions and support one another, then we are better able to lead. The level of respect we have for each other and that we engender from our councils and our boards grows. We are better able to grow the next generation of leaders. The level of coaching and mentoring grows, making it more possible to ensure our success over the long-term.

**We are stewards of the future.** When we know one another, are connected to

one another, are champions and support one another, then we are cementing our legacy as stewards of the future. A bright future for ourselves and our communities. A future grounded in respect for each other and the value we add to our organizations.

Knowing the "why" then leads to the "how" ... how do we build and strengthen our connections?

Let's make this coming year the year of the human connection. Let's do the small things that help make these connections stronger. Simply put, let's get better, together.

Over the coming year, board members and I plan on visiting MCMA members throughout the state to reach out and foster connections. Whether it is at one of these events or another that interests you, my challenge and ask of you is to engage

in and be intentional about making connections with people, even outside of your usual groups.

I will also visit and meet with members to further their careers, as we must strengthen this institution's role in supporting each other. This builds on the already great work being done by our committees and with our mentoring groups and coaching programs through ICMA. We are furthering connections to further our future.

The other thing I will do is tell my story. At the conference in May, the Planning Committee conducted an artifact event. It was an opportunity for us to talk at our tables about our work and why we do it. It was a chance to share our story, and our story becomes real when we assign mementos to it. Each of us has an office, and in that office are the things that are important to us ... that remind us of why we do this work. They are our artifacts.

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*President's Column continued*

These artifacts, big and small, tell a story about us. In a small, but significant way, our stories matter and need to be told.

My artifact is a quote that I printed off in college and have carried with me in every stage of life and job I've ever had. There are layers of tape and push pin holes on the edges and in the corners. The piece of paper has seen better days. The quote itself is about how our attitude makes the biggest difference in our day. It's a reminder that how I choose to tackle problems is just that ... a choice. I can choose to be negative or I can choose to bring a positive attitude.

For me, it's a reminder that I am responsible for me and the attitude I bring. The idea has served me well throughout my career and my life. When I'm having a hard day, I look at it. It may be weathered, but it is mine and speaks to me, and ultimately it embodies me. It's about what I bring to this work and inspires me each day to be a little better.

Again, thank you. Not only for the trust you've shown in selecting me as president this year, but also giving me a network of peers who I treasure and I'm honored to serve. ◻

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## MCMA Newsletter

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

## New MCMA board member profile: Chad Adams

Chad Adams has been serving as the city manager for the City of Albert Lea for the past six years. Chad has been in the city management profession for 18 years and holds a master's degree in public policy from the University of Northern Iowa and undergraduate degrees in history and political science from Southwest Minnesota State University in Marshall, Minnesota. Prior to serving in Albert Lea, Chad served as Medina's city administrator for eight years and as city administrator in Onawa, Iowa for three years.

In addition to his municipal duties, Chad serves as the co-chair on the current Blue Zones Initiative in Albert Lea to increase opportunities for active, healthy living through community wide policy, environmental, and systematic changes. Chad is active in Albert Lea through his church as a recent past president and through service on various committees. He coordinates activities such as the Land Between the Lakes Triathlon for the local Kiwanis Club; serves as board member to the Riverland Community College Foundation and Southeast MN Together Initiative; and is an ex officio member to several organizations throughout the community.

In his spare time, Chad likes to travel, volunteer, read, play trivia, and spend time with his wife Ann of 18 years and children Alivia (14), Grant (11) and Will (8), including coaching various youth sports with his three children. Chad occasionally participates himself in recreational activities such as basketball, cycling, and triathlons. ◉

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## Fall 2017 APMP update

*Jackie Schwerm, President, Assistant City Administrator, Waconia*

APMP recently completed the elections for the 2017- 2018 Board and would like to welcome new at-large board member Becky Ahlvin, management assistant for the City of Cottage Grove. The rest of the board is, as follows:

- President: Jackie Schwerm, City of Waconia
- Vice President: Chelsea Petersen, City of Chanhassen
- Treasurer: Maria Carrillo Perez, City of Coon Rapids
- Secretary: Jared Voto, City of Richfield
- At Large: Tim Sandvik, City of Falcon Heights
- At Large: Sarah Alig, City of Woodbury
- At Large: Becky Ahlvin, City of Cottage Grove
- Past-President: Renee Eisenbeisz, City of Shoreview

We would also like to thank past-president, Renee Eisenbeisz, for her excellent direction and leadership during the 2016-2017 membership year.

APMP's annual fall conference is Thursday, Oct. 5, 2017. The conference will take place at Richfield City Hall and will focus on critical communications and media relationships. It will include hands on training, real-world examples of communicating through difficult situations, and a conversation on how different communities utilize social media.

The conference is open to all city staff, and the cost to attend is \$30. To RSVP, send an email to [associationofpublicmanagement@gmail.com](mailto:associationofpublicmanagement@gmail.com).

Additional fall meetings include a happy hour scheduled for 3 p.m. on Oct. 19 (location TBD) and a noon meeting on Nov. 16 at the League of Minnesota Cities focusing on city leadership academies. ◉

Contact Schwerm at [jschwerm@waconia.org](mailto:jschwerm@waconia.org).



## Appointments and other professional news

- **Rebecca Olson**, Assistant to the city manager, Shoreview, has been appointed assistant city manager, Roseville
- **Jessica Byer**, communications manager, Blue Earth County, has been appointed county administrator, Waseca County
- **Renee Eisenbeisz**, assistant to the city administrator, Newport, has been appointed assistant to the city administrator, Shoreview
- **Jim Ericson**, city administrator, Mounds View, has resigned his position to move to Grand Marais for his wife's career and to pursue a dream of living on the North Shore!
- **Mary Hurliman**, Woodbury, has been appointed deputy public works director, Bloomington
- **Jackie Schwerm**, assistant to the city administrator, Eden Prairie, has been appointed assistant city manager, Waconia
- **Elizabeth Tolzmann**, assistant city manager, Bloomington, has been appointed director of policy analysis and planning, Ramsey County ☐

### Reaching the MCMA Secretariat

**For MCMA Secretariat services, contact:**

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You can also contact Kate Brenna,  
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at kbrenna@lmc.org.

Both Kevin and Kate can be reached at  
(651) 281-1200.

## MCMA group dinner at ICMA San Antonio Conference

Each year at the ICMA National Conference MCMA holds a Monday evening dinner for Minnesota managers, assistants, partners, and friends. This year's dinner in San Antonio will be Monday, Oct. 23, 6–10 p.m. at the Sunset Station Event Center, just a few short blocks from the convention center and major hotels.

Further information and a registration form can be found on the home page of the MCMA website—[www.mncma.org](http://www.mncma.org). The deadline for reservations is Monday, Oct. 2. ☐

### Reminder:

Register by Oct. 2 for MCMA dinner in San Antonio!

## Board meetings recap

The MCMA Board of Directors met on Wednesday, May 3 at Grandview Lodge and on Friday, July 14 in Oakdale. Major issues discussed and actions taken included:

- Adding \$2,000 to the fiscal year 2018 budget for ICMA conference attendance stipends; in a drawing at the annual meeting stipends were won by Crystal Johnson, city manager, Granite Falls and Nate Burkett, assistant city administrator, Shakopee.
- Discussion with ICMA Midwest Regional Director David Limardi and Midwest Vice President Lon Pluckhahn regarding future election of Midwest vice presidents.
- Review of outcomes for the 2017 Annual Conference; acceptance of proposal of MnGTS to manage the 2018 conference.
- Appointment of 2017-2018 MCMA committees and committee chairs.
- Approval of plan for MCMA dinner during the 2017 ICMA Annual Conference in San Antonio.
- Receiving reports from senior advisors Bob Thistle and Bill Craig regarding their ongoing outreach to members. ☐

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

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

# Stepping back from the edge

By Jon Hohenstein, Retired Community Development Director, Eagan

Many things in life seem pretty random, but every once in a while something happens in the most timely way possible. That is how I felt when Brian Gramentz presented the 2017 MCMA President's Award to Bill Bassett at the spring conference. Knowing Bill was in hospice care, it would have been timely enough if Brian had just read his thoughtful and heartfelt comments to those in attendance and indicated Bill would be receiving the award at home. It was even more meaningful because Brian and Kevin Frazell had coordinated a Skype connection for Bill and his family to be able to hear the comments and applause in real time. And it was even more timely because Bill passed away shortly after.

Looking around the room, it occurred to me the majority of the local government managers in Minnesota came into the profession since Bill retired from the City of Mankato twenty years ago. Some may have known him from his more recent work as a range rider/senior advisor or in the various other roles Brian described in his comments, but few in the current membership had the opportunity to have a personal relationship with Bill as a colleague, teacher, mentor, or friend. I was lucky to have him as all of those things.

To put things in context, though, you should know I grew up in southern Minnesota, with the Mankato Free Press as our primary daily news source. Neither the paper nor many writing letters to the editor were above criticizing Bill. Nor were my parents. I first became aware of him when my father would read an article and say words to the effect of, "What does that Bassett think he's up to now?" Bill applied a managerial style that is no longer taught in public administration programs, one that got things done, but also invited strong and vocal opinions in the community. Some city council candidates ran on the specific platform of moving Bill on to other employment opportunities, and it is a credit to the deeper, more nuanced side of Bill that he survived so many of those campaigns and, in time, turned so many of those opponents into supporters and friends.

Despite that context, when I met Bill as a teacher at the Urban and Regional Studies Program in Mankato, either he had mellowed with age or there was a lot

more to him than I had understood at a distance. He taught important lessons about being supportive of mayors and city councilmembers and responsive to their concerns. He was the first person to share the insight that 2 + 2 doesn't always equal 4 when neighborhood concerns or big picture issues were at stake. He challenged idealistic students to appreciate that stakeholders are often more interested in the effectiveness of outcomes than in the efficiency of processes.

That said, one of his stories had to do with efficiency. He shared that he worked with a public works director early in his career who had a ready answer every time the city council had an infrastructure question, no matter how obscure, ancient or trivial the subject. When did the city install the sewers in Elm Street? 1959. What diameter are the water services in the old XYZ subdivision? ¾. How many properties in town still have septic systems? 87.

Bill was amazed and asked the director how he knew all of those answers and to that level of detail. The man answered, "I don't, but I have an idea of what's probably close, and I know I know more about it than they do. They're just

happy getting an answer and being able to move on to make their decisions. If it really is something critical, I'll make a note, go back and check, and at the next meeting, I'll tell them I was thinking some more about the question and the actual answer is X." Bill asked how in the world the man got away with that. He answered, "The way I figure it, we're all just guessing."

I know we are proud of what we know and what we can do and it's important that the information and advice we give decision makers is accurate and reliable. The lesson I took from the story and from Bill is not that you should make it up as you go, but that life and local government can be complex and uncertain and, sometimes, one of the most important things we can do is help the people we work for and who work for us be sure enough of themselves and what's important that they can focus on making good decisions. If that guess isn't the truth, it's pretty close to it. ☐

“... it is a credit to the deeper, more nuanced side of Bill that he survived so many of those campaigns and, in time, turned so many of those opponents into supporters and friends.”

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**Note:** The MCMA board is inviting new voices to join in bringing a bit of personal insight and humor to the newsletter. If you would be interested in contributing a tongue-in-cheek article for an upcoming edition, please contact Secretariat Officer Kevin Frazell at [kfrazell@lmc.org](mailto:kfrazell@lmc.org).