

President's column

By Brian Gramentz, MCMA President, City Manager, New Ulm

By the time you read this, turkeys will have been consumed and your Christmas presents are wrapped and maybe unwrapped already! Ready or not ...

ICMA info

First, I want to share a bit of ICMA news. I accepted the chairmanship of the ICMA Midwest Regional Vice President Nominating Committee and, according to the regional agreements and ICMA protocol, the person selected as Midwest Regional Vice President in 2017 will come from State Grouping B (Illinois, Ohio, Michigan—not eligible). Minnesota is in State Grouping A (along with Missouri, Wisconsin, Iowa, and Indiana). State Grouping A rotation comes up in 2018, 2021, and 2024.

Due to the 10-year rule (a state is not eligible if they have had two members on the ICMA Executive Board in the preceding 10 years), the earliest Minnesota can submit a CEO member is 2024. It could be as late as 2027, if a non-CEO Minnesota ICMA member is selected in 2022. So, plan accordingly.

In other ICMA news, a Midwest State Association conference call was held on Nov. 14 to coordinate and update the state associations on numerous topics. Bob O'Neil was given a six-month contract (Jan. 1, 2017, to July 1, 2017) to assist with the transition to incoming ICMA Executive Director Marc Ott. Discussion was had on getting all ICMA state affiliation agreements approved and returned by the end of March 2017. The MCMA Executive Board will be meeting in December to review the state affiliation agreement.

Food for thought

While sitting in the woods deer hunting over the weekend, I was reminded of an old commercial from BASF (1997), which stated that BASF didn't make the end product, they just made it better. As I ran that through the brain cells (to keep from nodding off), I somehow linked it to our profession. We don't make the final decisions, but we (hopefully) make them better.

We analyze facts, legal issues, and financial impacts, using logic and a dose of ethics, and then we boil complex issues down into a recommendation that is submitted to our

respective elected bodies ... so they can make the final decision. I have been surprised from time to time by a city council taking a different direction than what was recommended, and I have come to realize, that's OK. It isn't personal. They might see the issue and

potential solutions differently than I do. And in the modified words of BASF, we don't make the decisions, but by our efforts, we do help inform our elected bodies on the issues and options, which should result in better decisions.

Remember Senior Advisors

I leave you with a quote I have posted at my desk, "Good judgment comes from experience ... that comes from bad judgment." So, that leads into a plug for our Senior Advisors (you can find their names and contact info on page 2 and at www.mncma.org). Senior Advisors are waiting to help you, and they have all sorts of "Good Judgment" experience. Please do contact them—no problem is too big or too small! ☐

Contact Gramentz at
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Winter Workshop: Cybersecurity and Crisis Communications

By Steve Taylor, MCMA Second Vice President, Administrator, Sherburne County, and Kevin Frazell, MCMA Secretariat Officer

This year's Winter Workshop will be Thursday, Feb. 2, and Friday, Feb. 3. Topics will be cybersecurity and crisis communications. And for a location we return to an old favorite, Fitger's Inn in Duluth.

On Thursday afternoon, Michael Johnson, director of graduate studies in security technologies, Tech Leadership Institute, University of Minnesota, will lead us in a discussion about one of the most compelling issues of our time—cybersecurity. As a consultant to both business and government, Johnson will help us think through the exposures of our local governments, and particularly, what managers need to know and do to avoid disruption of critical city and county systems.

On Friday morning, executive level communications professional Gail Plewacki will turn our attention to crisis communications, whether the issue is a cyber-attack, a police shooting of an unarmed suspect, an employee embezzling money, or a baby dying in a daycare licensed by your organization. Gail Plewacki has nearly 15 years' experience in the public sector, currently works for the Minneapolis Public Schools, and was previously an award-winning investigative journalist with KARE 11 and KSTP.

For a more detailed workshop schedule and registration form, visit the MCMA website at www.mncma.org.

We hope to see you in Duluth in early February! ☪

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MCMA Newsletter

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

Update of Recognition and Membership Committee: Managers in transition

By Bart Fischer, First Vice President, MCMA, City of Oakdale

The Recognition and Membership Committee has become the “home” of the MCMA and President Brian Gramentz’s priority of looking at how our association might better support our managers-in-transition (MITs). Discussion has focused mainly on two areas. First, how to better support members at the time of and immediately following transition with things like counseling, job coaching, interview skills, etc.

The second area of focus has been on creating conditions and an environment where MITs are more likely to secure project work or interim assignments at a reasonable rate of compensation. Secretariat Officer Kevin Frazell, as well as committee members, have had conversations with other state associations with formal MIT programs to see what may be helpful in providing suggestions and experiences. As a result of these conversations the committee is considering reaching out to a couple of private-sector firms that have experience in placing MITs and may have an interest in doing something similar in Minnesota.

Committee members (and former MITs) Mike Funk and Charlene Stevens have also volunteered to update our Transition Guidebook.

In the meantime, the committee would like to remind all MCMA members to remember our MITs by reaching out to encourage them and consider providing opportunities for them to undertake some project work in your city or county, if even on a part-time basis. ☐

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Reaching the MCMA Secretariat

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

Appointments and other professional news

- **Patrick W. Antonen**, city administrator, Centerville, Iowa, has been appointed city administrator, Circle Pines.
- **Stevan Kvenvold**, city administrator, Rochester, has announced his retirement for the first half of 2017.
- **Greg Lerud**, city administrator, Milaca, has been appointed city administrator, Shorewood.
- **Brent Marek**, city administrator, Carver, will now be city manager there. Congratulations to Brent, the city, and the citizens of Carver on adopting the Plan B Council-Manager form of government.
- **Logan Martin**, city administrator, Bayport, has been appointed city administrator, Rosemount.
- **Aaron Reeves**, city clerk, Rochester, has been appointed assistant city administrator there.
- **Michael J. Votca**, city administrator, Tracy, has been appointed city administrator, Belle Plaine.
- **Charlie Yunker**, HR coordinator, St. Anthony Village, has been appointed assistant to the city manager there.
- **Alison Zems**, deputy city manager, Prescott, Arizona, has been appointed deputy city manager, Mankato. ☐

Board meeting recap

The MCMA Board of Directors met on July 22 at the Minnetonka City Hall, Oct. 14 at the New Ulm City Hall, and Dec. 9 at Braemer Golf Course in Edina. Highlights of board action included:

- Receiving and approving a proposal from MnGTS to help plan and manage the 2017 annual conference.
- Appointing Susan Arntz, city administrator, Waconia, and Chelsea Petersen, assistant city manager, Chanhassen, as our representatives to the ICMA Coaching Advisory Task Force.
- Receiving and approving the recommendation of the annual conference site selection committee to pursue a contract with Grandview Lodge to host the annual conference 2018 – 2022.
- Adopting amendments to the Code of Ethics Rules of Procedure for Enforcement to bring them into line with the procedures used by ICMA.
- Approving a new state affiliate agreement with ICMA.
- Holding a discussion with leadership of the Education and Outreach Committee about both the ICMA and MCMA Coaching and Mentoring programs. ☐

Note: After nearly 15 years, “Memorandum from the Edge” and its author, Jon Hohenstein, have retired! 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.

Dr. Suess was correct! ‘Oh, the places you’ll go’

By Craig Waldron, Former City Administrator, Oakdale, Public Administration Program Director, Hamline University

Dr. Suess was right on in his book *Oh, the Places You’ll Go*. I like his statement, “Out there things can happen and frequently do to people as brainy and footsy as you.” So here, in memory of Dr. Suess, are some strange, funny, and interesting events that I observed in 41 years of my public administration journey. Oh, the places I went!

I remember the city councilmember vehemently complaining about the budget and the inflated staff salaries. After a 5-minute bathroom break, he came back and asked, “When are we going to fund the new \$200,000 for the softball field lights?” (I don’t think he ever saw the light!)

I remember getting the constant lectures that we must run government like a business. Yet when I would propose economic development projects that treated the city like an equity partner or accessed extensive cash flow for the city, I was told, “STOP, we are trying to run too much like a business.” Once during my community development days, I proposed to eliminate my salary, and just be paid a percentage of the development value that I brought in to the city—pay for performance! (Thud, a more heavy lead balloon had never been invented.)

I remember the clown screaming at me at one of our parades about an issue that no one could figure out. Of course, the clown was also the mayor’s aunt. (To this day, I still can’t watch *Killer Klowns from Outer Space*.)

I remember the citizen who came to see me to complain about the cable company. After much discussion it finally dawned on me that she was absolutely convinced that while she was watching cable television, they were sitting in the studios watching her through her television. (She did leave me a foil hat however for future protection.)

I remember the councilmember trying to find money we didn’t have available for a pet project. He suggested that we simply bond for the project and then we won’t have to pay anything back. (Maybe there is a free lunch.)

I remember the councilmember who demanded we stay lean and refrain from hiring any new staff. He wanted us to

contract out as much as we possibly could. Six months later, during a budgetary meeting, he complained about the extensive number of consulting contracts. (Over time, the place between the rock and hard place grew to be a quite comfortable setting.)

I remember touring facilities that were similar to city projects that we were considering. I recall our elected officials commenting on how the hot dogs were being cooked, how we could rearrange the merchandising to reflect the successful Sears approach, and what colors we should paint the walls in our project—maybe mauve would be nice! (OK, let the elected officials worry about the small stuff; city staff will handle the big stuff!)

I remember the citizen screaming about our inflated budget at the truth-and-taxation hearing. Two weeks later his house almost burned down and he is back before the City Council heaping praise on the city as well as the fire department. (I thought about bringing in one of my grandkid’s connect-the-dot books for him.)

I remember the Texas death matches (a pro wrestling term) that I ended up in the middle of and not by choice. There was a battle royale on the stairway of city hall between a radio consultant and the public works director. The consultant was telling the director where he was going to “STICK a hotly debated antenna.” I remember the gigantic citizen proceeding to choke the street superintendent right in front of me (gee, I hope the cops arrive soon—he could die), or the time the mayor and I were caught between rival gangs ready to duke it out at one of our city festivals. (The crusher never had it so hard!)

Speaking of professional wrestling, I remember the time one of the councilmembers got extremely upset with me because I told him professional wrestling was fake. Why did we ever hire a dummy like you, haven’t you ever seen them bleed? Also, he was missing a

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check out
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website:**

www.mncma.org

finger. He proceeded to tell my son that Andre the Giant bit his finger off at one of the matches. (Our poor son was upset for a week!)

I remember the time a city council-member called to ask me what a serial killer was because he had to speak at a Rotary meeting that morning. I thought he was kidding, thus I told him it was a person that went through Cub crushing cereal boxes. He immediately took off before I could tell him I was just kidding. We had to send out a squad to catch him before the meeting as this was in the days before cell phones.

And what about those choruses that we all have heard all too often? I was recently on a consulting contract and I heard the age old line that a certain elected official "was not in the business of picking winners and losers." Oh really, can you show me one vote where one group does not benefit more so than another group from any vote that you make? I also loved the councilmember chorus when the seething mass was

present, who stated "if staff would've given me more information at first, I never would've supported this project. (Try opening your packet before the meeting.)

I believe these incidents really show us, and I'm sure many of you have very similar experiences, that there is no formula or magic bullet in public administration. We are out there in that swamp every day. What it underscores is that we need to maintain a sense of humor and not take ourselves too seriously. (When you have escaped cows running up and down 694, you have no choice but to avoid the "UDDER" chaos, maintain a sense of humor, and "MOOOOOVE" on.)

Last of all, I want to leave you with the closing wisdom of Dr. Seuss once again: "And when things start to happen, don't worry. Don't stew. Just go right along. You'll start happening, too. You'll be on your way up! You'll be seeing great sights! You'll join the high flyers who soar to great heights!"

Keep soaring, my friends!! ☺

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