

## President's column

By Bart Fischer, MCMA President, City Administrator, Oakdale

As I reflect on my year as president of MCMA, my thoughts go to you, the members. Ours is a profession that truly is noble and stands the test of time ... it is resilient. And it is you, our members, that make our association and profession remarkable.

I have also been reminded of the question I posed last May at our Annual Conference: So why do connections matter? Over the past year, I have been a firsthand witness to the importance of connections whether they be at the cultural, community, team, or individual level.

Connections are important for strengthening our communities, our councils/boards, our staff, and each other. When we know and are connected to one another, we are better able to lead and we reinforce our legacy as stewards of the future.

Throughout the year, the board and I have been able to take part in opportunities to promote the human connection that we all need to survive in our profession. I personally have had the opportunity to meet with a number of outstanding individuals who are preparing to take the next step in their local government careers. It is exciting to see this next generation stepping into public service, and these opportunities have

provided me with lifelong relationships. I firmly believe our profession has a bright future!

I have also had the chance to attend meetings around the state where members come together to share and discuss challenges as well as wins! These groups are already building connections and "leaning" on each other for support. This has been one of the most encouraging things to witness during my year as president, people building and valuing lasting relationships.

As I draw my final column to a close, I want to thank a number of people for a successful MCMA year. First, my fellow board members who take the time and have the heart to serve MCMA faithfully. Second, our committee members and chairs who provide valuable information, recommendations, and programming for all of us to enjoy. Also, our secretariat, Kevin Frazell. Kevin takes the time to listen to our crazy ideas while also being a steady, guiding hand we can all lean on for support. And finally, a thank you to all of you, the members. Thank you for the trust you have shown in selecting me as president for this year, and also giving me a network of colleagues and peers who I value and am honored to serve!

I look forward to seeing you in May at the MCMA Conference! ◻

Contact Fischer at [bart.fischer@ci.oakdale.mn.us](mailto:bart.fischer@ci.oakdale.mn.us).

“Connections with other people affect not only the quality of our lives but also our survival.”

—Dean Ornish

*The Professional  
Association  
of Appointed  
Administrators  
Serving Local  
Governments  
in Minnesota*

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

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

## Appointments and other professional news

- **Craig Dawson**, research and monitoring director, Minnehaha Creek Watershed District, has announced his retirement.
- **Ron Johnson**, city administrator, Cannon Falls, has retired.
- **Steve King**, city administrator, South St. Paul, has announced his retirement for this summer. Brad Larson, assistant city administrator, Savage, has been appointed city administrator there.
- **Joe Rudberg**, city administrator, Breezy Point, has retired.
- **Brad Swenson**, city administrator, Wadena, has announced his retirement for this spring.
- **Barry Stock**, city administrator, Savage, has retired.
- **Craig Waldron**, former city administrator, Oakdale, has been appointed city manager, North St. Paul.
- **Patrick Wussow**, formerly City administrator, Brainerd, has been appointed city administrator, Breezy Point.

## MCMA Board Approves Fiscal Year 2019 Budget

*By Kevin Frazell, MCMA Secretariat*

The MCMA board has approved a fiscal year (FY) 2019 budget of \$171,200, up 3.4 percent over projected expenditures from FY 2018. The budget includes \$98,300 of expenses related to the Annual Conference, including nearly \$55,000 in food costs.

Other highlights of the budget include continuation of our four Sr. Advisors, membership in the ICMA Coaching Program, three \$3,500 local government intern stipends, two \$1,000 first-time attendee stipends for the ICMA Conference, and funding of \$1,000 professional services stipends for managers in transition.

The budget, as adopted, will decrease MCMA's fund balance by some \$10,000. However, the fund balance at the end of FY 2019 is projected to remain at a healthy 33 percent of budget. ◻

## MCMA Newsletter

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

# MCMA Women in the Profession Task Force update

By GERALYN BARONE, City Manager, Minnetonka

The MCMA Women in the Profession Task Force has been busy planning and hosting a variety of activities. The group's mission is to encourage women in the public administration field by creating mentoring opportunities and raising awareness of the barriers that women may face in moving up in their careers. The focus has been on sharing personal stories and expertise, along with providing a learning environment for the professional development journey. Although the task force's target audience is women, all are welcome to join in the activities (and many of our male colleagues have!).

At the **MCMA Winter Workshop** in Rochester, the task force sponsored table conversations at Thursday's luncheon. Attendees first shared stories about their favorite type of professional development activity and who their "go-to" person for advice is when facing personal or professional struggles. Discussion topics centered on describing career challenges and how those were overcome; taking care of yourself and managing the stress that comes with the job; and knowing when you've achieved wellness and balance (and asking—is that just an impossible dream?). The most interesting question posed was "What would you tell your younger self?"

**Coffee & Careers** sessions continue to be a big hit, with groups meeting in both the east and west metro. Recent conversations have centered on personal wellness and work/life balance; diversity and inclusion; mentoring; and preparing for a challenge. The next Coffee & Careers West is set for April 10 from 9 – 10 a.m. at the Minnetonka Community Center. The topic is Lone Rangers—working with outliers on the city council/county board or staff (co-workers or subordinates). The next East session is on April 26 at 8 a.m. at the Oakdale Discovery

Center, and the topic is Managing Boards, Commissions and Volunteers.

The task force is diligently preparing for a preconference session at the **MCMA Annual Conference at Grand View**. The event is a mini-career lab called "Preparing for the Next Opportunity" and will focus on three areas associated with your next career move: the application, preparing and interviewing, and negotiating the offer and starting the job. Included is optional resume review, mock video interviews, and role playing a negotiation session. Top recruiters will assist, from firms including David Drown Associates, HueLife, The Mercer Group and Waters & Co. This event is on Wednesday, May 2 from 1:30 - 3:30 p.m. at Grand View, with a social to follow. Cost is a bargain at \$25. Visit the MCMA website for more details and registration.

Other activities in the planning stages include an east-meets-west Coffee & Careers event, a virtual Coffee & Careers, additional networking opportunities for those in Greater Minnesota, and an event at the upcoming League of Minnesota Cities Annual Conference. The task force is open to new ideas, so please reach out to task force members if you'd like to connect. ☐

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## Board renews secretariat services agreement with LMC

The MCMA Board has approved a new five-year agreement with the League of Minnesota Cities for secretariat services running from July 1, 2018 through June 30, 2023. The new agreement is essentially a continuation of the arrangement between MCMA and the League that has been in place since 2000.

LMC services include maintenance of the membership database, dues collection and other financial management; staff support for the annual meeting, board of directors and committees; newsletter publication; website and listserv maintenance; public relations and legal

services as needed; ICMA relations including Sr. Advisor program; conference coordination (overall planning and management of the annual conference continues with GTS); management of awards programs; and direct services to members as requested. The annual fee for services in 2018 is \$24,000 plus direct expenses, with an annual CPI adjustment each year thereafter.

The League very much values its ongoing professional relationship with MCMA and deeply appreciates the confidence of the board of directors in extending this agreement. ☐

# Why top companies diversify their workforces

*Tom Vellenga, Assistant Administrator, Carver County and MCMA Boardmember*

Colleagues, the MCMA board asked me to write about diversity this month. While the MCMA is doing a good job of advancing women in the profession, I want to touch on racial diversity. Racial diversity in many of our communities is growing apace. The data are indisputable. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, some of our cities and counties in Minnesota are diversifying significantly every year—and several counties in Greater Minnesota are experiencing the fastest growth in the variety of ethnicities settling here. Mahnomon, Nobles, Ramsey, and Hennepin counties lead the way with 53, 39, 36, and 30 percent of the population, respectively, categorized as “minorities,” races other than “white.” Mower and Kandiyohi counties have also seen notable growth in diverse racial populations, nearing 20 percent, and that trend is predicted to spread through a number of metro areas and mid-sized cities.

While diversity among our residents is a growing reality, inclusion is mixed. Inclusion is an active choice. It is the decision to welcome folks who are from a different culture.

As our communities diversify, we are well advised to reckon with an attendant challenge: To what extent will we recruit people to our workforces who reflect the communities we serve? That is, when will our residents “of color” be able to walk up to a municipal building and see employees who come from their culture?

Why are workforce diversity and inclusion important? Because we value excellent customer service, it is becoming increasingly advisable. We are social creatures with strong cultural identities. We all carry around an iden-

tification with a particular culture, whether we know it or not, and cultural segment is often – though not always – associated with our race. When dealing with strangers, our default is to associate with people from the same culture – and that means race. That is why the residents we serve are more at ease with public servants who look and speak like them. That can be particularly helpful in social work, but is also true for all city and county services.

What’s more, if we value our performance, we have to consider the data again: Management studies at Northwestern University’s Kellogg School of Business and elsewhere show significant improvements in decision-making when a group is made more diverse. As the Harvard Business Review put it in a 2016 article, “diverse teams are smarter.” Guess what: when teams involve colleagues of varying backgrounds, they avoid “group-think” more often, which yields better results. Fortune 500 companies understand this: look at their CEOs, drawn from around the world, and their increasingly diverse workforces.

While statewide workforce data are not yet available, we know this: in Minnesota, workforce diversity in municipal governments will usually lag behind community diversity.

It will be far better to initiate and manage a diversity and inclusion initiative than react to external complaints. Others have gone before us, and the strategies and experts to help us improve our service and performance through diversity and inclusion are out there.

Getting to know someone from another culture is usually personally rewarding. Perhaps you will testify to that, in this space, in a future newsletter. ◻

*Contact Vellenga at [tvellenga@co.carver.mn.us](mailto:tvellenga@co.carver.mn.us).*

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## Supporting our managers in transition

*Steve Taylor, First Vice President and Chair, Recognition and Membership Committee*

The Recognition and Membership Committee has spent much of the year working on augmenting our Managers in Transition (MIT) program. The MCMA Board has approved providing a stipend of up to \$1,000 for any MIT to access professional personal and career counseling support through Sand Creek Employee Assistant Program.

Services that Sand Creek can provide will include:

- Assisting with work/life challenges
- Career counseling and support
- Access to a work/life wellness website for all MCMA members

The plan calls for DJ Enge to be the initial contact point for any MIT accessing these services. His colleague, certified career counselor Nancy Fraasch, will then take over for initial assessment, consultation, and arranging specific follow-up services. DJ and Nancy met with a group of those who have been through the “in transition” experience in April to help them better understand their realities, experiences, and emotions.

At our annual conference, there will be a MIT Round Table from 1:45 to 2:30 p.m. at Grandview to discuss what MCMA does to support our MITs, but perhaps more importantly, what MCMA members could be doing better. A key idea we are developing further is encouraging members to consider hiring MITs for interim and project work in their city or county. ◻

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# 2018 ICMA Annual Conference

## *Baltimore, Maryland*



### Preliminary Program and Registration Opening:

In keeping with ICMA’s commitment to environmental sustainability, the preliminary program will be provided in the **June issue of *PM*** magazine. Complete details will be available on the conference website ([icma.org/conference](http://icma.org/conference)), where **online registration and the conference housing bureau will open on Wednesday, June 6 at 12 Noon EDT.**

### Educational Program:

- Four outstanding keynote sessions
- Two inspiring afternoon featured speakers
- Dozens of **concurrent educational sessions** in six theme tracks and four career tracks developed by the 2018 Conference Planning Committee:
  - Creating Communities That Last
  - Assistant/Deputy Managers
  - Equity and Social Inclusion
  - County Managers
  - Not Your Grandparents’ Workforce
  - Small-Community Managers
  - Redefining Community Engagement: From the Couch to Town Hall Meetings
  - Senior/Credentialed Managers
  - Smart Communities: What Are They?
  - The Challenges—and Responsibilities—of Putting Your Well-Being First
- ICMA University forums and workshops, special sessions, and events
- Inspirational Breakfast with a featured speaker
- Lunches for women and assistants in local government management
- Educational exhibits and solutions track sessions
- Roundtable discussions
- Field demonstrations highlighting the best of Baltimore and Maryland



## Social Program:

- The Conference Host Committee is planning a variety of social events that make the most of the Baltimore area including:
  - **Saturday Evening Reception: Maryland Science Center**  
Situated in Baltimore's Inner Harbor, the Maryland Science Center is one of the original structures that drove the revitalization of the Inner Harbor from its industrial roots to a thriving downtown destination. Three levels of modernized hands-on exhibits focus on physical science, space, Earth science, the human body, and the Chesapeake Bay's native blue crabs. Catch up with colleagues and enjoy drinks and hors d'oeuvres while exploring this fascinating venue and great views of the Inner Harbor.
  - **Tuesday Evening Social Event: B&O Railroad Museum**  
Designated as a U.S. National Historic Landmark and part of the Smithsonian Institution, the B&O Railroad Museum has one of the most significant collections of railroad treasures in the world and the largest collection of 19th-century locomotives in the U.S. A major restoration following a snow-related roof collapse in 2003 allowed the museum to upgrade many of its facilities, which are now also used as an event venue, where ICMA attendees will enjoy food, drink, and entertainment.

## Location and Hotels:

- **Baltimore/Washington International Thurgood Marshall Airport (BWI)** is just 12 miles from downtown Baltimore.
- **All conference hotels** are within walking distance of the **Baltimore Convention Center**, where most conference sessions and events will take place.

## About Baltimore:

Discover the Charm of Charm City by visiting [icma.org/about-baltimore](http://icma.org/about-baltimore).



### MCMA at ICMA —A Monday evening cruise on the harbor

MCMA has planned something very special for our time together in Baltimore—a Monday evening dinner cruise on the harbor! While we'll have our own private deck, we'll be sharing the Spirit Cruises ship with other state associations. So get ready for good food, good networking with colleagues, and rumor has it you might even want to be working on your dance moves! Watch for more information later this summer. □

### Reaching the MCMA Secretariat

#### For MCMA secretariat services, contact:

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

# Reflections on '18 Winter Workshop

*Patrick Antonen, City Administrator, Circle Pines*

The MCMA Winter Workshop took place Feb. 8-9 in beautiful downtown Rochester. We commenced the event with a luncheon sponsored by the MCMA Women in the Profession Task Force. Roughly 20 people attended the luncheon and there were wonderful table discussions. After lunch, we initiated the workshop with a lively discussion of building community resiliency for a changing climate. We had an interesting presentation from Dr. Kenneth Blumenfeld, senior climatologist from the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. Following Blumenfeld's presentation, discussions were provided by Paul Moss and Laura Millberg from the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency. We worked in small groups to discuss how our communities are dealing with climate change. A few things which resonated in the conversation were:

1. How communities are having to over-size storm sewers based on what we expect to be more common severe weather events.
2. New construction projects that need to consider the different landscaping features which will thrive in our new climate.

At dinner, MCMA President Bart Fischer honored retirees Craig Dawson, Gary Neumann, and Stevan Kvenvold. Each distinguished retiree was accompanied by their families and spoke about accomplishments over their careers and what the profession has meant in their lives. After dinner a group went outside in the 10-degree weather to experience the SocialICE, which was put on by the Rochester Downtown Alliance. This group transformed Peace Plaza into an outdoor ice bar experience. There was live music, lighting effects, ice sculptures, and fire pits to entertain the attendees. The event was free to the public and was a great example of Minnesotans embracing the Bold North that we have heard so much about over the last year.

Friday's session kicked off with former Circle Pines (Hopkins, Brooklyn Park, Met Council, and ICMA as well) City Administrator Craig Rapp. Rapp discussed resilience and shared many personal stories which had a strong impact on the audience. He was a great example of how difficult this profession can be and how to survive by reaching out to your colleagues, family, and friends to help get through the tough times. The second half of Rapp's presentation was a roundtable featuring city managers/administrators which included Melinda Coleman of Maplewood, Curt Boganey of Brooklyn Center, Charlene Stevens of Cottage Grove, Mark Casey of St. Anthony Village, and GERALYN Barone of Minnetonka. Each discussed different times throughout their careers when they had to be resilient, and how they were able cope and get through the trying times.

Overall the workshop was very informative, and if you haven't been to a winter workshop before they are a great professional development opportunity. The workshop is a smaller, more intimate experience than the spring conference, allowing for more in-depth discussions with your colleagues. Personally I look forward to next year's workshop. ☺

“ He was a great example of how difficult this profession can be and how to survive by reaching out to your colleagues, family, and friends to help get through the tough times.”

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check out  
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website:  
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