

## President's column

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

The end is near! Wait, I meant to say, my term as MCMA president is ending, and I want to express a heartfelt thanks to the current MCMA Executive Board members for all the assistance and support provided to the MCMA organization and me this past year. It truly has been an enjoyable experience.

Kevin Frazell and his staff at LMC kept on top of things and should also be commended. This past year we continued our focus on managers in transition and women in the profession, and keeping the organization going in a positive direction. A couple of sayings come to mind: "Leave it better than when you found it," and "Do no harm." I hope I succeeded on both accounts.

### Regional VP selection process

I was privileged to serve as the chairman of the ICMA Midwest Region Nominations Committee in March. We interviewed two candidates and selected one to become the next Midwest regional vice president at the ICMA Annual Conference in San Antonio, Texas. If anyone is interested in running for the next Midwest regional vice-president position from State Group A (MN, MO, WI, IL, OH), the next opening is in 2018. Please feel free to contact me about the selection process.

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

“...the chief  
function of local  
government at all  
times is to serve  
the best interests  
of all the people.”

### ICMA ethics and strategic plan

ICMA is focusing on Tenet 4 of the Code of Ethics, which was created in 1952 and can be paraphrased as “the city manager serves the community by keeping it informed in a friendly, courteous manner, and serves the best interests of all people on a non-partisan basis.” It was revised in 1972 to read: “Recognize that

the chief function of local government at all times is to serve the best interests of all the people.” The only guideline supporting this tenet states the minimum length of two years’ employment is required to render a professional service to the local government. There was intense discussion about moving the guideline to another more appropriate tenet, and either making Tenet 4 meaningful, or dropping it out of the ICMA Code of

Ethics as it is about “local government” and not specifically focused on actions of the ICMA member. As ICMA continues to review the Code of Ethics, please submit your opinions when you have the opportunity.

Lastly, ICMA adopted a new strategic plan on Feb. 17. For those wanting to view it, you can use the ICMA web page to get it, or use the following address to access it: <http://icma.org/Documents/Document/Document/308996>.

May is almost here, so see you all at Grandview! ☺

Contact Gramentz at  
[brian.gramentz@ci.new-ulm.mn.us](mailto:brian.gramentz@ci.new-ulm.mn.us).

# Grandview here we stay—for another five years

*Melanie Mesko-Lee, City Administrator, Hastings, and Kevin Frazell, Secretariat Officer*

Who can believe it has been 10 long years since MCMA took the bold step to move its annual conference from one side of East Gull Lake to the other, landing at Grandview Lodge? Our by-laws stipulate that the board will direct a review of the site of the annual conference every five years. The board appointed a special committee of Melanie Mesko Lee (Chair), Susan Arntz, Luke Fischer, Dianne Miller, Emmy Foster, and Clint Gridley to complete the task.

After considering all the pros, cons, and options, the committee concluded that the members still really like Grandview, and there are few other attractive options for hosting a conference of our size in a resort-type conference facility.

However, the committee did note a couple of concerns with Grandview—the housing reservations system and quality of internet service—and also wanted to make sure we were getting a reasonable deal. So they gave Grandview an opportunity to address the two shortcomings and submit a great proposal. Grandview delivered!

After communicating with our account representative, Joe Lindholm, the committee recommended to the board that MCMA designate Grandview Lodge as the site for its annual conferences for the years 2018-2022. Joe and his staff were very responsive in addressing our concerns and have, in fact, been working closely with GTS Educational Events and the 2017 Annual Conference Planning Committee to address the housing complexities, many of which are inherent to the cabin setup. Their proposal includes no rate increase in 2018 and a 2 percent annual cap thereafter.

Our dates will be the first Wednesday-Friday of May in each of those years, so why not mark those on your calendar right now?

The board unanimously concurred with the committee recommendation and has acted formally to accept the Grandview proposal. Loon Lodge will keep on rockin'! ☺

Contact Mesko-Lee at [mmesko\\_lee@hastingsmn.gov](mailto:mmesko_lee@hastingsmn.gov).

## MCMA Newsletter

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

# Ways to help a manager in transition

*Charlene Stevens, City Administrator, Cottage Grove and Former MIT*

The MCMA Membership and Recognition Committee has developed the following guidelines for members on how to assist a fellow manager in transition (MIT). All members are encouraged to contact fellow members who are in transition to offer support and encouragement.

Members are also encouraged to let the MCMA secretariat know of a manager who is in trouble or transition, so MCMA support can be offered.

This list is not meant to be exhaustive, and individuals will have different comfort levels, but the bottom line is members have a responsibility to support one another. Managers in transition often feel isolated or left behind, especially if they are not in the metro area, so reaching out and staying in touch with colleagues matters.

## **Ways you can personally help a member in transition:**

- Reach out to colleagues going through transition and ask what he or she needs.
- Realize that the time of termination and transition are extremely difficult, stressful, and emotional for a colleague, and that your colleague has likely been under intense stress for a while leading up to this.
- Attend the council meeting where your colleague will be fired. You don't have to speak, but sometimes just having support in the audience can be helpful.
- Be willing to have coffee, lunch, or just a conversation and listen, especially as the time in transition grows longer. Realistically a manager can be in transition for six months to a year.
  - o Many colleagues reach out in the initial weeks after someone is fired, but as the months go on, colleagues don't reach out with the same frequency or urgency.
  - o You can reach out via email, phone or text, but don't underestimate the value of a handwritten and personal note.
- Offer to help your colleague practice an answer to the question, "Tell us, what happened in your last position?"
- Offer to help your colleague practice interviews or prep for an upcoming recruitment, especially if you have more recent experience with interviewing and recruitment.
- Hire a member in transition for interim work or special projects. Income and continued work are important needs for someone in transition.
- When going to ICMA or MCMA conferences, invite a member in transition to share your room at no cost. While both ICMA and MCMA will waive conference fees, travel and lodging expenses are difficult for an MIT.
- Drop off a bottle of wine, a growler, coffee, or a gift card for dinner. The gesture may seem small, but it is meaningful.
- Be positive. Talk about "when" not "if" the colleague will return to work.
- Consider being a reference for a colleague or providing information on opportunities the colleague is pursuing.
- Become familiar with the resources that ICMA and MCMA offer managers in transition and encourage your colleague to take advantage of any resources offered by MCMA or ICMA. ○

*Contact Stevens at [cstevens@cottage-grove.org](mailto:cstevens@cottage-grove.org).*

# Senior Advisor Reminder— Why Not Connect?

*Kevin Frazell, MCMA Secretariat Officer*

MCMA wants to remind all members about our fantastic Senior Advisor Program, which is co-sponsored with ICMA. The four distinguished and now-retired members of our profession listed below are making their time and considerable professional experience available to all of us.

The focus of the Senior Advisor Program is professional support. Whether it's an issue with staff, a community "hot potato," difficult times with a member of the governing body, or just the need to get a listening ear and some good advice on a current project, the senior advisors are here to help. All four are available by phone, and often can drop by your office for a cup of coffee or a local restaurant for a bite to eat. You'll also find the senior advisors at the MCMA Annual Conference and, often, at regional meetings of managers and administrators in your area of the state.

## The four advisors, their locations, and contact information are:

### Bill Craig

St. Michael  
(763) 367-0870  
peggr@aol.com

### Tim Madigan

Faribault  
(507) 339-2605  
madigan67@gmail.com

### Tom Hedges

Eagan  
(651) 895-7881  
thedges23@comcast.net

### Bob Thistle

Coon Rapids  
(763) 755-3563  
r.thistle@comcast.net

Our fifth senior advisor, Bill Bassett, is taking a reprieve while he deals with health issues. ○

## Reaching the MCMA Secretariat

### For MCMA Secretariat services, contact:

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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 Kate Brenna,  
Administrative Assistant, at kbrenna@lmc.org.

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

## Appointments and other professional news

- **Mike Anderson**, city administrator, Birchwood Village, has been appointed assistant city manager, Waseca.
- **Bradley Chapulis**, community and economic development director, Worthington, has been appointed city administrator, Baxter.
- **Brian Fitsinger**, city administrator, Cloquet, has been appointed deputy county administrator, St. Louis County.
- **Renae Fry**, administrative coordinator, Sauk County in Wisconsin, has been appointed city administrator, North Branch.
- **Tina Goodroad**, director of planning and development, Dayton, has been appointed city administrator there.
- **Tobin Lay**, treasurer, Birchwood Village, has been appointed city administrator there.
- **Jessica Loftus**, city administrator, Orono, is in transition.
- **Jackie Schwerm**, senior management analyst, Eden Prairie, has been appointed assistant city administrator, Waconia.
- **Jenelle Teppen**, city administrator, LeSeur, has been appointed deputy director of public services and revenue, Dakota County. ○

## Board meeting recap

The MCMA Board of Directors met on March 24 at the League of Minnesota Cities and took the following actions:

- Met with the senior advisors for a review of the program.
- Received a report from the Recognition and Membership Committee on ways to strengthen support for managers in transition.
- Adopted a fiscal year 2018 budget of \$156,250. The budget includes three local government intern stipends of \$3,500 each, and a total of \$3,000 to support managers in transition.
- Accepted the proposal of Grandview Lodge to continue hosting the MCMA Annual Conference for the years 2018-2022. ○

# Cybersecurity and crisis management ... oh no!

*Steve Taylor, Second Vice President, MCMA, Sherburne County*

The Mid-Winter Conference took place at beautiful Fitger's Inn in Duluth on Feb. 2-3. About 45 city and county administrators and their guests attended the conference to learn from leaders in the fields of cybersecurity and crisis management.

The Professional Development Committee, 10 very capable city and county administrators, decided on these topics because there was an interest in learning about issues that are both current and substantive—providing information you can bring back to the office and use.

## **Cybersecurity policies**

Presenter Mike Johnson, a director of graduate studies at the Technological Leadership Institute at the University of Minnesota, is responsible for providing leadership in the areas of cyber security and critical infrastructure protection. He held nothing back as he explained the vulnerabilities we all have to deal with in our daily lives and what to do to avoid disruption of critical city and county systems.

He focused on the need to develop internal policies to strengthen our systems and to identify a myriad of different malware and other malicious attacks, which can completely disable computer networks. He provided many examples of how systems can and have been compromised. Strengthening passwords is one way to keep "the bad guys" out, and he discussed incorporating symbols such as \$@%& into your passwords.

## **Crisis communication mantra**

Gail Plewacki spoke to us based on her experience as an award-winning investigative journalist with KARE 11

and KSTP, and 15 years in the public sector. Her mantra for dealing with an organizational crisis is to "prevent, prepare, and practice."

Under the "prevent" category, Gail said you need to regularly evaluate areas of operations for image risks whether it be police, snow removal, or water quality. In order to "prepare," take the time to think about how you will respond to a PR crisis and have staff proactively identified to manage and mitigate. Finally, the "practice" area involves scheduling leadership team discussions about risk areas several times a year, and training spokespeople in effective response techniques.

Gail went on to provide several examples of poorly executed and well executed crisis management events. Finally, she outlined the "Top Six Rules for Risk Communications":

1. Be truthful
2. Make sure you know the facts
3. Don't minimize the seriousness
4. Never blame others
5. Do the right thing
6. Say something! Reporters and others will fill the void!

The workshop was filled with a significant amount of information with many takeaways so we can all improve our respective organizations. ◻

*Contact Taylor at [steve.taylor@co.sherburne.mn.us](mailto:steve.taylor@co.sherburne.mn.us).*

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## **MCMA enters a new state affiliate agreement with ICMA**

*Kevin Frazell, Secretariat Officer*

Our national professional association, the International City/County Management Association (ICMA), periodically reviews and updates its affiliate agreements with state associations like MCMA. In December, the MCMA board approved a new agreement with ICMA that aligns the purpose and programs of the two organizations. Areas of emphasis are ethics, leadership and professional development, advocacy for the profession, member development, engagement and support, ICMA governance, and inclusiveness and diversity.

The agreement runs in perpetuity until amended at the request of either ICMA or MCMA. A copy of the agreement is posted on the MCMA website under the ICMA Resources link. ◻

# Recognition & Membership Committee report: supporting our managers in transition

*Bart Fisher, 1st Vice President, city administrator, Oakdale*

I want to start out by recognizing and thanking the members of the Recognition & Membership Committee for all of the hard work they have put in this year! In addition to selecting the Barrett Award winner, the committee was charged with discussing and recommending how MCMA might better support our managers in transition (MIT).

We have had great discussions at our meetings and made the following recommendations to the board at their March 24 meeting:

- Create a specific MIT link on the MCMA website containing both resources for those in transition as well as information for all members on ways to support MITs. Charlene Stevens (Cottage Grove) has put together an excellent list of “Ways to Help a Colleague” that is included in this newsletter and will be on the website.
- Encourage MCMA members to hire colleagues to carry out short-term project work in their cities and counties. This will be facilitated on the website with a standing list of those interested in being employed in such assignments, along with a model short-term employment agreement that can be used by members. Reminders will also be sent to members throughout the year.

### **Additional committee discussion and board action:**

- The committee also spent quite a bit of time discussing how interim manager/administrator openings and appointments are handled by MCMA and how changes to that process might be in order. This included talking with a number of in-state and out-state recruitment firms about interim placements. Presently, the League of Minnesota Cities keeps a list of people interested in obtaining interim positions and provides the list to cities upon request. The board took action to direct the secretariat to request that LMC also add interested hiring firms to this list of names.
- There was also much discussion at the committee level regarding the professional services MCMA provides to our colleagues who are in transition. Presently, as many of you are aware, a member in transition receives one hour of free consultation with attorney Roger Knutson. The committee discussed how we might expand those professional services to include career planning, resume writing, coaching, interviewing, and general counseling. The board directed the secretariat to look into how such services might be provided in a fashion similar to those provided in our city/county organizations for employees through employee assistance programs.

A big thank you to committee members Mike Funk and Charlene Stevens for their work in revising and updating the MIT Guide! This updated guide provides many valuable resources for MITs. It will be posted on the website and provided to colleagues in transition.

I would be remiss if I did not also mention that MCMA has a number of senior advisors who can be a valuable resource to those experiencing difficulties in their positions and are in transition as well as anyone seeking advice about the profession. Their names are listed within this newsletter and the committee would encourage members to utilize the talents and advice of these individuals.

Again, thank you to all of the committee members for the time and energy they have brought to the Recognition & Membership Committee. Great work! ◻

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



# Moments from Mornson

By Michael Mornson, City Manager, Hopkins

During my 31-plus years of being a city manager/administrator I have dealt with some crazy stories and issues. We all have our conflicts—between residents and council, council and staff, and staff dealing with other staff. Conflicts at any level are interesting to deal with in government. The stories that I am sharing are a little off the wall. I will only share the city with my first story. For the rest of the stories, I will leave it up to you to determine where it happened.

## Story #1: Flat Tires

I started my first job on April 1, 1985. Yes, April Fool's Day, as administrator for the cities of Carver and Young America. Four months into the job, Carver held a public hearing on construction of sewer and water for the entire city. The population was 800, and every house had private septic tanks and wells. The council voted for it despite the public not wanting it.

As we walked out of the Carver City Hall we were stopped by the sight of the mayor's four flat tires and other damage to his vehicle. At the age of 23, and four months in the job, I started wondering if this profession was for me. Hey, all we were trying to do was get safe drinking water to the public.

## Story #2: Stag Party

The local fire department decided it was OK to have a stag party for one of its own at

the fire station. The department may have pulled it off had a local resident not popped in after noticing all the activity at the station. The resident thought it was a fundraiser for the department and wanted to assist in the efforts.

## Story #3: A Prostitute

A new resident from the east coast moved into town and filed a police report for theft from an escort. He felt cheated that he did not get his full 60 minutes for which he paid. When the officer responding informed him that prostitution was illegal in this state, the resident asked if the officer could forget he made the call. The officer responded with a "that's probably a good idea."

## Story #4: Fire Chief

A fire chief decided to patrol the city on Halloween with his fire truck and attempt to arrest individuals doing bad things. He carried several sets of handcuffs in the fire vehicle. He did not understand that the police department was not happy with him. I recall this one since I had to discipline him while two officers sat outside my door for protection. This was the second time I thought about leaving the profession. ◻

Contact Mornson at [mmornson@hopkinsmn.com](mailto:mmornson@hopkinsmn.com).

**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).

Be sure to  
check out  
MCMA's  
website:

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