

President's column

By Steve Taylor, MCMA President, County Administrator, Sherburne County

Well, now I've done it. I have officially put in my notice to the Sherburne County Board and am retiring effective June 21 of this year—a date chosen for several reasons which I will discuss later. This is where I will try to wrap up my 14 years of living, learning, and having fun in Minnesota. It's a tall order but here it goes.

I have lived in seven states, seven houses and have had seven jobs ... wow, triple seven; I should go to Vegas! Throughout my 30+ year career, and especially in Minnesota, I have been extremely fortunate to have had mentors to emulate while also gaining valuable experiences from professional associations. It's been a privilege to have been affiliated with MCMA for 13 years and on the MCMA Board since 2015. Further, I have attended eight ICMA conferences, obtained my credentialed manager status and attended a multitude of local technical trainings and mid-winter workshops. When time allowed I attended various MACA events as well. I have become a more avid reader (leaders are readers) because of Don Salverda's "book club."

The reason I mention these numerous enriching experiences is because of their importance in shaping me both professionally and personally. It didn't used to be that way.

“My journey since moving to Minnesota has allowed me—actually, taught me—to be a better administrator, and MCMA has been the catalyst.”

I moved from Colorado where I worked as a director of finance & administration for an agency of the city and county of Denver. I was looking for a new opportunity in local government in part because I wasn't developing as a person—there was just something missing. I applied for a job with Carver County where Dave Hemze saw something in me, took a risk, and hired me as his assistant (referred to as administrative services division director at the time).

Parenthetically, I moved to Minnesota with my wife and three kids who were 9, 7, and 5 years old at the time; we knew no one except for a brother-in-law who lived in Woodbury. My oldest is now gainfully employed at Emerson Electric in Shakopee while the other two attend out-of-state colleges. They all received an excellent education and I have Minnesota, at least in part, to thank for their success.

In my eight years working for Dave I observed how he interacted with elected officials, his plans to reorganize county operations and his interactions with residents. I filed away the strategies he used to navigate difficult issues both from an operational and political standpoint. While managing a large organization, Dave carved out time to engage with various associations especially MCMA because he understood the value of ongoing knowledge acquisition. He's pretty good at playing quarters too!

Appointments and other professional news

- **Charlene Stevens**, former city administrator, Cottage Grove, has been appointed senior vice president, GovHR USA.
- **Dana Hardie**, administrative services director, Burnsville, has been appointed city manager, Victoria.
- **Michael Brethorst**, city administrator, Melrose, has been appointed county administrator, Becker County.
- **Roxy Traxler**, county administrator, Sibley County, has been appointed vice president of finance and operations at South Central College in Mankato.
- **Scott Duddeck**, fire chief, North St. Paul, has been appointed city manager there. ☐

MCMA at ICMA: Join in for dinner at The Diner in Nashville



Join MCMA attendees at the ICMA Annual Conference in Nashville for dinner at The Diner on the evening of Monday, Oct. 21. The Diner offers six floors overlooking downtown Nashville with both casual and upscale dining. **Check out a virtual tour of the venue here: <https://www.thediner.com/virtual-tour>.**



The Diner is .2 miles (approx. 5-minute walk) from the headquarter hotel (Omni Nashville Hotel) and half a mile from the Music City Center where the conference will be held. MCMA attendees will enjoy food from a pre-selected menu on the private fourth floor (and fifth floor if needed). The price will be similar to previous years, around \$55/person. Stay tuned for sign-up details in the coming months. If you have questions, contact Heather Corcoran (hcorcoran@lmc.org, (651) 281-1256) or Kate Brenna (kbrenna@lmc.org, (651) 281-1249). ☐

MCMA Newsletter

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Your Senior Advisors are here to help!

A Winter Workshop like no other

By Dianne Miller, 2nd Vice President, Assistant City Administrator, Eagan

- ☑ Learn tools and insights to manage in today's age of political polarization.
- ☑ Walk away feeling inspired and energized after hearing the stories and advice of your peers.
- ☑ Enjoy a Friday with your friends and colleagues at a fabulous micro-brewery.

Kudos to everyone who was a part of the MCMA Winter Workshop. The Professional Development Committee thanks you for the suggestions and ideas that led to many changes this year. The result of the pre-conference survey was a new location, a one-day format, and a provocative and timely topic. We shattered previous attendance levels, and feedback was strong about the content of the day. A special thanks to the many panelists who honestly and passionately shared their stories, wisdom, and lessons. Speaking for many who attended, we walked away feeling grateful for this profession and one another. Keep up the great work and we will look forward to the 2020 Winter Conference! ☐

Contact Miller at dmiller@cityofeagan.com.

MCMA Board approves fiscal year 2020 budget

By Kevin Frazell, MCMA Secretariat

The MCMA Board has adopted a budget for fiscal year (FY) 2020 of \$175,150, a 2.3 percent increase over FY 2019. Our association ends FY 2019 with a projected deficit of \$4,265, substantially less than what was included in the adopted budget. The year-end fund balance stands at \$68,849, or 40 percent.

By far the major line item in the budget, both for revenues and expenditures, is the MCMA Annual Conference. This event happens almost immediately after the beginning of each fiscal year on May 1. Projected revenues and expenditures for the 2019 conference are balanced at \$103,000, with the major cost being meal charges from Grandview. The conference does also generate a net profit of around \$8,000 from conference patron revenues.

Other budget highlights, largely unchanged from FY 2019, are continuation of the three \$3,500 local government intern stipends, two \$1,000 stipends for first-time attendees at the ICMA National Conference, and \$2,000 in professional services stipends for managers in transition. The Monday evening dinner at ICMA is provided a \$2,000 subsidy and the Winter Workshop receives \$1,000.

The programmed deficit for the FY 2020 budget is \$3,450, which the board concluded was very acceptable given the relatively high level of fund balance. The board is not proposing any change in the member dues schedule for next year. ☐

Reaching the MCMA secretariat

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MCMA's website:**

www.mncma.org

Education and Outreach Committee Update

Susan Arntz, Committee Chair, City Administrator, Waconia

MCMA INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

The 2018-2019 MCMA Internship Program awarded matching grants to the cities of Cottage Grove, Maple Grove, and Moorhead. These cities were selected from a pool of six applicants. Interns in each city have completed their internships and submitted their final reports to the committee. The committee reviewed the final reports and approved reimbursements.

Some highlights from the interns' final reports include:

- In Cottage Grove, an intern administered and analyzed the annual employee survey.
- In Maple Grove, an intern created and implemented a new employee orientation program.
- In Moorhead, an intern enhanced the city's communication efforts through e-notifications and social media.

For the 2019-2020 MCMA Internship Program, we received four applications. The applications were reviewed, and three recipients were selected:

- Bloomington
- Litchfield
- Rochester

The recipients indicated a wide range of work assignments in community development, communications, human resources, budgeting, and sustainability. We look forward to receiving their final reports to review all the opportunities the interns were given and the great work they completed. The reports will be used to help other cities create high quality internships.

Watch for dates for the next year's solicitation.

MANAGER-IN-RESIDENCE PROGRAM

In 2018, MCMA started the Manager-in-Residence Program with the University of North Dakota (UND). Between Oct. 29, 2018 and Nov. 2, 2018, UND hosted Manager-in-Residence (and UND graduate) Dan Tienter, director of finance and city treasurer for the City of Fridley, Minnesota. During this time, Tienter presented information on a variety of local government topics to three undergraduate and two graduate level courses with an enrollment of more than 210 students. Additionally, Tienter participated in several other activities, including, but not limited to:

- Giving a lecture in the graduate-level courses on property tax administration.
- Attending a luncheon with UND faculty to discuss course curriculum with respect to local government.
- Participating in a panel discussion on local government careers with four other local government practitioners.
- Holding approximately eight hours of office hours to discuss local government topics with students.
- Meeting with UND faculty to discuss the formation of an ICMA Student Chapter.
- Meeting with UND faculty to discuss strategies to encourage the participation of local government managers in the Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs and Administration, which provides accreditation for public administration programs.

A final report is due to our committee and we will review the activities and recommendations for any future iterations of the program. ○

Contact Arntz at sarntz@waconia.org.

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News from Women in the Profession Committee

By GERALYN BARONE, Minnetonka City Manager

It's official: MCMA's Women in the Profession group has been upgraded from task force to permanent standing committee status! The MCMA Board granted approval at the end of last year.

In 2015, a group of MCMA members met to discuss ICMA's white paper regarding the status of women in the local government profession and how Minnesota might address some of the identified concerns. Nationally, only 13 percent of local government CEOs are women, and in Minnesota 26 percent are women.

An ambitious brainstorming session resulted in a list of what might be done to remove barriers and advance the status of women in Minnesota. Subsequently, the MCMA board sanctioned the Women in the Profession Task Force. Waite Park City Administrator Shaunna Johnson initially served as chair, and Minnetonka City Manager GERALYN BARONE assumed that role in 2017.

Priorities of the committee are as follows:

- Educating both members and elected officials about potential obstacles that prevent women and young professionals from advancing in the field.
- Strengthening programs that mentor, support and assist women and other professionals in their career advancement.
- Sponsoring social and networking opportunities for women professionals.

A variety of activities open to all MCMA members and beyond have been orchestrated by the group. Examples of sponsored events include:

- Coffee & Careers informal networking and discussion sessions (groups in the west metro, east metro, north/central Minnesota and western Minnesota meet regularly)
- Pre-conference seminars at the MCMA Annual Conference
- Cocktails & Careers at the MCMA Annual Conference
- Lunch activities at the MCMA Winter Conference
- Breakout educational session at the League of Minnesota Cities (LMC) Annual Conference
- Breakfast with Minnesota Women in City Government (MWCG) at the LMC Annual Conference

The committee is continuing with many of the above-noted activities, with more planned:

- Coffee & Careers on Steroids—"east meets west" seminar (fall 2019)
- Virtual Coffee & Careers (to remove travel barrier for members)
- Co-sponsorship of an LMC Annual Conference breakout session with MWCG (June 2019)

In making its request for committee status, the task force recognized that some of the initial activities explored in October 2015 can best be addressed by other MCMA committees, especially the Education and Outreach Committee. As has already been demonstrated, the group complements the efforts of other committees, such as the Professional Development and Annual Conference committees.

Plan to join us at the MCMA Annual Conference. Register for the pre-conference session "Pathways to Leadership" set for Wed., May 1 at 1:30 p.m. and socialize at "Cocktails & Careers" on Thurs., May 2 at 8 p.m. Everyone is welcome! ☐

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President's column *Continued from page 1*

John Mulder, the Hermantown city administrator, has authored an excellent article in this newsletter where he discusses the need to continuously learn from others, keep an open mind and the importance of humility. I have tried to embody all those things. My journey since moving to Minnesota has allowed me—actually, taught me—to be a better administrator, and MCMA has been the catalyst. The highlight for me is the annual conference where I'm able to commiserate, collaborate, hang out and share difficult conundrums and satisfying successes with fellow administrators.

Reading about leadership concepts has also contributed significantly to my self-growth. While I keep somewhat up to date on the latest management tomes, I particularly enjoy biographies. They capture my interest as I try to understand the motivation and decision-making process of the great leaders of our time. My exposure to the lasting value of reading has been reinforced by Don Salverda and his group of west metro administrators. (Did you know Don was a part-time Roseville police officer, a Ramsey County commissioner for 18 years succeeding his dad, once a good friend of Loni Anderson, and most recently the founder and first president of the Roseville Area Optimist Club?) Don's enduring positive attitude and strong sense of ethics has had and will continue to have a lasting impact on me.

“The highlight for me is the annual conference where I'm able to commiserate, collaborate, hang out and share difficult conundrums and satisfying successes with fellow administrators.”

So why would I want to leave now? Why June? I have a county board that functions cohesively and effectively. The county is growing and has great staff. In a contrary way, maybe that's why I thought it was best to go now ... things are going well, a solid foundation has been built, and maybe it's time to let someone else move the bar even higher. Another reason has to do with the fact that a number of important efforts are wrapping up such as:

- Completion of the \$62 million addition & renovation project at our government center in Elk River (it's only taken 33 months).
- Agreements on our 11 union contracts, well eight of 11 so far.
- Completion of county tax abatement negotiations with Google regarding their proposed data center in the county.
- And most importantly, my term as president of MCMA.

As I sign off a final time and settle down in the home we purchased in Wilmington, North Carolina, I will bring with me all that my mentors and MCMA have provided. As I have mentioned to some of you, I hope to teach public administration at a nearby university as I have a strong desire to keep my toes in local government. What better way than to teach emerging leaders and continue the cycle of learning?

Thanks for all your support over the years. ☉

Contact Taylor at steve.taylor@co.sherburne.mn.us.

Still the intern

By John Mulder, MCMA Board Member, City Administrator, Hermantown

I served as the administrative intern in Roseville and Inver Grove Heights in the late 1980s (it is a little painful to admit that it was that long ago). I may very well hold the record as the longest serving intern in the history of Inver Grove Heights as I searched, applied, and interviewed for my first “real” job. My job search was becoming frustrating, and at times I wondered if I would ever land that first job. I remember at a one of the monthly luncheons of the Minnesota Association of Urban Management Assistants (MAUMA—the precursor to APMP), we were asked to introduce ourselves by saying what we as kids wanted to be when we grew up. I jokingly said that I wanted to be an administrative intern.

As an intern, I knew that there was so much to learn and that I hadn’t had any measure of success in the profession. My short-term, very narrow and specific definition of success was becoming an assistant city administrator. I wanted to develop a sense of expertise and be recognized as someone with a level of success on an issue or project and thus create a level of credibility.

Over the years, I have learned a lot by attending various conferences, seminars, and listening to other city and county administrators. I have learned from experienced professionals, and now that I am 30 plus years away from my internships I am learning from a group of impressive young professionals. I look at them, and wish I would have had the knowledge and skill sets that they have when I was that age.

I finally attended my first ICMA annual meeting in 2017, after being in the profession of local government management for over 25 years. While at the conference, I said to my wife that sometimes I feel like the intern. She lovingly reminded me that I have been doing this kind of work for a long time, and that I shouldn’t feel like that. My point was that while I have accomplished a lot and have had varying degrees of success on different projects, I still feel like I have a lot to learn.

I enjoy my position of leadership in my community. I enjoy being involved in both shaping my community and helping my city council make their vision for our community a reality. I like helping staff figure out how to move from an idea to a tangible result. But I have come to believe that maybe feeling like the intern isn’t a bad thing.

I enjoy reading about and studying principles of management and leadership. The popular notion is leaders are really smart people who have a clear direction of where they are headed and have a specific and precise plan on exactly how they are going to get there. It has been my experience though, that often leaders, while having a sense of direction, are really just trying to navigate the various trials, roadblocks, and obstacles along the way. In the process, they are learning new things, trying and failing, and working out all the potholes and frost heaves of their work.

Leaders need to have a level of expertise, but I think leaders should be careful not to think or act like they are the smartest person in the room. Now, it may very well be that they are the smartest person in the room on the given topic of the day, but if they act that way or think that way too much, they may very well miss important lessons from other people. A large part of leadership is humility and being vulnerable enough to admit you can still learn from others.

Success is rarely measured over months and years, but rather over a career. Remember to be humble and ready to learn from others. I think it is the fool that says that they have it all figured out, and then closes themselves off to new lessons.

If being the intern means still learning and looking for a degree of success, then maybe we should all strive to still be the intern. ◉

Contact Mulder at jmulder@hermantownmn.com.

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