

President's column

By Laurie Hokkanen, MCMA President, Chanhassen City Manager

Writing in the MCMA newsletter is one of the privileges of serving as the MCMA president. For this newsletter, I want to dedicate the space to Aaron Sather, a bright and energetic 26-year-old who served as management analyst III at Dakota County until his unexpected passing on Feb. 20. Aaron had also worked for the City of Savage, City of Cottage Grove, and Carver County on his journey to a career in public service. Although early in his career, Aaron was already giving back to the profession by serving on the APMP Board.

His obituary reads:

"Aaron M. Sather, age 26, of Savage, MN, passed away on Sunday, February 20, 2022, at Fairview Southdale Hospital, in Edina, MN.

Survived by parents, Michelle "Shelley" and Steven; brother, Kyle; grandfather, George Ware; uncle, Curt (Sue) Sather; fiancée, Claire Gagnon. Preceded in death by grandparents, Vicky Ware, and Clarence and Dorothy Sather; uncle, Scott Ware.

Aaron is a life long resident of Minnesota, graduated from Prior Lake High School in 2013, and went on to attend University of Saint Thomas, where he earned his Bachelor's in History, and later attended Hamline University and earned his Master of Public Administration in 2019. Aaron had many passions and remarkable qualities, which are impossible to summary in a few short sentences.

Most notably, he worked at Dakota County in Physical Development, where he developed an interest in drone piloting, and ultimately had ambitions of working in City Administration. Outside of work, Aaron also enjoyed power lifting, reading about history, listening to songs about history, and could tell you everything about anything that has ever happened. He also had a commitment to learning more about investment strategies, sound financial health, and sharing his pursuit of knowledge with

"... the best we can do to honor those who don't have the opportunities they hoped for is to use our time well."

others who were interested. Aaron was a fantastic story teller, and had a knack for being able to paint a picture and make you laugh. His vast knowledge of history gave him the ability to relate and create conversation with practically anyone. Aaron was also fond of trips up to the North Shore, where his family has been vacationing for generations. We are incredibly grateful and thankful for the experiences and memories we could share with him, but we wish there were more. His time with us here was cut short far too soon, and we miss and love him deeply."

Although I didn't personally know Aaron well, I feel his loss and offer my condolences to his family, friends, and colleagues. Aaron had dreams of becoming a city or county manager. He was bright and enthusiastic, and brought a fantastic energy to

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Appointments and other professional news

- **Lindy Crawford**, city administrator, Mora, has been appointed city manager, White Bear Lake.
- **Geralyn Barone**, city manager, Minnetonka, has retired.
- **Michael Barone**, city administrator, Minnetrista, has retired.
- **Brad Martens**, city administrator, Corcoran, has been appointed city manager, Shoreview.
- **Tom McCarty**, city administrator, Stillwater, has retired.
- **Dianne Miller**, assistant city administrator, Eagan, has been appointed city administrator.
- **Dave Osberg**, city administrator, Eagan, has retired.
- **Alex Saxe**, management fellow, Dakota County, has been hired as assistant city administrator, Wyoming.

Do you have a new appointment or other professional news to share?

Contact the secretariat at the information listed.

Reaching the MCMA secretariat

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Your Senior Advisors are here to help!

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MCMA internship stipend recipients

By Madison Hagenau, MCMA Secretariat

Every year the Education and Outreach Committee of MCMA awards stipends to three jurisdictions to provide a talented young person with real-life experience working in local government management.

The 2022 stipends were awarded to the cities of Otsego, Burnsville, and Dundas.

The committee considers the following elements when selecting the recipients of the stipends:

- MCMA membership status.
- Quality of the proposed work tasks.
- Exposure to public administration and local government management.
- Program supervision.
- Mentorship opportunities. ◻

MCMA Board meeting recap

By Madison Hagenau, MCMA Secretariat

The MCMA Board met on Dec. 10 and Feb. 25. Highlights of the meetings were:

- Interviews of candidates for the ICMA Midwest region vice president position.
- An update on the planning of the Winter Workshop.
- Approval of the annual conference budget and sponsorship packages.
- An update on the plans for the 2022 Annual Conference.
- Appointment of the Site Search Committee to consider location options for future annual conferences. ◻

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conversations about local government. One day, he might have written his own president's column. My small tribute is to offer this column to share his story and remember him.

Many of you have experienced personal losses over the last few years. We couldn't be there for each other in those losses in traditional ways. So, I'd like to say to each of you that I'm sorry for that. I'm also reminded that our opportunity to serve and do the work we love is not guaranteed to us. We don't know what lies ahead, and the best we can do to honor those who don't have the opportunities they hoped for is to use our time well. ◻

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Reflections from recent retirees

By Jackie Schulze, Assistant City Administrator, Waconia

Throughout this pandemic, we've heard a lot from current city managers and administrators about how their day-to-day operations have been impacted. We've seen the workplace change significantly in the last two years, and organizations have had to pivot to address work from home challenges, hybrid or fully remote meetings, lack of training, etc. However, one thing that we haven't talked much about is how the pandemic has impacted managers who are/were retiring in the middle of it. How did the pandemic impact their last year of work as a city manager/administrator? Did COVID play a role in their decision to retire? Did it affect their "goodbyes?" And now that these former managers are retired, has COVID altered their plans?

When it came to planning out their retirement, none of the former managers I talked to stated that COVID played a role in their retirement timeline. Most retirements were planned around financial decisions, time spent in the workplace, family and personal situations, etc. Everyone retired within their general timeline that was planned pre-COVID, give or take a few months.

HOW WORK GOT DONE

While COVID didn't play a role in any of the managers' retirement timelines, everyone echoed a similar theme: COVID played a role in how work got completed in their final year. Mike Barone, who retired from Minnetrista at the end of 2021, stated that quite a few "back burner" projects never saw the light of day, which was a difference from previous years. Retired Shoreview City Manager Terry Schwerm, whose last day was Nov. 30, 2021, stated that because there was such an emphasis on responding to new mandates and adjusting service models that there were other priorities and goals that the city had to delay — others echoed this. Geralyn Barone, who retired from Minnetonka in September of 2021, saw a decline in the ability to develop strong personal relationships with newer council members, as virtual meetings didn't allow for the more casual conversations. She also wishes that she would have kept up with MCMA's Coffee and Careers, even if it would have been virtual.

Mark McNeill, who retired from Mendota Heights after 45 years in the public sector, stated that while responding to the pandemic was unique, as public administrators it's our job to solve these types of problems, and once everyone figured out how to adapt to the virtual setting the same work got accomplished.

SAYING GOODBYE

The COVID pandemic had different impacts on these retired managers' "goodbyes" both from their cities and their colleagues. McNeill stated that this was a big challenge — his work retirement recognition with the City Council and staff was held outside so people could safely gather. He also saw great turnout at his non-work retirement celebration, where many colleagues showed up — but several did send their regrets because they weren't comfortable gathering at the time. Geralyn Barone was able to safely gather with her colleagues, council, and City staff to celebrate her retirement in September and states that she was "most appreciative and humbled by all who acknowledged my service." Mike Barone

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“And for those who are contemplating retirement, don't hesitate to reach out to a recent retiree to ask for advice or talk through your decision!”

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stated that he was able to have a great send-off from the City Council at his last council meeting as well as a nice retirement party, however, some invitees did send their regrets due to the omicron variant ramping up. He also recommends to anyone considering retirement to do so in the spring, summer, or fall — winter can cause weather challenges, and his party date of Dec. 15 saw rain, high winds, thunderstorms, and tornados!

Schwerm, however, stated that COVID had a significant impact on his ability to say goodbye to staff, friends, and colleagues in the way he had hoped to do so. He was unable to take his management team to lunch, an annual tradition near the holidays, or hold an employee gathering so he could say thank you to Shoreview's outstanding staff for their work and dedication. Shoreview is hoping to plan something for later this spring when it should be safer to gather!

POST-RETIREMENT PLANS

COVID has played a significant role in all of MCMA's recent retirees' retirement plans. Mike Barone's father caught COVID, and while he didn't have to be hospitalized, Mike has spent a significant amount of time in Green Bay to help care for him. His son is planning a wedding in October of this year, and they are hoping that the wedding will continue as normal as he has seen a lot of his son's friends' weddings cancelled due to the pandemic. Geralyn echoed that right after her retirement, she was able to take a few planned trips, but the recent omicron surge has impacted some plans to start the year — she is working through them.

For McNeill, the largest impact has been travel related as well. He and his wife have had to twice reschedule getting together with their travel partners from Sweden. In addition, he has a daughter in Australia who has been on lockdown for most of the last two years, and they still are unable to travel there to see her! Schwerm also echoed the travel theme, as he and his wife were hoping to travel someplace warm for a month or so, but the omicron surge (and his daughter's pregnancy) has impacted their plans. All hope to be able to travel again as soon as it is safe to do so.

WORDS OF WISDOM

All recent retirees had great words of wisdom for those who are considering retirement. Schwerm was told by retired City Manager Clark Arneson to try to take a trip immediately after retiring to get away from the work, which Schwerm was unable to do due to COVID. McNeill encourages everyone to retire when they are ready, if they can. He writes "there are no certainties in life — be prepared to pivot and adjust to the circumstances." Mike Barone echoed that when it comes to retirement, each person needs to do what works for them. He plans to stay involved in the profession and is excited to see everyone at Grandview this spring. Geralyn Barone highly recommends retirement to those who can make the move, although the immediate cutoff from emails was startling at first. She also stated that you don't necessarily realize how big of a commitment public service is until you step away from the profession. She writes "the newfound freedom to be curious about things I never had the time for before has been a gift."

Thank you to some of MCMA's most recent retirees for sharing their stories. Although their last year or so in the city management field was not what they expected, they all helped to successfully navigate their communities through one of the largest challenges they likely saw in their career, and their work did not go unnoticed. For those who we were unable to celebrate, we hope to be able to celebrate your accomplishments soon! And for those who are contemplating retirement, don't hesitate to reach out to a recent retiree to ask for advice or talk through your decision! **◻**

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My ICMA Executive Board experience

By *Clint Gridley, Woodbury City Administrator*

My, what a strange journey it has been since 2018 as I pursued and was elected to serve as a Midwest Region vice president to the 21-member ICMA Executive Board. I left out the word “long” because it has all seemed so short and fast. As I reflect on my time that ended last fall as the Midwest representative, I want to provide a few thoughts considering my ICMA board journey. First and foremost, I am so grateful for the opportunity to serve a profession I love. I greatly enjoyed getting to know the broad dimensions of our professional association and engaging with city management professionals, despite half of my board service time impacted by COVID-19 gathering and connecting restrictions.

Inclusion evolution

Over my term on the board, the overarching issue was how to broaden our inclusion efforts. Actually, long before our world was overtaken by the recent events involving social injustice, the ICMA Executive Board had been focused on working with our membership on issues of equality, diversity, and inclusion. Greater membership inclusion was the principle behind the efforts that led to the 2020 proposed and broadly approved constitutional changes providing enhanced membership rights to affiliate members.

The second area of ICMA Executive Board inclusion activity relates to policing, racial equity, and social justice that, unfortunately here in Minnesota, we have had a front row seat to. Our members have considerable involvement in providing leadership and guidance to police and sheriff’s offices. I am thankful for the heartfelt discussions the Executive Board had in this area and our June 2020 unified statement and action steps that in essence said our highest purpose is the preservation of human life. The ICMA continues to strive to assist our membership in achieving high service standards to provide for safe and healthy livable communities, equitable access and services, and protection of life and property for all.

The third area of inclusion to highlight is our international work in creating a comprehensive strategy and roadmap to advance ICMA’s global future — the “I” in ICMA. I had the good fortune of being on the inaugural Global Visioning Committee and the hiring of Managing Director, Global Engagement Alexandre Bouche to better cultivate the seeds of a more expansive international direction that will hopefully open the ICMA more to the world, and the world more to ICMA. This will change us in ways we still cannot imagine, but it is a process I fully commend to you.

In between all this, the board also submitted to members a ballot measure revision to Tenets 5 and 6 of the ICMA Code of Ethics. Our Code of Ethics is the cornerstone to our profession, and keeping the document living and relevant is critical to our membership. These changes were also well supported.

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What is ahead

While allowing greater participation within the ICMA family is a good thing and was broadly supported by the membership, it does have consequential impacts in the value proposition of full membership as it compares to the value of affiliate membership and its very affordable price. Therefore, examining the dues structure after this constitutional change is now necessary to assure the right balance of the value-to-cost between affiliate and full member rates is achieved, and that members perceive a fair correlation of their dues to the membership level service and opportunities.

A challenging project the Executive Board is also working on is redrawing ICMA's U.S. regional boundaries to hopefully achieve a better-balanced composition of members — particularly in the Southeast region as our largest membership region.

In the post pandemic world of new ways of communicating, connecting, and learning, the Transformation 2030 initiative will be important to focus on improving and developing knowledge resources, training, peer engagements, events, and technical assistance.

And as always, the ICMA Code of Ethics is a living document that will continue to be reviewed and kept current with our changing world.

Executive Board service

Serving on the ICMA Executive Board does provide a wonderful opportunity to support the local government profession and see firsthand the many collaborative partnerships of the ICMA with diverse organizations and affiliates in service to local government. The ICMA is a unique organization with a strong and rich history of support of the council-manager form of local government and serves as a liaison representing the interests of our local members in support of ICMA initiatives while providing members with valuable products and services.

In my time serving on this board, I have found that our membership shares a very strong passion and commitment to local government. We take pride in being innovative and in preparing the next generation, enhancing talent, and many other initiatives. Thank you for allowing me to bring your voice in support of advancing and growing our profession. ◻

– Contact Gridley at clint.gridley@woodburymn.gov

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