MCMA
Minnesota City/County Management Association
A State Affiliate of ICMA

MCMA Newsletter

FALL 2025

The President's Column

Leadership Through Connection: MCMA's Mentorship Initiative

By: Jackie Schulze, MCMA President, Waconia Assistant City Administrator

As fall approaches, I'm reminded of the energy and excitement that comes with a new school year. For many of us, this season stirs up memories of fresh notebooks, sharpened pencils, and the feeling of starting something new. But beyond classrooms and textbooks, fall also brings to mind the people in our lives who have helped guide and encourage us along the way — our teachers and mentors.

Throughout both my educational journey and my career, I've been fortunate to have teachers, professors, and colleagues who took the time to share their wisdom, provide perspective, and remind me that even in challenging moments, growth is possible. After returning to Minnesota following graduate school, I was welcomed into the field by individuals who encouraged me to join organizations like APMP and MCMA and took me under their wing. Years later, those same colleagues, many of whom turned into friends, continued to support me — encouraging my involvement with MCMA committees and inspiring the confidence I needed to pursue a position on the MCMA Board. Their support throughout my career has helped shape my leadership journey and continues to influence how I approach my work today.

It's in that spirit that I'm excited to share one of MCMA's key initiatives this year: the development of a formal mentorship program. Many of you are already doing this in informal ways, but many others have expressed the desire for structured opportunities to connect, learn, and support one another. Whether you're early in your career, transitioning into a new role, a first-time city administrator, or simply seeking to broaden your perspective, mentorship is one of the most meaningful ways we can strengthen our profession.

Mentorship offers transformative benefits for both parties involved. For the mentee, it can sharpen professional skills, expand professional networks, offer clarity during hard times, or advise on taking that next professional step. For the mentor, it's a chance to pass on hard-earned wisdom and experience the deep satisfaction that comes from guiding and empowering others. At its best, mentorship creates a safe space for honest dialogue, shared learning, and mutual growth.

The Education and Outreach Committee has been asked to take the lead in building this program, with the goal of launching at next year's annual conference. My hope is that it will create lasting connections, foster growth, and continue the cycle of support that has long defined our association.

Just as fall marks new beginnings for students, it also feels like the right time for us as an organization to embrace this new chapter in mentorship. I encourage each of you to consider how you might participate — whether as a mentor, a mentee, or perhaps even both.

– Contact Schulze at jschulze@waconia.org

The Professional Association of Appointed Administrators Serving Local Governments in Minnesota

Appointments and Other Professional News

- **Kris Busse**, city administrator, Owatonna, has retired.
- **Jeff Dahl**, city manager, Wayzata, has been appointed city administrator, Woodbury.
- **Clint Gridley**, city administrator, Woodbury, has retired.
- **Bret Heitkamp**, city administrator, Champlin, has retired.
- **Jenny Max**, city administrator, Nisswa, has been appointed city administrator, Champlin.
- **Allie Polsfuss**, administrative services director, Minnetrista, has been appointed city administrator, Breezy Point.
- **Jenna Tuma**, assistant city administrator, Owatonna, has been appointed city administrator.
- **Michelle Wolfe**, city manager, Blaine, has retired.

Do you have a new appointment or other professional news to share? Contact the secretariat at the information listed.

MCMA Board Meeting Recap

By: Madison Hagenau, MCMA Secretariat

The MCMA Board met on June 4, July 25, Aug. 7, Aug. 20, and Sept. 23. Highlights of the meetings include:

- Discussion of goals and priorities for President Jackie Schulze's term
- Appointment of three new senior advisors
- Appointment of members to 2025/26 committees
- Debrief of 2025 Annual Conference and discussion of early plans for the 2026 Annual Conference
- Declaring a vacancy on Board of Directors
- Appointment of new board member

MCMA Newsletter

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Your senior advisors are here to help!

Senior Advisor Changing of the Guard

MCMA members will soon see several new faces as a result of recent retirements and new appointments in the ranks of the senior advisors.

The Senior Advisor program is an ICMA/MCMA partnership that provides advice, guidance, and support to members in need of assistance from experienced, retired city managers and administrators. This assistance is available to managers, administrators, assistants, and department heads who are MCMA members.

In May, Bill Craig submitted his resignation after more than 10 years as a senior advisor. In June, Jeff Weldon, who had served as a senior advisor for both Minnesota and South Dakota, also submitted his resignation after more than seven years of senior advisor service to the profession.

The resignations left two vacancies of the five authorized senior advisor positions in the state.

The MCMA Board accepted both resignations with regret. After advertising for applicants, the Board was pleased to receive four highly qualified candidates. After one dropped out during the interviewing process, the Board chose to increase the number of senior advisors to six, and appointed the three remaining candidates.

Be sure to check out MCMA's website: mncma.org

The newly appointed senior advisors are:

Ed Shukle: Ed brings more than four decades of public sector experience. He was city administrator and manager in Benson, Mound, Farmington, Jordan, and most recently Landfall Village, and also was an assistant in Brooklyn Park. In addition, Ed brings county experience, having served in two capacities for Anoka County. He retired in 2022.

Kris Busse: Kris very recently retired after serving as city administrator of Owatonna and city manager of Waseca for a total of nearly 30 years. She also has assistant experience in Austin.

Dave Osberg: Dave retired in 2022. He has experience in both Greater Minnesota and in the metro area. He served as city administrator for more than 40 years total in Waterville, St. James, Hastings, and most recently in Eagan.

All three of the new senior advisors served for many years on the MCMA Board, and were each presidents of the organization.

Reaching the MCMA secretariat

For MCMA secretariat services, contact:

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Meet the New MCMA Board Members!

Kim Keller (1st Term Director)

Kim Keller brings nearly 20 years of experience in local government to her work. Since August 2021, she has served St. Louis Park as city manager. Previously, she held diverse positions in Minneapolis, including directing the department of regulatory services and leading programs dedicated to strategic planning and performance measurement. She previously served on the winter conference planning committee with MCMA. With a master's in public and nonprofit administration from Metropolitan State University and a bachelor's in social work from Saint Catherine University, Kim is deeply committed to fostering community well-being and progress.

To decompress, Kim can be found on road trips with her pop-up camper, designing furniture, and with her nose in a book. She's joined in these adventures by her husband of 16 years and two children, named "pre-teen" and "8 going on 70".

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mncma.org

Lindy Crawford (1st Term Director)

Lindy Crawford is the city manager of White Bear Lake, a role she has served in since December 2021. Before joining White Bear Lake, she served as the city administrator/ public utilities general manager of Mora as well as city administrator of Tonka Bay. She attained a Bachelor of Science and Master of Arts in urban and regional studies from Minnesota State University, Mankato.

Following graduation, Lindy worked as a city management fellow in Edina. Throughout her undergraduate years, she completed internships in Excelsior, Mound, Mankato, and Austin. Throughout her career, she has strived to be an active member of MCMA, serving on the Conference Planning Committee for three years and the Membership and Recognition Committee for the past ten years.

Lindy and her husband Paul were recently married in September! Together, they enjoy traveling, trying new cooking recipes, and playing with their six year old cattle dog-mix, Emmy.

MCMA Strategic Plan Update

By: Noah Schuchman, 1st Vice President, Golden Valley City Manager

At the 2025 MCMA Annual Conference, membership approved the organization's new strategic plan. Initiated by now past-President Peyton Mastera (Dilworth), the strategic plan was drafted in the fall of 2024 by the MCMA Board with the assistance of facilitator and past-President Laurie Hokkanen (Chanhassen).

The strategic plan lists six strategic priorities for the organization from 2025-2028:

1. **Advance Professional Development**
   Goal: Equip members with tools and knowledge to be effective and ethical leaders in local government.
2. **Promote the Profession & Role in Local Government**
   Goal: Raise awareness of the professional/council-manager model and the value of professional local government leadership.
3. **Drive Member Participation & Networking**
   Goal: Foster a supportive, inclusive, and collaborative professional community.
4. **Create Opportunities for the Future of the Profession**
   Goal: Prepare the next generation of leaders in local government.
5. **Provide Member Support**
   Goal: Support and promote the individuals who make up our association.
6. **Optimize Senior Advisors**
   Goal: Actively connect, guide, and support MCMA members across all stages of their careers by serving as visible, engaged mentors and facilitators of professional relationships and regional collaboration.

Be sure to check out MCMA's website: mncma.org

Since you've surely read the entire 15-page document, you know the above is just a taste of what is included in the strategic plan. If you have not yet explored it, on behalf of the Board, we encourage you to read it…and get involved! The strategic plan is available at mncma.org/about-mcma.

What is clear and universal is that this is an organization focused on you and your success. The MCMA Board is committed to advancing initiatives that prioritize and support members at all stages of their careers, but this can't be done by just the Board.

Each year, Secretariat Madison Hagenau sends out a solicitation to members to join an MCMA committee — thank you to all those who participate.

Please consider volunteering for and participating in a committee in the future — each of which will have an important role in implementing the strategic plan. For more information, visit mncma.org/committees or contact Secretariat Madison Hagenau or a board member.

Finally, I am deeply proud of the support MCMA members give one another — in good times and in bad. Earlier in this newsletter, you read President Jackie Schulze's (Waconia) column on the upcoming mentorship program that we will be working to put in place.

Developing the next generation of local government leaders is a core value and is fundamental to the future of the profession. If a committee is not right for you, please look out for opportunities in the future for you to be mentored or be a mentor.

– Contact Schuchman at nschuchman@goldenvalleymn.gov

Been There, Done That!

Unsolicited Advice from Your Senior Advisors

Your Mayor and You

By: Mark McNeill, MCMA Senior Advisor

One of the most important relationships that you will have as a professional, local government administrator is the one that you have with your mayor (or county board chair). This relationship will often determine whether your job will be smooth sailing or fraught with problems.

Regardless of whether you work for a city, a county, or a governmental board, for conciseness in this article, I'll refer to this generically as the mayor-manager relationship.

In some cases, you may inherit a seasoned mayor as you begin in a new job, and he or she will be the one who will help you settle into your new position. After a while, however, you will likely be the one who does the on-boarding when there is a change in the top elected official.

Sometimes, a new mayor will have worked their way up to the top — they might have served a term, or several terms as a member of your city council. Or, they will at least have served on one of the city's advisory commissions. In this case, the mayor should be familiar with the organization, and what ought to be his or her proper role.

Be sure to check out MCMA's website: mncma.org

Occasionally, however, you may be saddled with a new mayor who has not previously been on the "farm team" and got elected without fully understanding what is to be expected of them. Hopefully, they ran because of a desire to make things better, rather than being someone with an axe to grind.

In either case, establishing good and regular lines of communications will be important.

When the change in elected leadership comes after an election, one of your first actions should be to call the winner, offer your congratulations, and invite them to meet, preferably before they are sworn in. It may be an informal "get to know you" meeting. And if it wasn't crystal clear during the campaign, you should ask what issues they have and what they would like to accomplish. Offer your assistance when possible.

Depending on the relationship, facilitating a "hand-off" meeting between the outgoing and incoming mayors might be beneficial.

Each newly elected councilor and mayor should receive an orientation immediately after taking office (if not prior to) — a physical tour of city facilities, meetings with the city's senior staff to learn about the city's functions; reviews of the budget, any city strategic plan, etc. Familiarizing the mayor with the city's organization as soon as possible will be especially critical.

Early on, you should establish how best to communicate with your mayor — phone call, email, or text? You will want to be respectful of their time, but try to encourage the mayor to meet face to face with you at least weekly to discuss issues of the day, maybe the agenda for upcoming meetings, and if necessary, get signatures.

Depending on whether they are employed elsewhere, some mayors prefer almost daily check-ins by phone or physically coming into City Hall. (That practice usually presents other challenges, but we won't go into them here!)

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You should recommend and then hold a goal setting session for the whole council early in the new year following an election, especially if there are new faces on the council. The mayor should play a key part in that discussion.

The League of Minnesota Cities offers excellent training opportunities through the Elected Leaders Institute. On behalf of the Minnesota Mayors Association, LMC has produced a concise Minnesota Mayors Handbook, which was last updated in October 2024 and is available on the League's website. You should encourage your mayor to take advantage of these resources.

Also, what is your city's form of government? That will make a difference.

Only four cities in Minnesota have what is termed a strong mayor form of government — Minneapolis, St. Paul, St. Cloud, and Duluth. Just because your mayor has a domineering personality doesn't make them a "strong mayor"; their power comes from the law!

Most Minnesota cities that employ MCMA members are either Plan A (council administrator) or Plan B (council manager). As such, the mayor's powers are defined by state law but are sometimes supplemented by city ordinance. The Minnesota Mayors Handbook spells out those statutory powers. You should go through those with your mayor so that they are certain that their responsibilities are understood.

Beyond the officially defined mayoral duties, there are other unofficial duties which are also important.

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One of the more important things that a mayor should do is build consensus among the other elected officials regarding policy issues (while being mindful of open meetings laws). If they can't or won't, that may need to fall to another on the elected board, or you as the manager — however, depending on the topic, that may present complications for you ethically or politically. Also, an effective mayor must be able to run a meeting without dominating the discussion.

The mayor may be the spokesperson for the city, whether with school group tours, through the local news media, or when meeting with state or federal legislators. But if the mayor is not comfortable with public speaking, help him or her delegate those chores to another person (another elected official, yourself, or a public information officer) so that the job will get done.

For your sake and theirs, the mayor needs to know how to "stay on their side of the fence" so there is no confusion as to who is responsible to take action. If the mayor strays into an administrative area, a gentle reminder from you to them saying "...That's not really your job — let me do that!" might suffice. However, if frequent incursions into non-policy issues happen and reminders from you to "stay in your lane" don't work, enlisting the assistance of a trusted member of your council, or the city attorney, might be warranted.

In closing, while you will have personal and professional relationships with each member of your elected body, the ones that you have with you mayor or board chair, are special — even critical! They should be treated as such.

– Contact McNeill at mcneillmh@gmail.com

Association of Public Management Professionals (APMP) Update

By: Sabrina Hille, Otsego Assistant City Administrator

APMP is starting the year with some opportunities for some technical skills workshops! We hold our monthly meetings virtually and occasionally in person. Our monthly meetings cover a dedicated topic that is presented by a community expert on the subject. To learn about upcoming topics, check out APMP's subpage on the MCMA website, under affiliated groups: mncma.org/apmp.

On Oct. 9, we will hold our Annual Conference at the New Brighton Community Center. The focus of this year's conference is Leading in 2025: Partnerships, Planning, and Purpose. We hope you can join us! We will learn from various experienced professionals on mayor and city administrator/manager relationships, strategic planning, supervisory and leadership programs, and labor relations.

This year we hope to continue the mission and past success of APMP, with a focus on connecting with those in the profession who have not previously been members. Monthly membership meetings are open to everyone; I encourage you to attend and meet some new faces! Stay tuned for information on regional networking sessions instead of our annual book club.

I am lucky to have the following brilliant colleagues to work with and develop the programming for our group this year. Our 2025-2026 Board is:

- **President: Sabrina Hille, City of Otsego**
- **Vice President: Laura Linehan, City of Little Canada**
- **Treasurer: Sarissa Falk, City of Minnetonka**
- **Secretary: Matt Unmacht, City of Chanhassen**
- **At-Large: Noel Mills Ford, City of Mendota Heights**
- **At-Large: Courtney Miller, City of Richfield**
- **Past President: Katie O'Conner, Dakota County**

We are confident that we will build off of the momentum from previous years and build a year of programming that helps us to grow, learn, and develop as local government professionals. We aim to provide those with technical skills and a strong network to help those in local government succeed. As always, reach out to me or any of the other board members for additional information.

– Contact Sabrina Hille at SHille@OtsegoMN.gov

Be sure to check out MCMA's website: mncma.org

SAVE THE DATE!

The 2026 Spring Annual Conference will be held at Madden's on Gull Lake April 29 – May 1, 2026!

Conference registration will open in January!