

President's column

By Scott Neal, MCMA President, Edina City Manager

This is my final chance to share my thoughts and observations with all of you about my term as your MCMA President. I think I can sum it up with one clear statement: It has been an unusual year to be the president of the Minnesota City/County Management Association.

Coming into the year, I knew that my presidency would be a year of transition in the secretariat position. League of Minnesota Cities Member Services Director Kevin Frazell had served MCMA faithfully for more than twenty years as our secretariat. His retirement last year paved the way for a new secretariat, Heather Corcoran. But then Heather got the job of her dreams as the legislative policy analyst for the City of Rochester, MN — her hometown. She had to take it. That meant we moved on to our third secretariat in less than twelve months, Member Engagement Coordinator Madison Hagenau. Madison is catching on quickly. She's doing a great job. We are in good hands for the future.

It's customary for the president to serve an additional year on the board in the past president role. My immediate predecessor as MCMA president was Steve Taylor. When Steve announced his retirement last year, he also announced that he would be moving to North Carolina, so he would be unable to fill the past president's role on the board. Graciously, Steve's predecessor as MCMA president, Bart Fischer, agreed to serve a second term as past president.

Problem solved. But then Bart got a wonderful job opportunity to join the team at WSB, which meant that he would depart from his city administrator job in Oakdale, and from his second term as the past president of MCMA. The board and I decided to leave the position unfilled for the balance of my presidency. With any luck, I'll take a run at the role when I hang up the crown later this spring.

And then the coronavirus entered our lives, and our lives changed forever.

Like many of you, the coronavirus has caused me to cancel events that I never dreamed I would ever have to cancel someday. I canceled both the community 4th of July parade and

a neighborhood Easter egg hunt on the same day. What a crappy day that was. But we're all having days like that. Canceling this year's MCMA Spring Conference was another low for me. The conference committee had worked so hard to put together a great program. Interesting speakers. The weather was going to be great. There were changes coming to the social and entertainment aspects of the conference to make our gathering more enjoyable for more people. And, on a personal note, I was looking forward to the opportunity to publicly transition my great powers as MCMA president to Dianne Miller. She's going to be very good in this role for the upcoming year.

“Like many of you, the coronavirus has caused me to cancel events that I never dreamed I would ever have to cancel someday.”

Continued from page 1

I want to thank you all for the kind words of support that you've offered me during my year in the president's seat. It's been gratifying. I am grateful that I got a shot to be the president of MCMA during my career. I wish everyone could do it once. My term was strange, but it was also very rewarding. Thanks for the memories. Take care everyone, and be well in the year ahead. ◻

Contact Neal at sneal@edinamn.gov.

Appointments and other professional news

- **Tim Ibsch**, city administrator, Blue Earth, has been appointed city administrator, Kasson.
- **Stephanie LaBrune**, administrative assistant, Pipestone County Conservation & Zoning, has been appointed city administrator, Tyler.
- **Devin Massopust**, assistant city manager, New Brighton, has been appointed city manager there.
- **Pat Melvin**, city administrator, Arlington has been appointed city administrator, Minnetonka Beach.
- **Tim Peterson**, city administrator, Moose Lake, has been appointed city administrator, Cloquet.
- **Annita Smythe**, city administrator, Cokato, has been appointed city administrator, Clearwater.

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

MCMA Newsletter

is published three times a year for the members of the Minnesota City/County Management Association by MCMA's Secretariat:

League of
Minnesota Cities
145 University Avenue
West St. Paul,
Minnesota
55103-2044

Contact:
Madison Hagenau
Member Engagement
Coordinator
mhagenau@lmc.org
(651) 215-4048
Fax: (651) 281-1296

MCMA Officers/Board Members

President:
Scott Neal, City of Edina

First Vice President:
Dianne Miller, City of Eagan

Second Vice President:
Laurie Hokkanen, City of Plymouth

Secretary-Treasurer:
Geraldyn Barone, City of Minnetonka

Directors:
John Mulder, City of Hermantown
Brad Martens, City of Corcoran
Peyton Mastera, City of Dilworth
Jackie Schwerm, City of Waconia
Patrick Antonen, City of Circle Pines

Ex-Officio Members

APMP President:
Maria Solano, City of St. Louis Park

Senior Advisors:
Bill Craig, St. Michael
763-367-0870 • peggcr@aol.com
Janice Fransen, Jackson
507-841-0974 • jfransen60@gmail.com
Tom Hedges, Eagan
651-895-7881 • dhedges23@comcast.net
Jeff Weldon, Sauk Centre
320-557-8006 • jtwelldone@gmail.com

Your Senior Advisors are here to help!

Fiscal year 2021 budget

By Madison Hagenau, Secretariat Officer

The MCMA Board has adopted a budget for fiscal year (FY) 2021 of \$102,092, a significant decrease from FY 2020, due to the cancellation of the Annual Conference. Our association ends FY 2020 with a projected excess of \$12,259, substantially more than what was included in the adopted budget. The year-end fund balance stands at \$89,000.

Typically, the major line item in the budget, both for revenues and expenditures, is the Annual Conference, which happens almost immediately after the beginning of each fiscal year on May 1. With the conference being canceled this year, the FY 2021 budget looks much different compared to years passed. There will be no revenue generated from this event and there were few expenditures incurred through the planning process. The unforeseen circumstances brought on by COVID-19 had significant impact on what is typically the major budget items.

Other budget highlights, largely unchanged from FY 2020, are continuation of the 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 programmed deficit for the FY 2021 budget is \$45,192, due to the significant loss of revenue. However, with the sizable excess at the year-end of FY 2020, and given the relatively high level of fund balance, the FY 2021 budget will remain stable through these uncertain times. ◻

Contact Madison at mhagenau@lmc.org.

Board meetings recap

By Madison Hagenau, Secretariat

The MCMA Board met on Feb. 21, March 27, and April 17. Highlights of the meetings were:

- Review and approval of the proposed fiscal year 2021 budget.
- Discussion about the impacts of COVID-19 on hosting the MCMA Annual Conference, and ultimately making the decision to cancel the event.
- Review of the costs associated with the planning and cancellation of the MCMA Annual Conference.
- Discussion of amending the criteria for life members as stated in the MCMA Constitution.
- Identification of options to recognize 2020 award recipients.

Reaching the MCMA secretariat

For MCMA secretariat services, contact:

Madison Hagenau

Member Engagement Coordinator

(651) 215-4048

Fax: (651) 281-1296

mhagenau@lmc.org

League of Minnesota Cities
145 University Avenue West
St. Paul, MN 55103-2044

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

www.mncma.org

“We got a lot of questions like, ‘You just started a new job? Congrats! What’s it like starting a job in a pandemic?’ So, we thought we would tell you!”

Starting a new job in a pandemic

By Kelly Dumais, Assistant City Administrator for the City of Wyoming, and Casey Casella, Management Analyst for the City of Savage

Starting a new job is nerve-wracking and exciting in the best of times. During a pandemic, it gets a little more complicated. Casey Casella and myself have both transitioned to new roles in cities during the global response to COVID-19. I began my role as the assistant city administrator for Wyoming and Casey began her role as management analyst for Savage. We got a lot of questions like “You just started a new job? Congrats! What’s it like starting a job in a pandemic?” So, we thought we would tell you!

Leaving a job

Casella: Leaving during the Stay-at-Home Order meant incomplete goodbyes. I was lucky to have thoughtful and innovative coworkers who made my last days unique with video call goodbyes, a PowerPoint presentation of our favorite memories together, and even a car parade outside my house!

Dumais: I gave three-week notice to my previous employer when I accepted my new position. I wanted to make sure that I had enough time to wrap up loose ends and get everything ready for transitioning my projects. I didn’t realize at the time though that those three weeks would look very different from what I expected them to! Four days after I gave notice was my first day working from home as a part of social distancing protocols. I am thankful that I got to share a few in-person goodbyes.

New beginnings

Dumais: I think that new jobs are all about adapting. There are protocols, policies, names, and personal preferences of coworkers that are all important to learn. Doing this from a distance requires a lot of communication and patience. I think one of the most important things to do when starting out in a new place in a new position is to listen — to hear how people interact, expectations, and standards. Listen for any concerns or hopes that people have. Doing this without actually being in the office has required a lot of partnership from other staff — I am so thankful for all of the support and patience they have given me!

Casella: When beginning my job, I relied heavily on reading documents, watching videos, and email communication. The pandemic highlights the benefit of written policies and procedures. Good documentation provided a strong foundation for my first few weeks.

Continued on page 5

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

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

www.mncma.org

“The pandemic highlights the benefit of written policies and procedures. Good documentation provided a strong foundation for my first few weeks.”

Continued from page 4

Building relationships

Casella: Social interaction is the foundation of our society. Starting a new job without this foundation was a significant challenge. At the same time, a crisis or global challenge can bring people together. Sure, introductions were different, chatting about staying at home or personal well-being with people I just met. I've found people are willing to share more direct and honest conversations during this pandemic.

Dumais: While I was the new person in Wyoming, responding to COVID-19 was new for everyone. Everyone is figuring out what this looks like, how to respond, how to keep people safe. I felt immediately a part of the team as we worked on our response to this as well as the rest of the work of the City, which had not stopped because of the pandemic.

Working from home

Dumais: I was able to start working from home right away. This was both a blessing and also a challenge as I felt supported but also had to figure out how to do my job differently than I expected.

Casella: A big shoutout to the IT folks in our cities. IT employees already assist in getting new employees set up in normal times. They played a special role during our new working-from-home chapter. As a new employee, they set up work-from-home capabilities right away and were responsive to my questions remotely. Make sure to thank your IT folks for leading monumental technology adaptations in a minuscule amount of time.

Final thoughts

Casella: Do a quick check in with your new employees to make sure they have resources they need to succeed in this crazy time. For me, I'm thrilled to be joining the Savage team and send thanks to my mentors and colleagues who helped make the transition successful.

Dumais: I am very excited for the days when I will be able to go into the office and talk with my coworkers and residents in person, but until that day, I am thankful for the support of my coworkers and our community as we navigate our way through this! How organizations respond to challenges says a lot about what type of organization and team they are. Jumping into my role in Wyoming, I am very excited about stepping into this role and about my work in this community. 🍀

Contact Dumais at kdumais@wyomingmn.org.

Contact Casella at ccasella@ci.savage.mn.us.

THREE RULES FOR TIMES OF CRISIS

(or ‘normal’ times — whatever that means)

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

This year, the middle of March was certainly a time to beware, but I think few of us saw how bad it would get, and just how much our work and lives would change as a result of the coronavirus.

On March 11, I left work around 4:30 p.m. knowing that I was going to be out of the office for the next two days. By 5:30 p.m. that afternoon, major sporting events were being canceled or suspended, and my first reaction was, “This is going to have a long and lasting impact on the economy.” Little did I know how things would continue to go out of control.

In Hermantown, our mission statement reads, “Working together to serve and build our community.” For me, that is not just words on paper, but is truly, a heartfelt description of what our whole purpose is. It really is our organization’s calling. In fact, “serving my community” is part of my own personal mission statement.

One of the ways we have tried to build community over the past five years was to build the Essentia Wellness Center. It started out as a “gathering place” that would serve as a community center where the members of the community could come together to strengthen their relationships and build healthier lives. It was a bricks-and-mortar display of our mission to build community.

I began typing this up on my computer on a Thursday afternoon, but it was far from a typical Thursday. It had been a difficult week. It has been hard to keep focused on our regular duties and the projects in front of us. Just about everything has been impacted in some way or another.

A typical Thursday would have included attending meetings and scrambling to finish off the task list for the week, but, our world seemed to explode with the coronavirus. By this point, we had decided to close the Essentia Wellness Center and City Hall. All of our work to build and open the Wellness Center over the past five-plus

years came to a screeching halt. Our whole purpose to serve the community seemed to stop. These two actions seemed to fly in the face of serving the community. It was a gut-wrenching decision, but counterintuitively, the best way to serve the community was to tell them not to gather and to practice social distancing.

On Thursday (March 19) I prepared my “Friday Follow Up” (a two- or three-page document I send out to the council following council meetings) and wrote a couple of “rules” that we were trying to follow as we adjusted to the crisis. As I think about these, they might be rules for us to follow during the crisis or even when things get back to normal (whatever that might be).

“... counterintuitively, the best way to serve the community was to tell them not to gather and to practice social distancing.”

Continued on page 7

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

www.mncma.org

Continued from page 6

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

The number one rule: Be Flexible.

Things are changing all the time, this is unprecedented in our lifetime, and it is hard to plan as we do not know what will happen next, or how long any of this will last.

A related rule is: Be Patient. As we adjust, things may take a little longer and some work may have to be put on the back burner.

Finally, one last rule: Be Kind. Lost in all of the planning, adjusting, and trying to figure how to live in ways that are not “normal,” there is an emotional and mental burden to all of this. Make a point to reach out to someone who is being “socially distant” and try to bridge that distance by saying a kind or encouraging word. You can still “serve and build our community” and maintain social distance by reaching out and checking in with people.

City Hall has been closed to the public for over two weeks now. Our employees are still working, some at City Hall while practicing social distancing, some remotely. We continue to find new ways to serve the community even if it is not face-to-face or by gathering.

I am not sure I even know how to define “normal” anymore. But, I think these three “rules” can help us deal with the current situation and move forward in serving and building our community. ☐

Contact Mulder at jmulder@hermantownmn.com.

“Lost in all of the planning, adjusting, and trying to figure how to live in ways that are not ‘normal,’ there is an emotional and mental burden to all of this.”