

Final president's column

By Laurie Hokkanen, MCMA President, Chanhassen City Manager, 2021/2022 MCMA President

The Minnesota City/County Management Association (MCMA) has existed since 1951 to:

- Increase the management proficiency of members and other urban administrators.
- Strengthen the quality of urban government through professional management and to share the professional experience.
- Maintain the high ethical standards of the profession of local government management and to recognize the historical significance of the council-manager form of local government organization.
- Educate the citizenry and students about the merits of professional local government management with the council-manager form serving as a model.

I'm using this space to remind you of what you already know for this reason — the world is full of distraction, need, noise, and worthy causes. I would be surprised if you didn't often feel like you're behind or wish you could do more. Need a clone machine, anyone?

As an MCMA Board, we said no to several requests this year. I noticed a pattern in these decision-making processes. Our first instinct was usually to say yes. The causes were worthy and the relevance to our

membership was apparent. The Board is comprised of people who desire to serve and be helpful.

Upon further discussion and reflection, we realized that the ask was outside of our mission. Saying no can be difficult and can mean disappointing people. It also means keeping resources and priorities available for the work you most need to do. I'm grateful to have served on the MCMA Board with thoughtful people who have been able to keep MCMA's purpose in mind.

“Let's be clear about our mission — let's know what we're doing and why.”

A key lesson that I've been learning from this past year has been about mission. In my city, we've been fortunate to have our management and leadership team working with The

Drucker Institute's Public Sector Playbook Training where one of the core teachings is mission. Peter Drucker wrote, “The foundation of effective leadership is thinking through the organization's mission, defining it and establishing it, clearly and visibly.” The mission, in other words, tells everyone what we do and the way we do it. Mission is our reason for being.

One of my lightbulb moments this past year was that our mission also gives us permission to say no. Considering what to take on requires us to ask not only if there is a need, but whether we are the right people to address it.

Final president's column continued on page 5

Appointments and other professional news

- **Gregg Lindberg**, deputy city manager, Burnsville, has been appointed city manager.
- **Kurt Ulrich**, city administrator, Ramsey, has retired.
- **Marcia Glick**, city manager, Robbinsdale, has retired.
- **Mark Nagel**, assistant city administrator, Elko New Market, has retired.
- **Risi Karim**, management fellow, Edina, has been hired as assistant city administrator, Northfield.
- **Tim Sandvik**, assistant city administrator, Vadnais Heights, has been appointed city manager, Robbinsdale.

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 April 8 and May 4. Highlights of the meetings were:

- A debrief of the Winter Workshop.
- An update on process and timeline for the Site Search Committee.
- Approval of the fiscal year 2023 budget.
- Review of the final Annual Conference program.

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

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:

Laurie Hokkanen, City of Chanhassen

First Vice President:

John Mulder, City of Hermantown

Second Vice President:

Brad Martens, City of Shoreview

Secretary-Treasurer:

Peyton Mastera, City of Dilworth

Directors:

Jackie Schulze, City of Waconia

Patrick Antonen, City of Circle Pines

Noah Schuchman, City of Duluth

Bruce Messelt, Sherburne County

Kevin Watson, City of Vadnais Heights

Ex-Officio Members

Past President:

Dianne Miller, City of Eagan

APMP President:

Kelly Torkelson, City of Mendota Heights

Senior Advisors:

Bill Craig, St. Michael

763-367-0870 • peggcr@aol.com

Janice Fransen, Jackson

507-841-0974 • jfransen60@gmail.com

Mark McNeill, Prior Lake

612-599-1941 • mcneillmh@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!

MCMA meetup at the 2022 LMC Annual Conference

By Madison Hagenau, MCMA Secretariat

The Minnesota City/County Management Association is hosting a meetup as part of the League of Minnesota Cities 2022 Annual Conference in Duluth.

The LMC Annual Conference will be held Wednesday, June 22-Friday, June 24 at the Duluth Entertainment Convention Center (DECC).

The meetup will be from 1-2 p.m. on Wednesday, June 22. This is a great opportunity to connect with other city managers from across the state. We hope you will join us! Please visit www.lmc.org/MCMA-LMC22 for more information and to register for the conference. View the conference agenda to learn about sessions and additional networking opportunities that may be of interest to you. ◻

2022 Winter Workshop recap

By Brad Martens, City Manager, Shoreview

The Winter Workshop usually held in January was delayed until March 4 due to the surging pandemic. However, apparently it was right on schedule since we now know that winter will end sometime in June. Shannon Portillo led the morning session titled, “Organizational Obliviousness: Understanding and Overcoming Bias in Local Government Management.” Portillo called attention to the ways stereotypes influence everyday practices of individuals and organizations through a few engaging real-life examples. Surveys showed an extremely high rating for this session, which sparked some good discussion in the room.

In the afternoon, a panel of our peers shared their experience leading hybrid teams in Dakota County, Mankato, Olmsted County, and Cambridge. Topics included best management practices, lessons learned, pitfalls, surprises, employee engagement, monitoring results, and more. The next step for many of these organizations is to decide what stays moving forward and what goes back to “normal,” whatever that is. These experts also shared their policies, which are available to anyone who would like them.

The event was well attended with 73 registered. If some of you are wondering to yourself why a workshop that included a session on a hybrid work environment didn't include a virtual option, you're not alone. Ultimately it was too cost prohibitive to offer a high-quality virtual option for this one-day event. As much as that may have limited attendance, it was great to be back in a room with our peers hearing the buzz of conversation taking place in the room. Special thanks to the planning committee who put in the effort to make this event a success under challenging conditions. Thank you! ◻

– Contact Martens at bmartens@shoreviewmn.gov

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

APMP update

By Kelly Torkelson, APMP President, Assistant City Administrator, Mendota Heights

At this year's MCMA awards dinner, we all got the opportunity to celebrate the legacy of Aaron Sather, our friend and colleague who passed away this spring. As I shared at the conference, the APMP Board knew that renaming the emerging leader award after Aaron was the only right thing to do, as he was so inspiring about his passion for public service and for connecting with colleagues. When I reflect on that spirit, I feel grounded in my own passion for public service and am reminded about why we do what we do.

It is a great honor to be able to serve in local government. Our work makes us responsible for the trust that our community members place in their government. For some people, we are the only level of government that they ever engage with, whether that is through paying their water bill, speaking at a city council meeting, or voting in an election. Local government can be an amazing opportunity for us to connect neighbors and shape our corner of the world, and I think that much of our duty as public servants and public leaders is to also share those possibilities and connect people with what is possible when local government works well.

“A part of Aaron’s legacy, and a part of why we thought it made sense to rename the Emerging Leader Award after him, is that he was a wonderful connector of people.”

A part of Aaron's legacy, and a part of why we thought it made sense to rename the emerging leader award after him, is that he was a wonderful connector of people. When we have new faces come into our organizations, attend a conference, or show up at a meeting, they can help us learn how to be better. As folks learn how we do things, they also learn what doesn't work, what is confusing, and what is unnecessarily complicated. Established leaders lose an opportunity to see what we don't see about ourselves if we don't ask for their feedback. The wicked problems we struggle to address, such as diversity, equity and inclusion, transparency, communication, and the list goes on, these are not things unique to local government, and while folks might be new to our organizations, they are likely not new to these topics and can provide valuable feedback.

Connecting with people new to our organizations, or even new to our network, doesn't need to be super formal. In fact, making something super formal might dissuade honest feedback. Rather, connecting over a cup of coffee, a chat in the break room, or whatever way the new person feels comfortable can create opportunities for learning. These connections are the foundations for mentorship, they can illuminate new paths of opportunity, they might inspire new careers, and they could even teach us something. The answers to our biggest problems are people: their ideas, their insights, their passion. Sometimes all we need to do is slow down for a chat. ○

– Contact Torkelson at ktorkelson@mendotaheightsmn.gov

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

Final president's column continued from page 1

At the Annual Conference, keynote speaker Kristen Cox shared the same message. She said, "Do the right thing, and do the right thing well." Cox shared a few tools that we could use to tackle and solve our organization's most difficult problems. She posed a question that we can ask ourselves to evaluate a new endeavor, "Are the goals we set things we can directly impact?" Her contention was that many of the solutions that we come up with provide only the illusion of progress because they are trying to solve the wrong problem.

With these insights and knowledge, here's what I want for myself, and for you. Let's be clear about our mission — let's know what we're doing and why. Let us be very clear about what our values are and embrace and live them. Once we have our sights focused, we have room to do the things that we are the best suited for and can make the most difference in. I hope we can better preserve our optimism, our faith in each other and our institutions, and have more endurance for this calling of public service. Thank you for your commitment to local government. ☐

– Contact Hokkanen at lhokkanen@ci.chanhassen.mn.us

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

What MCMA is reading/watching/ listening to

By Laurie Hokkanen, City Manager, Chanhassen

We're starting a new feature in the MCMA Newsletter this month. Our colleagues will share with us a quick insight into a piece of content that they've been interested in lately. It might be a podcast, a book, a TED Talk ... the medium is less important than the takeaway. This list can be your inspiration for what goes with you on your next walk/run, commute, staff meeting discussion, or wherever else you need new ideas to ponder.

Riley Grams, City Administrator, City of Osseo

For me, I've always been interested in space/the universe/etc., and particularly how species evolve to stay alive. I got into the podcast called "[The End of the World,](#)" by Josh Clark. It's a 10-episode deep-dive into how the human species can evolve, while learning from past mistakes, to live on long into the future. Episodes cover topics like: Why haven't we run into aliens yet? What are the natural risks that humans must navigate to survive? What is the Great Filter, i.e., what prevents species from spreading into the universe? It's really mind-bending stuff to think about ... and fascinating. Makes you really think way beyond your own life and the immediate world around you.

Continued on page 6

Continued from page 5

Casey Casella, Management Analyst, City of Savage

“Leadership is Language,” by L. David Marquet. This book explores the way we communicate to address complex decisions and empower employees. Going from “Are you good with X?” to “How confident are you with X?” changes the dynamics of the conversation.

“How to Be an Antiracist,” by Ibram X. Kendi. This book is applicable to the unique position in public service we hold to actively pursue an equitable society on both an individual and policy level.

“How To Be Awesome at Your Job,” by Pete Mockaitis. Weekly podcasts with guests offering specific, actionable insights that boost work performance. Pro tip: Sign up for email summaries of the podcast for shorter, bulleted advice straight to your inbox.

Matt Unmacht, Assistant City Manager, City of Chanhassen

As a fan of professional golf, I learned early on that everybody who watches the PGA Tour must make a very important decision: Tiger or Phil. Personally, I was Team Tiger. I was drawn to his relentless pursuit of perfection and his willingness to show emotion, good or bad, on the course. The Tiger fist pump will always be iconic. I had never really connected with Phil Mickelson. That’s why I was eager to pick up Alan Shipnuck’s new biography, **“Phil: The Rip-Roaring (and unauthorized) Biography of Golf’s Most Colorful Superstar,”** which has been heralded as one of the most revealing and colorful sports books in years.

“Phil” chronicles Mickelson’s career arc on the golf course, but more interestingly, it divulges the man behind the scenes. Phil Mickelson is more than the charismatic smile and happy-go-lucky attitude. He is a sarcastic jackass and a relentless gambler. But he’s also a dedicated father and a loving husband. More recently, Mickelson has made multiple public missteps and has taken an indefinite hiatus from the game of golf. The word that kept coming to mind for me while reading the book is enigma. Ultimately, “Phil” is yet another reminder that there is always more to a celebrity’s image than what is carefully captured on the camera.

Final note

And here’s a plug for **“The City Speak” podcast**, produced by the League of Minnesota Cities. The City Speak offers short takes on timely topics in the Minnesota city world from our talented colleagues. With dozens of episodes to choose from, you’re sure to find something of interest! **🗨️**

– Contact Madison Hagenau at mhagenau@lmc.org

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