

President's column

By Laurie Hokkanen, MCMA President, City of Chanhassen

In the spring of 2021, then-President Dianne Miller wrote, "You've made it through over one year of a pandemic. Pause and give yourself a pat on the back. You've earned it." At the time I read that, it seemed like we were on the path to brighter days and a moment of celebration and relief was in order. Instead, the last six months has been filled with more unexpected detours, bumps, and new challenges.

Nonetheless, take a moment again to pat yourself on the back. You are doing hard work, in hard times. And it matters. Your organization, your community, your colleagues, your family and your friends are grateful.

In recent months, I've been talking with my dad as he prepares to become the state commander for the Minnesota Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW). I always credit my military upbringing and my dad's example of public service as a main source of inspiration for wanting to be a city manager. My dad served in the Army for over 20 years. We lived in nine different states and countries by the time I graduated high school and he retired from the military. Even though he still works full-time in his second career, he dedicates countless hours to advocating for veterans through the VFW. I'm so proud of him and grateful for his example. My dad has been developing his message to the membership around the theme, "Be

the Reason." Since my opportunity to share a message with the MCMA membership is coinciding with his, I'd like to call upon you to do the same.

BE THE REASON

Be the reason ... that someone finds their calling in city management. Can you host an intern? Can you have coffee with someone who wants to change career paths? Can you speak to a high school or college class about what a city manager does? Can you identify already someone in your organization who might be interested in learning more?

Be the reason ... that someone new feels welcome at the table. Attend an APMP meeting to network with colleagues you've not had the opportunity to meet yet. Attend the first-time attendee reception at MCMA in May and save a spot at your dinner table for someone new. Send an email or a card or a text to welcome someone to a new position.

Be the reason ... that someone in your community has confidence in their government. Live the ICMA Code of Ethics. Tell your elected officials and community members about the Code of Ethics and how it guides our work. Go out of your way to explain the systems and processes to people who don't understand the "how" and "why" of local government.

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*The Professional
Association
of Appointed
Administrators
Serving Local
Governments
in Minnesota*

"Thank you for your dedication to all of these important efforts — being a mentor, making people feel welcome, being a great example of good government, and being awesome colleagues. It really does matter!"

Appointments and other professional news

- **Chelsea Petersen**, administrative services director, Oakdale, has been hired as assistant city administrator, Shakopee.
- **Maria Solano**, senior management analyst, St. Louis Park, has been hired as deputy city manager, Plymouth.
- **Tom Harmening**, city manager, St. Louis Park, has retired.
- **Kim Keller**, director of regulatory services, Minneapolis, has been appointed city manager, St. Louis Park.
- **Michael Johnson**, city administrator, New Prague, has retired.
- **Leslie Valiant**, city administrator, Spicer, has been appointed city administrator, Willmar.
- **Shane Fineran**, city administrator, Watertown, has been appointed city administrator, Waconia.
- **Joshua Tetzlaff**, city administrator, Dodge Center, has been appointed city administrator, New Prague.
- **Michael Sable**, assistant city manager, Maplewood, has been hired as assistant city manager, Bloomington.

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!

APMP UPDATE

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

After 18 months of a pandemic, now more than ever, I appreciate the colleagues that I have in this profession. Our professional network is one of the most valuable resources that we have to figure out what to do next as we navigate uncertainty and the unknown. I want to thank Jared Voto, our past president, who helped to carve a new path of learning last year. We adopted virtual meetings and found new ways to connect across distance, including starting an Association of Public Management Professionals (APMP) book club that read the book “A Good Time for the Truth: Race in Minnesota.”

Race is a topic that we must engage with as local government leaders, especially in Minnesota with the events of George Floyd’s death last year and the massive racial disparities present in our state and communities. Participating in this book club helped me to understand perspectives that were both familiar and unfamiliar to me, giving insight and voice to our Minnesota neighbors whose stories tie to different aspects of my own experience while also providing insights that I had never before considered.

This was just one of several ways in which APMP creates conversations to reflect, discuss, and connect on the many challenges we must address as local government professionals. I am looking forward to building on the successes of last year as we begin this new year.

I am lucky to have the following brilliant colleagues to work with and develop the programming for our group this year. Our 2021-2022 Board is:

- President: Kelly Dumais, City of Wyoming
- Vice President: Cassandra Tabor, City of Blaine
- Treasurer: Aurora Yager, City of Wayzata
- Secretary: Casey Casella, City of Savage
- At-Large: Katie O’Connor, City of Eden Prairie
- At-Large: Aaron Sather, Dakota County
- At-Large: Jake Foster, City of Chanhassen
- Past President: Jared Voto, Washington County

While there are still a lot of unknowns with the future of the pandemic, we are confident that we will be able to safely build off of the momentum from last year and build a year of programming that helps us to grow, learn, and develop as local government professionals. As always, reach out to me or any of the other board members for additional information. ○

– Contact Dumais at kdumais@wyomingmn.org

MCMA Board meeting recap

By Madison Hagenau, MCMA Secretariat

The MCMA Board met on July 23 and Oct. 15. Highlights of the meeting were:

- Discussion of goals and priorities for President Laurie Hokkanen’s term.
- Appointment of members to 2021/2022 committees.
- Review and approval of criteria for the Outstanding Service Award.
- Approval of APMP bylaw updates.
- Debriefing of 2021 Annual Conference and discussion of early plans for the 2022 Annual Conference.

Meet the new MCMA board members on page 4!

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

The importance of STAYING CONNECTED to those who inspire us

By Michael Sable, Assistant City Manager, City of Bloomington

The local government profession has lost a great leader.

William Horne, city manager of Clearwater, Florida for the last 20 years died unexpectedly on Aug. 21, 2021. Those of us fortunate enough to know and work with Bill understand how important he was for our profession.

Bill always had a warm smile for everyone he met. Veterans of the profession knew him as someone who could provide calm, wise counsel. Newcomers were welcomed into the fold as he coached and mentored us to be better.

Bill was the board chair of the Alliance for Innovation when I first met him in Kansas City in 2012. I was new to the city side of local government and was fortunate to be seated at a table with him during one of the sessions. I was immediately struck by his thoughtfulness and presence. The word that comes to mind is *gravitas*. Bill had it, and you were drawn in immediately.

I didn't even know what he did. I just knew I wanted to grow and learn from him. I mustered up the courage to introduce myself and ask him how to be more involved in the profession generally — the Alliance specifically. He couldn't have been more gracious or helpful. I believe I owe my own stint on the Board of Directors to Bill Horne and Karen Thoreson. I'm forever grateful to them.

I have long said that the Alliance for Innovation was my "home" because "they are my people." I believe in the power of local government to transform communities, in part, because of Bill Horne.

I continued to see Bill at Transforming Local Government (TLG) and ICMA conferences. He was someone I admired and respected, and who always displayed the same genuine warmth I'd experienced at our first meeting.

At the 2015 BIG Ideas conference in Milwaukee, Bill was at his very best. Back then, the conversation was around building and strengthening trust in communities ripped apart by violence and conflicts between community and police. This was post-Ferguson, Missouri. Sadly, the lessons are difficult to learn and the important conversation around these issues continues.

BIG Ideas 2015 was not your typical conference. BIG never was. It was where we wrestled the hard questions with our peers willing to do the hard work. This particular event grew heated as the participants became immersed in the issues. By Sunday morning, tensions were high, sides were being formed, and things ran the risk of going off the rails. Two people stepped in: Jim Keene from Palo Alto and Bill Horne. Jim, of course, turned the conversation back to humanity through poetry. He read us the poem by Langston Hughes called "Motto." It was what we needed in the moment.

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Meet the new MCMA Board members

Kevin Watson

First-term director



Kevin Watson has served the city of Vadnais Heights as city administrator since early 2013. Kevin holds a master's degree in public administration from the University of Kansas and a bachelor's degree in business administration from Oklahoma State University.

Prior to Vadnais Heights, Kevin served in a variety of capacities on the West Coast, including city administrator of Junction City, Oregon; assistant to the city manager in Keizer, Oregon; a project manager for Dallas, Oregon; and an internship with the city of Reno, Nevada after grad school. While living in Portland, Oregon, Kevin met his future wife, Kathryn, a Minnesota native who effectively recruited him to come to the Twin Cities.

As a third-generation city manager, Kevin grew up participating in ICMA and state association activities, which gives him a uncommon appreciation for the support provided by MCMA as a professional. Kevin has served on most of the MCMA committees over his eight years in the state, as well serving as spring conference committee chair. Kevin has been president of the Metro Area Managers Association and has served on a variety of LMC committees as well.

Kevin and his wife have been married for eight years and have three young children. When not spending time with his family Kevin loves playing golf, traveling, visiting new restaurants with his wife, and trying to explore the unique offerings of Minnesota. Kevin has also adopted the fandom and heartache of a Minnesota sports fan, for better or worse.

Bruce Messelt

First-term director



Bruce Messelt has served Sherburne County as administrator since 2019. A Minnesota native, Bruce holds a master's degree in public administration from the University of Minnesota's Humphrey School of Public Affairs and a bachelor's degree in political science from Concordia College in Moorhead.

Bruce is a public service professional with nearly 30 years of experience, spanning positions with the U.S. Department of Defense, NATO, and local governments in both Arizona and Minnesota, including Moorhead, Lake Elmo, and Chisago County. Bruce is also current president of the Minnesota Association of County Administrators and former Chair of the MCMA Professional Conduct Committee.

Bruce and his wife Terri have been married for twenty-eight years and have three children. Along with spending time with his family, Bruce loves listening to music, camping, canoeing, hiking, and alpine skiing in the winter (when he also serves as a ski instructor). ◻

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Be the reason ... that MCMA remains a vibrant professional network. Attend the Winter Workshop in January or the conference in May. Sign up for a committee (it's never too late!) Respond to requests for information on the listserv. Reach out to colleagues who are new in their position, experiencing challenges, or in transition.

None of these are new asks or endeavors. There is already so much on all of our plates. Thank you for your dedication to all of these important efforts — being a mentor, making people feel welcome, being a great example of good government, and being awesome colleagues. It really does matter! **👍**

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

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Jim reminds us, “One of the reasons I love poetry and why I deploy it so often, is that poetry springs from the inarticulate part of us, the part that doesn't know what to say. It is a well we can draw from though, or a hidden bridge to take us, through words, to where we need to be. The poem is always given, or revealed. It must be received. The ability to make oneself able to receive is an act of intention. Of letting go but also paying close attention.”

Bill Horne brought us back to our higher moral purpose. As city leaders, we play a central role in how our communities adapt and respond to tragedies. He encouraged us to tackle the horrible legacy of slavery and to improve race relations to build resilient communities. The only way out was through. He reminded us that by working together we can make a difference. In fact, it's our only choice. We must draw from within and with intention. We have to actually do the work.

So, today I am sad. I lost someone whom I consider a mentor and friend. We lost a champion and an example of great local government leadership.

I am also reinvigorated to tackle the hard things that need doing in order to make our communities great. I just hope I can do it with the same level of calm, thoughtful, and steady leadership as Bill. **👍**

– Contact Sable at mike.sable@maplewoodmn.gov

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