

## The President's column

By John Mulder, MCMA President, Hermantown City Administrator

### The Power of Ideas

In the previous century, I had to take a required philosophy course as part of my undergraduate studies during my sophomore year. It was an introductory course and in my sheltered short life in Iowa, I hadn't ever given too much thought to philosophy. At that time, philosophy seemed like an ivory tower pursuit without practicality or importance to my daily life.

I am a down-to-earth, practical person, and a lot of discussion about the meaning of life can seem like it wastes our life. My thoughts were probably summed up by the John Lennon quote, "Life is what happens when you are busy making other plans." Of course, I couldn't have articulated that at that time.

So, I signed up for the course, mostly to check the box, but also to accept the challenge from my college roommate who had done poorly in the course as a freshman. He bet me a pizza that I couldn't get an A in the course.

I ended up thoroughly enjoying the course and the professor earned my utmost respect. Toward the end of the class, my professor wrote, "I wish you would/could major in philosophy," and I made my roommate make good on the pizza.

Part of the reason I loved that course was that it showed me the power of ideas and how they shape some of the seemingly mundane things we do every day. That professor showed me how events of the day shaped the philosopher's ideas and values, those values then were reflected in the action of the philosophers and the society at that time. Philosophy and real-life actions were not separate and unrelated, but

actions were directed and shaped by our understanding of life.

There may be no better example of doing mundane things because of deeply held values than all the work done by our cities and counties to ensure a democratic process by holding elections. Most people don't realize and understand all the work that must be done to make the elections runs smoothly and ensure that each person is given the opportunity

to cast their ballot. The general population simply shows up, marks their ballot, and enters it into the ballot machine.

Cities and counties ensure a fair election in part because the State of Minnesota has all kinds of rules to facilitate that, but we also ensure a fair election because we value democracy

**"The essential thing 'in heaven and earth' is that there should be long obedience in the same direction; there thereby results, and has always resulted in the long run, something which has made life worth living."**

– Friedrich Nietzsche,  
*Beyond Good and Evil.*

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and we want the votes of the citizens to be accurately reflected. We obey the rules, but we also obey our own internal set of values. We maintain this "long obedience" not because we are compelled to by some outside force, but rather by ideas and values that we deeply hold. It's maintaining that obedience to our values, that make elections, democracy, and all of the other work in local government have meaning and make it all worth doing. ◻

– Contact Mulder at [jmulder@hermantownmn.com](mailto:jmulder@hermantownmn.com)

## MCMA Board Meeting Recap

*By Madison Hagenau, MCMA Secretariat*

The MCMA Board met on Oct. 14 and Dec. 2. Highlights of the meeting were:

- Update on the planning of the Winter Workshop.
- Approval of the Annual Conference budget and sponsorship packages.
- Update on the plans for the 2023 Annual Conference.

## Reaching the MCMA secretariat

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## MCMA Newsletter

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**Your Senior Advisors are here to help!**

# Coffee & Careers – All are welcome!

*By Jodi Gallup, Women in the Profession Committee Chair*

The MCMA Women in the Profession committee is excited to bring back in-person Coffee & Career events. These events first started in 2016 to connect with others in the profession over a one-hour round table conversation on a specific topic. In the beginning, we focused on topics on career growth, recruitment challenges, and moving from peer to manager. We've also had rich discussions on building up women around you, being a mentor, and fighting stereotypes of women leadership.

At our November 2022 Coffee & Careers event in Bloomington, we learned from each other on how the pandemic has shifted certain expectations and priorities. We also learned how workplace policies affected individuals differently depending on their unique situations.

We invite you to join the conversation and invite colleagues in your organization – they do not need to be an MCMA member – who could benefit from these conversations. Mark your calendars (and send an invite to a colleague) for our next event, which will be held at the League Building.

**LOCATION:** League of Minnesota Cities Building,  
145 University Avenue West  
St. Paul, MN 55103

**TIMEFRAME/AGENDA:**

- 8:30-9 a.m.: Check-in & grab a cup of coffee
- 9-9:50 a.m.: Round table discussion
- 9:50-10 a.m.: Each person provides one takeaway from discussion

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

**Feb. 23 Coffee & Careers: Paid Parental Leave & Remote Policies**

Discuss with others on how these policies can support employees, along with lessons learned on how to prepare for extended leaves and new office environments. You're invited to join the conversation to share your story and hear firsthand from others who have recently utilized paid leaves and remote policies.

The Women in the Profession Committee's charge is, "to continue to develop and deliver programs to support entry and advancement of women in the profession of local government management and addressing life-work balance issues for all professionals." We hope these rich, one-hour conversations can help do just that!

*– Contact Gallup at [jgallup@plymouthmn.gov](mailto:jgallup@plymouthmn.gov)*

# BEEN THERE, DONE THAT!

## *Unsolicited Advice from Your Senior Advisors*

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**Greetings!** Look for this column to be a regular feature of future MCMA newsletters. It is an effort on the part of the Minnesota Senior Advisors to reach out and make counseling services available to any MCMA member who needs assistance.

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### **Who are the Senior Advisors, and what can they do for me?**

The Senior Advisor program is a partnership between ICMA and state sponsors to help address the personal and professional needs of individual members. Personal support is the program's priority activity. Assistance to governing bodies, charter commissions and community groups on the form of government is the second priority.

The ICMA Senior Advisor program was established by the ICMA Executive Board in 1974 as the Range Rider Program to make the counsel, experience, and support of respected retired managers of the profession available to members. In 2014 ICMA changed the name from Range Riders to Senior Advisors to better describe the role and its primary emphasis on providing members with advice and support.

The goal of ICMA is to have Senior Advisors in every state. There are five Senior Advisors in Minnesota who have been appointed by the MCMA Board and whose appointments have been ratified by ICMA. There is no compensation; this is a volunteer/unpaid position with some reimbursement toward expenses for attending the State and ICMA Conference.

Being considered for a Senior Advisor appointment requires a minimum of 10 years as the appointed city administrator/manager; or at least 10 years of management experience as an assistant/deputy administrator/manager.

All discussions are on a confidential basis. Senior Advisors are friends, colleagues, and advisors to the profession — not consultants!

It can be lonely at the top, especially when a city administrator/manager is undergoing a possible transition. The Senior Advisor program is designed to help with personal and professional issues, not to provide technical assistance or solve substantive problems in a local government.

There are many situations when an administrator/manager might contact a Senior Advisor:

- How do I do a performance review?
- I have been asked to step down — now what should I do?
- There is a problem with the mayor or a staff member.
- I have a councilmember who has an ethical problem.
- This city does not fit my professional goal —when should I leave and still meet the ICMA tenure requirements?

*Been There, Done That! continued on page 5*

**Be sure to  
check out  
MCMA's  
website:  
[mncma.org](http://mncma.org)**

*Been There, Done That! continued from page 5*

All Senior Advisors must uphold the high standards as embodied in the ICMA Code of Ethics. While the primary mission of the Senior Advisor is to serve colleagues and to represent the profession, there is need to restrain from participating in a stance on a controversial issue or any involvement in political activity.

Senior Advisors try to regularly attend MCMA board meetings and state conferences by Zoom or in person.

Any MCMA or ICMA member is encouraged to call or meet with a Senior Advisor. With the combined years of experience of the Advisors in Minnesota, there is a good chance that one of us has had relevant experience to speak with you about a topic which can't be discussed with anyone else in their community or even with your family.

Each of the five Minnesota Senior Advisors has a designated territory they serve (check the MCMA website for the geographic assignments); however, the territory designation is very flexible — any administrator/manager may contact any of the Senior Advisors at any time.

The Minnesota Senior Advisors are available to listen, share experience, offer hope and advice when appropriate. We can be reached at:

<b>Bill Craig</b>	wmpcraig@aol.com
<b>Janice Fransen</b>	jfranson60@gmail.com
<b>Tom Hedges</b>	tdhedges23@comcast.net
<b>Jeff Weldon</b>	jtwelldone@gmail.com
<b>Mark McNeill</b>	mcneillmh@gmail.com

Look to this column in the future to address topics such as ethics, interviewing and job search tips, dealing with addiction, relationship stresses, and other issues which undoubtedly weren't covered in grad school.

Finally, thanks to MCMA veteran and uber-creative Jon Hohenstein for suggesting the title of this column. ◉

- Tom Hedges

- Mark McNeill

*Senior Advisors*

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## **SAVE THE DATE!**

### **The 2023 Annual Spring Conference is at Madden's on Gull Lake on April 26-28, 2023!**

Earlier this year, the Site Search Committee considered various locations for the 2023 MCMA Annual Conference and brought a unanimous recommendation to the Board. The Board considered the recommendation noting that a change in venue and date are not easy decisions, but believe this is the best decision and unanimously accepted this recommendation. Madden's has a lot to offer as a conference venue and is eager to host our group next spring.

Visit the MCMA website for more information and to register for the conference! ◉

# 2023 Mid-Winter Workshop Update

By Peyton Mastera, city administrator, Dilworth

The Professional Development Committee is tasked with organizing and setting the agenda for the annual mid-winter workshop, this year to be held on Jan. 27 at Forgotten Star Brewing in Fridley.

There has always been heated discourse and polarization at the federal level of government, but the last several years have seen this filter down to the state, and inevitably to the local level. As local government public administrators, we must be prepared to deal with this challenge while upholding all ethics.

This year's midwinter workshop will enlist the help of Braver Angels, a nonprofit whose dedicated mission is political depolarization. Their team will lead a discussion and several exercises on how we are to navigate this division amongst elected officials, staff, and constituents and what our roles are as leaders of organizations. Hopefully, you will take from this a series of tools that can be utilized in your community and discover that there are commonalities among us all. The divide is not as prevalent as it may seem.

Additionally, you will have the pleasure of hearing Dr. Cindra Kamphoff deliver a powerful, introspective message on how we are to manage ourselves and our organizations in a divisive climate. I believe you will find Dr. Kamphoff to be energizing and capable of bringing about an uplifting spirit.

The Professional Development Committee has been thoughtful and pragmatic when putting together content for this year's program, and I believe it will be beneficial to you and your organizations.

See you in Fridley! ☺

– Contact Mastera at [peyton.mastera@ci.dilworth.mn.us](mailto:peyton.mastera@ci.dilworth.mn.us)

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## Appointments and Other Professional News

- **Adam Bell**, city administrator, Bayport, has been appointed city manager, Crystal.
- **Casey Casella**, management analyst, Savage, has been appointed assistant city administrator.
- **Dave Konshok**, administration intern, Stearns County, has been appointed city administrator, Richmond.
- **Anne Norris**, city manager, Crystal, has retired.

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

*Contact Madison Hagenau, MCMA Secretariat, at [mhagenau@lmc.org](mailto:mhagenau@lmc.org).*