

President's corner

By Heather Worthington

Lately, I am reminded by something my mother used to say often when I was growing up—"Many hands make light work." In our work as city managers, we know the benefit of having strong teams within our organizations. We also have resources in our colleagues, through sharing our challenges, mentoring each other, and building our profession through those relationships. In this sense, many hands really do make light work!

Our work in counties and cities is difficult—especially during unsettled economic times. Many of you have had to lay off employees and make deep cuts in your personnel costs just to keep your heads above water for 2009. With cuts in LGA forecasted for 2010, you are likely working hard right now to figure out how you will make your budgets balance next year. This is where your colleagues can be a resource, a sounding board, and a way to put words to the fear and anxiety we are all feeling right now. By supporting each other, we can lighten the work load.

To that end, MCMA wants to hear from you about other ways we can support you during this time. I am always happy to communicate by phone (952-826-0415) or e-mail (hworthington@ci.edina.mn.us). If I can't help with your specific issue, I can help you identify people who can.

The MCMA Board of Directors has also committed to meeting with regional groups of administrators and managers in the coming months to have informal discussions about the issues facing the profession and the services we can offer to our membership. Throughout the remainder of 2009 and into 2010, we'll be meeting in several areas of the state (see article on page 3 for more specific information about times and locations):

- St. Paul, Sept. 10 (MAMA monthly meeting)
- Parker's Prairie, Sept. 23
- Wright County, Sept. 24
- McIntosh, Sept. 24
- Marshall, Oct. 7
- Owatonna, Oct. 22

I hope you'll be able to attend one of these sessions. If you are part of a regional group and you would like to have MCMA Board members (including yours truly) attend to talk about various issues, please contact me and we'll work it into the schedule.

And, as always, the MCMA listserv/member forum is a great way to reach out; if you're not signed up you can do so at www.lmc.org/page/1/member-forums/signup.jsp. Once you're signed up, it's easy to ask for information or feedback by sending e-mail to mcma@listserv.lmc.org.

Yours in service,
Heather Worthington, President. ☐

**Your
Range
Rider
is here
to help:**

Bill Bassett
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Your input needed on MCMA strategic plan, service to members

Meetings scheduled for Sept. and Oct.

By Kevin Frazell

In an effort to reach out to MCMA members around the state, the MCMA Board and staff have scheduled a series of “dialogue with the members” meetings.

The purpose of the meetings is to get member input into implementation of the new MCMA strategic plan, and to discuss any other thoughts, reactions, or expectations for MCMA service to its members. The new strategic plan can be accessed on the web site at www.mncma.org/MCMAStrategicPlan2009.pdf

Written thoughts are also most welcome, and can be sent to either President Heather Worthington at hworthington@ci.edina.mn.us or Secretariat Officer Kevin Frazell at kfrazell@lmc.org.

Meetings locations and dates:

St. Paul*

Thursday, Sept. 10, 12 p.m.

LMC Building—MAMA monthly meeting

Parker's Prairie**

Wednesday, Sept. 23, 11 a.m.

Parker's Prairie Community Center
(prior to the LMC Regional meeting)

Buffalo*

Thursday, Sept. 24, 11 a.m.

Wild Marsh Golf Course restaurant in Buffalo—
Wright County Administrators group

McIntosh**

Thursday, Sept. 24, 11 a.m.

McIntosh Community Center
(prior to the LMC regional meeting)

Marshall**

Wednesday, Oct. 7, 11 a.m. –

Best Western Marshall Inn
(prior to the LMC regional meeting)

Owatonna*

Thursday, Oct. 22, 12 p.m.

Torey's Restaurant—SMCCMA monthly meeting

**Registration for the St. Paul, Buffalo, and Owatonna meetings will be handled by MAMA, Wright County Administrators, and SMCCMA as part of their regular monthly meetings. Mark your calendar now and watch for further registration information from those three organizations.*

Further information (including how to register) for the Parker's Prairie, McIntosh, and Marshall meetings, all of which are being held immediately prior to a League of Minnesota Cities (LMC) Regional Meeting, will be sent out by LMC or by the regional managers group in the near future. ☐

Mid-Winter Seminar and Social

By Kevin Frazell

Okay, we know summer is barely over. But it's Minnesota and, well, you just know it's gonna get cold!

The Professional Development Committee has already been hard at work on the 2010 MCMA Mid-Winter Professional Development Seminar and social event and they have some new concepts to give you (and your family) a reason to attend!

The dates are **February 5-6** and the location will be familiar—**Grandview Lodge** in Nisswa. Yep, the same place we meet for the annual conference last May. The Committee thought members and families, especially children, would enjoy a chance to experience Grandview in a winter setting. We are working with Grandview to provide programming for children ages 4 – 12 so that both parents can enjoy the educational program.

The details of the educational program are yet to be worked out, but Friday afternoon will likely deal with the recession and its impacts on our local communities, while the Saturday session will deal with an interpersonal leadership topic.

Mark your calendar now and watch for details and registration information later in the fall. ☐

Meet the new Board members

Three MCMA members were newly elected to the MCMA Board of Directors at the annual meeting in May. Here's your chance to learn more about them.

Barry Stock

Barry Stock is the City Administrator for the City of Savage, a position he has held since 2002. He has been with Savage since 1997, having served as economic development director and deputy city administrator. Prior to joining the City of Savage, Barry was an assistant city administrator for the City of Shakopee, where he worked for 13 years.

Barry's government career started when he was a seasonal parks and street employee in high school and college, leading him to attain an undergraduate degree in Urban Studies from the University of Minnesota and a master's degree in Urban and Regional Studies from Mankato State University. He's worked in nearly every municipal discipline, providing a varied perspective that's proven valuable in his current administrative role.

Barry is a tireless community advocate and volunteer, having served as president for two different chambers of commerce and the local soccer club, as well as co-founding Shakopee's community festival. In 2002, he was named the Savage Chamber's Business Person of the Year. Today, he is the secretary for both the Savage Rotary and the Dan Patch Days Board of Directors.

Barry and his wife, Lorna, live in Savage and have five college-aged children—all boys. Barry's outside interests include refereeing soccer, spending time at his cabin, and working out at Lifetime Fitness.

Shaunna Johnson

Shaunna Johnson is currently the City Administrator for the City of Waite Park, where she has been for the last 5 and half years. Prior to Waite Park and her return to her home state of Minnesota, Shaunna served in a variety of positions with the City of El Dorado, Kansas including Planning Director, Human Resource Director, and even Interim City Clerk. Shaunna received her Bachelor's Degree from Concordia College in Moorhead, MN and her Master's Degree from Wichita State University-Hugo Wall School in Wichita, KS.

She has been actively involved with the MCMA Planning Committee and also many LMC boards and committees including LMC Board of Directors, MAP Board, Annual Planning Committee, and the Ethics Advisory Committee. Shaunna enjoys being actively involved in a variety boards and committees and sees the value it provides to her in her profession.

Shaunna resides in the rural area of Holdingford where she lives with her husband Chris and four boys: Harley (12), Wyatt (11), Jesse (9), and Beau (2). When she is not running with her kids, Shaunna enjoys spending time at the lake, playing cards, and sewing.

She is honored to serve on the MCMA Board and looks forward to the opportunity to serve the members of the organization.

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Appointments and other professional news

- **Brian Anderson**, Assistant to the City Administrator, Lakeville, has been appointed City Administrator, Newport.
- **Don Donahue**, former City Manager, New Hope, has been appointed City Administrator, Corcoran.
- **Bart Fischer**, Assistant City Administrator, Chaska, has been elected as President of the Association of Public Management Professionals (APMP).
- **Duane Hebert**, County Administrator, Barron County, WI, and former city and county administrator in Minnesota, has been appointed County Administrator, Winona County, MN.
- **Gordon Heitke**, City Administrator, Lino Lakes, has been appointed City Administrator, Baxter
- **Sara Irvine**, former City Administrator, Tonka Bay, has been appointed Assistant Administrator, Afton.
- **Lynn Lander**, City Administrator, Hermantown, has been appointed city manager, Aberdeen, SD.
- **John Mulder**, County Administrative Coordinator, Lincoln County WI, has been appointed City Administrator, Hermantown.

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Lisa Henning

Lisa Henning is the Assistant to the County Administrator with Dakota County, a position she has held for the past two years. Lisa came to the county as a fellow in the highly competitive International City/County Management Association (ICMA) post-graduate fellowship program from 2005-2007. She holds a bachelor's degree in Sociology and Criminology from the University of Northern Iowa, and a Master's in Public Affairs degree from the Indiana University School of Public and Environmental Affairs. During graduate school, Lisa worked as a financial analyst for the Bloomington, Indiana Police Department.

Lisa is committed to community service both on and off the job and seeks opportunities to serve the public outside of the local government profession. She volunteers monthly for a neighborhood food shelf; serves as the secretary for the Twin Cities Indiana University Alumni Association Board; and is active in her church. She also spent a year as an AmeriCorps volunteer working for a public housing authority in Evansville, Indiana.

Lisa is an aspiring long-distance runner and is training for her first marathon (the Twin Cities Marathon) in October. In addition she enjoys baking, especially cupcakes, which she frequently tests on coworkers, friends, and family. Lisa also loves travel, visiting friends and family across the country as often as possible.

For the past two years Lisa has attended APMP meetings ("assistants group"), where she has benefited from networking with talented and dedicated people. She decided it was time to meet more great local government managers through MCMA. Lisa is excited to be a new member of the MCMA Board and hopes to provide a county perspective to the group, form new professional relationships, and learn from veteran managers. ○

Reaching the MCMA Secretariat

For MCMA Secretariat services contact:

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You can also contact Rebecca Erickson,
Administrative Assistant
(rerickso@lmc.org), or Jim Miller,
Executive Director (jmiller@lmc.org).

All can be reached at (651) 281-1200.

So You Think It's Tough Here...

For this issue, we contacted two former MCMA members—Jim Antonen and Dwight Johnson—who had previously wandered off to other states, but have subsequently returned “home”. We asked them to comment on the differences that they perceive between being a local government manager here, and their former states.

Jim Antonen

It is great to be back in Minnesota after an 8 year absence. I have been asked to give my thoughts on the difference between Minnesota and California. To describe the difference would be like trying to explain to Johan Hohenstein the difference between Randolph Scott and Howdy Doody. But I will try! Governance in California is basically nonexistent. It is a governmental system where public opinion polls govern rather than elected officials. With the advent of term limits, very little institutional memory is retained and the history of mistakes is constantly repeating itself; especially with minority rule in the State Legislature, a two thirds vote is required to pass the budget. The only axiom some politicians seem to understand is what do I need to do to get reelected. In my opinion to fix the California system and to restore California to what it was prior to Prop 13 would require a Constitutional Convention to start all over.

The contrast between California and South Dakota maybe from my memory even more stark. In South Dakota, cities go about their business with little affect from the State. No State aid, no levy limits and the right to raise their own revenue and make their own decisions. What a novel idea of local government doing just that “local government.” If that idea caught on in Minnesota we could have like South Dakota a short (35 day) and long (40 day) legislative session that concentrates on state issues; rather than trying to micro manage cities and counties. Perhaps this seems harsh and I know many fine elected officials, but this past year's fiasco leaves a bitter taste in my mouth and may be the harbinger to the end of the Minnesota miracle.

As I said it is good to be back in Minnesota and I am hopeful that sensibility will once again reign in this fine State. On a related matter I was deeply distressed by this spring's presentation of the history of the horns of dilemma. In conference with MCMA's historian Tim Madigan and scholar Dan Donahue we shall right this wrong next year at Grandview. Heather you have been warned!

— *Jim Antonen*

Was previous manager of Sartell and Moorhead, but has also had management stints in South Dakota, and more recently California. He was appointed as City Manager of Maplewood in March, 2009.

Dwight Johnson

I am very happy to be back in Minnesota after five years in the Chicago suburbs. There is definitely a different political culture in Illinois. It was amazing to me to watch the Governor and the Legislature in gridlock on budget and other issues, even though one party solidly controlled both branches of government. The previous Governor was so distrusted that members of his own party required all understandings and deals to be in writing. Even the leaders of the House and Senate stopped speaking to each other. I know our previous Governor once suggested a Unicameral for Minnesota, but I think it's really Illinois that needs it most. While the vast majority of

state and local officials there are honest and hard working, there is a culture that is based more on who you know than what you know. Generally this alone did not mean that there was any illegal or unethical conduct. But this cultural background seems to make it easier for such problems to take root in Illinois. Minnesota's reputation for clean government continues to seem well deserved to me and we should never take that for granted.

While Illinois has its problems, we could learn some things from them about how the State shares tax resources. Every Illinois municipality automatically gets 1% of all the state sales tax generated within that municipality. This was a version of Minnesota's old Local Government Trust Fund that actually worked. In addition, any city over 25,000 population is automatically considered “home rule” and can approve up to an additional 1% sales tax by council vote alone. Cities under 25,000 can receive the additional sales tax through a referendum procedure. My community, Homer Glen, was able to operate with no property tax whatsoever. And, there is no history of the Legislature trying to undo any of this. Perhaps when one of the cities in the state is Chicago, other cities have some protection also.

I know that my old friend Jim Antonen is also providing some comments. His days in South Dakota overlapped my days in Nebraska. As I recall, South Dakota was one of several states in the Great Open Spaces City Management Association. Perhaps Nebraska was considered to be too densely settled and urbane to be a part of GOSCOMA. But both Nebraska and South Dakota shared a widely held “local control” ethic. Even minor proposals to micro-manage cities in Nebraska were met with huge resistance not just from local officials, but also by farmers, ranchers and small business owners. Perhaps there is something to be said for a little “pitchfork” democracy.

— *Dwight Johnson*

Returned to Minnesota as City Administrator of Rosemount in August, 2008, from Illinois. He had previously been City Manager in Shorewood and Plymouth, but also worked in Nebraska.

Memorandum from the edge

Jon Hohenstein, Community Development Director, Eagan

When you grow up on a farm, your schedule is determined by the livestock you raise. Like clockwork every morning and evening, dairy families and their cows meet in the milking parlor. If you raise chickens, you gather eggs at least twice a day. No matter what you are raising, you can't ignore or get behind on feeding, watering, and manure management. Not only does that cut into production, but the people from the county are absolutely humorless about that sort of thing.

When I was growing up we fed pigs for a few years, we had chickens from time to time, but mostly we grew corn and soybeans. So the constant was a pride of barn cats, who marauded among the outbuildings like a band of Navy Seals whose objective was the mice and related creatures that ate and/or contaminated stored grain.

To supplement their natural diet and bribe them to stay when the pickings were slim, three times a day one of us would scrape table scraps into a metal bowl, fill an old peanut can with dry cat food, and lead a swirling, meowing riot of mousers to the small shed they used as their base of operations. If you came outside after mealtime without the bowl and the peanut can, you became the instant victim of a congregate, yellow stink-eye that would shoot shivers up your spine.

My brother, sisters, and I got to name the kittens that arrived late each spring. High fertility rates were offset in the rural state of nature by frigid winters, bigger predators, the lure of other mice at nearby farms, and the fact that chickens are more adept at crossing roads than a lot of cats are. As a consequence, our feline population fluctuated in the teens and each May brought the opportunity to dub new batches of littermates.

While our neighbors had cats with names you might expect, like Tabby, Fluffy, and Buttons, the names we chose came from whatever recent experience held our fascination at a particular time. When I was introduced to classical music, a batch of kittens ended up

named Johan, Wolfgang, and Franz. When Mission Impossible came to TV, four little fluff balls were named Barney, Cinnamon, Willy, and Mr. Phelps. My siblings were older than me, so I grew up with a number of cats whose names were topical references varying from the obscure to the obvious. I never did find out how Barabbas got his name, but I'm guessing that Easter came late one year or his litter was born early.

One of our cats was named Geronimo. You might imagine that to be a reference to the Apache chief, perhaps drawn from a western movie, but you'd be wrong. Originally, my brother had named him Elvis because a thick tuft of fur on his head made it look like he had combed up a pompadour. Naturally, his brothers were named Little Richard and the Big Bopper.

He was renamed after he developed his own unique method of hunting. Most cats stalk their prey, crouched low in the grass and creeping slowly and silently until they are close enough to pounce. Whether through ingenuity, primal channeling of a jaguar ancestor, or plain laziness, Elvis would climb up onto a tree limb or granary rafter and wait for an unwitting mouse to wander into the kill zone. Then, like a paratrooper, he'd drop from the sky onto his target. When it became obvious that he was hunting exclusively from above, there really was no choice. Elvis Presley was a marksman in an armored division, not a paratrooper.

The first couple of times you see a cat drop out of the sky, it gives you a start. After a while, you get used to it. I remember walking into the granary one day, looking up and seeing him perched on a ledge, scanning the shadows for dinner. I said, "Hi, Geronimo!" and I swear to God, he put a paw in front of his mouth and went "Shhhh!" I guess whether you're a human or a cat, when someone's hunting, you don't give away his position. ◻

**Be sure to
check out
MCMA's
web site:**

www.mncma.org