



Minnesota  
City/County  
Management  
Association

## President's corner

*Dave Unmacht, County Administrator, Scott County*

As I write my first column as President of MCMA I note for all you past presidents (and there are many of you) that I have kept your streak alive and well. To wit: tardiness with meeting the persistent editors' deadline. So, if you were wondering if I was going to break your string of missed deadlines, just confirm with our esteemed editor, Mr. Frazell, and he will fill you in that we are still a long way from Cal Ripkin sort of numbers, but our streak remains strong and I have done my due diligence to keep it going (without the use of performance enhancing drugs I might add).

With that aside for history to judge, it is more important to note that the MCMA Board is pressing forward with an aggressive agenda. Following up on our strategic planning work from the past year, Committees have been formed and are pushing ahead with our highest priorities: Next Generation and mentoring, Member in Transition Program, Civic Engagement, K-12 Educational Presentations and ICMA Credentialing.

In addition, during our recent Board meeting held on July 27, I had an opportunity to outline a few of my personal priorities for the organization. Presidential prerogative, if you will, allows me to identify organizational initiatives that will have much of my attention in the remaining months of my term. During the Board meeting I highlighted the following areas:

### ***Ensuring a smooth transition to Grandview for our annual conference.***

In fact we are having a joint Board/Planning Committee meeting in late September at Grandview. Relocating our conference was a significant decision for our Association and you can be assured that the Board and Conference Planning Committee members will work ahead to make the first conference at our new site a success.

***Challenging each Committee to focus on accomplishing one or two significant projects for the year.*** I believe if we limit our focus to one or two important initiatives our Committees will be successful; time simply does not allow us to take on too many ideas and projects in any given year.

***Implementing the new Manager in Transition program.*** This was a personal priority for me as Vice President last year and I look forward to staying in touch with Kris Busse and the Committee throughout the months ahead. There is a lot of energy and momentum already in place around this priority; building on it will secure our success in this strategy.

***Defining the role of Range Rider program in MCMA.*** This task was identified in our Strategic Plan as a priority, I think it will be timely and relatively easy to have important dialogue with our Range Riders and members on what do we want from this program and how we should shape its future.

***Encouraging further dialogue and joint programming between MCMA and MACA.*** Cass County Administrator and MACA President, Bob Yochum, plans to attend the MCMA Board's September meeting to further the dialogue between our two Associations. We have come a long way with our activities in the past few years and we want to continue discussions about how we can work together in to the future.

***Institutionalizing the role of the intern position in MCMA.*** As great as volunteers are and as important as giving back to your association is as a professional priority, it is clear that we do need additional "staff" resources to ultimately accomplish our objectives in MCMA. I am very pleased that we are moving ahead -- with the cooperation of the LMC -- in seeking an intern to help us with the work ahead.

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

## Range Riders are here to help:

Bill Bassett  
(507) 243-4346

# Board meeting recap

Since publication of the Spring newsletter the MCMA Board has met twice – May 9 at Cragun's Lodge and July 27 in Shakopee. Highlights from those two meetings are:

- Accepted proposal of Grandview Lodge as site for the annual conference for 2008, with the option to renewal annual through 2012
- Directed that the Recognition and Membership committee review the criteria and nominating process for the Robert A. Barrett Award for Management Excellence
- Accepted the recommendations of the Recognition and Membership committee to revamp the Managers in Transition program
- Approved solicitation of private sector funds to support creation of internships in Minnesota local governments
- Adopted a budget of, including costs of the annual conference, for fiscal year 2007/08. Budget includes appropriation for hiring of part-time intern to work on MCMA strategic plan priorities
- Approved contract with Government Training Service (GTS) to manage 2008 annual conference ☐

### MCMA Officers/Board Members

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# Minnesota gathering at ICMA-Pittsburgh

## *Something New – Dinner!*

This year MCMA is doing something unique and special for its State association gathering at the upcoming ICMA conference. Rather than the usual Monday evening hors d'oeuvres reception at the hotel, we'll be having a sit down dinner at a nice restaurant!

This special treat is brought to you courtesy of Fairbault City Administrator and Pittsburgh-area native Tim Madigan. Eager to show off the charms of his hometown, Tim has arranged for MCMA members and their guests to dine at LeMont, high atop Mt. Washington, overlooking downtown Pittsburgh.

Social hour with light hors d'oeuvres and a cash bar will begin at 6:00, dinner will be served at 7:00. This schedule will permit time back at the hotel for those members who want to visit the receptions of other states.

Entrée choices are:

- Boneless chicken breast, stuffed with borsic cheese and served in a pastry shell
- Atlantic salmon, char-grilled with honey-soy marinade and glaze
- Filet mignon

Cost for members is being paid by MCMA (honestly folks, this isn't costing us any more than the usual reception!). For guests there will be a charge of \$55.

If you wish to attend, please RSVP to Rebecca Erickson at [rerickso@lmc.org](mailto:rerickso@lmc.org) no later than Friday, September 28th. Be sure to include your entrée choice, and if you are bringing a guest, their entrée choice as well.

LeMont is located at 1114 Grandview Avenue. From the convention center or conference hotels you can take a cab. **OR** if you're just slightly more adventuresome, go to Station Square at the base of Mt. Washington where you can catch a tram ride up the side of the mountain. The tram will drop you just down the street from LeMont. Union Square is about a mile walk from the convention center and surrounding hotels; you can also catch the "T" (Pittsburgh's subway) from the convention area to Station Square. The fare is \$2 each way, including transfer between the subway and the tram.

For a sneak preview of what's in store, check out the LeMont website at <http://www.lemontpittsburgh.com/>. ☺

## ICMA Midwest Regional Summit

*Peter Herlofsky*

*City Administrator, Farmington*

*ICMA Midwest Vice President*

MCMA is pleased to be playing host to the 2008 ICMA Midwest regional meeting—March 27 and 28 at the Minneapolis Radisson. The ICMA regional meetings have traditionally been an opportunity for the ICMA Vice Presidents, state association officers and staff from each region to network and discuss issues of common interest. However, in recent years ICMA has encouraged all members to attend and has added an ICMA University course offering on Thursday afternoon as an enticement! Mark your calendar now and watch for further information early in 2008. ☺

## Mid-Winter Seminar – dates and location

Mark your calendar now for the 2008 MCMA Mid-Winter Professional Development Seminar and social.

**Dates:** February 1–2, 2008

**Location:** The Lodge at Brainerd  
Lakes in Baxter

Programming for the seminar is currently under consideration, and will be announced later in the fall.

## Reaching the MCMA Secretariat

**For MCMA Secretariat services contact:**

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

## MCMA Annual Conference date and location reminder

Yup, it's really going to happen! The spring annual conference is confirmed for Grandview Lodge in Nisswa, May 7–9, 2008. As a reminder, our rates at Grandview will be slightly higher than what we've had in the past: Single occupancy—\$447; Double occupancy—\$362. There will also be a single lodging option at the very near Days Inn Nisswa that would run about \$362, including all meals and activities at Grandview.

The MCMA Board of Directors and 2008 Annual Conference Planning Committee are meeting together at Grandview on Friday, September, 28<sup>th</sup> to tour the new facility and make sure we get off to a great start. Samantha Orduno, City Administrator, Dayton and Charles Grawe, Assistant City Administrator, Apple Valley, are co-chairs for this year's conference committee. Assuming all goes well in May 2008, MCMA has the option to continue each spring at Grandview through 2012. ☐

## MCMA membership total increases nearly 20%

One of the initiatives of Past President Jamie Verbrugge and the 2006-07 MCMA Board was to make a concerted effort to bring more local government management professionals into the fold. Specifically, letters of invitation to join the association and to attend last May's annual conference were sent to all folks with the title of "Manager" or "Administrator" in the state who did not already belong. A special effort was also made to reach assistants.

It paid off! While it is always difficult to reconcile exact numbers with those who have belonged in the past, the bottom line is that MCMA begins its new fiscal year with nearly 300 members, about a 20% increase from the average membership of 250 in the past.

A big welcome to all of the new members, and to those who rejoined after a few years absence! ☐

## Appointments and other professional news

- **Michael Ashcraft**, Deputy City Manager, Olathe, Kansas, has been appointed City Manager, Moorhead
- **Mitch Berg**, former City Administrator, Afton, has been appointed City Administrator, Mahanomen
- **Sean Gillen**, Professor from Eastern Kentucky University and previous Council Administrator, Lexington, KY, has been appointed City Administrator, Grand Rapids
- **Lisa Henning** has been appointed Assistant County Administrator, Dakota County
- **Matt Jaunich**, City Administrator, Hector, has been appointed City Administrator, Arlington
- **Bob Louiseau**, City Manager, Perham, has been appointed City Administrator, Detroit Lakes
- **Nathan Matthews**, City Administrator, Winnebago, has been appointed City Administrator, Staples
- **Doug Reeder** has announced his retirement from Brooklyn Park, effective March 31, 2008
- **Vickie Schleuning**, Code Enforcement and Public Health Manager for Brooklyn Park, has been appointed Assistant to the City Manager, Brooklyn Center
- **Tammy Schutta**, Assistant to the City Manager, Shoreview, has been appointed Assistant City Administrator, East Bethel
- **Greg Sparks**, City Administrator, Owatonna, has been appointed Town Manager, Mountain Village, CO

## Introducing the Intern— MCMA now has its very own intern!

After adopting the new and ambitious strategic last year, the MCMA Board concluded that we needed some help with the details of getting it all implemented. With encouraging local governments to retain and re-create internship positions as part of the Next Generation initiative, the Board also wanted to set an example. Funding for an intern to work 8–12 hours per week on MCMA business was included in the budget for 2007/08.

For this year the position will be filled by Joel Peck. Joel holds a BS degree in journalism from North Central University in Minneapolis, and has completed his Master of Arts in Public Administration at Hamline in St. Paul. He currently works for the Minnesota House of Representatives as Administrative Assistant with the Chief Clerk's Office. He serves on the St. Paul District 5 Planning Council and has done volunteer intern work for the St. Paul Police Department.

Joel's interest in local government stems from his years as a reporter for the White Bear Press, covering city issues in White Bear Lake, Mahtomedi, Hugo, and Vadnais Heights. Having covered local government management for years, Joel now is passionate about wanting to do it himself, and sees the MCMA internship as a great entry into the profession. He looks forward to meeting many of you.

In addition to the MCMA duties, Joel will also be doing some work for LMC, helping staff the Minnesota Cities Stormwater Coalition and supporting work on certain LMC strategic initiatives. ☐

## President's corner, continued from page 1

It is a privilege to serve as the President of MCMA and I am honored to work with very professional and dedicated colleagues on the Board. Our ultimate success is a direct function of the commitment and involvement from all members. I know from my own experience it can be very hard to "give a lot" to other activities, but I also know how far we can go if we "give a little." I encourage you, if you have not already committed to a Committee or task, over the course of the next eight months, to find time in your busy schedule to give a little for you and your colleagues within MCMA.

Just imagine if each of our nearly 300 members gave just a little how much we can accomplish. If you want to know how to do this and are not familiar with MCMA or its Committee's give me a call or send me an email at [dunmacht@co.scott.mn.us](mailto:dunmacht@co.scott.mn.us). ☐

## Get acquainted with the Board

**Melanie Mesko Lee** is currently the Assistant City Administrator with the City of Hastings, where she has served for eight years. Prior to Hastings, Melanie worked for the community of Oak Park Heights and for Senator Deanna Weiner. Melanie has a Bachelors degree from Mankato and a Masters degree from Hamline.

She has been actively involved in APMP ("the Assistant's Group") and is a former past president. Additionally, Melanie is fortunate to be able to continue her professional growth through involvement in a variety of other local government organizations. The networking and formation of relationships within the profession are valuable benefits.

Melanie lives with her husband John, her two daughters and her first "baby," Lenny the Pug, in Farmington. When not trying to keep up with the kids, she enjoys running, gardening, and finding a quiet spot to read. She feels privileged to be serving as a board member of MCMA, and looks forward to continuing her involvement with the organization's initiatives. ☐

# Memorandum from the edge

*Jon Hohenstein*

The news coverage of the 35W bridge collapse was notable for several reasons. First, it was wall-to-wall. Hour after hour, day after day, everyone from the local news anchors to the national morning shows to the cable news channels to the foreign media covered the story. Second, following the initial disaster and its immediate aftermath, the story slowed to a crawl. Yes, it is an important story affecting the lives of thousands of people and highlighting the condition of the nation's infrastructure. It deserves serious attention, but by the end of the second day, the local news was covering who else was covering the story, including the Chinese. Third, it finally drew peoples' attention to something important. Something so serious was going on that for days no one paid any attention to Lindsay Lohan, Paris Hilton, or Britney Spears.

And even more importantly, most Republicans and Democrats forgot to fight with each other for a while and began to talk about what our priorities should be, how decisions about things like steel and concrete affect peoples lives and what investing to meet our basic needs now and in the future ought to mean.

One of the most notable things from a city and county perspective, though, was the realization on the part of so many people that in Minnesota, local governments, their leaders and their employees were ready to respond to a disaster of extraordinary proportions and did so promptly, tirelessly, professionally, and effectively. Admittedly, the extent of the death and destruction was not as great as that in the 9/11 attacks nor as widespread as Hurricane Katrina, but it was still accurately described as a catastrophe of historic proportions.

It was clear, though, that emergency medical personnel, law enforcement, fire departments, hospitals, and others had planned for the potential for something like this and knew how to respond. The training, the discipline, the tabletops and the field exercises were all applied to the situation and the public and the media noticed. National reporters commented on how organized and effective the incident command and communications system worked. More than once, someone

noted, this wasn't like Katrina. The people at the bridge site were ready to respond to the unimaginable and they did their jobs without having to think twice.

On the one hand, I am bothered that there are people who are supposedly doing the peoples' work with us who seemed surprised by the heroism and skill that local government employees displayed. That they spoke about the quality of the emergency response as if they expected something less of those who are committed to serve. On the other hand, a lot of people got it. A lot of people from legislators to people who write to the editor and call talk radio and many in between began to talk gratefully about what we get from our public employees in Minnesota. It is sad that it took something like this to get their attention, but it is heartening that it did.

For all of the images that we saw of public servants doing what they do during the initial response, the rescues and the recovery operations, there are the many, many images of things that few people see, the things that all of you, your elected officials, and your employees do that truly provide for the health, safety and welfare of our citizens. None of us is in this business to be thanked or recognized, but it is great for a while at least to have more people openly appreciating the service, dedication, and commitment to the public good that so many local government employees and leaders practice day in and day out.

They always say that as long as the snow gets plowed, the potholes get patched, and everything goes away when the toilet is flushed, you won't get very many phone calls. People don't know that you're there, but their lives are better and easier because you are. People knew local government employees were there when the bridge fell down. And a lot of them appreciate that more than they ever have before.

Our thoughts and prayers are with the victims and their families. Our support and willingness to help go out to Hennepin County and the City of Minneapolis. Our gratitude and appreciation go out to every public employee and elected official who doesn't get thanked enough. ☐

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