



Minnesota  
City/County  
Management  
Association

## President's corner

*Jamie Verbrugge, City Administrator, Rosemount*

Membership has its privileges, right? When you sit down once a year to fill out the membership renewal for MCMA (and for many of you, ICMA), there probably is a momentary thought about what you get for your investment. And then that little person in your head reminds you that membership in MCMA and/or ICMA is just something you are supposed to do.

Were it that easy, there would be little purpose for a Board of Directors. It would be very easy to collect dues, have our Secretariat schedule and plan a couple of conferences, and show up.

Fortunately, there isn't an "Easy" button. Instead, the MCMA Board has been putting a lot of thought into what privileges membership confers, what services MCMA provides, and what needs the association exists to fulfill.

The Board held a strategic planning session in October to map out the association's mission. In late November most of the officers met with committee chairs to share the vision and align responsibilities within the existing committee structure. At its Dec. 1 meeting, the Board adopted the strategic plan.

The plan has three focus areas (member support, professional development, and civic engagement) and a limited but achievable number of initial objectives.

In the area of member support, the emphasis of work over the next couple years will include enhancement of the Members-in-Transition Program and establishment of a mentor program. The Membership and Recognition Committee and Next Generation

Committee will assist the Board in moving these initiatives forward.

To provide for continuing professional development needs, the Professional Development Committee will work on increasing the number of members participating in the ICMA Credentialed Manager program and the Next Generation Committee will continue to encourage more internship opportunities.

To promote civic engagement, the Educational Initiatives Committee will be working toward more comprehensive implementation of the K-12 Curriculum MCMA has developed in conjunction with the academic community. The Board will also be working on outreach initiatives that encourage community education and civic awareness.

These objectives are not the limit of what we will pursue as an association. There are other issues that will continue to earn our attention, such as quality programming of conferences, evaluation of the Range Rider program, and adherence to the code of ethics.

Most importantly for our members, this strategic plan for the next couple years represents an investment in you, in the profession, and in local government. It is a statement that the Board recognizes the value proposition when you fill out your dues renewal.

At the same time, we hope our members recognize there is value to be gained by investing even a small portion of your time to MCMA. The strategic plan will be posted on the MCMA web site. Take a few moments to review it and then a few moments more to contemplate how you can contribute. □

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

### Mid-Winter Seminar

- MCMA's Mid-Winter Professional Development Seminar will be held in Duluth Feb. 23-24. See page 3 for more details.

# MCMA Board meeting recap

By Kevin Frazell

At the Oct. 13 meeting in Edina, the MCMA Board spent most of its time formulating a new strategic plan to guide the work of the association over the next one-to-two years. (For more information about the strategic plans, see President's Corner on page 1.)

In other action, the Board provided feedback on the Minnesota reception at the ICMA conference in San Antonio; discussed the mid-winter seminar with Robin Silverman (see article, page 3); reviewed the work of the MCMA committees; and approved

the concept of sending an RFP for annual conference meeting facilities to resort properties in greater Minnesota.

At the Dec. 1 meeting in Wabasha, the MCMA Board officially adopted the new strategic plan, and discussed the work of the MCMA committees to implement the strategic plan. The Board also held an informal afternoon discussion with members from southeast Minnesota to discuss the strategic plan and other expectations for the association. ☐

**Range  
Riders  
are here  
to help:**

Bill Bassett  
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# MCMA Mid-Winter Seminar: Robin's Back

By Kevin Frazell

Pull your bathing suit out of storage quick!! The MCMA Mid-Winter seminar is right around the corner and waiting for you, Feb. 23-24 in Duluth at the Best Western Edgewater Resort and Waterpark. And back by popular demand is Robin Silverman, who will be spending both Friday afternoon and Saturday morning covering the topic of intercultural conflict.

Now for those of you hoping that Robin will repeat last year's "performance" of not arriving until Saturday (giving you an unexpected Friday afternoon for fun, libations, and naps!) it probably won't happen. First the odds are against it. And second, Robin will be driving from the Twin Cities, and not be at the mercy of Northwest airlines. But she does promise a fun and engaging seminar for MCMA members and their partners!

We're back in Duluth, but this year just up the road at the Edgewater. If a great seminar at a nicely renovated conference hotel isn't enough to attract you, maybe the prospect of sliding down a waterfall with or without your kids is!

Registration information for the seminar is posted on the website [www.mncma.org](http://www.mncma.org). In the meantime, the Edgewater is ready to take your room reservation at 1-800-777-7925. Be sure to tell them you are with the Minnesota City/County Management Association. A variety of room styles and rates have been set aside:

- Tower Atrium (overlooking the water park): \$129
- Atrium Double (overlooking Lake Superior): \$129

The rooms are located in different parts of the hotel, so if you have special requests, such view, access, room amenities, etc., be sure to clarify those details with the reservations agent. ☐

## Reaching the MCMA Secretariat

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## Thank you received from former Gov. Arne Carlson

Bruce Messelt, chair of last year's annual conference planning committee, received the following note from former Gov. Carlson regarding his speech at our Thursday evening banquet:

*Dear Bruce:*

*Thank you ever so much for your very kind note and gift certificate. The honest truth is that I had a wonderful time . . . It was truly a wonderful occasion and I am deeply grateful to you and the association for your public service.*

*Warmest Regards,*

*Arne H. Carlson*

## The Annual Conference: To Cragun's or Not To Cragun's?

Kevin Frazell

MCMA has been holding its spring annual conference at Cragun's resort in the Brainerd Lakes area since . . . well, since God invented local government managers. While no one seems to know for sure just when this venerable tradition started, some of the "older" members of the association think it began sometime in the early 1970s, long before the "Next Generation" had even been born.

The MCMA by-laws require that the association rebid its annual conference location. May 2007 is the last year of our current contract with Cragun's, so the discussion has opened as to where we will be meeting in 2008.

To approach the assignment in a meaningful and member-responsive fashion, the MCMA Board commissioned an online survey of members for input on locations and dates of the annual conference. Almost half of you took us up on the opportunity to register your opinion. Thank you!

Key findings of the survey are listed below. (Many of the survey questions gave the option of "check all that apply" or asked respondents to rank their preferences, so not all percentages will add up to 100 percent.)

- The site of the conference was rated as very important to the decision to attend by only 14 percent, but as at least somewhat important by 43 percent. Adding these two categories together yields 57 percent.
- 87 percent said they would prefer a resort location, and 40 percent were open to a hotel with conference center. Other options, like a hotel setting, were rated far lower.
- When asked about preference on more specific options, the following were ranked first or second choices (out of six) by the percentages indicated:
  - 78 percent would like the conference to remain at a resort in the Brainerd Lakes area.
  - 48 percent would specifically like to remain Cragun's.
  - 40 percent are open to a resort facility in other parts of greater Minnesota.
- There was little interest in meeting in a greater Minnesota regional center, and even less interest in meeting in the metropolitan area. Practically speaking, the lack of interest in meeting in the metro means the option of a hotel with conference is essentially out, since the Plymouth Radisson and Northland Inn are the two facilities staff had in mind when designing this question.
- Continuing to meet just prior to the fishing opener no longer appears to be an important consideration; 87 percent rated it from "very unimportant" to "can take it or leave it."
- There was still a very strong consensus for continuing to hold the conference in May; April and June were the most popular second choices, but far less preferred than May.
- Respondents indicated practical considerations were the

**Continued on page 7**

## 2007 MCMA Annual Conference

Mark McNeill, MCMA Board

The 2007 MCMA Conference Planning Committee, under the able leadership of committee co-chairs, Matt Podhradsky of Chaska and Tim Houle of Morrison County, has been busy meeting and planning the 2007 Conference to be held at Cragun's, May 9-11. The theme for this year's event is tentatively set for, "Building/Strengthening the Position of Local Government Managers." Be sure to mark your calendar!

The conference promises to provide many opportunities for Minnesota managers to grow both themselves and the MCMA organization. The committee anticipates the conference will include several exciting and well-recognized speakers in addition to the other wonderful accoutrements for which the Conference is known. ◻

## Getting ready for ICMA's 93rd Annual Conference in Pittsburgh this fall

*Dave Unmacht, MCMA First Vice President*

Admittedly I knew little about Pittsburgh as I flew to the "steel city" for the 2007 annual Conference Planning Committee meeting over the weekend of Nov. 17-19. I've never been a Pirates or Steelers fan and the industrial town of iron workers held no allure for me as a child. I went in a stereotypical skeptic and came out a surprising believer.

Five words sum up my experience more than any: "It's not your Grandfathers Pittsburgh". Not even remotely close. Just so you know, this article is not being sponsored or paid for by the Chamber of Commerce either.

Pittsburgh is a vibrant, energetic, renaissance town with breathtaking views from Mount Washington. I have been to Mount Vernon and even Valley Forge, but to be honest I did not even know there was a "mount" named after our first President let alone in Pennsylvania. If you have not been to Pittsburgh, from the airport to downtown (roughly 20 miles), the city quite literally "opens up" in front of you as you exit the freeway tunnel under the mountain. This is quite a unique and distinct introduction for new visitors to this city. It turned out to be a great beginning to what was an excellent weekend.

The location of our 2007 ICMA Conference offered a multitude of cultural, historical, educational, and professional development opportunities. From the natural beauty of the three rivers, to the redevelopment of the industrial community, to the pride in their native inclines, to the new and splendid major league sport venues, to the clean and friendly downtown, and the many shopping opportunities, this city hopes to come alive for ICMA members during our conference scheduled for Oct. 7-10. Second to our Minneapolis Host Committee (how can I not say this), the Pittsburgh Host Committee did a wonderful job acquainting visitors with the local amenities, including the downtown nightlife.

Close to 100 ICMA colleagues from across the country, as well as Ross Hoff and his ICMA staff, came together the weekend before Thanksgiving to plan the conference program. Along with becoming familiar with the city, the convention center, and the excellent dining ideas, the Planning Committee spent many hours working on educational and professional development priorities for our conference.

Sessions are being planned in career tracks such as small community managers, emerging leaders, and the senior executive (like Brandt Richardson and Craig Waldron) of our profession. Theme tracks are planned for subjects such as managing health care costs, leadership development, citizen engagement, next gen/first time managers, and personal/family issues. Social activities will focus on events such as the Heinz History Center, River Cruise, Andy Warhol Museum, Fallingwater, and the Frick Art Museum, to name just a few.

A very good friend of mine told me before I left for Pittsburgh that I would enjoy my visit and be surprised at what this city has to offer. I left with skepticism, yet great anticipation, and came home with a strong message for my colleagues. Pittsburgh will be ready to host the ICMA Conference. Pittsburgh is a special town and has much to offer its guests. I encourage you to consider joining me and many of your Minnesota colleagues in attending the 2007 ICMA Conference in Pittsburgh. ☺

## Consider membership in ICMA

*Peter Herlofsky, ICMA Midwest Regional Vice President*

The International City/County Management Association (ICMA) is an organization of professional public administrators. One of ICMA's primary advantages is to provide a connection between its members who are scattered around the globe. ICMA provides a means for members to associate with other members through the biweekly newsletter, monthly PM Magazine, regional training, and most notably the annual conference. ICMA also provides outreach to state associations.

Membership in ICMA is meant to be inclusive to all public administrators. It is also meant to be a tool used to introduce the profession to individuals currently enrolled in public administration curriculums and currently employed in local government. As ICMA members, it is your responsibility to encourage and provide an ICMA membership experience to employees in your organization who show promise or an inclination to initiate a career in public administration. An ICMA membership is an opportunity to associate with the profession. Please share the privilege.

For more information about ICMA membership, visit the ICMA web site at: [www.icma.org](http://www.icma.org) ☺

## Performance measurement in Minnesota

Michael Williams, City Administrator, St. Cloud

The Minnesota cities of Bemidji, East Grand Forks, Hutchinson, Moorhead, St. Cloud, and Woodbury have joined the ICMA Center for Performance Measurements (ICMA-CPM) and created a Minnesota consortium to:

1. Coordinate use of the ICMA CPM so that good comparative measurements are obtained.
2. Recruit more Minnesota cities to join to make the CPM even more meaningful and useful.
3. Create a special introductory price to make joining more enticing and affordable.

The CPM now has over 150 member city and counties around the country. Data collection from these entities provides the ability for interagency benchmarking as well as internal performance improvement comparisons from year to year. Participants are now able to use the online database to customize comparisons with all other jurisdictions based on population, climate, urban density, method of service provision, community demographics, and other characteristics.

Performance measurement is becoming another "arrow in the quiver" of local government management professionals. Meaningful performance measurement is not easy, but the ICMA CPM makes it as easy as it can be and a true tool for leading local government organizations.

In St. Cloud we have attempted to blend our budget and finance policy, annual Council goal-setting, annual leadership team goal-setting, annual leadership team performance evaluations, and performance measures into an annual cycle that coincides with the budget process. It's a system that's a little difficult to accomplish, but we are making headway. What's nice about it is its simplicity; what's written down gets done.

Imagine the following sequence of events:

1. Prior to commencement of the annual budget process, the Council creates a draft of its annual goals during a retreat.
2. The Council's annual goals are forwarded to the leadership team (LT) during a LT Retreat and further developed.
3. The Council/LT annual goals are presented the Council for approval.
4. The annual budget process begins with members of the LT creating indicators of success (indicators), which are really performance measures in concert with the goals.
5. The indicators are adjusted by the administrator and presented to the Council as the premise for the proposed budget. The indicators and the budget and finance policy are the focus of the Council's budget discourse. In fact, there is discussion about overall policy and direction rather than discussion about small expenditures and micro-management.
6. The approved indicators and the approved Council/LT goals are used to assist in developing individual LT members' performance evaluation goals for the coming year.

Continued on page 7

## Position appointments & other personal/professional news

- **Tanya Ange** has been appointed Mankato assistant to the city manager.
- **Scott Arneson**, Aitkin County administrator, has been appointed Goodhue County administrator.
- **Mitch Berg**, Afton, is in transition.
- **Tony Chladek**, Stewartville city administrator, has been appointed Merrill, Wis., city administrator.
- **David Hamilton**, Goodhue County administrator, has been appointed Crow Wing County administrator.
- **Nick Koktavay**, Woodbury administrative intern, has been appointed Carver County management analyst.
- **Joe Lynch**, North Branch city administrator, has been appointed Inver Grove Heights city administrator.
- **Dean Lotter**, Minnetrista city administrator, has been appointed New Brighton city manager.
- **Bill Malinen**, Lynnwood, Wash., city administrator, has been appointed Roseville city manager.
- **Jeff O'Neill**, Monticello deputy city administrator, has been appointed Monticello city administrator.
- **Jessica Sandin**, former Oakdale intern, has been appointed, Tonka Bay city administrator.
- **Roxy Traxler**, LeSeur County coordinator, has been appointed Mille Lacs County coordinator.
- **Jeanna Troha**, Assistant City Manager, New Brighton, has been appointed Assistant City Manager, Wilsonville, OR
- **Sandra Vargas**, Administrator, Hennepin County, has been appointed President of the Minneapolis Foundation

## Nominations wanted: Award for Management Excellence

Kevin Frazell

It's time to start thinking about nominations for the 2006 Dr. Robert A. Barrett MCMA Award for Management Excellence.

The award recognizes a manager, administrator or coordinator who has established him or herself as a role model, leader, and mentor in the local government profession. Previous winners of the award are Eagan City Administrator Tom Hedges, St. Louis Park City Manager Charlie Meyer, Fairmont City Administrator, Jim Zarling, Woodbury City Administrator, Barry Johnson, Oakdale City Administrator Craig Waldron, and Scott County Administrator Dave Unmacht. In each case, the elected bodies, staff members, and communities enthusiastically joined in celebrating these manager's award recognitions.

A mailing to solicit nominations will be sent shortly after the first of the year to the governing body in all local governments with a MCMA member. While nominations must have the endorsement by the governing body, MCMA members are encouraged to "make a suggestion" in the right places for managers they believe should be recognized. Note that nominations received during the past three years can be renewed by a simple letter from the nominating governing body.

The MCMA Recognition and Membership Committee, chaired by First Vice President Dave Unmacht, will make the final selection. The award will be presented during the MCMA Annual Business Meeting at the Spring Conference in May. If you would like more information about the award, please contact Kevin or Rebecca at the Secretariat offices. ○

## The Annual Conference,

continued from page 4

most important to them, including comfortable meeting facilities, good food, good access from all parts of the state, and reasonable cost.

Based on the belief that great associations listen to their members, the MCMA Board has received proposals from six resorts that would like to host the annual conference.

The proposals will be evaluated and selection made in time for announcement at the 2007 conference. Stay tuned to find out if the Cragun's tradition will continue into a fifth decade, or if the Next Generation will be conferencing in a new location. ○

## Performance measurement in Minnesota,

continued from page 6

7. The annual goals, the indicators of success, the budget and finance policy, and annual performance evaluations and goal setting are all referred to periodically throughout the year to ensure completion of tasks and reporting back to the LT and the Council.
8. The process is followed again in the coming year.

The Council has appreciated the budget discussion and results. We created the indicators of success with no guidebook or consultant to help—just good practices and a general, remedial understanding of performance measurements, thanks to the CPM.

Some in our profession would consider this a small start toward making use of performance measurements. To me, it is a major shift in the way we look at services and the annual appropriation process. The "system" in St. Cloud is a good step toward measuring, reporting, guiding, and improvement; and that's what it's all about!

I invite you to join St. Cloud and the other Minnesota cities in the ICMA-CPM. The more participants we have in our state, the more valuable the opportunity to learn together and to develop better comparative data for our state.

To learn more about ICMA-CPM, contact Mike Lawson, ICMA, at [mlawson@icma.org](mailto:mlawson@icma.org) or (202) 962-3634. If you'd like to talk with someone about the Minnesota project, contact, Moorhead Assistant City Manager Michael Redlinger or Woodbury City Administrator Clint Gridley. ○

# Memorandum from the edge

By Jon Hohenstein

Listening to the various commentators from different perspectives analyze the outcome of the recent federal and state elections brought to mind Winston Churchill, who said that democracy is the worst form of government devised by the wit of man, except for all the others.

You have to admit that selecting public leadership by a popular vote has not always been the obvious choice for nations and their governments. Military coercion, divine right, armed revolution, and socialist one-party rule have been tried at various times, with mixed and marginal results. Mussolini did make the trains in Italy run on time, but he failed to transfer power peacefully to his successors. He failed at that big time.

At times, I think local government professionals find themselves and their roles similarly denounced. Critics say that having substantial responsibilities in the hands of bureaucrats is the worst system they can think of. To which I would extend the corollary, by saying, except for all the others. More than that, having a well-trained and experienced group of professionals committed to public service is the best possible complement to popularly elected government boards. That is what makes it possible for ships of state to continue under steam through one election after another, regardless of who takes control of the rudder or the courses they choose to take.

We may take for granted that those we all serve know what we know—that the Council-Manager form of government and its variations were originated to eliminate government corruption, excess, and cronyism. Many people may remember civics lessons about Boss Tweed, machine politics, and the Teapot Dome scandal. It seems, though, many fewer remember how, over 100 years ago, American government in general, and city and county governments in particular, shifted their employment and management structure away from political patronage toward reform systems based on merit and demonstrated ability.

George Santayana said that those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it. Or at least they are doomed to more demanding majors, like math and biology.

In any case, it seems more and more these days, some people are repeating history. There are efforts in some places to politicize the work of local government staff. They see political motivations among staff that do not exist or want local employees to be aligned with candidates or parties rather than serving those who are elected.

By extension, there are some who seem to think this local government management stuff can't be all that difficult and just about anyone ought to be able to do it. I mean it's not like you're running a highly-regulated, closely-scrutinized, multi-million-dollar service business. Oh, wait. I'm sorry, that is exactly what you are doing.

This mindset is strange to me. It is as if someone woke up one day and said, "This is a beautiful morning, I think I will start underwriting insurance today. How hard can it be? Maybe after that, I will originate some home loans. Or wait, better yet, I have a killer software application I can write. I better get me one of those computer things."

I am not so naïve as to claim that what we do is rocket science. But like any specialized profession, it is one that is best done by people who are trained in the theories and fundamentals of the field, who are committed to doing it well by putting the public interest ahead of their own, and who expand their abilities through experience and life-long learning. It is also best done by people who are able to serve diverse personalities through a commitment to the primacy of those elected to give policy direction. That is to say, people who understand that there can be a range of good outcomes and their job is to carry out the selected direction to the best of their ability.

Perhaps that is the other difference between what we do and what rocket scientists do. The laws of physics, once they are learned, are relatively predictable. For them, how you get a rocket off the ground does not change from one election to the next. For local government professionals, on the other hand, elections may bring warp speeds to other dimensions. When that happens, you want seasoned hands on the flight deck. ◻

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