

We asked, you told us

Heather Worthington, President

It's been a whirlwind autumn and early winter. The MCMA Board held a series of meetings in various parts of the state to meet with members and discuss issues important with you in local government management. We shared some war stories, laughed a lot (of course!), and listened intently to your thoughts about our profession and the challenges we will all face in the upcoming year.

We started in St. Cloud on July 10 where we had a great discussion with managers from that area. We next visited with metro area managers at the MAMA meeting on Sept. 10, followed by a meeting with Wright County managers in Buffalo on Sept. 22. Then it was on to Marshall on Oct. 7, and finally Owatonna on Oct. 22.

I know—you're thinking "when did they come North?" Well, we tried to meet with members in Parkers Prairie and McIntosh, but unfortunately a combined lack of registration and some personal schedule conflicts prevented us from making that trip. As before, I want to make a standing offer to meet with any group, anywhere in the state, anytime. Please let me know if you would like to arrange a group meeting in your area.

We heard from administrators in smaller communities that the Minnesota Clerks and Finance Officers Association (MCFOA) is in many ways a more relevant organization for them. One potential member pointed out, however, that MCMA focuses on management issues—a gap in MCFOA's offerings. As a group, we concurred that for smaller communities, membership in both MCMA and MCFOA can be a good practice. We also agreed that MCMA needs to find ways to reach out to smaller communities, and find relevant member services and topics for discussion in the future. We also discussed (as we have in the past) ways to partner more effectively with the Minnesota Asso-

ciation of County Administrators (MACA) in order to strengthen our ties with our county colleagues.

The MCMA website was a big topic of conversation at several meetings. An emphasis on professional development, electronic roundtables, networking, listservs on specific topics, and better search functionality were all noted as desired upgrades. I am very happy that Phil Kern is leading our effort to revamp and upgrade our website. Our goal is to unveil the site at the MCMA Annual Conference at the Grand View Lodge in Nisswa in May.

As always, mentoring continues to be an important topic for our profession. Strengthening the Range Rider program and providing better connections in the mentoring program already in place are top priorities for our membership. One member suggested a program for first-time managers who are not assistants or fresh out of graduate school, but find themselves sitting in the manager's chair for the first time. Serving these "in-between" managers will be increasingly important as we experience more retirements and promotions of assistants or other first-time managers. I welcome your thoughts about how to implement such a program!

We continue to hear a great deal about support for the Members in Transition (MIT) program, which has been renewed and strengthened by Dan Donahue. This program is most useful when you keep in contact with Kevin Frazell (MCMA Secretariat) about your situation and needs. On your membership form we ask for a home phone number and a home e-mail address. This is so that if you are in transition, we can still contact you. Please avail yourself of these services, and keep in contact with us so that we can assist you when needed.

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

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

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Next Generation Committee Off & Running

By Bart Fischer, Next Generation Committee Chair

The MCMA Board has asked the Next Generation Committee to take on two assignments this year: to increase ethnic, gender, age and other types of diversity within the profession; and to generally continue the Next Generation effort of attracting young people to the profession.

The Committee decided on 3 strategies to pursue throughout this year:

1. Work with the Educational Initiatives Committee to help support providing the MCMA curriculum in classrooms, including inner city or regional center schools where the city may not have an MCMA member serving in local government or "championing" the effort.
2. Make a concerted effort to participate in college job fairs, including having an MCMA booth in order to market the profession as well as MCMA, MAMA, and the APMP as organizations beneficial to those starting careers in local government.
3. Attempt to obtain invitations to address both undergraduate and MPA graduate classes with the message of local government management. Chairperson Bart Fischer from Chaska has received a number of good leads on classes to attend; if you know of any possibilities, please contact him at (952) 227-7529 or bfischer@chaskamn.com.

In addition, Committee Member Lisa Henning of Dakota County has researched the issue of students at MN colleges and universities not being eligible for the ICMA Fellows Program because the institutions are not accredited by NASPPA. Happily, Lisa has learned that the institution is required only to be a member of NASPPA and does not have to be accredited.

Also, the first MCMA-sponsored local government internship, which this year was with the City of Hugo, has gone well. Proposals from cities and counties interested in hosting next year's intern will go out shortly after the first of the year. Justin Miller, Matt Hylan, and Craig Ebeling have also agreed to continue their efforts on raising support from the private sector for the Internship Program.

Thanks to all of the members of the Next Generation Committee for their hard work! If you have an interest in joining the Committee, please contact Kevin Frazell, MCMA Secretariat, at kfrazell@lmc.org or (651) 281-1215. ☺

Appointments and other professional news

- **Tanya A. Ange**, assistant to the city manager, Mankato, MN since 2006, has been appointed assistant city manager of Mankato.
- **William Craig**, former City Manager of Hopkins and West St. Paul, is returning to Minnesota to serve as Administrator, Hassan Township.
- **Bruce Messelt**, former City Manager, Moorhead, has been appointed City Administrator, Lake Elmo.
- **Ron Moore**, former City Administrator, Arden Hills, is in transition.
- **Michael Rietz**, former City Administrator of Kasson, who has been working in Missouri and Texas for the past three years, has been appointed City Administrator, Barnesville.
- **Matt Skaret**, City Administrator, Madison, has been appointed City Administrator, Milford, IA.

Reaching the MCMA Secretariat

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(rerickso@lmc.org), or Jim Miller,
Executive Director (jmiller@lmc.org).

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

2010 ICMA Annual Conference report

By Curt Boganey, First Vice President

Thanks for the opportunity to participate on the 2010 ICMA Annual Conference Planning Committee. The conference is scheduled for October 17-20 in San Jose California, the 10th largest city in the U.S. with more than a million residents. I especially want to thank those of you who offered suggestions for improving the conference. The committee was composed of delegates from every state, several countries, strategic partners, the San Jose planning team, and ICMA staff.

You should expect excellent and reasonably priced accommodations that will be very convenient to the Conference Center and light rail transit. The local airport is a 15-minute drive to downtown. For such a large population the downtown has the look and feel of a much smaller metropolitan area.

One of the goals of the committee is to take advantage of the numerous high tech companies located in the midst of Silicon Valley. Some members were able to tour Google and they left really "geeked" and excited about the possibility of including this tour as part of the ICMA package.

The committee discussed numerous ways to keep the conference of high quality and affordable. Expect online opportunities to expand as ICMA is able to learn more and better ways to exploit the Internet as a way to share content with those members unable to attend onsite. For those who have not used your \$200 ICMA credit, it is still available for use in 2010.

San Jose is a great venue with lots to offer in terms of culture, shopping, and recreation. The Planning Committee of San Jose is working very hard to make this an enjoyable experience that you will not forget. The Planning Committee is focused on assuring that the content of the sessions will be more than worth your investment in time and money. I encourage each member who can to attend what should be an excellent event. ◻

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Finally, on a number of occasions we heard from many of you about the need to do more proactive education around the roles and responsibilities of a professional local government manager. Several expressed frustration in dealing with mayors and councils who do not understand the role of a professional manager and the difference between governance and management. We also heard from members who feel that professional development, and the value it brings to us as managers needs to be communicated more clearly to our elected officials.

As an association, we have struggled with these issues in the past. Since we often play a very "background" role in our professional life, we have a hard time finding an effective way to communicate about the importance of these issues while remaining diplomatic with the very people who can hire and fire us. I strongly welcome your wisdom and advice on this important topic!

As one member noted, our Strategic Plan is "very ambitious." After talking with all of you, I also believe we have focused on the areas of most importance to our membership. We have many members serving faithfully on our various committees, and they are leading this plan forward. Your input as members is valuable to that effort. Please continue to reach out to me or another MCMA Board member if you have thoughts about the direction of MCMA and the Strategic Plan, and many thanks for your valuable input thus far.

Here's wishing you a happy and prosperous new year! ◻

2010 Mid-Winter Professional Development Seminar

By Mark McNeill, Second Vice President

Dust off your best mukluks, hitch the dogs to the sled, and join us for MCMA's 2010 Mid-Winter seminar at Grand View Lodge in Nisswa.

This always-popular event will be held in our new home of the MCMA Annual Conference so that MCMA members and their families can participate in one of the northland's premier venues, while at the same time providing an opportunity to learn and reconnect with your colleagues.

The Professional Development Committee has been working hard to provide for a top-notch program for this event. Our presenter will be Anna Maravelas, whom you may recall from the 2009 MCMA Annual Conference. At that time, she gave us a sampling of her nationally-acclaimed work on "How to reduce work place conflict and stress." Her appearance at the winter seminar will give her an opportunity to go beyond the introductory presentation that she made in the spring on this important topic—you're sure to come away with some great information.

To make this a full family-friendly gathering, Heidi Nelson of Ramsey and Susan Arntz of Waconia are working with the Grand View Lodge to have reasonably-priced and supervised activities for kids 12 and under available during the sessions, allowing members and spouses to fully participate in the program. They will be presenting a sure-hit session for future MCMA-ers aged 4-12 years, entitled "So...what do mom or dad really do all day?" (That might even constitute a refresher course for some of us!) There will also be games, crafts, and movies.

Mark your calendars now for Friday, Feb. 5 and Sat., February 6. For registration information and to download the registration form, visit the MCMA website at www.mncma.org. ☉

Board Meetings Recap

The MCMA Board of Directors met Oct. 22 in Owatonna and Dec.4 in St. Paul. Significant actions take at those two meetings included:

- Appointing Delano City Administrator Phil Kern to fill an officer vacancy created by the resignation of St. Cloud City Michael Williams.
- Approving expenditure of up to \$1,500 for the Next Generation Committee to have display space at college job fairs.
- Designating the position of MCMA Past President to serve as the Managers in Transition Coordinator.
- Approving a contract for a GovOffice website for MCMA.
- Expanding the Range Rider program to up to four positions to better serve the state.
- Organizing to identify, contact, and interview "pioneers of the profession" in Minnesota as requested by ICMA for the 2010 centennial conference. ☉

Association of Public Management Professionals

Dave Schaps, APMP Vice President

The Association of Public Management Professionals of Minnesota (APMP of Minnesota) is a professional organization consisting of assistants and non-CAO personnel at many levels of local government. While most may refer to this interesting bunch of detail oriented people faithfully hovering around their respective manager or administrator (often to ensure seamless operations and an image of flawless governmental actions) as the “assistants” group, a growing number of members work as assistants in other departments such as public works, finance, administrative services, and community development. In addition, the group has been focusing on coordinating with the MCMA’s Next Generation efforts, as well as recruiting and networking with upcoming graduate and undergrad students who may have an interest in public service.

Although the organization is closely involved with MCMA and often draws from the same membership, it also represents a good cross-section of possible career paths in local government. In addition, varying career orientations can be found within APMP, representing many different facets of service delivery, including assistants looking to “move up” one day, career assistants, and individuals in a wide range of departments and specializations.

The group provides an excellent professional networking opportunity for those interested in local government management. In addition, the APMP is actively working to develop the connections that will link together the next generation, share information and valuable experiences amongst its membership, and to introduce talented individuals to the potential of a career in public service. The group hosts monthly lunch meetings, usually hearing from a speaker or discussing various topics, and often travels to a range of locations in the metro area. APMP also frequently joins with the MAMA group to hear about topics beneficial to both organizations. If you happen to be interested in joining the group, or know of someone that may benefit from participation, more information can be found by clicking on the Assn. Of Public Management Prof. tab on the MCMA website or checking out the APMP Facebook page! ◻

MCMA Annual Conference update

*By Bill Malinen, Conference Committee Chair;
and Melanie Mesko-Lee,
Board Liaison*

The 2010 MCMA Annual Conference is scheduled for May 5-7 at Grand View Lodge in Nisswa. The Conference Planning Committee has been hard at work to develop a conference program that can meet your professional and networking needs during these difficult times. There is rarely a lack of topics proposed for the conference, and this year is no exception.

A number of exciting and practical themes have been emerging, including the importance of building trust, the value of effective networking, and how those infamous “Horns of Dilemma” can actually teach us about getting something done. Additional sessions on technology, performance measurement, financial planning and civic engagement are also in the works—you will not be lacking for great content!

The Grand View Lodge has also unveiled its new, much larger conference center, which will allow concurrent sessions, more space, and even a wineskellar in the basement to hone those networking skills in a relaxed setting.

Whether it’s your first conference or your 20th, the Conference Planning Committee is also looking forward to introducing some new ideas to help all members become better acquainted and build those important relationships. We’re all in uncharted waters; what better time to stretch ourselves and try something new?

But don’t worry—while you will be offered some new things to look forward to, there are also some of the same comfortable standbys, including recreational options to recharge your batteries. And even better, we’re working hard on the expense side to try to offer the conference at a lower cost in 2010! ◻

Memorandum from the edge

Jon Hohenstein, Community Development Director, Eagan

You never know where an offhand comment will go sometimes. I was visiting with our friend (and the heir apparent to the ICMA throne) Dave Childs one day about his view of the local government management profession as something more than a job, more even than a career. Dave holds that our profession, properly understood, is a calling, that it has a spiritual, transcendent nature. He shared then and has since shared in a PM article that he once was chided for suggesting this by someone who said that he hoped it didn't mean we all had to hug and sing kumbaya. I responded that it's too bad kumbaya has gotten such a bad name and that ended up in the article, too. Dave took the point in one direction to support his thesis of calling and did a great job with it.

I'll take it in a little different direction and back to my point, which is that people sometimes forget where topical references come from and what they mean. This is a case in point. If you research the word kumbaya, say for instance to write a column for a professional association newsletter, you will find that it has come to carry a derisive connotation among many users of the term. For them, it is associated with weakness and an ignorance of the threats in the world around us—a naive plea for everyone to just get along.

Research a little further, past the recent popular culture hits, and you will find two competing etymologies for the term and the song. The one many of us learned growing up is that it is of African origin and means friendship and peace. The more accepted definition by web standards is that it comes from the Gullah dialect of former slaves in South Carolina and Georgia. It is their pronunciation of the phrase "come by here" and the song asks for God's presence in the things people do. Using either derivation, it means something more substantial than just getting along and something that a lot of people say fairly frequently and reverently.

On Sundays, many of us share the peace with one another. The worship leader wishes peace to us and we wish it back. Then we exchange it with one another. In some churches, the exchange of peace has been accompanied by handshakes with strangers, hugs and the occasional kiss. Recently, concerns about H1N1 contagion have led many churches to advise against actual touching, which suits the old school Lutherans I grew up with just fine. A warm, apostolic wave should be enough to get the job done.

Meanwhile on other days, in other rituals, people say shalom or salaam, words that come from the same root and the same region, although you'd never know it based on how some people in that region treat each other. And if you go farther east, you will find people bowing and saying, namaste, which means essentially, your spirit and my spirit are one. While there are likely other examples around the world, if you add those cultures and religions up, they account for about 70 percent of the population of the earth. They use slightly different words, but they all mean pretty much the same thing—peace be with you—just about the best thing you can wish or pray for someone else.

So if saying something like kumbaya is a fundamental tradition on Sunday or Saturday or Friday, in a worship setting when you supposedly are at your most authentic and reflecting your most closely held values, why would it be looked down on in other situations or on other days of the week?

I don't want to believe that people don't mean it when they say it as part of their worship. I don't want to believe it is like the other things a person only does at church, like dress up as a shepherd or wash dishes. And I don't want to believe it only applies to people we perceive to be like us and not to anybody else. I'd rather believe that we just forgot what it really means. And maybe we'll have that in mind the next time we say our own version of peace be with you, at least I hope so. ◻

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

www.mncma.org