

## President's corner

*By Curt Boganey, President, City Manager, Brooklyn Center*

As I begin my term as President, I would be remiss if I did not thank Immediate Past President Heather Worthington for her exceptional leadership. Specifically, the organization made great strides last year, e.g., Board outreach to members and non-members at several sites around the state; the development of a draft ICMA affiliation agreement; a major overhaul of our organization's website; improvements in our Members in Transition Program; and one of the best received annual conferences in recent years. While Heather provided the direction and inspiration, the work of staff and many volunteers that served as committee chairs and committee members, along with you, made this possible.

Being President is an honor and certainly a challenge that I look forward to. I am very confident that 2010 will be another exceptional year for our organization of county and city leaders. I want to thank each of you in advance for volunteering once again to serve our organization and its members. If you have not signed up for a committee, it is not too late to serve. Please let me know that you wish to serve and I will find a place where your talents and energy will be put to good use.

We recently held our first Board meeting where the Board committed to continuing and enhancing many of the efforts of last year. The Next Generation Committee has accepted the challenge of exploring ways

to enhance the diversity of our profession, beginning with a survey of efforts of other state organizations. Expect an evolution of improvements to the MCMA website, as each committee is being asked to look for ways that will make this portal an absolutely essential membership tool for information, education, and communication. The Members in Transition program led by Heather Worthington will continue to develop for the benefit of our members.

At the next Board meeting we will continue our review of a proposal regarding a potential International Exchange effort. If you have an opinion regarding the role of MCMA in supporting International Exchange efforts, please contact any Board member and share your thoughts and insights.

This year we will review/develop long-term fiscal planning policies. While the organization currently enjoys a very healthy fund balance largely built up as we prepared to host the 2005 ICMA Annual Conference, for the last several years annual expenditures have exceeded revenues. It seems obvious this is a trend that will need to be mitigated in the long term. We want to begin the process of putting appropriate policies in place while we have the luxury of time.

Thank you in advance for making 2010-2011 another great year in the history of a great professional association. ◻

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

Bill Bassett  
(507) 243-4346

**MCMA Officers/Board Members**

**President:**

Curt Boganey, Brooklyn Center, (763) 569-3300  
cboganey@ci.brooklyn-center.mn.us

**First Vice President:**

Mark McNeil, Shakopee, (952) 233-9300  
mmcneill@ci.shakopee.mn.us

**Second Vice President:**

Phil Kern, Delano, (763) 972-0550  
pkern@delano.mn.us

**Secretary/Treasurer:**

Melanie Mesko Lee, Hastings, (651) 480-2350  
mmesko\_lee@ci.hastings.mn.us

**Directors:**

Tim Houle, Crow Wing County, (218) 824-1045  
tim.houle@co.crow-wing.mn.us

Lisa Henning, Dakota County, (651) 438-4254  
lisa.henning@co.dakota.mn.us

Shaunna Johnson, Waite Park, (320) 252-6822,  
sjohnson@waitepark.org

Barry Stock, Savage, (952) 882-2646  
bstock@ci.savage.mn.us

Brian Gramentz, New Ulm, (507) 359-8233  
brian.gramentz@ci.new-ulm.mn.us

**Ex-Officio Members**

**Immediate Past President:**

Heather Worthington, Edina, (952) 927-8861  
hworthington@ci.edina.mn.us

**APMP President:**

Bart Fischer,  
(952) 227-7529  
bfischer@chaskamn.com

**LMC Executive Director:**

Jim Miller  
(651) 281-1205  
jmiller@lmc.org

**Range Rider:**

Bill Bassett, Madison Lake  
(507) 243-4346  
wbassett@hickorytech.net

---

**MCMA Newsletter** is published three times a year for the members of the Minnesota City/County Management Association by MCMA's Secretariat:

League of Minnesota Cities, 145 University Avenue West, St. Paul, Minnesota 55103-2044

Contact: Kevin Frazell, Director of Member Services, kfrazell@lmc.org • (651) 281-1215 • Fax: (651) 281-1296

# Local Government in Ukraine

By Richard Fursman

After struggling through the Kiev airport on my first trip to Ukraine in 2002, I took a cab with my fiancé about 30 miles to Kiev. At first there were woods and open fields, then old Soviet era look-a-like apartments appeared and leaned crowded together with rusted entry doors that had not closed in years. Graffiti, unkempt grounds, and tired, leaky steam pipes that offered free heat (when available) jetted in and around the buildings. Overhead wires and boxy, Russian-made cars (Machine-a), sputtering along with cracked windshields, completed the entangled ensemble. I took in all the sights of broken sidewalks, potholes, and paintless water storage tanks and marveled at the "ow-hanging fruit."

When we arrived in Kiev I was even more astonished to see a beautiful City emerging. The many churches were showing newly restored golden, onion topped domes that glistened in the sun and stars. Signs of new high rise apartments and glitzy stores were opening and being built, replacing the many dilapidated buildings. Restoration of 200-year-old French architecture structures was taking place behind rows of scaffolding.

When our taxi broke down we took a brief stroll and found a crowd gathered around a newly formed sink-hole in the middle of the main street. Some sort of utility truck had sunk, bottom first, into this pit. Only the front grill of the truck was visible now, with a bewildered, worried looking driver pacing back and forth. There was little or no insurance at the time. People quickly assessed the scene and brushed it off as normal and moved on. After 10 years of capitalism, everything was chaos.

Fast-forward to 2007 and I was now consulting with the University of St. Thomas for a 40,000 population suburb of Kiev. My assignment was to assess the status of municipal functions and offer strategic suggestions. The streets were more crowded with cars, and second-hand Audi's and BMW's from Germany's after-market were now becoming the norm.

Progress was evident, yet the enormity of the problems and scarcity of resources at the municipal level stood in contrast with the rapid investment coming from the nearly lawless private sector. Scores of new 30-40 story luxury condos were sprouting everywhere, offering 1,500sf of the gated good life for \$250,000.

Meanwhile, City operated schools, hospitals, and infrastructure continued to fall into disrepair. Trash strewn streets, alleys, and parks were the norm. Playgrounds were scattered with broken slides, swing-less bars, and weeds. The few elite rich didn't bother with this lot and the majority of the poor simply resigned themselves to it.

When I was done with my assessment I suggested the city draw up a strategic plan that involved the citizens as much as possible. "You don't have the resources to do enough, the people don't trust you, and citizen action may lead to some civic pride, responsibility, and connection with the local government," I pleaded. Many were ready to embrace the ideas, but the most powerful wanted none of it. "We are elected by the people to lead them; we will decide what is best," they responded. A history of Czars, slavery, and dictatorship left no room for grassroots ideology.

Continued on page 4

## Committee appointments made

President Curt Boganey and the MCMA Board have made initial appointments to the 2010-2011 committees. The listing was sent out on the MCMA listserv, but if you missed it please look on the MCMA website at [www.mncma.org](http://www.mncma.org) to check your appointment! If you would still like to be on a committee, please e-mail Kevin Frazell at [kfrazell@lmc.org](mailto:kfrazell@lmc.org).

## Dinner at ICMA San Jose Conference

For those attending the October ICMA Annual Conference in San Jose, CA, MCMA will be hosting its usual dinner for members. The dinner is scheduled for Oct. 18 at Il Fornaio, a Mediterranean restaurant located in the St. Claire hotel. Social hour is at 6 p.m., dinner from 6:30-9 p.m.. Cost for members is covered by MCMA; guests are welcome for a fee of \$50. Watch for sign up closer to the time of the conference. ☐

### Reaching the MCMA Secretariat

**For MCMA Secretariat services contact:**  
Kevin Frazell, Director of Member Services  
League of Minnesota Cities  
145 University Avenue West  
St. Paul, MN 55103-2044  
(651) 281-1215 • Fax: (651) 281-1296  
[kfrazell@lmc.org](mailto:kfrazell@lmc.org)

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

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

## *Continued from page 3*

Yet, the brightest cause for hope was the unbelievably dedicated staff that I met. They battled corruption, resource issues, and a population that looked at them with deep suspicion, all for about \$200 a month, plus bribes.

A couple of officials were seeing me off for the night when we crossed paths in front of City Hall with an elderly local who noticed my different look. The old but sturdy man had a WWII service medal pinned to his shirt; probably a leftover from the May celebrations. Staff answered his inquiries and he asked if I was former military. After I answered "U.S. Navy," the man shook my hand with his wide strong grip that showed I was no match for his strength. After he embraced me with a bear hug, he flicked his neck (meaning lets go drink) and said "sauna!" He wanted to drink vodka, sit in the sauna, and talk. "We need to drink to the past and plan the future!" he shouted with tears streaming. Unfortunately I had to go.

This past May I was back in Kiev and met again with two wonderful people I had worked with and befriended during my consulting trip three years past. Human Rights Advocate, Professor Nikoli Mosunov, and Dr. Vladimir Salamatov; Fulbright Scholar and teacher of public administration greeted me at the train station to talk. The idea of exchanging ideas with city officials from Minnesota was officially hatched and put in motion.

About 20 Minnesota administrators and managers (with spouses) have indicated interest in doing a week-long exchange with Ukrainian counterparts in May of 2011. The agenda is still being set and outcomes being honed. The main emphasis is to learn, contrast, and compare ways of doing things with particular emphasis in civic engagement and strategic planning.

While the Ukrainians have a lot to learn about transparency (the public is often not allowed to attend council meetings), hiring talent (not your brother-in-law), and engaging the public, they also have a lot to share. One thing is certain: those who have the chance to look deeply into the lives and operations of these public officials will certainly discover something new about themselves, their work, and the meaning of good, transparent governance.

Efforts are now underway through ICMA and USAID to see if this trip qualifies for a grant. Watch for additional information about the details. In the meantime, anyone wanting to learn more about being part of the trip should contact me at richardfursman@gmail.com. ○

## **Board member profile: Brian Gramentz**

Brian Gramentz has been the City Manager of New Ulm for the past nine years. Prior to New Ulm he was City Administrator in Hudson, WI (5+ yrs); in transition (6 months); City Manager in Sioux Center, IA (7+ yrs); City Administrator in Winsted, MN (3 yrs); and Eagle Lake, MN (3+ yrs). He interned at Region Nine Development Corporation in Mankato, (and has known Craig Waldron a long, long time). He received a Bachelor degree in Public Administration from Minnesota State University-Mankato (MSU) in 1981 and Master's degree in Public Administration from MSU in 1989. He served in the U.S. Air Force from 1974-1977 and has been an American Legion member for 23 years.

He has served on numerous committees and boards in all three state manager organizations. As a board member, he looks forward to working with the other board members and members of the MCMA organization during these fiscally challenging times. While in Iowa, he was on the Iowa League of Cities Executive Board from 1993-1995. In 1994 he was presented the ICMA Award for Program Excellence-Citizen Involvement for a downtown redevelopment project in Sioux Center, IA.

Brian and his wife Lori have three adult children. Two of their children have found their significant others and have scheduled weddings for spring of 2011. As empty nesters they can pretty well come and go as they please as long as someone feeds the fish in the aquarium. Summers usually find them on at least one 3,000-5,000 mile motorcycle trip.

Brian's other leisure activities include designing and making stained glass windows/panels, hunting, and fishing. He recently took up archery with hopes that he can qualify for the special deer hunt held in New Ulm, since his flowers and bushes are on the local deer herd's menu from April thru November.

As many of you are aware, New Ulm is home to Schell's Brewery, the second oldest privately held brewery in the nation. Brian volunteers to assist many of the community festivals and activities held at the brewery. What he won't do for free beer (you might want to keep that in mind). ○

## MCMA 2010 Teacher's Achievement Award winner



The MCMA Educational Initiatives Committee is pleased to announce the winner of the 2010 Teacher's Achievement Award: Kathleen Ferguson Quinn. Kathleen is a social studies teacher at Stillwater Area High School where she teaches U.S. Government & Politics and Practical Government. Her focus

is on teaching her students about local government with a requirement they attend a public meeting in their community like a city council, county board, or school board. The students are required to write a seven paragraph essay which is then part of the Civic Engagement unit. This leads to many rich classroom discussions on what is the hot topic in their community. Kathleen includes visits to the Washington County Government Center and she invites local elected officials to her class to speak to the students and engage them on what is important in their community.

Stillwater High School Principal Ryan Laager states "We are fortunate to have faculty like Kathleen who really engage students in the world around them. We are proud to have MCMA publicly recognize her with this award which she shares with her teachers and staff. Kathleen's efforts make Stillwater a quality high school."

This award exemplifies the efforts of MCMA to recognize and honor those social studies teachers across the state who are teaching their students to be active and involved in their community so they can be our future leaders of tomorrow. Committee Chair Dianne Miller of Eagan wanted to thank Jennifer Bloom who is the executive Director of the Learning Law and Democracy Center for nominating Kathleen. MCMA President Curt Boganey of Brooklyn Center presented Kathleen with her award at the Aug. 27 Stillwater School Board meeting ◻

## Appointments and other professional news

- **Mike DeRosia** has been appointed City Administrator, Lake St. Croix Beach.
- **Andrew Elbert**, former city administrator, Prairie City, Iowa, has been appointed City Administrator, Winsted.
- **Luke Fischer**, Assistant to the City Administrator, Delano, has been appointed City Administrator, Watertown.
- **Jessica M. Loftus**, city administrator, Tonka Bay, has been appointed city administrator of Orono.
- **Tim Madigan**, former City Administrator, Faribault, has been appointed Interim City Administrator, Northfield.
- **Bret Mareck**, former city administrator, Winsted, has been appointed City Administrator, Carver.
- **Scott Neal**, former City Manager with Eden Prairie, has been appointed City Manager, Edina.
- **Joel Walinski**, City Administrator, Northfield, has been appointed City Administrator, Leavenworth, Washington.

## MCMA Board Meeting Recaps

The MCMA Board of Directors met on April 16 and July 30, 2010. Major highlights of those meetings include:

- Approving a letter to the Minnesota Department of Education urging that local government be included in state standards for social studies education.
- Awarding the 2010 MCMA Local Government Intern position to the City of Medina.
- Working on a draft of a state affiliate agreement with ICMA.
- Approving a slight expansion of the Secretariat agreement with LMC to cover more staff time for maintenance of the new MCMA website.
- Giving direction with regard to priorities for implementation of the strategic plan, including:
  - Promoting increased diversity within the profession.
  - Continuing encouragement to members to become credentialed with ICMA.
  - Refining and implementing a strengthened Manager in Transition program.
  - Forming a stronger connection with graduate schools to promote local government management.
  - Continuing to hold MCMA Board meetings around the state as a way to connect with more members. ◻

# Memorandum from the edge

*Jon Hohenstein, Community Development Director, Eagan*

Hardly a week goes by when someone does not ask me when Tom Hedges will retire. Craig Waldron announces that Tom is retiring every chance he gets. It's natural for people to ask—Tom's been in the public administration business for 38 years and in Eagan for 34. In January 2011, he will have been a city administrator in parts of five different decades. He went past the Rule of 90 like it was a fencepost along the highway.

He says he still likes it too much. He says he still has a passion for it. My personal theory is that he's too afraid to retire—not that he's afraid of retiring itself, but he is afraid of the retirement party.

And he has good reason to be. Having been present at a number of retirement parties, I have concluded that they serve not only as the recognition and summary of a career, but they also can serve as the soapbox for the equivalent of the drunken, best-man toasts that are the inevitable hallmark of all non-Amish weddings.

At retirement parties, somebody who truly is unaccustomed to public speaking (more likely a parade of somebodies) is bound to ask for the chance to share a few words. Then a sensation of group discomfort descends over the audience and it doesn't go away until the person responsible for wrapping things up actually gives the shell-shocked honoree the "Years of Selfless Service" plaque and invites one final round of applause.

The problem is that most of us don't really know what to say at something as significant and singular as the event punctuating a career. We think we know, but when we open our mouths, the most bizarre stuff comes out. If someone has a hard time defining social acceptability or difficulty telling or timing a joke, or if they have a final ax to grind before the guest of honor actually leaves, it gets worse.

Too many people have watched television roasts staged by Dean Martin and the Friars Club and they have it in their heads that it's fun and funny to be insulting and degrading to, and about, the guest of honor. Folks,

television roasts are like wrestling matches; they are performed by trained professionals, who have practiced their moves and no one really gets hurt. Try those kinds of jokes and stories yourself in the local reception hall and someone probably will get hurt.

So here are a few suggestions if you are planning or participating in a retirement party for someone. Choose a seasoned, sympathetic master of ceremonies, who is adept at keeping things moving and using a hook. Likewise, choose a sound engineer who can "accidentally" turn off the microphone. Give thought to whom you invite to speak and remember that you don't have to let everyone speak. Give speakers a timeframe—four minutes a piece is pretty good. Prescreen videos. Remember, if you've never been funny on your feet before, you will not magically become so standing in front of a crowd. The best ad lib is a planned ad lib and the same goes for the rest of the speech. Only say things you would say if the person you were saying them about were doing your performance review the next day.

While the person retiring should be permitted the latitude to say or do whatever they please at their retirement party, they probably should avoid certain temptations, too. As opportune as it might seem, a retirement speech is no better time than any other to out the village idiot, dress down the town bully, tweak the stuffed shirts, or finally share the secret you've been harboring all these years. It's probably best to stick to the tried-and-true sentiments of appreciation and gratitude, the inevitable truth that all credit is shared, and the fervent hope that some good came out of one's best efforts and positive intentions.

Tom Hedges is going to retire when he is darned good and ready and he's entitled to make his own choices about that. If you'd like to try to make some money on it though, we've set up a board and are making book. It's like the progressive jackpot at the casino and a lot of good bets have already come and gone. If he keeps working another couple of years, the prize will be a Ferrari. ◻

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

[www.mncma.org](http://www.mncma.org)