

President's column

Raising the bar

By Shaunna Johnson, MCMA President, City Administrator, Waite Park

I would like to take this opportunity to thank each and every one of you for being members of MCMA and for allowing me to serve as your president. I feel truly blessed to be part of such a great organization where knowledge is shared, and lasting friendships are created. Who else can we commiserate with that truly understands life in local government better than other fellow managers? Thank you for being a great manager and for making your community a better place to live, work, and play.

As summer is nearing the end, and fall is fast upon us, I can't help but think of one of my favorite times of year—football season! Many of you know that I am a little passionate about a certain football team, the Holdingford Huskers! My son Wyatt has had the privilege of playing with the varsity team for the past two years and is now starting his third year on the team as a senior.

Like many teams, the Huskers have had incredible coaches and players who have truly believed in their abilities and have been passionate about playing football. In 2012 and 2013, the Huskers made it to state, but in both years fell to their opponents in close games during the first rounds of state playoffs. Most thought their chances of making it to state again were slim, given the number of starters they lost, but the team members never gave up their passion or their belief in their abilities.

Before starting the 2014 football season, the team came together and developed a motto for the season. The motto was, "Raise the bar!" The team took this motto to heart. T-shirts were made and worn regularly by players; practices and preparation for the upcoming season were centered on "raising the bar." Raising the bar to them meant taking their game to the next level. The players and the coaches believed it and, as a result, their 2014 season was challenging but had an incredible ending!

The Huskers ended their regular season with three losses. The last game of the regular season ended with a very large defeat, and it really didn't look good for them going into the playoffs, but this team never gave up. The playoffs were a true testament to a team that lived by its motto of "raising the bar." They completely changed their offense going into playoffs and they continued to win as a result. In the end, the Holdingford Huskers defeated the Warriors of BOLD High School in a double overtime game to become the Section 2A champions—something that had not happened in Holdingford since 1984, exactly 30 years ago!

Seeing what this team accomplished makes me think of the lessons this holds for all of us in local government. We all face challenges, from managing the day-to-day operations to jumping from one issue to the next, never feeling like you have enough time to do more than just scratch the surface. We face the challenges of elected officials and political divisiveness in many of our communities. We deal with the countless number of regulations, budgeting shortfalls, and personnel issues day after day. We can easily get caught up in just putting out the fires and answering the questions of our staff and elected officials. Like the Husker football team members, who could have chosen to just continue to play the game like they always have, we too can choose to just continue to do the day-to-day tasks of operating a city, or we can choose to "raise the bar."

Raising the bar is about thinking about how we do things and how we can do them better. It's looking at our offense and determining if we have the right players in the right positions and playing as a team. It's determining whether we need to refocus our efforts to find better outcomes. Do we stay with the status quo, and is that enough to keep our team motivated and passionate about the services we provide to our communities? Do we take the chances of changing our game and looking for out-of-the box

Continued on next page

Continued from page 1

thinking? With the ever-changing world we live in, we all need to challenge ourselves to do better.

As managers in local government, we are fortunate that we have many resources available to us to help us achieve our success. The tools that are available through ICMA and MCMA are invaluable to us all if we choose to use them. Your involvement is what is necessary for you to truly see the value of what these organizations can give you and what you can give back to these organizations.

In looking at this upcoming year for MCMA, our Board is focused on women in local government and finding ways that we can encourage, support, and recognize the important role they play in the local government management roles. In addition, we are focusing efforts on providing more support to our members in transition. What resources do we all have to be more supportive to them? We can offer resources like advice and mentorship, sample separation agreements, resume development, mock interviews, etc. As the year continues, these initiatives will be further defined and developed. I encourage all of you interested in any of these initiatives to get involved.

As I look forward to another Husker football season, I see many things changing. I see senior players with many last game opportunities, I see a different team developing new talents, and I see new competitors testing the strengths and weaknesses of this team. Like the Husker team, our teams are ever-changing as well. We face retirements of the baby boomers, opportunities for developing new talent, and continual forces that will certainly test our strengths and weaknesses as local government organizations. How we choose to adapt and channel our energies will be crucial as we move forward. Will we choose to "raise the bar," or will we just be satisfied with the status quo? A quote that I believe sums it up is that from Muhammad Ali: "Champions aren't made in the gyms. Champions are made from something they have deep inside them—a desire, a dream, a vision!" ◻

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

MCMA Officers/Board Members Ex-Officio Members

President:

Shaunna Johnson, City of Waite Park

First Vice President:

Brian Gramentz, City of New Ulm

Second Vice President:

Bart Fischer, City of Oakdale

Secretary/Treasurer:

Steve Taylor, Sherburne County

Directors:

Geralyn Barone, City of Minnetonka

Sara Folsted, Renville County

Laurie Hokkanen, City of Victoria

Dianne Miller, City of Eagan

Scott Neal, City of Edina

Immediate Past President:

Tim Houle, Crow Wing County

Senior Advisors:

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

Bill Craig
(763) 497-3577
peggcr@aol.com

Tom Hedges
(651) 895-7881
tdhedges23@comcast.net

Tim Madigan
(507) 339-2605
madigan67@gmail.com

Bob Thistle
(763) 755-3563
r.thistle@comcast.net

**Your
Senior
Advisors
are here
to help!**

Board meeting recap

By Kevin Frazell, MCMA Secretariat

The MCMA Board of Directors met July 17 in Waite Park. The board met Mary Wynne, who replaced Helene Johnson as the executive director of GTS. The board also approved a contract with GTS to manage the 2016 annual conference.

In addition to maintaining focus on the association's strategic priorities, two new areas of emphasis were identified: (1) creating a new task force to look at the issues of women in the profession; and (2) considering ways MCMA can be a stronger, more supportive resource for managers in transition. ☐

New board member profile: Geraldyn Barone

Geraldyn Barone grew up in Glencoe, Minnesota. She received her bachelor's in political science from the University of Minnesota and her master's degree from the U's Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs. She interned in the Minnesota House of Representatives and in the city manager's office in St. Louis Park.

Following grad school, Geraldyn worked in an administrative capacity in the Brooklyn Center Police Department before being promoted to personnel coordinator and then assistant city manager. In 1994, Geraldyn was hired as Minnetonka's assistant city manager. Her duties expanded to include director of administration, with oversight of HR, IT, communications, and city clerk.

In 2012, Geraldyn was promoted to her current position as Minnetonka's city manager. In addition to the MCMA board, Geraldyn serves on the Municipal Legislative Commission and LOGIS boards. She's a past president of MAUMA, now known as APMP.

Geraldyn has been married for 32 years to Michael Barone, Minnetrista's city administrator, and they have two children. They're huge sports enthusiasts, having followed their kids' many sports activities and now as Gopher season ticket holders for football and basketball. Geraldyn serves as finance council chair of her church. She attributes her ability to collaborate and reach consensus to being the middle child (#6) of 11 and is grateful for the opportunity to use those talents on the MCMA board. ☐

New board member profile: Laurie Hokkanen

Joining the MCMA board after serving a one-year term in her role as the president of APMP is Laurie Hokkanen. After eight fun years as the assistant city manager in Chanhassen, she transitioned to the role of city manager in Victoria last November. She is glad she stayed in the same area so that Todd Gerhardt can continue to pick on her and offer occasional good advice.

Laurie grew up as an "Army brat," moving a total of 10 times. She was born in Germany, lived in Colorado Springs for 10 years total, and graduated from high school in Sierra Vista, Arizona. She followed her parents' roots back to Minnesota without understanding how cold it is here, and had to transfer from the University of Minnesota to St. Cloud State after freshman year to gain a shorter walk to class (and access to the Public Administration program).

Laurie learned a lot about local government through a two-year internship with the City of Becker while attending SCSU, where she received her bachelor's degree in Public Administration. She enjoyed four years of living in close proximity to Chicago while earning a master's degree in public administration from Northern Illinois University and working for the City of DeKalb, Illinois, as a transportation planner for the first MPO (DSATS) created in Illinois in 20 years.

At home, Laurie is thankful for a great husband, Ben, who works as an account manager for Reynolds & Reynolds, selling computer hardware and software that runs auto dealerships. They have three active and witty boys, Lance (15), Sean (7), and Owen (4). Aside from enjoying their antics, Laurie loves to travel, spend time with friends, read, back Kickstarter campaigns, tinker with technology in general, and try new foods/restaurants. To learn more, you can follow her on Twitter, where her handle is @lhokkanen. ☐

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

You can also contact Amy Harger, Event Coordinator (aharger@lmc.org), or Dave Unmacht, Executive Director (dunmacht@lmc.org).

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

Appointments and other professional news

- **Jeff Cadwell**, city administrator, Mahanomen, has been appointed county administrator, Cook County.
- **Tim Cruikshank**, city manager, Anoka, has been appointed city manager, Golden Valley.
- **William Reynolds**, previously president, WHR Professional Services Solutions, has been appointed city administrator, Shakopee.
- **Matt Stemwedel**, assistant city manager, Coon Rapids, has been appointed city manager there.
- **Charlene Stevens**, former city administrator, Willmar, has been appointed city administrator, Cottage Grove.
- **Dean Zuleger**, former city administrator, Lake Elmo, is in transition. ◻

Alliance for Innovation's Transforming Local Government Conference Coming to St. Paul Next June

Don't forget to mark your calendar (and alert your council and your staff!) that the national Alliance for Innovation is bringing its Transforming Local Government (TLG) conference to St. Paul next June 14-17, 2016. The League of Minnesota Cities is hosting and partnering with the Alliance to offer a unique joint conference experience that will enrich the members of both organizations.

The TLG is heavily oriented not just to MCMA-type CEOs and assistants, but really to employees at all levels of the organization that are working as teams to deliver services and address emerging community challenges in new and innovative ways. The 2016 conference will be the first time the Alliance has collaborated with a state municipal league. The necessity of elected officials and staff forming a strong partnership to make innovation happen will be a major sub-theme.

Don't miss this unique opportunity to mix it up with hundreds of local officials from across Minnesota, along with hundreds more from across the U.S. and Canada. ◻

MCMA Sr. Advisor Program Adds Three New People to Assist Members

Serving in local government management is gratifying, but can also be challenging and, at times, can even feel lonely. The Sr. Advisor (formerly called Range Rider) program is a joint endeavor of MCMA and ICMA designed to make the guidance, experience, and support of respected retired members of the profession available for counsel around both professional and personal issues. Please consider it one of your important professional resources!

We are extremely pleased that Bill Craig, Tom Hedges, and Tim Madigan have recently joined Bob Thistle and Bill Bassett to offer a well-rounded and available cadre of five Sr. Advisors for the members of MCMA. The five advisors have been assigned territories covering the entire state. They will be making annual contact with each member in their territory, just to "check in," as well as reaching out to greet newly appointed members and to offer support to those who are "in transition" or going through other difficult times in their career.

Areas of assignment:

- Southwestern Minnesota—Bill Bassett
- Southeastern Minnesota—Tim Madigan
- Dakota, Scott, and southern half of Hennepin Counties—Tom Hedges
- Carver, Wright, and the northern half of Hennepin Counties—Bill Craig
- Anoka, Ramsey, and Washington Counties—Bob Thistle
- Central and Northern Minnesota—divided between Hedges, Craig, and Thistle

For more information, a more precise map of territories, and contact information, please visit the Sr. Advisor section of the MCMA website at www.mncma.org. And notwithstanding the assigned territories, any member of MCMA is welcome to reach out to any of the Sr. Advisors with whom they feel most comfortable. ◻

Memorandum from the edge

By Jon Hohenstein, Community Development Director, Eagan

The Minnesota City/County Management Association recognizes local government management excellence each year with its Dr. Robert A. Barrett Award. As the head of the Urban and Regional Studies Institute at what was then Mankato State University, Dr. Bob was a devoted supporter of professional local government management, and he worked tirelessly to prepare young people for the profession and to put them in contact with mentors and employers to pursue careers in the field. As time has passed and those who knew Bob have grown older and have begun to retire, MCMA's leaders make a point of reminding its members who he was and why it is an honor to be recognized in his name.

MCMA and the local government management profession had another champion named Dr. Bob: Robert Terry, of the Humphrey School of Government. Dr. Bob Terry's leadership theories were shared in books like *Authentic Leadership: Courage in Action* and through his Action Wheel Leadership model, which helps leaders identify the actual source of challenges and the best means of resolving them. One of the key take-aways from that model is that it is common to assess problems as lying in the areas of organizational resources or structure, when they are frequently in the areas of mission and meaning. That is to say that authenticity and alignment of values is the starting point of many solutions.

As you might expect with a model that focuses on meaning and values, Dr. Terry placed emphasis on shared opportunity as a key to organizational development. Central to his approach is the idea that an organization is optimized when its people participate in the definition of the mission and have power to function within it. He went so far as to say, "Organizational effectiveness is strengthened and transformed by equal opportunity." He also said, "Organizational effectiveness is impoverished ... without equal opportunity."

At an MCMA conference many years ago, he illustrated this through a group participation exercise. To get buy-in, he had everyone put a dollar on the front table. He divided the participants into three groups and explained that the group that won the exercise would get to divide the money.

He then explained the rules. It was a democratic game in that every group had input into the outcomes of each round, and every group got a certain number of game pieces or chips. But from there, the rules of participation were slightly different for each group. In each round, a situation was put forward, the groups would caucus, and the result of the round led to a reallocation of the chips. It didn't take long to realize that the

rules differentiated among an elite, a middle class, and an underclass. With each round, the elite used its advantages to amass more of the chips, the middle class tried to hold its own, and the underclass grumbled about the unfairness of it all.

The game almost always ended in the same way, and the MCMA experience was no different. After several rounds of situations and caucuses, the elite group came back into the room to share their latest approach to collecting more of the chips and found that the pile of dollars was missing from the front table. While they were out, the money had been taken by the other groups and divided among their members, who had decided there was no point in being abused any longer.

After the elite outrage subsided to a point, Dr. Terry explained we had done exactly what almost every group does. Those who had the advantages within the rules of the game lost sight of the fact that the game could only end satisfactorily if all participants agreed to the values of the system and the rules by which they were applied. He went on to describe the one time it had not turned out that way. He was working with an order of nuns and, after the first caucus, the elite group came back in the main room and announced that instead of telling everyone else what to do and how to do it, their one rule was that all responses to the situation would be presented from the floor and that all participants would have equal voting rights in deciding what to do. He said at that point, the game was over. By practicing what they preached, the sisters made sure everyone won.

Dr. Terry turned this observation about values and power into an essay called "The Parable of Ups and Downs." It's too long to repeat here, but it's easy to find online. I'd encourage you to look it up. At the end of the essay, he observes that when DOWNS become UPS, they tend to forget what it was like to be DOWN. I hope that is not always the case. If and when any of us are fortunate to get UP, everyone will be more fortunate if, like the "elite" nuns, some of us choose to prove that to be wrong. ◉

**Be sure to check out
MCMA's website:**

www.mncma.org