

## President's column

By Melanie Mesko Lee, MCMA President, City Administrator, Hastings

As spring is finally, slowly starting to make an appearance, I'm thrilled to catch glimpses of the changes in season—grass emerging from the melting snow, spring flowers starting to peek out, the extra sunlight and warmth that provides (at least for me) a little extra energy each day. It feels a bit cliché to comment about how quickly the last 12 months as your MCMA president have gone by, yet also so fitting.

I could reflect about the amazing committee work that has been done on the topic of civility—partnering with the League of Minnesota Cities to develop a report from which action plans will likely emerge later this year. Or I could comment on the great mid-winter program that focused not only on civility but also the hot *Lean In* topic. (If you haven't yet read the book, I recommend giving it a shot.) Perhaps I could share the honor I felt when the organization was able to welcome back some recent retirees and thank them for their service at the mid-winter dinner. I've felt energized by the input and board participation as we've discussed fiscal priorities, partnerships, and multiple initiatives. Or I could smile as I think about the camaraderie that was apparent at the MCMA dinner at the ICMA conference in Boston. I could state the obvious about how Kevin Frazell keeps the ship afloat through organization, institutional knowledge, and a healthy dose of humor.

I could write about all of those things, and they would all be honest reflections. But the risk of listing all the cool things that the group does is too great. I would be certain to leave out something important, like the Cal-ICMA initiative, the successful partnerships with both ICMA and APMP, the work of the Range Riders, and the continued outreach to our members in transition. So, that's it, I'm not going to call out all the good things MCMA does, because man, would it be embarrassing to leave something out, like the new MCMA Ethics Line on the ICMA knowledge network.

The work of this group is amazing to be sure. The fabric of the organization is strong. It is so because of the commitments members make to contribute to MCMA. It will remain so only if that continues. I encourage you to find a way to make your mark by helping this continue to be

an inclusive, courageous, leading organization ... volunteer to serve on a committee, share your knowledge as a mentor, call a member in transition, or even plan to reach out to new members at the next conference to help them feel welcome.

"A job worth doing is worth doing together." —Anonymous

Thank you for allowing me to serve with and for you. I look forward to continuing my involvement in this great organization. And, until we cross paths again ... with you in service. ☐

“A job worth  
doing is worth  
doing together.”

—Anonymous

# Thank you to Range Rider Paul Sparks

Former Albert Lea City Manager Paul Sparks has submitted his resignation as a Range Rider for ICMA and MCMA. Paul has been dealing with cancer for several years, and while he is feeling great, the treatments limit his mobility and ability to travel around the state.

Paul is up for phone calls and emails. If you'd like to check in with him and, perhaps, just thank him for his service to our association, his number is (507) 377-0449, and his email is [ptsparks@charter.net](mailto:ptsparks@charter.net).

Bob Thistle and Bill Bassett continue as MCMA Range Riders. Staff will be working with them to determine the future needs of the program, including likely recruiting some additional members. ○

**Your  
Range  
Riders  
are here  
to help!**

## MCMA Officers/Board Members

### President:

Melanie Mesko Lee, City of Hastings

### First Vice President:

Tim Houle, Crow Wing County

### Second Vice President:

Shaunna Johnson, City of Waite Park

### Secretary/Treasurer:

Brian Gramentz, City of New Ulm

### Directors:

Bart Fischer, City of Falcon Heights

Scott Neal, City of Edina

Erin Stwora, Dakota County

Steve Taylor, Sherburne County

Kurtis Ulrich, City of Ramsey

## Ex-Officio Members

### Immediate Past President:

Phil Kern, City of Delano

### Range Riders:

Bill Bassett

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You can also contact Amy Mansager, Event

Coordinator ([amansager@lmc.org](mailto:amansager@lmc.org)), or Jim

Miller, Executive Director ([jmiller@lmc.org](mailto:jmiller@lmc.org)).

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## MCMA Newsletter

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# Reaching the next generation of potential local government managers

*By Dave Schaps, Assistant City Administrator, Oakdale*

The Educational and Outreach Committee and APMP kicked off a strong 2014 with a presence at two job fairs, including the recent Mankato State Career Fair held on Jan. 28, with their College of Behavioral Sciences, and the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU) Career Fair held on Feb. 18 at the Minneapolis Convention Center.

Tyler Burkart of Woodbury and Shane Fineran of Waconia attended the Mankato fair, and Dave Schaps of Oakdale and Range Rider Bill Craig attended the MNSCU fair providing representation for APMP and MCMA at these events.

At both events, we were able to provide a number of resources to interested students, including several potential internship options and lists of open positions currently with local governments around the state. Having this information available at the fair worked very well as most students inquired about what was currently open in local governments. This was also a positive change from the more general pitch about the profession that we have made at previous job fairs when only a few entry level positions existed due to the economic downturn, and this appeared to spark more interest during our conversations.

At both fairs, we were able to have approximately 40-50 substantive conversations with students that were interested in city/county management or other work for local government entities. The students were from undergraduate to master's level, and represented a good cross section of majors such as urban studies, public administration, political science, law enforcement, recreation, finance, human resources, business, and computer science. It was interesting to see that some of the students were very familiar with local

governments and had undertaken previous internships with cities and counties, while others were looking for information on what services cities and counties provide, such as planning, finance, recreation programming, information technology, and environmental management type activities.

One of the things that we strongly encouraged the students to do was to contact a city/county manager or department head and ask about the opportunity to job shadow with them, or ask if they could do some type of project work so that they could gain some relevant experience, and thus be able to list a marketable skill on their resume.

Overall, both fairs were excellent events, and provided great opportunities to meet one-on-one with students and talk about the profession. In addition, having actual jobs that people could apply for helped in overcoming the notion that there are no positions open in the public sector right now—which was a concern expressed by some of the students.

As mentioned several times both in the Educational and Outreach Committee and at APMP, many of us can recall a specific individual that reached out to us about the profession and sparked our interest in local government. These events provided the opportunity to plant that seed through the great conversations that we were able to have with the students. Please do not hesitate to contact members of the committee or APMP board if you have an interest in attending a job fair or would like materials about MCMA and APMP when visiting with young professionals or your local schools.

See you in Bloomington in February! ○

# Board meeting recap

The Board met on Dec. 13 in Waite Park and on Feb. 13 in Bloomington. Highlights of those meetings were:

- Discussion with Irina Fursman and Jim Brimeyer regarding MCMA support of continuing city official exchange with Ukraine. (This has been put on hold pending outcome of the unrest in Ukraine.)
- Discussion with ICMA Midwest Vice President (and Mankato Deputy City Manager) Tanya Ange on ICMA priority issues including a new dues/financing structure, changes to the credentialing program to make it more relevant to those early in their careers, and the *Life, Well Run* campaign.
- Appointed West St. Paul City Manager and former ICMA Board member Matt Fulton to head a committee that will develop strategies to implement *Life, Well Run* in Minnesota.
- Reviewed our state affiliate agreement with ICMA and determined that we are doing well in fulfilling most of our obligations.
- Approved a draft 2014-2015 budget of \$96,050, which is an increase of about 8 percent over 2013-2014; much of the increase relates to the higher cost of the Mid-Winter Workshop now that it is being held in the metropolitan area.
- Acknowledged that MCMA now enjoys a fairly significant fund balance and discussed new priorities or programs that might be funded (see article "Association finances and fund balance" on page 5).
- Received and adopted the Joint Task Force on Civility report (see article "ICMA Midwest Summit," below). ◉

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## ICMA Midwest Summit

*By Melanie Mesko Lee, MCMA President, City Administrator, Hastings*

Recently I was able to join a collaborative professional development opportunity, as the 26th Annual Iowa Municipal Management Institute (IMMI) partnered with ICMA and its Midwest Regional Summit on a three-day conference focused on the complex challenges and demands of local government. Held in Iowa City, I had the honor of representing MCMA as we discussed the challenge of culture change, civility in local government, and ICMA priorities and initiatives.

As many of us have experienced, influencing cultural change in our organizations can be a long process of two steps forward and one step back. Four managers shared their stories of what worked in their organization. Not surprisingly, we were reminded to communicate, communicate, and then communicate some more. Additionally, making sure your elected body is in the loop and on board is equally important.

As your president, I was able to provide an update of the many good things our organization is doing, including the civility initiative in coordination with the League of Minnesota Cities. There was also robust discussion on the review of Tenet 12 of the ICMA Code of Ethics and its guidelines, "Seek no favor; believe that personal aggrandizement or profit secured by confidential information or by misuse of public time is dishonest." Why focus on Tenet 12? This tenet covers a broad range of common issues that are significant for professionals working in local government: gifts, conflicts of interest, personal relationships, use of confidential information, outside employment, and endorsements. ICMA is looking for feedback—visit <http://icma.mindmixer.com> or contact Martha Perego at [mperego@icma.org](mailto:mperego@icma.org)

Finally, I was able to participate in the ICMA Midwest Regional Nominating committee interview process, recommending a candidate to represent the Midwest Region on the ICMA Board. I appreciate the opportunity to be a part of this informative few days! ◉

## Association finances and fund balance

In 2011 the Board made adjustments to bring MCMA revenues and expenditures more into alignment, the membership approved a 20 percent dues increase, and recovering attendance at the annual conference meant that event, once again, began to return a profit to the association. It has all paid off!

The association fund balance is projected to stand at approximately \$56,000 or 64 percent of expenditures at the end of the fiscal year (FY) 2013-2014. As part of the 2011 adjustments, the Board also adopted policies establishing a minimum fund balance of 25 percent, "contingency" reserves of up to 40 percent, and a stipulation that dollars available above that amount could be used for new programming and/or avoidance of dues increases.

The Board has adopted a base budget of \$96,050 for FY 2014-2015 that continues and adequately funds current programs. Under the adopted financial policies, however, approximately \$20,000 could be spent for new programming, preferably for non-recurring obligations. Suggested uses have included higher quality speakers at future annual conferences and reinstatement of the local government internship grant. The Board welcomes any suggestions individual members may have for ways to use these funds to advance the purposes of MCMA and of professional local government management in Minnesota. ○

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## Appointments and other professional news

- **Aaron Reeves**, city administrator, Cannon Falls, has been appointed city clerk, Rochester.
- **Karen Brown**, county coordinator, Fillmore County, has retired.
- **Bobbie Vickerman**, deputy finance, Fillmore County, has been appointed county administrator there.
- **Patrick Trudgeon**, community development director, Roseville, has been appointed city manager there.
- **Kenneth Anderson**, community development director, Crosslake, has been appointed city administrator, International Falls.
- **Pat Wussow**, county administrator, Aitkin County, has been appointed city administrator, Brainerd.
- **Ron Johnson**, city administrator, Lake City, has been appointed city administrator, Cannon Falls.
- **Ari Klugman**, former intern, Edina, has been appointed city administrator, Madison Lake.
- **William J. Petrcek**, city administrator, Fox Lake, Wis., has been appointed city administrator, Lexington.
- **Shane Fineran**, assistant administrator, Waconia, has been appointed city administrator, Watertown.
- **Tom Vellenga**, founder and president, Heartland Democracy, has been appointed assistant county administrator, Carver County.
- **Robin Leslie**, principal planner, Oshkosh, Wis., has been appointed city administrator, Wells.

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## Doing good by eating well

The MCMA Board and staff are particularly excited about the MCMA group dinner next Sept. 15 during the ICMA centennial conference in Charlotte. We have already locked up a buy-out reservation that Monday evening for upscale southern cuisine at The King's Kitchen, which is located very near the convention center and major hotels.

What's unique, however, is that The King's Kitchen is run as a nonprofit organization, putting its proceeds back into the Charlotte community to feed the hungry. They also train under-resourced individuals to pursue successful careers in the restaurant industry.

If you'd like to know more, check it out at [www.kingskitchen.org](http://www.kingskitchen.org) and watch for registration information later this summer. And get ready for some lip-smackin' good southern cooking! ○

# Memorandum from the edge

By Jon Hohenstein, Community Development Director, Eagan

Sometimes people tell me I should write a book. When they do, my modesty runs off and hides behind a tree. I hear those people saying they like my writing and think I have important things to say. Then I realize they may have meant something else entirely, like if I were to write a book, it would keep me busy doing something besides bothering them for a while.

In the same way as pointing out something unusual on the side of the road may distract a child who is asking if we're there yet, telling Jon he should write a book may be a great way to distract him enough to get some peace and quiet for a while. When I think that, my modesty comes trudging back, hand in hand with embarrassment and more than a little resentment in tow, grumbling, don't think I don't know what you really meant.

In the event the suggestion were genuine, though, I would have some decisions to make, like whether the book should be about a topic of popular interest that I have not approached before, something like gastroenterology or calf roping. On the other hand, it could be a book of essays, in which case, I could dust off 25 years of these articles, edit out the dated references, and see whether ICMA has any interest in publishing a Kindized Green Book of half-baked theories to try when you have run out of other ideas.

If they are not brave enough to do that, I could change the references from local government management to some role everyone can see themselves in, self-publish, and start watching the money roll in. I am guessing the ideas I have written about over the years would apply equally well and be useful to readers who fancy themselves to be crime scene investigators, antique store pickers, or aspiring chefs.

Yet another option would be to expand on other people's successful management and leadership books. Of course, I would need to rely on the axiom that imitation is the highest form of flattery or that satire is an absolute defense in cases of plagiarism, but there is no point dwelling on that when

the options are so wide ranging and we are really only thinking out loud at this point.

The natural follow up to *Lean In* is *Tip Over*. I think I am uniquely qualified to write that. A person would have to decide which way to go with the next book in the *Blink* series. I am going back and forth between *Stare* and *Nap*. As long as we are on Daniel Pink, the companion of *Drive* needs to be *Stop Texting, You Nincompoop*. *It's Not All About Me* has to be followed with *Who Are We Kidding, Of Course It's About Me*. I am of the opinion that a sequel to *The One Minute Manager* would be disingenuous. That would not stop me from writing it, but I feel the need to be transparent up front. For all of those *True North* devotees out there, a good option would be *There are Other Directions Too, You Know*.

Of course, given enough time, you have to follow *Who Moved My Cheese?* with *What Is That Awful Smell?* Or, in the alternative, it could be the more assertive *Keep Your Hands Off My Nachos*. You have to follow *First Break All the Rules* with *Wait, I Can Explain*, and the logical extension of *What Color is Your Parachute?* would be *They Promised Landing Would Not Hurt This Much*.

If there are not enough sequels to go around, I suppose there would be ideas to explore in prequels. The prequel to *FISH* has to be *BAIT*, just like the prequel to *Good to Great* has to be *Sucky to Good*. They practically write themselves. For those not quite ready for *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, a good option would be *You Will Never Amount to Anything If You Don't Stop Doing That*, although I would have to share writing credit for that with my uncle, Larry, who practically used that phrase to death.

Last, but not least, if it were just about the money, I have an idea for a sure-fire best seller that no store or retailer will be able to keep in stock. Plain and simple, the title would be *Are You as Tired of Hearing About Jack Welch as I Am?* I have to go now. McGraw-Hill is on line one. ◉

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

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