

# Meeting #1 of Education Dimension Committee of Michigan Local Governors & Managers Association

March 12, 2008 – MML Offices, Lansing

**Attending:** Jason Eppler, Curtis Holt, Bill LeFevere, Roger Fraser, Clay Pearson

Updates were received from the Chairs of the Summer Conference and the Professional Development Committee on their initial work since being appointed. Roger Fraser is chair of the January 2009 Winter Institute and attended this meeting of the Education Dimension committee to help formulate strategies for his group's work.

It was noted that the adopted 2008/09 MLGMA budget has allocated \$22,000 to the Education Dimension Committee's work.

This being the first meeting of the new Education Dimension Committee (MLGMA), the time was spent reviewing results of the member survey of professional development needs and brings to mind priorities for the Committee. The feedback from members (162 out of 341 members participated) was predominately reflecting a desire to have substantive material available to members and to have that presented at the State MLGMA Conferences. The call for further increasing substantive topics were more so for the summer gathering which faces a perception of being during a busy time of the year for managers scheduling vacations and also fairly close in time to the ICMA National Conference. It is also recognized that particularly for the state association gatherings as opposed to the national, these gatherings are essential professional relationship building opportunities with peers who face similar environments and structures.

The five topic areas in the survey which received the highest in number of respondents with high interest were:

- 1) Leadership (93)
- 2) Sustainability, Community Development (92)
- 3) Economic Development (92)
- 4) Budget and Finance (85)
- 5) Infrastructure Financing and Development (84)

The background facts above provided the basis for the following discussion and recommendations:

## Recommendations to the Board:

- 1) Establish an explicit organizational purpose for the MLGMA Conferences. Are these to be profit centers as a practical matter for the association, or rather primarily a break-even professional development and relationship-building opportunity? It was noted that over time, the goal for the MLGMA Conference has perhaps changed, although that is primarily unstated. There is history that at one time, fund balance was being grown in an effort to host an ICMA National Conference. The winter conference is now seen as a profit center for MLGMA. Indeed the adopted 2008/09 MLGMA Budget shows a net revenue (in excess of \$10,000) for the association. The summer conference is budgeted to be a break-even financially; however, financial performance is heavily dependent on

revenue. The history of the summer conference is a financial "loss" over the last five years.

- 2) Allow/focus on steadily building a reputation for MLGMA Conferences to have a "name" keynote speaker. The aim is to have increasingly higher profile presenters, recognizing the additional expense, to both draw more Michigan attendees and to provide better content. Achieving this in large part relies upon a direction from item number one above that the winter institute is not seen as a "money-maker" but that instead the proceeds are substantially put back into the program.
- 3) Better organize and publicize the regional MLGMA Meetings/Lunches. There was discussion about the varied structures of the MLGMA regional gatherings which is fine. However there should be an effort to improve the effectiveness and reach of these gatherings. The entire site should be displayed in a newsletter and the website to illustrate options for close peer networking. Moreover, the leaders of each region should be automatically sent, or at least biannually, from MML with contacts of professional managers/assistants in those regions. It was noted that reaching out to new professional public managers is an established need for many reasons and the regional gatherings are an easy entry point to build those ties.
- 4) Continue to reach out to the first-time managers and smaller jurisdictions by trying a tiered-rate registration for Ypsilanti. It was recommended that for the winter 2009 Conference in Ypsilanti, that a tiered-rate conference registration be established. Cost and time were noted repeatedly in the survey results as issues in whether a member is able to attend. It is recognized that professional public managers are obligated to invest in their own professional development; this effort may be a bridge to make that investment more prevalent.