



MLGMA

<http://www.mlgma.org>

**Michigan
Local Government
Management Association**

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May, 2008

Message from the President

Edward B. Koryzno, City Manager, City of Ypsilanti

While attending the recent Midwest Regional Summit in Minneapolis, I was reminded of the Groucho Marx quote, "Time flies like an arrow -- fruit flies like a banana". Time did fly because the experience was so valuable. This day and one-half program combined educational information and the chance to meet managers from neighboring states in a smaller venue. Past President Richard Watkins, Clay Pearson, Darnel Early, and I networked with managers from throughout the Midwest region. The program opened with a half-day session by Bob O'Neil presenting "The Manager's Role In Moving Communities from Good to Great" interspersed with DVD clips from the video of the same name, a preview of the "A Whole New Mind" video, which is this year's video project and manager interviews. Our own Clay Pearson was one of the featured managers in the video clips.

Bob O'Neil shared with the group that ICMA will begin celebrating the 100th anniversary of the council manager form. The celebration begins in 2008 with the anniversary of Staunton, Virginia becoming the first council/manager city and ends in 2014, the 100th anniversary of ICMA. ICMA has asked the State Associations to develop a history of their respective first managers and first manager cities. MLGMA is very fortunate to have creative leaders who compiled a printed history in 1983 of what was formerly MCMA and amended it in 1995. Since this document has not been updated in over 10 years, it sounds like a committee assignment in the making. ICMA is also searching for famous people who were relatives of pioneering city managers to share their perspectives. Bob showed an interview with Paul Volcker, former Federal Reserve Chair, whose father was a City Manager in New Jersey. Bob's staff also somehow discovered that Johnny Depp's father was, for a brief time, a City Manager in Kentucky. We still have an opportunity to preserve on video, interviews of people who worked with some of the great managers in our State's history and this is something we, as an organization, should consider doing.

During the second day of the summit, the morning session concentrated on ICMA's Strategic Planning Draft outcomes and provided an opportunity for those attending to provide feedback to ICMA. Afterward, the Midwest State Presidents presented a summary of the projects their respective state organizations are working on. I shared our recent strategic plan efforts and the development of a council/manager plan video. During the afternoon, I had the pleasure to interview Midwest Vice-President candidates with my presidential counterparts from Ohio, Illinois, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, and Missouri. I am pleased to tell you that either of the two candidates the group recommended to the board for consideration, will be an excellent representative. All in all, it was refreshing to interact with managers and ICMA staff in an accommodating learning environment. I encourage you, if time and budgets permit, to attend next year's Midwest regional summit, which will be held in Chicago. I am confident that time will fly for you too.

Strategic Plan Experience Committee

(By Tom Markus, Birmingham)

The Strategic Plan Experience Committee met on May 9 at the Manistee City Hall (a beautifully restored old Post Office). City Manager Mitch Deisch hosted our meeting and served as our fishing guide along with Brian Sousa. Pat Sullivan and myself willingly joined our hosts on the Big Manistee River for some steelhead fishing. Brian and Mitch are outstanding trout fishermen who willingly tutored both Pat and me. You will have to ask Pat who caught the biggest fish. The Big Manistee was a wonderful place to be on a cool spring morning.

Lest I forget, we did have a committee meeting, and it was quite productive. Shea Charles and Mitch Deisch reported that they are working with both ICMA and the MML in the development of a database which meets the vision of identifying substantive areas of experience and other special talents in order to provide a resource of experiences and talents with a Manager's name associated with them that other Manager's could call upon when in need.

Pat Sullivan reported on several different award ideas, including:

- Announcing the ICMA Years of Service Award winners at one of our annual conferences;
- Create a similar years of service award program for Michigan years of service;
- Michigan "Big 10" award presented annually for 10 years of service in the State of Michigan;
- Recognizing Managers for unique and innovative projects;
- Michigan Manager's Hall of Fame recognizing Michigan Managers who have made significant contributions to the profession and our organization; and
- Manager biographies similar to the profile features in the monthly PM Magazine and run in the MML Magazine, MLGMA Newsletter, and on our website.

These ideas and others will be further explored in discussions between Pat Sullivan, Mitch Deisch, and Jennifer Tubbs, Awards Committee Chair.

Cathy Vander Meulen is studying the ICMA Legacy Leaders program in our State and efforts to link Credentialed Managers with emerging professionals. Cathy will prepare an article on the Legacy Leaders program for a future newsletter to meet this vision item. Cathy, along with Larry Nielsen, will work in the future on developing a model-in-service training program for department directors who have an interest in becoming chief administrators. Cathy and Larry will also examine recommendations to expand internship opportunities within our profession.

I will be working with the MML to promote comprehensive educational programs of MLGMA, MML, and affiliate organizations' meetings, conferences or training programs, and seminars that provide an educational program within the State of Michigan which meets ICMA's Practices for Effective Local Government Management in order to allow Michigan Managers and Assistants to meet the requirements for ICMA credentialing by staying in-state. Further, MLGMA will work with MML staff to ensure that all meetings, conferences, trainings, and seminars identify which of the 18 "core competency" areas a particular class, seminar, training session, or conference addresses when preparing the program/literature for such events. Additionally, MLGMA should work with MML and ICMA to provide telecommute-type access to allow remotely located public managers to "virtually" attend/participate in relevant meetings, conferences, trainings, and seminars.

I am speaking with ICMA about making credentialing certification available to MLGMA members who are not also ICMA members. This conversation has evolved into making ICMA membership more affordable for communities of lesser means.

Finally, in speaking with Ted Staton, Chair of the Strategic Plan Committee, I found that two vision items dealing with educational issues have been misplaced under the Experience Committee and will, with MLGMA approval, be moved to the Educational Committee.

The next meeting of the Experience Committee is planned to be held during our MLGMA Summer Workshop session.

Please E-mail
Articles of Interest
for the
Manager to
Al Vanderberg
at
avander@
co.ottawa.mi.us
by the 1st of
Each Month.

Cost and Results of Government Study

(By Frank L. Walsh, St. Joseph)

In 2002 and 2006, the City of St. Joseph surveyed our 8,800 residents and asked them a series of questions regarding the future of our community. The results of the surveys were very telling, our residents asked the City Commission to find a way to lower taxes and attract more families to our city. In setting their annual goals for 2007-08, the City Commission made lowering taxes by reducing the cost of government as their #1 goal for the coming year. The task appeared daunting.

Lowering taxes and attracting families were the main agenda items for our November 2007 study session. The City Commission asked a series of questions about how we compare as a community to cities of similar size in Michigan. Questions such as wages, benefits, staffing levels, services, pension multipliers, taxable value, water and sewer rates, millage rate and overall cost of government per capita surfaced as the primary questions from the elected body. The City Commission asked staff to come up with a tool to measure our community against Michigan communities with a population of 5,000-15,000.

The 2008 Cost of Government Study was this tool and in January 2008 we began compiling the study with a plan to survey 30 Michigan communities. We asked 44 questions of each community from the number of full-time personnel to their general fund tax rate. We were pleased to receive 20 of the 30 requests back in time to complete our findings.

I want to thank and acknowledge the following communities who participated in our study:

Alma	Alpena
Cadillac	Charlotte
Coldwater	Grand Blanc
Grand Haven	Grandville
Hastings	Howell
Ionia	Manistee
Marshall	Niles
Saline	South Haven
South Lyon	Sturgis
Wixom	Woodhaven

The results of the survey provided the City Commission and staff with the information we needed to take a good look at our own local government and the cost to provide services to our citizens. Over 100 residents turned out for an April City Commission meeting to hear the results. Three immediate changes were made in our management structure as a result of the findings. The Clerk/Finance Director positions were combined; the Assistant Street Superintendent position and a parks management position were eliminated. Additionally, several other minor changes were made resulting in a total savings of \$173,000 in administrative costs.

The final act by the City Commission was the adoption of the "20% Plan". The goal of the plan is to further implement some of the findings from the study and allowing us to reduce our general fund millage rate by 20% over the next 5 years. This year we took the first step in the right direction by reducing our general fund rate from 12.23 to 11.73. This one-half mill reduction equates to \$200,000 in actual savings to our taxpayers.

Keeping our promise to implement the plan is going to be a challenge. However, the City Commission is committed to making the reduction. Personally, I believe the "perfect storm" of less state revenue, a sagging housing market, declining taxable values and Michigan's unemployment are going to have an incorrigible effect on a number of Michigan communities. How we react is going to dictate our future.