

# THE ADMINISTRATOR

A PUBLICATION OF THE N.C. CITY & COUNTY MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION

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## RIGHT ON 'CUE

**Working as a local** government manager is hard business full of late nights and sometimes weekend work. Sometimes managers just need to cut loose.

Kannapolis Deputy City Manager Eddie Smith (pictured) and former Tryon Town Manager Justin Hembree have found a great way to blow off steam on weekends – or, in this case, smoke. The two compete in competitive

barbecue festivals. They've even been featured on national TV for their efforts.

Recently, the team, which has been competing since June 2010, was featured on Travel Channel's show, "All You Can Meat."

The TV segment was filmed in during a Kannapolis employee appreciation



barbecue, with more than 300 people from the community, according to the *Winston-Salem Journal*.

"They wanted to create an event to surround the activity of cooking to show how cooking meat, preparing barbecue, kind of brings communities together," Smith said.

According to the paper,

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## WHO'S AFRAID OF THE BIG, BAD (MR.) WUF?

*East Carolina University graduate Joe Durham, Wake County deputy manager (left) and University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill graduate Doug Bean, former Morganton and Asheville city manager, had the encounter they both have always dreamed of back in August. The two got to meet Mr. Wuf, North Carolina State University's mascot. This dream meeting came during the N.C. Association of County Commissioners' annual meeting, which was held in Raleigh.*



## THE ADMINISTRATOR

*The Administrator* is a monthly newsletter of the North Carolina City and County Management Association, a professional association for city and county managers and assistant managers from counties and municipalities throughout the state of North Carolina.

For comments or suggestions, please contact Matt Lail, editor, at 919-819-3979, or email at [collards12@yahoo.com](mailto:collards12@yahoo.com).

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### International City & County Management Association Conference

Phoenix, Arizona  
October 7-10, 2012

### N.C. City & County Management Association Winter Seminar

Sheraton Research Triangle Park  
February 6-8, 2013

### N.C. City & County Management Association Summer Seminar

Craven Convention Center,  
New Bern  
June 20-22, 2013

## WEBINAR: DEVELOPING YOUR COMMUNITY BRAND

**An important and oftentimes neglected responsibility of government leaders is the job of building a reputation that is fair, honest and powerful. A brand is not created; it is discovered within the spirit of a place. According to Don McEarchen, President of North Star and Community Branding Specialist, using qualitative and quantitative research tools, it is possible to achieve a focused snapshot of a community's values, assets and priorities, which can then be articulated as its "brand."**

During this Alliance for Innovation webinar ([register now](#)), McEarchen will provide an overview of the

requirements for understanding and articulating your community's brand. He will be joined by several local governments who successfully "branded their communities.

Price is \$149 for Alliance Members and \$249 for nonmembers, Organization-wide Members Distribution \$495, Organization-wide TLG Partner Distribution \$395, Organization-wide Nonmember Distribution \$825

**Developing Your Community Brand**, Thursday, September 27, 2012; 1:00 PM - 2:30 PM

## BROADBAND CONFERENCE TO LOOK AT VITALITY

### The Municipal Fiber

Networks Conference will be held November 8 - 9, 2012, in Danville, Virginia.

Co-sponsored by Broadband Communities Magazine and the City of Danville, Virginia, this is the first conference of its kind in this country, an event devoted entirely to the relationship between a community's economic vitality and the presence of advanced

broadband networks.

The conference features an impressive array of speakers who will help attendees evaluate the options and opportunities to develop the optimal, affordable broadband telecommunications solution for their communities.

Check out the conference at <http://bbcmag.com/danville>.

# ETHICS: THEY DID WHAT?

*Reprinted with permission from Public Management (PM) magazine, published by ICMA, the premier local governmental management organization, Washington, D.C. Contact the ICMA Ethics Center at 202.962.3521 or visit [ICMA.org/ethics](http://ICMA.org/ethics).*

**The stories of unethical** conduct in public sector organizations this year have been audacious and unrelenting. One after another, they tell the tale of highly trained and educated, dare we say “professional” people, who either have no sense of good judgment or were just corrupt. It’s a shame because those stories add to public cynicism about government and harm the reputation of others working in public service.

But mostly it’s a shame because it is largely avoidable. Many types of misconduct are actually preventable. You can remove the opportunity for someone to do something wrong, like embezzling funds.

Where it can’t be eliminated, the infrastructure should be in place for early detection so that you can contain the damage. Add to the strategy creating a culture that does not encourage or support unethical conduct. It’s the giant triplets of ethics management: values, rules, and compliance.

## **Basic Systems and Compliance Work**

The story of the Illinois town treasurer who allegedly stole \$30 million in six years is a textbook case of what can go wrong when systems, structures, and compliance are absent. Error No. 1 was allowing the treasurer to serve the dual and incompatible role of comptroller.

This gave her total access to the money. From there, she created off-the-book bank accounts that she was able to conceal in part because she had a relative collect the city’s mail from the post office.

The theft was uncovered not by the annual audit but by an employee who was filling in when the treasurer was on vacation. That employee was smart enough to order the bank statements directly from the banks and discovered many six-figure transactions.

For a city with an annual budget of \$8 million, the transactions were the alarm that set off the formal investigation. About the only standard compliance measure in place here was the taking of vacations. Whether that was mandatory or just her choice is not clear.

The embezzlement was entirely avoidable had appropriate systems been in place. Sadly, this is not an isolated case. A tax manager for the District of Columbia

stole \$48 million by distributing fraudulent property tax refunds.

The manager approved and issued the refunds made out to real and fictitious entities. One big structural gap allowed the scam to go on for years. The employee was allowed to pick up the checks. Instead of mailing them to the payee, the individual gave them to employees and friends to deposit on her behalf.

## **Culture Drives Conduct**

The media had a field day with the news that a contingent of Secret Service agents, while on a presidential detail in Cartagena, Columbia, partied with and then hired prostitutes. Was this an aberration? Or was this type of conduct common practice? Did this violate any rules? Why didn’t they receive any training telling them not to do this?

Secret Service agents actually do get ethics training. Do you wonder what the role play exercise was like for the hypothetical question: “Can I hire a prostitute and bring her back to my room?”

On a serious note, most agents aren’t on protective detail. As part of the U.S. Treasury Department, they work on complex financial investigations that can generate serious ethical dilemmas. Whether the previous training touched on appropriate personal conduct or not, it will now.

All that said, Cartagena was not the result of poor ethics training. It resulted from a serious lack of judgment on

## ETHICS MATTERS, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

the part of individuals who were most likely influenced by the organization's culture.

### Back to Ethics 101

Although they don't make the national headlines, there are numerous other incidents of questionable conduct by local government professionals. One city manager used the city credit card repeatedly to make personal purchases. Even if repayment is made immediately, this is not an acceptable practice.

Several individuals had questionable travel practices

ranging from expensing meals that were covered by the event registration; extending their stay and charging it back to the organization; upgrading flights; charging spouse travel back to the organization; and unwarranted, costly charges for incidentals. On the purchasing front, more than one organization had to respond to headlines after it was disclosed that staff split projects into phases in order to evade the formal bid process.

Unethical conduct harms the reputation of the individual, the organization, and the profession. It's avoidable if leaders heed the fundamentals of Ethics 101.

Focus first on organizational culture. Inspiring people to live up to the values of public service is critical.

The optimists among us hope that values would be sufficient to guide people to do what's right. But setting clear boundaries with rules and structure is needed as well. Lastly, values and rules are meaningless without compliance and accountability.

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*Washington, D.C.*

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## A MESSAGE FROM BOB O' NEILL: ARE YOU SIGNED UP FOR SMARTBRIEF?

### I am pleased to

announce that ICMA has partnered with a new vendor, SmartBrief, to launch the *ICMA SmartBrief*, a daily e-mail newsletter specifically designed for local government managers. A copy of the launch issue is attached below.

This resource brings you a quick, two-minute daily read that will keep you up to date with the latest news and trends in our industry. News stories are meticulously

selected for content and delivered straight to your inbox.

Because of your affiliation with ICMA, we are pleased to offer this [completely free service](#) to you. We are convinced that the *ICMA SmartBrief* will save you time and keep you informed, but if you do not wish to receive this resource, you may unsubscribe at any time.

Over the next few weeks,

we will send you four additional introductory issues of the *ICMA SmartBrief*, with the hope that you will subscribe. [Sign up for your free subscription today](#) to ensure you don't miss a single issue.

Thank you for your continued interest in ICMA.

Sincerely,  
Robert J. O'Neill Jr.  
Executive Director  
ICMA, the International  
City/County Management  
Association

## RIGHT ON 'CUE, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Initially, the film crew had planned to shoot at Smith's house, wanting to have a neighborhood gathering to show off the community.

"And I said, 'Oh, I can do better than that,'" Smith said. "I wanted to showcase Kannapolis and Cabarrus County."

Smith was able to organize an employee appreciation event, which had Kannapolis Fire Department trucks and city staff on hand showcasing Kannapolis at Village Park.

"It's exciting, knowing two years ago I just ate barbecue, I didn't compete," Smith told the newspaper.

"Never in my wildest dreams did I think that six months later I'd get a phone call with that opportunity," Smith said. "So it was almost surreal."

Smith and Hembree – like thousands of North Carolinians

– used to just cook barbecue for fun, before football games. (In their cases, the 'cue was cooked for tailgating at Appalachian State University games.) But Hembree was the Tryon manager during a barbecue festival, and he asked his friend, Smith, to compete with him.

It didn't turn out so good, according to the Journal. The two competed in June 2010 in Tryon. They came in 89<sup>th</sup> out of 90 teams.

"We clearly had a sign over our sight in 2010 saying, 'Rookies,'" Smith said with a laugh.

But the two were bitten with the competition BBQ bug.

Between entry fees, the cost of meat, travel expenses and other costs he can personally spend anywhere from \$500 to \$600 a competition.

"We decided, me and my buddy, when we first got into

this, six months in, we said, 'If we're going to be doing this, we don't need to be wasting our time and money,'" Smith said. "We need to learn exactly what we should do at these competitions."

But Smith and Hembree persevered and worked at their craft and even took classes. And it has paid off; their rankings have continued to climb. But more important: the two are having fun.

"It's a great hobby and it's a great stress reliever and it's a great camaraderie with others on the circuit who love to cook barbecue," he said. "And you're in a festive atmosphere all the time."

## CORRECTION



*The photo (left) ran in the August issue of The Administrator and listed these gentlemen as the winners of the 2012 NCCMA Summer Seminar Golf Tournament. In fact, the winning team included Mint Hill Town Manager **Brian Welch**, **Steve DeBolt**, **Jeff Davenport** and **Bill Barry** (not pictured).*

*We regret the error.*