

# The Administrator

A PUBLICATION OF THE NORTH CAROLINA CITY AND COUNTY MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION

AUGUST 2011, ISSUE 8

## NCCCMA website updated

**W**ww.NCManagers.org, the official website of the N.C. City & County Management Association (NCCCMA), has recently been given its first major facelift in almost eight years. The changes to the new-look site were done both for functionality as well as aesthetics.

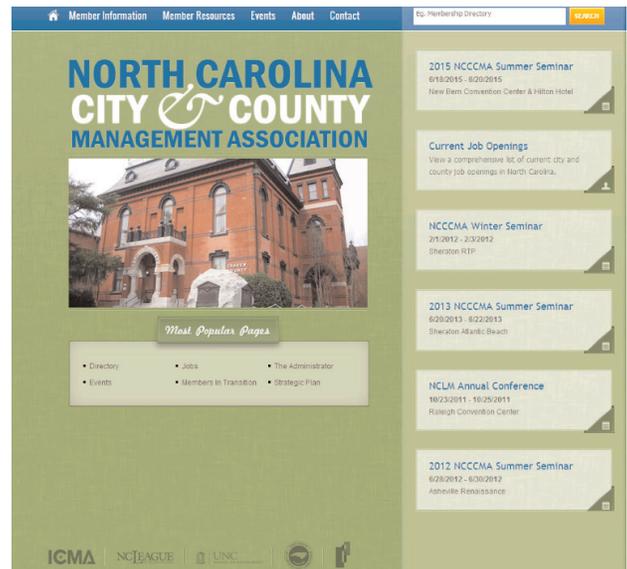
With the new design, items that have proven very popular in the past are much easier to find. For instance, the link to the job openings (via the N.C. League of Municipalities, N.C. Association of County Commissioners and ICMA websites) are much more prominent. In addition, upcoming events are given importance on the right-hand side of the page, in a scrolling format, in order to make sure members know when the next NCCCMA seminar is coming up.

The front page also offers a quick glimpse of

links to vital sections, such as the Membership Directory, Members in Transition, *The Administrator* archive and more. These are listed under "Most Popular Pages."

Members of the NCCCMA Executive Committee were given a sneak-peak of the new website during their meeting at the 2011 Summer Seminar in Sea Trail back in June. Among the suggested changes were more photos that represent the variety of cities, towns and counties across the state.

Work on the layout of the site was conducted by Melissa Smith, Matt Lail and Yolanda Guerra, with VC3 providing the techni-



cal expertise.

Please send suggestions about the site to Matt Lail at mlail@ncilm.org.

## NCLM, NCACC launch ReadyNCLocal.org

**I**n the days leading up to the arrival of Hurricane Irene, the N.C. League of Municipalities and the N.C. Association of County Commissioners announced the launch of ReadyNCLocal.org, a joint project aimed at helping municipal and county governments prepare year-round for disasters of any kind.

It is hoped that ReadyNCLocal.org will be your "one-stop shop" for information both before and after an emergency occurs.

ReadyNCLocal.org has sections devoted to:

- Mutual Aid
- N.C. Water Warn
- Getting Ready
- Recovery
- County Emergency Management Contacts

The decision to launch a site like ReadyNCLocal.org came from discussions between the two organizations. It has also become apparent in recent years that disasters don't just happen during Hurricane Season. North Carolina's local governments face the possibility of emergency management scenarios throughout the year, whether it be tornadoes in the spring, hurricanes or flooding in the summer, or even snow and ice storms in the winter.

However, one of the key components of ReadyNCLocal.org is the idea of making sure that local governments have their mutual aid "ducks in a row" year-round. In doing research for the new site, it became obvious that county and municipal emergency management contact

information was, in many cases, out of date and obsolete, with a number of listings including personnel who are no longer employed by the city or the county.

Be sure to bookmark [www.ReadyNCLocal.org](http://www.ReadyNCLocal.org): Emergency management information for North Carolina's local governments.

Both NCLM and NCACC thank VC3 for providing technical assistance in creating this new site.

# Principles challenged

*Reprinted with permission from Public Management (PM) magazine, published by ICMA, the premier local government management organization, Washington, D.C. Contact the ICMA Ethics Center at 202/962-3521 or visit ICMA.org/ethics.*

When it comes to ethics, talk is cheap. You only know how meaningful your values are when they get tested by the most difficult of circumstances: when you have something to lose, tangible or intangible, by doing the right thing and when financial security is on the line. For many local government professionals, the current job market is testing both their fortitude and their values.

## Breaking into the Field

The job search was taking far longer than the new MPA graduate ever anticipated.

After months of sending out résumés and never getting past the first interview, she finally got an offer: assistant to the city manager in a large city. Although the professional experience would be awesome, the candidate was really concerned about her personal life. She had grown up in a small town. How would she cope in such a large place where she knew no one?

But the pressures of no income and loans to pay won out. She accepted the position and decided to just “suck it up” about the personal life. After all, it’s only a couple of years, right?

A week after she signed the offer letter, the town where she would really love to work and live invited her to an interview. Because she hadn’t started work yet, she thought, why not go on the interview? What did she have to lose?

Just about everything.

Having accepted an offer, the candidate should stop interviewing and take the position accepted. Going on an interview after you have accepted an offer is like going on a date with someone new after you get engaged. It sends entirely the wrong message about your level of commitment.

If the first organization learns that you are still searching, don’t be surprised if it withdraws its offer. After all, that organization’s definition of hiring the best and brightest staff undoubtedly means they want people who demonstrate high ethical standards by honoring their commitments.

Searching for the perfect position in the public sector is difficult because transparency and merit-based hiring make for a long process. In today’s shrinking market with tons of competition, it’s even tougher.

Local governments, like any employer, invest resources in the recruiting process that end up being wasted by applicants who don’t keep their commitments. Before interviewing for a position, take the time to check out the organ-



ization and the community to make sure that it would be a good fit professionally and personally.

If you have any doubts, don’t take the position. But once you give your word and accept a bona fide offer, keep your commitment. Your reputation is one of life’s intangibles that can be tarnished by a rash commitment or a selfish decision.

## Encore Adventures

After 20 years of county management in coastal regions, the manager and his spouse decided it was time for a new personal and professional adventure. The manager landed a position in a wealthy mountain resort community. The couple’s relocation plan called for the manager to rent a house in the new community while the spouse remained behind to sell the family home as well as her business.

It was a good plan until the real estate market tanked. Now, after almost a year on the

Continued on page 3

## Calendar of Events

**ICMA Annual Conference**  
Sept. 18-21, 2011  
Milwaukee

**NCCMA Winter Seminar**  
February 1-3, 2012  
Sheraton RTP

**NCLM Annual Conference**  
October 23-25, 2011  
Raleigh Convention Center

**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) 715-3929, fax to (919) 733-9519, or mlail@nclm.org.



## Reminder: ICMA E-Debit Card expires on August 31

The ICMA Executive Board extended the Economic Crisis E-Debit Card through August 31. This extension gives those who haven't already taken advantage of this opportunity the possibility of saving another \$200 (Full members) or \$100 (Affiliate members) toward your membership

renewal, ICMA Annual Conference registration, ICMA University events or programs, or the Virtual conference.

It's easy and simple to use the credit, no plastic card is involved. Eligible members will just enter the code DEBITCARD on the regis-

tration form to take advantage of their e-debit card funds. Visit [icma.org/debitcard](http://icma.org/debitcard) for the full details.

Be sure to take advantage of this member benefit for members-in service before time runs out.

## Can't get to Milwaukee? Attend virtually

The 2011 Virtual ICMA Annual Conference live event will take place during the annual conference, September 18-21. Developed in partnership with Peach New Media, ICMA will broadcast live over the Internet streaming video of 12 educational sessions, four keynote sessions, plus 9 audio-only sessions. Your virtual conference registration allows you to watch any of these sessions on-demand thru November 30.

New this year, the Virtual Conference is free for onsite conference attendees who purchased a full conference registration. Conference attendees will receive access to the virtual conference archive, after the conference ends.

Fees for those not attending the annual conference:

**Register by August 31 and Save \$25!**

■ \$199 ICMA Members

■ \$299 Non members

**Beginning September 1**

■ \$224 ICMA Members

■ \$324 Non members

You and your staff don't have to miss out on the premier professional development event just because of tight budgets and travel restrictions! Virtual conference registration lets you and your staff view the live sessions over the Internet, in one conference room.

Go to [http://icma.org/en/conference/virtual\\_conference](http://icma.org/en/conference/virtual_conference) for more information.

## Ethics, continued from page 2

market and several reductions in the asking price, their house is still unsold. In fact, they can't even rent it. The spouse can't unload her business either.

Between the rent, mortgage, and cost of traveling to see each other, their personal savings are quickly diminishing. Filing for personal bankruptcy is an option they are discussing. Adding to the financial stress is the personal stress of being apart far longer than planned.

When the manager accepted the position, he made a verbal commitment to the city council to stay for five years. He meant it. He and his spouse were truly looking forward to enjoying the amenities of mountain living. On the professional side, he had enjoyed long tenures in his previous positions and knew that was a key to his success.

With no foreseeable end to his financial and personal woes, though, the manager is thinking about an exit strategy. A city manager position is open in another state. It's a desirable com-

munity, and it also enjoys a lower cost of living. By taking that position, he could reduce at least some portion of his expenses. His spouse's business opportunities potentially would be better, too.

But leaving comes at the added price of breaking his word. What's more important here? Keeping his ethical commitment or avoiding personal financial disaster?

The guideline on tenure in the ICMA Code of Ethics recommends a minimum of two years in order to render a professional service. One exception to the requirement is for unforeseeable, severe personal problems.

The economic crisis was certainly an unforeseeable situation for most of us. But it is also a universal situation, like the hurricane or other natural disaster that devastates a community and that affects everyone to varying degrees. In the wake of such an event, would it be okay for the manager to walk away from a professional obligation to the community to attend first to the

damage or even loss of the manager's home?

It's an extraordinarily difficult choice to make. Yet many local government leaders in the midst of a disaster do put duty first. They remain on the job to make sure that the recovery plan for the community is properly executed. Only afterward do they turn their focus to the personal recovery effort.

In the end, the manager decided to honor his commitment and put duty first. On the personal side, he decided to explore every opportunity to avoid financial disaster, including talking with the city council about options for assistance.

—Martha Perego  
ICMA Ethics Director  
Washington, D.C.  
[mperego@icma.org](mailto:mperego@icma.org)