

The Administrator

A PUBLICATION OF THE NORTH CAROLINA CITY AND COUNTY MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION

FEBRUARY 2011, ISSUE 2

Association still strong, more than 50 years in

More than 400 people descended on the Sheraton Imperial RTP in Durham in early February to celebrate a milestone of the N.C. City/County Management Association (NCCCMA): the association's 50th annual Winter Seminar.

Municipal managers and county managers once had their own respective associations, and the two merged to form NCCCMA in 1964; however, the UNC-Chapel Hill School of Government (then the Institute of Government) began hosting joint winter seminars of the two organizations, beginning in 1961. Thus the reason for the half-century celebration.

Not surprisingly, it was a chance for reflection and honoring the past. An article from the 1964 issue of *Popular Government* was distributed. That article describes the formation of the joint city-county association: "North Carolina posted another first on May 2 and 3 when the North Carolina City and County Managers Association was organized at a meeting of city and county managers at Wrightsville Beach. The merger of city and county managers is a successor to the North Carolina City Managers Association." The first president of the association of William Veeder, Charlotte city manager, with Mecklenburg County Manager J. Harry Weatherly serving as vice president. The article goes on to say that the conference was attended by about 50 city and 10 county managers.

The 2011 seminar reflected on that heritage and history. A special 50th anniversary reception was held on Thursday, February 3, and retired Farmville Town Manager Richard Hicks and retired Forsyth County Manager Graham Pervier entertained the audience at the President's Luncheon with charming stories



Among those named NCCCMA Life Members were (from l-r): Steve Raper, Jim Hipp, Keith Langdon, Randall Billings, Ed Humphries, Doug Bean, Michael Morgan, Joe Huffman and Sam Noble.

about their years in local government administration. In addition, a new slate of Life Members (pictured above) were added to the growing role. New Life Members are: D. Kelly Almond, Doug Bean, Randall Billings, Kathryn Q. Billings, Jim Hipp, Ed Humphries, Keith Langdon, Gary McConkey, Michael Morgan, Sam Noble, Juanita Pilgrim, Steve Raper, Joe Huffman and Patricia Weaver.

Also, Honorary Membership was awarded to retired N.C. Association of County Commissioners General Counsel Jim Blackburn and Appalachian State University MPA Director Dr. Marvin Hoffman. The association also honored Hoffman by naming the \$2,500 MPA scholarship to the University of North Carolina-Greensboro in his honor.

As always, there was a business element to the seminar, as attendees learned about the latest trends in technology, citizens academies, branding, human services and much more.

The opening keynote address of the seminar, on February 2, touched on the changing political climate in the state and in America. Political strategists Brad Crone and Paul Shumaker explained recent elections and looked ahead to 2012 and beyond. Crone warned that the state's need to cut spending will "run downhill" and "will impact your budgets, folks."

"We have to declare war on the deficit, said

Continued on page 3

Professional fouls: As serious as illegal conduct?

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.

You are putting me in the same category as those criminals? Those embezzlers? Sex offenders? Thieves? Unbelievable!!"

This is a common reaction to hearing the news that you are subject to a public censure for conduct that violated the ICMA Code of Ethics. The conduct didn't violate any law. But the ICMA Committee on Professional Conduct, having reviewed all the facts and the member's response, concluded that, because what you did was such a serious ethical breach of the profession's standards, ICMA needs to issue a public statement.

What professional foul could be so bad that it warrants the same censure as illegal conduct? Is there really such a thing? And why go public? Under what circumstances is such a serious response justified?

This is not an esoteric debate for the ICMA Committee on Professional Conduct; it is front and center in committee deliberations of complaints filed against members.

Political Foul

Consider the recent case of the city manager who agreed to join the ticket of a candidate seeking the governorship.

The city manager didn't resign from his position in order to run. In responding to the ethics complaint, the manager questioned how his conduct could be wrong given that his entire city council not only supported his candidacy but agreed to amend his agreement so that he could work part-time in order to free up time for campaigning, plus he could return to his full-time position if unsuccessful.

Even some colleagues privately supported the effort in the hopes that his financial expertise and knowledge of state and local government would be beneficial to local governments as they sought to bring about change in financial policy at the state level. Given this support, what rationale does ICMA have for objecting?

In making the recommendation for public censure, which was upheld by the ICMA Executive Board, the committee noted that political neutrality is a hallmark of the local government profession. It's a line in the sand that professionals shall not cross.

The principle dates back to that very first code that said no city manager should play an active role in politics. Times have certainly



changed. But the challenges of the current political environment, coupled with the lack of clarity in the public's mind about the role of professional managers, lend more, not less, credence to the principle of political neutrality.

Do you want to be viewed and function as that independent, qualified, and objective source of advice on policy and operational matters? Such a status happens only when professional local government managers stay out of politics.

The last critical detail in this case was the fact that the city manager announced his candidacy days before the council took an official vote to grant his leave. This timeline certainly made it look like the votes had been locked in before the public knew about or could consider the merits of the proposal. The behind-the-scenes negotiations that evidently took place in this case violated the profession's commitment to transparency.

Integrity Foul Out

If political neutrality is one key hallmark of
Continued on page 3

Calendar of Events

NCCCMA Summer Seminar

June 23-25, 2011
Sea Trail
Brunswick County

NACo Annual Conference

July 15-19, 2011
Oregon Convention Center
Multnomah County, Ore.

NCACC Annual Conference

August 18-21, 2011
Embassy Suites Hotel &
Concord Convention Center
Cabarrus County

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@ncclm.org.



Winter Seminar, continued from page 2

Shumaker. "If we don't face it now, it will be a bigger, bigger problem five or six years later."

Both gentlemen predict even more spending on political campaigns -- and possibly more aggressive campaigns.

Said Crone about the 2012 elections: "Buckle your seatbelts."

Karl Smith with the School of Government brought, perhaps, better news on the state of the economy.

"I think things will get better," said Smith, "especially for local governments."

Economic signals look to solid growth in the retail sector and in revenue. The gross national product has shrunk in recent years to historic proportions, but has recently grown.

During the seminar's business meeting, Retirement Committee Chair Grant Goings, Wilson city manager, stated that "the future is very uncertain" with regards to the state and local government retirement system. The "relative" good news, Goings said, was the retirement systems' boards recommended a .53 percent adjustment to the employer contribution rate for FY 11-12. Goings noted, however, that the Future of the Retirement Committee rec-



NCCCMA once again conferred scholarships to students at the public MPA programs in the state. Scholarship winners were: Lillie Ward, Appalachian State University; Amanda B. McGhee, East Carolina University; Justin Lanier Sutton, N.C. Central University; Stephanie Kapera, N.C. State University; Emily Leik, UNC-Chapel Hill; Ame Esterline, UNC-Charlotte; Jai H. Kim, UNC-Greensboro; Kevin C. McCall, UNC-Wilmington; and Paige E. Roberson, Western Carolina University.

ommended that future employees be given a choice in a defined benefit or defined contribution arrangement, and to set the minimum unreduced retirement age at 55 for future hires.

Said Goings: "We don't want to see separate classes of employees. We value that defined benefit system." He also noted that "all of you are going to have to be ad-hoc members of the (NCCCMA) Retirement Committee ... and

champions for the cause."

And in other news, Steve Wyatt, chair of the Membership Support committee, honored former manager Richard Self, now with the State Energy Office, with an award for putting NCCCA Members in Transition to work -- even temporarily -- in his office while they look for permanent jobs.

Ethics, continued from page 2

the local government profession, the other must certainly be the integrity of one's word. It's disheartening to see the number of instances in recent years when ICMA members agreed to accept a position but then failed to keep their commitments.

They don't show up for work, opting to either remain in their current positions or accept a preferred offer elsewhere. Or they take the position but fail to serve the recommended two-year tenure. And, to be clear, these are not instances of the governing body failing to uphold its end of the bargain.

Some of these cases received more media coverage than others, given the profile of the community. That said, the impact is extraordinary, regardless of size or wealth of the organi-

zation or the incident's notoriety. Elected leadership looks inept, the public can be left wondering about the value of recruiting outside the community, and the organization spends critical time in a holding pattern.

One community hiring its first manager was highly disappointed when the individual withdrew without any explanation and then accepted a position at a higher salary in another city. This could have led the community to abandon all plans for bringing professional management to the organization. Under the mayor's leadership, the community stayed the course, restarted the search process, and eventually recruited a manager.

For Violations, There Are Consequences

Every true profession has a set of core, defining, and fundamental principles. They are nonnegotiable. Violate the principles and expect consequences. After all, there is little point in having a code of ethics for the profession if the profession is reluctant about speaking out when the conduct of its members fails to adhere to the highest standards.

—Martha Perego
ICMA Ethics Director
Washington, D.C.
mperego@icma.org