

The Administrator

A PUBLICATION OF THE NORTH CAROLINA CITY AND COUNTY MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION

MARCH 2012, ISSUE 3

N.C. local governments mourn the loss of Blackburn

Former N.C. Association of County Commissioners (NCACC) General Counsel Jim Blackburn died suddenly March 5 while visiting with family in Charlotte. Blackburn worked with the NCACC for 26 years before retiring in December 2010.

During his nearly three decades with the NCACC, Blackburn was often rated among the most effective lobbyists by the North Carolina Center for Public Policy Research. In April 2011, Blackburn received the Grainger Barrett Award for Excellence, given by the Government and Public Sector Section of the N.C. Bar Association. He also received the Order of the Long Leaf Pine from Governor Beverly Perdue in 2011 to honor his long career in public service.

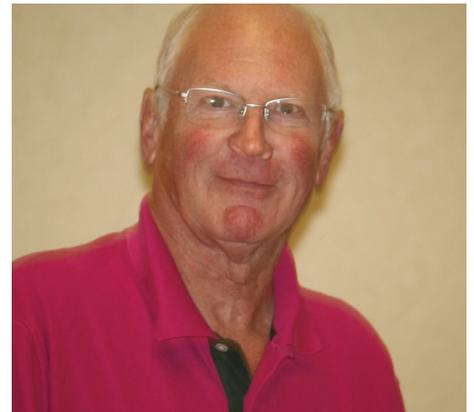
While with the NCACC, Blackburn played an integral role in convincing the General Assembly to take the Medicaid burden off counties in 2007, and he was also instrumental in helping the Association begin its Risk

Management Pools in 1985.

After graduating from Duke Law School in 1980, Blackburn landed a job with the General Assembly's Research Division. While at the General Assembly, Blackburn worked with NCACC General Counsel Butch Gunnells and Executive Director Ron Aycock on several issues. When Gunnells took another job and Aycock was promoted to executive director, Blackburn applied and was selected to be the NCACC's next staff counsel in December 1984.

Blackburn was also active in the International Municipal Lawyers Association and provided guidance and leadership to the N.C. County Attorneys Association for many years.

A native of Pennsylvania, Blackburn arrived in North Carolina in 1971 with the U.S. Army when he was stationed at Fort Bragg. He graduated from Princeton University with a B.A. in English. He received his Master's in Public



Blackburn accepted Honorary Membership in the N.C. City & County Management Association during the 2011 Summer Seminar at Sea Trail.

Administration from N.C. State University and a law degree from Duke University.

He is survived by his wife of 37 years, Cyndy, and their three adult children Natalie, Sarah and Jamie.

Information courtesy of CountyLines, the publication of the NCACC.

Hiatt named Rotarian of the Year

Concord City Manager Brian Hiatt, first vice president of the N.C. City & County Management Association, was recently honored by the Concord Rotary Club as Rotarian of the Year for 2012.

Hiatt was presented the award at the club's March 14 meeting, after being selected by his peers within the organization for the collective work he does both in the community and with the club. The award is presented to a Rotarian who has exemplified "Service Above Self" in daily life both as a Rotarian and a member of

the community.

"I am extremely honored," Hiatt told the *Cabarrus Business Magazine*. "I have been a Rotarian for almost 25 years and have always been amazed by the work of both individual clubs on a community level and the Rotary organization around the world."

Hiatt has been a member of the Concord Rotary Club since 1998, and is a past-president and Paul Harris Fellow. He is also a past-presi-



dent of the Lake Hickory Rotary Club.

Hiatt serves as president of the Academic Learning Center and is on the board of directors for the Cabarrus Economic Development Corporation and the Water and Sewer Authority of Cabarrus County. He is a past-president of the United Way of Cabarrus County board of directors, and served as the chairman of the United Way's Cabarrus campaign in 2002. He is also a former board member of Hospice of Cabarrus County.

Hiatt has served as city manager since 1998. He came to Concord from Hickory, where he served as assistant city manager for more than 10 years.

Good conduct: Is there an app for that?

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.

We look to technology to fix complex issues all the time. The results are often workable solutions for even the extremely challenging issues. And simple solutions that we never even desired but now couldn't do without because they make life easier. So why not a technology solution for critical needs facing all organizations: getting individuals to make good ethical choices?

Downloaded to the smartphones of staff members and local government officials, an ethics app could offer caution on today's misstep to avoid, as well as advice on common everyday issues. Customized for the user, it would have both the organization's code of conduct and their profession's standards.

It could also work as a personal assistant, helping a person to track progress toward the goal of being a more ethical person. It's a place where you could record on a daily basis—with lots of security of course—your good and not so good deeds. Like that popular dieter's site, you would earn or lose "points" based on your behavior.

The points concept needs work because unlike dieting, a good deed doesn't always erase a bad one. But still writing down what you are actually eating, doing, and so forth is an effective behavior modification strategy.

And at the heart of it all, it is behavior that needs to change. And it is ours. In some cases, it's true that unethical conduct is more of a knowledge gap than a behavioral lapse. Unfortunately, there are people working in organizations or elected to public office who don't know right from wrong, ethical from unethical. ...

Often, the issue really comes down to our behavior. We know intellectually what the right thing to do is, but we just don't do it. Why? In the context of the Penn State scandal last fall, columnist David Brooks wrote, "People are really good at self-deception. We attend to the facts we like and suppress the ones we don't. We inflate our own virtues and predict we will behave more nobly than we actually do."

For support of his position, he looked to the authors of the Blind Spot, Max H. Bazerman and Ann E. Tenbrunsel, who noted "When it comes time to make a decision, our thoughts are dominated by thoughts of how we want to behave;



thoughts of how we should behave disappear."

How do we change behavior? We need to create organizational cultures that encourage individuals to make ethical choices and then support them when they do. There are a number of tactics that can be used, but they need to be part of an overall strategy and not used as one offs. Here they are:

- Set clear professional and organizational standards.
- Hold individuals accountable for their conduct with an objective review process. Talk about ethical issues to raise awareness.
- Engage in creative, fun, and formal training that not only builds awareness but gives individuals practical guidance about what to do when faced with an ethical problem.
- Give sound advice to those who need it.
- Make asking for help acceptable in the culture.
- Provide a safe place for anyone to report wrongdoing.

The ethics app has some promise but just as one tool in the box. What is your plan to create and support an ethical workplace?

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

Calendar of Events

2012 NCCMA Summer Seminar
 June 28-30, 2012
 Asheville Renaissance
 Register at NCManagers.org

2012 NAACC Annual Conference
 August 16-19, 2012
 Raleigh Convention Center
 Raleigh/Wake County

2012 NCLM Annual Conference
 October 21-23, 2012
 Charlotte 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.



Coping with Crisis: Report looks at how local governments are reinventing themselves

UNC-Chapel Hill School of Government's Carl Stenberg has authored a report (available as a pdf) for the International City/County Management Association (ICMA) called *Coping with Crisis: How Are Local Governments Reinventing Themselves in the Wake of the Great Recession?*

As the economic recession deepens, the nation's local governments have moved beyond a "business as usual" approach to cutting costs and improving efficiency. The premise for this paper is that America's cities, towns, and counties are currently in the process of reinventing themselves now that the easy measures have

been adopted. This paper examines the scope of strategies considered by local governments using keywords from daily ICMA News Briefings from April 15, 2009 to April 15, 2011. According to the results of the research:

- The majority of proposals were aimed at cutting expenditures rather than raising revenue.
- Elected officials are examining the provision of core local services, but remain reluctant to enter into collaborative arrangements with other jurisdictions or private service providers.
- Most of the responses collected were conventional and incremental as opposed to



bold, innovative strategies, though this could change in the coming years.

Go to ICMA.org for more information.

The power of PELA

In the current economic environment, local governments need strong leaders who apply innovative problem-solving approaches that build external partnerships across jurisdictions and sectors. The Public Executive Leadership Academy (PELA) is an engaging and intensive executive training program that offers public executives the opportunity to learn more about themselves as leaders and to gain the skills necessary to lead and manage change in their communities.

Lane Bailey, city manager in Lenoir, attended PELA in 2008. "In addition to developing the whole person," he says, "PELA has a community problem-solving component that makes the program unique. The PELA faculty and staff are second to none." Eddie Smith, deputy city manager of Kannapolis, agrees. "PELA provided me with unparalleled access to national speakers and practitioners, such as John Nalbandian of the University of Kansas," he says. "His anecdotes are so real and familiar to ours that it makes you excited about working for our communities and improving everyday life."

PELA participants work on a personal leadership development plan, incorporating feedback from faculty, colleagues, and community stakeholders. In addition, participants choose a

"real world" project for leading community or regional change and develop a plan for carrying it out. This project will integrate and apply the leadership knowledge and skills developed during PELA. When Eddie Smith attended PELA in 2005, he worked on a plan to create a regional sewer system in Yadkin Valley. The idea was brought to fruition a few years later with the creation of the Yadkin Valley Sewer Authority.

Who should attend?

PELA is designed for public leaders with at least five to seven years of progressively responsible management experience:

- New and veteran municipal and county managers who want to hone their leadership and collaboration skills
- Assistant managers and department heads who currently play significant external roles in their community

Why should you attend PELA?

You will leave PELA better able to

- Create a framework for thinking about your relationship with your governing board and staff
- Develop tools to diagnose problems and create solutions within your community and your organization
- Exchange ideas with experienced faculty from UNC-Chapel Hill and national organizations, and with a diverse group of your peers

- Work on a personal leadership development plan

What will PELA cost?

The course fee is \$4,000 and may be paid over two fiscal years. Lodging, most meals, and instructional materials are included. Participants will pay their own travel expenses. North Carolina City & County Management Association (NCCMA) members and UNC-Chapel Hill Master of Public Administration alumni will receive a \$500 tuition discount. A limited number of scholarships are also available through Local Government Federal Credit Union.

Application

A select group of up to 30 participants will be admitted. Application deadline is May 1. Apply online at www.pela.unc.edu. Applicants will be notified by May 15 regarding admission.

For more information

For additional information, contact Lisa Sheffield, program manager, at sheffield@sog.unc.edu or 919.962.3464, or Carl Stenberg, PELA director, at stenberg@sog.unc.edu or 919.962.2377. The application, program agenda, list of PELA faculty, and hotel information can be found at www.pela.unc.edu.