

# The Administrator

A PUBLICATION OF THE NORTH CAROLINA CITY AND COUNTY MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION

NOVEMBER 2011, ISSUE 11

## Attend the Value of Public Service forum - for free

The Alliance for Innovation is pleased to invite members of the N.C. City & County Management Association (NCCCMA) to the Value of Public Service Manager's Forum Webinar on November 30, 2011. As a year-end gift to our members and state affiliate partners, we bring this excellent webinar to you FREE of charge.

We find ourselves today working in an era of dynamic global economics, stormy political discourse and facing yet another crisis in confidence in our public institutions. Memories of 9-11 sacrifices of public servants have faded as we debate the causes of our national afflictions, diminished financial security and face the current rhetoric frequently condemning the public sector.

That said, many of our communities have a brighter economic future and are kinder and gentler places because of the personal investment and labor of public employees. Many of our public employees start every day with the



well-being of the entire community in mind.

We cannot forget that what public employees do is essential to the functioning of our communities and the well fare of our citizenry. Working hard, treating elected officials, peers and citizens with respect and civility, allows our trusted local leaders to find answers to any question and respond to any challenge our communities face. Local government employees bring honor to the profession and can help attract a new generation to public service.

Join us as we say thank you to our local public servants during the Value of Public Service in a Manager's Forum webinar. Led by Randall Reid, county manager, Alachua County, Fla., we interview local government professionals as we take an in depth look at:

- A Leader's Response to Tough Times

for Public Servants – Katy Simon, county manager, Washoe County, Nevada

- How Military Service Translates to Local Government – Bill Horne, city manager, Clearwater, Fla.

- Reshaping the Local Government Organization – Kevin Bruny, chief learning officer, Chesterfield County, Va.

- The Future of Public Service: A Look Through the Millennials Looking Glass – Daniel Ortiz-Hernandez, management analyst, Casa Grande, Ariz.

This is an opportunity for us to celebrate those who stay, because what you do is noble work ... work with dignity ... work with integrity. What other job can one name that provides the chance to impact thousands of people's lives for the good on a daily basis? Only in public service do you get to show up every single day, challenged to be your best for other people in

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## Don't forget to nominate names for board

It is time again to submit names of those city and county managers and assistants whom you believe would be good candidates for N.C. City & County Management Association director spots.

The NCCCMA Nominating Committee must present a slate of candidates for consideration to the board and to the membership at the winter seminar. The report will need to be presented during seminar's opening session on Wednesday, February 1, 2012, at the Sheraton Imperial in Research Triangle Park/Durham County. The committee will present its slate of

officers to the membership during the opening session and again during the business meeting. The vote will occur during the business meeting, with the successful candidates to be sworn in at the business meeting of the summer conference, which this year will be held June 28-30 at the Asheville Renaissance

The Nominating Committee is comprised of Immediate Past President Lane Bailey, Lenoir town manager; past presidents Mike Dula, Elon town manager; and David Cooke, Wake County manager.

The committee is looking to recommend three directors to serve a two-year term expiring in June 2014. The nominees should represent two municipalities and one county. The committee is also looking for someone to fill the slot of Secretary/Treasurer and Second Vice President.

Please submit the names to the nominating committee members. Bailey may be reached at [lbailey@ci.lenoir.nc.us](mailto:lbailey@ci.lenoir.nc.us); Dula may be reached at [mdula@ci.elon.nc.us](mailto:mdula@ci.elon.nc.us); Cooke may be reached at [dcooke@co.wake.nc.us](mailto:dcooke@co.wake.nc.us).

# Tan, rested and running

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The 2012 presidential campaign season is sure to be competitive and combative given the partisan climate, battleground rhetoric, and tough issues facing the country. The race is off to an early start as committed candidates and those testing the waters toured Iowa and other key battlegrounds this summer.

Public servants at all levels have a keen personal as well as professional interest in the outcomes of the elections. For professionals managing our cities and counties, the challenge is to be well informed about the candidates' positions and the potential impact on issues while also remaining politically neutral. The combined effort of being engaged and well informed can make it difficult to stay above the fray.

Political neutrality is a foundational principle of the profession. To serve the public and members of the governing body equally, we remove ourselves from the larger democratic process of selecting elected leaders, and we limit our participation to voting. In reality, that means following the guideline of the ICMA Code of Ethics on elections:

Members share with their fellow citizens the right and responsibility to vote and to voice their opinion on public issues. However, in order not to impair their effectiveness on behalf of the local governments they serve, they shall not participate in political activities to support the candidacy of individuals running for any city, county, special district, school, state, or federal offices. Specifically, they shall not endorse candidates, make financial contributions, sign or circulate petitions, or participate in fund-raising activities for individuals seeking or holding elected office.

Seems clear and direct—unless you consider all the nuances of the campaign process.

### Issue Briefing or Party Fundraiser?

The local chapter of the dominant political party in town is hosting a presentation by a nationally known and hugely successful political consultant. Marketed as a briefing on national issues, the ticketed event is attracting lots of attention. The mayor and most of city council plan to attend and are encouraging the city manager to do so as well.

From the mayor's perspective, it is important for the manager to be well informed. Since all the elected officials are from this party, no one on council will take issue with the manager's attendance. The manager, who has presented on city issues at party meetings during the off-



season, is hesitant about attending this event.

A ticketed event sponsored by a political party during a campaign season is probably a fundraiser designed to support the party's candidates and mission. It is wise to double check first, but, if confirmed, the manager must decline. Even attending if someone else pays for the ticket would not be appropriate because the event is supporting a slate of candidates.

### The Debate

A private college in the city has been selected as the venue for one of the Republican Party debates between the president and his challengers. City police and staff will assist with the logistics. The mayor, a Republican, has been invited to open the event. The assistant city manager is tasked with coordinating the city's logistical efforts. She obviously will be granted access to the event and perhaps even offered a seat on the dais, if desired.

The assistant city manager, cognizant of her commitment to political neutrality, is concerned

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## Calendar of Events

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

**2012 NCCCMA Summer Seminar**  
June 28-30, 2012  
Asheville Renaissance

**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.



## Transforming Local Government Conference to be held in April

Can you imagine what the future holds for local government? While it's hard to gain full insight into what the future holds, what we do know is that local communities are changing. This change is happening as a result of demographic swings, economics, and shifts in the political landscape. Success into the future for a local government organization will be defined by an ability to adapt, learn and foster creative ideas to meet the challenges of tomorrow.

The 2012 Transforming Local Government

(TLG) Conference will be presented by the Alliance for Innovation and co-hosted by the University of Kansas School of Public Administration, KACM, MCMA, and Kansas City Metro Area Governments. By combining TLG and the Annual Conferences for KACM and MCMA, this joint conference will allow participants to gaze through the looking glass to see and hear those stories of innovation. Through innovative case study sessions, conference attendees will take an in-depth look at

the ingenuity and creativity of successful government programs. During provocative keynote sessions, you'll be inspired to tap into new energy and a sense of reinforced commitment to your work.

TLG attracts participation from local governments that are deliberately seeking new and innovative ways to connect people, information and ideas that support their efforts to be the best communities in which to live, work, and prosper. The TLG conference is recognized for its dynamic content that encourages freethinking and fosters unprecedented ideas. The conference experience is designed to promote team building and a sense of camaraderie.

Join us in Kansas City, MO April 18-20, 2012 to dive deep into the innovative practices that are emerging from the local government industry.

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every single decision, every single action, every single hour.

This is a LIVE Webinar event. Webinar Times: 1:00PM ET – 2:00PM ET, 12:00PM CT – 1:00PM CT, 11:00AM MT – 12:00AM MT, 10:00AM PT – 11:00AM PT.

Register at [www.transformgov.org](http://www.transformgov.org). When registering, please indicate your Alliance

Affiliate Organization.

NCCMA and the Alliance for Innovation are partnered in efforts to provide members of both organizations exposure to national innovations along with sharing the innovative initiatives and projects of NCCMA local governments.

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that her obligation to be on-site during the event creates an ethical issue. Would her attendance be misconstrued as supporting Republican Party candidates? Should she just stay in the parking lot during the debate?

Even though this debate is sponsored by and is solely between members of the same party, ICMA members are not precluded from attending (assuming it's a true debate and not a fundraiser). Debates are certainly part of the campaign process, but they also serve the purpose of informing voters.

But it's nuanced. Although simply attending a debate doesn't signal support for either the party or a candidate, sitting on the dais wearing a "vote for Joe" T-shirt does.

Again, the commitment to political neutrality is not intended to deprive professionals from gathering information and insight.

### To Caucus or Not

The caucus process used in a number of states essentially requires individuals to publicly demonstrate their support for a candidate in order to register a vote in the primary. This manner of voting would appear at first consideration to violate the principle of political neutrality outlined in the ICMA Code of Ethics.

But the principle was never intended to either limit a member's right to vote or prevent it. Recall the opening principle of the guideline: "Members share with their fellow citizens the right and responsibility to vote and to voice their opinion on public issues."

ICMA members can participate in the caucus process for the purpose of registering a vote. Caucuses, probably more than any other campaign activity, raise concerns about the

subtle distinction between voting and campaigning. To be clear, it is okay to voice your vote or stand for the candidate of your choice. It is crossing the line, though, to actively rally or seek support for the candidate of your choice.

If you are concerned that attending a debate or participating in a caucus would undermine your effectiveness or create the appearance that you are not politically neutral, then it is best not to participate. It was Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart who reminded us that ethics is knowing the difference between what you have a right to do and what is right to do.

—Martha Perego  
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