

The Administrator

A PUBLICATION OF THE NORTH CAROLINA CITY AND COUNTY MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION

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Seminar to look at 'Guiding Public Service in a Changing World'

The 48th annual N.C. City & County Management Association Winter Seminar, to be held February 4-6, 2009, at the Sheraton Imperial Research Triangle Park (Durham County) will feature a theme of "GPS for Managers: Guiding Public Service in a Changing World."

You can register for the seminar at <http://www.sog.unc.edu/courses/0627/>. A block of hotel rooms will also be held until January 5.

This seminar will once again feature ICMA University workshops. One will touch on "Essential Management Skills," while the other will look at "Using the Baldrige Award in Local Government."

In addition, Newark, N.J., Mayor Cory

Booker will be the keynote speaker and David Limardi, ICMA president and Highland Park, Ill., city manager, will speak at the closing plenary session.

Concurrent sessions will include discussions of the impact of the new administrations in Washington and Raleigh on local governments, the role of local governments in emergency management, and sustainability in tough economic times. Thursday afternoon will feature a Revitalization Tour of downtown Durham culminating in a reception at the new Durham Performing Arts Center.

Once again, the winter conference will allow the chance for respective Master of Public Administration alumni groups to fellowship with

one another at breakfasts on Thursday.

The President's Luncheon that day will also allow the opportunity for some "Memorable Moments in Local Government" - always an entertaining time.

The third and final day will once again shine the light on the Public Executive Leadership Academy (PELA), as well as orientation for new managers and association members. Before Limardi delivers the closing speech there will be a presentation by David Thompson, N.C. Association of County Commissioners executive director, and Ellis Hankins, N.C. League of Municipalities executive director, on potential legislative issues that could impact local governments in the very near future.

Nominations still needed for director spots

It is time again to submit names of those city and county managers and assistant managers 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 to the membership at the winter conference, which will be held February 4-6, 2009, 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 on February 4

and again during the business meeting on February 5. The vote will occur during the business meeting, with the successful candidates to be sworn in at the business meeting of the summer conference on June 27 in New Bern/Craven County.

The Nominating Committee is comprised of Immediate Past President Randy McCaslin, High Point assistant city manager; and past presidents Charles Penny, Rocky Mount assistant city manager, and Neil Emory, recently-retired Harnett County manager.

The committee is looking to recommend

three directors to serve a two-year term expiring in June 2011. The nominees should represent two municipalities and one county. The committee is also looking for someone to fill the slot of Secretary/Treasurer (municipal member) and Second Vice President (county member).

Please submit the names to the nominating committee members. McCaslin may be reached at Randy.McCaslin@HighPointNC.gov; Penny may be reached at Charles.Penny@RockyMountNC.gov; and Emory may be reached at 107 Queensbury Ct., Dunn, NC 28334-5530 or (910) 892-5711.

'Tis the season - for gifts!

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With the holiday season approaching, there is no time like the present (no pun intended) for local government leaders to review their organization's practices and policies for accepting gifts from appreciative residents, local businesses, and vendors.

The best policies or practices should support the organization's values, help staff and officials make good judgments, communicate clear expectations to all, be uniformly and fairly applied and enforced across the organization, and, in addition, build public trust and confidence in the integrity of the staff and organization. When you have completed the organizational assessment, consider whether you are the role model for exemplary conduct.

Local governments address the challenges of gift giving and receiving in a variety of ways ranging from a pure values-based approach, which empowers the individual to make the judgment call based on shared values, to a stricter regulatory standard.

Regardless of the approach, it is always important to encourage individuals to think about appearances and how their conduct con-

tributes to an ethical culture. Just establishing a set of rules without explaining how they support good public service values won't be effective in achieving the desired conduct.

ICMA's Code of Ethics expresses a core commitment to seek no favor and offers this guidance on gifts:

Members should not directly or indirectly solicit any gift or accept or receive any gift—whether it be money, services, loan, travel, entertainment, hospitality, promise, or any other form—under the following circumstances: (1) it could be reasonably inferred or expected that the gift was intended to influence them in the performance of their official duties; or (2) the gift was intended to serve as a reward for any official action on their part. It is important that the prohibition of unsolicited gifts be limited to circumstances related to improper influence. In de minimus situations, such as meal checks, some modest maximum dollar value should be determined by the member as a guideline. The guideline is not intended to isolate members from normal social practices where gifts among friends, associates, and relatives are appropriate for certain occasions.

Advice on creating effective gift guidelines

Seek no favor.

Encourage all staff and officials to literally

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"seek no favor." Don't leverage your official position for advantage, and do not take or solicit gifts related to your official position.

Set reasonable standards.

If the policy sets a value limit on gifts, make sure that it passes the reasonable-person standard, that is, is the gift small enough that a reasonable person would assume it was not a reward or intended to gain favor?

Acknowledging the ambiguity of the reasonable-person standard, some policies set the threshold at zero and permit only token gifts of food that can be shared with others.

Help individuals make good decisions.

Creating a framework for decision making, placing value limits on gifts, and implementing a disclosure requirement can provide individuals the guidance needed when the issue isn't clear. The policy in place in the city of Phoenix, Arizona, advises employees: "That while you are the first to decide whether to accept any gift, you must recognize that others will decide if there is 'the appearance of favoritism' for your

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Calendar of Events

NCCMA 2009

Winter Conference

February 4-6, 2009

Sheraton Imperial, Research Triangle Park, Durham County

NCCMA 2009

Summer Conference

June 25-27, 2009

New Bern/Craven County

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.

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Urban Land Institute offers Charlotte workshop on sustainable development

The Urban Land Institute's Daniel Rose Center for Leadership in Land Use is sponsoring a new workshop for public officials on implementing sustainable development in their communities. These two-day workshops will be offered in metropolitan regions across the country, in partnership with ULI District Councils. The first workshops will be offered Orange County, California, January 8 & 9, 2009, and in Charlotte, January 21 & 22, 2009. The Charlotte workshop will be held at the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Government Center, Room 267, 600 East Fourth Street.

Sustainable development policies and practices are becoming a high priority for local governments. Conserving energy, reducing carbon emissions, protecting natural resources and balancing economic and social opportunities

require vision, leadership and collaboration.

This new two-day workshop will provide valuable tools and strategies for local public officials eager to learn how they can leverage more sustainable development practices in their communities.

The workshop includes definitions, measurements, case studies and group exercises, which focus on best practices and the most effective role that public officials can play in creating more sustainable communities while enhancing the quality-of-life for citizens.

What participants will learn

- New trends in public sector sustainable development programs and policies
- Emerging tools and best practices for sustainable development
- Lessons from successful programs for set-

ting goals and measuring what matters

- How private sector sustainable development can create public economic benefits
- Models for public/private leadership and collaboration
- Barriers to sustainable development practices and ways to overcome them

This workshop is open to elected and appointed officials, agency directors and staff, policy makers, planners, developers, and others.

To register, go to www.uli.org/register

For more information on the workshop, contact Marta Goldsmith, ULI senior vice president for community/education provost at marta.goldsmith@uli.org

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having accepted a gift." The policy provides a practical list of gifts — examples include Arizona Cardinals football tickets, college tournament tickets, and symphony hall performances — that an employee must declare if accepted.

Communicate broadly.

In addition to educating staff and officials about gift policies, go the extra step to make sure that residents, businesses, and vendors understand the values and policies that drive the organization. Vendors interested in doing business with the city of Tempe, Arizona, are informed of the city's no-gift policy (including no meals) when they register to do business with the city. One city manager sends thank you notes letting the gift giver know how the gift will be used (donated to the staff holiday party or homeless shelter, for example) and explains the limitations on accepting gifts. Gifts that violate

the city policy are returned with a note from the manager explaining why.

Be uniform, fair, and cognizant of roles.

A grateful public rightfully acknowledges the contributions of public safety and other frontline service providers. Leaders need to acknowledge the contributions of all who work to deliver services by establishing and enforcing a uniform policy across the organization. That said, some employees by virtue of their roles and responsibilities will be held to a higher standard.

The city of Decatur, Georgia, expresses it well. While no employee should solicit or accept any gift or gratuity from anyone who has official business with the city, "it is particularly important that managerial employees, contracting officers, inspectors, and enforcement officers guard against any relationship which might be construed as evidence of favoritism, coercion,

unfair advantage or collusion."

Lead by example.

The headlines about gifts and gratuities across all business lines and professional sectors are ugly, demoralizing, and a source of great embarrassment. We work hard to establish credibility and trust with the public by paying attention to appearances and holding ourselves accountable. If accepting a gift undermines your credibility or creates the appearance of impropriety, don't do it. Often the best strategy is to simply say, "no thank you."

Remember, there is always free cheese in a mousetrap!

—Martha Perego, ICMA-CM
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