

The Administrator

A PUBLICATION OF THE NORTH CAROLINA CITY AND COUNTY MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION

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Kay Plyler, passionate public servant, taken away too soon

Kay Plyler, the town of Matthews' assistant manager for 13 years, was killed during a terrible storm that swept through the Charlotte area in early March.

On March 8th, a tree fell on the vehicle that Plyler was driving on Charlotte's East Boulevard, killing her. She was in the car with her daughter; the two were on their way to a ball that night. The tree was toppled due to wind gusts, which reached some 40 miles an hour.

According to the *Charlotte Observer*, Plyler's daughter was taken to Carolinas Medical Center with non-life-threatening injuries.

In an email to fellow city and county managers across the state, Matthews Town Manager Hazen Blodgett wrote that during Plyler's 13 years as an assistant manager, "she

made significant contributions to the Town including acting as interim Town Manager two times. Her most recent achievement was as the 'champion' for the Town to hire a economic developer to insure continued balanced high-quality growth in Matthews. ...

"We have lost an outstanding public servant."

Blodgett's sentiments were echoed from around the state, with special attention paid to Plyler's professionalism, personality and love and devotion to her family.

"She was very easy to talk to friendly and



This photo of Plyler was taken at the NCCCMA Winter Seminar in January.

warm by nature clearly a wonderful, special person who will be deeply missed by many," wrote one manager. "She talked frequently of her friends, family and career and I feel grateful for having known her if only briefly as she was a sincere friend."

"She took her responsibilities in Matthews very seriously and was dedicated to being the best professional she possibly could," wrote another. "We will miss her and her infectious smile."

An informal memorial service was planned for Stumptown Park on March 12 in downtown Matthews. According to Blodgett, the family requested that instead of flowers that donations can be made in Plyler's name to the United States Equine Rescue League, Inc. (user1.org).

SEI scholarship applications due May 16

The membership of the North Carolina City and County Management Association (NCCCMA) has been authorized to award three \$2,500 grants in support of member participation in the Senior Executive Institute (SEI) of the University of Virginia.

An application for an NCCCMA grant of \$2,500 may be filed in the form of a letter explaining how participation in SEI will contribute to your professional development. Address the letter to NCCCMA Professional Development Committee, c/o Melissa Smith, NCCCMA, P.O. Box 3069, Raleigh, N.C.

27602 or msmith@ncm.org by May 16, 2008. The Professional Development Subcommittee will review all candidate submissions and send notification of grant awards no later than May 23, 2008.

There are, however, some key factors considered in evaluating NCCCMA grant applications including:

- Membership in NCCCMA
- Membership in ICMA
- Years of public service (counted using ICMA method)
- Organization's ability to pay

• Predictable value of program to professional development of candidate

Candidates must submit an application to UVa no later than June 1, 2008. SEI will be conducted from July 20-August 1. The total cost of \$5,000 includes lodging, most meals and instructional materials.

More information may be obtained from www.ncmanagers.org, www.coopercenter.org/leadership/SEI/ or from Melanie B. Gillies, SEI Program Coordinator, at (434) 982-5512 or email: mbg4b@virginia.edu.

Ethics Q&A

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The new elected executive wants to clean house

Q The newly elected county executive has announced plans to remove the chief administrative officer (CAO) and several other management staff when he takes office. One way he intends to do this is to build a coalition with sympathetic members of the board of supervisors to reduce the salary and responsibilities of key personnel.

Although the CAO has an employment agreement and intends to contact an attorney to protect her rights under the agreement, that is not the case for the other staff. In fact, in the past the CAO had persuaded some of these staff to leave the collective bargaining units to enhance their management standing in the organization.

The CAO wonders whether she has an ethical obligation to advise the employees to seek legal counsel. The CAO has the authority to hire and fire many of these staff, but she believes her days are numbered.

A Because the county executive has made it clear he intends to remove senior staff, the CAO may offer them advice. The CAO can make it clear that she does not intend to fire them, but that she is likely to lose her own position so a new CAO may be asked to do that.

The CAO may want to limit her advice to outlining the options that are available to these employees and encouraging them to be prepared should they be pressed to leave.

Managers caught in service agreement differences

Q Two cities have been working toward a joint service agreement to share purchasing expertise. For several years, the two cities have successfully worked together on a shared snowplowing service, and the elected leadership had been supportive of exploring new partnerships for shared services.

The city manager in one community works for elected officials who are enthusiastic about pursuing this strategy as a way to reduce costs and maintain services. The city council in the other community, however, turned over in the most recent election and now is split on the matter.

The manager who works for the supportive city council is considering whether to attend a council meeting in the community that has become hesitant about expanding the partnership. His purpose in attending the meeting would be to show support for the project and

answer questions. Are there ethical issues regarding his participation in the meeting?

A The city manager is wise to consider his relationship with his colleague in the neighboring jurisdiction. First, the manager should be sure that his elected officials concur that it would be a good idea to have a representative at the meeting and that the city manager is the best choice.

Second, if the city manager decides to attend the meeting, he should let his colleague know in advance. If his council has asked him to make a public statement, he should let that be known and give his colleague a copy of the statement in advance, ideally signed by the mayor.

Or, if the city council has asked that he be present in case there are questions, he can let his colleague know that he will be sitting in the back of the room. At the meeting, he also should make it clear that his only reason for attending is to represent the city council he serves.

Tenet 2 of the ICMA Code of Ethics reminds members that whenever they advise and respond to inquiries from elected or appointed officials of other local governments, they should inform the administrators of those communities.

To read more ICMA ethics advice on political activity, go to <http://icma.org>, click on "ethics," and select the ethics resource pages.

—Elizabeth Kellar
Deputy Director
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Washington, D.C.
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Calendar of Events

NCCMA Summer Conference
June 19-21, 2008
Crowne Plaza
Asheville/Buncombe County

ICMA Annual Conference
September 21-24, 2008
Richmond, Virginia

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.



Assistant manager nominations due May 30

In 2001, the Executive Committee of the North Carolina City and County Management Association (NCCCMA) authorized the annual recognition of one or more Outstanding Assistant Managers from our member jurisdictions. Assistant managers play important roles in the operation of local governments, including carrying out, in some instances, the duties of the manager. Many of the members of the NCCCMA are current or former

assistants, or have assistants under their direction.

NCCCMA members are encouraged to submit deserving assistants for consideration. Nominees can be longtime assistants or outstanding newcomers to the profession.

A panel will review the nominations and select the recipient. The award will be announced and presented at the NCCCMA

Business Meeting on Saturday, June 21, 2008.

If you wish to nominate an assistant manager for consideration for this award, please complete the nomination form (available at www.ncmanagers.org and also previously mailed out to the membership) and return via fax or email to Melissa Smith at 919-715-1900 (fax) or msmith@ncm.org by May 30th, 2008.

2008-09 NCCCMA Committee Volunteer Form

We are in the process of seeking volunteers to serve on NCCCMA's committees for 2008-09. Please complete this form and return it by **May 16, 2008** if you are interested in serving on a committee of the North Carolina City and County Management Association. (*Form also at ncmanagers.org*)

Name _____

Unit of Government _____

Mailing Address _____

Work Phone _____ Fax _____

Email Address _____

Please indicate any NCCCMA committee(s) you currently serve on _____

Please select a committee you would like to serve on in 2008-09.

- Civic Education Project Committee
- Membership Support Committee
- Sustaining Membership/ICMA Relations Committee
- Program/Conference Committee
- Professional Development Committee
- Retirement Committee
- Collaboration with MPA Programs Committee
- Professional Conduct Committee

Please complete this form and return via fax to 919.715.1900, attention Yolanda Hart, by May 16, 2008.