

THE ADMINISTRATOR

CHOCK FULL WINTER SEMINAR RIGHT AROUND THE CORNER

Conference to take place Jan. 28-30 with registration opening soon.

Before you know it, 2025 will come to a close, meaning that the N.C. City & County Management Association (NCCCMA)'s 2026 Winter Seminar will be close behind. The NCCCMA Winter Seminar will take place at the Benton Convention Center in Winston-Salem, January 28-30, 2026.

Please note that seminar registration and hotel reservations will open during the week of December 1. Members will receive an email as soon as registration and hotel room blocks are open, so keep an eye out for that.

The Winter Seminar will get started with the always-popular – *and competitive!* – NCCCMA Tobacco Road Classic Basketball Tournament on the morning of January 28 at Hanes Hosiery Community Center. Wednesday's events also include self-guided tours to appreciate Winston-Salem's public art, New Members and New Managers orientation, and a host of concurrent sessions.

Wednesday will also include a keynote presentation by **Doug Middleton**, a former player in the National Football League and mental health advocate who also just so happened to have played college football at Appalachian State University, where he also earned his Master's in Public Administration. In addition, Middleton is no stranger to the NCCCMA Winter Seminar as he attended the event as a student! Middleton, owner of Dream Yoga and Wellness LLC, will touch on how public leaders often shoulder invisible weight, political pressure, community expectations, and the emotional toll of leading

through uncertainty. Drawing parallels between the mental demands of professional sports and public service, Middleton will explore how resilience, vulnerability, and purpose-driven leadership can help managers stay grounded while serving their communities. Attendees will walk away with practical tools for protecting their mental health, modeling empathy, and creating a culture of well-being within their organizations.



Networking is always a major draw for the NCCCMA seminars. This year's event will once again host a general networking reception on Wednesday evening; however, this year will also offer a Deputy & Assistant Manager Reception at the same time (4:45-6:00 p.m.). If you are a deputy or assistant manager, this is your chance to meet peers, connect, share experiences, and build relationships with colleagues who understand the unique challenges and opportunities of your role. In addition to networking, we want to hear from you! Come prepared to share your ideas and help us strengthen the Association's commitment to help you serve in your role.

And that's just Wednesday of the Seminar! Be on the lookout for registration and hotel information, as well as more information about the rest of the seminar agenda as it becomes available and finalized.

MEET AN EMERGING MANAGER

Spotlight on Kevin Webb.

This month's "Emerging Manager Spotlight" highlights Kevin Webb, Planning Technician for Mills River.

Birthplace: Fort Myers, Fla.

Current job and location: Planning Technician, Town of Mills River.

Favorite hobby: Trout fishing.

What is your go-to book recommendation and why? I love *A Land Remembered* by Patrick D. Smith because of my interest in Old Florida history, particularly the pioneer days of "Cracker" Florida. Traditionally, a Florida Cracker refers to a cattleman from Florida or South Georgia, and the term comes from the cracking sound of cattle-drovers' whips.

I grew up in Sebring, Florida, in south-central Florida, where traces of Old Florida are still evident. Orange groves are still present for miles, though the citrus industry has faced significant challenges from Greening Disease and development pressures.

Why did you join the Association? I joined NCCCMA on the recommendation of a supervisor, who also suggested that I enroll in the mentorship program. Participating in the mentorship program has been highly beneficial to my professional development, providing guidance and insights that are helping me achieve my career goal of becoming a local government manager.

What does public service leadership mean to you? Public service leadership, to me,

encompasses many qualities, but my top three most important attributes are:

1. **Integrity** – Always act honestly and ethically, even under pressure. Upholding integrity builds trust and ensures decisions are guided by principles rather than convenience or external influence.
2. **Inclusiveness** – When making decisions for the public good, focus on equity, fairness, and inclusivity. Everyone deserves a voice in the decision-making process, as long as it is respectful and aimed at contributing to the common good of the community.
3. **Adaptability and Resilience** – A strong public service leader can navigate change and uncertainty, especially during crises. They respond effectively to challenges while remaining focused on the public good, learn from mistakes, and take accountability for their actions.



What do you think is the most pressing issue the next generation of managers will have to face? Honestly, I believe the most pressing issue for the next generation of managers is adapting to constant change—whether it comes from policy shifts, economic fluctuations, technological advancements, or evolving cultural norms. Effective managers must respond swiftly and strategically, ensuring that their actions serve the public good while maintaining fairness, inclusivity, and long-term impact.

NCCCMA AWARDS RECOGNITIONS TWEAKED AND EXPANDED

Manager of the Year Award will now go to four individuals.

Some exciting changes are coming to how the N.C. City & County Management Association (NCCCMA) recognizes well-deserving members.

The NCCCMA's Executive Committee has approved, at the request of the Membership Support Committee, the creation of two new Manager of the Year awards, one for large jurisdictions and one for small jurisdictions, based on population. The intention is to recognize one municipal and one county manager for each jurisdiction category, for a total of four (4) awards. In addition, the Assistant Manager of the Year award will now recognize one municipal and one county assistant manager each year, instead of recognizing only one assistant manager.

Information will be emailed to the membership with nominations due by Friday, December 19th. The recipients will be recognized during the President's Lunch at the Winter Seminar.

Here is information about the various awards, including the John Whitehurst NCCCMA Service Award, also presented at the Winter Seminar.

NC Local Government Manager of the Year (Large Organization Category)

Eligibility: Must be a City/Town Manager, County Manager, or Town Administrator in North Carolina serving in a municipality with a population of 10,001 or more, or a county with a population of 99,001 or more.

Award Criteria:

Some of areas in the nominees will be evaluated on:

- Leadership & Organizational Impact
- Innovation & Modernization
- Community & Regional Leadership
- Excellence in Governance
- Public Service Values

Nomination Requirements:

- Minimum of 2 years of service in their current role.
- Nomination memo (2 pages max) addressing how the nominee meets the criteria.
- Letter of support from an elected official.
- Resume or bio of the nominee.
- Optional: Supporting materials (news articles, performance data, project summaries, etc.)

NC Local Government Manager of the Year (Small Organization Category)

Eligibility: Must be a City/Town Manager, County Manager, or Town Administrator in North Carolina serving in a municipality with a population under 10,000 or a county with a population under 99,000.

Award Criteria:

Some of areas in the nominees will be evaluated on:

- Leadership & Management Excellence
- Innovation & Problem Solving
- Community Impact
- Resilience & Resourcefulness
- Commitment to Public Service

Nomination Requirements:

- Minimum of 2 years of service in their current role.
- Nomination memo (2 pages max) addressing how the nominee meets the criteria.
- Letter of support from an elected official.
- Resume or bio of the nominee.
- Optional: Supporting materials (news articles, performance data, project summaries, etc.)

The John E. Whitehurst Service Award

The John E. Whitehurst Service Award honors retired NCCCMA members who have demonstrated exceptional commitment to supporting NCCCMA, the local government management profession and local government managers. Unlike the NCCCMA Life Membership Award, which recognizes members upon retirement, the John E. Whitehurst Award is specifically for those who have been retired from local government management for at least two years and have gone “above and beyond” in their service to NCCCMA, the profession and the other local government managers.

Minimum Qualifications:

- A minimum of 15 years of active membership to the NCCCMA, which includes serving on NCCCMA committees and/or NCCCMA executive committee.
- The nominee must have served as a local government manager or a deputy/assistant local government manager during their time of active service to be considered.
- A strong demonstration of commitment to professional development.
- The nominee shall be retired (no longer working full-time for a unit of a local government) and continue to actively participate with the NCCCMA, on committees and Senior Advisors as an example, for a minimum of two years.
- A record of positive contributions to NCCCMA and/or the local government profession.
- The recommendation of at least three (3) members in good standing with the NCCCMA.

Nomination and Selection Process:

Nominations must be submitted to the NCCCMA Executive Director. A minimum of three letters of recommendation must accompany the nomination form. The Membership Support Committee will review the nominations and if warranted, recommend the candidate(s) to the NCCCMA Executive Committee. The Membership Support Committee may only recommend a candidate(s) with two-thirds supporting vote of the Membership Support Committee's membership. Upon receiving a recommendation from the Membership Support Committee, the Executive Committee may approve the award with a majority vote.

MPA SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS NAMED

Will be formally recognized at Winter Seminar.

The local government profession is one that constantly has its collective eyes set on the future. In that vein, the N.C. City & County Management Association (NCCCMA) annually recognizes 10 recipients of the Master's of Public Administration (MPA) scholarships for each of the public universities that offer MPA degrees across North Carolina. Each student will receive a \$3,000 scholarship and will be recognized during the President's Lunch at the NCCCMA Winter Seminar, which will be held Jan. 28-30 in Winston-Salem. Congrats to this year's 2025-26 NCCCMA MPA scholarship recipients:

Turner Zsambecky	Appalachian State University (Matt W. Williamson Scholarship)
Kendall Harr	East Carolina University (Donald B. Hayman Scholarship)
Destiny Butler	NC Central University (Gordon Whitaker Scholarship)
Seeby Jarvis-Earl	NC State University (John "Jack" Vogt Scholarship)
Evan Hopper	UNC-Chapel Hill (John Milton Gold Scholarship)
Alexis Douglas	UNC-Charlotte (Albert & Gladys Coates Scholarship)
Kellen Labonte	UNC-Greensboro (Marvin Hoffman Scholarship)
Maggie Frye	UNC-Pembroke (NCCCMA MPA Scholarship)
Oliva John	UNC-Wilmington (NCCCMA MPA Scholarship)
Masen Sherrill	Western Carolina University (Jake Wicker Scholarship)

NOMINATING COMMITTEE SLATE PUT FORTH

Directors will be voted upon by membership at Winter Seminar.

The NCCCMA Nominating Committee, comprised of Past Presidents Mary Furtado (Chair), Elton Daniels and Michael Peoples, have put forth the nominees for the 2026-27 Executive Committee. The slate of officers and directors will be voted on by the membership during the Business Meeting held during the upcoming Winter Seminar.

As per the NCCCMA constitution, additional nominations can be made during the business meeting. In addition, the nomination of Elton Daniels to serve as NCCCMA's representative on the NCLM Board of Directors for a two-year term beginning in 2026 with the opportunity to serve an additional two-year term, and the endorsement of three NCCCMA members for consideration for ICMA Regional VP are included on the report.

Nominating Committee Report
2026-2027

President Eddie Smith, Deputy City Manager – City of Kannapolis

Immediate Past President Lloyd Payne, City Manager – City of Concord

First Vice President Jodi Miller, Town Manager – Town of Garner

Second Vice President Bo Ferguson, Deputy City Manager – City of Durham

Secretary/Treasurer Jaime Laughter, County Manager – Transylvania County

Directors---Terms Expire 2027

Paige Dowling, Town Manger – Town of Sylva

Reagan Parsons, City Manager – City of Southern Pines

Jeff Repp, Town Manager – Town of St. James

Directors---Terms Expire 2028

Yaidee Fox, Assistant Manager – City of Hickory

Zach Ollis, Assistant Manager – City of Albemarle

Katherine Cathey, Manager – Person County

NCLM Board of Directors (one vacant seat to represent the Central NC Region)

Elton Daniels, Manager – City of Rocky Mount

ICMA Region E (formerly Southeast Region) Vice President Endorsements:

David Ellis, Manager – Wake County

Tasha Logan Ford, Manager – City of High Point

Yaidee Fox, Assistant Manager – City of Hickory

SENIOR ADVISOR PROGRAM UPDATE

Association actively looking to recruit great mentors.

After four and a half years in his role, Derwick Paige has resigned as an NCCCMA Senior Advisor effective November 30th. In addition, Randy McCaslin has announced his resignation as Senior Advisor after three and a half years, effective December 31st. The Association thanks both gentlemen for their service and dedication to the profession.

With their retirements, NCCCMA is actively recruiting persons interested in serving as Senior Advisors.

Here are the minimum requirements:

- Be a NCCCMA Life Member and ICMA Life Member or Retired Member with a minimum of 10 years membership with ICMA.
- Be a resident of North Carolina at the time of appointment.
- Be respected and highly regarded by those in the profession and be able to serve as a trusted, discreet advisor to their peers.
- Be willing to accept the assignment out of unselfish commitment to the profession

and be willing to accept only actual reimbursement for out-of-pocket expenses incurred in the fulfillment of his or her responsibilities. NCCCMA and ICMA provide reimbursement for travel related expenses.

- Have served at least ten years as a Chief appointed local government official and/or an Assistant/Deputy Manager.
- A willingness to actively participate in the Senior Advisor program for the duration of the appointment and attend NCCCMA conferences, ICMA conferences and attend local and regional managers meetings. NCCCMA and ICMA reimburse for conference registration, travel and meal expenses.
- Be willing and able to travel in a large assigned geographical area.

If you are interested in becoming a Senior Advisor, please visit <https://ncmanagers.org/page/senior-advisors-formerly-range-riders> and/or contact Rob Shepherd, shepherd@sog.unc.edu or 336-456-7151.

**NORTH CAROLINA
CITY & COUNTY
MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION**

MENTORING & COACHING PROGRAMS

Are you a new manager and looking for advise?

Become a Mentee or Coachee!

The NCCCMA Mentoring & Coaching Programs connect experienced County and City Managers with individuals who would like to advance their careers.

> **Coaching is for quick questions**
> **Mentoring is for longer term support**

Sign up today at:

mentoring.ncmanagers.org

ETHICS MATTER

Questions from members on Tenet 7 illustrate the importance of political neutrality to the local government profession.

By Jessica Cowles, ICMA Ethics Director

November is the height of all things fall and giving thanks for our family and friends. For our profession in the United States, the month also means local, state, and federal elections. This can bring different personalities to leadership positions that results in member questions about the profession's commitment to political neutrality and how to forge effective working relationships with these individuals.

Members have asked me these questions about Tenet 7. My answers follow that are based on the ICMA Code of Ethics. Note: I edited identifying information to honor the conversation's confidentiality.

Is it okay to financially contribute to a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization in my state? Could I be part of this nonprofit's organizing effort? Donating. In these times, it is extremely difficult to have nonbiased information in local government campaigns, and this seems like a great instrument for doing so. Tenet 7's guideline on personal advocacy states that you can be involved in issues of personal interest as long as it does not conflict with your job responsibilities. On the surface, I think it is fine to donate. I'm sure their list of funders will be made public so you should consider whether this is something you should disclose to council. Can you assist in organizing it? Yes, with caveats. An organization whose mission is to provide accurate, nonpartisan election information with a commitment to democracy should not be considered controversial, but some elected officials and community members may mistakenly interpret your involvement through a political lens.

Consider whether voicing your personal and financial support could affect your ability to be effective in your role. Are you the convener who brings together disparate interests in your community? The moderator? Viewed as an objective voice in the community? While the cause does not seem to be aligned with a particular political party, what is the perception? Finally, tone and respect matter enormously here—both your own and that of the those associated with the organization.

I would like to wear an LGBTQ pin and display an "Everyone Welcome" sign in a local government facility. Would these activities be considered political? In your circumstance, your governing body adopted a Pride month resolution and the local government's personnel policy says that the organization is accepting and encouraging of all. Since the governing body has adopted statements of support, you have responsibility for policy implementation since they are the council's view, not your own personal opinions, on the matters at hand.

Additional information that wasn't included in my response to the member: Remember that balancing political neutrality with personal advocacy is always challenging! Members never need to face this one on their own. For example, several practitioners tackled this issue in a recent, free webinar for members and provided a resource list on this topic: icma.org/page/advocacy-issues-personal-interest. These resources included a link for an ICMA project several years ago that culminated in its participants writing an article that laid out several questions to consider before engaging on issues of personal interest: <https://icma.org/articles/pm-magazine/what-if-i-want-march>.

I have a friend who is running for a local governing body in a different community from the one where I am the manager. I stay out of any politics, but I have been invited to gatherings for them and would like to attend. Since this does not involve my organization, can I?

If the candidates are hosting gatherings, even though they are not in the community you manage, you should not attend or contribute to their campaigns. The gatherings are likely fundraising events and that compromises your political neutrality even if they are nonpartisan races. Your council members or residents may hold different viewpoints and that could cause trouble for you.

THE ADMINISTRATOR

The Administrator is a monthly newsletter of the N.C. City & County Management Association., a professional association of city and county managers and assistant managers from counties and municipalities throughout the state of North Carolina.

For comments or suggestions, please contact the editor, Matt Lail at 919-819-3979, or email collards12@yahoo.com.

UPCOMING EVENTS

2026 NCCCMA Winter Seminar

January 28-30, 2026
Winston-Salem

2026 NCCCMA Summer Seminar

June 25-27, 2026
Asheville

MEMBERS IN TRANSITION

If you are looking to keep up with your colleagues in the profession, be sure to check out the Members in Transition page:

www.ncmanagers.org/page/ManagerInTransitionReports

The Chamber of Commerce will be hosting a candidates' forum for the five candidates for the local governing body. Three of the five are incumbents and they are running for three at-large seats. This is the organization's first election since I became manager. Is it okay for me to attend the forum?

If I did, I would stand at the back of the room just as an observer and would not participate in any way. I want to get a sense of where policy direction might go if there is a change in the governing body, and this will be the only forum since it is not available online.

It is okay to attend in-person. Your approach of keeping a low profile by sitting at the back of the room is spot on so you learn what the council candidates are discussing without highlighting your presence.

I have a former governing body member that has decided to fill a vacant county commission seat in a district that covers our community and the surrounding area. This seat will be filled by appointment to serve out the remaining term of the former elected commissioner. As part of the appointment process, the candidate needs to submit letters of recommendation, and they asked me to write one. I am unaware of any other potential candidates for the position. Also, the appointment must be from the same party as the original elected member.

You should not write a letter of recommendation for this elected office candidate, even if it is filled by appointment. You should explain that your commitment to political neutrality prevents you from doing so. If a member of your governing body, employees, or residents disagree with positions/policies of this candidate (and there will likely be at least a few), it puts you in a very difficult situation.

I have been asked to speak at a women's health event that our local federal elected official is organizing. My governing body is divided along political lines so I am concerned this could be viewed as political.

You wouldn't think a woman's health event would be controversial or political. These are the times we live in, and your instinct is right to decline given the composition on your governing body and that the

invitation to speak is coming directly from a congressional office. Local government management jobs are hard enough that you do not need this to be any fodder for your community or governing body.

As I was preparing to send a letter to the state municipal league to alert them of federal cybersecurity funding/resources being cut and the impacts on the community I manage, it occurred to me that perhaps this may be interpreted as me engaging in political activities. To be clear, this communication is meant to alert our professional associations of the impact of the loss of these resources and to ask them, as our advocates, to work to restore this important funding. What do you think?

Your letters addressed to your state municipal league are both factual and professional. The letters are fine to send as-is with the caveat that your governing body is supportive of the organization's efforts because you would not want to land in hot water. You may have done so already, but I advise you to provide notice to your governing body since you are sending them to the state league. I will explain a few areas that would require you to do some further assessment:

- If you wrote these letters in your capacity as manager directly to federal representatives without your governing body adopting a resolution to ask you to do so or otherwise informing them. The difference here is they are going to the league as a professional association. My recommendation is to have the league advocate for local government needs so one community is not feeling any direct effects from those efforts.
- If the letters were your own personal opinions because these are clear impacts on the community you manage.
- If you have a very divided governing body on this and other federal spending issues, it may not be wise or good timing to write these letters.

One of the benefits of your ICMA membership is free, confidential ethics advice. Have a conversation with jcowles@icma.org to ask before you act. Don't go at it alone. Keep the questions coming!

DEMYSTIFYING THE MAGIC

Webinar ranks the impact of AI use cases in local government.

The International City/County Management Association (ICMA), in partnership with GovAI, is hosting a webinar on December 11 for a data-driven look at the real impact of artificial intelligence in local government. The webinar is free to ICMA members.

Which AI initiative should local governments prioritize first: a staff chatbot, a citizen service bot, or deep workflow automation? As AI use

cases (and hype!) grow across Canadian municipalities, it's getting harder to tell what's essential versus what's just possible. Join us for a data-driven look at AI's real impact in local government and come away with a practical framework to evaluate and rank any new initiative.

You can register here:
<https://shop.learninglab.icma.org/products/29534419-a> .

MILES NAMED NCACC MEMBER SERVICES DIRECTOR

Was previously at Center for Public Leadership & Governance.

The North Carolina Association of County Commissioners (NCACC) is pleased to announce Tracy Miles will serve as director of the NCACC Member Services Foundation, effective Wednesday, October 1, 2025.

In this role, Miles will lead the Foundation's efforts to support and expand trusted coaching, guidance, capacity support, and technical assistance services for North Carolina counties. She will advance this work through strategic fundraising, revenue generation, and philanthropic partnerships. Her priorities include securing transformative grants, building meaningful partnerships and telling NCACC's powerful story to enhance mission-driven programs, including opioid response, disaster recovery, county financial management, and mentoring the next generation of public administrators.

“The use of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to expand our Strategic Member Services department and resources has proven that our work is making a positive, meaningful impact in North Carolina counties,” said Miles. “I’m honored to build meaningful relationships with donors, giving funders the opportunity to contribute to our work serving North Carolina’s counties and strengthening the services that inspire good government and thriving communities.”

Miles will also continue serving as Strategic Member Services (SMS) cohort manager, a position she has held since 2023. In this role, she leads NCACC’s Strategic Project Coordinator (SPC) program, which has placed 24 early career

professionals in 37 counties spanning the state of North Carolina.

With more than 20 years of experience in public administration, higher education, consulting, and nonprofit leadership, Miles brings expertise in strategy development, capacity assessment, coaching, and organizational growth. Prior to joining NCACC, she held leadership roles at UNC-Chapel Hill’s Center for Public Leadership and Governance, Girls on the Run of the Triad, and the American Heart Association, and also managed her own consulting firm focused on performance measures and strategy development.

Miles holds a Master of Public Administration from UNC-Chapel Hill and a bachelor’s degree in psychology from NC State University. She is an adjunct faculty member in UNC-Chapel Hill’s MPA program and recently authored an article for the International City/County Management Association (ICMA) titled “Connecting Early Career Professionals with Opportunities in County Government.” She will continue to work closely with Association staff, members, and statewide partners to grow the Foundation and deliver lasting support for counties.



“We’re excited to have Tracy Miles step into this leadership position,” said NCACC Executive Director Kevin Leonard. “She brings a strategic mindset, public service experience, and relationship-driven leadership that will help us build a strong and sustainable foundation to support counties across North Carolina.”