

# THE ADMINISTRATOR

## TRULY A 'WINTER' SEMINAR!

More than 600 networked and learned in Winston-Salem.

**Admittedly, it was touch and go there for a bit if the 2026 edition of the N.C. City & County Management Association (NCCCMA) Winter Seminar was going to take place or not.** The talk of severe winter weather across much of the state threatened to put a damper on the annual event. Thankfully, the bad weather never came, but 468 attendees and 143 sponsors did, meaning 611 attendees came together for the event.

Following are just some of the highlights from the event – a seminar that included everything from a fun **basketball game to speed networking.**



# MANAGERS OF THE YEAR

These leaders demonstrate excellence in governance.

For many years, one of the highlights of the Winter Seminar each year has been the awarding of the Assistant Manager of the Year awards. This year's seminar saw the addition of Managers of the Year recognition in the categories of Municipal Large Jurisdictions, County Large Jurisdictions, and Small Jurisdictions.

The Municipal & County Large Jurisdiction awards go to those who are committed to excellence in governance, have demonstrated the ability to manage and lead with excellence, embrace innovation and modernization, and have positively impacted the quality of life in their region. This award goes to a person serving a municipality with a population of 10,001 or more or a county of 99,001 or more.

This year, the Municipal Large Jurisdiction Manager of the Year Award went to **Sally Sandy** from the City of Morganton. The County Large Jurisdiction Manager of the Year Award went to **Brent Trout**, Harnett County. Both were recognized during the President's Lunch.



The Small Jurisdiction category for Manager of the Year recognizes someone who demonstrates leadership in high-performing organization with limited resources, shows strategic vision and adaptability, and showcases creative problem solving – for a municipality under 10,000 in population or a county under 99,000 in population.

This year's winner in the Small Jurisdiction category went to **Jonathan Russell**, City of Washington (now with Town of Robersonville). Russell, too, was recognized during the President's Lunch.

(Please note that there were no submissions for County Manager of the Year – Small Jurisdictions.)

Congratulations to this year's Managers of the Year recipients!

# ASSISTANT MANAGERS OF THE YEAR

All three recognized during President's Luncheon.

In 2001, the NCCMA executive committee 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 NCCMA are current or former assistants or have assistants under their direction.

This year's Assistant Manager of Year award was expanded to include the recognition of both a municipal and a county manager. The Co-Assistant Municipal Manager of the Years were **Matt Efirm**, Town of Hillsborough; and **Ron Massey**, City of Jacksonville. The Assistant County Manager of the Year was **Coley Price**, Harnett County.



## THE FUTURE LOOKS BRIGHT



Congratulations to this year's slate of Master's of Public Administration 2025-26 scholarship winners, who were recognized during this year's winter seminar President's Luncheon (and in last month's *The Administrator*).

## CONGRATS TO NEW LIFE MEMBERS

Five distinguished individuals were recognized as the latest additions to the NCCCMA Life Member category and were also recognized during the President's Luncheon. Pictured (from left to right) are: David Hewett, Rick Howell, Craig Honeycutt, NCCCMA President Lloyd Payne, Lisa Hughes and Todd Clark.



## REID NAMED HONORARY MEMBER

Has been a loyal attendee for a decade.

**Congratulations to Randy Reid, who was conferred by the members of the N.C. City & County Management Association (NCCCMA) with Honorary Status during the 2026 Winter Seminar.**

Reid has been a familiar presence at our Winter and Summer Seminars for more than a decade, representing ICMA as the Southeast Regional Director. His commitment extended beyond these events—



Randy attended most Executive Committee meetings, offering invaluable advice and serving as a trusted resource for our leadership.

In addition to his service to ICMA and state associations throughout the Southeast, Randy was recently honored for a remarkable 50-year career in local government. His tenure includes eleven years with ICMA and leadership roles in Vandalia, Ohio; Green River, Wyoming; Titusville, Florida; and the counties of Martin, Alachua, and Sarasota in Florida. His contributions have strengthened our profession and inspired countless colleagues.

# SHEFFIELD PRESENTED WITH OLD NORTH STATE AWARD

Recognized for two decades of NCCCMA service.



**One of the most familiar – and constant – faces at the N.C. City & County Management Association (NCCCMA) seminars** through the years has been that of Lisa Sheffield with the UNC School of Government. Sheffield has spent more than 24 years at the School of Government – and 20 of those she has spent in support of the NCCCMA. Sheffield, who retired on January 31 after three decades of state service, was honored with the Old North State Award during the 2026 Winter Seminar.

“As the program manager for the NCCCMA Winter Seminars, Lisa has played a central role in delivering high-quality professional development to hundreds of municipal and county managers every year,” said NCCCMA President Lloyd Payne. “Her steady hand, attention to detail, and deep commitment to excellence have helped shape an experience that we, as members of the City & County Management Association, truly value.

“Lisa’s contributions have helped to strengthen communities across North Carolina and left an enduring mark on the NC City & County Management Association. Her work exemplifies the highest ideals of public service.”

# RICHARDSON PASSES AWAY

Life Member served Black Mountain for 18 years.

**Al Richardson, who was an NCCCMA Life Member** and who served as manager for the Town of Black Mountain for 18 years, passed away on February 5, 2026. He was 86 years old. He is survived by his wife, Betty Kitchen Richardson; his son Jeff (former manager of Cleveland County and assistant manager of Asheville and current manager of Albemarle County, Va.), and daughter Melissa LaTourette, along with grandchildren and great grandchildren.

It was while running a store in Black Mountain where Richardson realized his love of community service. In March 1982, the Town of Black Mountain approached him to serve as town manager. He would hold that job until his retirement in 2000. While serving as manager, Richardson completed the local government manager certification program at UNC-

Chapel Hill. While serving as Black Mountain’s manager, Richardson also was appointed to the Civic Federal Credit Union in Raleigh where he served 19 years, including chair.



For his career of service, Richardson was presented with the Order of the Longleaf Pine by Governor Jim Hunt. After retirement, Richardson continued to serve as a deacon at the Black Mountain First Baptist Church, and serving seven interim appointments as Town Manager in the communities of Fletcher, Mills River, Montreat, as well as Black Mountain.

# MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: JOE MOORE

*Our “Member Spotlight” offers a glimpse into the personalities and lives of you – the N.C. City & County Management Association member. Our “Member Spotlight” this month features **Joe Moore**, NCCMA Life Member & Civic Education Committee chair.*

Birthplace? **Charlotte.**



Favorite vacation spot? **Warmer is better than colder (it can't get hot enough for me). Urban is better than rural (I enjoy visiting, and studying, other cities).**

Favorite hobby? **Learning. While I enjoy hiking and kayaking, I spend a lot of time and money on education because I love to learn. I'm a Doctoral Candidate at NC State's College of Design studying how rural downtowns redesign themselves after their economies change.**

Favorite Movie Quote? **I gravitate to movies portraying breaking through constraining norms by employing innovative thinking and empowering others beyond their self-perceived limits. While Managing Brevard, I got our Management Team tickets to “Moneyball” to convey “despite our limitations we're going to fight above our weight by thinking unlike anyone else and acting unlike anyone expects us to.”**

First local government job? **Town of Cary, Engineer I.**

Western or Eastern BBQ? **The purist in me says to pick Eastern, but I like Western better.**

Mountains, beach or Piedmont? **Love to visit the beach but love living in the mountains and bushwhacking new trails with a compass and a map.**

Favorite local government hero? **Bill Coleman, Cary Town Manager, inspired me to become a Manager, and then encouraged and advocated for me to become one.**

Describe your town in 10 words or less. **We call Brevard home now. It's nice to come back to the place I managed, see how some initiatives matured, but not have to worry about managing them.**

What is one thing most people KNOW about you or would say about you? **I'd hope they'd say I stood for everything that is right about our profession: honesty, work ethic, commitment, and service. I think they'd say I never hesitated in sharing thoughts, but I was also very thoughtful.**

What is one thing most people would be surprised to learn about you? **I may have supported my daughter's cosplay-phase by attending Comic Conventions as Tony Stark (aka Iron Man).**



# MEET AN EMERGING MANAGER

## Spotlight on Kelly Weston.

*This month's "Emerging Manager Spotlight" highlights Kelly Weston, Strategic Engagement & Technical Services Manager, Centralina.*

**Birthplace:** Winston-Salem, NC.

**Current job and location:** Strategic Engagement & Technical Services Manager at Centralina Regional Council in Charlotte, NC.

**Favorite hobby:** I love being creative, whether that involves working on a DIY home project or spending time crafting. I'm also a big college basketball fan (GO HEELS!) and enjoy watching and attending games. Lately, I've also really gotten into roller skating and ice skating.



**What is your go-to book recommendation and why?** I always like to recommend books that showcase great storytelling. One of those is *The Vanishing Half* by Brit Bennett. It's a historical fiction novel about identical twin sisters who part ways as teenagers and grow up living in two separate and totally different worlds. Their choices shape future generations of their families in interesting ways. The story spans from the 1950s Deep South to California in the 1990s and explores themes of identity and family ties. The last friend I recommended this book to finished it in just two days.

**Why did you join the Association?** I attended my first NCCCMA conference as an MPA student at UNC Charlotte and really enjoyed connecting with local government administrators from across the state and hearing about their experiences. In my role at the COG, I'm fortunate to interact with city and county managers regularly, but being part of the association gives me a chance to learn from them in a different setting and from a different perspective. A few years after that first conference, I joined NCCCMA to better understand the issues that matter to managers and to explore the resources and tools available that help them problem-solve and navigate their roles, while also supporting my own professional growth and development.

**What does public service leadership mean to you?** To me, public service leadership means being deeply committed to community and helping make the place you and others call home not just function but truly thrive. It means giving your time and energy to support others and collaborating with people to find solutions. It's the kind of work you do because the impact is real and because serving your community feels meaningful. Also, public service leadership is a role that definitely requires tough skin. As a retired local government manager friend and mentor of mine always says, "Don't make it personal. Don't take it personal." I keep this advice in mind whenever situations become challenging.

**What do you think is the most pressing issue the next generation of managers will have to face?** This topic is nothing new, but I think prioritizing transparency will continue to be a critical issue for managers in the future. Public trust in the federal government has declined steadily over the past couple of decades, but people still tend to place more trust in local government. To maintain that trust, I think the next generation of managers will need to be proactively transparent and meet the public's growing expectations for engagement with local officials, while also recognizing that these interactions can sometimes lead to incivility. As managers, they'll need to balance openness and accessibility with ensuring their employees feel safe and supported as they do their work.

# LOCAL EXCELLENCE AWARDS NOMINATIONS OPEN

Submissions encouraged from communities of every size.

## **For nearly 60 years, ICMA's Local**

Government Excellence Awards have celebrated individuals and programs that have transcended expectations, ignited change, and created a lasting impact on their communities.

## **Nominations are open!**

Submissions encouraged from communities of every size in the United States and throughout the world for professional and program excellence awards.

## **Professional Awards recognize individual achievement:**

- Award for Career Excellence in Memory of Mark E. Keane
- Award for Career Development in Memory of L. P. Cookingham
- Assistant Excellence in Leadership Award in Memory of Buford M. Watson Jr.
- Academic Award in Memory of Stephen B. Sweeney
- Early Career Leadership Award in Memory of William H. Hansell Jr.
- Advocacy for the Profession Award in Honor of Martha Perego
- NEW: Good Governance Award

**Program Excellence Awards recognize local governments and their chief administrators for inventive and successful programs in the areas of:**

- Community Equity and Inclusion
- Community Health and Safety
- Community Partnership
- Community Sustainability
- Strategic Leadership and Governance

**Nominations accepted through March 13, 2026.**

Award winners will be notified by the end of July and honored during the ICMA Annual Conference in Long Beach/Los Angeles, California.

Recipients will also be featured in the special Awards issue of PM magazine and highlighted on other platforms throughout the year.

Submit your nomination today!  
<https://icma.org/articles/member-news/2026-local-government-excellence-awards-nominations-open>

## 10 REASONS TO LOVE AND HONOR CITY/COUNTY MANAGEMENT

A reminder of why those of us love what we do.

*By Roub Gould, ICMA-CM; Dr. Frank Benest, ICMA-CM; and Jan Perkins, ICMA-CM*

**Our profession has weathered over a hundred years of change and is still the most common form of local government in the United States and 40 other countries. Much has transpired at the global and local levels during that time, and the council-manager form has adapted and evolved.**

We are asked, “Do you still recommend local government management with all of the pressures involved these days?” Our answer is “yes.” While challenges, stresses, and headaches abound, the work done by city and county managers is essential. Those in the top local government job and those in other management roles are doing meaningful work. Their careers are focused on creating better communities and strong organizations. The work matters for strengthening our civil society and making lives better for those we serve.

The three of us have served a number of cities as city managers. We remain involved today helping leaders as they grapple with improving governance, developing employees, and enhancing communities. We’ve listed 10 reasons why we love this profession. It’s February, so here is our valentine to all of you who practice or aspire to be in city and county management.

**1. You Make a Lasting Difference.** You can improve your part of the world by focusing on one community at a time. You are in a position to have a positive impact on people’s lives. Many people you will never meet will benefit from your commitment to making a difference. Whether it is in advancing safety of the community, rebuilding critical infrastructure, enhancing quality of life, or promoting environmental sustainability, what you do matters to real people. As city or county manager, you have direct influence over dozens of services, projects, and activities that shape and build community. You can build a legacy that matters to people in the community.

**2. You Promote Local Democracy.** The top management job is a cornerstone of local representative democracy. You respect the role of the elected body. You encourage the public to participate in community affairs. You guide your staff to openly communicate with the public and do their best work on behalf of the community. As city or county manager, you are at the vortex of communication, information, and decision making between local elected leaders, professional city staff, and community leaders. The executive has an affirmative duty to ensure that the will of the people’s representatives is skillfully and ethically carried out with public transparency, civic participation, and a long-term view. You have a key role in making local representative democracy work.

**3. You Enjoy a Professional Network.** You get to work with some exceptional people bound together by a commitment to public service. Many servant leaders drawn to local government are altruistic and driven by the communitarian ideal—we all do better working together for the common good. We collaborate and support one another in the trials and difficulties of this highly specialized public service. We jointly develop new strategies, techniques, and approaches to vexing local problems. Good ideas and innovations are openly shared and disseminated. These facts bind us together as a profession for mutual success. In local government management, we interact with elected and appointed officials of character, intelligence, humor, idealism, compassion, and drive. Some

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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](mailto:collards12@yahoo.com).

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### 2026 NCCCMA Summer Seminar

June 25-27, 2026  
Asheville

### 2027 NCCCMA Summer Seminar

June 17-19, 2027  
New Bern/Craven County

### 2028 Joint Summer Seminar

June 22-24, 2028  
Hilton Head, SC\*

*\*Joint Conference with SC City & County Management Association*

## 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](http://www.ncmanagers.org/page/ManagerInTransitionReports)

will become life-long friends who will enrich your life. Camaraderie and teamwork are great benefits of the local government management profession.

**4. You Thrive on Action.** Our job is never dull and rarely predictable. The profession covers multiple disciplines with a diversity of residents, businesses, and visitors. You encounter so many issues and dilemmas that you are never bored. Communities are always evolving. Development, macroeconomics, social patterns, technology, demographics, and external influences all play a part in change—whether it is intentional or happenstance. The manager must help the community to adapt and thrive in constant change. The pace can be hectic. If you revel in a variety of challenges in your work, city/county management will appeal to you.

**5. You Learn Something Every Day.** One thing is for certain: nothing is static. City/county management offers a laboratory for learning. There is no chance for complete mastery given the diverse functions that managers oversee. People who are curious and want to know the “why” as well as the “what” are a good fit for this profession. There is ample opportunity to learn, change your point of view through new knowledge, and become inspired. The range of services in any local government is vast. It is no small feat to acquire knowledge about each of them, whether it be law enforcement, fire and emergency services, planning, code enforcement, public works, the arts, health, criminal justice, environmental services, parks, recreation, senior and youth services, housing, economic development, redevelopment, mobility, social services, intergovernmental relations, human resources, finance, information technology, or more.

**6. You Help Others Be Their Best.** City and county managers build successful teams. This is such a highly satisfying part of the job. The team includes both the governing body and the local government’s staff. The chief executive helps elected officials do the public’s business through positive governing norms. The manager leads their organizations in a way that gets the right people into key positions, with the team working in sync for the community’s benefit. It takes leadership and backbone, along with interpersonal, coaching, and mentoring skills. Some talent will be developed internally and rise through promotion; some will come externally. Supporting young people in local service is crucial. The key is a common commitment to excellence and teamwork. A good city or county manager is always at the chemistry set improving the team through organizational development and succession planning. You can build a legacy.

**7. You Commit to a Code of Ethics.** We’re all members of a noble and collegial profession with standards, ethical codes, and values. ICMA seeks to make this profession real for all its members by instilling the obligations and expectations of a highly respectable profession. This means committing to the ICMA Code of Ethics and going about your work every day with that code underlying your actions. It not only underpins our profession, but it makes the job so much easier when you have the north star of professional ethics to guide you on difficult decisions.

**8. You Really Get to Know Your Community.** Cities and counties are fascinating and never truly alike. Each has its own history, traditions, leaders, development patterns, strengths, gaps, culture, and community feel. Every community is made up of people with their unique personalities and interests. There are service clubs, street fairs, art exhibits, sports events, and more. If you like people, you are in the right job. If you are a student of how people live, work, and recreate together, cities and counties are learning laboratories. Even long-term managers comment on how fast things change and their jobs along with it. By virtue of our positions, we get to know people in our communities in ways few can.

**9. You Develop Transferable Skills.** The local government management skill set is in demand throughout the United States and internationally. Most of us will serve in more than one community in our careers and much of the expertise, experience, training, and understanding is transferable across jurisdictions despite their differences. Serving in several local governments adds richness to a career in local city or county management and keeps the manager learning and growing. And when the manager is ready to enter a second phase or “encore” career, the skills learned can be quite useful.

**10. You Make a Good Living.** City and county managers are paid decently for their public service work, and enjoy good benefits such as healthcare, leave time, insurance against injury, and often pensions. They can generally afford a comfortable home, vacations, decent schools and colleges for their kids, and to live with dignity and security in retirement. It is a career with a healthy living attached to it.

**Bonus: You Accumulate Good Stories.** In one's career, a city or county manager will accumulate many stories. These can be poignant and tough, quite funny, or even bizarre. Consequently, you will be able to top any story at a cocktail party. That's our list. We suspect you will have others based on your own experiences. We would be remiss if we didn't say that there is much fun to be had in this profession. You will go to special events, sing happy birthday at a staff party, flip pancakes with your city council at a community breakfast, and more. A job is not all seriousness. Your staff will appreciate your lightheartedness along with your focused attention to getting things done. In closing, our communities need and deserve great leaders at the top – both elected and appointed. Being a city or county manager, despite many challenges, can make a huge difference in the lives of the people who live in their communities. It's a profession that is satisfying, rewarding, and worthy of respect.

## ETHICS MATTER

Why reporting potential ethics violations is essential.

*By Martha Perego (originally published in 2018)*

**Whether out in the field delivering services** or occupying the manager's chair, all employees have a stake in reporting incidents of suspected or actual wrongdoing. An organization's reputation is built—for better or worse—on the conduct of each individual employee.

Creating a culture that encourages an individual to raise the red flag when something unethical or illegal is taking place is critical. Everyone needs to be willing to report what's happening behind the scenes or even take steps to stop it from happening in the first place.

But it's a tough sell. Whistle-blowing feels like a violation of that kindergarten rule not to be a tattletale. Very few of us enjoy confrontation or being the instigator who causes trouble for someone else (even if that person deserves it). The lack of certainty about facts and motivations keeps others silent. But the consequences of keeping silent can be significant and harmful.

### UNETHICAL CONDUCT IS VISIBLE

The typical case of unethical conduct in the workplace is rarely a secret. Somebody besides the perpetrator knows. After all, the conduct is taking place in a fairly sophisticated work environment in the light of day to be witnessed by a work colleague or perhaps even a supervisor. And if it is a serial activity, the number of witnesses just grows.

Or perhaps no one actually witnessed the activity but suspects it based on some level of tangible evidence. Then there are the others who didn't see the conduct but heard about it.

### COST OF SILENCE

This all begs the question: What do we need to do to create a culture where individuals feel personally responsible and safe enough to report questionable conduct and to convey the point that sitting on the sidelines while a colleague falls off the ethics cliff is harmful to all?

Leaders are not immune from the urge to sit on the sidelines. The topic at one city's

management team meeting was the recent dismissal of the IT director. This individual, recruited from the private sector with high expectations, lasted only a year before the city manager asked for his resignation.

The manager explained to the management team that in several instances the director entered into contracts that violated city policy. This employee continued the practice even after being counseled on the matter. The final straw was his personal relationship with a direct report.

As members of the management team talked about their experiences with this individual, they were startled to realize that they all had inklings that things were not okay, that he just didn't seem to get it about operating in the public sector, and, yes, that they had heard those rumors about his affair.

But—to a person—no one had talked with the individual or raised the issue with the city manager. What was their ethical obligation to address their concerns with their peer? Would an early intervention have produced a better outcome?

The result of the team members' reflection was a personal and joint pledge for real, mutual accountability. In practice, this meant having the courage, in private, to call their colleagues on unacceptable conduct. The next step would be directly to the city manager's office, if required.

## PROFESSIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY

As a profession, we face the same ethical obligation to hold our colleagues accountable for their conduct. And, yes, it's tough to do. We've walked in their shoes. We relate to the difficulty of having every misstep, big or small, reported in the media and kept alive by the bloggers.

The ICMA Code of Ethics establishes high standards for the profession. In a murky and complicated universe, it defines clear lines of acceptable conduct. Some ethical violations, like taking extra compensation or gifts, are so obvious that they get addressed by the employer and ICMA.

But there is a whole universe of inappropriate conduct where the associated risk and potential damage to the public and the profession may be visible and understood only by another professional in the field. Examples include political activity and conflicts of interest. Therein lies part of the value of self-policing.

## PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

ICMA members have an ethical obligation to report incidents of unethical conduct by peers. A guideline to the ICMA Code of Ethics states: "When becoming aware of a possible violation of the ICMA Code of Ethics, members are encouraged to report the matter to ICMA. In reporting the matter, members may choose to go on record as the complainant or report the matter on a confidential basis."

See something that raises a substantial question as to a colleague's honesty, trustworthiness, or fitness to serve the public? See conduct that is damaging to the reputation of other professionals and to the profession? Then you should report it in good faith to ICMA, even knowing that you might not have all the facts.

Allow an objective peer review process to sort out those facts and reach an independent judgment. If you are on the fence about reporting, then please contact ICMA staff to discuss your options confidentially.

Bottom line? Create a culture within your organization that actually encourages employees to report wrongdoing. The cost of silence is too high to the profession and to your organization.

**NORTH CAROLINA CITY & COUNTY MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION** MENTORING & COACHING PROGRAMS

Are you a new manager and looking for advise?

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