

THE ADMINISTRATOR

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‘COACHING’ OPPORTUNITIES REMAIN

In 2017, the N.C. City & County Management Association (NCCCMA) and the Center for Public Leadership and Governance (CPLG) entered into a service agreement to pilot a coaching program to support NCCCMA members experiencing a significant transition, including job loss. CPLG paired program participants with a certified coach.

The pilot program was successful in meeting participant needs with the

majority of pilot program participants reporting that the program helped them to define goals and take specific actions to meet those goals.

The program, “Coaching for Change,” currently has three slots left for NCCCMA members who would like to receive professional coaching.

The program is ideal for folks who may be in between jobs or contemplating career moves, such as an assistant/deputy manager

thinking about becoming a the city/county manager.

Job transition is largely outside of a manager’s control. How you respond to it is up you. To take the first step forward towards job stability with support from a focused professional, please click visit

<https://www.sog.unc.edu/ncccma-coaching>

ICMA COACHING: LIVING IN AN AGE OF ANGER

The International City & County Management Association (ICMA) will be presenting a webinar as part of its ICMA Coaching series on September 9 at 1:30 p.m. EDT. The webinar is called Managing Hostility in Public Discourse: Living in an Age of Anger.

Anger has become commonplace in today's

political discussions and has left many of wondering how to diffuse these volatile situations. A few simple strategies can help increase the ability to have a productive conversation and keep the wheels of your city/county government efficiently turning.

This interactive webinar will explore topic such as: What is causing

hate and divisiveness in today’s politics? ... Is there a place for anger in public discourse? ... and What are tools to keep anger from disrupting a city/county meeting?

Visit classroom.icma.org to learn more about this and other educational opportunities.

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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 919-819-3979, or email at collards12@yahoo.com.

UPCOMING EVENTS

2021 NCCCMA Winter Seminar
February 3-5, 2021
Winston-Salem

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:
<https://www.ncmanagers.org/page/ManagerinTransitionReports>

SENIOR ADVISORS ARE HERE TO MEET YOUR UNIQUE NEEDS

No doubt Covid-19 has increased anxiety levels for many local government managers across North Carolina. Many managers and administrators feel isolated and stressed; the inability to network face to face can lead to higher anxiety.

N.C. is fortunate to have the Senior Advisor Program as a resource all the time – but particularly during times like these. Senior Advisors are available to provide an outlet for many managers to have a confidential conversations during these trying time.

Senior Advisors provide service, under a joint agreement with ICMA and the state association, to both ICMA and NCCCMA members.

Senior Advisors are retired municipal and county managers with extensive experience in the management profession who are recruited and screened by the NCCCMA Membership Support Committee and approved by the NCCCMA Executive Committee and ICMA. This program makes a Senior Advisor available, at no charge, to NCCCMA and ICMA members for private counseling. These retired

managers have experienced the problems and frustrations of managing local governments and are willing to assist managers in resolving these issues. Senior Advisors are envisioned as friends, colleagues and counselors to the individual managers and are there services are provided **confidentially**.

During the last NCCCMA Executive Committee meeting, the following Senior Advisors were reappointed for another two-year term: **John Whitehurst, Jim Freeman, Tom Lundy, Mike McLaurin, Pete Connet and Erskine Smith. Brian Hiatt and Roger Stancil** are the other two Senior Advisors who are currently serving their one-year initial appointment, and will be considered for a two-year appointment in January 2021.

Please feel free to contact any one of NCCCMA's eight (8) Senior Advisors who you may be the most comfortable with speaking to.

To learn more about the Senior Advisor program visit www.ncmanagers.org and click "Senior Advisors" under the "Information Exchange" tab.

ETHICS MATTERS: IT'S ELECTION SEASON ... AGAIN?

**By Martha Perego,
ICMA-CM**

Social distancing has added another layer of complexity to the voting process here in the United States and will alter candidate campaign strategies. Yet some things remain the same. Come August, the national party conventions will take place, virtual or not, to move presumptive presidential candidates to the party's official nominee. By Labor Day, election season will be in full throttle.

This season always presents a unique challenge to those who chose public service, specifically local government, as a profession. Your work provides a ring side view of how a representative democracy functions. In a tripartite deal, residents get to select their elected leaders at all levels of government, elected officials get to

lead and set policy, and the professional staff work to the success of it all by serving as nonpartisan conveners and critical sources of objective and independent guidance.

On a personal level, you do get a voice. You can vote for the candidates of your choice and voice your opinion on the issues. You may not have voted for that elected official or support their positions on the issue, but in your official capacity, you do need to work with them—and do so in a way that doesn't compromise your role or cross that sometimes-blurry line into the realm of politics. It brings to mind a member's story about Vice President Hubert Humphrey's remarks at an ICMA conference in the late 1960s. He said how great it was to be addressing the largest group of non-politicians who are engaged in politics!

As we move into the high season of campaigning, here is some advice for navigating the most common election experiences.

Voting: ICMA members share with their fellow citizens the right and responsibility to vote. If you live in a state with closed primaries, you are permitted under the ICMA Code of Ethics to register with a political party for the purpose of exercising that right.

Candidate Endorsements: In order to be effective in doing your work on behalf of your local governments, do not endorse any candidates running for any city, county, special district, school, state, or federal offices. Activities to be avoided include public statements of support, yard signs, and bumper stickers, as well as more subtle signs of support, such as appearing on the dais of a campaign

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rally with the candidate or posting a selfie on social media wearing the candidate's campaign gear. These activities constitute an endorsement.

Financial Support:

Whether it is for an individual seeking elected office, an incumbent running again, a political party, or another organization that makes direct donations to candidates, members should not make financial donations. All donations, regardless of how modest, are a matter of public record with both names and occupations listed. While the donation may be tiny in the grand scheme of things, you are publicly stating your support for the candidate.

What about other fundraising events like private parties hosted by supporters or going as a guest to an event? All of these efforts, whether a direct appeal or not, are intended to

generate financial support for a candidate. For that reason, they should be avoided. The election guideline in the ICMA Code of Ethics states that members shall not make financial contributions or participate in fund-raising activities for individuals seeking or holding elected office.

Candidate Debates:

Forums or debates sponsored by independent organizations provide everyone the opportunity to learn more about the candidates and their positions. For that reason, you can attend as a private citizen or staff member. What's important is to keep a low profile and be prepared to respond if someone at a local event tries to draw you into the debate. Practice saying, "I am just here to learn more about the issues and have no comment."

Candidate Rallies:

While highly political, there is an argument that they are an opportunity to hear more about the candidate's position on the issues. Sitting on the dais behind the candidate is not a good idea. A lower profile in the back of the venue is a better choice.

Issues: The guideline on personal advocacy of issues makes it clear that ICMA members do not lose their right to express their opinion. Members share with their fellow citizens the right and responsibility to voice their opinion on public issues. Members may advocate for issues of personal interest only when doing so does not conflict with the performance of their official duties.

If you want to advocate for a position, you can do so. First, make it clear that the opinion you offer is your own. Second, don't use public resources,

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including your official title, to support a personal stance. Third, focus on the issue, not the candidate. Lastly, you can join and/or make a financial contribution to an issue-oriented advocacy organization. You can march in a protest or rally, or participate in a campaign designed to raise awareness. You can put a bumper sticker on your car (just not on a city-issued one).

In the current climate where every issue is highly politicized and partisan, taking a stance can seem very political. For that reason, it's wise to consider the consequences of speaking out. It's not a reason to stand down or stay silent. Just something to consider.

Family Activities:

What do you do if your kids want to put up a yard sign? Or protest? Or your spouse wants to make a financial

donation? The Code only applies to the conduct of the member. Your spouse can make a campaign donation, even from a joint account, if they sign the check. The yard sign or bumper sticker on the family car are stickier issues to address. How would anyone else know that it is your spouse or child who supports the candidate and not you? Best to have that candid discussion with family about how their political activity can affect you.

On a personal level, you have the right to vote for the candidate of your choice. On a professional level, whether an elected official was your choice or not, you need to work with them in support of your community. That county commissioner, state representative, or congressman that represents your local government and the residents will be your ally in bringing needed

support during a natural disaster or assistance on legislation. Publicly engaging on behalf of or in opposition to an elected official will restrict your ability to serve your official position. Some may respond, "But I live in a city or state that is all one party, so what's the harm in engaging?" Just because it is nonpartisan or dominated by a single party, doesn't equate to the absence of party politics or party factions. In every campaign, there are winners and losers. Don't bet that you will always select the winner. It's best to exercise your right to participate in the democratic process while observing a politically neutral stance.

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