**WINTER SEMINAR COMING UP!**

Please note that venue has a mask requirement.

The 2022 N.C. City & County Management Association (NCCCMA) Winter Seminar is coming up Feb. 2-4, 2022, at the Benton Convention Center in Winston-Salem.

Please note that the Benton Convention Center has a mask requirement in place that requires everyone to wear masks at all times indoors except when actively eating or drinking. In addition, the Planning Committee has secured additional meeting spaces in order to allow for better physical distancing for all attendees.

As mentioned previously, the Winter Seminar once again offers a plethora of networking and educational opportunities for local government development. The seminar kicks off with on Wednesday with an Orientation for New Managers and Association Members, followed by the Opening General Session with Rogan Kersh, Provost and Professor of Politics & International Affairs, Wake Forest University.

A number of the state’s public universities with Master’s of Public Administration programs will hold alumni breakfast meetings on Thursday, Feb. 4. Those breakfasts begin at 7:30 a.m. and include: Appalachian State University, East Carolina, NC State, UNC Greensboro, UNC Charlotte, UNC Wilmington and Western Carolina.

And on Friday morning, from 9 a.m. until noon, there will be a session, *Trust: The Key to Effective Leadership Workshop.* (A separate registration is required.) In this session, participants will explore the concept of trust and its links to effective leadership using an evidence-based model developed from a series of studies conducted in the Iraq combat zone. Throughout the session, the instructor uses self-assessments, small group exercises and discussions, and storytelling to reinforce concepts. This session is presented by Patrick J. Sweeney, Professor of the Practice of Management and Executive Director, Allegacy Center for Leadership and Character at the Wake Forest University School of Business.

**ETHICS MATTER!**

Election season is a myth.

In the not-too-distant past, electing candidates for public office was akin to the rotation and tilt of the Earth. Both had defined seasons with the caveat, of course, that politics, like mother nature, can be unpredictable. With each, we had our equinoxes and solstices. A time for activity and a time for rest.

The predictability of seasons gave local government managers and their staff clear direction.
During the campaign season, astute staff kept their heads down, avoided meetings with elected officials designed as campaign photo ops, and curtailed their social activities. An annual community picnic once regularly attended is now off-limits during campaign season when all the candidates make an appearance.

Between the swearing in and the next primary, that period of détente provided all parties with the opportunity to focus on the actual work of serving constituents. While ever vigilant, of course, for the off chance of getting drawn inadvertently into politics, this period did provide the manager and staff with needed breathing room. Parked for a moment were the concerns about ulterior motives of an elected official who sought a meeting with constituents or convened a meeting with elected officials and community leaders to talk about an issue. The focus was on issues, not campaigns.

Perhaps influenced by the culture at the federal level where both newly sworn officials and incumbents alike seem fixated and focused on prevailing in the next election, the season for politicking at the local level seems far less defined as well. In this new environment, managers and staff are advised to be on guard and ever vigilant in recognizing and managing the candidate politics. To that end, here is some advice that applies to all ICMA members who are working for a local government.

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

To be effective in doing your work on behalf of your local government, do not endorse any candidates running for 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 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 a financial donation. 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 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 with 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 your response: “I am just here to learn more about the issues and have no comment.”

**Candidate Rallies**

While political, there is a valid argument that rallies 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 the best option. Attending a single event is a learning opportunity. Attending multiple events is crossing the line into a show of support and endorsement for the candidate.

**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, including your official title, to support a personal stance. Third, focus on the issue and 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 car).

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.

**Conclusion**

On a personal level, you have the right to vote for the candidate of your choice. On a professional level, whether the elected official was your choice or not, consider your obligation to work effectively with all elected officials on behalf 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 impair your ability to serve your official position. Some may respond, “But I live in a city or state that is dominated by one party, so what’s the harm in engaging?” Just because it is nonpartisan or dominated by a single party doesn’t insulate the process from 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.

*By Martha Perego, ICMA-CM*

**Director of Member Services and Ethics Director, ICMA,**

**Washington, D.C.**
REMINDER: ICMA SOUTHEAST CONFERENCE COMING UP IN MARCH
Registration has just opened for this event.

As mentioned in last month’s Administrator, the International City/County Management Association (ICMA) Southeast Regional Conference will be held March 2-4, 2022, in Atlanta.

The conference will be held at the Ritz Carlton in Atlanta. Please note that registration for the Southeast Regional Conference has opened up, and hotel reservations must be made by February 7.

The ICMA Southeast Regional Conference is a great opportunity to experience an ICMA conference and to network with hundreds of local government management professionals from across the southeast region as well as with members of the ICMA leadership.

For more information about the conference including the session topics, click here: https://regionals.icma.org/about/

CONSTITUITIONAL AMENDMENT PASSES, 122-2
Vote allows for modernization.

Back in September, we mentioned that the membership of the N.C. City & County Management Association (NCCCMA) was tasked with voting on a constitutional amendment regarding modernization and updates. The membership vote took place beginning in November and the amendment passed with 122 “FOR” votes to two “AGAINST” vote. A copy of the amended constitution is now available on the NCCCMA website at https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.ncmanagers.org/resour ce/resmgr/NCCCMA_Constitution_amended_.pdf

“As many of you are aware, there have been discussions about updating our constitution for several years,” NCCCMA President Lance Metzler said in an email to the membership in advance of the vote. “Much of the discussion has been on the topic of expanding the opportunity for the ‘next generation’ of local government managers to become members of NCCCMA provided they have the written endorsement of their manager but there has also been the need to ‘modernize’ the constitution to allow for electronic meetings and voting. … [We] now believe the proposed constitution addresses these issues.”

Here were the section numbers corresponding to the proposed Constitution changes that were approved:

Article I, Section 1: The text clarifies the 501(c)6 tax status of the NCCCMA and provides some history of the NCCCMA.

Article I, Section 2: The text concerning the ICMA Code of Ethics is moved to Article II.

Article II, Section 2: Text concerning the ICMA Code of Ethics applying to all NCCCMA members was moved to this section. The proposed text is consistent with the adopted NCCCMA policy regarding ethics violations. It clarifies that ICMA shall conduct investigations regarding NCCCMA members if that person maintains membership in ICMA.

Article III, Section 2: The proposed text reflects the long-standing practice of the Executive Committee reviewing and recommending requests for Life Member status.
Article III, Section 3:
The proposed text combines the associate and affiliate membership categories. There was no functional difference with the current constitution.

Article III, Section 4:
This text incorporates the 2019 Ad Hoc Committee’s recommendation for the creation of an Emerging Local Government Managers (ELGM) membership category. This new category replaces the former department head membership category. A local government manager must approve of a person’s application for this membership category. Members in this category may serve on committees, except the Professional Conduct Committee and Executive Committee, but they may not vote on association matters.

The Program committee is charged with continuing to give priority to professional development sessions and topics that benefit the public management profession.

The Professional Development Committee will implement a process where scholarship funds are initially offered to Active Members and then offered to ELGM, as funds are available.

The Sustaining Membership Committee is charged with the development of networking opportunities for current and future local government managers. These opportunities could include the creation of speed coaching for new managers, the expansion of mentorship programs and the general encouragement for the active members to be more inviting and engaging with new members of the Association. The Committee will also evaluate the dues structure to determine if the cost of membership is a deterrent to ELGM membership.

Article III, Sections 4 & 5: With the Emerging Local Government Managers category, student members may serve on committees, except the Professional Conduct Committee and Executive Committee. They may not vote on association matters. This text also prohibits fulltime local government employees from serving as a student member.

Article III, Section 7: This section continues to state that only Active Members and Life Members may vote concerning association matters.

Article III, Section 9: The revised text states that future changes to membership dues may occur through electronic voting means.

Article V, Section 1: The proposed text enacts the tradition of past presidents serving on the Nominating Committee. The new text also provides for electronic elections if the winter business meeting cannot be held in person. It also provides for electronic installation of officers and the board if the summer business meeting cannot be held in person.

Article VI, Section 2: The new text states that the First Vice President shall be responsible for strategic plan priorities.

Article VI, Section 4: New text requires that the records of the NCCCM will be available to the members.
WHITEHURST STEPPING DOWN AS SENIOR ADVISOR
Veteran will continue to provide assistance.

John Whitehurst has decided to step away from being an “active” Senior Advisor effective February 1st. The N.C. City & County Management Association (NCCCMA) thanks John for his many years of service to NCCCMA in a variety of capacities, including as the NCCCMA president from 1993-94 and as a Senior Advisor for approximately 20 years.

Senior Advisors provide service, under a joint agreement with ICMA and NCCCMA, 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.

Whitehurst has been a true friend and advisor to the members of NCCCMA and ICMA throughout his career as a county manager, his many years as a NCACC staff member and through his various roles with NCCCMA. As most of you know, several years ago the Executive Committee created an award in John’s name, the “John E. Whitehurst Service Award,” to recognize him for his many years of outstanding service to NCCCMA and local government management profession and to recognize other members who make or have made significant contributions to the local government management profession in North Carolina.

While we hate to see John step down as an active Senior Advisor, the good news is that the NCCCMA Executive Committee has recognized John as a “Senior Advisor Emeritus,” which will allow John to continue to provide some assistance, as he is willing to undertake from time-to-time, and to continue to be a sounding board and to provide assistance, when needed, to NCCCMA and the active Senior Advisors. As most of you know, John sends out emails on an almost daily basis sharing news articles about managers and local government topics, and he’s agreed to continue to do this.

Please join me in thanking John for his many years of service and for his willingness to continue to provide support to NCCCMA in a reduced capacity. If you would like to send any notes of appreciation to John, he can be reached at jwhitehurst@mediacombb.net.

We are happy to report that Scott Elliot, former County Manager with Pitt County, and Larry Faison, former City Manager with the City of Monroe, have been approved by NCCCMA and ICMA to be installed as our newest Senior Advisors. Please be on the lookout for more information regarding their appointments to be sent out to the membership in the coming weeks.