



PM MAGAZINE

JUNE 2007 · VOLUME 89 · NUMBER 5



Serving Diverse Communities — Best Practices

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Localities are called on to provide services to residents without a full understanding of the unique practices and expectations of diverse populations who are new to their areas. What is the best way to provide services to growing diverse populations? What practices are most effective?

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Ethics

- The Recall Turmoil
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Letters*

On Retirement

Taking Long-Term Care into Consideration

Commentary

- Black Crater Fire Hits Too Close to Home
- Breaking Out of the Sausage Factory
- Ya Gotta Love This Job

Profile

Norton Bonaparte, Jr.

Performance Matters

Not a Trivial Exercise

Intern Profile*

Daniel Jones, Gainesville, Florida

FYI*

- Help Reduce Fire Fatalities
- Generosity Begins at Home
- City Offers Parkmobile Party Packages
- Kabul Trash Dump Is Transformed Into a Pedestrian Walkway



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Serving Diverse Communities — Best Practices

Across the nation, local communities are experiencing rapid growth of di-verse ethnic populations. This is happening in both traditionally ethnically diverse states such as Arizona, California, and Texas as well as in states that are less traditionally diverse such as Arkansas, Georgia, and North Carolina. Along with this growth comes an inevitable clash of cultures.

Local governments are called on to provide services to residents without a full understanding of the unique practices and expectations of diverse populations who are new to their areas. What is the best way to provide services to growing diverse populations? What practices are most effective?

This article is the first of two articles designed to address these questions. In this article, three best practices case studies (one in Woodburn, Oregon, and two in Stockton, California) and an introduction to a recently completed best practices study are presented, along with key learnings from the implementation of these best practices. In the second article, sched-uled for publication in the July 2007 issue of PM magazine, a more in-depth look at the findings from the International Hispanic Network's (IHN) best practices study, "Municipal Best Practices for the Hispanic Community," will be presented.

Interest in an article on the topic of best practices for serving diverse communities was generated by a telephone coaching panel called "Serving Diverse Communities—Best Practices" held in October 2006, which was organized by Cal-ICMA's Preparing the Next Generation Committee (cochaired by Frank Benest, city manager, Palo Alto, California, and Tim O'Donnell, city manager, Brea, California).

The telephone coaching panel was presented to highlight the best practices study completed by IHN, and it was presented as one of several telephone coaching panels held throughout the year to train the next generation of local government managers and new public agency executives about key lead-ership topics.

The coaching session was moderated by Don Maruska of Don Maruska & Company, who also serves as director of the Cal-ICMA coaching program. Serving on the telephone coaching panel were two practitioners and a college profes-sor. Dr. Abraham Benavides, assistant professor, Department of Public Administration, University of North Texas, reported on the IHN's recently completed best practices study for serving Hispanic communities.

Authors John C. Brown, city administrator, Woodburn, Oregon, and Christine C. Tien, deputy city manager, Stockton, California, shared concrete exam-ples of best practices and strategies from their own cities that other local government agencies can follow to reach out to diverse communities and also bring diversity into their workplaces. Their stories are presented here.

Study Results: Municipal Best Practices for the Hispanic Community

IHN is a nonprofit organization whose purpose is to encourage professional excellence among Hispanic local government administrators; improve the man-agement of local government; provide unique resources to Hispanic local government executives and public managers; and advance the goals of professional, effective, and ethical local government administration. One of the organization's objectives is to improve the management of local government and, in particular, target the management of communities with Hispanic populations.

To further this objective, IHN commissioned the University of North Texas to survey cities across the nation to determine the best practices of local governments in Hispanic communities. The survey also investigated information regarding the effects of Hispanics on local government services, including housing, family services, personal safety, and the needs of lower-income families. Additional information was also sought to scrutinize immigrant services and the best practices conducted by differing local govern-ments. The study was funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

The survey was conducted during January and February of 2005, and it was sent to Hispanic city managers and to non-Hispanic city managers who manage cities with populations that are at least 12 percent Hispanic. The survey

received a 31 percent response rate, with responses from 31 states.

Responses include the identification of 29 best practices programs conducted in Hispanic communities, with an additional 16 best practices programs in police services identified through a review of the literature. A more in-depth description of the results of this study will be presented in the July 2007 *PM*.

Best Practices Case Studies

Woodburn, Oregon. Woodburn has 22,000 residents and a unique cultural composition. Natives of Woodburn are joined by immigrants (Latinos and "Old Believer" Russians), seniors, and commuters. Immigrants come for work, for affordable housing, and to join family. The effect of migration is so pronounced that fewer than one-fifth of Woodburn residents are natives, more than one-third are foreign born, and 30 percent lack U.S. citizenship.

In 2000, Latinos accounted for 50.1 percent of the population, making Woodburn Oregon's largest city with a Hispanic majority. This number is likely higher than reported because of undercounting by the U.S. Census Bureau. Enrollments in Woodburn's schools, where nearly 70 percent of all students are Latino and 66 percent are monolingual Spanish speakers or English-language learners, may be a more accurate measure.

Woodburn's cultural change has been gradual. Beginning in the 1950s, immigration has continued unabated to the present day as migrants from Texas, Russia, Mexico, and Central America have come to harvest crops. Many recent arrivals speak Spanish or one of 19 indigenous dialects as their primary language.

Civic leaders have long recognized Woodburn's cultural change. They also recognize the barriers limiting equal access to services by all residents. Language is an obvious barrier, but barriers also include lack of knowledge of regulations and procedures and distrust of government, especially law enforcement. Efforts to increase the number of Spanish-speaking employees were undertaken in the 1990s, but they fell short of addressing the other barriers.

The 2000 census accelerated discussions about the city's responsiveness to all of its residents and Latino involvement in civic affairs. In 2001, the city council directed staff to improve outreach and provide translation at council meetings. The council also sought to concentrate efforts on informing, communicating with, and engaging the city's Latino residents. The city council hoped to increase civic participation, improve the responsiveness of city services to the needs of the Latino community, and reduce negative contacts between law enforcement personnel and residents.

The city relies on its community relations officer (CRO) to meet these objectives. It also altered incentive structures and recruitment strategies to increase the numbers of culturally competent, bicultural, and bilingual employees. More than one-quarter of the police force is now bicultural, and every department in city hall has Spanish-speaking employees greeting the public.

The CRO position was created in 2002 and is responsible for specific activities:

- Providing oral and written translation.
- Providing ombudsman services.
- Producing a bilingual quarterly newsletter.
- Coordinating with merchants and other agencies to produce events.
- Promoting city services and activities in multiple media.

For this position, Woodburn hired an individual who could provide translation services in flawless Spanish, build relationships and trust, understand and explain government, and exhibit cultural competency. The CRO is a naturalized citizen with a legal and administrative background in the Mexican government and family ties to Woodburn.

Strategic placement of this office in the entry to city hall assures accessibility for those who cannot ask for its location. technical qualifications, the CRO brings to the job an ability to educate and develop community-wide cultural appreciation. Woodburn uses Spanish-language movies, live theater, and celebrations honoring holidays such as September 16, which is Mexican Independence Day, to build goodwill and knowledge of Latino culture.

Radio and television also help the city connect with Latino residents. The CRO develops public service announcements and audio and video broadcasts. Beyond local radio and public access television, the CRO also partners with a regional Spanish-language channel. The CRO is producing and hosting a new show, *City Life*, on FM radio. It will be broadcast in English, Spanish, and indigenous languages to inform, advise, and discuss city issues for residents of the community.

The CRO has assisted more than 2,500 individuals, businesses, and organizations since 2002. Issues span the range of services, although business licenses, utility billing, and traffic citations are frequent topics. Not surprisingly, when afforded the opportunity to communicate, non-English speakers voice the need for the same services and have the same concerns as English speakers.

The CRO has also translated hundreds of printed city materials, most of which are used to invite public participation or to provide notice. Long-range projects include translations of ordinances, applications, forms, and the city's Web site.

Finally, the CRO produces a fully bilingual, quarterly newsletter, distributed to more than 5,000 homes. Each issue includes typical newsletter fare, plus an installment of "How It Works," a civics lesson, and cultural information about the holidays, customs, and historic individuals and events of the city's diverse populations.

The newsletter is an important tool for developing cross-cultural appreciation. Merchant advertising subsidizes newsletter costs and has had unexpected relationship-building benefits with Latino-owned businesses. A downtown business watch, ongoing sponsorships for events and festivals, and user-friendly code enforcement are all products of this relationship.

Although Woodburn has a long way to go before it realizes the goal of inclusivity, the community relations officer provides an effective communication tool for those who are underrepresented in the community. Factors beyond the control of the CRO, such as immigration and citizenship status, can limit effectiveness on some issues. But through this position, Woodburn has a way to explain civic activities to all its residents, a way to invite them to participate, and a way to ensure their voices are heard regardless of language barriers or voting rights.

Stockton, California. Stockton is a diverse urban community with a rapidly growing population of 286,000. Stockton is 37 percent Latino; 23 percent Asian; 11 percent African American; 1 percent Native American, Hawaiian, Alaskan Native, and Pacific Islander; and 4 percent multiracial. The majority of Stockton's residents are U.S. born, but Stockton also has a large number of residents who are recent immigrants and who are not fluent English speakers.

Three years ago, Stockton was ranked number 17 nationwide for a city with the most residents born outside of the United States—almost 25 percent. These numbers have made city officials aware of the importance and value of outreach efforts to the group of people who are not native English speakers. Stockton provides two different best practices programs that directly target services to its diverse communities.

Lao Khmu Community Liaison Program. On October 8, 2002, the city entered into a partnership with Lao Khmu Association, a local community organization, to provide outreach services to the Southeast Asian refugee community to promote a greater understanding of local government and to enhance the job skills of those in the program. This program was funded by a grant received by the Lao Khmu Association from the Office of Refugee Resettlement (part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services) to enhance the job skills of residents with refugee status. In Stockton, the majority of residents with refugee status are from Southeast Asia.

Stockton became the first city in California and the second in the nation to establish a fully grant-funded refugee job placement program, with job placement occurring within a local government agency. From December 4, 2004, through October 31, 2006, a total of 18 participants or "Lao Khmu community liaisons" have participated in this program. These liaisons were mainly of Cambodian and Hmong descent. Each started with a six-month contract. Most received an additional six months of employment. Each liaison also received full job-related benefits.

The liaisons worked in a total of five city departments—the city clerk's office, the city manager's office, the fire department, parks and recreation, and the library. In the library, the liaisons were successful in their outreach efforts to the Southeast Asian community by using the library's bookmobile program. A few also assisted with translating and labeling Hmong videos and books. In the parks and recreation department, one liaison taught art at one of the city's after-school programs and eventually became an art instructor. Several liaisons were retained by city departments after the completion of their contracts.

Although funding for this program ended, the city benefited tremendously from the liaisons' work by tapping into their language skills to help with outreach to their respective communities. The participants also benefited tremendously by gaining a better understanding of local government and enhancing their job skills.

LEALES Program. A few years ago, the city began to hear complaints from Latino business owners about crime in the East Main corridor, a business district that is primarily Latino owned and serves the Latino community. Under the leadership of Gary Giovanetti, Stockton's vice mayor at that time, the city encouraged the businesses to form the East Main Business Alliance. The city envisioned a business watch group similar to the existing neighborhood watch groups.

After several months of meetings with the alliance, the Stockton police department noticed a pattern of crime that targeted Latino migrant farmworkers. The police department began to track and investigate each incident. The city found two primary reasons why Spanish-speaking migrant workers were vulnerable victims: they carried large amounts of cash, and they feared deportation.

In April 2005, the city enlisted the help of local trusted community and business organizations to create a new program called the Latino Education About Law Enforcement Services (LEALES). The goal of LEALES is to prevent and reduce crimes targeted at Latino community members who work on farms.

The name LEALES was created because it sounds like the Spanish word *lealtad*, which means "loyalty." LEALES members include a city council-member and representatives from the city manager's office, the police department, the San Joaquin County Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, Hispanic media outlets, El Concilio (a local nonprofit organization), and the Diocese of Stockton.

To address the fears of the Latino farmworker community about deportation, the Stockton police department developed a policy that states that police officers will not ask about the immigration status of crime victims. LEALES coordinated several successful media campaigns in both Spanish and English to inform the local Latino community about the police department's new policy and to provide tips on how not to be a victim.

Staff handed out flyers at hot spots, fairs, and venues frequented by the Spanish-speaking population. To help pay for brochures, the city received sponsorships from businesses that included the Community Trust Credit Union, the San Joaquin County Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, Food for Less, and Anheuser Busch.

There was coverage in the local media. The city also assigned a police officer to provide interviews on local Spanish-language radio and television shows. Segments on “How Not to Be a Victim” continue to be played on local Hispanic television stations.

LEALES has been a great success. Since the inception of LEALES almost two years ago, there has been a 16 percent increase in the reporting of crimes, including robberies and aggravated assaults, over a one-year period. LEALES is now working on alternative ways to help prevent farmworkers from being targets of robbers.

Many farmworkers do not have bank accounts and therefore carry large amounts of cash. LEALES is beginning a new push to encourage farmworkers to sign up for bank accounts and to let farmworkers know that check-cashing venues often take a large amount of their paychecks for administrative processing fees.

To set up a bank account, most banks require two forms of identification. For noncitizens of Mexican descent, a *matrícula consular*, a form of identification issued by the Mexican consulate, and a tax identification number are usually adequate forms of documentation. Large banks like Bank of America, Wells Fargo, and Washington Mutual accept *matrículas consulares* as a form of identification.

LEALES is working on convincing other banks to accept *matrículas consulares* as forms of identification. LEALES has also assisted with efforts to encourage Latinos to sign up for *matrículas consulares* by inviting the Mexican consulate to fairs and events.

Implementation of Best Practices: Lessons Learned

At the end of the telephone coaching panel, panelists identified these key learnings from implementation of their communities’ best practices programs:

1. Support from the top is important to success.
2. Start with a needs assessment that includes input from diverse communities.
3. Don’t focus on immigration status; services will not be utilized without trust.
4. Provide extensive outreach and make drop-in services easily accessible.
5. Analyze contacts to identify common issues, themes, and problems for follow up.
6. Translate written materials, city Web site information, and newsletters into the languages and dialects of diverse communities. Present not just the “what” but also the “why.” Use these materials to educate about government.
7. Use radio and television; some members of diverse and immigrant communities are not literate.
8. Cultivate local minority-owned businesses as partners in serving diverse communities.
9. Coordinate with other agencies that provide services to diverse and immigrant communities. The local Mexican consulate and farm labor unions are good examples that may be overlooked.
10. Understand the cultural differences in how meetings are conducted: meetings should be neighborhood based; start with meet-and-greet time to establish trust; provide child care; and solidify trust by “breaking bread” together—have food or snacks available.
11. Implement best practices in two phases: short term for demonstrated successes; then longer-term programs.
12. Evaluate regularly the effectiveness of new best practices programs for serving diverse communities.

The changing demographics and ethnic diversification of local communities are occurring rapidly, sometimes quicker than local governments are prepared to handle effectively. The results can be fear, anger, and frustration in the community; but these results can be avoided. Tools are available to support local government efforts to cope effectively with this change, and they are available through several professional organizations (see Resources).

Local governments are encouraged to contact these organizations for additional information.

Resources
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. For more information on the Cal-ICMA Coaching Program services and programs offered by the Preparing the Next Generation Committee, visit the Web site at www.cal-icma.org. 2. For a podcast of the October 2006 “Serving Diverse Communities—Best Practices” and other prior telephone coaching sessions, or for a listing of the 2007 telephone coaching program schedule, visit www.cal-icma.org/coaching. 3. For copies of PowerPoint® presentations, video clips, news articles, and contact information from the October 2006 telephone coaching session “Serving Diverse Communities—Best Practices,” visit www.cal-icma.org/coaching and search under the “Telephone Panels” tab. 4. For more information on the case studies or the best practices study presented in this article, contact Dr. Abraham David Benavides, assistant professor, Department of Public Administration, University of North Texas (benavides@unt.edu) or the authors of this article. Contact information is available at the end of the article. 5. Tools are available to support local government best practices efforts to serve diverse communities through these professional organizations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ International City/County Management Association (ICMA) at www.icma.org. ▪ International Hispanic Network (IHN) at www.internationalhispanicnetwork.org. ▪ National Forum for Black Public Administrators (NFBPA) at www.nfbpa.org. ▪ California Asian Public Administrators Network and Caucus of Elected Asians (CA-PANACEA) at achan@ci.sunnyvale.ca.us.

Julie C. T. Hernández (jcthernandez@managementpartners.com) is a local government consultant with Management Partners, San Jose, California (www.managementpartners.com), is a founding member of Cal-ICMA’s Preparing the Next Generation Committee, and is a former president and boardmember of the International Hispanic Network. **John C. Brown** is city administrator, Woodburn, Oregon

(john.brown@ci.woodburn.or.us). Christine C. Tien is deputy city manager, Stockton, California, and a boardmember of CA-PANACEA (christine.tien@ci.stockton.ca.us).

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FEATURE

Ethics

THE RECALL TURMOIL

Q. The mayor is taking the heat for an unpopular zoning decision, and disgruntled residents have begun circulating recall petitions. The village manager and senior staff want to do whatever they can to help the community and the organization get through the turmoil, but they are not sure how to handle it. They are bombarded with questions from the news media, who want to know how the recall campaign will affect the village. What are the ethical considerations the village manager should keep in mind?

A. A recall campaign has many of the same elements as a regular election of elected officials. Voters have the right to determine who is elected or who is removed from office. Elected officials have the responsibility to educate the public to vote for them or to explain the reasons to vote against the recall. The village manager should avoid commenting on the negative effects of a recall campaign because some residents will interpret that as a show of support for the mayor.

When speaking with the media, the village manager can explain her ethical obligations under the ICMA Code of Ethics and why she and her staff cannot comment on the situation. The second sentence of Tenet 7 requires ICMA members to "refrain from participation in the election of the employing legislative body." The guideline on elections of the governing body notes that "members should maintain a reputation for serving equally and impartially all members of the governing body of the local government they serve, regardless of party. To this end, they should not engage in active participation in the election campaign on behalf of or in opposition to candidates for the governing body."

The village manager will want to give a similar briefing to her elected officials so they, too, gain an understanding of her professional obligations.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND THE NONPROFIT OPPORTUNITY

Q. The assistant county manager has a broad portfolio of responsibilities: public works, human resources, and parks and recreation. He also joined the board of directors of a nonprofit organization that seeks to create more affordable housing in the region. Coincidentally, the county's director for community development recently presented an affordable-housing proposal to the board of supervisors, but it was rejected.

The assistant county manager is enthusiastic about leading regional discussions on housing issues. He took a facilitation course to improve his skills in helping groups work through controversial discussions. He has no privileged information at his disposal; all of the affordable-housing information he has gathered for the nonprofit has been distributed at public meetings. If he serves in the leadership role for the nonprofit, might his responsibilities there cause an ethical conflict with his responsibilities as assistant county manager?

A. The key issue is whether the county manager sees any conflicts in the two roles. If not, there is no ethical issue with the assistant county manager's nonprofit role. The assistant county manager will want to be sure he and the county manager discuss the potential political issues so they are in agreement on how to handle them.

PROMOTING AN Ethical Culture

Since ICMA adopted its first Code of Ethics in 1924, it has been recognized as a world leader in promoting ethical conduct in local government. Tap into ICMA's vast knowledge base to get the training and peer assistance services you need to foster an ethical workplace. The ICMA approach is interactive, motivational, and grounded in public service values.

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- Promoting an Ethical Culture
- Ethics in the Real World
- The Role of Managers in Building an Ethical Organization
- Elected Officials and the Public Trust

Contact the ICMA Ethics Center at 202-962-3521 or visit icma.org/ethics.

ICMA Leaders at the Core of Better Communities

Ethics advice is a popular service provided to ICMA members. The ICMA Executive Board members who serve on the Committee on Professional Conduct review the inquiries and advice published in PM magazine. ICMA members who have questions about their obligations

under the ICMA Code of Ethics are encouraged to call Martha Perego at 202/962-3668 or Elizabeth Kellar at 202/962-3611.

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On Retirement

Taking Long-Term Care Into Consideration

Often, when we are making plans for retirement, we spend a lot of time thinking about the trips we want to take, the extra time we will have to pursue our hobbies and spend with our loved ones, and sometimes even the start of a new career.

An area that we might not spend as much time considering, but that's just as important, is our health and the costs that come with getting older.

Life expectancy rates are higher than they've ever been. But we have to keep in mind that living longer carries with it the possibility of needing long-term care. The most current projections indicate that more than 40 percent of Americans age 65 and older will eventually need long-term care.

Long-term care refers to medical and social support services that assist people who have chronic health problems that affect their ability to perform everyday activities. Retirement homes and in-home health care are two good examples of this kind of support.

Long-term care can become quite expensive. The average annual cost for in-home health care is about \$37,000, and prices can reach \$70,000 for a private room in a nursing home or assisted-living facility.

Therefore, it is essential to prepare for these costs ahead of time, especially if you plan to stop working before you become eligible for Medicare.

One option to consider is long-term-care insurance. The advantage of having insurance is the peace of mind that your expenses will be covered if long-term care becomes necessary.

With insurance, personal assets are protected, there is greater choice in the selection of long-term-care settings, and, in general, families have increased financial security.

In response to client needs, ICMA-RC recently partnered with Long-Term Care Quote—an independent, consultative, phone-based network of experts in the long-term-care field—to assist participants in determining their long-term-care needs.

LTCQ works to simplify all of the complex information on the market today and helps participants secure the best value for their insurance dollar. The service works with many of the nation's leading insurance companies and provides estimates over the phone or on the Internet. There is even a tool to help you determine whether, given your personal circumstance, such a policy is appropriate.

With so many options available, it is important to us that our clients have this information at their fingertips.

Of course, retirees considering long-term-care insurance must weigh several factors, including personal financial situation, family medical history, proximity of other family members, age, and ability to pay premiums.

Be sure to compare plans and carefully evaluate the best type of policy for your situation.

Whether you use LTCQ or work through a financial planner, consider a long-term-care policy as a way to protect you and your family in the event of a serious illness. You may ultimately decide you don't want coverage, but you will have the security of knowing how long-term-care policies are structured and for whom they work best.

—Joan McCallen
President and CEO
ICMA-RC
Washington, D.C.

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Profile



Norton Bonaparte, Jr., is the city manager of [Topeka, Kansas](#).

Bonaparte Reflects on His First Year

City manager Norton Bonaparte, Jr., says native Topekans don't always appreciate what a great city they live in. "I have found that people who have lived here all their lives tend to see Topeka as being 'OK,'" Bonaparte said. "But those who moved away and came back, or are living here for the first time, speak very highly of Topeka as a great place to live."

Bonaparte said he feels that same sense of enthusiasm about Topeka, the eighth city he has called home during a 30-year career in public administration.

Bonaparte, 53, took office a year ago [in March] as Topeka's first permanent city manager. His previous jobs included being city administrator of Plainfield, New Jersey; city administrator of Camden, New Jersey; township manager in Willingboro, New Jersey; and city manager of Glenarden, Maryland.

Bonaparte and his wife, Santa (pronounced Son-tuh), last year bought a home in southwest Topeka, where they live with their daughter, Akia Bonaparte, 31; their son, Norton Bonaparte III, 25, a single father who works for Cingular Wireless; and a 1-year-old grandson, Norton Bonaparte IV.

Norton Bonaparte, Jr., took office at a time of political flux, as Topekans had elected three new councilmembers in 2003 and four new councilmembers and a new mayor, Bill Bunten, in 2005. Topekans also voted in 2004 to adopt a city council-manager government, while noncity voters in 2005 rejected a proposal to consolidate city and county governments.

David Bevens, whom Bonaparte named as city spokesman after taking office last year, said many Topekans expected their first city manager to bring "great changes." But Bevens said he thought the greatest change in city government since Bonaparte took office has been its stabilization.

Still, his time in office hasn't been entirely comfortable for Bonaparte. Councilman John Alcalá publicly criticized Bonaparte at a council meeting in July, saying he should share more information about city matters with the council. Councilwoman Sylvia Ortiz expressed a willingness to fire him in September at a meeting of the Hi-Crest Neighborhood Improvement Association. Votes from five councilmembers are needed to fire the city manager.

Bonaparte said he realized from having managed other municipal governments that political pressure is part of the

job. "Every city has its own unique political environment, and Topeka does, too," he said.

Bonaparte said one of his main challenges as city manager has involved educating Topekans about the role of the person with that job. He said the council's responsibility is to set policy while the city manager's job is to lead the city workforce while implementing those policies.

Bunten, who became mayor at the time the responsibility for running the city was being shifted from the mayor to the city manager, said he is pleased with the work Bonaparte has done. "I believe it's difficult for anyone to come into a city for the first time and just start off running, but he took his time, he got a feel for the city, and I believe after a year here that he is a good, solid member of the community," Bunten said.

Bonaparte said he and Bunten share a commitment to making the city cleaner and safer. Bonaparte also said he would like to see Topeka implement a "community visioning process" through which Topekans would develop a common, shared vision for their community and what they want it to be. Various sectors of the community then would work together to make that vision a reality.

Bonaparte compared the visioning process to a campaign announced by Topeka's Safe Streets anti-crime group last week to involve various community groups in working to make Topeka the nation's safest capital city with a population of more than 100,000.

Bonaparte said achieving that goal will involve fighting both crime and the perception that Topekans are in danger of being victimized.

"Making Topeka safe involves reducing crime and getting citizens active in crime prevention to the point where they feel safe," Bonaparte said.

He added that while Topeka was hurt economically by recent announcements of the impending closing of facilities operated by Payless ShoeSource and Adams Business Forms, Topekans can be proud about ongoing or upcoming projects to develop their city's riverfront, expand its Frito-Lay plant, and rebuild central Topeka's College Hill area.

"I think this is a city on the cusp of being able to transform itself into a very vibrant community," he said.

BONAPARTE'S SUCCESSES

Mr. Bonaparte described some of the high points of his first year as Topeka's city manager:

- Hiring former Kansas City, Kansas, Police Chief Ron Miller as Topeka police chief.
- Hiring Randy Speaker as a deputy city manager. Speaker continues to carry out his prior duties running the city's department of housing and neighborhood development.
- Working with the council to successfully develop a 2007 city budget and preparing to build a 2008 budget that is effective, efficient, and responsive to the public's needs.
- Initiating an ongoing restructuring of the city's code compliance department.
- Getting acclimated to Topeka's city government and its community.

—Tim Hrenchir
Reporter
Topeka Capital-Journal
Topeka, Kansas

Reprinted with permission from the March 13, 2007, issue of the *Topeka Capital-Journal* newspaper, Topeka, Kansas.

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Performance Matters

Not a Trivial Exercise

For more than 10 years, Urbandale, Iowa (population 36,000; Robert Layton, city manager), has used performance measurement to enhance its budgeting and decision-making processes. Communities like Urbandale that have leveraged performance information know that collecting, analyzing, and applying performance data are not trivial exercises.

It takes a significant amount of staff time and effort to develop an effective performance measurement program. This is true whether a community participates in the ICMA Center for Performance Measurement (CPM) or builds its own program from scratch.

In Urbandale, however, the resources that are devoted to the performance measurement program are seen not as an expense but as an investment that will pay off later in reduced costs, better service, or both.

As an example, consider Urbandale's recently completed Ten-Year Staffing Plan, which was presented to the city council in 2006 in response to the council's desire for a more thoughtful and objective approach to staffing decisions.

Before Urbandale developed a performance measurement program, its staffing planning tended to take a short-term view, and it accounted mainly for such nonperformance factors as population trends, changes in technology, the economic climate, changing citizen expectations, and recommendations from national standards-setting bodies. One of these was the FBI's annual publication *Crime in the United States (CIUS)*, which summarizes criminal activities and police staffing at the national, regional, and state levels.

The 2003 edition of *CIUS* reported that the national average police staffing level for cities in the 25,000 to 49,999 population range was 1.8 sworn officers per 1,000 residents; in midwestern cities of this size, the figure was 1.6. Not surprisingly, these figures were often cited as support for the claim that 1.5 officers per 1,000 is the "recommended" staffing level. (*CIUS* also noted that among cities in the 25,000 to 49,999 range, nearly 36 percent had fewer than 1.5 officers per 1,000.)

Rather than blindly aim for a recommended target in its staffing planning, Urbandale's elected officials and management team instead chose to focus on quantitative performance and outcomes. Although Urbandale had 1.27 officers per 1,000, the community had proportionally fewer sworn officers than many Iowa and midwestern cities of similar size.

In terms of quantitative performance measures, Urbandale was outperforming many of its peers. The city, for example, experienced fewer personal and property crimes, fewer crimes per 1,000 residents, and fewer arrests per 1,000 than comparable cities. It also knew that it cleared twice as many reported crimes per full-time employee at a cost 55 percent less per cleared crime when it compared itself with the average for participants in CPM. Perhaps most important, citizen perceptions in Urbandale were overwhelmingly positive, with 99 percent of surveyed residents reporting that they were "very satisfied" or "satisfied" with police services.

With these and similar performance measures in mind, the city undertook its effort to develop its staffing plan for the next 10 years. Department heads were asked to anticipate their staffing needs using quantitative performance measures to the extent possible. The information from the departments was combined with performance information from CPM (and other sources) to plan for and justify staffing changes in the coming decade.

Originally, the police department indicated that, because of the increasing population and geographic area of the city plus the desire to have 1.5 officers per 1,000 residents, it was necessary to increase staffing by 11 sworn officers over 10 years—an increase of 25 percent. When staff incorporated the performance data described above, however, the department head, the management team, and the elected officials agreed that an increase of six officers was more appropriate.

The Urbandale staffing plan will be revisited periodically and updated to reflect changes in environmental factors and performance information, so the numbers may be revised over time. It is clear, however, that the application of performance measures enabled the city to examine police staffing objectively and quantitatively and, therefore, avoid the potential hiring of five police officers over 10 years.

Absent performance measures, Urbandale likely would have added those 11 new officers over time. With performance measures, the city avoided a substantial cost while it also committed to ensure the high levels of public safety its residents expect.

—Robert Layton
City Manager
Urbandale, Iowa
rlayton@urbandale.org
and
Donald Gloop
Center for Performance Measurement ICMA
Racine, Wisconsin
dgloop@icma.org

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