



April 4, 2014

Mr. Lee Worsley, NCCCMA President  
200 East Main Street  
Durham, NC 27701

Dear Mr. Worsley,

As the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of professional local government management approaches, the NCACC has chosen to dedicate a portion of our resources to help promote ICMA's *Life, Well Run* campaign. Our commissioners' relationships with their professional managers are key to their success in moving their communities forward. It is, indeed, important to highlight the significance of this professional relationship. By expanding the existing efforts of the Association, we can help increase awareness of both this campaign and the profession.

By focusing on the activities of our communications and education departments, we envision a smooth integration of the *Life, Well Run* campaign into our daily operations. We have already engaged in some of these activities while others will be developed throughout this year. The attached CountyLines article shows one way we have begun highlighting the importance of professional management. This letter serves as our commitment to the *Life, Well Run* campaign and shows the ways in which we will promote professional management and good government while staying within the bounds of the NCACC mission.

- This is the inaugural year of the NCACC County Management Fellowship, which is a great way we are promoting professional management by encouraging post-graduates to join the profession. We are happy to have NC State MPA student, Michael James, as the first fellow to be a part of this program. He is currently working in the Lee County manager's office.
  - The executive director is planning to include two fellowships in the Association's budget for FY2014-2015.
- We plan to use this year's "Welcome to Your County" videos to highlight managers in North Carolina counties. We will interview managers from around the state and use *Life, Well Run* video clips for the intro and exit shots. We hope to use portions of [this video](#) and integrate it into our original production.
- In our monthly newsletter, *County Lines*, we plan to highlight a North Carolina manager for the next three months. This can include the *Life, Well Run* logo and might include a graphic that shows the current demographics of county managers in the state.
- This year we plan to create a collection of information that will help county officials when looking for a new manager. The creation of this resource is highly relevant to the *Life, Well Run* campaign because the resources will promote finding a well-qualified manager. Some resources that might be included are as follows:

- A book review of Vaughn Upshaw's book, *Getting the Right Fit: The Governing Board's Role in Hiring a Manager*.
- Guidance from an experienced manager and current NCACC Outreach Associate on the steps for successfully recruiting a new manager.
- A link to the ICMA's Code of Ethics and a statement about why it is important that managers adhere to these standards.
- On our website, under "Welcome to Your County," we hope to create a section that describes what it means to be a county manager.
- We are now connected to the *Life, Well Run* Facebook and Twitter sites. Through these social media tools, we hope to show our followers the great ways that this campaign is helping promote good government.
- As a part of the social media promotion, we will also help support the campaign by attaching the *Life, Well Run* hashtag to any postings we create that tie in with this initiative or "share" any relevant Facebook posts by the *Life, Well Run* committee.
- When NCACC staff members are visiting counties, we will take pictures of those employees we see doing great things for their communities and share that on social media outlets with the *Life, Well Run* hashtag attached.
- We will put a link to the *Life, Well Run* website under "[Learn About Counties](#)" on NCACC's webpage.
- We will declare April the *Life, Well Run* month in conjunction with County Government month and advertise it as such on our website.
- At our annual conference, we host a Youth Summit. This year we are hoping to find a county manager to speak with the youth during the introductory session in hopes of raising awareness and generating interest in professional management. If a member of the task force has a recommendation for or a volunteer who would like to participate in this event, that would be of great help in our planning efforts.

Through these activities, we hope to enhance the visibility of the *Life, Well Run* campaign in our efforts to promote professional management. Please let me know if you have any questions or any suggestions, and we look forward to working with you all in this capacity.

Sincerely,



Amanda Stratton  
Staff Assistant

cc: NCCCMA *Life, Well Run* Task Force  
Mr. Tom Lundy, Catawba County Manager  
Mr. Charles Penny, Rocky Mount City Manager  
Mr. David Thompson, NCACC Executive Director

Attachment: CountyLines Article, "County Managers Balance Many Roles"

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CountyLines

Posted on: March 31, 2014

**County Managers balance many roles**

It wasn't too long ago that most counties in North Carolina did not have a professional county manager.

By Todd McGee  
Public Relations Director

Instead, the chairman of the board served as the top administrative official, signing contracts, preparing the budget and overseeing county staff in addition to fulfilling the duties of an elected official.

But in the past 40 years, county government – and county governance – has changed significantly. The responsibilities for counties have grown and become more complex. A manager must understand how state and federal laws and regulations impact distinct county service areas such as public health, human services and public safety, must be an expert at crafting and managing a budget, must be able to manage and motivate a large and diverse workforce, and must be able to partner with a governing board that can often have differing perspectives on which direction a county should go. In short, a county manager has to be part lawyer, part accountant, part human resources director and part mediator.

"The position has gotten much more complex and I think the roles have changed substantially," said longtime Catawba County Manager Tom Lundy. "When I came into the profession, it was more like command and control. I think today the manager is much more of a facilitator, a community builder. We have to still have the management skill set, but I think there is much more of that facilitation and trying to build a community."

Lundy began his career in county government in 1972, when he served an internship with Catawba County. It was around that time that the N.C. General Assembly updated the general statutes for county administration, strengthening the laws for the council-manager form of government. By the end of the decade, as counties began to provide more and more services for citizens, nearly every county in the state had hired a professional county manager to oversee the day-to-day operations of the county and to implement the policies adopted by the elected Board of Commissioners.

"North Carolina has a history of strong, professional management," said Lundy, who became Catawba County Manager in 1979. "Our forefathers were very astute when they built this form into the General Statutes. It provides for a unitary form of government.

"Where this plan works best is where you have a very strong partnership between the elected officials, managers and citizens. Managers are able to take the policies of elected officials and turn them into action. This frees the elected officials up to be more in tune with the citizens and to be more focused on those broad governing policies."

Lundy pointed out a study in 2011 conducted by IBM that showed that local governments with the council-manager form of government were 10 percent more efficient. Lundy said the efficiencies saved taxpayers money and allowed those local governments to provide more services to citizens.

Lundy credited the UNC School of Government, the International City-County Management Association (ICMA), the N.C. City-County Managers Association (NCCCMA) and the N.C.

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Association of County Commissioners for promoting the development of professional county managers. These organizations offer many training sessions designed specifically for county managers, keeping them current on all the service areas provided by counties as well as best practices for budgeting, managing human resources and other issues.

"We are so blessed in North Carolina to have the resources we have for managers," he said. "The state association is such a robust organization. The School of Government is so wonderful. ICMA has been championing management for 100 years.

"Managers in this state are professionally trained thanks to their education and the tremendous work of the School of Government, and the excellent sessions put on by the NCACC and ICMA. Because of the extensive training, you've got managers who use best practices, who benchmark with other communities. A lot of research bears out that professionally managed cities and counties are much better for the citizens."

County government has changed a lot during Lundy's four decades in Catawba County. He has also seen a lot of changes in the county manager profession. When he first started, a medium-sized county like Catawba would be considered a stepping stone job for a professional manager. A manager would work a few years and then move up to a larger county.

Now, managers are staying for longer. Transylvania County Manager Artie Wilson has served as manager for that small mountain county for the past 22 years. He will be retiring Sept. 1. Jerry Ayscue has been serving as manager in Vance County, with a population of just over 45,000, for nearly three decades. Eighteen counties have had the same manager for at least the last 10 years, including in some of the more rural areas of the state like Bladen, Clay, Edgecombe and Swain counties.

"When I came into the profession, the adage or the advice was three years in a community and then go," said Lundy. "What we found over the years is that managers are much more engaged and involved. The length of time that managers are staying has increased.

"I think that's a good thing because you get invested in the community. Managers are staying longer and are having to live with the decisions and recommendations they are making."

Lundy says he doesn't see a return to the days when the chairman doubles as the county's top administrator. Durham County Commissioner Brenda Howerton hopes he is correct. Durham recently went through the retirement of veteran county manager Mike Ruffin, who had led the county since 2000, except for a brief period in 2004. Howerton said that during the search for Ruffin's successor, no thought was given to asking a commissioner to take over the reins.

"It just takes a different skill and knowledge from being a commissioner to being a manager," said Howerton. "For a manager, you have to have all the training and all the experience, and you have to have someone who is an expert on the budget. I would not want to be a manager – being a commissioner is enough of a challenge.

"I always appreciated Mike and his acumen about keeping us informed and keeping the ship going. That's what a manager does. He keeps the ship going."

Lundy is confident that North Carolina will continue to develop strong county managers. Even though there is concern about a recent rash of retirements from veteran managers (as many as 30 counties have hired a manager since January 2013 or will hire a new one this year) and the increasing challenge of managing a complex county government, Lundy believes the profession will thrive.

In fact, Lundy says the variety is a key selling point when he speaks to students in one of the many Master's in Public Administration programs offered in North Carolina. He says he does not hesitate when a student asks him about a career in local government.

"I wholeheartedly encourage them," he said. "For young people, it is the scope and variety of activities that you get to be involved in. It's a wonderful opportunity to work with people, to help build communities. If you like working with people, it is a great profession. You can actually see the results of your labor."

That sentiment was expressed by Transylvania County Manager Artie Wilson when he informed the citizens of his county of his impending retirement after 22 years at the helm.

"I have enjoyed working for the people of the county, and have found my work to be very meaningful," he said. "I am blessed to have a job that I love, and a job that makes a difference in peoples' lives."

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**Commissioners looking to move up to the Legislature**

Posted on: March 31, 2014

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