

# PM

PUBLIC MANAGEMENT

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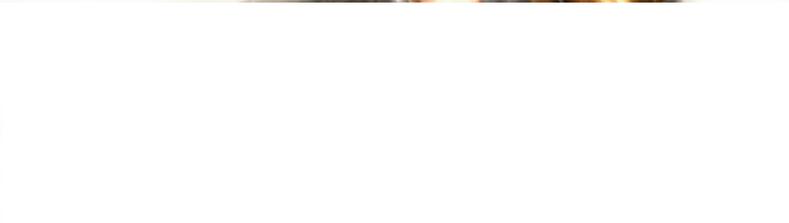
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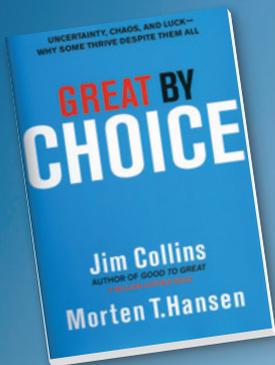
## IT CAN HAPPEN ANYWHERE

**Management Steps  
To Take Now**



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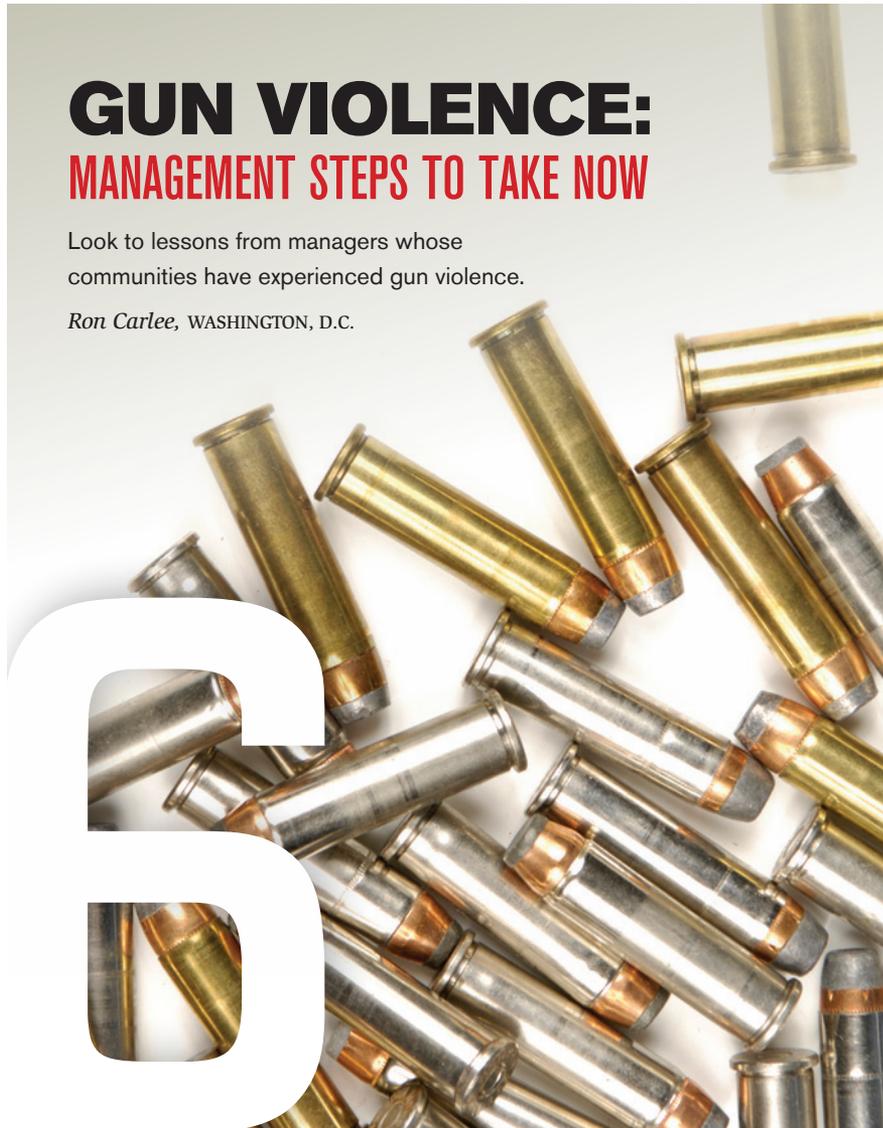


## cover story

# GUN VIOLENCE: MANAGEMENT STEPS TO TAKE NOW

Look to lessons from managers whose communities have experienced gun violence.

*Ron Carlee, WASHINGTON, D.C.*



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[icma.org/pm](http://icma.org/pm)

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BY MARTHA PEREGO

## WHAT'S A MANAGER WORTH?

### Setting reasonable compensation

# \$800,000:

This figure was blasted across national news media in 2010 as the city of Bell, California, corruption scandal unfolded. It's no wonder that it made national news. It was a sum that defied any reasonable explanation or standard in the profession.

The justice system is moving forward this spring with the criminal trials of the elected and appointed officials alleged to have engaged in a host of

## DECISIONS ON COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS MUST BE MADE BY THE ENTIRE GOVERNING BODY IN A PUBLIC MEETING.

illegal financial activities to misappropriate public funds, which included the city manager's compensation.

Bell is an anomaly. But Bell is also an opportunity: an opportunity to add structure and rigor to the process of setting executive compensation for local government managers so that the public we serve has faith in our conduct.

### The Challenges

The lack of established practices for negotiating public sector executive compensation combined with the transparency threshold that must be met makes an otherwise difficult task daunting. Roles and responsibilities may be clear on paper but not in action.

The decisionmakers—that is, the governing body—are not always experienced with the process. The beneficiary—that is, the manager—sometimes is the one

who is more knowledgeable, skilled, and, shall we say, savvy.

That imbalance can create a conflict of interest. The result can be compensation packages or benefits negotiated in good faith that are inappropriate, unfair, and just too costly.

### The Principles

The principles of the profession have long been the driver for personnel and compensation matters. The standard for establishing executive compensation is that it be fair, reasonable, and transparent. But what is “fair” is subjective and debatable.

Focused on principles, ICMA established formal guidelines for negotiating executive compensation that set standards for benchmarking using comparable public sector salaries on regional and national bases. The guidelines more clearly define roles and responsibilities, and they address issues that relate to all employees as well.

### The Process

For the process to have any credibility, the organization must be able to clearly articulate how the compensation package was calculated. To establish fair and reasonable compensation, the governing body should either operate as a committee of the whole or designate an evaluation and compensation subcommittee. This group should design and implement the methodology for setting compensation of the local government manager and any other appointees of the governing body.

Compensation benchmarks should be established on the basis of compensation in comparable local govern-



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\*ICMA Credentialed Manager (ICMA-CM)

ment and public sector agencies. The governing body should engage experts, whether contracted or in-house, to provide the information required for establishing fair and reasonable compensation levels.

All decisions on compensation and benefits must be made by the entire governing body in a public meeting.

### The Realities

The principles and guidelines outlined above provide insights into how to address such unusual or questionable practices as these:

#### *Is it okay to negotiate a retention bonus?*

Known as an inducement to retain the services of the CEO, retention bonuses are controversial even in the private sector. Some experts think that well-run organizations with competitive compensation plans don't need to chain senior employees to the organization with a promise of a substantial future payout; better to set a reasonable salary based on the position's requirements.

Then, set goals with defined metrics that if met, result in a performance-based reward. After all, past performance is not always a predictor of future results.

#### *Having negotiated severance, is it okay to negotiate and accept more in a forced departure? If so, under what circumstance?*

A deal is a deal! The most ethical approach generally is to accept what was originally negotiated and not to leverage the departure to obtain more. But there are unique situations where it is fair and ethical to negotiate for more: long-tenured managers who are terminated close to retirement and short-tenured managers who sometimes incur the cost of relocation but are terminated before being afforded the chance to show what they can do. It is rare, but the settlement of legal claims may result in additional payments made at departure.

#### *Is it okay to request an exception to the policy that caps the amount of leave that can be sold back in order to boost retirement?*

Managers are in a unique class and do negotiate for benefits that other employees do not receive. But changes to benefits should be considered during agreement negotiations or renegotiations so that changes can be considered in the context of the cost of the entire package. Avoid one-offs and practices that lead to pension spiking.

#### *In a small organization with limited resources, it can be beneficial for staff to play multiple roles. Can the manager serve multiple functions and be paid a salary for each job?*

An individual should receive a single salary that recognizes all duties and responsibilities assigned rather than different salaries for different assignments.

### Key Reminders

Elected officials have a governance role to play. Create a compensation committee of the governing body or committee of the whole to design and implement the framework for setting the manager's compensation.

Decisions on compensation and benefits must be made by the entire governing body in a public meeting. In the interests of transparency, the salary plan and salary ranges for local government positions, including the manager's employment agreement, should be publicly accessible on the agency's website.

Don't put your personal compensation interests before the good of the overall organization and that of the citizens.

Local government managers have an ethical responsibility to be clear about what is being requested and to avoid excessive compensation.

Greed is not good. **PM**



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# WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE YOUR LEGACY TO BE?



**JEFF WELDON, ICMA-CM**  
City Manager  
Brookings, South Dakota  
jweldon@cityofbrookings.org

Since a core value of effective local government management is about making a difference, I believe a valued legacy would be that I left my community better than when I found it; and that the accomplishments made in partnership with so many other stakeholders over time, truly made a difference in the quality of life for residents and visitors.

Whether it is building physical infrastructure or civic infrastructure, the ability to incrementally move the needle just a little every day to build capacity that helps advance a community toward its goals is perhaps the greatest testament of professional achievement local government managers can earn.

Legacies should stand the test of time and be sustained by their lasting and self-perpetuating impact made through the leadership, professionalism, knowledge, and perseverance we as managers were able to bring to our communities during our service.



**DONNA VANDERLOCK, ICMA-CM**  
Town Manager  
Weston, Massachusetts  
vanderclock.d@westonmass.org

I hope to leave behind a town government that is:

- financially sustainable, has set aside sufficient reserves, is on track for funding its long-term liabilities, and has a culture of justifying the funding level that is truly needed to provide services cost-effectively and will turn back money that doesn't need to be spent.
- responsive to resident requests and concerns, provides excellent customer service, and when saying "no," explains the reasons why.
- a place where employees enjoy coming to work; where they feel supported, respected, and valued for their contributions; and where they work well as a team to provide services to the community.
- regarded by residents as being well managed.



**MARKETA GEORGE OLIVER, ICMA-CM**  
City Manager  
Norwalk, Iowa  
marketaoliver@ci.norwalkia.us

I would like my legacy to be one of fairness, not only to residents, employees, and councilmembers but also to future generations.

I want—and feel I have an obligation—to leave them in better circumstances than my generation inherited. I want to leave a legacy of an example of the kind of service that a person would want to emulate.

On a personal level, I would like to leave a legacy of generosity and kindness, of volunteerism, and of helpfulness.



**ALBERT TRIPP, ICMA-CM**  
City Manager  
Airway Heights, Washington  
atripp@cawh.org

I desire to leave a legacy of advancing the community that I serve. During a time of economic and political uncertainty, I am concerned about how easy it is to fall into a trap of feeling trepidation about what tomorrow holds. As I look around, changes in every aspect of modern cities and counties appear as a blur.

Still, communities need leaders who are ready to take bold, calculated, and decisive actions to prepare for tomorrow and the future. Without such leadership, communities will not be equipped to meet the changes and opportunities of tomorrow. Each day is a brand new day to move my community forward and build a better tomorrow. **PM**

# MEDICAL MARIJUANA

Find a list of websites with local ordinances and actions in states where medical marijuana laws were recently approved.

► [icma.org/medicalmarijuana](http://icma.org/medicalmarijuana)



# 2

## CITIES LEARNING FROM CITIES

Professional staff from Golden, Colorado, assessed traffic flow, intersections, and pedestrian patterns in the city of Gjilan, Kosovo, and recommended improvements that will help Gjilan reduce congestion, ensure pedestrian safety, and keep parked cars off the sidewalks.

► [icma.org/kosovotraffic](http://icma.org/kosovotraffic)



## BEET JUICE FOR THE ROAD

Overland Park, Kansas, tested mixtures to determine if a beet juice mixture works for snow- and ice-control operations.

► [icma.org/beetjuiceforsnow](http://icma.org/beetjuiceforsnow)



## PREPARE AND RECOVER

For disaster preparedness and economic recovery assistance, the International Economic Development Council has a distinctive website.

► [icma.org/econ\\_recovery\\_site](http://icma.org/econ_recovery_site)

By Ron Carlee

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# **GUN VIOLENCE:** IT CAN HAPPEN ANYWHERE

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MANAGEMENT STEPS  
TO TAKE **NOW**



**Norcross, Oakland, Seattle, Aurora, Oak Creek, Minneapolis, and Newtown**—seven U.S. cities from coast to coast, all of which experienced mass shootings in 2012: 72 dead, 70 injured, and many others emotionally scarred for life.

The magnitude of gun violence in the United States is undeniable. As with all social phenomena, the extent of the problem and the dominant public attitudes vary dramatically from one community to another. The stark reality is that mass gun deaths can occur in any community on any day. The challenge for managers is to be prepared.

### TAKEAWAYS

- › Have a gun violence plan but be prepared to improvise.
- › Take care of the victims and families first and then immediately take care of all responders—especially, but not only, police, fire, and EMS.
- › Move on.

### 10 Issues Requiring Attention

City managers who have experienced mass shootings in their communities have accumulated valuable experiences that can help other managers prepare for similar emergencies. Based on interviews and reports from these communities, here are 10 critical issues that have emerged.

#### 1. STAY INVOLVED.

Managers walk a line between disengagement and micromanagement, but at all stages—emergency preparedness, response, and recov-

ery—the chief executive needs to be visible and engaged.

Blacksburg, Virginia, is the home of Virginia Tech, the location of the 2007 mass shootings that killed 33 people and injured 23. Blacksburg Police Chief Kim Crannis advises that a manager needs to be involved so that the manager understands what the police and emergency management personnel are doing and why. Mark Verniel, Blacksburg's city manager, confirmed that participating in simulation training "gave me an entirely different perspective on what active shooter policies really mean."

**2. PLAN AND TRAIN.** The Columbine High School murders in 1999 changed everything, showing how lessons can be learned and put into place. Active shooter plans are now commonplace and direct first responders to encounter and neutralize the shooter as the immediate priority.

Most police departments now plan and train based on this model. Mass events, however, require responses across all of the assets of a local government. Planning, training, and testing cannot be limited to public safety.

Police Chief Mike Kehoe, Newtown, advises that cities need to practice and drill for these incidents with all of the stakeholders and in the locations where the incidents can occur. In the case of a school, for example, that means training with the fire department, the emergency

drills together.

They had also studied the official report published on the Virginia Tech shootings and had integrated lessons learned from that tragedy into the university's and DeKalb's emergency response procedures.

**3. ACTIVATE THE PLAN.** The actual incident, however, will not match the plan and the scenario training. Having a strong foundation enables responders to improvise based on the uniqueness of the situation. Expect the unexpected; be prepared to be surprised.

A 2012 shooting at a nursing school in Oakland, California, left seven people killed and three injured. City Manager Deanna Santana shared a police department after-action report that advised

of sensitivity to people who have lost loved ones.

Family assistance is critical. Families need to have a number to call and someone with whom to talk. Many family members will gather at the scene. A safe, secure, and private location needs to be established for the families where they can get accurate information and support services and have their basic needs met.

Delays in identifying victims and clearing the crime scene will seem endless and create considerable anxiety for family members. They need to know that people are aware of their needs and are doing everything possible to meet them. They need *empathy with action*.

The Oakland Police Department reports that it needed to get translators for victims and witnesses and needed water and food for them during the long period that it took to identify the deceased and to take statements. Everyone was in shock: victims, witnesses, and responders.

Skip Noe is city manager of Aurora, Colorado, where 12 people were killed and 58 injured during the 2012 shooting in a movie theater. Noe advises local government staff to take their time and follow the lead of victims. "Putting the victims first will always put responders and the local government in the best position."

**5. TAKE CARE OF YOUR PEOPLE, YOURSELF, AND THE COMMUNITY.** It may seem strange that the community is listed last in this heading; however, if first responders and other officials, including the manager, are emotionally impaired, they cannot take care of others.

A mass death event, however, presents images never imagined, images indelibly etched into everyone's memory. Early intervention can make a difference. Critical stress debriefing is an essential part of the preplanning and requires immediate deployment. It's a mistake to think that intervention is only needed for first responders. A mass death event takes an emotional toll and counseling needs to be rapidly available for everyone, including local govern-

## “Putting the victims first will always put responders and the local government in the best position.”

medical service (EMS) responders, the state police and local neighboring police, the teachers, and the school administrators all at the same time

This is extremely difficult from a scheduling standpoint, but it is critical. Bill Halstead, fire marshal and emergency management director for Newtown, says it is critical for a fire department to have standard operating procedures and operating guidelines in place for its response to violent incidents, and to coordinate its practices with other responders.

At the 2008 shooting at Northern Illinois University (NIU) in DeKalb, Illinois, six people were killed and 21 injured. City Manager Mark Biernacki shared an independent study that reported how the fire department, department of public safety, hospital, and other mutual-aid responders were well prepared for the shooting because employees had practiced emergency

responders to be flexible and prepared to change tempo depending on the situation.

Dan Singer is city manager of Goleta, California, where seven people were killed at a mail processing plant. He notes that government is accustomed to "following the rules," which can help guide an organization in a time of crisis, but that not every scenario can be predetermined. Goleta says key participants must think creatively, intuitively, and non-bureaucratically.

**4. TAKE CARE OF THE VICTIMS AND THEIR LOVED ONES.** This is one of the most critical and most challenging tasks. Once the scene is secured and people are out of danger, a new phase of difficult and emotional work begins. In everything that is done, it is critical to show the highest possible regard for the dignity of the people who may have died and the highest possible level



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ment staff members.

Of less severe but real impact is overwork and obsession with the incident. All participants, including the police and fire chief, the manager, the mayor or board chairman, and the public information officer, are all at risk of overextending themselves and diminishing their effectiveness. Self-discipline rarely works. People engaged in a major event must take care of each other, up and down the hierarchy.

Singer observed that everyone's attention—the manager, police and fire chiefs, public information officer, mayor, and others—is focused outward during a mass event. Employees in the organization, or those who have responded or have simply been touched by the incident, also need attention, support, reassurance, and information.

**6. MANAGE THE MEDIA AND OTHER OUTSIDERS.** The number of media outlets is overwhelming and their reach

is global. Media transmit 24/7, with an insatiable appetite. Have a media management plan in place, including contingency resources from outside the organization.

Be prepared to take these actions:

- Designate a media manager.
- Find a place to stage the media.
- Meet the media's basic safety and sustenance needs.
- Give the media visuals.
- Schedule regular briefings.
- Select a spokesperson; have a clear message and stick to it.

Kirsten Zimmer Deshler, former public information officer for Goleta, says that "from a communications standpoint, it would be an understatement to say Goleta was not prepared for this crisis." City Manager Singer goes on to point out that managers "shouldn't worry about overcommunicating; You can't say too much, too often," he asserts, "when providing pertinent and helpful information to the community and media."

Blacksburg Manager Verniel notes that in addition to the media, there will be many "official" visits and that "people with issues" will appear. Among the most common in Blacksburg were protestors from Westboro Baptist Church. When the independent church known for its extreme ideologies came to Blacksburg wanting to create a scene, Verneil reports, "We didn't take the bait; we let them do their thing and then they moved on."

**7. FACILITATE AN AD HOC MEMORIAL AND APPROPRIATE EVENTS.**

People are compelled to demonstrate their sadness and hurt. Help make a memorial happen. Find a place for it and protect it. At an appropriate time, retire it and preserve the artifacts as appropriate.

Noe says there was an overwhelming outpouring of support and a need for the community to come together in Aurora. Accordingly, the city planned and executed a vigil in 48 hours, with an attendance estimated at 10,000.

Profiles of

## Leadership and management in action

**"Being a Credentialed Manager** keeps me on my toes! It helps me approach learning opportunities throughout the year knowing that I'll be recording what I learned, what difference it made, and how it will improve my effectiveness as a leader and manager in my organization."

— Susan K. Thorpe

*Deputy City Manager, Peoria, AZ*

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**ICMA**

## Calendar of Events

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- **May 2–3** Mountain Plains Region, (Aurora, CO)

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### 8. MANAGE DONATIONS AND

**VOLUNTEERS.** Beyond the ad hoc memorial, a number of people will want to help, often with money, which needs a depository and a trustworthy administrator to oversee it. People will also want to make donations of goods and services, whether these are needed or not. Realize that these are good people with good intent who sincerely want to help. Give them a way to do so and have a strategy in place to accomplish it.

### 9. PLAN A PERMANENT MEMO-

**RIAL.** Involve the families of victims and others intimately connected to the event. Set realistic goals that are achievable within a reasonable period of time.

**10. MOVE ON.** In the immediate term, practical issues need managers' attention. Trash still needs to be collected, water mains have to be repaired, and responses must be made to routine 911 calls. There is a compelling need to return to normalcy or as close as one can get in the community.

In the mid-term, the community has to resolve a long list of tasks: clearing the crime scene; reopening or permanently closing the site of the incident; attending to such legal matters as lawsuits and trials; and handling the many requests from outside organizations for presentations about the event, with the heaviest demands likely to be on the police and fire chiefs.

Aurora Manager Noe relates what a difficult decision it was to reopen the movie theater where the shootings took place. In the end, the conclusion was to reopen, in many ways as an act of defiance against the shooter.

And then there are the official reviews—after-action reports, commission reports, legislative reports—any and all of which may second-guess what the manager and his or her team did and how they performed. Blacksburg Manager Verniel recommends embracing legitimate criticism and using it as a lesson for everyone. He notes that

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security launched a new website in January 2013 that provides comprehensive information about active shooter preparedness: <http://www.dhs.gov/activeshooter>.

Columbine is a great example of how people learned to operate differently.

The ability to “move on” for the long-term may be the hardest task of all. Dealing with all of the above issues creates a new day-to-day reality that can become an obsession. All involved will be changed forever.

“Surreal” is a word that has often been used to describe gun-violence tragedies. Managers must find the support to move on themselves, so that they can help the community move on, honoring those lost and building a community for the living, for their children, and for posterity.

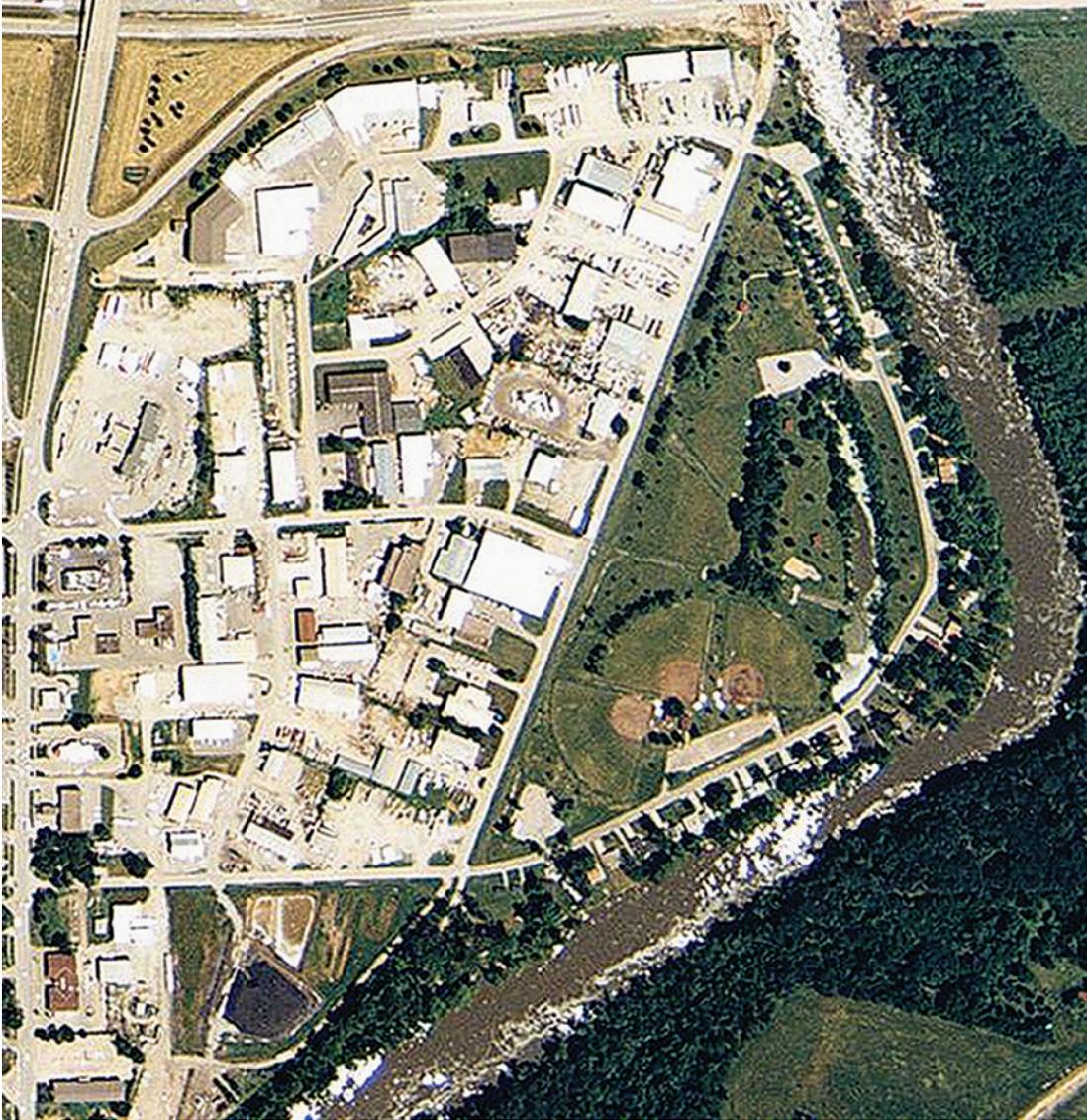
### Join the Conversation

ICMA, in collaboration with the Alliance for Innovation, has created a gun violence topic on the Knowledge Network ([icma.org/kn](http://icma.org/kn)) that is open to all contributors. Its intent is to share lessons learned and to create an environment to discuss civilly the issue of gun violence and its impact at the local level. **PM**

Material for this article is based on interviews and e-mail messages with staff members from affected communities and written reports that they provided. ICMA staff members Leonard Matarese and Thomas Wiczorek made contact with the police and fire chiefs from Newtown, Connecticut. Staff member Gabriel Brehm also conducted research. Figures were obtained from various news sources.



**RON CARLEE** is chief operating officer, ICMA, Washington, D.C. ([rcarlee@icma.org](mailto:rcarlee@icma.org)). On April 1, he will begin service as city manager, Charlotte, North Carolina. He was previously county manager of Arlington County, Virginia, 2000–2009, and had local responsibility for managing the response to the 9/11 terrorist attack on the Pentagon in 2001.



Before (left) and after (right) aerial shots of a formerly distressed area called Iowa River Landing in Coralville, Iowa.

# A BROWNFIELDS BONANZA

CORALVILLE, IOWA, UNDERGOES  
REDEVELOPMENT TRANSFORMATION

By Howard Lalli



by more than 58,000 cars per day. Many of the vehicles are on their way to the University of Iowa and its basketball arena and football stadium, as well as the VA Hospital and the University of Iowa Hospital and Clinics, which is the largest teaching hospital west of the Mississippi River. The identified site, however, was home to waste-transfer stations, dumpsters, abandoned warehouses, adult entertainment establishments, trucking firms, and recycling yards.

### Setting Priorities

Once the site was identified, the city council set priorities and work began with a volunteer committee inviting public input on an ambitious master revitalization plan for the Iowa River Landing development. The plan resulted in a design of a mixed-use district with a multi-million dollar hotel and conference center that would create an inviting gateway to the city.

Data resulting from EPA grant-funded phase I and II environmental site assessments was used multiple times over several decades to drive realization of the ambitious redevelopment. Multipronged public engagement ranged from involvement with the 75 owners of 110 parcels of land in the redevelopment area, to outreach at schools to promote education about contamination and what students can do to help clean up their environment for the future.

Engagement of property owners included addressing initial concerns that testing results would become public information. The process included helping them realize that these issues would surface eventually—whether during sale, redevelopment, or financing of an expansion—and that testing up-front minimizes the impact on a property’s long-term value. Today, property owners in the area readily seek the assessment.

The city continually sought the most sustainable possible redevelopment processes, which included recycling existing concrete streets, sidewalks, and building foundations for use as granular backfill under new streets. Recycled asphalt overlay material was stored for future use. Four metal buildings were disassembled, taken off-site, and reassembled for reuse on other sites so that the material did not go to the landfill.

Existing wetlands were not bulldozed

### TAKEAWAYS

- › Coralville, Iowa, exemplifies how small communities can transform underused land into a community asset.
- › Educating and engaging the public throughout Coralville’s redevelopment project was essential to its success.

Coralville, Iowa, a heartland community of 18,500 people adjacent to Iowa City, successfully used \$1.9 million brownfields grant funding from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to catalyze redevelopment of an industrial park located at the gateway to the city. The cleanup that ensued became the largest in Iowa’s history, including removal of 72,000 gallons of diesel fuel, a significant coal pile, and thorough groundwater remediation. Although Coralville is still in the process of executing its redevelopment plan, the community is already realizing benefits.

In the late 1980s, the city targeted Iowa River Landing as a distressed location with great potential due to its location next to the Iowa River and Interstate 80, which is passed

## ICMA PARTNERS WITH EPA ON BROWNFIELDS CONFERENCE

**Brownfields redevelopment** projects often require the expertise of such multiple disciplines as environmental science, economic development, infrastructure engineering, civic planning, financing, and community development. In most jurisdictions, however, practitioners of each of those disciplines are housed in separate departments, making coordination a challenge to brownfields program managers.

“The key to successful redevelopment projects is effective interoffice coordination within a local government that can often be facilitated by the local government manager. ICMA, in partnership with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, organizes the National Brownfields Conference to educate local decisionmakers about sustainable land reuse and to share successful collaboration techniques.

Since 2003, the conference has steadily grown from an event with roughly 2,500 registrants at Brownfields 2002 in Charlotte to more than 7,000 for Brownfields 2011 in Philadelphia; no conference was held in 2012. Brownfields 2013 is expected to be one of the largest conferences to date.

— **GRANT SPARKS**, BROWNFIELDS 2013 CONFERENCE DIRECTOR, ICMA, WASHINGTON, D.C.



This photo depicts a small portion of the 60 acres of land that were transformed over the past 12 years of redevelopment, where Coralville sought sustainable processes, including recycling and reassembling metal buildings for reuse on other sites.

over but rather enlarged and enhanced to become an integral part of the riverfront park for public use. Other sustainable practices that Coralville implemented included permeable paving, stormwater control, green roofs, LED lighting, and electric-car charging stations.

The Coralville Marriott Hotel and Conference Center was completed in 2006 with 286 rooms, and 6,000 square feet of meeting and exhibit hall space. The city-owned hotel generated more than \$4.5 million in room revenue in its first five years. Artwork displayed in the hotel is created by Iowa artisans, and its library features books by writers who have attended the world renowned Iowa Writers Workshop at the nearby University of Iowa.

In front of the hotel, the privately financed River Bend was built with three floors of residential condominiums above 26,000 square feet of first-floor commercial development that catalyzed other private investment in the area.

During the redevelopment process, it was important to the community that an existing softball complex not be lost, so the city purchased property in other parts of the community to expand the facilities for adult

and youth softball, baseball, soccer, and additional sports activities.

Greater community connectivity has also resulted from the redevelopment: Coralville and Iowa City created a new pedestrian-bicycle trail over a rehabilitated dam across the Iowa River.

At every step of the redevelopment, EPA funding—and when there were gaps between eligibility for such grants, funding from the city—made it possible to answer concerns about environmental risk. The assessments made it possible for the city to either demonstrate that there was no risk on a particular parcel or, when there was, to determine its extent and develop a plan to address it.

By 2006, Coralville had realized \$140 million of investment: \$70 million in the Marriott, \$40 million in acquisitions and demolition, \$18 million of public infrastructure, and \$12 million of other commercial redevelopment.

In addition to the usual analysis, data from the early assessment was also used to negotiate property values with existing owners. The information depicted different scenarios ranging from unrestricted residential to heavy industrial use. It was

used again to assist the city in ensuring that it maintained its due diligence and its liability protection as purchasers of contaminated property.

The data was used in infrastructure applications to help develop such sustainable infrastructure for the area as a cleanwater loan to create bioswales, infiltration practices, wetlands, and planning practices to minimize the stormwater runoff impacts from the development. Most recently, the assessment data is being used to help developers pursue state tax credits, once again leveraging the original EPA grants.

### A Path of Redevelopment

Perhaps most importantly, all of this has led to formally establishing and defining a brownfields program, allowing a variety of properties to be assessed and started on the path of redevelopment, which would have been extremely difficult without the EPA grant funding.

A second phase of redevelopment has been underway since 2006, led by a partnership with the University of Iowa Hospital and Clinics. Its \$70 million Iowa River Landing state-of-the-art facility opened in October 2012, serving 600 patients a day with a full-time staff of 300. The University is now in the early

**During the redevelopment process, it was important to the community that an existing softball complex not be lost, so the city purchased property in other parts of the community to expand the facilities for adult and youth softball, baseball, soccer, and additional sports activities.**

stages of planning for a second, similar facility in the Iowa River Landing.

Earlier in 2012, Backpocket Brewing, a 225,000-barrel production and bottling facility with public tap room, opened its doors. Just up the street from the brewery, a 100-room Homewood Suites extended-stay hotel with first-floor retail space opened in early 2013, and June 2013 will bring the arrival of an 80,000 square foot Von Maur department store. This phase of redevelopment will signal a total public and private investment of more than \$300 million.

### Tips for Successful Projects

Coralville City Administrator Kelly Hayworth is a loyal attendee of the National Brownfields Conference (see box this page). "Attending these conferences helped me see what other communities have done," says Hayworth. "I've seen a

range of types of reuse, and I've learned the practical aspects of getting residents and businesses involved." Here are his tips for successful redevelopment projects:

**Engage the public.** Coralville recognized the need for public involvement and therefore created a planning committee made up of city council representatives, leaders from the community and local businesses, university employees, and residents. Clear communication with the community as to what the master plan entailed and the process of getting there was key to the city's success.

**Harness funding.** Coralville has received seven EPA Brownfields Assessment Grants to date, totaling more than \$1.8 million. Obtaining grant funding is a competitive process but the determined city persistently applied for grants knowing the long-term benefits would pay off. Coralville also used a mixture of local and state funding in order to complete the project.

**Create partnerships.** Much of Iowa River Landing's success is attributed to the public and private partnerships that were vital throughout the redevelopment plan. At each step of the process, partnerships offered a range of expertise, guidance, and support. The EPA, Iowa Department of Transportation, Iowa Department of Economic Development, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, city council, University of Iowa, and numerous private organizations were instrumental in this project. **PM**

## GAIN A BROWNFIELDS EDUCATION

**Local governments play** a huge role in brownfields redevelopment. Typically, it is the responsibility of local government officials to identify sites, create action plans, implement programs, apply for funding, and monitor a project to completion. Coralville, Iowa, City Administrator Kelly Hayworth continues to attend the National Brownfields Conference because he and his staff colleagues have benefitted from ideas and inspiration that have fueled the redevelopment of a 160-acre brownfields site in his community. "It isn't just for large cities. Small communities can take great advantage of the information at the event," he says.

The National Brownfields Conference, Brownfields 2013, being held in Atlanta, May 15–17, 2013, is the largest, most comprehensive conference focused on cleaning up and redeveloping abandoned, underused, and potentially contaminated properties in the nation. Participants gain access to more than 150 educational and learning opportunities, outstanding plenary sessions, 200 exhibitors, scores of networking events, special training sessions, film screenings, and more to aid in any redevelopment project. To learn more, visit [www.brownfieldsconference.org](http://www.brownfieldsconference.org).



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THE  
**ARTS** ARE  
*DEFINITELY*  
GOOD FOR  
**BUSINESS**

Final article in a three-part series on  
the value of nonprofit arts and culture  
organizations to local governments

By Robert Lynch

In previous articles published in the January/February and March 2013 *PM* magazines, I wrote about how nonprofit arts organizations contribute to a local government's economy and create jobs, economic impact, and tax revenue. For this final article, I am going to switch gears and discuss how the arts are used to attract non-arts businesses to communities, how they help keep skilled employees at those businesses, and how they improve local schools.

As local government managers, you work to attract major corporations and small businesses to open up shop in your community. You know that a new factory employing 100 people will generate hundreds of thousands of dollars in economic activity and tens of thousands in tax dollars.

I suspect you have a standard presentation that you use to demonstrate why a business should locate in your community. The attractions might include low tax rates, cheap real estate, or quality schools. But does your standard pitch include a robust arts and cultural scene and substantial arts education in local schools? If not, it should!

## TAKEAWAYS

- › To be successful when attracting new businesses, a manager needs to be prepared to sell a community, including its cultural resources.
- › Business leaders overwhelmingly want creative employees. A manager needs to make sure a community has a robust creative economy to train and keep these highly sought-after employees.

### CEOs Value Art Skills

More and more CEOs are looking for more pluses than just tax breaks. They want happy employees who are creative and are good problem solvers. More often than not, business leaders say creativity is of high importance when hiring.

The arts are about critical thinking, solving and reframing problems and facts in ways that reveal insights and opportunities. Music, creative writing, drawing, and dance provide skills sought by employers of the third millennium. In fact, a 2010 Americans for the Arts survey found that 72 percent of companies contributing to the arts recognize that art skills stimulate creative thinking, problem solving, and team building.

The Boeing Company exemplifies this principle. When considering this company's history—from designing and building the earliest biplanes to creating and supporting today's supersonic aircraft and spacecraft—you might think it would be content with how far it has come. But a company of its size and scope doesn't succeed by resting on its laurels.

It is constantly reexamining its capabilities and processes to ensure that it is as strong and vital as its heritage. In fact, its culture mirrors the heritage of aviation itself, built on a foundation of innovation, aspiration, and imagination. To help foster

a culture of innovation and imagination, Boeing has turned to the arts.

George Roman, vice president, state and local government operations and regional executive, at Boeing, sums it up nicely: "We have long held that investing in the arts positively impacts economic development and growth, produces a creative and diverse workforce, and nurtures the imagination and self-reflection needed to solve complex personal and community issues."

Christopher "Kip" Forbes, vice chairman of Forbes, Inc., echoes this sentiment. "The success of my family's business depends on finding and cultivating a creative and innovative workforce. I have witnessed firsthand the power of the arts in building these business skills. When we participate personally in the arts, we strengthen our 'creativity muscles,' which makes us not just a better ceramicist or chorus member, but a more creative worker—better able to identify challenges and innovative business solutions. This is one reason why the arts remain an important part of my personal and corporate philanthropy."

### A Quality-of-Life Indicator

If you ask CEOs what their most valuable resource is, savvy executives will say the organization's employees. The problem is that each night, employees go home.

The challenge of a CEO is to make the company such that they are happy and want to continue to come back each day and work there. CEOs are realizing that employees become dissatisfied when the area where they live (this could be your city or county) does not offer them adequate leisure activities. In other words, people want things to do.

So, when a company is looking to open a new factory or office, more and more it wants to know what types of cultural activities exist for employees. If your answer is none or a few, then the CEO is liable to keep on looking.

The concept of city livability is becoming more and more common. People



**Scottsdale, Arizona's public arts program has been in existence for some 27 years. For more information on the city's robust program, visit [www.scottsdalepublicart.org](http://www.scottsdalepublicart.org).**

When a company is looking to open a new factory or office, more and more CEOs are asking what types of cultural activities exist for employees. **If your answer is none or a few, then the CEO is liable to keep on looking.**

want to live, work, and play in one area. Communities without a modest arts scene not only miss out on economic benefits but also risk losing residents, and thus, businesses who can't find enough qualified employees.

"The arts are critical to the quality of life in our communities and to attracting people to our communities to create a high-quality labor pool. Hanesbrands and its employees are proud to be strong supporters of the arts and contributors to the vitality of our communities," according to Hanesbrands Chairman and CEO Richard Noll.

Hanesbrands donated \$2 million to create the Hanesbrands Theatre in

the Sawtooth Building, which was a former Hanes Hosiery Mill in downtown Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

The black-box theatre was built in a way that easily allows the space to be reconfigured to accommodate theatre, dance, and film presentations, meeting the needs expressed by more than a dozen arts

groups for space in the downtown area for performances and other events.

Respondents to The Conference Board's *CEO Challenge 2013* ranked innovation as their third greatest challenge overall. When CEOs were asked to rank their top innovation challenge, human capital was their top concern.

### In the Classroom

How does one get innovative, creative employees? The most recognized way is having a great school system, including one that has a robust arts education program. Did you know that a student who has taken an arts education class at least once a school year is:

- 4 times more likely to be recognized for academic achievement.
- 3 times more likely to be elected to class office within their schools.
- 4 times more likely to participate in a math and science fair.
- 3 times more likely to win an award for school attendance.
- 4 times more likely to win an award for writing an essay or poem.<sup>1</sup>

Not everyone who takes an arts or music class will become a professional artist. Actually, few do. But, students can use the skills they learn in their arts class and apply them to a work setting. This is why students with an arts education background go on to be productive, creative employees.

So a local government with creative students fosters business that by its very nature is becoming more and more creative and innovative by necessity. Communities that have a modest-to-thriving arts scene have one more amenity to attract business—and keep the ones that are already there.

I hope that this series has expanded your view of the value of arts and culture in local communities. In these times of tentative economic recovery, managers must use every available avenue to stabilize and improve the local economy. **PM**

### ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Brice Heath, S. (1998). *Living the Arts through Language + Learning: A Report on Community-based Youth Organizations*. Americans for the Arts Monograph, 2 (7).

This three-part article series concludes in this issue. The January/February *PM* article, "The Arts Mean Business," online in the Archives tab at [icma.org/pm](http://icma.org/pm), examines the value of nonprofit arts and culture organizations to local governments. The March article "Arts Mean Economic Revitalization," also online in the website Archives, shows how arts patrons give strong support to local business.



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\*Cigna Choice Fund® Experience Study, 2012.

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BY LARS WILMS AND TOMMY POULSEN

# DENMARK'S LOCAL GOVERNMENTS PRESS ON

Danish municipalities confront efficiency reforms, global economic crisis, climate change

Compared to other countries, Denmark is small in population and size but great in democratic tradition and strong in local political and administrative power. With 5.5 million inhabitants and a size of 43,000 square kilometres, Denmark has a simple two-tier structure with national authorities at one level and regional and local authorities at the other.

A relatively high level of taxation on income, property, companies, and consumption is the financial basis of a public sector second to none. The public sector bridges wealth disparities, stretches out a social safety net for those in need, and directly runs or subsidizes a range of activities from education to employment, from cultural to environmental matters, and from transportation infrastructure to university research and development.

Our welfare system is often referred to as the Scandinavian welfare model, which is based on our specific historical and cultural background in this part of Europe regarding, for instance, a tradition of consensus politics, equal rights to social security, education for all as a key priority, and the fact that Denmark is recognized as a nation with virtually no corruption at all.

This efficient, transparent, and democratic public sector may be one of the reasons for Denmark being cited as one of the best countries to live in by such magazines as *The Economist*.

The expenditure of local governments amounts to almost 50 percent of the total public expenditure in Denmark. That is, half of the total public expenditure is taken care of

by local government authorities in 98 municipalities, leaving the other half to five regions and the state. These 98 municipalities employ, all in all, 500,000 employees and cover a broad range of public responsibilities, handled in close contact with the local residents.

A municipality is, at the same time, an authority and a service provider for the residents from the cradle to the grave. As such, the municipalities are the residents' main entry to public service in Denmark.

City management, therefore, is a job category of interest to many people by offering a wide range of services under

a unified municipal umbrella, whether individuals want to manage social, health, educational, cultural, environmental, technical, or financial matters. Thus, a career as city manager in local government is something to strive for in Denmark.

This does not mean that Danes, including Danish city managers, are just happy people riding their bicycles on the many specially constructed bicycle lanes in cities, as an American television program once told the Americans. We do have our share of problems and challenges in our everyday working life.

An average Danish community with 56,000 inhabitants employs 5,100 employees spread out in city hall, kindergartens, schools, nursery homes, utility works, road maintenance departments, senior citizen caregivers, and so forth. And it goes without saying that an organization this size constantly gives managers new challenges, especially when interacting with local, regional, national, and worldwide societies in constant change.

## DECENTRALIZED FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

Decentralization of the responsibility for public affairs is probably more pronounced in Denmark than in any other country. After the local government reform, the expenditure of municipalities, out of the total public expenditure, amounts to almost 50 percent.

The Danish decentralisation differs from the financial management model of other countries in three areas:

1. Municipalities are entitled to impose such taxes as income tax and real property tax (land tax). Consequently, taxes are the primary source of financing for the municipalities.
2. State grants are general and not earmarked for specific purposes. The local politicians make the cross prioritization of expenditure and service level within the different sectors—naturally, within the framework of the law.
3. Since 1980, an agreement system has been developed between the state and the municipalities according to which financial agreements are made between the government and LGDK (on behalf of the municipalities) regarding the framework of the municipal economy.

The main advantage of the agreement system is that the agreements and fulfilment of the goals of the agreements, covering all the municipalities, offer the individual municipality greater latitude.

Source: Local Government Denmark (LGDK).



Commuting by bike generally improves health conditions of the population. Some 22 municipalities are working together to build a vast net of biking lanes that will connect the inner city of Copenhagen with the surrounding suburban municipalities.

### Managing the Challenges

What, then, are the greatest challenges to managers in executive positions these days?

First of all, we are still following up on the efficiency requirements in the Danish local government reform that came into force in 2007. From a city manager's point of view, taking part in a process of merging two or more local governments into one—and, at the same time, taking over new responsibilities from other parts of the public sector—is a once-in-a-lifetime experience. And successful it was!

The Danish government announced the municipal reform in 2004 as a voluntary process towards larger municipalities providing more tasks close to the residents, and with the aim of creating an even more efficient, transparent, and democratic political and administrative structure in Denmark. The reform focused on 1) the size and structure of municipalities; 2) the distribution of tasks between state, regions, and municipalities; and 3) the financial transfers of the equalization system.

In order to make municipalities able

to meet the demands of tomorrow, one of the main arguments from the government was: Size matters if you want to develop economic and professional sustainability in local government. As a result, the previous 271 municipalities were restructured into 98 in 2007, with an average size of 56,000 inhabitants against 20,000 before the reform, and now with only 7 percent of the municipalities with less than 20,000 inhabitants against 76 percent before the reform.

Without going into details about the fascinating local decision-making process in those formative and difficult years before the actual mergers took place, which would take yet another article to describe thoroughly, it is possible to summarise the main result of the municipal reform: an improved municipal sustainability with larger units, more specialization, greater professionalism, and expanded digitalization.

The municipal reform, and of course the technological development in itself, has in particular brought along many internal challenges of using new technologies in the digitaliza-

## FACTS ABOUT LOCAL GOVERNMENTS IN DENMARK

- **Denmark has 5.5 million** inhabitants and covers 43,000 square meters.
- **As a result** of the municipal reform in 2007, the new map of Denmark has 98 municipalities, of which 65 are merged municipalities and 33 are unchanged municipalities. Before the reform, Denmark had 271 municipalities.
- **The average size** of Danish municipalities after the reform is 56,000 inhabitants compared to 20,000 before the reform.
- **All in all**, there are 2,500 locally elected politicians in Danish town councils compared to 4,700 before the reform.
- **A town council** has between nine and 55 elected representatives depending on the size of the municipality. The council elects the mayor and sets up a finance committee and other permanent political committees differing from municipality to municipality, but, typically, a municipality has a technical and environmental committee, a social services committee, a children and education committee, and a culture and leisure committee.

The political structure of the municipality is typically mirrored in an administrative organization with a board of directors and with professional departments reflecting the political structure and the extensive municipal tasks.

If you want to know more about Danish municipalities, visit the Local Government Denmark (LGDK) website. LGDK is the interest group and member authority of Danish municipalities (<http://www.kl.dk/English>).

tion of municipal organizations and in the way we manage our relations with residents. Along with Local Government Denmark (the national association of Danish municipalities), the Danish government has decided on an ambitious digital strategy for public institutions that aims at both optimizing and renewing the entire public sector, including an extensive use of digital self-service solutions aimed at residents.

Thus, executive city managers operate in a complex field in which they have to implement national strategies on digitalization, as well as apply these to the wishes and needs of local administrators, politicians, and residents.

### Economic and Environmental Issues

And here we are today in our larger communities but in a totally changed environment affected by the worldwide financial crisis. Like in most other countries, we are trying to survive an economic crisis where the town councils have to cut budgets and make difficult priorities between activities of need-to-have and nice-to-have. As managers, it is our responsibility to prepare and carry out these decisions when our political bodies have made their choice between “worse or worst.”

In this atmosphere of change, we are, as well, being faced with external challenges beyond our immediate control; that is, the increasing climate changes.

Climate change has already left visible traces in Denmark. In the summer of 2011, Copenhagen and surrounding areas were hit by a cloudburst of unprecedented precipitation. The enormous amount of water caused extensive damages at an estimated cost of more than \$515 million U.S. dollars. Since then, more cloudbursts have occurred in other parts of the country.

Although Denmark has a well-developed sewage system, the dimensioning of the pipes will never be able to solve the problem of disposing extreme quantities of water over a very short period of time, a problem that the

local governments have been forced to address. Therefore, we are currently in the process of mapping the possible problem areas.

Once the problem areas are identified, plans for the transport of sudden water flows must be drawn up. This may include new ways of thinking in relation to landscape planning with, for example, the location of parking areas in lower terrains than the surrounding areas to allow flooding, flooding of playing fields, or the utilization of available water for recreational purposes.

### Demand for Innovative Thinking

In short, these external challenges force the municipalities—and our private counterparts—to think innovatively and outside the box, avoiding major investments in order to limit the negative effects of climate change.

All in all, the municipal reform, the priorities made in consequence of the economic crisis, and the constant inter-

nal and external challenges have been an incentive for city managers in Denmark to work within a framework of “more for less.” That is, in spite of less available resources and lower budgets, we—and, for that matter, also the many private and market-based service providers—develop and motivate employees to take part in the creation of more productive and efficient municipal services for the benefit of residents.

This makes it easier for town councils, when reconsidering municipal service levels, to make their decisions according to available funds, according to local political values, and, of course, according to their legitimate wishes of maintaining their position in the eyes of the local electorate. **PM**



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**FACILITY DUDE**

BY SHEILA MCGINLEY

# WEIGHING BENEFIT OPTIONS

Examine the advantages of offering a combined medical and dental benefit plan

While every local government is unique and its needs may vary, offering a separate dental plan—that is, a dental plan with a different carrier from the medical plan—has three distinct disadvantages:

- Administrative burdens.
- Lack of clinical integration.
- Financial impact.

A disadvantage to offering a separate dental plan is the possible administrative burden from dealing with multiple carriers. Different account teams, separate bills, different customer service phone numbers, and different hours of operation all lead to more time spent managing benefit plans rather than managing a workforce. These administrative variances can also lead to employee noise and confusion, resulting in dissatisfaction with benefit offerings.

Another disadvantage to offering separate medical and dental plans is the lack of clinical integration between dental and medical benefits. Studies show clinical associations between oral and overall health. When an insurance company can link those associations into an integrated service approach, the end result can be a healthier individual who spends more time at work than at the doctor/dentist or sick at home. In fact, 164 million employee hours are lost each year<sup>1</sup> due to dental-related illness.

## Key Factors to Consider

Medical and dental integration programs, preventive dental care outreach for medically at-risk individuals, and continuous employee education about the importance of oral health to overall health are all important factors an employer should consider when looking at bundling medical and dental benefits with one carrier.

Another consideration for local governments is determining whether an

**FIGURE 1.** Results – Lower Medical Costs Associated with Appropriate Periodontal Therapy.

POPULATION	SAVINGS*
Diabetes	\$1,292 or 27.6%
Heart Disease	\$2,183 or 25.4%
Stroke	\$2,831 or 34.7%
ALL Customers**	\$1,020 or 27.5%

\* Not an underwriting decrement. \*\*All customers regardless of condition.

## A DISADVANTAGE TO OFFERING A SEPARATE DENTAL PLAN IS THE POSSIBLE ADMINISTRATIVE BURDEN FROM DEALING WITH MULTIPLE CARRIERS.

insurance carrier offers up-front savings for combining benefit plans. For example, Cigna’s 1 percent bundling credit results in \$10,000 in premium savings per 100 employees, or 10 to 15 percent in dental savings.

Besides such up-front savings, appropriate treatment of periodontal conditions provides long-term medical cost savings. Cigna’s 2012 study *Appropriate Periodontal Therapy Associated with Lower Medical Utilization and Costs* shows average annual medical savings for those individuals in the study who had proper periodontal treatment (see Figure 1).

## Conduct Due Diligence

For a local government to reap medical cost savings from proper dental care, medical and dental benefits must effectively work together to educate individuals and encourage them to receive the

proper treatment for their conditions. This bottom line can be difficult to realize when medical and dental benefits are offered by different carriers.

With seemingly countless choices offered by benefit carriers in the marketplace today, employers should do their due diligence to find the one that meets all of their benefit needs—medical and dental—and can save them money, while helping employees get and stay healthy.

For more information on Cigna Government and Education health benefit options, contact Kathryn Army, director, Cigna for Government and Education (Kathryn.Army@Cigna.com; cigna.com/healthiergov).

## ENDNOTES

1 Oral Health in America: A Report of the Surgeon General, 2000.



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Hartford, Connecticut

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BY EVELINA MOULDER AND RON CARLEE

# COMPENSATION TRENDS

## ICMA survey tracks current practices

**H**ow much money should I make as a local government manager and what benefits should I receive? These are questions that ICMA seeks to help answer through its annual *Compensation Survey for Local Government Chief Appointed Officials*, which was reinstated in 2011 after a compensation scandal in Bell, California.<sup>1</sup>

The 2012 survey had a 42 percent response rate; 2,974 chief administrators from across the United States responded. Significant findings include:

- Regarding salary, no national survey can answer the question about how much a specific manager in a specific local government should make.
- Where managers and staff have the same type of benefits, the calculation for determining those benefits is generally the same.
- Most managers appear to take seriously the issue of full disclosure and transparency regarding their compensation.

A detailed discussion of ICMA's survey can be found in the 2013 edition of *The Municipal Year Book*; survey results are also posted on the ICMA website with data from other ICMA surveys about local government programs and practices.<sup>2</sup> This article is intended to summarize what every manager should know about current practices.

### Salary Factors

ICMA recommends that salary be determined based on six factors:

- Scope of services provided by the local government.
- Job requirements.
- Experience necessary for successful performance.

- Market pay for comparable public sector executives.
- The local government's financial position (i.e., what it can reasonably afford).
- The credentials, experience, and expertise of the chief appointed official (CAO).

Among the most important of these principles is the pay survey of comparable public sector executives in the specific market where a local government is located. Pay practices and the cost of living varies so much that national data can only provide very broad parameters, with the emphasis on "very."

The ICMA 2012 data show a median salary of \$103,000 for all managers serving in local governments with populations ranging from less than 2,500 to those with populations exceeding 1 million. When local governments are divided into population categories, there is an observable correlation between

FIGURE 1. MEDIAN, MINIMUM, AND MAXIMUM SALARIES BY POPULATION GROUP.

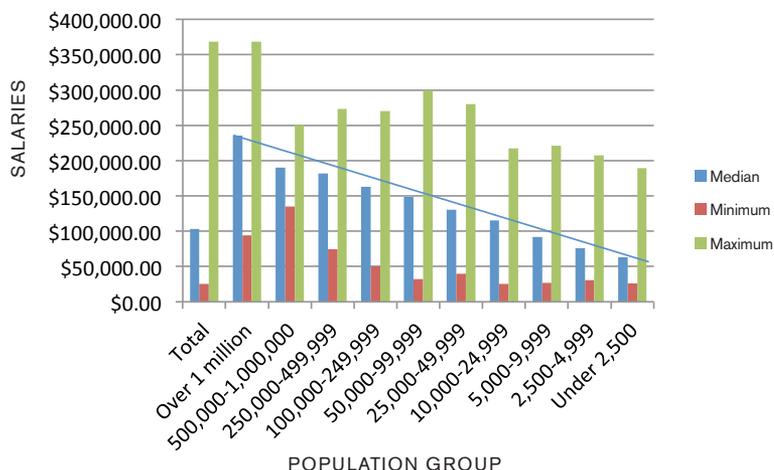
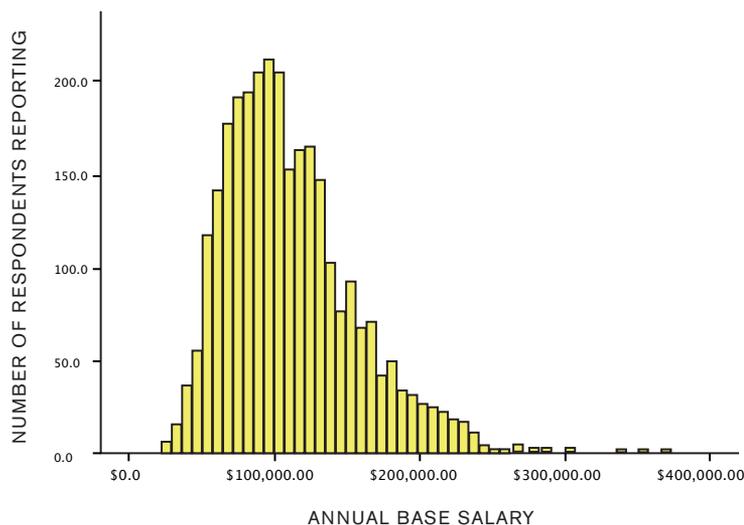
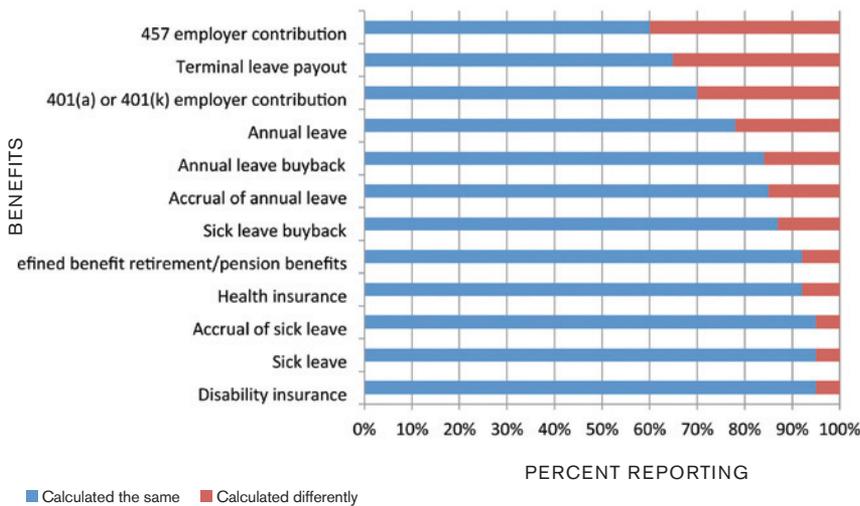


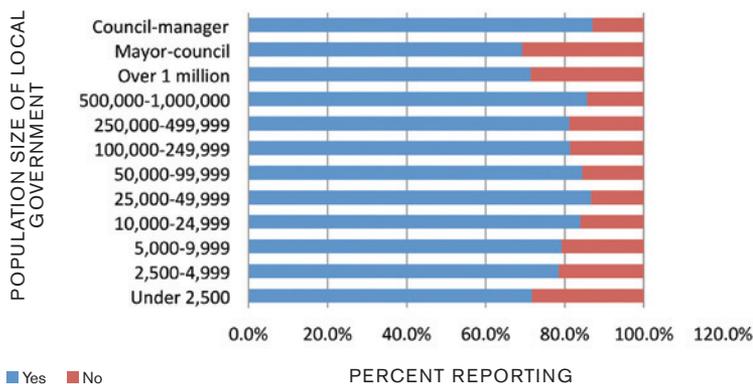
FIGURE 2. DISTRIBUTION OF SALARIES.



**FIGURE 3. BENEFITS CALCULATIONS.**



**FIGURE 4. EMPLOYMENT AGREEMENTS.**



median salary and the size of the jurisdiction as shown in Figure 1.

The highest salary reported was \$368,282 and the lowest salary was \$26,000. Figure 2 shows the distribution of salaries reported.

### Calculating Benefits

There is a legitimate argument that a manager and other executives in a local government should receive an executive benefits package consistent with their added responsibilities, as is common in the private sector. In local governments, however, the ICMA survey shows that there are few exceptions in the manner in which benefits are calculated when the manager and staff

receive the same benefit.

This is not to say that managers do not receive some benefits that other staff do not. But when the benefits are the same, the calculation methods for determining the benefits are also the same. If, for example, the health insurance premium paid by the employee is a percentage of salary, then that holds true for both the CAO and staff.

Nonetheless, differences in calculation of benefits do occur in numbers that are not insignificant. Areas where differences emerge in more than 20 percent of the respondents are retirement, both 457 and 401(a) contributions, and in terminal leave payouts. Differences in these areas are logical and perhaps should

occur more frequently considering that manager jobs are “at will” positions.

Higher retirement payments and terminal leave payouts can mitigate the risks inherent in the position. In addition, annual leave is calculated differently for 22 percent of respondents. This approach reflects the practice in the federal government for the Senior Executive Service, in which each staff member accrues eight hours per pay period regardless of tenure. All other federal employees have annual leave determined by years of service.<sup>3</sup>

### Provisions That Mitigate Risk

The most important way to mitigate risk in at-will positions is through a formally adopted severance provision in the manager’s employment agreement. The survey shows that most managers have an agreement and a severance provision; however, this is not universal, especially among chief administrative officers in mayor-council forms of government.

Among the managers who have severance provisions, the most common provision is six months of pay, although ICMA recommends one year of severance. The higher level is more prevalent among larger local governments, while smaller jurisdictions show higher percentages limiting severance to only three months.

### Transparency Matters

The excesses that occurred in Bell, California, based on subsequent indictments, were the result of a conspiracy among people of bad intent. What permitted the perpetrators to get away with excessive compensation for so long was the total lack of transparency to the public. Once the *Los Angeles Times* exposed the fraud, Bell residents were outraged and have subsequently changed the way in which the city operates.

Data from the 2012 survey affirm that most managers understand the importance of transparency. A number of recommended practices, as illustrated

in the accompanying charts, are nearly universal. The adoption of the practices tends to be lower in small jurisdictions (population less than 2,500) and in local governments with the mayor-council form of government. A practice that has not yet become common is posting

the manager's salary and employment agreement on the web.

In local governments with populations 50,000 and over, however, more than half post the manager's salary on the web. The largest percentage that posts the employment agreement is only

24 percent and is found in local governments with populations between 50,000 and 99,999.

**Increased Responsibility**

The events in Bell and a few other cities tarnish the reputation of all professional managers. The bad actions of a few place a greater responsibility on the many to demonstrate publicly their commitment to honesty and integrity and to the ICMA Code of Ethics, which is at the core of professional local government management.

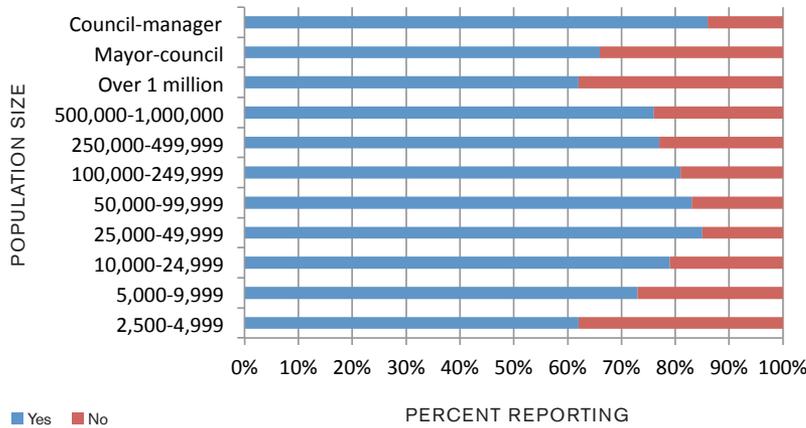
ICMA's policies state that managers should be compensated fairly, consistent with the executive responsibilities entrusted to them and consistent with the pay of such other public officials as school superintendents and heads of commissions and public authorities. The only way that the public can be certain that compensation is fair is through full disclosure.

This includes documentation of the manager's full compensation package, its adoption in public session, and making sure that the details are fully accessible. A taxpayer may take an exception to the package, but not because the information was not available. **PM**

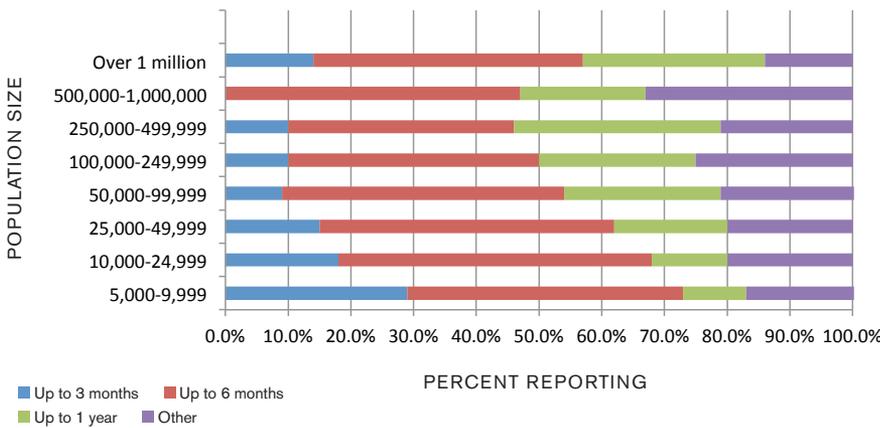
**ENDNOTES**

- 1 Refer to archived March 2012 PM article "Bell California: Where Our Profession Is Making a Difference." <http://webapps.icma.org/pm/9402/public/feature2.cfm?title=Bell%2C%20California%3A%20Where%20Our%20Profession%20Is%20Making%20a%20Difference&subtitle=How%20Managers%20Stepped%20Up%20to%20Help%20the%20Community%20Recover&author=Kevin%20Duggan>.
- 2 [http://icma.org/en/icma/priorities/surveying/survey\\_research\\_overview](http://icma.org/en/icma/priorities/surveying/survey_research_overview) (Accessed 1/22/2013).
- 3 <http://www.opm.gov/oca/leave/html/annual.asp> (Accessed 1/16/2013).

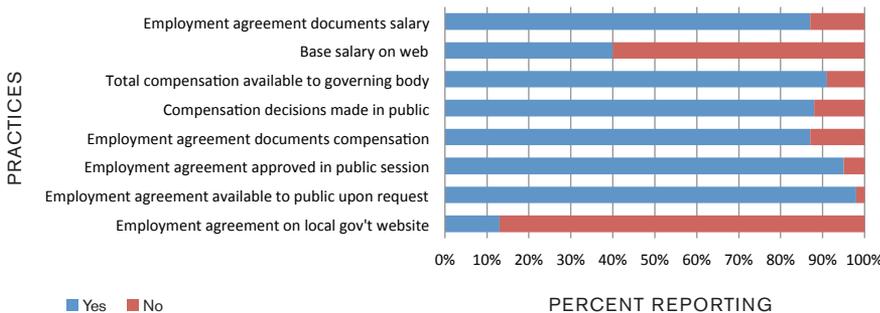
**FIGURE 5. SEVERANCE PROVISIONS.**



**FIGURE 6. LENGTH OF SEVERANCE PAY.**



**FIGURE 7. TRANSPARENCY PRACTICES.**



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BY PHILIP GROSS AND STEVE BUNKER

# CONTROLLING CREDIT CARD FEES

Three tips to help manage these costs

**A**re you increasingly taking credit cards as a form of payment from your residents for tax payments, traffic violations, utility payments, recreation classes, and so forth? Have you ever wondered what the real cost of accepting credit cards is and where that money goes?

In this article, we present a brief overview of credit card fees and the actions that can be taken to help ensure that local governments are paying the lowest fees possible. These fees, which can range from less than 2 percent to more than 4 percent, go to three primary players, although they are all collected by the processor as a single set of charges:

**1. The processor** (your bank or such an independent organization as First Data, Elavon, TSYS, PayPal, and others) moves the data and the money around and collects the fees on behalf of all of the parties. This organization transmits sales transaction data to the issuing bank for authorization by VISA, MasterCard, and Discover networks. Note: To keep things simple, AMEX is not being addressed here since the company operates under its own set of rules.

The processor's piece of the fee can be a percentage of the sale amount (10 or 20 basis points); a per-transaction fee for authorizations and/or settlements (\$.10); or, as is usually the case, a combination of these. There also may be some monthly or account-related charges.

The processor's fees typically range from 5 to 15 percent of the total fees charged. While these fees are negotiable, they often do not represent the biggest savings opportunity.

**2. The credit card networks** (VISA, MasterCard, and Discover) connect the

processor to the relevant issuing bank for each transaction. Their fees are typically around 5 percent of the total fees and are not negotiable. VISA, MasterCard, and Discover set the rules and interchange fees for processing their cards.

There are more than 500 different price points, based on the manner of processing the card (swiped, online, or by postal mail); the type of merchant (business, government, not-for-profit, or educational); the type of card being used (corporate or consumer, credit or debit, rewards); and other elements, including transaction size, data collected, and timing.

**3. The issuing bank** (the bank that issued the credit card to the individual using it) gets the largest part of the fees, averaging 80 to 90 percent of the fees charged. The issuing bank is taking the credit risk, covering fraud, and paying for the rewards given to the card holder. It passes these costs to the merchant through the interchange fee. **TIP No. 1:** Interchange fees are not negotiable but can often be reduced if the processing rules are properly understood and managed; they offer the greatest savings opportunity to local governments.

## Pricing Models

The credit card world has two pricing models: bundled fees and interchange plus. **TIP No. 2:** Interchange plus is the preferred pricing model for most organizations. It brings full transparency to the fees charged and helps you better manage your processing to achieve lower fees; this article focuses on interchange plus.

To reduce these costs, it is imperative that you review and understand your merchant card statement and all fees charged. Each processor's statements are

different, and there is no uniform set of codes or abbreviations used.

Ask a knowledgeable representative of your processor to explain each charge on your statement. "Knowledgeable" is a key word here because many sales and account representatives in the credit card industry have a limited understanding of the complex rules and fee structures. A large trade association, for example, was recently assisted with reducing its fees by having the organization reclassified from a not-for-profit merchant to a business-to-business (B2B) merchant. Although this association is a not-for-profit for tax purposes, for credit card purposes, it saved money as a B2B merchant because the preponderance of cards being used by its members were corporate cards and the special rates for not-for-profits only apply to certain types of consumer cards.

Since every situation is different, there is no simple set of guidelines to reduce a local government's fees. **TIP No. 3:** The best process to follow is to have the processor explain each fee you are being charged, then ask, "What can we do to reduce this fee?"

Are you, for example, classified properly? Are you following all of the fraud prevention rules? Are you providing all of the data (e.g., the address information) that VISA and MasterCard require to prevent unnecessary surcharges?

If your community doesn't have the time or expertise to undertake this process, help is available. Some expense reduction advisers work on a contingent-fee basis, getting paid based on savings realized so there is no upfront cost to the client. **PM**



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BY TIM WOLFF

# WHEN DUTY CALLS

Service is our motto

**A**n undeniable truth about our management profession is that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to our work. What one community or one legislative body expects from its manager can be enormously different from another. Some of this comes from how big or small a community is, what resources are available to the community, and, of course, what residents expect and need from the manager.

In my community, the village services are divided into four different departments, and presently I am the department head of all four. During my nine years as village manager, I've

## WHAT ONE COMMUNITY OR ONE LEGISLATIVE BODY EXPECTS FROM ITS MANAGER CAN BE ENORMOUSLY DIFFERENT FROM ANOTHER.

done such high-profile duties as filling potholes, snow plowing, dog catching, replacing street signs, directing traffic, clearing downed trees, mowing road shoulders, and more.

This past November 15, I was en route to pick up bags of yard waste from a resident when a staff assistant called. She quickly told me that central dispatch had just paged our local fire department to help a nine-year-old boy stuck in the riverbed.

Our community surrounds an 800-acre impoundment of the Chipewewa River, and our "lake" level can be lowered by opening a mechanical sluice gate on a dam. That lake level had recently been lowered for the winter to help minimize shoreline damage from ice, exposing large areas that normally are underwater and had yet to fully dry. Apparently, this cold and muddy

exposed bottomland was the perfect place to play that day.

For readers unfamiliar with Michigan, November 15 is also a special holiday for many in our state—opening day of hunting season. In our area of the state, it is celebrated to the extent that most local schools are closed and kids can be found playing outdoors.

### A Muddy Predicament

When the assistant called to let me know of the situation, I was less than one minute away from the location and quickly headed there. When I arrived, I was greeted by several children who

led me over to their friend who had managed to get himself buried in mud up to his waist. He was roughly 100 feet away from the shoreline and had begun to panic about his predicament.

From the shore I was able to get him to confirm that he could still feel and move his toes and other than being stuck, was physically okay and in no real immediate danger. After reassuring him that he was going to be fine, his next fear quickly surfaced, which was this request: "Please don't tell my mom!"

While waiting for the fire department, his friends and I were able to get a rope out to him. This helped calm him down and reassure him that he was going to be fine. By now, a solid 10 minutes had passed since I arrived, and I was still the only person on scene. Shortly thereafter, members of the local

volunteer fire department began arriving, most dressed in camouflage having come directly from the woods. They were able to free the boy and were the true heroes of the day.

### Serving the Public Is What We Do

The moral of the story is that most of our communities have faced tremendous challenges in recent years due to the economy. These changes have seen many hard choices made, often involving the reduction of staff and services. The needs of our communities, however, have not changed. In fact, they likely have grown.

I remind my staff that we are in the business of serving the public, and that we work for a company where everyone we interact with is an owner of that company. Everyone we deal with has value and is someone important who should command our full attention.

I believe that by honoring this value of truly serving the public we can help bridge any impact on morale that organizations have faced due to service or staffing reductions. Organizationally, we may have limitations due to funding and resources, but that should not be an excuse to absolve us of our fundamental purpose.

This point is proven by the fact that the village's Department of Public Works truck had a long rope in it that day specifically for this purpose. One staff member had suggested it in case somebody was stuck in the lake.

That suggestion, based in an honest concern for village residents, gives me comfort to know that if any of the village staff had been driving to pick up brush bags that day, they would have made the same choice to provide help.

As for the boy in the mud, other than needing a new pair of shoes, he was perfectly fine. Oh, and his mother did find out! **PM**



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