



**OCCMA**

**Oregon City/County  
Management Association**

A State Affiliate of **ICMA**

**FIRST QUARTER 2024**

# Independence:

## Four Ways the City Helps its Local Businesses



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## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dan Huff, City Manager, Molalla



As we begin our trek through 2024, I am reminded of all the people I have encountered over the past year. I also anticipate enhanced or new relationships throughout the new year. As City Managers/City Administrators, we have many roles. We tend to be guarded a little differently in each of those roles. The OCCMA Board has discussed Support for City Managers continuously and I believe we will see amplified effort on this subject in 2024. Remember to connect with your colleagues and develop relationships. This is the area that we grow as individuals and these relationships can reinforce us professionally, as well.

The OCCMA Board has developed an excellent work plan for 2024 that is tailored to our needs here in Oregon. The good news is that we have fresh ideas and perspectives for our conferences. Incoming President, Martha Bennett, Lake Oswego City Manager, has taken on her role with the Professional Development Committee with conviction and I expect to see good things come out of that work. I encourage you to get involved with our committees if you have not. There is a time commitment, but the rewards outweigh the effort. Working on a committee is an effective way to recharge and meet colleagues.

We have chosen a profession that can be rewarding and thankless, all at the same time. Not many managers of complex organizations are on the job 24-7 and required to develop relationships with elected officials, as a key component to the job. We manage multi-million-dollar budgets and continue to be asked about trivial items that sometimes cause community uproar. For example: A few years ago, I had a former city councilor ask me what a utility worker was doing in front of a residence. I told him I did not know, but I could find out quickly. He told me that it was unprofessional that I did not know what my employees were doing at all times. This situation was not a big deal, but it does represent some of the unreasonable and unrealistic demands we all face.

We all have egos that get in the way, and we need to remember why we chose to take on this profession, from time to time. It is important to think about the public good in our communities. We should also strive as professionals to leave things in a better place than when we found them. Constantly collaborating with elected officials is a hard job and it rotates and changes continually.

Building relationships with your colleagues is helpful. They are in the same place you are in or have been there before. The 2024 plate is full of opportunities to enhance your skills and forge those relationships during the following Conferences:

- NW Regional Conference, Seaside, March 26-29
- LOC Spring Conference, Klamath Falls, April 25-26; OCCMA Workshop, April 25
- OCCMA Summer Conference, Hood River, June 24-27
- ICMA Annual Conference, Pittsburgh, PA, September 21-25
- LOC Fall Conference, Bend, October 17-19; OCCMA Workshop, October 17

Let our Project & Affiliates Manager, Angela Speier, know if you have questions or need clarification. You can also contact me.

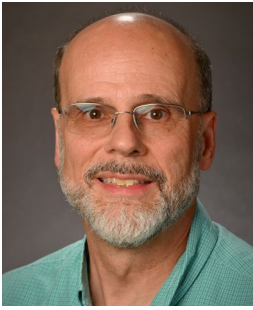
A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dan Huff'.

Dan Huff  
OCCMA President  
Molalla City Manager



# Meet OCCMA's Newest Senior Advisers

## Richard Meyers



Richard Meyers has been named the new senior adviser for Benton, Jefferson, Lane, and Linn counties. He served as the city manager of Cottage Grove, Oregon, since October 1997 and retired on Oct. 1, 2023, after 26 years in the role. Before his tenure in Cottage Grove, he was the city manager for Myrtle Point, Oregon, from 1990 to 1997

and was on staff at the League of Arizona Cities and Towns from 1988 to 1990. Meyers brings more than 36 years of experience to his new position.

Throughout his career, Meyers has been active in both the Oregon City/County Management Association (OCCMA) and the International City/County Management Association (ICMA). He is eager to serve and assist in any capacity possible.

Meyers and his wife, Wanda, have four married children and ten grandchildren, with two more expected in summer 2024. The couple resides in a home built before 1895 and enjoys uncovering its history and preserving its character. The family has always enjoyed camping — transitioning from tent to trailer camping — and spending time outdoors. Meyers looks forward to more camping and kayaking with Wanda, playing with his grandchildren, and relaxing during snowstorms.

## Dale Shafer



Dale Shafer is the new senior adviser for Clatsop, Columbia, Lincoln, and Tillamook counties. Shafer began her career in municipal government working part-time as the city treasurer of Athena, Oregon. Twenty-one years later, she served as the city recorder/treasurer and the municipal judge. Allergies forced her to retire and relocate

from Eastern Oregon to the coast, where she discovered the City of Nehalem was seeking a city recorder. Embracing the challenge, she applied, and a year later, she became the city manager of Nehalem.

Shafer describes her career as fun, challenging, and entirely unexpected. She has served on the OCCMA Board of Directors, the Oregon Association of Municipal Records (OAMR) Board of Directors, including a term as OAMR president, and on numerous other committees during her more than 30 years in municipal government.

Becoming a senior adviser appealed to Shafer because it would allow her to retire again while still contributing to the municipal government in Oregon.

Welcome aboard, Richard and Dale!



## OCCMA is Hosting the 2024 NW Regional Managers Conference

The 2024 Northwest Regional Managers Conference is scheduled for March 26-29 at the [Seaside Civic & Convention Center](#). The conference planning committee has developed an outstanding program this year, including sessions focused on: the role of the city manager in community leadership discussions; artificial intelligence; ethics; career development; developing practical leadership skills; and much more. The city of Seaside is also planning several tours and conference activities for attendees. Lodging information, the preliminary agenda, and online registration are available here: [occma.org/NW-Regional-Conference](https://occma.org/NW-Regional-Conference). OCCMA hasn't hosted this conference since 2019, you don't want to miss out on the opportunity to network and learn with fellow city managers and assistant managers from Oregon, Washington, and Alaska.

# Winter Storm Lessons Learned

By Madison Thesing, Assistant to the City Manager, Lake Oswego and Kelsey Lewis, Grants and Programs Manager, Wilsonville

This January, over the Martin Luther King, Jr. Day weekend, a significant winter storm affected cities across the state. It brought snowfall, freezing rain, and extreme winds, causing widespread power outages, travel disruptions, and extensive closures. The storm significantly damaged trees, power lines, and infrastructure, including water main breaks and flooding due to melting snow and ice.

As cities and residents continue cleanup and recovery efforts, two cities share their experiences and lessons from this historic storm.

## Lake Oswego

In the Portland Metro area, Lake Oswego was among the hardest-hit communities. Fallen trees and branches caused the most significant damage. High winds, combined with freezing rain, led to hundreds of trees falling, destroying more than 50 homes, damaging businesses and homes with burst and frozen pipes, displacing community members or forcing them into hotels, leaving thousands without power, and tragically resulting in one fatality.

During the seven-day storm event:

- 9-1-1 dispatch received approximately 4,000 inbound calls.
- Public Works received 300 calls for water shut-offs alone.
- Crews responded to at least 125 large trees that fell in the right-of-way and onto city streets.
- Hundreds of trees fell in parks and natural areas throughout the city.
- More than 14,000 customers in Lake Oswego were without power, representing over 80% of the community.
- Police and the Adult Community Center responded to more than 300 welfare check requests.
- The Communications Team issued 35 emergency alert public information updates via social media channels and the city website.

Following the 2021 ice storm, Lake Oswego implemented pre-winter staff training, a coordinated communications plan, and routine multi-department Emergency Operations Center training. The 2024 storm demonstrated the success of this preplanning, coordination, and training and identi-



fied additional growth opportunities. Some Lake Oswego takeaways for cities to consider include:

- Creating a public information call center separate from the emergency dispatch center to direct non-emergency calls.
- Using public alerts/reverse 9-1-1 to share emergency messages with a redirect to the call center once it is open.
- Creating one central storm webpage to archive all messages shared via social media, NextDoor, the website, newsletters, etc.
- Establishing liaison roles/points of contact for external partners (school district, county, utilities) before the event, as well as internally for managing those relationships.
- Creating a debris removal plan for residents as soon as possible and communicating it early and often.
- Creating a shareable frequently-asked-questions list for all administrative staff and call-takers.
- Reevaluating criteria for closing City facilities and establishing when/how closures will be communicated to staff.
- Activating the Emergency Operation Center and command structure when in doubt.

## Wilsonville

Due to the storm conditions and impact, the City of Wilsonville chose to close facilities, and its transit agency, SMART, canceled bus service for a partial day. The City prepared ahead of the storm, aware of the damage freezing rain can cause to trees and roads. An ice storm in 2021 was devastating to Wilsonville's tree canopy, and the subsequent cleanup taught City staff important lessons in preparedness and response.







Ideas for cities to consider when a winter storm is approaching include:

- Updating city/service closure procedures for staff with new technology and modes of communication.
- Ensuring the fire department has appropriate contact information to forward calls from residents about burst pipes to the correct water provider.
- Setting up a winter weather work order in asset management software preloaded with FEMA rates for equipment and labor at the start of winter for easier FEMA reimbursement.
- Being prepared to provide timesheets and collective bargaining agreements for FEMA reimbursement.
- Increasing the budget for tree trimming depending on the age and condition of the city's trees.
- Knowing staff limits for addressing storm damage, particularly tree removal, and contacting tree contractors before the storm hits.
- Publishing the snow and ice control plan, or at least a map, on the city website so residents know what to expect for snow plowing.



## 2024 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

### March 26-29

NW Regional Managers Conference  
Seaside Convention Center

### March 29

OCCMA Board of Directors Meeting  
Seaside Convention Center

### April 25

OCCMA Spring Workshop  
Running Y Resort, Klamath Falls

### April 25-26

LOC Spring Conference  
Running Y Resort, Klamath Falls

### June 24-27

OCCMA Summer Conference  
Best Western Plus Hood River Inn

### June 24

OCCMA Board of Directors Meeting  
Best Western Plus Hood River Inn

### August 30

OCCMA Board of Directors Meeting  
Virtual

### October 16

OCCMA Board of Directors Meeting  
The Riverhouse on the Deschutes, Bend

### October 17

OCCMA Fall Workshop and  
Annual Membership Meeting  
The Riverhouse on the Deschutes, Bend

### October 17-19

LOC Annual Conference  
The Riverhouse on the Deschutes, Bend

### November 21-22

OCCMA Board of Directors Retreat  
Independence Event Center

# City Spotlight

## Four Ways Independence Helps its Local Businesses

*By Shawn Irvine, Independence Economic Development Director*

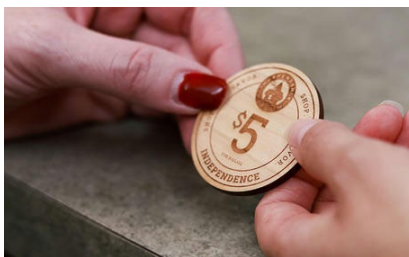
### 1. Scratch-Its and Wooden Nickels

Independence created its scratch-its using scratchoff.com. The new scratch-its are deployed for a month as a “Love Local” campaign in February since it’s typically one of the slowest months for our businesses but has the Valentine’s



Day hook for marketing purposes. People who purchase at any of the 20 participating businesses receive a scratch-it with their receipt. Every scratch-it is a winner: \$1, \$5, \$10, or \$20, and can be redeemed as cash at any participating business on a subsequent purchase. At the end of February, the City buys back the redeemed scratch-its from the businesses at 100% of face value, so they aren’t actually out any money.

This quickly became a hugely popular program, and redemption amounts show the benefits were well distributed; no one business dominated the benefit. We asked business owners to mark the total sale amount on every redeemed scratch it, and we were able to determine that every dollar of City money brought another \$5 of private money to the business. We are now in our third year of Love Local, and businesses report that February is one of their best months. Even businesses that don’t participate have noticed an uptick. Our funding source for this program has been ARPA funds, but we transitioned to using lodging tax dollars this year.



tion of the scratch-its, the Independence Wooden Nickel. These wooden discs were imprinted with the City logo on one side and a QR code on the other, taking users to a web page explaining the program and identifying participating businesses. Businesses can opt in or out at any time—we

post them on the website or take them off—and the nickels are used at participating businesses just like scratch-its. Also, like scratch-its, the City repurchases the nickels from the businesses. Unlike scratch-its, there is no deadline to redeem the wooden nickels; it is an ongoing program that encourages people to come back and spend their nickel if they didn’t have time when they were in town. Also, unlike scratch-its, we can reuse the nickels and save some money.

### 2. Technical Assistance

Independence has partnered with our neighboring city of Monmouth to implement two technical assistance programs for local businesses after COVID-19. We heard from our business owners that they couldn’t spare the time to attend classes and other traditional forms of technical support. They said “I just need someone who can do some things for me.” So, we created a program that paired business owners with consultants to provide one-on-one support for their self-identified needs.

Business owners went through an initial screening with the project manager to understand their situation and ensure there weren’t any gaps in their self-reported needs. The business owners then selected from a menu of support the program could offer, including web development, social media strategy and post creation, bookkeeping and financial services, graphic design for logos or brochures, search engine optimization, and more. The project manager then matched the business owner with a consultant who worked with the business owner to deliver the desired product. The consultants were drawn as much as possible from the local community so that the money spent would stay within the community and increase the chance that a business owner may choose to retain the consultant after the assistance program ended. The second round of this program (also funded by ARPA) is just wrapping up, and we will have supported over 60 local businesses in the two communities while also growing the portfolio of a dozen local consultants.

### 3. Public-Private Partnerships

Independence has partnered with private developers to complete extensive development and redevelopment projects. These partnerships can be very impactful because of the private investment and job creation. Still, it’s essential to be thoughtful and deliberate because a lousy project will quickly erode the community’s confidence in its local government.



In Independence, we used creative terms with the sale of our old city hall to incentivize a keystone redevelopment in the core of our downtown. The building was vacant and deplorable but located on an evident corner downtown. We marketed the property for \$350,000 but said that if the buyer restored the building and brought a destination commercial use (brewery, winery, etc.), we would credit back \$200,000. Additionally, if they rebuilt the streetscape with the wide sidewalks and historic-style streetlights on Main Street, we would credit them back another \$100,000. Critically, the buyer had to pay the total price upfront, and we would only pay the credit back when the commercial use received a Certificate of Occupancy and when our Public Works Department accepted the finished streetscape. The original purchaser restored the building and installed a brewery tenant but lost the building to a bank before securing occupancy, leaving significant debt to the contractor who did the work. Because we hadn't paid out the credit, the City could work a new deal with a different developer that made everyone whole and retained what is now a destination commercial use downtown.

On a much larger scale, the City acquired 15 acres of land downtown that had been a gravel pit and concrete batch plant for over 100 years. After completing the due diligence that a developer would require (environmental, geotechnical, floodplain, etc.), the City created an 11-acre development terrace outside the floodplain with the remaining 4 acres below flood elevation serving as an expansion of Riverview Park. A Special Public Works Fund loan allowed the City to build the road, water, and sewer infrastructure through the site, and a Request for Qualifications was used to solicit a development partner. The RFQ, instead of the more common Request for Proposals, was important as it didn't require as much investment from the developers to craft a response. When a developer was selected, the parties entered an Exclusive Negotiating Agreement. They spent the better part of the following year negotiating a development agreement that delineated the project and what contributions the City would make.

*continued on page 8*



Before – Empty land in downtown Independence



After – Independence Landing mixed-use development



Downtown Independence





The former Independence City Hall is now home to a brewery with retail space and hookups for four food trucks.

Ultimately, this collaboration resulted in the construction of a 75-room hotel and 114 residential units, with land left over for future development. The City hired an independent economist to complete a Return on Investment analysis to ensure the City's funds were being used wisely. He determined that because of the City's Urban Renewal District, the City's nearly \$6M total investment would be paid back within 11 years if no other development happened within the district. Additionally, he found that the visitors to the hotel and new downtown residents would bring over \$6 million in new spending annually to the community – which would support existing businesses and likely generate additional redevelopment to help pay back the project even faster. As with the old city hall, the City's incentives were backloaded with a property only being transferred when the developer proved he had financing and was ready to pull permits. Other credits were only triggered upon occupancy of the hotel.

## Grants

Independence has consistently utilized grants and funding from state and federal programs to achieve projects it couldn't afford. The previously mentioned hotel and residential development utilized Business Oregon's Brownfield Revitalization Fund twice to pay for the cleanup of contamination found during site development. An Oregon Parks and Recreation Local Government Grant paired with a state legislative allocation funded the development of the property's riverfront park and trail system. A state Transportation and Growth Management grant funded the initial concept plan for the site, and DLCD helped us write a new zone to allow for the desired mix of uses on the property.

Many of the historic buildings downtown have been renovated to restore their original historic look. The City supported this with façade grants funded through Urban Renewal. Still, it also secured state Preserving Oregon and Diamonds in the Rough grants to help building owners fund the renovations. In all cases, the building owner had



to put a significant share of their funds into the project. In partnership with the Independence Downtown Association, the City secured three Oregon Main Street Grants ranging from \$100,000 to \$200,000 to renovate building interiors and construct apartments on the second floor of a historic building on Main Street. I highly recommend working with them to access this funding if you have a Main Street organization in your community.

There are a myriad of ways to support local businesses, but it's essential to tailor programs to the needs expressed by your community. We also always look to layer programs to create multiple benefits. For example, the brewery that opened in the old city hall used our technical assistance program to create an online ordering platform for crowlers (growler-size cans). Later, they received an Oregon Main Street Grant to create two additional interior retail spaces in the building and hookups for three additional food trucks (all with tenants identified). At the same time, they received a grant from Business Oregon to purchase a canning line, which they will use to grow their business and also make available to other small-batch beverage producers in the region. Success creates success, and sustaining that momentum can accomplish a lot.





## 2024 OLLG Winter Conference Was a Success

The Oregon Latinos in Local Government hosted their first Winter Conference on Friday, February 23.

Over 60 attendees participated in the one-day event. The conference started with Guilian del Rio, Equity Program Manager, Lake Oswego, and Danny Morato, Supplier Diversity Administrator, Hillsboro, explaining the importance of networking and the difference between networking and connecting. They stressed the need to bring a positive attitude and energy, listen with an intent to serve, add value, and to make sure you are being authentic. When networking, people need to learn to listen and ask good questions, make sure to connect on common ground, and remember to follow up after the event.

During the second session of the morning, Shelli Romero, Region 1 Area Manager, Oregon Department of Transportation, shared her insight into finding your career path. She provided the following lessons she has learned throughout her career:



- Strategically position yourself and try to work on projects that highlight your strengths.
- Take calculated risks and make sure you talk about your accomplishments.
- Make sure to give credit where credit is due.
- Be your authentic self.
- Gain coworker's trust and be helpful to others.
- Adopt the mindset of "lifting all boats."
- Take control of your career and map out a strategy.
- Identify your strengths and work on closing gaps in areas in which you are not as strong.
- Get to know your coworkers beyond work.
- Consider getting a mentor both at work and outside of work.
- Always do your best and practice before an interview.
- Be fierce; rejection is part of career advancement.
- If you don't succeed at first, try again.
- Know your worth and ask yourself hard questions.
- Invest in leadership training.
- Maintain and update your resume, just in case.

- Celebrate your and your coworkers' achievements.
- Work-life balance is important to avoid burnout: take your vacation time because tomorrow isn't guaranteed.
- Have clear communication, especially when having difficult conversations.
- Nominate people for awards to show how much you appreciate them and boost their careers.

After lunch, Danny Morato, Eunice Makinde, DEI Manager, Hillsboro, and Will Cortez, Accessibility Project Manager, Metro, explained how they started and have expanded



their employee affinity and employee resource groups within their organizations. Lastly, the attendees heard from Kelly Madding, Deputy City Manager, Medford; Simone Brooks, Assistant City Manager, Hillsboro; and Rahim Harji, Assistant City Manager, Hillsboro, about the different functions of government and the essential skills individuals need when coming into executive management in Oregon.



## OCCMA Spring Workshop

The OCCMA Spring Workshop is being held on April 25 at the Running Y Resort in Klamath Falls. The workshop will kick-off the LOC Spring Conference beginning at 8:30 am. This workshop will focus on planning for and recovering from an emergency you never thought would impact your community. The panel will delve into ways city leaders can plan for their community's future in an ever-changing natural environment. They will share what they wish they knew before the emergency hit and how to best set up your community for resiliency. [Click here to view the program and register.](#)

# City Manager Spotlight

## Baker City Welcomes City Manager Barry Murphy

By Rob Drake, Senior Advisor



Effective Jan. 1, Barry Murphy became the new city manager in Baker City, Oregon. He had visited Baker City previously with his wife's family. I met recently with Barry in his office at Baker City Hall, inside the beautiful and historic 1874 building downtown.

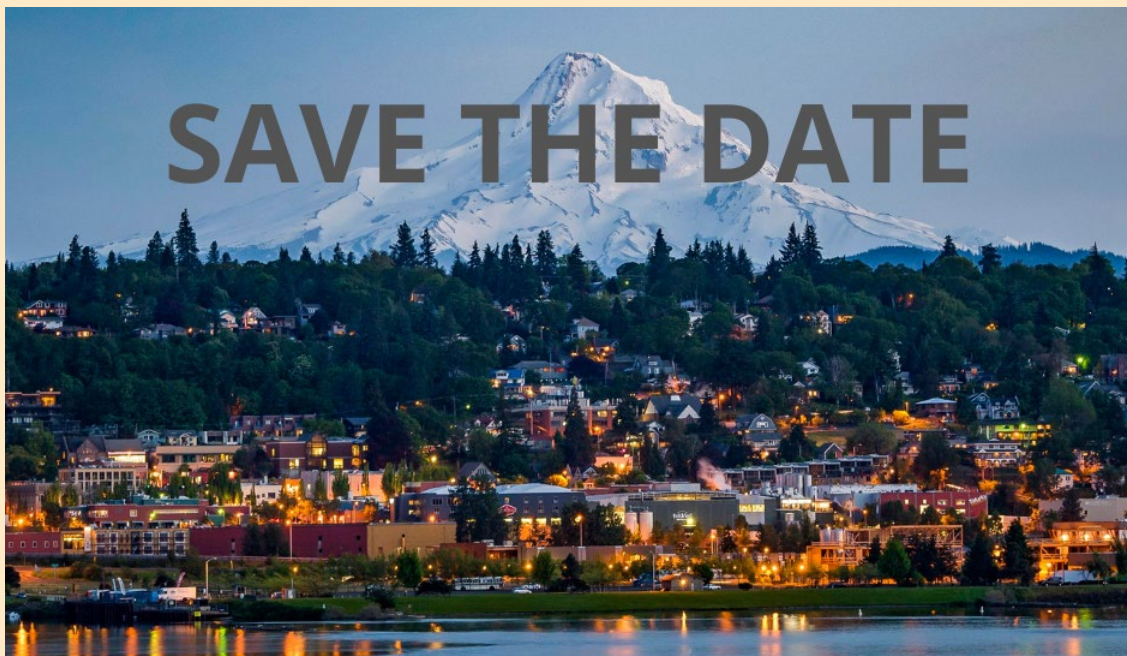
He grew up in a military family, living across the United States and Germany. He recently retired from

the U.S. Air Force as a colonel, flying F-16 fighter planes. Barry graduated from the U.S. Air Force Academy and earned a master's degree from Troy University and the

National Defense University. His 22-year military career spanned overseas tours in Italy, Germany, Japan, and South Korea. He deployed twice to Afghanistan and once to the Middle East for the anti-ISIS campaign in Iraq and Syria. Most recently, he served in leadership positions in Japan and South Korea.

Barry held leadership positions, providing important experience overseeing military operations, troops under his command, and their families, plus all base infrastructure. He has a cordial, respectful communication style and is very approachable. He is asking all the right questions as he learns more about managing Baker City's government.

As city manager, he manages over 60 employees serving more than 10,000 Baker City residents. Barry lives in the city with his wife and their seven children. His wife is a Baker City native.



### 2024 OCCMA Summer Conference

June 24-27, 2024

Best Western Plus Hood River Inn

Questions: Angela Speier, [aspeier@orcities.org](mailto:aspeier@orcities.org) or 503-884-6322





# City Manager Spotlight

## New City Manager Takes Helm at Yachats: A New Era of Leadership and Community Service



Bobbi Price took over as Yachats City Manager on December 1, bringing a wealth of experience from her previous role as the Executive Director of the Yachats Area Chamber of Commerce. With a background in leading community events and tourism promotion as the Tourism Development and Festival Manager at the Greater Newport Chamber of Commerce, and earlier as a Program Coordinator for

Newport Parks and Recreation, Price is well-equipped for her new role. She expressed her enthusiasm for serving the Yachats community, stating, “I am passionate about Yachats and look forward to serving the community in this new capacity.”

The Yachats City Council unanimously selected Price for the city manager position in October 2023, with her tenure beginning on December 1. Price’s 13-year tenure at the Greater Newport Chamber of Commerce, culminating in her role focusing on tourism and festival management, has prepared her well for the challenges of city management. She believes her extensive experience, coupled with her recent work in Yachats, positions her as a valuable asset to the city.

Price credits her family’s support and work ethic for her drive and determination. A Waldport High School graduate

who briefly attended Portland State University, Price chose to return to her roots, valuing hard work over formal education. Her family’s history of homesteading along the Alsea River has instilled in her a strong sense of community and resilience.

As Yachats’ seventh city manager in eight years, Price aims to bring stability to the role. Her journey began at the Embarcadero Resort Hotel & Marina in Newport, followed by a significant stint at the Newport Parks and Recreation Department, where she honed her grant-writing skills. Her marriage to Brian Price, a carpenter, and their life along the Alsea Highway with their two children, adds a personal dimension to her professional narrative.

Price’s leadership at the Newport Chamber of Commerce, where she played a pivotal role in the Newport Seafood & Wine Festival, and her efforts to rejuvenate the Yachats Chamber of Commerce, demonstrate her ability to foster community engagement and growth. Her selection as city manager followed a rigorous search process, highlighting her community support and leadership potential.

In her new role, Price is committed to leveraging her experience and community support to address Yachats’ unique challenges and opportunities. Her approach to city management will focus on collaboration, effective communication, and strategic planning to enhance the city’s livability and service to its residents. Price’s journey from community event coordination to city management underscores her dedication to public service and her vision for Yachats’ future.

# ICMA | coaching program

## Career Compass No. 105: How Do You Show Up as a Leader?

People count on you as a leader. Amid all the demands and distractions, how do you show up, being present, focused, and energized to serve others?

By Dr. Frank Benest | Dec 15, 2023 | ARTICLE

*I'm an HR division manager in an urban county. I've gotten some feedback that I seem distracted in my one-to-one meetings and when I lead my division staff meetings. People also get upset when I sometimes cancel and reschedule meetings because of more urgent demands on me.*

*Well, I guess that I am distracted. I have a lot of work that is on my plate; I'm overwhelmed with meetings and email; we're down several positions; and I feel some uncertainty and anxiety about the future (as do my staff). And, the other HR division managers apparently feel the same way.*

*Another problem is that I sometimes feel exhausted by mid-afternoon. I don't have much energy to carry me strongly throughout the workday.*

*I want to be a good leader for my division team members, but how do I deal with the frustration that my staff feel? How do I deal with my own frustration and anxiety?*

### Response

First of all, let me acknowledge that the role of local government mid-managers is more difficult than ever. Demands keep coming. Retaining talent is challenging. Many staff





work from home or have hybrid schedules. The future of any local government organization is uncertain.

Second, I commend you for wanting to be a good leader. Leadership is not about responding to our own needs and wants. Rather, it is about serving others and responding to their needs. As Dan Rockwell states, “Leaders show up to serve.” We leaders get meaning and in some cases joy by serving others.

Because of all the daily challenges facing you and your division staff, you as a leader must decide on how you are going to show up. As a leader, it is your responsibility to be present, focused, and energized. It is of course easier said than done. As a long-time manager and chief executive in local government, I too often felt overwhelmed, distracted, and anxious. If I were going to serve as a good leader over the long haul, I had to figure out how to better manage myself.

Here are some thoughts and possible approaches.

## **Focus on the Joy of Leadership**

Leadership is difficult. However, oftentimes we leaders spend too much time focusing on the challenges of leadership and bemoaning the resistance to our efforts. To show up with positive energy and enthusiasm, we need to first acknowledge and keep front-and-center the joy of leadership. Through effective leadership, you can make a positive difference for your team, your organization, and the communities that you serve. Yes, while leadership is difficult, the opportunity to lead and contribute is a blessing.

## **Determine Leadership Intent and Assess Gaps**

To get started, you must decide your intent as a leader. How do you want to show up?

If you want to show up being fully present, focused, energized, and engaged, then you need to state that intent to yourself, your division team, and others (such as your HR director and any informal or formal coaches). By making this a personal and professional goal and publicly stating your intent to do a better job in this area, you are more likely to take some steps to improve.

*Leadership starts with self-awareness.*

In addition to stating your intent, you must also assess how you currently show up. Are there any gaps between your intent and current realities? For example, do you sometimes:

- Show up in the morning feeling overwhelmed or frazzled?
- Cancel one-to-one check-ins with direct reports or cancel staff meetings?
- Feel overwhelmed by your to-do list?

- Enabling of others
- Eager to support (without taking over)
- Thankful

With respect to these behaviors, “Being present is bringing your best self to what you are doing now.” (See [Dan Rockwell, Leadership Freak blog, “7 Simple Practices That Enable Being Present,” Feb 7, 2023.](#))

## Start Small

To become more fully present at work, it is a good idea to start small and then build on a few good habits. For instance, a few small steps could include:

- Don’t start your day at home or at work by checking your email. Begin the day by identifying one do-able goal or task to accomplish in the morning and one do-able goal or task to accomplish in the afternoon.
- Turn off any notifications on your phone or computer so you don’t get distracted during your conversations and meetings.
- Shorten your meetings from 60 to 50 minutes so you have time to think about the conversation and interaction, jot down any follow-up items, and then focus on your next meeting.

(See [Dan Rockwell, Leadership Freak blog, “Enjoy Big Differences from 7 Delightful Small Things,” April 22, 2022.](#))

## Adopt a Few Rituals

Rituals are defined as a prescribed set of actions regularly repeated in a precise manner by an individual or members of a group. Rituals help us achieve some sense of control and comfort amid a lot of uncertainty. (See [Career Compass #99 “Harness the Hidden Power of Rituals.”](#))

A few rituals can help us keep engaged and energized. I find that evening and morning rituals are particularly helpful. For instance, I end my day by reviewing the next day’s schedule and identifying a few do-able priority tasks for the next day. This ritual helps clear my mind so that I can go to sleep without too much worry about the coming work day.

I also have a few morning rituals. I start by taking a walk to fetch several newspapers. I then enjoy my morning coffee and oatmeal as I read the newspapers. Once I’m done, I say to myself, “OK, Frank. You are ready to take on your work for the day.”

Other people do not schedule any meetings for the first hour at work so they can start a priority morning task and be focused on that task. As another ritual, others set aside several mornings per week to walk around the office, chat with staff, inquire about their



families, talk about sports, hobbies or other leisure activities, and express appreciation (about anything).

## Clear Your Mind and Focus

Before a meeting with a direct report or your team, it is helpful to get grounded, clear your mind of distractions, and get focused.

Bain and Co. identified 33 key leadership traits and found that mindful presence (called “centeredness” in the study) was the number one trait of successful leaders. The research indicated that showing up fully present created better connection with staff, increased employee engagement, and improved performance. (See [Rasmus Hougaard and Jacqueline Carter, “If You Aspire To Be a Great Leader, Be Present,” hbr.org, Dec 13, 2017.](#))

Before an important meeting or presentation, you can clear mind and get focused by intentionally pausing, closing your eyes, and taking a deep breath or two. Or, take a short walk. When you are in the meeting, consciously sit up or stand up straight, uncross your arms, and smile a little. (See [Rasmus Hougaard and Jacqueline Carter, “If You Aspire To Be a Great Leader, Be Present,” hbr.org, Dec 13, 2017.](#))

## Enhance Your 1:1 Meetings

One-to-one meetings are a critical opportunity to connect with direct reports and support them. However, many of us managers feel overwhelmed by these 1:1 meetings. Either we cancel and reschedule these 1:1’s, or we aren’t fully present and don’t maximize the opportunity.

*Being present honors the person in front of you.*

One problem is that sometimes our “inner voice” distracts us from truly listening. Our inner voice may say “I wish he would stop talking.” Or, “I know what she’s going to say.” Or, “I wonder when Joe will respond to my text.” The end result is that staff people feel frustrated or unheard.” (See [Rasmus Hougaard and Jacqueline Carter, “If You Aspire To Be a Great Leader, Be Present,” hbr.org, Dec 13, 2017.](#))

Another typical problem with 1:1’s is that the manager overly focuses on accountability, trying to ensure that the staff person is meeting timelines on key deliverables. It is no wonder that employees dread or at least don’t enjoy these accountability oriented meetings. (See [Career Compass #53 “How Do I Hold People Accountable?”](#))

You want to create a “safe place” so that the staff person can express any problems or frustrations and share possible steps forward without you as the manager stepping in and fixing the problem. (See [Rasmus Hougaard and Jacqueline Carter, “If You Aspire To Be a Great Leader, Be Present,” hbr.org, Dec 13, 2017.](#))

An alternative approach is to inquire about the person, one's family, and/or one's personal pursuits, as well as share similar information about yourself. Then you can focus on the staff person's projects by asking a few questions:

- Why is this project important to you? (Purpose is the great self-motivator.)
- What is challenging?
- What are you learning?
- What will you focus on in the next two weeks?
- What is your next step or two?
- How can I support you?

Leading is often more about asking questions than providing answers.

One-to-one interaction can be enhanced by moving away from your desk (which acts as a barrier between you as the superior and the staff person as the subordinate). You can both sit around a table or in chairs across from each other. An even better setting for some of your 1:1s could be meeting at a café or conducting a walking meeting.

The key point is to enhance 1:1 meetings by being fully present, open, supportive, and forward-looking. As Dan Rockwell suggests, "Being present honors the person in front of you." (See ["7 Simple Practices That Enable Being Present," Leadership Freak blog, Feb 7, 2023.](#))

## **Lean on Others**

A leader cannot lead alone. Some leaders feel that it is lonely at the top. I believe it is lonely only if we isolate ourselves.

Loneliness is an epidemic in America. The U.S. Surgeon General reports that a majority of American adults feel lonely. (See [U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory "Our Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation," May 2023.](#)) This sense of loneliness may be even greater for those of us with managerial responsibilities. (See [Career Compass #60 "I Don't Like My Mid-Manager Job!"](#))

People count on you. Whom do you count on for support? (See [Dan Rockwell, Leadership Freak blog, "Comedy Makes Pfizer's Corporate Affairs Officer Feel Alone," March 29, 2023.](#)) Whom can you take into your confidence as you try to exert positive influence and show up energized? This informal support group may include another manager, a trusted colleague or team member, or an informal coach. With these supporters, you can share your intent and goals, recent missteps, and concerns. Trusted advisors can provide feedback or simply listen and provide emotional support.

*Lean on others.*

It is also a good idea to share some of your leadership tasks. Lean on others. For instance, you can rotate the role of the convener and facilitator of division meetings



among your staff members (and in process further develop them). It is difficult to show up with energy and enthusiasm if you feel alone.

## **Re-Edit the Movie**

To assess how you are actually showing up on a daily basis, examine your day by asking yourself these questions:

- Which conversations or interactions with others went well today? Which ones did not go so well?
- How did the direct report or team feel at the end of the conversation or interaction with you?
- How did they experience you?
- To what extent did you fulfill your leadership intent or otherwise show up as your best self?

As part of this daily self-assessment, some leaders review key conversations or interactions at the end of the day as if they were watching a movie. If the conversation or interaction was problematic, they rewind and replay the movie in their head and then edit it noting the improvements they will make so that the interaction is better next time.

If the interaction was not experienced well, one leader is reported to phone a direct report or colleague on the way home. The leader says “I don’t feel good about our conversation today.” Rather than blaming the other person, the leader owns the conversation and the outcome and may ask how they can improve the conversation the next time. (See [Dan Rockwell, Leadership Freak blog, “4 Questions That Guide Your Most Important Conversation,” May 31, 2023.](#))

## **Audit and Replenish Your Energy**

Throughout my career I took great pride in having a lot of enthusiasm and energy. As suggested by Peter Drucker, a leader’s role is to manage one’s energy and the energy of others. Dan Rockwell agrees that “personal energy is more important than skills, talents, and resources.” (See [Leadership Freak blog, “20 Questions That You Can Use To Audit Personal Energy,” March 24, 2022.](#))

You are responsible for your own energy. The problem is that your energy needs to be sustained and regularly replenished. The first thing to do is to audit your personal energy. Using a 1-10 scale, ask yourself:

- I know my most productive time of day.
- I take breaks during the day.
- I regularly express gratitude.
- I eat healthy foods.
- I have a consistent bedtime.
- I know what today’s priority is.
- I frequently do things I love to do.

- I usually get the day's work done.
- I use my strengths every day at work.
- My work aligns with my values.
- I enjoy a hobby or some leisure pursuit.
- I exercise regularly.
- I connect with friends every week.

Which items most influence your energy in a positive way? In a negative way? (See [Dan Rockwell, Leadership Freak blog, "20 Questions You Can Use to Audit Personal Energy," March 24, 2022.](#))

I know that I am more energized in the morning hours so I focus on key priorities after finishing my morning coffee and reading the newspaper. To refill my energy tank, I take a walk in the mid-afternoon after focusing on work projects in the morning and early afternoon. After my walk, I can return to work. Certain people energize me so I regularly schedule a cup of coffee or a drink with them to reconnect and discuss my projects and life in general.

### **Do Less, Be More**

I know that you as an HR division manager are trying to push out the work assigned to your division. As a leader, your role is to help your team become more productive. The key is how you show up and interact with people. Do less, be more.

You can make a big difference in the lives of others by being self-reflective, deciding how you want to show up and be present with others, and taking small steps to become a better leader. I am not suggesting you change who you are. I am suggesting that you can become your best self.

As Harry Kraemer, former CEO of Baxter Pharmaceuticals, stated, "If you don't know yourself, how can you lead yourself? If you can't lead yourself, how can you lead others?" ([Dan Rockwell, Leadership Freak blog, "Journey To Silence," April 5, 2011.](#))



Sponsored by the ICMA Coaching Program, [ICMA Career Compass](#) is a monthly column from ICMA focused on career issues for local government professional staff. Dr. Frank Benest is ICMA's liaison for Next Generation Initiatives and resides in Palo Alto, California. [Read past columns](#) at [icma.org/careercompass](http://icma.org/careercompass).

If you have a career question you would like addressed in a future Career Compass, e-mail [careers@icma.org](mailto:careers@icma.org) or contact Frank directly at [frank@frankbenest.com](mailto:frank@frankbenest.com).





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# An Academy of Their Own

By Kelly Hart, Lebanon Community Development Director

In the world of sports, the iconic film “A League of Their Own” depicted the resilience and determination of women in professional baseball during World War II. Fast forward to the present day, and a similar spirit is alive in the Northwest Women’s Leadership Academy (NWWLA), a program dedicated to nurturing and empowering women to take the helm in local government. This leadership training and mentorship program shares striking similarities with the professional women’s baseball league portrayed in the movie, creating a powerful analogy for these women’s transformative journeys.

## Spring Training for Leadership

Just as baseball players undergo rigorous spring training to hone their skills and prepare for the season ahead, the NWWLA annually selects a cohort of 20 rising women to participate in a leadership training and mentorship program. This can be seen as the equivalent of spring training for these aspiring leaders, where they receive comprehensive education on the critical components of local government and leadership.

## Competitive Selection Process

In “A League of Their Own,” players were chosen based on their talent, commitment, and passion for the game. Similarly, the NWWLA employs a competitive selection process to choose its cohort. Women are selected not only for their potential but also for their dedication to local government, career growth aspirations, and the need for the support and guidance that the academy provides. This ensures that the participants are qualified and deeply committed to making a difference in their communities.

## Team of Coaches and Mentors

In the movie, the baseball teams were led by experienced coaches who guided the players through the game’s challenges. The NWWLA takes a similar approach by assembling a team of coaches, comprised of past alumni and a steering committee, who develop the academy’s curriculum. These coaches bring their own experiences and insights, acting as mentors to the rookies and providing valuable guidance as they navigate the complexities of leadership in local government.

# OCCMA Communications Committee Reimagines Its Role

By Andy Varner, North Plains City Manager

The Oregon City/County Management Association (OCCMA) membership has elevated the Communications Committee to a standing committee status in 2024. Traditionally, the committee has focused on developing and distributing the quarterly membership newsletter. However, during its retreat last fall, the OCCMA Board of Directors tasked the Communications Committee with reenvisioning its contributions to the membership.

The landscape of how businesses and municipalities engage with stakeholders has evolved dramatically over the past decade. Consider the methods your organization employs to connect with its constituents. Often, a multifaceted approach is necessary for effective communication, serving as a two-way street of valuable information exchange. In management, we may view our communications team as an internal service provider that supports various departments and divisions.

With the onset of the new year, the newly restructured Communications Committee explored this concept further. Is it possible for the committee to play a more internal role, supporting our numerous committees and subcommittees? We plan to attend various meetings to introduce this concept, ensuring the valuable efforts across our membership are consistently shared and highlighted throughout the year.

Additionally, we will delve into topics such as identifying the most effective social media channels, clarifying our target audience (internal versus external), revamping our newsletter or blog, observing best practices among peer state organizations, and more. While we aim to minimize surveys, we will seek alternative methods to gather feedback on what is effective and what requires improvement. Stay tuned for more updates in 2024!





Just as Babe Ruth pointed to the bleachers and called his home run in the 1932 World Series, the 2023-2024 Rookie Class of the Northwest Women's Academy are calling their shots for bright futures ahead.

### **Hall of Fame Level Training**

Just as the baseball players in the movie received training from Hall of Fame level coaches (...well, by the end of the movie), the NWWLA exposes its cohort to the best in the field of local government. Renowned city managers, directors, and local government leaders are brought in to share their expertise and insights, elevating the training experience to a Hall of Fame level. This exposure ensures that the participants receive a top-notch education and are well-prepared for the challenges.

### **Building a Network**

One of the key takeaways from “A League of Their Own” was the strong bond that formed among the players. Similarly, the NWWLA emphasizes building a network among its participants. The cohort becomes a supportive community, and the connections made during the program extend beyond the training camp. The alumni network becomes a valuable resource for ongoing support and collaboration in the challenging field of local government management.

### **Entering the Big Show**

Just as the baseball players were prepped to enter the big leagues, the NWWLA prepares its cohort to enter the world

of local government management. With knowledge, skills, and a robust support network, these women are empowered to take on leadership roles and make a meaningful impact in Oregon’s local government. The results have paid off; the NWWLA alumni have excelled in their careers, several rising to positions of directors of departments and city managers, and many others continue to rise through the ranks.

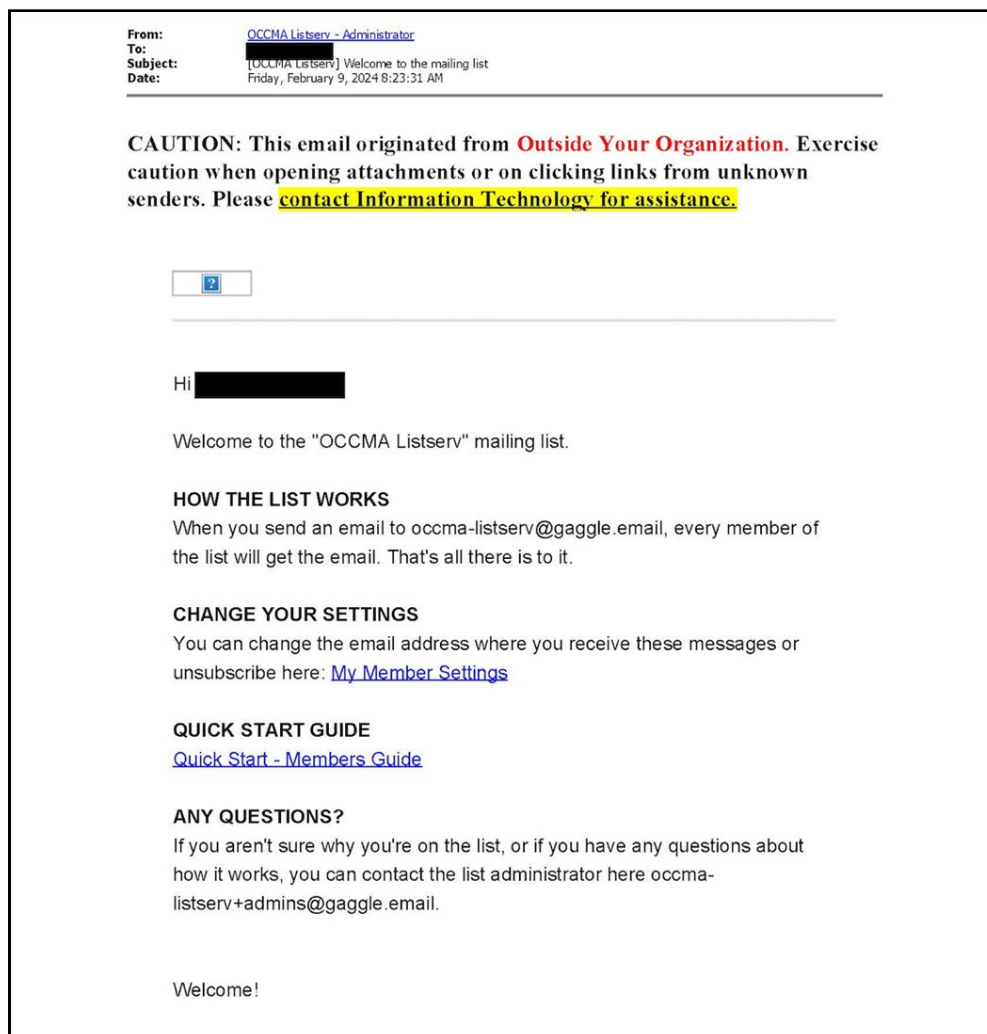
### **Conclusion**

The Northwest Women’s Leadership Academy stands as a beacon of empowerment, echoing the spirit of resilience and determination portrayed in “A League of Their Own.” Through a structured program of education, mentorship, and networking, the NWWLA is nurturing a new generation of leaders poised to leave an indelible mark on local government in Oregon. The parallels between the academy and the professional women’s baseball league serve as a poignant reminder that, just like their counterparts on the baseball field, women in leadership can overcome challenges and thrive when provided with the right support and opportunities.

# Managing your Gaggle Listserv Account

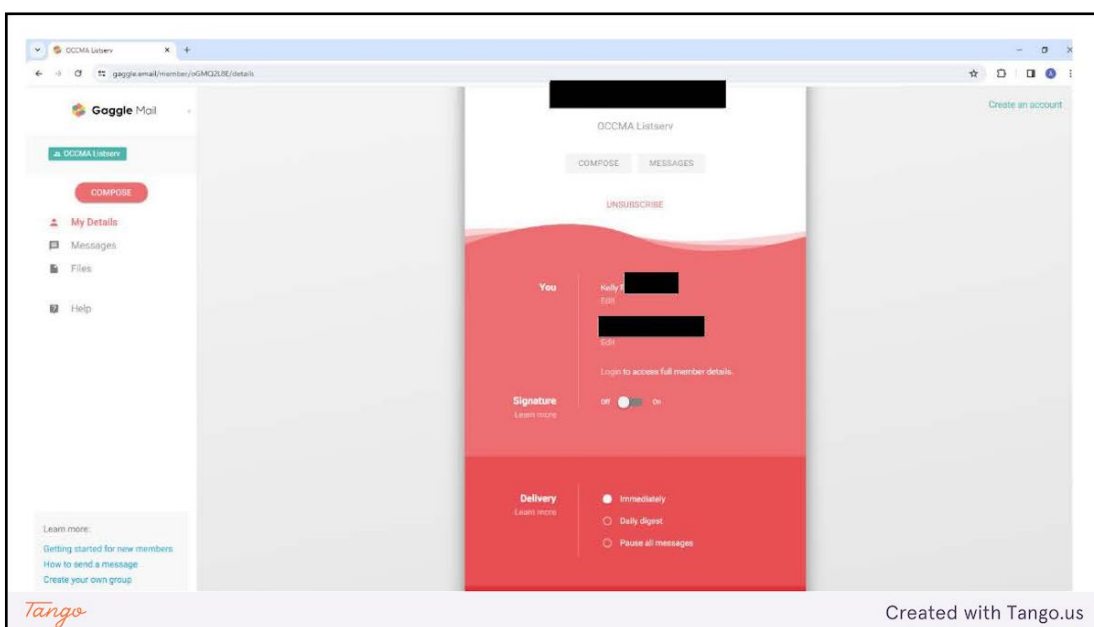
## I. Welcome Email

After your OCCMA membership application and payment have been received, you will receive a welcome email from gaggle.



## 2. Member Settings

Click the member settings hyperlink from the welcome email. The screen below will allow you to edit your name, email, signature and delivery method. The delivery method allows you to receive emails from the listserv immediately, daily, or you can pause all messages.



### 3. Create an Account

Click Create an Account in the top right corner of the screen. This will bring up the screen below and ask you to create a password.

The screenshot shows the 'League of Oregon Cities - Sign Up' page for Gaggle Mail. On the left, there is a sign-up form with fields for 'Email address' and 'Password', a 'Create account' button, and links for 'Sign in with Google' and 'Sign in with Apple'. On the right, a large graphic encourages users to 'Join over 500k people already using Gaggle Mail.' Below this, six testimonials from various professionals are displayed in a grid, each with a quote, a name, and a title. The bottom of the page features the 'Tango' logo on the left and 'Created with Tango.us' on the right.

### 4. Account Activation

Once your password has been created, you will receive an email asking you to validate your email address. Click the link. This will bring you back to your member settings page.

### 5. Messages

From your account page you can access all past listserv posts and their responses. Before posting a message, you can search previous posts to see if your question has been posted before. Or maybe you remember seeing a similar question and can't find the responses. Gaggle stores all responses to questions and documents that were shared. You can also reply to messages from this page.

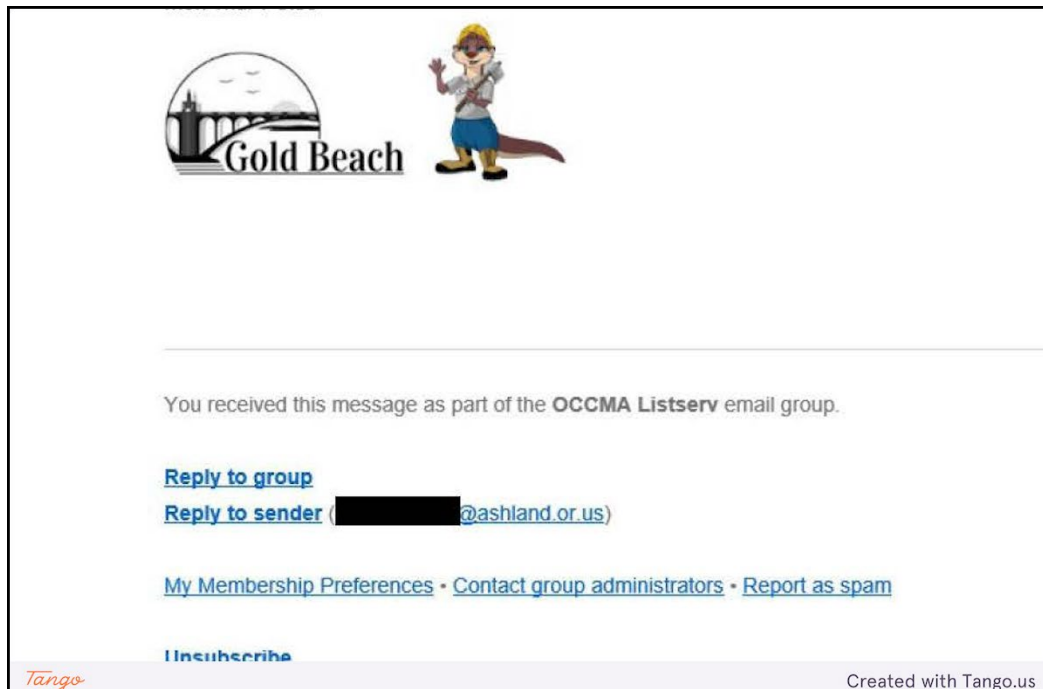
The screenshot displays the 'Gaggle Mail Messages' interface. A left sidebar contains navigation links: 'COMPOSE', 'My Details', 'Messages', 'Files', and 'Help'. The main area shows a list of messages with icons, subject lines, and dates. One message, 'Does anyone have an RFP for legal services?', is selected and expanded on the right. This expanded view shows the message content, the sender's information (Will Ibershof, City of Madras), and a 'REPLY TO GROUP' button. The bottom of the page includes the 'Tango' logo and 'Created with Tango.us'.

*continued on page 24*



## 6. Messaging Through Your Email

Listserv messages come directly to your inbox. When you would like to reply only to the sender and not the entire listserv, you can scroll to the bottom of the email and select the option to reply to the sender and not the entire group.



## 7. Gaggle Help

We hope this user guide helps you make the most of the OCCMA listserv. If you have any questions about your account, please direct them to Angela Speier at [aspeier@orcities.org](mailto:aspeier@orcities.org) or 503-884-6322.

# New Resource: Lobbying 101 Toolkit

The LOC is excited to introduce a new Lobbying 101 Toolkit to help city officials in Oregon effectively communicate with their state and federal elected leaders. Within the Lobbying 101 Toolkit, city officials will learn:

- The basics of the Oregon Legislature, including how to find your legislator, track a bill, submit testimony, and read a bill, plus the official and unofficial rules of lobbying.
- How to build relationships with legislators and key staff members.
- The difference between lobbying for substantive policy reform, versus lobbying for needed supplemental revenue, and how to do both successfully.

This toolkit is comprised of short training videos, frequently asked questions, helpful links, sample documents, and other tools that will help city officials build confidence in representing their community, and more effectively engage with their lawmakers for the betterment of their local communities. More resources will be added to the toolkit in the coming weeks. If you have questions about the Lobbying 101 Toolkit or how to work with lawmakers or their staff, please reach out to the [LOC lobbying team](#).



# Oregon Senior Advisors



From  
**Sheila  
Ritz**

## Small Cities Meetings Region 2 and Region 8

In December, I attended the Region 2 meeting in Maywood Park. The only in-person attendees were representatives of **Maywood Park**, LOC staff, and myself. **King City** attended virtually. LOC Lobbyist Scott Winkels gave a presentation about the opioid addiction settlement fund, which is available over the next 18 years. There are other settlements still being negotiated. Cities over 10,000 population receive a direct distribution and smaller cities need to apply to the State Alcohol and Drug Policy Commission for funding of opioid remediation programs. Nonprofits need to partner with cities or counties to apply for funding. Scott discussed the LOC policy proposals for the next legislative session to address the substance abuse crisis. These policy proposals were developed by representatives of the District Attorneys Association, the Sheriffs Association, and the Chiefs of Police Association. LOC would like active support from cities at the legislative session.

I attended the Region 8 meeting virtually. In-person representatives were from **Hood River, Cascade Locks**, LOC staff, and **Senior Advisor Dave Waffle**. Scott Winkels gave the same presentation as in Maywood Park.

## Clackamas County Managers - Jan. 8

Representatives of **Oregon City, Sandy, Estacada, Happy Valley, Lake Oswego, Canby, and Molalla** attended. They discussed city library boards: whether they are only advisory to the City Council or if they have the authority to direct the city's library director. They continued discussing library funding and the use of county library funds for capital expenses.

They also discussed the homelessness initiative, which is separate from the opioid settlement fund. It was also noted that some cities' virtual council meetings have been interrupted by hate speech through AI (artificial

intelligence). Some cities shared their process to prevent such occurrences.

## Allison Williams, Hood River County Administrator



Allison started as the new county administrator on Dec. 4. She was previously the city manager of Moses Lake, Washington for three years and five months. Before that, Allison worked for the city of Wenatchee, Washington for 21 years: six years in long-range community and economic

development planning as a community planner and then as executive services director for 15 years. In this position, she was chief of staff for the city's management team and the right hand of the mayor in a strong mayor form of government. Wenatchee is the largest city in a region serving a two-county area (Chelan and Douglas). As a fruit-growing locale with nearby forests and rivers, Allison describes many similarities with Hood River County. The area recovered from the Sleepy Hollow Fires, which swept through Wenatchee in the summer of 2015, destroying dozens of homes and waterfront warehouses and scorching 3,000 acres of vegetation. In the aftermath, Allison was involved with developing new land use codes (Wildfire Urban Interface), community forest protection plans, and other related initiatives, which she feels prepared her for leading Hood River County.

The county has several priorities that need addressing, including the overall modernization of county facilities and operations. They are on the state funding list to replace their court building. So far, they have gotten planning funding and are hopeful to receive construction funding in fiscal year 2026-27. The 911 emergency operations center is housed in the administration building, which needs seismic retrofitting. It is an old building, so they will look at several options for adequate facilities. Recruitment, retention, and succession planning are other focus areas. Allison is continuing the work of their predecessor, Jeff Hecksel, to obtain ongoing financial stability for the county. There are several big issues to work through, including discussions with the city of Hood River about annexation and

partnerships on facilities. Those topics, along with developing solutions for workforce housing, are attractive to Allison, as much of her professional career has required developing collaborative relationships.

Allison's husband is originally from Oregon, and they have two adult sons: one lives in Bend and the other in Boise. They are pleased to be closer to family. Allison is a very personable leader and is excited about the variety of projects underway in the county.

### **Tyler Deems, Sandy City Manager**



Tyler has worked for Sandy for nine years as deputy city manager/finance director and since September as permanent city manager. The city has a moratorium on new construction due to wastewater issues. They need over \$130 million of capital improvements. They came to an agreement with

EPA and DOJ last June to address the problem. So far, they have received \$16 million in grants, obtained approval for \$30 million in loans, and increased utility rates by over 200% in the last four years. The first phase of the project was completed; there is still capacity expansion needed at the wastewater treatment plant and an additional discharge site.

There is a new 10.5-acre park under construction on 45 acres the city purchased from the school district in 2017. This was the site of an old middle school and aquatic center. The city closed the aquatic center in May 2019 because operating costs were unsustainable. Now those facilities need demolishing.

The city is recruiting a finance director, and Tyler made a contingent offer for a police chief pending a background investigation.

### **Greg Dirks, Wood Village City Manager**



Greg has worked for Wood Village for 15 years, with the last four as city manager.

The city completed a major SCADA update for water and sewer, modernizing the system for security, resilience, and operations. Now, they have more confidence in report accuracy

and system operations. They are upgrading one city well, including capacity and optimal backup power. After updating the wastewater master plan, there is a need to upsize the main sewer trunk line. Now, with more accurate SCADA data, they are monitoring flows to determine the full buildout capacity needed. (Wood Village borders other cities, so cannot expand.) The city also hired an architectural firm to design a replacement 20-year-old park bathroom facility and expects bids soon.

The three smaller East Multnomah County cities have a history of joint work on issues of mutual concern. Their contract with Gresham for fire and emergency services expires next year. Together, they are negotiating with Gresham Fire and studying all service options in the future. They also continue efforts with Multnomah County to obtain improved ambulance and homelessness services.



From  
**Dave  
Kanner**

### **City Managers Convene to Address Regional Issues**

I recently caught up with **Aaron Prunty, Eagle Point's** city manager for the past four years. This appears to be a dream job for Prunty, who has lived in Eagle Point for 21 years and can walk to work. He also has a very stable city council with several long-time councilors. Prunty said the city's budget is in good shape, thanks largely to conservative budgeting. He recently hired a new police chief who is evaluating everything in the department, and he filled a public works director position that had been vacant for 18 months, during which Prunty served as interim director. Emergency planning will remain a focus area for the next six to 12 months. Eagle Point was threatened by one of the Labor Day wildfires that struck Southern Oregon in 2020, although the city had no damage. So, the emphasis on emergency planning is understandable. Overall, Prunty said he is very happy in Eagle Point, adding, "It's nice to work with really smart people who want to do a great job."



A familiar face is **Talent's** new city manager: **Gary Milliman**. Milliman, as many likely know, was the longtime manager of Brookings and, after retiring, a senior adviser for the south coast and parts of Southwest Oregon. He and his wife relocated to Medford last year, and he began looking for interim work. When the Talent job opened, he applied and was the top council choice. Talent faces numerous near-term challenges. One of the biggest is planning for the future of the "Gateway Project," at the entrance to the city on Highway 99. The city adopted a mixed-use master plan in 2019, but when the 2020 Alameda Fire destroyed over 500 housing units in Talent, the city converted the property to temporary housing for fire survivors. That agreement expires at the end of the year, and the city needs to figure out how to move forward. Milliman said a large percentage of Talent's staff has been with the city for less than two years but are a "good, dedicated bunch."

**Jackson County city managers** gathered in Central Point for their monthly meeting in late January. In attendance were **Chris Clayton, Central Point; Jeff Alvis, Jacksonville; Ryan Nolan, Rogue River; Aaron Prunty, Eagle Point; Gary Milliman, Talent; Danny Jordan, Jackson County; Eric Swanson, Phoenix; Lily Morgan, Gold Hill; and Ryan Martin, Medford's** deputy city manager. Most of the meeting focused on a presentation from Tim Doney, director of Emergency Communications of Southern Oregon, the region's 911 dispatch agency. ESCO has a capital project underway to enhance and upgrade the agency's radio communication system. Voters approved a \$28 million bond measure in 2019 to fund the project. But when it went out to bid, there was only one \$37.6 million proposal. Negotiations brought the price down, but ESCO still needs \$4.6 million more, so discussion focused on how to raise that money. Funding from the legislature or Congress were popular ideas.

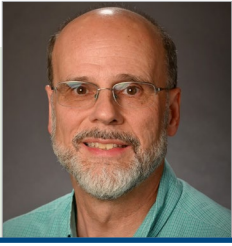


After the meeting, I spoke with **Lily Morgan, Gold Hill's** city manager since early December. Morgan has an interesting background, having served on the Grants Pass City Council and Josephine County Board of Commissioners. She was elected to the Oregon House of Representatives (District 3) in

2020 and 2022. Gold Hill's interim city manager last year was the former Grants Pass police chief; he recruited Morgan for the job. She faces numerous challenges, not least that the city manager role is not included in Gold Hill's charter or considered an officer of the city — that's high on her priority list to correct. Gold Hill has only five staff members, so it needs to be clear the city manager is the administrative head. Another project under discussion has been expanding the Rogue Valley Sewer District into Gold Hill. Morgan has a master's in management from Southern Oregon University. Her experience, education and intellect make her well qualified to address the city's challenges. Gold Hill is fortunate to have her.

In early February, I attended the public managers meeting at the **Rogue Valley Council of Governments**. In attendance, along with heads of various Southern Oregon public agencies, were city managers **Aaron Cubic, Grants Pass; Ryan Nolan, Rogue River; Gary Milliman, Talent; Lily Morgan, Gold Hill; Sabrina Cotta, Ashland; and Eric Swanson, Phoenix**. Discussion focused on broadband access for rural areas and struggles many jurisdictions face with staffing.

In fact, RVCOG Executive Director Ann Marie Alfrey said at one point she was doing five different agency jobs, including finance director, internal services director and deputy director. (At this writing, she is still interim finance director.) Alfrey joined RVCOG nine years ago as human resources manager, later becoming deputy director and executive director three years ago, overseeing a 54-employee agency offering a broad array of services. RVCOG is the area agency on aging and metropolitan planning organization for the Rogue Valley, in addition to providing services including land use planning, IT support, HR recruitment, grant writing and staffing for the Bear Creek restoration initiative. Alfrey also provides primary staff support to a 24-member board of directors.



From  
**Richard  
Meyers**

## Ice Storm Cleanup Continues, New Manager Settles in Cottage Grove

In my first visits since being selected as a senior advisor, I joined with fellow Senior Advisor Rob Drake and visited **Joe Samaniego** in **Tangent**. Joe is working on several projects that unite community members by increasing participation and support. Rob and I assisted Joe in preparing materials to seek recognition for the community's efforts. While visiting Joe, community members brought a beautifully crafted time capsule to City Hall.

I dropped in on **Michelle Amberg** in **Creswell** for an update on the recent ice storm cleanup. The cleanup is nearly complete, but the community is dealing with a mandated moratorium and how that will impact economic development and attempts to address housing needs.



I also visited **Mike Sauerwein**, **Cottage Grove's** newly appointed city manager. Mike officially started work on Jan. 22 after the big ice storm that caused significant damage in Cottage Grove. Much of the community lost electricity for 5-10

days. Starting work during a crisis has been an exciting challenge for Mike, who said it was "surreal to come to a city that was completely dark and cold."

Some may remember Mike from when he worked in Sheridan from 1994-2004 before going to Washington for 20 years. He and Cottage Grove Finance Director Roberta Likens realized they had met when Mike was a University of Oregon master of public administration student who had interviewed Likens when she worked in Junction City.

Before returning to Oregon, Mike worked in the Washington cities of Sammamish, Medina, and Snoqualmie. He said he is excited to work in Cottage Grove and tackle the many projects ahead, starting with recovering from the estimated \$1.5 million in damage from the ice storm. Due to extensive tree damage, the city hired eight private tree contractors to assist city crews with debris removal. Two weeks into cleanup, there are already two large piles of debris, with the one closest to my house is taller than surrounding two-story homes. The city hopes the storm receives an emergency designation to help address costs since the damage exceeds that of a 2019 snowstorm.

When Mike arrived at city hall, over 45 residents without power and heat were housed in the building, including some with service dogs and exotic birds. City Hall was one of the few buildings with power from a generator. Many more were supported at the community center. Mike said he has been impressed with the community's "can-do" and supportive attitude, with many volunteers stepping up to help clear debris and assist neighbors.

Beyond storm recovery, Mike is moving forward with plans for Cottage Grove's \$5 million Main Street rehabilitation project and improvements to Bohemia Park, as well as the next steps to address homelessness and seek solutions. Welcome back to Oregon, Mike!

**Please feel free to call or email the senior advisor in your area if you need assistance**

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