Getting to the HEART of the Matter

INSIDE...

President’s Message
2022 OCCMA Summer Conference
Civic Education Toolkit
OR Employment Department Launches Paid Leave Program

OGEC Training Resources
Cybercrime on the Rise
Getting to the HEART of the Matter
Budgeting in Times of High Inflation

City Hall Selfie Day
Committee Reports
Retirement Updates
City Spotlight: Joint Community Engagement Specialist
Senior Advisor Reports
MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Susie Marston • City Manager • Gervais

What a great conference we had at Eagle Crest this year in Redmond! The facility was great, the content was superb, and it was great to see everyone who attended. Thank you to Scott Derickson and the Professional Development Committee for all your work putting the conference together. Next up is the fall workshop at the annual LOC Conference in Bend.

We are also grateful for our conference sponsors and for hanging out with us at the receptions and the president’s dinner. Thank you for being part of us! CIS’s continual support and contribution to the Senior Advisors are very much appreciated! Our senior advisors are rich in knowledge and always ready to lend a hand or an ear. Our membership values this program.

Have you seen the new Civic Education Toolkit on the OCCMA website? If not, you should check it out! This was created by PSU graduate student Ashleen McGirk, who rolled it out to us during the conference. Ashleen worked with board member Zoe Mombert and the Civic Education Committee on developing this resource. Thank you, Ashleen! The Board was glad to provide the opportunity to Ashleen, and we look forward to the prospect of more opportunities for students to engage with OCCMA.

I look forward to attending my first ICMA Conference this year in Columbus. If you’re going, please plan to attend the Oregon-Washington dinner Monday evening, September 19th, and the reception immediately before dinner hosted by the Maxwell School and co-sponsored by OCCMA and WCCMA. Plan to mingle with peers and, most of all, to celebrate our own Jeff Towery, McMinnville City Manager. Jeff is the incoming 2022-2023 ICMA President!

The 2023 NW Regional Managers Conference will be held March 28-31 in Fairbanks, Alaska. Be looking for more information coming out this fall.

I hope you have been enjoying the summer months and maybe going places to reset, refresh and recharge. Take good care, and we’ll all meet up again soon!

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CALENDAR OF EVENTS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>September 17-21, 2022</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICMA Annual Conference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Columbus, Ohio</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>October 4, 2022</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>OCCMA Board of Directors Meeting</td>
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<tr>
<td>Riverhouse, Bend</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>October 5, 2022</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>OCCMA Annual Membership Meeting &amp; Workshop</td>
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<tr>
<td>Riverhouse, Bend</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>October 5-7, 2022</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>LOC Annual Conference</td>
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<tr>
<td>Riverhouse, Bend</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>November 17-18, 2022</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>OCCMA Board of Directors Retreat</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Oregon Garden, Silverton</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>March 28-31, 2023</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>NW Regional Managers Conference</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fairbanks, Alaska</td>
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<td><strong>July 19-22, 2023</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>OCCMA Summer Conference</td>
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<td>Pendleton Convention Center</td>
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2022 OCCMA Summer Conference Held in Eagle Crest

The 2022 OCCMA Summer Conference was held at Eagle Crest Resort on July 19-22. Thank you to the Professional Development Committee, along with all conference attendees, speakers and sponsors, for making the conference a big success!
Oh, my! Thank you for this wonderful opportunity! That was my reaction to receiving the 2022 OCCMA Summer Conference scholarship. It was like an incredible dream come true. I lost my Green Card because we were in Japan too long. We moved back to Japan from the U.S. because of my ex-husband’s job. Without a Green Card, it has been challenging to support our son as a single parent from Japan without family here. Fortunately, I could become a professional graduate teaching assistant. The community around us has become our family. In a way, my dream has come true here in the big picture.

Twelve years ago, I moved to Portland from Kobe, Japan, for our son’s education. He is a Japanese American. We mainly moved because he wanted to leave the homogenous Japanese culture and go to a better English education situation.

Thankfully, with all the local community and government support in the Portland area, he was raised bilingual and bicultural as if a native of both countries; he understands both cultures and navigates etiquette and manners respectfully.

Raising a child takes a village. He needed a vast village that crossed different nations. After ODOT gave him a wonderful opportunity to practice his skills in business information systems as a paid intern, he graduated from Oregon State University this year.

I have been thinking about how I can return the favor. The OCCMA conference gave me a fantastic opportunity to see how I can be part of it. Learning from city and county managers and their staff has given me the confidence to do what I have been searching for in my career and volunteer work as a neighborhood association board member.

I have been thinking about how to build a collaborative culture internationally. I felt that we need to learn how to respect Western individual cultures and still create a collaborative culture to support each other. It might be critical for community members to feel a sense of belonging. Feeling a sense of belonging might help community members to care for their local land and neighbors. The local government has a big role to be a leader in taking care of community members in various ways. We usually feel joy in good relationships with family and friends. Good connections are essential for mental and physical health. Recently, our PSU Fulbright international student from Ukraine told me how his mother and grandmother could escape from Ukraine to Germany. His previous work peers helped them. Friendships saved us.

Hopefully, local governments can connect with other countries’ local governments more in the future. And those connections can help both sides thrive, let us learn from one other, and evoke new ideas. I believe putting people with different ideas and backgrounds together can create new ideas for the future, leading to beautiful collaboration and harmony. I hope I can be a part of it. Thank you for reading, support, and cooperation!
We all want more engaged community members and more diverse participation in local government. However, it can be challenging to inspire participation when residents don’t know how our cities or counties work. We’ve all seen the reports that Americans, particularly K-12 students, don’t know enough about government, public affairs, democracy, or local issues. This lack of knowledge of local government leads to a less engaged and distrustful citizenry.

As an emerging local government professional, I was excited about the opportunity to help facilitate civic education and inspire others to learn more about their communities. City managers and local government leaders are well positioned to foster the civic health of our communities. However, a number of Oregon cities and counties don’t have the capacity to develop educational materials. To help fill this gap, I had the opportunity to create a Civic Education Toolkit for OCCMA members. This kit provides easily accessible information on the basics of local government and the city manager profession. With direction from the Civic Engagement Committee, I compiled materials to communicate with city councils, community members, and future local government professionals about various topics relating to local government management.

The website is a “choose your own adventure” of civic education for local government in Oregon. It was inspired by the several citizen academies offered throughout Oregon, including in Wilsonville, Bend, and Medford. The toolkit can be used in a variety of settings and by a variety of users. The Ask a City Manager video series is excellent for those quick questions or introducing a new community member to how their city works. Focus areas include basic information about local government budgeting, community development, public works, and civic engagement. It also has an extensive glossary and a customizable toolkit local officials can use to tailor materials specific to their communities.

My hope for OCCMA is to utilize the toolkit as a first step to enhancing the civic health of our communities. The toolkit can be shared with council members, local news reporters, and trusted community organizations to create a more enlightened citizenry.

Ashleen McGirk is a recent graduate of the Masters of Public Administration program at Portland State University’s Mark O. Hatfield School of Government, specializing in local government administration.

SAVE THE DATE
Annual Membership Meeting
October 5 @ 12pm
Looking for a Speaker for an Event, Staff Training, or Board Workshop?

Oregon Government Ethics Commission (OGEC)’s skill trainers offer free customized one- to two-hour trainings on:

- Oregon Government Ethics law
- Executive Session provisions of Public Meetings law
- Lobby Registration law

Participants will hear real world examples, be able to ask questions, and walk away with resources that will help them comply with the law.

More information can be found online at Oregon.gov/ogec/training or you can contact the commission at training@ogec.gov.
Cybercrime Targeting Cities and Counties is on the Rise

*CIS responds by creating tiered insurance coverage to respond to the threat*

Earlier in the year, CIS unveiled its new three-tiered cyber coverage program ([https://www.cisoregon.org/PropertyLiability/Cyber](https://www.cisoregon.org/PropertyLiability/Cyber)) in response to a significant increase in cyberattacks on Oregon’s cities and counties.

Small cities and counties are not immune to cyber-attack; they are often the target of cybercriminals. CIS’s new cyber program initially had three tiers of coverage that featured stricter requirements for tiers two and three. These more stringent requirements led some cities and counties to take a wait-and-see approach to renewing or signing up for cyber coverage. Thankfully, CIS reduced its requirements considerably after its London broker came forward with an attractive quote with fewer conditions. In addition, the London broker came through with a compelling program for Tier 3 excess cyber insurance for CIS.

Because of the increased cyber risks to public entities, CIS worked diligently with brokers to find a carrier that would be willing to cover cyber insurance up to $1 million. But, in the end, CIS found one that would go to $1.25 million (for Tier 3). Despite warnings that premiums could double, the coverage turned out to be competitive and similar to last year.

The new coverage has many features, including variable pricing based on population and the flexibility to require fewer cybersecurity requirements. In addition, CIS members can purchase up to $1.25 million of cyber coverage when combining Tier 1, 2, and 3. CIS has also added a new Cybersecurity Specialist position that can provide cybersecurity services to members, which should help prevent some of the intrusions by cybercriminals.

Next Steps

For those cities and counties that want to purchase cyber coverage, CIS can add the coverage mid-term in 2022-2023. The following are the minimum requirements for coverage approval:

- Multifactor Authentication for remote access into networks. Remote access to networks includes privileged access to networks or the cloud.
- Three backup copies, two of which are offsite.
- CIS crime insurance with a minimum of $250,000 of coverage.
- Training staff about phishing and cybersecurity best practices.
- An adopted cybersecurity policy.
- Complete the CIS Cyber Application located on the CIS website.

If CIS members have questions about these requirements, contact Greg Hardin at 503-763-3889 or ghardin@cisoregon.org. Members can purchase excess cyber anytime during the year by contacting Tena Purdy at tpurdy@cisoregon.org.

**Quick Tier Facts**

TIER 1: All CIS members can elect to obtain $50,000 of cyber insurance (Tier 1) with no application required.

TIER 2: An additional $200,000 is available by completing the CIS Cyber Coverage application.

TIER 3: Four options are available above the Tier 2 coverage of $250,000. Members can pick an optional Tier 3 coverage for an additional $250,000, $500,000, $750,000 or $1 million of coverage. Tier 3 is provided based on an approved CIS Cyber Coverage application.
Getting to the HEART of the Matter

Jerry Gillham, Sutherlin City Manager

For many years, it wasn’t too difficult to find an encampment of people without a permanent home – if you cared actually to look. They were there. Very few of us went to the effort. Then – seemingly overnight – homeless people and homeless camps were everywhere, even in our more rural towns and regions.

When some of our homeless folks decided to camp in front of Sutherlin main street businesses or hide camps in back yards, it was time to do something. But what? Doing some serious research and consulting with the city attorney revealed that there were only two options: do nothing or create a camp that conformed to the federal Martin v. Boise Ninth Circuit ruling and subsequent legislative actions that cemented the ruling in Oregon law.

Since doing nothing seemed sure to allow conditions to deteriorate further, we quickly reviewed available city properties and designated a temporary emergency homeless camp. Then came the public outcry; the vitriol and anger were extreme. So, we moved the location. The “not in my back yard” crowd remained omnipresent, just fewer in number even after explaining the state and federal mandates. From a human-caring viewpoint, we felt compelled to create and foster a system of care that would lead to healthy, independent living.

We quickly formed a working group to make our low-barrier camp the best it could be for the campers and the neighbors. We transformed an unused lot near our main arterial by engaging key stakeholders as a temporary but workable tent camping solution. It was a good step forward.

What quickly became apparent as we tried to understand what might be next on a path back from homelessness was that we were alone in rural Oregon. Resources and funding to address homelessness were being focused on the larger population communities. It still doesn’t seem like their problems are being solved, yet those communities got significant funding. We are now the “responsible parties” yet remain unsupported and on our own with these unfunded mandates.

Our working group decided to cut to the heart of the matter and make a genuine effort to get people and families the help they need to get back into a home and live a fruitful and productive life. Our camp is functioning well, given that it is currently no more than that. We have created an address so service providers can know where to contact campers. Basic shelters, food, water, clothing, showers, and transportation are available regularly and irregularly. This is not enough even for the few dozen folks we are serving. A much more complete solution is needed.

Using our small camp, we’ve had time to work with our community, agencies, and the campers themselves. We learned early on that when we eliminated the free-range camping on city lands and offered only one location to set up a tent in our designated site, the campers not only complied, but we soon saw a calmness and new demeanor from most.

We began with 15 campers and immediately brought them together to get to know them and their individual needs and provide comfort, knowing they would not

Continued on page 9
be forced to move again anytime soon. This gradually changed the attitude and behavior of most of those living here. They transitioned from a state of constant fear and crisis to looking forward to a few days and weeks.

We then introduced the idea of some self-generated rules for the camp, and they appointed three leaders to serve as camp spokesperson, maintenance person, and meal-preparer. These three were the first to enter a Program of Care (PoC). There are three environments we manage on the site that will be mirrored on our new site, only larger in scale as described below:

**Tent:** Everyone who comes onto the grounds is immediately awarded personal space for a tent. This is, as prescribed by law, “low-barrier.” we also recently purchased open metal covers for making harsh weather more manageable.

**Contained Housing Unit:** Those in the camp who look at the second environment will see campers in a small, enclosed shed with solar and heat. These are awarded to campers who decide they want help and willingly enter a PoC designed for their specific needs.

**Personal Residence:** A tiny home village/apartment complex or other residence is under construction nearby. Those who have completed their PoC will be awarded permanent housing for a fresh, safe new start.

A collaboration between the City of Sutherlin and an essential service provider to our homeless camp has created a new non-profit to drive and manage this project, **Umpqua HEART.** We formulated a more global plan and began conversations with every provider of services to our homeless people and the county’s police and emergency responder teams. We assembled a list of key personnel to bring into the conversation from every city in the county. We have enlisted engineering and accounting professionals to create cost estimates and model budgets. Our U.S. Senators and their staff were asked to weigh in and help identify sources for help and funding. The result: a funding request was submitted through them for congressionally designated spending.

**Village**

**Umpqua HEART** envisions a low-barrier camp, a small module home development, and a tiny home village. An offer has been extended to a property owner of sufficient size and suitable location to meet the threefold camp. These property negotiations continue as we evaluate other sites.

We are also continuously improving our planning and are engaging a handful of significant partners to perfect our plan and get it funded. With the assistance of crucial consultant partners, we will more fully understand the needs of all of the county’s homeless populations, address others’ concerns and reservations, and, as soon as possible, sufficient secure funding to hire key staff, purchase the best property available that meets our needs, and launch the first phase of **Umpqua HEART Village.**
2022 Implementation of HB 3115 & HB 3124 Homelessness Resources

David Milliron, North Bend City Manager

The 2022 Legislature passed HB 4123 to establish locally led regional housing coordination through eight pilots across the state. These pilots are intended to leverage and coordinate work in the community and identify gaps in partnership with existing service providers. Each pilot received $1 million in state funding to operationalize coordinated offices, anchored by city-county partnerships, to strengthen their communities’ homeless response.

The LOC and AOC host a monthly implementation meeting for all pilots to meet and share resources as they work towards ramping up their regional coordinated homeless response collaboratives. Resources shared during the calls are posted on the LOC’s HB 4123 Pilot website at https://bit.ly/3Sttbet.

Each pilot is in various stages of implementing its coordinated homeless response system. At a minimum, the pilots must establish an office, form an advisory board, adopt an IGA, coordinate with their local continuum of care providers, and establish a centralized point of contact.

Although separate but related, the Oregon Mayors Association Board of Directors initiated a statewide homelessness task force composed of 25 mayors from across the state. Cottage Grove Mayor (and OMA President) Jeff Gowing is chairing the task force, which is expected to meet four times in 2022. The task force has three purposes:

- Serve as a foundation for developing a state funding package to present during the 2023 legislative session, to secure state funding for use by local governments and service provider partners to address homelessness in their respective communities;
- Lay the groundwork for a longer-term financial support package from the state as cities work to develop a continuing plan to respond to and address the homelessness crisis adequately; and
- Position mayors with a united voice and provide a unified message on the homelessness crisis so that an effective campaign for state partnership and support can begin.

SAVE THE DATE!

97th Annual LOC Conference
October 5-7, 2022 | Bend
2022 City Hall Selfie Day

Oregon cities and counties participate in the seventh annual City Hall Selfie Day on Monday, August 15.
2022 City Hall Selfie Day

City of Sherwood

City of Molalla Police Department

City of North Bend

City of North Bend Streets Department

City of Wilsonville
Throughout the winter and spring of 2022, the headlines about inflation were disconcerting: 8%, 8.5%, and 9.1% year-over-year CPI increases. You’d think those headlines would give municipal budgeters nightmares. Revenue streams don’t increase by those percentages, while M&S and capital costs certainly do.

But conversations and exchanges with managers and finance directors in jurisdictions throughout Oregon found little in the way of panic during the 2022 budget season. Nobody reported any cuts to services as a result of high inflation, although some people mentioned reductions in capital projects. It’s fair to say that people are pretty sanguine about it. Will Norris, former finance director and assistant city manager for the City of Hood River, came closest to expressing concern when he told me, “There was a lot of uncertainty about the persistence of inflation. The uncertainty led to a healthy measure of risk aversion but not a rigid strategy.”

Instead, the prevailing attitude among those I spoke with was summarized by Tualatin City Manager Sherilyn Lombos: “Inflation did not have a significant impact on the Tualatin budget process this year. We certainly were aware of inflationary factors, but in terms of the budget process, we did not need to adjust anything specifically after departments had submitted their budget requests.”

So, what are the factors that contributed to this sanguinity?

1. Predictable revenues and predictability in significant cost centers. For nearly everyone in local government in Oregon, property taxes are the single largest source of revenue, and payroll is the single largest expense. “Inflation doesn’t do anything to property tax projections,” says Harvey Bragg, senior deputy county administrator for Jackson County. As we all know, property tax revenues increase 3-3.5% yearly thanks to 1997’s Measure 50. Meanwhile, collective bargaining agreements cap pay increases. For instance, says Bragg, one of Jackson County’s bargaining units was capped at a 2% pay increase this year. That increase will no doubt be the source of considerable discussion in the next round of bargaining. Some jurisdictions did acknowledge inflation in increased employee compensation. Irrigon City Manager Aaron Palmquist budgeted a 7.1% COLA for his staff, many of whom went three years without a pay raise. Lombos got City Council approval in Tualatin to move a scheduled COLA from January 2023 to July 2022.

2. Some revenue sources are indexed to inflation, increase on predictable schedules or benefit from inflation. “Many of the fees on our fee schedule were increased by a CPI factor, so those fees were increased at a higher percentage than previous years,” says Lombos. Other managers reported that fee increases are set out in master plan schedules, so a 4% or 5% increase might have been set for FY23 several years ago. And in tourism-dependent communities like Hood River, inflation has a very salutary effect on revenues. “Lodging taxes are an excellent inflation hedge,” says Norris. “Our expectation is that lodging tax growth will be robust as room rates follow inflation. However, we are watching closely for any signs of ‘demand destruction’ if inflation results in groceries, rent, and other staples crowding out consumer discretionary spending. The consensus of economists seems to place this risk at least a year out, if not longer.”

3. Maintaining service levels is priority #1. To the extent that inflation impacted budgets last spring, it was mainly in the form of cuts to capital projects, and to a lesser extent, materials and services. Nobody who contributed to this article made mention of any service cuts due to inflation. Most people said maintaining Continued on page 14
service levels was a top priority in the budget process. Again, to the extent that inflation had an impact, it was on materials and services (especially gasoline) or capital projects. As Bragg succinctly put it: “Inflated material costs will reduce the miles of roads we will be able to improve.” Or, as Norris less succinctly put it: “While capital projects are highly sensitive to inflation, their pace of completion is also highly controllable. We are monitoring the cost of capital projects closely against budgeted figures and are ready to quickly pause upcoming projects as needed to re-evaluate utility rates.”

In Irrigon, Palmquist has been looking for lower-cost alternatives for M&S. He is also concerned that some grant streams might require the purchase of American materials, which would be difficult for some people. “We budgeted for the increase in gasoline cost and we’re now coordinating trips to Hermiston – not making three or four separate trips in a day. Fuel purchase expense went up a little, but not much.”

4. This whole inflationary episode highlights the importance of strong reserves and contingencies. Everyone agreed that having strong reserves and contingencies was a lifesaver during this period of high inflation. Even if it wasn’t necessary to tap them, they provided a fallback position and peace of mind. Aaron Palmquist says building up reserves has been a significant focus since he took Irrigon’s city manager position in 2013. He continues to build reserves in FY23, although the city may be putting aside slightly less than it did in prior years.

Sherilyn Lombos also notes Tualatin’s strong contingencies as a hedge against inflation. She said if costs drop, it will help build reserves and contingencies for future years or provide additional dollars for one-time expenditures. Harvey Bragg offers much the same thought about Jackson County’s budget: “Contingencies in all operating funds are sufficiently large enough to handle most surprises. If not, we will have to do a supplemental budget so we can dip into reserves.”

But there’s another side to this story. Many Oregon cities are on a biennial budget cycle. Their current year budget was prepared in the spring of 2021 before the current inflationary spiral began. Surely nobody was budgeting for 8% or 9% inflation in March last year. So, what has the impact been on biennial budgeters? Not that much, according to those contacted for this article.

“We are experiencing rising costs and are having to do supplemental budgets to adjust for the inflation we are experiencing, but didn’t anticipate when we prepared our 2021-23 budget,” said Anne Baker, Administrative Services Director in Florence. “If inflation is brought under control, our budget for the 2022-23 fiscal year won’t be affected. If it continues, we will be looking at supplemental budgets to make adjustments as we didn’t plan for inflation rates of this magnitude. We may have to cut back on projects in order to manage rising costs of services and materials that are needed for our day-to-day operations.”

In Lake Oswego, City Manager Martha Bennett says she and her team haven’t had to make any inflation-driven budget adjustments yet. “The biggest adjustment was caused by a very large number of retirements in the Fire Department, which caused an abnormally high use of overtime while the new staff was in training,” she said. “We were well prepared for a few reasons. First, because we treat our general fund departments as enterprises, our departments do not have a ‘use it or lose it’ mentality, which means they came into the current biennium with fund balances. Second, we had locked in pretty significant savings in our health insurance premium where we budgeted a 6% increase, so all departments had a little breathing room. Third, we have collared rates in our labor contracts, with a floor of 2% COLAs and a cap of 4%. The collar protects employees when inflation is low and the city when inflation is high.”

Baker and Bennett share the concern that if anything suffers in the current budget cycle, it will be projects, not services.

“We may have to cut back on projects to manage rising costs of services and materials needed for our day-to-day operations,” says Baker.

“We were not prepared for the unbelievable escalation of construction costs,” adds Bennett.” For example, the cost estimate for our golf course renovation came in at double the amount we budgeted for in 2020. We’ve been working collaboratively with the City of Portland on replacing our wastewater treatment plant, and the estimates on this project are more than 50% higher than our original estimate. The impact of

Continued on page 15
inflation, supply chain problems, and staff shortages are jeopardizing these projects.”

Finally, while inflation may be a major concern for managers, it’s important to remember that it’s likely an even greater concern for employees and constituents, who see inflation take a huge bite out of their personal budgets. So, what’s the message from local government to those audiences?

Aaron Palmquist: “To employees, it’s important to think about why we are doing what we are doing. We’re going to stay tight regardless. We’re trying to change the culture and move to a higher level of stewardship. How do we take it up a notch to have the money available the next time an emergency hits? To the community, we will do our dead level best to con-

continue providing services without making cuts. We’re going to work smarter.”

Martha Bennett: “I’ve been grateful that our bargain-
ing units have been very collaborative and creative, but we’ve spent some energy balancing compassion for employees with compassion for residents. All our external audiences are experiencing economic instability, and inflation is just one factor. So, we are working hard to manage the costs we can control so we don’t have to ask for larger-than-expected utility or fee increases this fall. Our message to the community has largely been, “We understand. We are here for you. Assuming prices begin to stabilize and fall in the next year, our residents should not notice the adjustments we have to make.”

The OCCMA Board of Directors met on July 22, 2022, to review proposed changes to the OCCMA Bylaws and Policy Annex.

The proposed changes to the bylaws include:

- Article 4, Section 2 – Modifies the definition of active members
- Article 9, Section 1 – Adds the Scholarship Committee to the list of standing committees

The proposed changes to the policy annex include:

- Article 5, Section 2 – Adds a new section regarding the membership in ICMA for the President-Elect, President, and Past President
- Article 5, Section 4 – Modifies who has the authority to approve payments from the OCCMA
- Article 8, Section 5 – Adds attendance to the LOC and AOC Conferences as an eligible expense for Senior Advisors
- Article 8, Section 5 – Makes it clear that reimbursement for attendance at any event by a senior advisor is subject to adequate funding
- New Article 12 – Creates an OCCMA Scholarship Program

The complete changes to the bylaws can be viewed [here](#).

The Board unanimously approved the changes proposed. The membership will be asked to vote on the proposed changes to the bylaws during the annual membership meeting at the Riverhouse in Bend on October 5, 2022.

Per the OCCMA bylaws, the Board can amend the policy annex with a two-thirds vote of members present at a regular meeting after introduction at a previous meeting, provided 30-days notice has been given via the OCCMA listserv, website, and newsletter. The Board will act on the proposed changes to the policy annex at its October 4, 2022, meeting. Members are welcome to provide comments for the Board’s consideration.
To reinvigorate our organizations post-pandemic, ultimate success depends on the actions of mid-managers. Positive change happens in the middle.

Dear Frank:

I’m a city manager in a mid-sized city. We survived the remote work phase of the pandemic, but are now struggling with the return-to-work phase. As city manager, I surveyed employees to identify their concerns and issues about returning to the office. Based on the survey, most employees who can do some work from home favor a hybrid model. The department heads and I are struggling with all kinds of issues:

- What is the nature of our hybrid workplace?
- How do we promote equal treatment among mostly office vs. remote workers, and office/knowledge workers vs. field/service workers?
- How do we ensure the safety and health of all our employees?
- What are ways that we can retain our talent as we move forward?
- How do we counter all the exhaustion, discouragement and uncertainty experienced by staff?

Do you have any suggestions on how we proceed and build a more energizing future for our organization?

All local government leaders are facing these kinds of organizational challenges as we begin to emerge from the pandemic shutdown.

Certainly, the senior leadership of the organization has a major role to play. However, I’d like to suggest that the most critical role is that of mid-managers. We in local government executive management must begin to redefine the role of mid-managers in our organizations, focus on upskilling, and provide much needed support.
The Role of Senior Leadership

As mentioned in other Career Compass columns, senior leaders must zoom in and focus on immediate concerns (such as health and safety protocols) as employees return to the office. Of course, it is not just about doing; it is also about communicating with the employees about what you are doing and why you are doing it.

At the same time, executives must zoom out and begin to reimagine the future of the organization, responding to questions such as:

- What are the big needs and demands of our community?
- How do we redeploy staff as needed?
- Going forward, what are the skills and competencies needed by employees?
- What kind of investments (i.e., technology, employee development) must be made?
- How do we enhance and enrich our organizational culture to better attract and retain staff?
- Are we as senior leaders modeling the desired new attitudes and behaviors that we desire to see in the workforce?

Just as you’ve engaged employees in back-to-work strategies, you must engage them in creating a new story for your organization's future.

Once senior management has begun to sketch out this new story for the organization, it needs to engage in “story-doing.” Storytelling must be followed by story-doing. Story-doing is taking the tangible steps to make the organizational story come true.

The Great Resignation

In a recent survey by Monster, 95 percent of people are considering leaving their current jobs. According to a Microsoft survey of workers, a majority of employees are struggling or just surviving in pandemic work conditions, with 41 percent considering leaving their organizations this year. (See Nolan McNulty and Heather Roberts Washington, “Empathy 2.0: The Answer to Changing Employee Needs,” Root blog, Sept 9, 2021).

The underlying causes of this Great Resignation moment include:

- Overwork, exhaustion, and burn-out
- A perception that employers did not exhibit much caring concern for employees during the shut-down and return-to-work phases of the pandemic
- A desire for flexible working conditions
- Less willingness by employees to tolerate poor relationships with their supervisors
- Uncertainty on many fronts
The Critical Role of Mid-Managers

While senior management has a must-do role, I believe that ultimate success in reinvigorating our local government organizations will depend on mid-managers. Positive change happens (or not) in the middle. In all its research on employee engagement, The Gallup Organization has demonstrated that employees experience the organization via the quality of their relationship with their supervisor and their relationships with team members.

So, as employees return to work in one fashion or another, what should the role of mid-managers look like?

The Historic Role of Mid-Managers

Historically, local governments (like most private sector organizations) have developed hierarchical structures. The traditional roles of mid-managers have included:

- Passing on to their units communications and directions from the top.
- Supervising the day-to-day work of subordinates.
- Ensuring compliance and accountability.
- Tracking project status.
- Pushing out the work based on certain goals or metrics.
- Living within budget allocations.
- Relaying (hopefully) input and concerns from employees to the next higher level of management.
- Ensuring “no screw-ups,” especially in the risk-averse environments of local government.

The key skill set of a mid-manager has revolved around one’s ability to direct and command, communicate, and ensure accountability. As discussed in Liz Wiseman’s book Multiplier (2010), many mid-managers spend most of their time in telling direct reports what to do and then testing them to see if they complied. As a result, these mid-managers are “diminishers”—they diminish the capabilities of others. In contrast, some managers are “multipliers” who support direct reports in stretching and growing and thus amplify their capabilities.

Historically, mid-managers have been promoted into their management roles because of their well-developed technical skills. They often fail because of their poor people skills.

What Has Changed?

Of course, the pandemic has changed us and our organizations. However, the research suggests that the pandemic-related shut-down has just accelerated a move toward new
realities such as demands for more flexibility and autonomy and the need to spur on innovation as we confront socioeconomic issues (i.e., homelessness) or environmental challenges (i.e., climate change).

“The Pandemic Has Accelerated a Move Towards New Realities.”

In responding to these pressing demands, one problem is the disconnect between senior leaders who want to return to normal and employees who demand different work conditions and relationships. In a McKinsey survey, three-quarters of the top executives were focused on the details of returning to work and normalcy. These senior leaders seemed to perceive a “finish line” or arriving at a stable status quo in the workplace. An equal 75 percent of the 5,000 employees surveyed disagreed. There was no perceived status quo or “finish line” in sight. Line workers perceived a sea change in how work gets done...and what work looks like.

McKinsey researchers concluded that employees seem to have a “greater grasp on the reality that uncertainty is our new normal.” They also suggest that the short-term view of senior leadership may actually increase attrition since employees may conclude that their leaders are clueless. (See Larry Robinson, “The Return to the Office Is a Reckoning for Leaders Locked in the Past,” SmartBrief blog, Aug 27, 2021.)

Based on this research, there is no “finish line.” We live in a new era of uncertainty and turbulence. It is all about adaptability.

Redefining Productivity and Accountability in the Post-COVID Era

To transform the role of mid-managers, we need to redefine our traditional notions of productivity and accountability. In command-and-control environments, productivity is about ensuring time on task, completing tasks, and/or focusing on outputs. In a facilitator and coaching environment, productivity is about achieving certain outcomes or results (i.e., vaccinating residents, helping business stay open, moving homeless people into housing).

In a mechanistic management model, mid-managers ensure accountability. By laying down certain milestones and performance measures for the team and then providing over-the-shoulder supervision, mid-managers only get a minimum level of performance and compliance because the manager “owns” the measurement. Of course, in a hybrid work environment, it is now difficult to walk around on a daily basis and directly supervise the work of team members.
If the team identifies the meaning behind the work and sets the outcomes and metrics to be achieved (within certain guiderails), there is shared accountability and ownership. According to Dan Rockwell, a great mid-manager creates colleagues, not passive followers. (See “How to Be a Leader People Love to See,” Leadership Freak blog, July 6, 2021.)

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\text{“TO TRANSFORM THE ROLE OF MID-MANAGERS, WE NEED TO REDEFINE OUR TRADITIONAL NOTIONS OF PRODUCTIVITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY.”}
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What Do Employees Need in Era of Anxiety?

In this new era of anxiety and uncertainty, mid-managers must emphasize behaviors that respond to what employees need and want. From their managers, employees need:

**Empathy:** In the post-pandemic world, employees need supervisors and managers to ask questions, listen deeply, and understand the challenges that workers are experiencing and what they are feeling. Of course, empathy requires that managers also respond in tangible and caring ways. (See ICMA Career Compass No. 86: Empathy is a Superpower.)

To support the importance of empathy, The Gallup Organization reports that a key driver of employee engagement is caring (“My supervisor, or someone at work, seems to care about me as a person.”)

**A focus on purpose:** As Daniel Pink suggests in his book *Drive* (2009), “meaning is the new money.” A sense of purpose is one of three key self-motivators. (The other two self-motivators are autonomy and mastery.) The problem is that leaders do not often articulate the purpose behind the work or help people explore the meaning behind their efforts. Think of your typical staff meeting. We run into the meeting and immediately start talking about “what” we’re going to do and “how” we’re going to do it. We need to “start with the why.” (See Simon Sinek, TED Talk, “How Great Leaders Inspire Action.”)

**Transparency:** In the midst of so much uncertainty, people desire information. People want to know the big picture. Employees need to hear from their managers what they know and what they do not know. In a turbulent environment, people are distressed and fearful and only hear 20 percent of what we are saying. Therefore, when we managers think that people are tired of hearing from us, we need to communicate some more.

**A sense of direction with a focus on priorities:** People are feeling overwhelmed with demands from governing boards, top management, and stakeholders, as well as from their families. In their work life, they yearn for a sense of direction even though long-term planning is impossible in the uncertain world of local government. So employees
want to know what is our direction and what are one or two priorities. (See ICMA Career Compass No. 94: 10 Principles for Leading in Turbulence.)

Optimism and can-do attitude: In the aftermath of the pandemic and the lockdown, employees need hope about a better future. While managers cannot predict with certainty how things will get better, they can explore with their teams what a better future looks like and then take steps within their spheres of control and influence to shape that future.

Calmness and steadiness: We all are experiencing disruption. Managers can model calmness and focus their teams in a steady manner on taking steps forward on a few distinct priorities.

Willingness to act: It is easy for us to feel overwhelmed. Effective managers demonstrate a bias for action. Managers with their team members can identify the direction, take a few steps forward, and then pivot as necessary. As Dan Rockwell in his Leadership Freak blog often emphasizes, action clarifies the path forward.

Openness to experiment and learn: Given the adaptive challenges facing local government, there are no right or wrong solutions. We need to try things out. “Think big, act small.”

“THINK BIG, ACT SMALL.”

During the shutdown, local government teams experimented and implemented a number of micro-innovations (i.e., instituting online development permitting, closing downtown streets so restaurants could create spaces for outdoor eating, conducting virtual public meetings, housing homeless people in hotels). Most of these micro-innovations were good enough “70 percent solutions” that need finetuning over time.

We cannot learn before we go; we learn as we go.

Connection: Due to the pandemic, people are feeling disconnected. Employees more than ever want a sense of belonging. They also want to feel that their organizations, especially their managers, care about them. We are all social animals and seek community. Thus, many employees are beginning to look for new organizations because they don’t sense that their current employers have demonstrated a genuine caring attitude toward them during the lockdown.

In the post-pandemic environment, people are longing for a “culture of connection.” (See Michael Lee Stallard, “Hope Employees Return to Work? Start Here,” SmartBrief, May 11, 2021.) The role of a mid-manager is to serve as a
“connector,” helping team members connect within the team and across organizational boundaries. (See Zahira Jaser, “The Real Value of Middle Managers,” hbr.org, June 7, 2021.

“DURING THE PANDEMIC, THE MICRO-INNOVATIONS WERE GOOD-ENOUGH 70% SOLUTIONS.”

Redefining the Role of Mid-Managers in the Post-Pandemic

It used to be that “soft” people skills were a “nice-to-have” competency. Now in the post-pandemic era, mid-managers exhibiting people-oriented skills is a key business necessity.

Given this much greater emphasis on human interaction and engagement skills, what are the new roles for mid-managers? In my view, these roles include:

1. **Culture-builder**: Culture is defined as the way we do things around here. It entails the attitudes and behaviors of organizational members. In any organization, there is rarely just one culture; there are typically many cultures. It is the role of the manager to build with team members a positive mini-culture or “cultural oasis.” (See ICMA Career Compass No. 51: Building a World-Class Culture.)

2. **Coach**: Coaches help players become the best they can be. They perceive the potential of the player and provide opportunities, guidance, resources, and encouragement. They are “multipliers,” amplifying the capacities and capabilities of others.

The Gallup research suggests that the one way to enhance employee engagement, commitment, and performance is for the manager to conduct one coaching conversation with a direct report every week or month. (See Jim Clifton, “Gallup Finds a Silver Bullet: Coach Me Once Per Week,” gallup.com, May 27, 2021.)

A good coach asks open-ended “catalytic” questions:
- For you, what is the personal meaning or purpose behind this project?
- What values, ideas, or goals are we fighting for?
- What does success look like?
- What energizes you about this project?
- What are your concerns?
- What do you desire as a role?
- What do you want to learn?
- What are one or two steps forward for you?
- How can I support you as we move forward?
3. **Barrier remover:** A key role for mid-managers is to remove obstacles for team members. This may include securing IT support; reaching out to another department to provide assistance; securing more time or budget for a project; or finding the right training resources for staff.

4. **Talent developer:** In the post-pandemic world of local government, it’s all about talent. Local government agencies cannot respond to community and regional demands without talent. Consequently, we need to better attract, retain, and develop talent. The great ideas of governing board members or top management are inconsequential without talent to shape those ideas for the better and make them come alive.

Talented employees are “free exiters”—they can freely exit or leave the organization. “A” and “B” players have the skills and confidence to leave an organization and find a more supportive organization elsewhere. A 2021 Korn Ferry survey found that 32 percent of employees intend to quit their current job because they don’t like the culture. (See [HR Dive blog, August 9, 2021](https://www.hrdivemagazine.com/).)

Culture, especially a culture that focuses on growth and development, can create organizational “stickiness.” (See ICMA Career Compass No. 85: To Thrive in Post-Pandemic, [Enhance Employee Experience](https://icma.org/careercompass).) The Gallup Organization has found that employees are more productive, committed, and engaged when they report that

- This last year, I have had opportunities at work to learn and grow.
- In the past six months, someone at work has talked to me about my progress.
- There is someone at work who encourages my development.

**Seven Tangible Steps to Transform the Role of Mid-Managers**

Mid-managers feel overwhelmed by the demands of senior management and those of front-line employees. Mid-managers are overloaded with responsibility for others—responsibility for their safety, productivity, and well-being. In fact, Gallup reports that mid-managers have higher levels of stress than their front-line subordinates (because of more responsibility) and more stress than senior managers (who have more control). (See Jim Clifton, “[Gallup Finds a Silver Bullet: Coach Me Once Per Week](https://www.gallup.com/store/50344.html), gallup.com, May 27, 2021.)

So, how do we in top management enrich the role of mid-managers and invest in them, and in the process transform our local government organizations?
Develop a well-communicated rationale for transforming the role of mid-managers. To focus on the needs of employees, ask employees what they need in the post-pandemic environment. Understanding that positive change happens in the middle, discuss with senior managers and mid-managers that the organization can only win the war for talent on culture, especially one focused on caring, belonging, and growth and development.

Don’t force great professional and technical staff to become managers as the only way to advance. Some people do not have the interpersonal skills to support “the other” and are, therefore, not suited for management. Yet, we continue to force good technical people into mid-manager roles as the only way that they can get more compensation and other rewards. We need to expand professional and technical career ladders so that great staff people without good people skills can still advance into well-paying “senior” roles and get recognized for their competencies and contributions. (See Brian Elliott, “It’s Time to Free the Middle Manager,” hbr.org, May 21, 2021.

Focus on role-modeling by senior leaders. Senior managers must model the way and demonstrate through their attitudes and behaviors the emphasis on a more caring and growth and learning-oriented culture. For instance, if coaching is a critical element of the new culture, senior managers must actively coach their direct reports. Modeling is the most powerful way that adults (as well as children) learn.

Free up time and energy of mid-managers. In their current role, mid-managers are overwhelmed with reporting to higher levels of management, responding to requests for information, completing administrative reports of all kinds, attending meetings all day, and engaging in over-the-shoulder supervision to ensure compliance and no mistakes. For managers to try out and practice new roles based on the needs of their team colleagues and the adaptive needs of the organization, top management must consciously work to eliminate some of these non-value-added activities.

Invest in the development of mid-managers. If we are to transform the role of mid-managers, we must train and upskill them. Based on the rationale for transforming the role of mid-managers, the HR department must develop a well-thought-out training program for new as well as current managers. Training and development for managers should emphasize enhancing their human interaction skills, providing one-to-one coaching, promoting employee engagement, exhibiting emotional intelligence, and building a positive team culture.

Based on employee feedback, San Mateo County, California, developed an upskilling development program that included coaching for its managers. Internal coaches are other managers who have been professionally trained and exhibit the skills that the
organization wants to see in their managers. Each new manager is provided with the opportunity to select an internal coach to work with them for six months. Additionally, all supervisors and managers can access an SOS (supervisors online support) intranet site offering videos, development opportunities, and other resources to support their success. (See SOS: Supervisors’ Online Support | Human Resources Department (smcgov.org). They can also get support and advice from their peers via a collaboration platform.

Provide an opportunity for mid-managers to connect with each other. Managers have increasingly lonely jobs and often do not experience much organizational support. Some organizations thus regularly conduct manager forums so that all managers know the big picture, can align with new directions and strategy, and most importantly, connect with other managers.

Evaluate, reward, and celebrate mid-managers based on their new role definition. Instead of solely evaluating and rewarding managers on the amount of work they and their team push out, evaluation metrics must be aligned with the people skills and behaviors that are now needed by employees and the organization. Compensation should follow. As a best practice, organizations should celebrate those managers who are exemplars.

A Call to Action

If our local governments are to thrive, not just survive, in the post-pandemic world, we need to better attract, retain, and develop our talent. As McKinsey reports, human capital is now scarcer than financial capital. (See “Culture in the Hybrid Workplace,” mckinsey.com, June 11, 2021.

“HUMAN CAPITAL IS NOW SCARCER THAN FINANCIAL CAPITAL.”

All the big organizational challenges that local governments face as they emerge from the pandemic require positive change in the middle, and, therefore, the need to redefine the role of mid-managers. If we do transform their roles, managers will not only be more satisfied, but our agencies will thrive as we become more human-centered organizations. Let’s use the post-pandemic threats to revitalize our local government organizations.

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. If you have a career question you would like addressed in a future Career Compass, e-mail careers@icma.org or contact Frank directly at frank@frankbenest.com. Read past columns at icma.org/careercompass.
Mark Reagles Retires from Rogue River

Given the nature of our profession, serving 22 years as the city administrator of a community is a major accomplishment in and of itself. But Mark Reagles, who retired in September after more than two decades at the helm of Rogue River (pop. 2,407), accomplished many big things for his small, tight-knit community.

A native Oregonian, Mark was born and raised in the small town of Lookingglass (not a typo), about nine miles west of Roseburg. He says he spent much time rafting up and down the creek that ran through the community.

After graduating from Douglas High School in Winston, he attended Umpqua Community College. However, he ultimately left for a job in a local sawmill. When the mill closed a couple of years later, he and his wife Carla packed up and, in January 1981, moved to Oklahoma, where they had some family connections.

“The oil boom was on,” says Mark, “and I did a little oil field work.” He eventually “lucked into” a public works job with the small city of Fletcher, Okla., (pop. 900), where he became the town’s public works director.

“It was a great job in a great community,” he says. “They took me under their wing and sent me to school for my certifications.” Fletcher also had an ambulance service, and Mark got his certification as an EMT.

But after seven years in Fletcher, Mark and Carla’s desire to raise their children closer to their grandparents became too much to resist. Mark was eventually hired as a water/wastewater plant operator by the city of Drain, a job he held for seven years. Mark then applied for the public works director position in Rogue River. “On a whim,” he says. “I didn’t think there was a chance I could get that job.”

He got that job and began working as Rogue River’s public works director in 1994, reporting to a series of city administrators, including Kelly Madding, now the deputy city manager in Medford. When Kelly left for the city manager position in Talent, the mayor approached Mark and asked him to take the job. And so, in 2000, Mark became Rogue River’s city administrator.

Among the major achievements during Mark’s tenure was the construction of a new wastewater treatment plant (the city had been under a moratorium for some time due to a lack of water and waste water capacity), the construction of a greenway from Rogue River to Valley of the Rogue State Park (about three miles upstream from the city), an overhaul of the city’s transportation system that repaved every road in the community, and the creation of a new park in the middle of town (a project just now wrapping up) that will serve as a centerpiece for the city. Mark also notes that Rogue River is one of a dying breed of small cities that has its own police force. “A source of pride for the community,” he says.

Growth, however, has been relatively slow, as I-5, the railroad, and the river create growth barriers. “We have a large urban growth boundary,” says Mark, “but it has always been the goal to maintain a small town feel.” The city did its first annexation this year: a mere eight acres.

Now that he is moving on to retired life, Mark is justifiably proud of what he bequeaths to his successor. “We have very healthy fund balances in all funds,” he says. “Whoever gets the job will not have any financial worries for many years. I’ll miss working with the people. Ninety-nine percent of my interactions with citizens have been positive. I’m friends with almost everyone in the city. My kids went to school and played sports here. People knew they could count on me. I’ll miss that daily interaction.”

Mark and Carla are going to stay in Rogue River. Retirement plans include lots of travel, especially to historical sites and places in the eastern U.S., and lots of hunting and fishing.

Catch a big one, Mark. You’ve earned it.
How does somebody recap such a varied career in local government service as Rob Drake has enjoyed since 1981? He had many achievements as a Planning Commissioner, member of the Beaverton City Council, four-term Beaverton mayor, two stints as an interim city manager, and now retirement from a decade as the Cornelius City Manager. Drake will step aside this summer when the Cornelius City Council completes the hiring process for his successor.

It’s very unusual for someone to serve as a mayor and switch to the role of a city manager. One current example is Jake Boone of Cottage Grove. He transitioned from their mayor to serving as their Assistant City Manager to longtime City Manager Richard Meyer. Given the popularity of the Council-Manager form of government, it is much rarer for someone like Rob to transition from being a strong mayor. In Beaverton, Rob was the full-time executive with control of all staff plus the leadership role of mayor.

Rob talked about the transition to the interim City Manager of Tillamook role and the encouragement he received from then-Mayor Bob McPheeters. Rob knew McPheeters from their time serving in leadership roles at the League of Oregon Cities. As Rob sat at the staff table for the first time in the Tillamook City Council Chambers, McPheeters put him at ease with the comment that he looked “natural” in that role. Rob said he tried to fit into the manager role by emulating managers with whom he had worked, demonstrating his understanding of the checks and balances between staff and elected officials. He would even jump into the mundane tasks of working in the office, including occasionally grabbing the vacuum cleaner. Drake also served as interim manager at Carlton before coming to Cornelius in 2012.

One of the highlights of the decade he led Cornelius (population 13,498) was the “All-America City” recognition in 2019. Drake knew of the process from an application Beaverton submitted in 2005. The familiarity gave him the background of the required documentation and insights on how to make an excellent presentation at the final award stage. Their application focused on three main topics: creating a downtown-focused urban renewal district, constructing the multiuse Cornelius Place with a new library and senior housing, and transferring law enforcement services from a city department to a contract with the Washington County Sheriff’s Office. Based on the submittal, a team of community leaders and members of the Cornelius Youth Council flew into Denver for the final judging. The presentation featured their collective journey with support from the community. The team conveyed the objective of overcoming fears expressed by the Latino community with the previous city police force and the subsequent success of Spanish-language Town Hall community meetings to address their concerns. It was a hit when Washington County Sheriff Pat Garrett very ably responded to questions during the Town Hall using his Spanish-speaking skills.

Drake says that managing relationships and trust in this “majority-minority” community (53% Latino) was one of the biggest challenges of his professional career. He hopes that the expression of the values of dignity and respect will continue with the next manager.

Building on his service in Washington County, Drake is praised by his colleagues. Forest Grove City Manager Jesse VanderZanden enjoyed the regular coffee meetings with Drake; the leaders of the two communities with a shared border often were on the same music sheet. Hillsboro is Cornelius’ neighbor to the east, where City Manager Robby Hammond says Drake has been a local government rock for many years and significantly impacted the entire Washington County area. Drake has made countless contributions to our region, from his direct work with Beaverton and Cornelius to his influence on the Washington County Cooperative Library Services Board. His wisdom and experience will be missed. Tualatin City Manager Sherilyn Lombos says Drake has been a steady, constant source of knowledge and guidance.
Rob Drake continued...

in Washington County and throughout Oregon. She said he could always be counted on to ask insightful questions, share relevant anecdotes, and infuse humor into the conversation. “I have always appreciated the energy and positivity Rob brings to everything he is involved in,” Lombos said. “He will be sorely missed.”

Rob is very appreciative of the support of his family throughout his career, especially his wife, Eileen. As he points out, his three children endured the schedule of a very busy person with huge responsibilities and recognized the sacrifices they made. There were always weeks when as mayor or manager, I was “burning the candle at both ends,” he said.

Rob was supposed to retire on June 30, 2022, but agreed to stay until his successor was named in Cornelius. He was able to take a summer trip to Victoria, British Columbia, but a Mediterranean cruise got postponed. He’s looking forward to serving on the board of directors of several housing-related organizations, time at their vacation home at Sunriver, and possibly as a Senior Advisor for the Oregon City County Management Association.

Meet Your New Senior Advisor: Ric Ingham

Ric Ingham is joining our Senior Advisors for Benton, Jefferson, Lane, and Linn Counties. He has a 28-year career serving non-metro communities throughout Oregon: Baker and Klamath counties in the 1990s; expanded relationships in Central Oregon working on behalf of Deschutes, Jefferson, and Crook counties as Economic and Community Development Manager; and work in Harney, Lake, and Klamath counties.

With 16 years as Veneta’s City Administrator, Ric built strong relationships with urban and rural city administrators, managers, and recorders in Lane County and the region. He returned to Veneta in April 2022 after a two-year COVID hiatus in Idaho. Ric remained professionally and civically connected to Oregon by assisting Rural Development Initiatives (RDI) with Idaho and Oregon projects, and helping the Oregon Natural Desert Association and the Oregon Natural Desert Trust with projects in eastern Oregon.

Ric encourages membership in OCCMA that provides resources for even the smallest of cities that the city recorder might need. He understands the requirements and commitments of the role, having worked with the region’s past Senior Advisors. “I’ve always valued Senior Advisors’ role in assisting their colleagues,” he said. “OCCMA, ICMA, and the LOC served me so well as a manager of a small city that I wanted to give back. When I started as an Economic Development manager for a COG, I had no idea I would spend 16 years in one community.”

When asked what is most memorable in his city/county management career, Ric says he was grateful to have worked with four mayors over 16 years, all people with the vision and commitment to lead their small community who brought great capacity and consistency to their roles. Although Veneta is a small city, Ric said he was also grateful that the community attracted and retained outstanding staff during his tenure. He would encourage managers in smaller cities to keep focused on the hiring process for key staff and managers.

Another highlight of Ric’s career was working with 14 placements through The University of Oregon’s Resource Assistance for Rural Environments (RARE) and PSU graduate programs. Those opportunities, he said, provided mentorship and work opportunities for talented people to grow in the field.

Ric wants OCCMA members to know he is here and available for them. “I want to be there for new city managers and administrators to help them connect with the right resources and be sure they know that ‘someone has your back.’” He is looking forward to seeing everyone at the LOC conference in Bend. Welcome, Ric!
City Spotlight

Joint Community Engagement Specialist

Haley Lagasse, North Bend Library Director

Community members already view the North Bend Public Library as an educational hub. But the city’s library wanted to redefine itself by deepening engagement with its patrons and providing outreach programs to the homeless and other underserved population segments.

Last year, the North Bend Public Library sought and was awarded a grant to embed a social worker in the library system. Funding for the program came from the Institute of Museum and Library Services through the Library Services and Technology Act and is administered by the State Library of Oregon. The “Community Engagement Specialist” position reports to North Bend’s Library Director. However, the county’s behavior and public health provider – Coos Health & Wellness – is the employer to remain HIPAA-compliant.

Libraries and social workers have a lot in common. Both are dedicated to serving every demographic in their community and are willing to develop innovative solutions to share resources. So, the program overlaps in new ways through partnerships to address community needs. The engagement specialist is based in North Bend but holds regular office hours in the libraries in the cities of Coos Bay and Lakeside. She offers resources and support to library patrons who need help navigating systems, complex processes, and life challenges.

For instance, the engagement specialist answers queries about the workings of state and federal agencies. Sometimes she helps someone find a warm place to stay for the night or navigate the federal government’s Lifeline Program for low-income consumers. She might also spend time with a patrol helping them complete government applications for services. She has also helped patrons connect with behavioral health providers.

The program served 335 patrons in the first six months of its initial start-up, with rapidly growing numbers. Patrons visit the specialist seeking information and resources. However, they also want help solving complex life problems and navigating area service providers. This low-barrier supportive service isn’t readily available elsewhere in Coos County. The alternative access point that the library provides is an essential part of the success of this model; the program can serve anyone who calls or comes into the library. This program is a beautiful example of collaboration between civic entities and a community-based organization to have a dynamic impact on the quality of life of Coos County residents.

Fun Happenings from Around the State

Public art is replacing decrepit old structures throughout Coos Bay. In July, an old wall near the chip mill on Highway 101 at the city border was turned into art thanks to the work of Mike Vaughan and the Coos Bay Urban Renewal Agency. On the final day of painting, members of the Coos Bay and North Bend city councils, and their city managers, joined Vaughan to complete the mural. “The theme is a North Bend tugboat and a Coos Bay tugboat pushing the ship,” Vaughan said. “In working on this, I realize this represents our democracy in the world.”

Pictured from left to right: North Bend Mayor Jessica Engelke, Coos Bay Councilor Stephanie Kilmer, North Bend Councilor Timm Slater, Coos Bay City Manager Rodger Craddock, North Bend Councilor Susanna Noordhoff, and North Bend City Administrator David Milliron. Engelke and Slater serve on the LOC Board of Directors.

Sisters is known for their quilt show, but recently the city installed the above mural in Barclay Park and a horse sculpture greets visitors as they enter the city.

Wilsonville Nature Plan Area in Memorial Park

The nature play was completed in the spring of 2022. The parks team designed and installed the space to provide a safe environment for kids to use their imagination and play in a nontraditional playground environment. It was partially funded by a Wilsonville-Metro Community Enhancement Grant.
The city of **Beaverton** is a welcoming and responsive city that currently serves water to nearly 90,000 people within their community, and counting. As the city grows and the impacts of climate change become more apparent, the city is looking for new ways to continue to provide sustainable and reliable water. That’s why, they are currently in various phases of finishing 24 individual water system improvement projects during the next five years thanks to a Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (WIFIA) loan from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) that is financing 49% of approximately $165 million in water infrastructure projects. One standout project is the South Cooper Mountain Non-Potable Water System (known as “Purple Pipe”) that uses treated and stored stormwater for seasonal irrigation use, effectively offsetting about 39 million gallons of drinking water demand during the summer and releasing approximately 12 million gallons of treated water into Summer Creek to increase stream flow and reduce the temperature.

The WIFIA loan is also being used to fund Beaverton’s infrastructure improvements at its connection points to the Willamette Water Supply Program (WWSP). The WWSP is a new water supply system that will treat and distribute water from the Willamette River to the Tualatin Valley Water District and the cities of Beaverton and Hillsboro. With more than 30 miles of water lines built to seismic standards, the WWSP provides a sustainable alternative water supply to meet future water demand and provide stability during emergencies. Go team Beaverton!

The Liberty Theatre in **North Bend** has spent years upgrading its facilities. However, one of the most public features was put in place in July when two Moorish domes were placed on the theatre's roof. The domes are part of the ongoing process of repairing and renovating the theater, which has offered live plays and other productions to North Bend for generations. The North Bend Urban Renewal Agency seeded the renovations with a $500,000 redevelopment grant. Those funds have since leveraged more than $6 million in state and federal grants. The next phase is to restore the 24-foot neon blade sign funded by a matching grant to the North Bend Main Street Program from Oregon Heritage, an Oregon Parks and Recreation division.
Dan Huff, Molalla City Manager

Dan has been the city manager in Molalla for nine years and says things are really happening now in the community. They have started an analysis to expand the Urban Growth Boundary so that they will have somewhere to grow. They are focused on growth that will improve the community. New commercial development includes a Grocery Outlet and the redevelopment of existing lots for single-family housing.

The City bought the old bowling alley building to demolish the structure and build a new police facility. They will be hiring an architect/engineer this summer for the project. The City also purchased land for a new park, which will be named Chief Yelkus Park after the last chief of the Molalla Tribe. Molalla is also replacing playground equipment in its existing parks while constructing a new tot playground.

The City has been expanding community art projects and festivals. There was a Summer Jam event, and despite the rain, it was still successful. The City received a Travel Oregon grant to construct four permanent kiosks in different park locations to display the work by local artists. They are displaying photographs rather than the actual art to avoid vandalism. The purpose is to support local artists and promote their work. People can contact the artist directly if interested in seeing the original piece and possibly purchasing it. The City Council appointed five residents to a Culture & Art Committee to work on enhancing such community events. Also, the Buckaroo event is back in operation, drawing thousands of people from outside the community. Dan wants to be sure these people see something new in Molalla every year.

Jason Tuck, Happy Valley City Manager

Congratulations to Jason and Bonnie on their marriage on June 25th!

The City currently has $200 million in projects in the works. The most unusual project is the City’s effort to create a downtown. Happy Valley was originally settled as large farm acreages and then large lot single-family residential. There was never any downtown development. The City was incorporated in 1965. The City is now in the process of purchasing 18 different properties to provide 30-40 acres for the development of a pedestrian-oriented downtown. They have a Draft Planning Concepts document that shows various street and land use configurations for the planned location. The site for the “main” downtown street needs to be decided. Rock Creek traverses the property from north to south and will be a beautiful amenity for the downtown area. However, a bridge for traffic and pedestrians will need to be constructed over it from west to east to adjacent properties. They anticipate the land use will be a mix of retail, commercial, employment, and housing. The City is assembling the 18 different properties to have control over what ends up being built. They will sell sections to developers who propose desirable development. The envisioned downtown will require a Comprehensive Plan amendment and the creation of a new “Downtown Overlay Zone” in the Development Code.

The City also has a feasibility study completed for a new Community Center to be built next to the new downtown development on the east. The City is in the process of acquiring 38 acres for the Community Center and parkland. The Council-appointed Community Center Steering Committee has prioritized the following amenities: indoor recreation pool, double court gymnasium, indoor walk/jog track, group exercise room, weight/cardio space, a 200-person community room with kitchen, and space to reserve for gatherings. The following steps
include developing a conceptual design/plan for the community center and a financial analysis/strategy.

The Library will be expanded by 7,000 square feet to include study rooms, a kitchen, and a community room. Construction will start in 2023. The City also plans on constructing a new Public Works Facility in a light industrial area.

City Council decision on the Pleasant Valley/North Carver Plan is expected in early 2023. This Plan encompasses 2,700 acres of formerly Damascus City land. Happy Valley has purchased 22 acres in Carver on the north side of the Clackamas River for a park.

The mayor and two council positions are up for election on the November ballot, as is the renewal of the five-year Parks Special Levy.

**Clackamas County Managers, May 2nd Meeting**

Clackamas County Administrator Gary Schmidt informed the city managers that there is no longer sufficient funding for Library Support Services. The County provides $2.9 million from the General Fund for these services. The library levy does not fund this operation. Gary said that the County could no longer keep up with the increased annual costs for library support services. Therefore the County must now freeze its contribution at the current $2.9 million level. In the 2008-09 fiscal year, the County funded $1.271 million for these services. Following discussion among the city managers, it was decided that the city managers would work on this situation rather than delegating it to the library directors.

The City of Warrenton Facebook page had this information about Linda:

“The City of Warrenton would like to recognize Linda Engbretson for serving the City for the past 27 years. In 1995, Linda was hired as the first ever City Recorder for the City of Warrenton, paving the way for future historians and record keepers. She became the Interim City Manager on July 1, 2016, then was hired as the City Manager on October 25, 2016.

Before working for the City of Warrenton, Linda said the strangest job that she had was stapling boxes for a cannery in Astoria during a summer in high school. Right before working for the City, she worked for Clatsop County Mental Health for 12 years as the office manager.

When asked what memory stood out the most during her career, she recalled how a City Manager early in her career treated people. She said no matter who came into city hall, regardless of who they were, how they looked, or where they came from, the City Manager listened to them and treated their concerns as important. She said this is something she has taken to heart as the highest example of public service.

Linda is going to miss working with staff, the community, challenges, problem-solving, and seeing projects completed that benefit the community. She joked that she will not miss City Commission meetings (ha-ha!).

I started thinking about this report at our Summer Conference at Eagle Crest. It was good to be back going to conferences. On the attendance list I marked the names of folks I’d talked to during the conference. Don’t worry I’m not going to list them all. There were 28 names that I checked. It was good to see Peter Troedsson and Jeff Towery who represent us at ICMA and to have ICMA staff Pat Martel and Martha Perego involved.

My calendars reflect that April to June were Zoom-
In retirement, she is looking forward to spending time catching up with her family and enjoying long walks on the beach with her dog.

Linda has been a wonderful leader, mentor, colleague, and friend to everyone around her. She is leaving some big shoes to fill and will be dearly missed. Her parting advice for the next city manager and public employees is “We don’t pick public service for the money. We work for the community as a whole. We need to be fair and respectful, even when we are not treated with respect in return. To be able to do this is worthy and important work.” Linda’s last day was Friday, August 5th.

Linda, we wish you the best in your retirement. Congratulations!”

Mayor Henry Balensifer said “I will greatly miss Linda as our City Manager. She's been the epitome of servant leadership and steady, humble management. I wish her the best in this next chapter in life and a well earned retirement!”

Astoria City Manager Brett Estes to Step Down

The City of Astoria website had this news:

“City Manager Brett Estes announced today that he will step down to pursue other career opportunities with his last day being July 4, 2022. Estes has served with the City of Astoria since 2007, first as Community Development Director, later adding the duties of Assistant City Manager, and finally in his current role since September 2014.”

“Mr. Estes is extraordinarily effective and competent in overseeing the complete range of City operations. I rely on his deep expertise and background knowledge of myriad issues, ranging from personnel and finance to State infrastructure funding and economic development,” said Mayor Bruce Jones. "He has always provided wise counsel during my 5 ½ years on the City Council. While I am deeply disappointed to lose him, I am glad for his new opportunity and wish him the very best.”

"I have truly enjoyed working with the citizens of Astoria during my tenure with the City in tackling sticky issues while at the same time achieving many community goals,” said Estes. “We have a great, hardworking staff whom I have had the pleasure to work alongside over the years; and I’ve had the pleasure of working with a number of dedicated elected and appointed individuals who are focused on making Astoria a better place.” The city is beginning the process of recruiting of a new City Manager.

“The Council will be considering the selection of an executive recruitment firm, as well as looking at the possibility of an interim City Manager (Manager Pro Tem) from both internal and external sources,” said Mayor Jones. “As we have seen with other cities in recent years the market for highly qualified individuals is extremely tight. The rapid escalation of housing prices makes outside recruitment even more difficult.”

Mayor Jones also said, “the Council will focus on its annual goals, and prioritize to keep key initiatives, particularly code changes related to housing density and the Port of Astoria Waterfront Master Plan, moving forward despite the transition in leadership.”

https://www.astoria.or.us/news

Mark Winstanley Retires

Mark Winstanley has retired from Seaside Oregon. His replacement started with the City on July 18. I talked with Mark at the Astoria-Warrenton Area Chamber of Commerce BBQ at Lewis & Clark Public Golf Course on July 14th. Spencer Kyle is his replacement. The Seaside Signal newspaper reported that Kyle was from South Jordan, Utah where he was director of administrative services.

Mark started with Seaside as Finance Director in September 1985. He was named City Manager in November 2001. The Seaside Signal had an article about Mark written by Skyler Archibald, Executive Director at Sunset Empire Park & Recreation District. Skyler reported that Mark started his 20 years as City Manager, the year Skyler graduated from High School. He said that Mark has been a resource for him since he was hired by the district in 2015. The key theme of the article was that Mark will be missed in the community. When he walked from City Hall to other locations for a meeting, Skyler watched Mark pick up every piece of litter he saw.
I had a chance to catch up with a couple of old friends this quarter and meet with one of OC-CMA’s newest members, Ashland Deputy City Manager Sabrina Cotta. She was a finalist last year when the City Council hired Joe Lessard. She made a great impression as Joe wasted little time bringing her on as his deputy.

Sabrina has a varied background that led her to her current position. She grew up in Colorado and worked in Army intelligence before completing her Bachelor of Arts in Political Science. Sabrina then earned her Master of Public Administration from The University of Alaska before starting her public service career with the Alaska Court System. From there, she accepted a management fellowship with the City of Tucson, Ariz., where she earned a Master’s in Political Science at The University of Arizona. This was followed by jobs in Lake County, Ill. (budget analyst); Colorado Springs, Colo. (legislative analyst); and the Pueblo West Metropolitan Service District (internal services director).

Sabrina’s father was a city manager, so she grew up around the profession and wanted to move to the Pacific Northwest. Currently, she is filling in as Ashland’s finance and human resources director while the city recruits to fill those positions. She is focused on affordable housing, sustainable service levels, and resiliency in emergency response, all tremendous issues in Ashland. She says Ashland is beautiful, and Ashlanders are passionate about their city government.

Join me in welcoming Sabrina to Oregon!

Following massive fiscal difficulty during the Great Recession, Danny has put Jackson County on excellent financial ground. Last spring, the county adopted a $540 million budget with some $200 million in reserves and fund balances across all funds. Danny’s most significant challenge will be replacing retiring Senior Deputy County Administrator Harvey Bragg, the architect of the county’s budget and who takes 33 years of institutional memory with him. In his always “thinking outside the box” style, Danny sees this as an opportunity to reorganize his leadership team.

Capital projects are also big on the county’s agenda. Jackson County hopes to team with Central Point on a $60 to $70 million 100,000-square-foot facility at the Fair and Expo Center that would double as a community center for the city and emergency response center for the county. The facility could house sports facilities for regional tournaments and indoor concerts, or provide space to house, feed, and care for people displaced by the fires that have become a fact of life in Southern Oregon.

The county has also gotten considerable press for a proposed $20 million aviation education and training center at the Rogue Valley International-Medford Airport. The center would offer education in airport management, pilot instruction, engineering, and

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

Dan Bartlett – (503) 791-8060, drbartlet@charter.net
Dave Kanner – (541) 851-1267, dave_kanner@yahoo.com
Sheila Ritz – (503) 698-5171, sheilaritz.sa@gmail.com
David Clyne – (541) 905-3230, davidclyne29@gmail.com
Gary Milliman – (541) 813-9267, gmilliman@brookings.or.us
Dave Waffle – (503) 360-6797, dwaffle.cm@gmail.com
Nolan Young – (541) 300-0551, nyoung@gorge.net
Ric Ingham – (541) 913-2725, ringham100@gmail.com
aircraft maintenance. In addition, it may incorporate emergency medical services education.

I also had the pleasure of breaking bread with Phoenix City Manager Eric Swanson. Back in the day, when I was the interim city manager in Phoenix, I worked in a tiny, cramped office in the city’s tiny, cramped city hall. At the same time, the police department operated out of what was essentially a double-wide trailer out back. Thanks to Eric’s leadership and a boatload of state money that came to Phoenix after the 2020 Almeda fire, work is underway on a new $16 million, 24,000-square-foot city hall/police station with space for Fire District 5 administration and vehicles. If all goes well, the new building should be done by the end of 2023.

While the Almeda fire was an unimaginable tragedy for the city, it created much vacant property in downtown Phoenix. With the Council’s support, Eric has been buying up many vacant lots. This provides a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for the city to reimagine its downtown and control the destiny of land that, before the fire, hosted what might charitably be called sub-standard commercial buildings.

Another fascinating project spearheaded by Eric is the “Phoenix Phoodery,” an outdoor food court next to the civic center that will provide space for five restaurants around an open-air seating area. I understand this concept has worked successfully in Portland, Bend, and maybe elsewhere. The city sees it as a catalyst for bringing people and new development back to the downtown core.

Also, a massive urban growth boundary expansion is on the city’s plate: 578 acres of land split between two urban reserve areas. One of those areas, on the east side of I-5, south of Medford’s city limits, is targeted for regional economic development (possibly a regional medical facility and much-needed high-density housing). Phoenix has been working for nearly five years on this UGB expansion, so making it happen would be a significant accomplishment for Eric and his team.

At the end of June, I joined Medford City Manager Brian Sjothun to tour the city’s Navigation Center, intended to be a one-stop shop for homeless services. The facility was being constructed in a former fabric distribution center near one of Medford’s main arterial roads. Joining us on tour were Chris Clayton (Central Point), Eric Swanson (Phoenix), Danny Jordan (Jackson County), and Jason Ledbetter (Yreka, Calif.).

The project, funded by state and ARPA funds, will offer various services to get people out of homelessness and will be operated by a local non-profit. In addition to office space for service providers, the center will include a courtroom, a commercial kitchen, shower and laundry facilities, 100 beds, and four family rooms. Guests can stay in the facility for 30 days and then transition to different programs and housing. The availability of new beds and services, together with hundreds of other shelter beds, transitional housing, and an urban campground, will allow the city to start aggressively enforcing its no-camping ordinance – a hot topic for Medford residents and businesses. All in all, it’s an awe-inspiring addition to Medford’s commitment to addressing homelessness.

Lastly, Sisters City Manager Cory Misely announced at the end of July that he is stepping down after nearly four years to accept a program manager position with the Oregon Solutions team at Portland State University. When I spoke to him shortly after he made the announcement, he was a little wistful about leaving the city but said Sisters was in great shape. I have always enjoyed talking to Cory and wish him the best in his next adventure! Cory said he was looking forward to doing something different for a while, broadening his horizons, and perhaps may jump back into city management down the road.
"Our mission is to support and stimulate our members and the profession in order to foster responsible, responsive local government with the objective of improving the livability of Oregon communities."

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