

OCCMA

**Oregon City/County
Management Association**

A State Affiliate of **ICMA**

FOURTH QUARTER 2023

The Future of AI in Oregon



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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Scott Derickson • City Manager • Woodburn



As the 2023 year draws to a conclusion and we reflect back on all of the difficult challenges and opportunities in both our own communities and the City Manager profession as a whole, I'm proud to say that OCCMA was at the forefront with training, continuing education and networking better equipping our membership with the tools and leadership skills needed to be successful.

As the ever changing social and political environments continue to be front and center, the need for a financial capable, responsive, and relevant OCCMA is more important now than at any time in the past 20 years. Moving forward, OCCMA is in great hands and well equipped to meet this challenge. Incoming President Dan Huff and President Elect Martha Bennett are among the best Oregon has to offer. The incoming 2024 OCCMA Board has the experience and leadership skills to propel OCCMA forward with financial stability and relevant high-quality trainings and conferences.

Having worked in the public sector for some 27 years, I can say there has never been more daunting challenges, or greater opportunities than right now. OCCMA's conferences are at the core of the organization's mission and function and provide the greatest benefit to our members and the City Manager profession. A number of conferences held in Fairbanks, Seaside, Pendleton, Austin, and Eugene were top-notch events.

ICMA's Austin conference was outstanding as well, with the added honor of having Oregon's own Jeff Towery serving as this year's ICMA President. Having

known Jeff for some 20 years, I took great joy in seeing my friend President Towery on the stage and pride in how well Oregon's Managers were represented.

Like any organization, we are only as good as the people who serve. OCCMA would not exist if not for our professional committee and ad-hoc committee volunteers, I would like to personally thank everyone who served on an OCCMA committee or ad hoc committee in 2024, your work is greatly appreciated. And above all, I cannot say enough about how much we value and appreciate Angela Speier, there would be no OCCMA without Angela.

City management is a rewarding multifaceted, dynamic and demanding career that challenges even the very best, and I know that OCCMA has been instrumental in my success as a manager. It is critical that those of us who have benefited from OCCMA membership ensure that the organization continues to pay it forward for the next generation.

And finally, the professional interactions and personal moments I shared with so many of you throughout 2023 have made a deep impact on me, I will never forget. I'm grateful and honored to have served as OCCMA's 2023 President and look forward to seeing everyone in 2024.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Scott Derickson'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Scott Derickson

New Scholarships Available to OCCMA Members

On July 22, 2023 the OCCMA Board of Directors unanimously approved a new Professional Development Program for members. OCCMA members can now apply to attend conferences and training programs throughout the year. Applications will be accepted quarterly by the dates list below. The applicant should be aware of conference deadlines and submit their application accordingly. For example, if you are interested in receiving a scholarship to attend the NW Regional Managers Conference taking place March 26-29, 2024, you will need to submit your application letter by February 1 to Angela Speier at aspeier@orcities.org. The OCCMA Scholarship Committee will review all applications and make award determinations.

- Round One: February 1
- Round Two: May 1
- Round Three: August 1
- Round Four: November 1

The scholarship opportunities are broken into two categories; the first is for professional development training programs that consist of national and international programs. The second category is for assistance in attending more local professional development conferences, such as the OCCMA Summer Conference and League of Oregon Cities Conferences.

For additional information about the program, eligible conferences, and application requirements, please visit: occma.org/Scholarships. Members are welcome to submit other programs and training for consideration as long as the applicant clearly demonstrates the applicability to the profession and explain how it will help meet the individual's professional development goals.

If you have questions about the program, please contact Angela Speier at aspeier@orcities.org or 503-884-6322.



SAVE THE DATE
Registration Opens on Jan. 31

NW Regional Management Conference
March 26-29, 2024

Seaside Civic & Convention Center

Questions: Angela Speier, aspeier@orcities.org or 503-884-6322



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The Future of AI in Oregon: Opportunities Amidst Challenges

By David A. Milliron, North Bend City Administrator

Oregon is on the cusp of a transformative era as AI and automated technology reshape our economic landscape. At the 2023 Oregon Economic Development Conference in Eugene, Dean Jameson Watts from Willamette University's School of Computing and Information Sciences painted a vivid picture of the technological evolutions and their implications for our state.

Reflecting on his own journey, from learning to type on typewriters to now having most of his typing and imagery done by AI, Watts highlighted the rapid progress AI has made. While AI isn't new, the breadth and depth of its current applications are unprecedented. Industries across the board are embracing AI, from foresting and agriculture to energy and retail. For instance, AI isn't just predicting future wildfires; it's aiding in designing strategies to prevent them. Similarly, while the robots might be adjusting our home thermostats today, the future might see them mapping out ideal locations for wind power or even replacing knowledge workers within organizations.

However, amidst these promises of enhanced efficiency and innovation lie significant challenges, primarily the threat of job losses. While AI's vast potential can indeed lead to the displacement of various roles, it's important to remember that AI's introduction into the economic scene also means the creation of new jobs and opportunities. The key, according to Watts, lies in preparing our workforce adequately.

While many worry about AI replacing humans in various tasks, Watts believes the jobs of the future will be rooted in uniquely human traits. These include:

- 1. Deep Contextual Knowledge:** A deep understanding of specific areas will be invaluable.
- 2. Strong Social Skills:** As AI systems work towards human ends, the ability to coordinate, interact, and collaborate will be crucial.

- 3. A Premium on Creativity:** While AI can assist, the genuine act of creation, whether in knowledge, art, or experiences, remains deeply human.

The Shift in Artificial Intelligence

From the early days of rule-based systems to the present where AI is not just predicting but generating the future, AI's transformational journey is reshaping industries in Oregon and beyond.

- From the '90s: Following experts.
- Early 2000s: Machines teaching us.
- 2010s: Predicting the future.
- Present: Machines generating the future!

However, to capitalize on these strengths, we need a radical rethinking of our educational and training systems. The jobs of the future will likely require extended periods of training, more than our current system accommodates. To ensure that everyone gets an equal shot at these opportunities, we must explore models that subsidize the risk of long-term training. The idea is to create a robust social safety net and a subsidized training model, ensuring that Oregonians are equipped to navigate and excel in this AI-augmented future.

In conclusion, the intersection of AI and economic development in Oregon presents both challenges and opportunities. By focusing on the strengths of human ingenuity, collaboration, and creativity, and ensuring that our workforce is adequately equipped, we can not only navigate these challenges but also harness the immense opportunities that AI brings.

Renew Your OCCMA Membership Today!

The OCCMA is now accepting applications for 2024 membership. The mission of OCCMA is to support and energize our members, and the profession in order to foster responsible, local government with the objective of improving the sustainability and livability of Oregon communities. The OCCMA allows members to provide one another with support and professional guidance.

Membership in the OCCMA provides the following benefits:

- Access to the OCCMA listserv (for active, affiliate, and student members)
- Access to the members only portion of the website at www.occma.org
- Support from the OCCMA Senior Advisor Program
- Access to the OCCMA's Civic Education Toolkit
- Access to quarterly E-Newsletters
- Allows members to participate on an OCCMA committee and in our affiliate organizations such as the NW Women's Leadership Academy (NWWLA) and the Oregon Latinos in Local Government (OLLG)
- Networking opportunities
- Professional development opportunities:
 - OLLG Winter Session, February 23, Lake Oswego City Hall
 - NW Regional Manager's Conference, March 26-29, Seaside Convention Center
 - Spring Manager's Workshop, April 25, Running Y Ranch, Klamath Falls
 - OCCMA Summer Conference, June 24-27, Best Western Plus Hood River Inn
 - OLLG Summer Session, September 20, TBD
 - Fall Manager's Workshop, October 17, The Riverhouse on the Deschutes, Bend
 - Access to the ICMA Coaching Program and other ICMA training opportunities
 - Scholarships are available for members to participate in professional development opportunities

[Click here](#) to learn more about the organization and submit your application online. For questions about your membership please contact Angela Speier, LOC Project & Affiliates Manager at aspeier@orcities.org or 503-884-6322.

2024 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

January 26

OCCMA Board of Directors Meeting
Virtual

March 26-29

NW Regional Managers Conference
Seaside Convention Center

March 29

OCCMA Board of Directors Meeting
Seaside Convention Center

April 25

OCCMA Spring Workshop
Running Y Ranch, Klamath Falls

April 25-26

LOC Spring Conference
Running Y Ranch, Klamath Falls

June 24-27

OCCMA Summer Conference
Best Western Plus Hood River Inn

June 24

OCCMA Board of Directors Meeting
Best Western Plus Hood River Inn

August 30

OCCMA Board of Directors Meeting
Virtual

October 16

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

October 17

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

October 17-19

LOC Annual Conference
The Riverhouse on the Deschutes, Bend

November 21-22

OCCMA Board of Directors Retreat
Independence Event Center

Incoming OCCMA Directors



Sabrina Cotta, Acting City Manager, Ashland

Sabrina has a varied government background starting her career in Army intelligence prior to completing her Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from Colorado State University. Sabrina worked for the Alaska Court System while earning her Master of Public Administration from the University of Alaska and from there accepted a management fellowship with the City of Tucson. She went on to become a PhD dropout but earned another master's degree in political science from the University of Arizona. From there she worked as a budget analyst in Lake County, Ill., a legislative analyst and the interim performance and strategic plan administrator for the City of Colorado Springs and the Director of Administrative and Internal Services for the Pueblo West Metropolitan District. Currently Sabrina is the Acting City Manager for the City of Ashland, but initially came to Ashland 21 months ago to be the Deputy City Manager. She and her family love the pacific northwest and are loving their new home in Ashland.



Martha Bennett
OCCMA President-Elect
City Manager, Lake Oswego



Abigail Elder
City Manager, Hood River



Nina Vetter
City Manager, Gresham

Thank you departing board members



Left to right: Adam Brown, City Manager, Keizer; Past President Scott Derickson, City Administrator, Woodburn; and Susie Marston, former City Manager, Gervais



Rachael Fuller
Former Assistant County Administrator,
Washington County

Continuing OCCMA Directors



Dan Huff
OCCMA President
City Manager, Molalla



Scott Derickson
OCCMA Past President
City Administrator,
Woodburn



Angela Speier
Secretary-Treasurer
LOC Staff



Jerry Gillham
City Manager, Sutherlin



Zoe Mombert
Assistant to the City
Manager, Wilsonville



Aaron Palmquist
City Manager, Irrigon



Mark Shepard
City Manager, Corvallis



Andy Varner
City Manager, North
Plains



John Walsh
City Administrator,
St. Helens



SAVE THE DATE

2024 OCCMA Summer Conference
June 24-27, 2024
Best Western Plus Hood River Inn

Questions: Angela Speier, aspeier@orcities.org or 503-884-6322



City Manager Spotlight

Bandon Welcomes New City Manager Torrey Contreras A New Chapter Begins for Bandon with Experienced Leadership

By Gary Milliman, Senior Advisor



The City of Bandon warmly welcomes **Torrey Contreras** as its newly appointed City Manager. With an impressive tenure at the City of Cerritos, California, where he served in various capacities over a span of three decades, Contreras brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to Bandon. His role in Cerritos culminated as the Senior Assistant City Manager, a position that capped a dynamic and impactful career in municipal government.

From Southern California to Oregon's Coastal Charm

Contreras's journey in Cerritos was marked by his influential contributions as Community Development Director and Economic Development Manager during a pivotal growth period for the city. He was instrumental in developing Cerritos' award-winning affordable housing program and spearheading economic initiatives, including the revitalization of the renowned Cerritos auto mall and the enhancement of several significant retail commercial centers.

Embarking on his Cerritos career as a Planning Intern, Contreras's ambition and dedication saw him ascend through the ranks to the role of Community Development Director, a position he held for nearly 15 years. In 2019, his expertise and leadership were further recognized with a promotion to Senior Assistant City Manager, where he managed a broad range of strategic planning efforts, labor negotiations, and regional infrastructure projects until his retirement in September 2023.

A Future Focused on Growth and Community

In Bandon, Contreras is poised to apply his experience in real estate, economic development, and strategic planning. As Bandon undergoes growth, particularly in its visitor service economy, his insights will be invaluable in navigating the city's evolving landscape.

A holder of a Master of Public Administration degree from California State University at Fullerton and a Bachelor of Science in Landscape Architecture from California State Polytechnic University at Pomona, Contreras is ready to immerse himself in Bandon's community life.

"Transitioning from the bustling economic environment of southern California to the serenity of Bandon presents a unique opportunity to leverage my skills in a new context," Contreras expressed. "I am eager to contribute to the City of Bandon and embrace its stunning natural surroundings."

An enthusiastic golfer, Contreras is also eager to explore the numerous prestigious golf courses that the Bandon area boasts.

Personal Endeavors Aligning with Professional Aspirations

"The convergence of my children's college journeys with the opportunity at Bandon couldn't have been timed better," shared Contreras. Alongside his wife, Kelly, and their two adult children, Caden and Presley, the Contreras family has recently laid down roots in Bandon, purchasing a home where they plan to delve into the local way of life.

"My family is captivated by the beauty and warmth of the Bandon community, and we're excited to engage actively in the fabric of this city," said Contreras.

As Bandon ushers in this new era under the guidance of Torrey Contreras, the community looks forward to the expertise and fresh perspective he brings to the table. His proven track record promises a bright future for the city and its residents.

Please join us in extending a heartfelt welcome to Torrey Contreras and his family as they embark on this new adventure in Bandon. His arrival marks not only a significant milestone for him personally but also heralds a period of enriched community engagement and strategic growth for our city.

City Manager Spotlight

Madras Welcomes Will Ibershof as New City Administrator



The city of Madras has ushered in a new era of leadership and expertise with the appointment of Will Ibershof as the City Administrator on October 2. Bringing with him a rich municipal governance and public administration background, Ibershof is well-poised to navigate our city through its next chapter.

Ibershof's career in municipal government commenced

in 2001 when he joined the City of Duvall, Washington, as a council member. His dedication to public service and leadership skills quickly propelled him into the role of Mayor in 2005, a position he held until 2017. During his tenure as Mayor, Ibershof demonstrated a unique ability to balance multiple responsibilities, also serving as a part-time City Administrator.

His journey in public service took him to Sultan, Washington, where he held the position of City Administrator from 2018 to 2023. Ibershof's tenure in Sultan saw him navigate the community through various challenges, showcasing his adept problem-solving skills and commitment to public welfare.

Ibershof's educational background includes a bachelor's degree in Communications from the University of Puget Sound and a master's degree in Public Administration from the University of Washington. These academic achievements gave him a solid foundation to excel in public administration.

Ibershof expressed his enthusiasm for the role, citing the city's climate, welcoming community, and opportunities for new challenges as significant draws to Madras. With its larger population compared to Duvall and Sultan, the city presents an exciting challenge for Ibershof. In particular, he looks forward to working with the airport and golf course, unique aspects of the Madras community that

he has not encountered in his previous roles.

The city has experienced a significant turnover in key staff positions. However, Ibershof sees this as an opportunity for growth and revitalization. His initial plans include fostering a collaborative environment within the city's departments and promoting open communication. He aims to lead a weekend retreat with city council members to revisit the city's vision and mission statement, ensuring everyone is aligned with the community's goals.

As a leader, Ibershof prefers to operate behind the scenes, guiding and supporting his team to achieve their best. He is eager to leverage Madras' assets, such as the airport, and explore innovative uses for city properties, including the potential development of a 180-acre solar farm near the airport.

With a vision for a united and prosperous Madras, Ibershof and his wife have committed to making the city their home.

"I think this is a place where I could live the rest of my life," Ibershof remarked, highlighting his commitment and belief in the city's potential. Madras stands on the brink of a new era. With Ibershof at the helm, the community is poised for success and innovation.



Madras Mayor Mike Lepin administers the oath of office to new City Administrator Will Ibershof.



Oregon Latinos in Local Government Opens 2024 Membership Drive

OLLG is a membership organization focused on:

- Supporting Latine professionals in local government.
- Promoting cultural awareness among local government employees who serve communities with a significant Latine population.
- Increasing public participation in local government within the Latine community.

Member Benefits

In 2024, OLLG will host five Café con Leche virtual meetings and two in-person professional development training sessions. The Café con Leche sessions are free to all OLLG members and members will also receive a reduced rate to attend in-person events. Another benefit of membership is the OLLG listserv. During the year OLLG members can stay connected and ask fellow members questions on the OLLG listserv. There are four different membership categories:

1. **Group** - Local government employees whose employers join Oregon Latinos in Local Government as paying members are automatically eligible for membership at no additional cost. This means all employees' membership dues are covered under this category. Membership dues are based on population size and range from \$75 to \$500.
2. **Associate** - Local government employees whose employers have not joined Oregon Latinos in Local Government may join as individual members for \$75 per year.
3. **Partner** - Nonprofit organizations that serve Latine populations and work closely with local government organizations may join as partner members. These organizations may include community-based organizations and chambers of commerce. Memberships dues range from \$250 up to \$750.

4. **Student** - Those enrolled in an accredited community college or university working towards a degree are eligible to become student members of Oregon Latinos in Local Government at no cost.

Group Membership

Government organizations include cities, counties, port districts, regional government organizations and local utility districts. You pay the following membership rates according to the population size served:

1,000 or fewer:	\$75
1,001 to 5,000:	\$100
5,001 to 20,000:	\$175
20,001 to 50,000:	\$250
50,0001 to 100,000:	\$325
100,001 to 500,000:	\$400
500,001 and more:	\$500

Signing up for OLLG

Authorized employees should visit: www.oregonlatinosin-localgovernment.org/join, select the membership category you would like to join and fill out the online form. Once completed hit the "Request to join" button. The form will automatically go to LOC staff. LOC staff will send an invoice to the organization's primary contact to collect membership dues. Once the dues are collected LOC staff will send the primary contact additional information. For group memberships LOC staff will include sample information to send employees encouraging them to become a member of OLLG.

If you have questions, please contact Angela Speier at aspeier@orcities.org or 503-884-6322.

Join

Oregon Latinos in Local Government

for professional development on

Feb. 23, 2024
9 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Lake Oswego Council Chambers
380 A Avenue
Lake Oswego, OR 97034

Learn with us about:

- The Art of Networking
- Finding Your Career Path
- Creating Successful Employee Affinity Groups
- Municipal Government Functions

Registration opens Jan. 10.

Contact: Angela Speier
aspeier@orcities.org



City Spotlight

Addressing Housing Challenges in Beaverton: A Comprehensive Approach Beaverton's Efforts to Tackle Housing Instability

In Beaverton, the growing concern for affordable housing mirrors a national trend. With an increasing number of households facing instability, the city has escalated its initiatives in recent years to provide a range of housing solutions.

Combating Homelessness through Innovative Programs

The city has implemented strategies to alleviate homelessness, including funding for housing services for youth and adults, and the creation of a Safe Parking Program. This program offers a secure parking space for those living in their vehicles. Additionally, Beaverton transformed a temporary shelter into a year-round facility and is currently renovating a building to serve as a permanent shelter, set to open in mid-2024.

Advancing Affordable Housing Development

A critical component of Beaverton's approach is the Housing Production Strategy, which outlines actions to promote diverse housing options. By 2026, the city aims to add 477 new housing units, with the Metro Regional Affordable Housing Bond playing a significant role. Notably, 121 units will cater to very low-income families, including designated Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) for the chronically homeless.

Showcasing Diverse Housing Projects

Several projects exemplify Beaverton's housing diversity:

- 1. The Mary Ann:** Developed by REACH Community Development, this 54-unit project near Beaverton High School includes 11 units for very low-income households. Since its opening in September 2021, it houses 117 residents, including 46 children.



Main Street (Wishcamper): Currently under construction in South Cooper Mountain, this 164-unit project by Wishcamper Development Partners will offer housing for seniors and families, including 17 units for very low-income households, and is expected to open in early 2025.

- 3. Senior Housing on 5th:** Focused on low-income seniors, this 104-unit project by Community Partners for Affordable Housing is in the predevelopment phase. With 68 units reserved for very low-income seniors, including 30 as PSH, it will also provide community space on the ground floor.

Collaboration: The Key to Success

These initiatives reflect a collaborative effort between the private and public sectors, including state, regional, and local partners, emphasizing the importance of joint efforts in addressing housing challenges.

Annual Oregon/Washington Dinner at the ICMA Annual Conference

This year's ICMA Annual Conference in Austin, Texas featured plenty of relevant local government topics sprinkled in with a generous dose of southern hospitality. At night, attendees experienced the sights, smells, and sounds of Austin's historic neighborhoods. On one of those humid evenings, more than 50 members of the Oregon and Washington Manager's Associations gathered at Iron Works BBQ in downtown Austin for a night of ribs, brisket, and discussion. A few photos of fellowship highlight these conversations.



ICMA | coaching program

Career Compass No. 103: Avoid Seeking Happiness at Work

Seeking happiness at work is not the end-goal. Rather, happiness will emerge if you seek a work life that is engaging and energizing.

By Dr. Frank Benest | Aug 29, 2023 | ARTICLE

I have served as an environmental programs specialist for a municipal public works department for six years. I report to the environmental services manager who directs my work and has confidence in me to carry out program assignments. It takes a long time with many steps to get something done in our city organization, especially since stakeholder groups get involved and advocate their own solutions to environmental challenges. It is difficult work; however, I am results-oriented and have more or less mastered the job. I get along with our team members who support my work. I am respected by my boss and colleagues and continue to get merit increases.



In order to better attract and retain talent, top management has made it a priority to retool our stodgy work environment and create a more vital and supportive organizational culture. However, I know this effort won't happen overnight. In the meantime, I am not particularly happy at work. It is not that I'm unhappy, I'm just not happy.

How do I become happier at work?

Like many of us, you spend most of your waking hours working. Therefore, you should seek to feel engaged and energized by your work.

I'm pleased that your top management in the city is seeking to build a more vital organizational culture. It is certainly a key leadership responsibility and is critical in attracting and retaining talent. (See [Career Compass No. 51 "Building a World-Class Culture"](#) and [Career Compass No. 85 "To Thrive in Post-Pandemic, Enhance Your Employee Experience."](#)) However, you, too, have responsibility in making your own work life more invigorating.

Rethink Happiness

The problem with happiness is that it means constantly feeling good or content, or being in a continual state of enjoyment or pleasure. Happiness tends to be temporary or even fleeting and it may be superficial. (See [Larae Quy, "3 Scientific Reasons Why Well-Being Equals Success," SmartBrief, March 15, 2023.](#))

Some of us seek happiness in money, influence, fame, pleasure, or comfort. While attaining some of these rewards might provide temporary satisfaction, we don't get all the value that we anticipate. We then seek more of the same thing or the next thing to bring us happiness. We are on what is called a "hedonic treadmill." A better approach is what the Greeks called "eudaimonia," which means "flourishing" or "seeking a life well-lived." "Happiness is not a destination; it is something that finds you along the way." (See [Emily Smurthwaite Edmonds, "Let Joy Find You," BYU Alumni Magazine, Winter 2023.](#))

Happiness emerges as a result of living a good life, including a good working life.

So, the question for you is: "How do I ensure that my work life is experienced in such a way that I find some measure of happiness and joy as a result of my efforts?"

This is the simple answer: If you are engaged and energized by the work and your work life, you will tend to be happier and more satisfied.

Here are some suggestions on how to find that elusive sense of happiness along the journey.

Start with the Why

We tend to focus on "what" we are going to do and "how" we are going to do it. However, to find meaning (which is key to engagement), we must start with the "why." (See [Simon Sinek, Start with Why, 2009.](#))

In my case, I could see my "why" as a trainer in leadership development programs as a way to earn income in my retirement. Or I can see my work as helping create the next generation of local government leaders serving their communities. Which is more energizing?

In terms of your work, you must ask yourself, why is this project important to me? Why is it important to the people I serve? As an environmental programs specialist, you can easily view your work as helping save the planet.

Some teams make it a habit of periodically inviting internal customers (such as staff from other departments) or external customers or stakeholders (such as neighborhood or business group representatives) to their team meetings and asking them to share how the team's efforts serve them and make a positive difference to them.

Invest in Building Relationships

The Gallup Organization's research on employee engagement identifies 12 critical factors (called the Q12) that lead to higher levels of engagement. One of those factors is strong social relationships. (See [Marcus Buckingham and Curt Coffman, First Break All the Rules, 1999.](#))

It is not the quantity of relationships but the quality of the relationships that make us happier.

The Harvard Study of Adult Development concludes that life satisfaction is not based on money or achievement but "warm connections with other people." These social bonds with family, friends, and colleagues not only make us happier but also healthier. It is not the quantity of relationships but the quality of the relationships that make us happier. (See [Robert Waldinger, TED Talk, "What Makes a Good Life? Lessons from the Longest Study on Happiness."](#))

There is much research suggesting that social support received from others is a strong predictor of happiness during periods of high stress. Even more important to sustained engagement and happiness is the social support provided to others. In other words, the more support you give, the more engaged and happier you are. (See [Shawn Archer, "Positive Intelligence," Harvard Business Review, Jan-Feb 2012.](#))

Some of us develop work relationships for transactional purposes. In other words, we understand that we need the cooperation of others to effectively do our work. While transactional support is necessary, we need to focus on a relational approach and connect with others for our own sake. Connection is all about accepting other people, showing genuine interest in them, and wanting what is best for them. You can connect with someone even if you don't agree with their perspectives and ideas. (See [Career Compass No. 79 "Leading by Connecting."](#))

A mutual, personal relationship involves:

- Knowing about the other person, including their interests (at work and away from work), history, hopes, values and concerns.
- Sharing yourself.
- Understanding their priorities and commitments.

- Engaging in a regular cadence of communication, even if there is nothing urgent to discuss.
- Showing a sincere curiosity and interest in the other person.
- Trusting their good intentions.
- Exhibiting a desire to support the other person.

(See [Leigh Bailey, “The Risks of Having Transactional Relationships with Your Peers,” bailygroup.com blog, March 10, 2021.](#))

Creating social bonds is the key driver of happiness.

There are many ways to connect with colleagues:

- Greet everyone when you arrive at work and say goodbye when you leave.
- Arrive at an in-person or virtual meeting five minutes early so you can chit-chat about family, hobbies, sports, or other activities.
- Ask a colleague to have coffee with you outside the workplace and inquire about their non-work life.
- Invite a colleague for a walk at lunch time and talk along the way.
- Bring coffee and bagels to an occasional team meeting to enhance socializing.

Rituals can also help foster connection. For instance, some groups have a “take 5” or “take 10” ritual at the beginning of their team meetings so people can share non-work information. To start meetings, another ritual is to share “one joy” and “one challenge.” Other teams may bring their favorite coffee or tea mug and share why the cup is important to them.

Building relationships requires intention and the will to do it. Bonding with others takes time and self-regulation. It requires that you be fully present with the other person and not distracted. It may mean substituting people time for screen time. For example, you might want to leave your phone in the car when meeting a friend for lunch.

Again, as the Harvard Study on Adult Development indicates, creating social bonds is the key driver of happiness.

Seek More Autonomy

Daniel Pink in his book *Drive: The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us* (2009) identifies three self-motivators and engagement drivers:

1. Meaning (knowing “why” you are doing something).
2. Autonomy (the opportunity to be self-directed).
3. Mastery (getting better and better at things that matter).

In local government, we deal with many challenging adaptive problems such as environmental sustainability and climate protection. There is often no right or wrong technical solution, and every stakeholder group has its own values and preferred solution. Since you have demonstrated much mastery in achieving program results, you

should seek more autonomy (within certain guiderails) in how you do your work. Given the adaptive nature of your work, you should seek more freedom to “figure it out.”

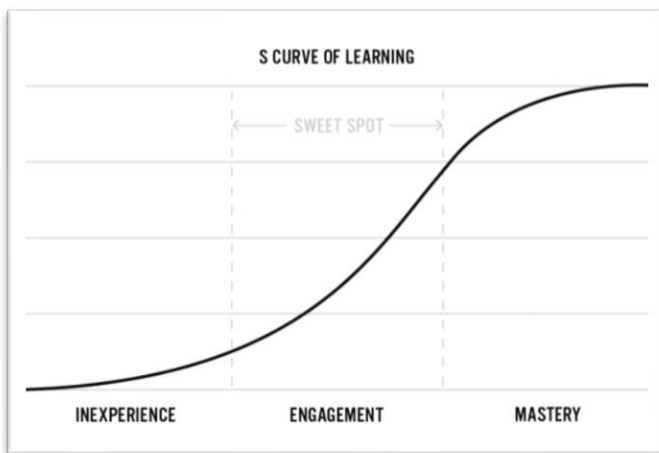
In turbulent times, you need to take a few steps forward, see what works and what does not, pivot, fix it up along the way, and learn as you go. (See [Career Compass No. 94 “Ten Principles for Leading in Turbulence.”](#))

You have earned a measure of trust and confidence with your manager. Therefore, the way to get more autonomy is to have a development conversation with your boss and ask for some latitude in planning, organizing, and implementing the next environmental project. Simply state “I can figure this out. I’ll let you know how I’m proceeding.”

Find a New S Curve of Learning

If we are not being challenged, learning, and growing, we tend to get stagnant, lose interest, and become unengaged. Again, the Gallup Organization has identified that

learning and development are key determinants of engagement.



We all find ourselves on an S curve of learning and growth.

At the far left of the S curve chart, you are at the “launch point.” You are inexperienced and feel uncomfortable because you are being fully challenged. As you learn, you arrive at the “sweet spot” of learning and growth and progress is rapid. In the sweet spot, you are fully

engaged. Eventually, you arrive at the “peak” and achieve mastery. (See [Whitney Johnson, “Manage Your Organization as a Portfolio of Learning Curves,” Harvard Business Review, Jan-Feb 2022.](#))

Many talented professionals leave an organization if they cannot move onto a new S curve of learning.

The problem with this mastery phase (at the far right of the S curve) is that you get bored and restless and need new challenges. Many talented professionals leave an organization if they cannot move onto a new S curve of learning.

You are at the peak in the S curve. You have some choices to re-energize yourself:

1. Have a development conversation with your manager and agree to secure a new meaningful and challenging project or team leadership assignment that will energize you.

2. Seek a new position with your organization or another agency that puts you on another S curve of learning and development.
3. Get involved with your professional organization or volunteer with a nonprofit so that you are promoting new learning for yourself.
4. Continue to feel stagnant.

Appreciating the Beauty Around Us

In his book, *The Search for Meaning*, Viktor Frankel found that one's underlying motivator in life is a "will to meaning," even in the most difficult of circumstances. (Frankl survived a Nazi concentration camp.) Sources of meaning include purposeful work, love, and appreciation of beauty. In fact, Frankel is remembered for his suggestion that the ultimate freedom is the freedom to decide on your attitude regardless of the circumstances and the adversity that you face. (Good advice for local government leaders.)

Therefore, one source of well-being is to seek out and appreciate beauty, whether that be natural beauty or artistic beauty. In my home state of California, we are blessed with the ocean, mountains, and deserts. While I do not participate in active water sports, I find it immensely soothing to look at the ocean and listen to the waves. Recently, I was in Palm Springs and appreciated the late afternoon light on the desert mountains.

Again, there are many ways to savor the beauty around us and find meaning in it. Eat lunch outside. Take a walk on the beach or along a trail at an open space preserve. Enjoy looking at the vineyards or orchards or mountains. Plant a garden or buy an indoor plant.

An appreciation of beauty (or the creative arts) can fill us with awe.

Practice Gratitude

According to the Gallup Organization, one of the 12 factors promoting employee engagement is being recognized by your boss, top management, peers or customers. The Q12 factor is "In the last seven days, I have received recognition or praise for doing good work."

Rituals can help promote the practice of gratitude.

While showing appreciation for good work is certainly a responsibility of organizational leaders, you should take charge of your own well-being and practice gratitude. In my case, I am grateful for:

- My health.
- The family and friends who love me.
- The growth and development of my now adult children.

- My meaningful work.
- Colleagues who appreciate my contributions.
- Financial resources.
- The diverse beauty, culture, and opportunities that I have available living in California.
- The opportunity to travel and appreciate different cultures.

I am a lucky guy.

Rituals can help promote the practice of gratitude. During my daily walks, my ritual is to think of one or two things for which I am grateful. Some people write in a gratitude journal in the morning as they rise or at night before they go to bed. Others start family or holiday meals or team meetings by having everyone share one thing for which they are thankful. I often write short notes to friends and colleagues expressing my appreciation for all kinds of things. (See [Career Compass No. 99 “Harness the Hidden Power of Rituals.”](#))

Finding Happiness Along the Way

You need to take charge of your life, including your work life, so you experience meaning and well-being. In doing so, beware of the “paradox of happiness.” “The more you chase it, the more elusive it becomes.” (See [Lorenzo Buscicchi and Dan Weijers](#)).

To create well-being, you can do a number of things:

- Search for meaning and purpose.
- Focus on developing social bonds and human connections.
- Seek autonomy and the opportunity to “figure it out.”
- Ensure that you are being challenged and continue to learn and grow.
- Appreciate the beauty that surrounds you.
- Practice gratitude.

You may not be happy all the time, but you will be engaged and energized and will find happiness along the way.



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

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.



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RETIREMENT



Farewell Trails: A Senior Advisor Reflects

By Dan Bartlett

Happy Trails: A Journey Through Public Service

As the familiar tune goes, “Happy Trails to you, until we meet again!” I share this sentiment as I step down from my role as a Senior

Advisor. Reflecting on a journey that began in the pages of the OCCMA Newsletter back in the fourth quarter of 2011, I recall an interview with JoAnn Ghelfi, then OCCMA Manager for the League of Oregon Cities and editor of the newsletter. When asked why I aspired to become a range rider, I playfully credited Charlie Henry but earnestly admitted my desire to “pay it forward” after benefiting from his dedicated service.

A Path Less Taken: From Academia to Range Rider

My academic pursuits in Community Service and Public Affairs at the University of Oregon, although from a department that’s long since dissolved, led me down an unconventional path—one where discussions in circles on the floor were part of the curriculum. A subsequent internship with the Federal Resources, Conservation and Development Agency carved my early steps, taking me through Oakridge, OSU Extension, Newport, and Florence.

City Dreams to County Realities

Aiming for a position in Eugene’s city management, I found myself amidst a throng of peers with similar ambitions. Destiny, however, had other plans. A recommendation landed me at a senior services non-profit in Albany, leading to my eventual transfer to Benton County. There, I journeyed through various roles, culminating in the position of county administrative officer.

Navigating Change and Charting New Courses

The winds of political change inevitably swept through the county, signaling it was time for me to set sail anew.

My odyssey took me to Milwaukie, where a late arrival at a pivotal dinner and an unflappable demeanor amidst the city’s diverse voices earned me nearly 12 years as their city manager.

Astoria to Range Riding: The Final Leg

Astoria beckoned in 2000, enriching my voyage with experiences that only a city steeped in history could offer. Retirement from Astoria didn’t end my travels; instead, it transitioned me to a Range Rider. Under Charlie Henry’s mentorship, my treks expanded across Oregon, from the rush of I-5 to the coastal trails of 101.

A Legacy Continued and a Horizon Awaiting

As territories evolved and new advisors stepped in, my final responsibilities lay with the communities of Clatsop, Columbia, Lincoln, and Tillamook. It’s gratifying to pass the torch to the capable hands of Dale Shafer, whom I visited over the years during her tenure as Nehalem’s city manager.

A New Trail Awaits

Now, the trails call me in a different direction—towards grandchildren and new adventures. The memories of connections made and the impact of shared experiences among peers will remain indelible. So, to all whom I’ve had the pleasure of serving and collaborating with, I echo once more, “Happy Trails to you, until we meet again!”

Dan Bartlett’s Unwavering Journey

Dan’s unwavering dedication to public service is a testament to the spirit that drives the heart of local government. As he embarks on his well-earned retirement, his legacy within the OCCMA and the communities he’s served continues to inspire the next generation of public servants.

We wish Dan the absolute best in his future endeavors and thank him for his invaluable contribution to the fabric of our local governance. His trails have been many, and the paths he’s paved will continue to guide us.

Oregon Senior Advisors



From
**Sheila
Ritz**

County Managers Collaborate on Library Funding and Community Challenges

On September 11, a significant meeting of Clackamas County Managers took place, attended by an array of city leaders including **Gary Schmidt (Clackamas County)** and representatives from **Oregon City, Molalla, Canby, West Linn, Estacada, Lake Oswego, Wilsonville, and Happy Valley**. The central theme was a discussion prompted by Gary Schmidt regarding feedback for the Board of Commissioners concerning the Library District Advisory Committee's (LDAC) correspondence on library funding.

The managers collectively acknowledged the dilemma of not favoring increased taxes while also grappling with the reality of insufficient funding to maintain escalating costs. This balance of fiscal responsibility and service provision remains a high-wire act for the county. Homelessness and state legislative mandates were also topics of serious discourse, highlighting the ongoing social challenges the county faces.

Gresham's Green Initiatives and Financial Strides



Nina Vetter, City Manager of **Gresham**, shared uplifting news on environmental and financial fronts. The city secured a whopping \$12 million grant from the US Department of Agriculture, aimed at expanding the tree canopy in Rockwood and western Gresham. Further-

more, Gresham received additional grants to enhance local parks and construct walking paths, bolstering the city's commitment to public spaces.

Despite recent setbacks with a public safety levy, Gresham is strategizing for the future with plans to re-approach voters and is currently innovating in police work through technologies like drones.

Troutdale: Development and Community Enrichment



Troutdale City Manager **Ray Young** provided an insight into the city's ongoing endeavors to find a sustainable solution for their city hall facilities. The community's pulse suggests a resistance to a bond measure for city hall, although economic development flourishes elsewhere with the introduction

of new breweries and businesses.

Looking forward, Troutdale anticipates the start of construction on a new waterfront trail and park in 2024, which is expected to be a significant enhancement for regional connectivity and recreation.

Milwaukie Welcomes a New Vision with Emma Sagor



Emma Sagor, stepping into her role as **Milwaukie** Assistant City Manager since June, brings a wealth of diverse experience. With her extensive background in urban planning and her recent focus on community-based services, Sagor is set to develop an Equity Work Plan and a 3-year

Strategic Plan for Milwaukie, charting a course for the city's immediate and strategic future.

Estacada Celebrates Environmental and Infrastructure Success



Melanie Wagner, **Estacada** City Manager, proudly accepted the Stream Award from the State Land Board, which honored Estacada's efforts in ecological restoration. Furthermore, the city is making headway with significant infrastructure upgrades, including a new wastewater

treatment plant and improvements to Main Street.

Estacada is also setting the stage for the Lake Shore Trail and Water Access Project, aiming to enhance connections to the Clackamas River and bolster tourism and recreation.

As our communities advance through these diverse projects and initiatives, while challenges are part of the journey, the dedication of our city managers and the support of state and federal programs continue to pave the way for development and prosperity across Clackamas County. Stay tuned for further updates as we continue to forge a path of growth and community engagement.



From
**Dave
Waffle**

United Leadership in Hillsboro

In this issue, we delve into the communication and collaboration strategies of the City of **Hillsboro's** leadership team, featuring **Robby Hammond, Simone Brooks, and Rahim Harji**. A key finding from our discussion is their unified approach to leadership, transcending traditional boundaries despite their distinct roles and diverse experiences. This synergy has enhanced their interdependence and appreciation for varied perspectives.

Robby Hammond, serving as City Manager since August 2019, has been with Hillsboro since 2012. Simone Brooks, an Assistant City Manager (ACM) since November 2018, manages a spectrum of city services. Rahim Harji, who joined as an ACM in April 2020 and was promoted to Deputy City Manager in June 2023, oversees critical departments like public works and economic development. Discover more about the team on the City of Hillsboro's website.

Their strategy includes weekly formal meetings and daily brief updates. This ensures that each member knows the others' activities, promoting a cohesive team dynamic visible to the broader organization of approximately 1,400 employees and volunteers.

A significant project highlighting their collaborative effort is the expansion of facilities for the Hillsboro Hops minor league baseball team. This \$120 million project, a blend of public and private partnerships, required intricate coordination among the leaders. The project involves upgrading facilities to Major League Baseball standards and substantially impacts the community and the city's sports infrastructure.

The early stages of the project were dynamic, with the team adapting to fast-paced developments. They navigated challenges like funding sources and risk management. For a deeper dive into the project, visit the Hillsboro Hops Ballpark Project page.

The team's connectivity has solidified, allowing for more direct and purposeful communication. They conduct retreats to evaluate progress and set priorities and use Microsoft Teams for day-to-day communications. Their bond extends to personal interests, such as new local bakeries, adding a touch of enjoyment to their professional collaboration.

Their coordination was mainly tested during the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, necessitating innovative policies and practices. They value the insights gained from collaborations with other cities and counties, and proximity to the Washington County management team has been advantageous.

Robby is chiefly responsible for liaising with the city council, but all three leaders are equipped to act as City Managers if needed. An example of their effective emergency management was during a fire in downtown Hillsboro in January 2022, where Simone led the communication efforts.

The Hillsboro leadership team's guiding principles for effective communication are to keep it enjoyable, maintain work-life balance, and collectively celebrate successes and learn from failures. And a reminder: don't forget the hot chocolate and cookies!



From
**Dave
Kanner**

City Managers on the Move: A Closer Look at Brian Sjothun and Jordan Wheeler

Last June, **Brian Sjothun**, City Manager of **Medford**, announced his plans to retire at the end of 2024, sparking curiosity and admiration. Eager to delve into his thoughts and plans, I invited Brian for a casual lunch, but not before taking a mesmerizing tour of the almost-completed Rogue Credit Union Community Complex, colloquially known as “Rogue X.”

With its grand opening fast approaching, Rogue X is a testament to Medford’s growth and commitment to community well-being. A long-time resident generously bequeathed the sprawling 140,000-square-foot facility, including an impressive 75,000-square-foot event center. This versatile space can be transformed to host basketball and volleyball tournaments, trade shows, and even concerts. Brian shared that 90% of the event schedule was already booked, indicating the community’s excitement and support.

Adjacent to this, the aquatics center promises to be a hit among families and fitness enthusiasts, featuring a competitive pool, a sizable recreational pool, an outdoor splash pad, and party rooms likely to be in constant demand. In a notable gesture of community support, Medford’s fourth graders can look forward to complimentary swim lessons.

However, capturing the grandiosity of Rogue X is no small feat, even with an iPhone in hand. For a more immersive experience, I recommend checking out “RCUCC Video Final” on YouTube.

Switching gears back to Brian Sjothun, he openly shared that his decision to retire stems from a desire for change rather than any specific issue or problem. Starting his journey in Medford in 2004 as a Recreation Superintendent and eventually rising to City Manager in 2016, Brian has played a pivotal role in the city’s progress. His dedication to major projects, including a \$300 million wastewater treatment plant expansion and a significant transportation corridor reconstruction, highlights his commitment to Medford’s future. Brian also took pride in addressing the city’s

homelessness challenge, ensuring that anyone in need can access shelter.

Reflecting on Brian’s tenure, it is evident that he will leave Medford significantly better than he found it, fulfilling a city manager’s quintessential goal. While I will undoubtedly miss our insightful conversations, I suspect the golf courses in Medford might be seeing more of Brian post-retirement.

In other news, **Jordan Wheeler** has taken on the role of City Manager in **Sisters** since July of the previous year. Known for his prior engagements as Deputy City Manager in Lake Oswego and City Manager of Sandy, Jordan is no stranger to the responsibilities and challenges of the position. Sisters, a vibrant and engaged community, has welcomed him with open arms despite its challenges. From managing the influx of tourists to addressing affordable housing and homelessness, Jordan is navigating through his new role with a supportive council and a dedicated staff.

One of the contentious issues he faced was the siting of a cold weather shelter, which elevated to a council-level land use issue. Despite the council’s denial, the dedication to finding solutions for homelessness continues.

With its charming downtown, exquisite restaurants, and breathtaking scenery, Sisters is undoubtedly a unique gem in Oregon. With Jordan Wheeler at the helm, with his affable personality and seasoned expertise, the city is in capable hands, navigating through its engaged citizenship and pressing community issues.



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