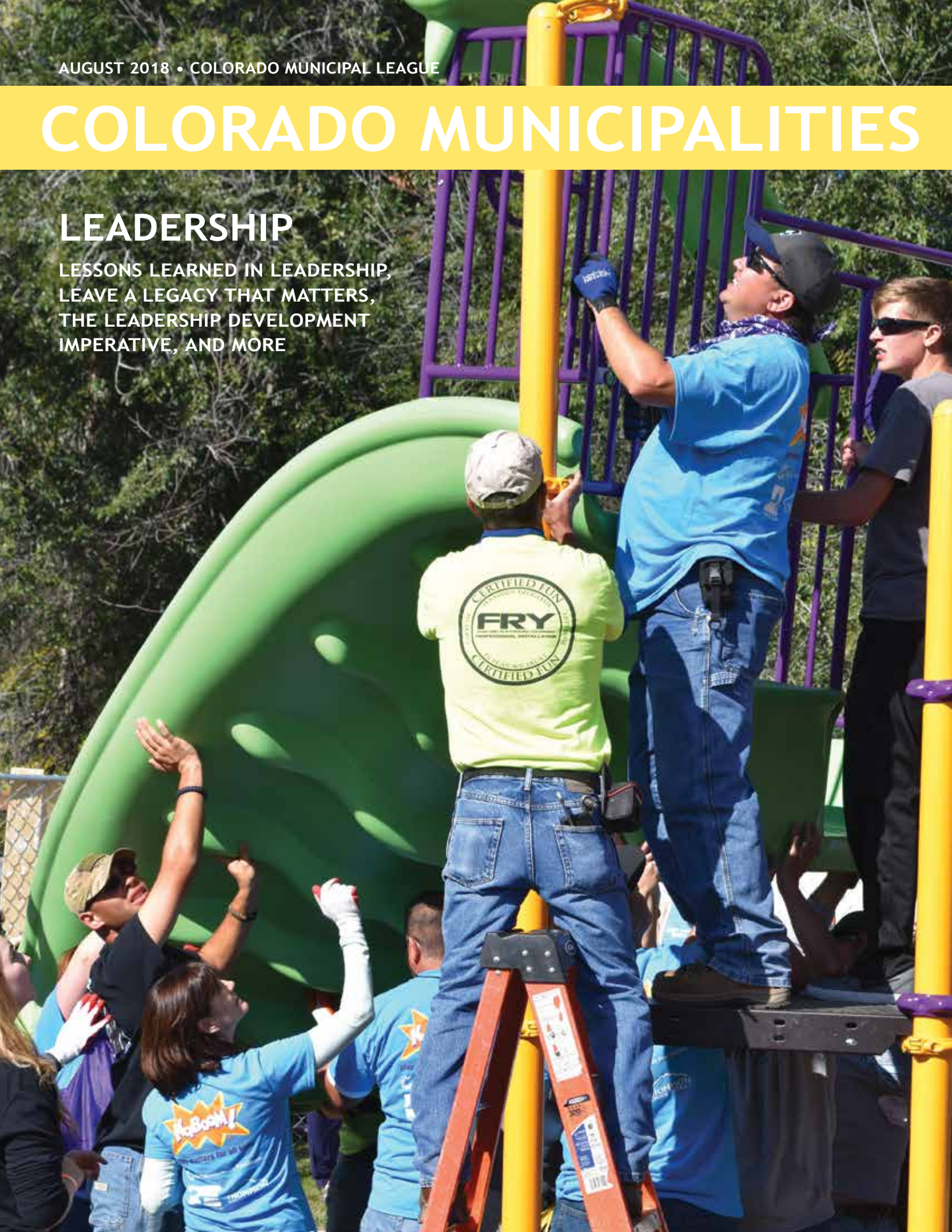


AUGUST 2018 • COLORADO MUNICIPAL LEAGUE

# COLORADO MUNICIPALITIES

## LEADERSHIP

LESSONS LEARNED IN LEADERSHIP,  
LEAVE A LEGACY THAT MATTERS,  
THE LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT  
IMPERATIVE, AND MORE





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*The Voice of Colorado's Cities and Towns*



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The Voice of Colorado's Cities and Towns

1144 Sherman Street  
Denver, CO 80203-2207  
(p) 303-831-6411 / 866-578-0936  
(f) 303-860-8175  
[www.cml.org](http://www.cml.org)  
[cml@cml.org](mailto:cml@cml.org)

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#### **Mission**

*Colorado Municipalities* is published to inform, educate, and advise appointed and elected municipal officials about new programs, services, trends, and information to help them perform their jobs and better serve their citizens and communities.

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#### **CML STAFF**

Meghan Andrews, database & administrative coordinator  
Amanda Blasingame, law clerk  
Kevin Bommer, deputy director  
Morgan Cullen, legislative & policy advocate  
Meghan Dollar, legislative & policy advocate  
Monique Grant, receptionist/administrative assistant  
Kathleen Harrison, meetings & events coordinator  
Sam Mamet, executive director  
Melissa Mata, municipal research analyst  
Traci Stoffel, communications & design specialist  
Christine Taniguchi, communications coordinator  
Lisa White, membership services manager  
Laurel Witt, staff attorney  
Allison Wright, finance & administration manager

#### **COLORADO MUNICIPALITIES**

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#### **CML SECTION CHAIRS / LIAISONS**

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The Colorado Municipal League is a nonprofit association organized and operated by Colorado municipalities to provide support services to member cities and towns. The League has two main objectives: 1) To represent cities and towns collectively in matters before the state and federal government; and 2) To provide a wide range of information services to help municipal officials manage their governments.

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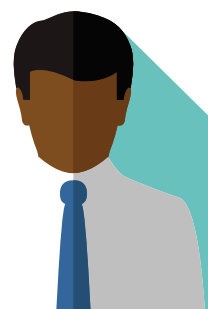
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On the cover: Leadership in action as the community builds a park in the City of Loveland.



# COLORADO MUNICIPALITIES

## ABOUT SOME OF OUR CONTRIBUTORS



### **Dana D'Orazio**

has spent more than 12 years building and leading cross-sector, local, and national programs. She

currently serves as the program director for leadership development and continuing education at National League of Cities (NLC), where she is leading the content and learning strategy for NLC's membership. Prior to this, she served as director of national strategy and operations at a startup. She also served under former Mayor Michela Nutter in the City of Philadelphia building pathways to education and employment and was an adjunct at Drexel University.



### **Irv Halter**

was appointed in May 2015 as executive director of the Colorado Department of Local Affairs (DOLA),

where he is a member of Gov. John Hickenlooper's cabinet. DOLA advises and supports communities throughout Colorado by partnering with local governments and community service organizations. Halter is a veteran of more than 32 years in the U.S. Air Force, where he was a combat-experienced fighter pilot and rose to the rank of major general. After retiring from the Air Force in 2009, he joined Computer Sciences Corporation (CSC) as the vice president and general manager for Air Force and Missile Defense Agency programs, providing IT and professional services.



### **Gov. John Hickenlooper**

is a lifetime entrepreneur who ran as a "dark horse" to become mayor of Denver in

2003. He led the campaign to pass FasTracks, the largest regional transportation initiative in U.S. history, and helped convince the 34 metro mayors to support the sales tax measure. In 2005 *TIME* magazine named him as one of the top five big-city mayors in America. He recently added "author" to his resume with his memoir, *The Opposite of Woe: My Life in Beer and Politics*. He was inaugurated governor of Colorado in 2011, having run on his history of collaboration for community good. He recruited talent from all quarters, and redefined the relationship between a state government and its business and civic communities.



### **Ron Holifield**

is CEO of Strategic Government Resources ([www.governmentresource.com](http://www.governmentresource.com)), which helps

local governments recruit, assess, and develop innovative, collaborative, and authentic leaders. His current clients include more than 550 local governments in 47 states. Holifield also has provided strategic consultation to some of the leading companies in America, from American Express to Xerox. He previously served almost two decades in city management with six different cities.



In 1987, **John O'Leary** was a curious 9-year-old boy. Playing with fire and gasoline, he created a massive explosion in his home

and was burned on 100 percent of his body. He was given a 1 percent chance to live. This epic story of survival was first showcased in his parents' book, *Overwhelming Odds*, in 2006. It was this book that first invited O'Leary to embrace his miraculous recovery and share it with the world. Today, he is an inspirational speaker teaching more than 50,000 people around the world each year how to live inspired. His book, *On Fire: The 7 Choices to Ignite a Radically Inspired Life* was an instant #1 national best-seller, has sold 100,000+ copies and has been translated into 12 languages.



A past president of CML, **Steve Rabe** has almost 35 years of local government management experience in

Colorado, having served full-time for the communities of Eads, Florence, and Cañon City. Since 2012, Rabe has provided interim administrator/manager and consulting services to nine municipalities and three special districts across the state to date.



**Tami Tanoue** has been in-house with CIRSA since 2001, serving as general counsel/deputy executive director. She was previously in private practice with the firm of Griffiths Tanoue Light Harrington & Dawes, where she served CIRSA as its contract general counsel for 12 years, and was city or town attorney for several Colorado municipalities. Prior to that, she was staff attorney for the Colorado Municipal League, where she represented the collective interests of Colorado municipalities. Tanoue is a regular speaker on local government liability topics, and has written several publications on liability issues.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

*Have some thoughts about an article that you read in Colorado Municipalities?*

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# LESSONS LEARNED IN LEADERSHIP

WAY BACK WHEN I WAS A YOUNG lieutenant, my squadron commander had a large picture hung behind his desk of about a hundred medieval warriors charging off toward the left end of the picture. Well behind them was a single figure running to catch up. The caption below said, “There they go! I must hurry after them, for I am their leader!”

If you have led any organization, large or small, this should make you chuckle. Keeping up with, and steering, a group of determined, talented people can be exhausting, as well as frustrating. But those of us who practice the art (and it is an art) of successful leadership know that it is personally rewarding beyond words.

I have had the privilege of “hurrying after” many hard-charging groups of folks while in uniform, in the private sector, and now as the executive director of the Colorado Department of Local Affairs. The size of the teams has varied from as small as 200 people to more than 30,000 with diverse purposes and missions. But the core tenets of leadership do not change. Following are a few that I have picked up, both as a follower of great leaders and a practitioner of the art they helped me learn.

First things first: **Being the leader is not about you.** It is about the people you lead and the results they deliver. Being the boss is a special privilege, but it does not make you special. Being humble about the position you hold is not just a gift to those you lead — it is a gift to yourself and will keep you grounded.

Next, **those you lead need to know what your core values are** — those things that, no matter what happens, you expect of yourself and those you lead. Mine are the values the Air Force adopted decades ago:

- Integrity First: Doing the right thing, even when no one is looking, and regardless of result
- Service Before Self: Public service is sacrificial by nature — mission first, and always
- Excellence in All We Do: We are what we repeatedly do — excellence is not an act, it is a habit

However you express your core values, you need to be certain that everyone in the organization knows them. I speak to all newcomers to my department about our vision and mission. And I always cover these values as non-negotiable traits that they must model. When people fail these tests, we retrain them. In the case of integrity, we quickly help them find another line of work.

**Leaders listen and learn.** I do not consider myself particularly talented. But I am very good at learning and understanding what my team is doing. This is not about being detail-oriented, as I cannot possibly know how to do their jobs. But I want to know enough so that I can ask thoughtful questions and can also explain to others, especially my bosses, what we are doing and why. This instills confidence in your organization, helps your people feel valued, and convinces them that you have their back. It also helps you keep up with them when they go “charging off”!


**Leaders make decisions.** One of the drawbacks of our modern information age is a growing presumption that we can know almost everything about any particular issue or challenge that we face. There is nothing wrong with trying to quickly get as much information as you can when facing a difficult choice. But, you will *never* know everything, and the extra time, meetings, etc., spent hunting down and debating all of the information is an opportunity cost that draws on limited resources.

Good teams can make even a mediocre decision work. But they cannot make a “no decision” work. Decide, and move forward.

**Leaders get buy-in.** My favorite coffee cup (which I have owned for more than 40 years) has the following inscription: “Diplomacy is the art of letting someone have it your way.” A beloved boss of mine once told me, “The best way to keep people from shooting holes in your boat is to get them into your boat.”

Good leaders are inclusive in their decision making, even when they may already have a pretty good idea of where they want to go. Listening and debating is good for your team and for you — you will likely learn something that makes your plan better. In these types of debates it is wise to give on small points, including others’ ideas. It allows your team to see their fingerprints on the final product. Once you get to a conclusion, their combined ownership will convince them to “have it your way.”





Leadership in a crisis is where we earn our pay. Anyone can be the leader on a good, routine day. **We have leaders for the bad days.** When those days come, and they will, you have to be the calm, collected voice. If you do, they will reflect that calm. If you lose your cool, so will they — not good!

To prepare for the “bad” days, it is essential that you have a plan appropriate to what crisis you might face (in my previous life it was losing an airplane, or going to war), and that you exercise that plan regularly to get the kinks out, constantly improving on the original. This is critical, because when the crisis comes you must stick with the plan. As a senior Marine veteran used to tell me, “Slow is smooth ... and smooth is fast.” Doing something quickly or on the fly may work in action movies, but it is the road to ruin in the real world. Good crisis leaders slow it down and keep everyone on track.

As I close, here are a few other self-explanatory leadership tips:

- **Have a clear vision** for your organization that focuses on the object of your affection (your citizens and community), not on your organization.
- **Pick three to five major goals** that you want to pursue to make the vision a reality. Do not add to the list until you achieve them. Long lists of goals are counterproductive — everything cannot be a priority.
- **Trust your people** — no one comes to work trying to do a bad job. Expect excellence.

- **Train your replacement.** Invest in people’s future, especially when you see talent. If you are a good leader and mentor, the organization will thrive long after you are gone. Again, it is not about you!

- **Success is a lousy teacher.** If you never make mistakes, you are not pushing yourself or your organization hard enough. Take ownership of failures. Give credit to the team for the successes. Your people will walk through walls for you if you habitually put them first.

- **Thick skin is essential.** Do not take criticism personally from above or below ... even when it was meant that way.

- **Good leaders are lifetime learners.** They constantly make adjustments based on observations of others, and new situations.

Being a leader is a high calling, no matter what the level or size of the enterprise. More than ever, committed quality leadership is in demand — and it matters. When you get it “right,” there is no better feeling in the world. Step up and make a difference!

# LEAVE A LEGACY THAT MATTERS

THIS IS A TOUGH AND BRUTAL time to serve your community. The personal cost of leadership has never been so high — and the need for character-driven leaders who put service above self has never been more critical. Public service has always been hard, but in too many communities, public service has devolved from hard to brutal.”

It can be emotionally wearying just to endure the constant slings and arrows of trolls who thrive on mean-spirited name-calling. They often knowingly disseminate false information with a conscious goal of dividing the community. It is even more frustrating and hurtful when it is a colleague on the council modeling the worst behaviors of divisiveness to try and get his or her way.

Sometimes you can feel so ground down that it becomes easy to forget that you originally ran for office because you love your community and wanted to create a future that is better than it would have been without your influence. Sometimes, it can take all you have just to survive the daily onslaught of incoming social media slime missiles just to get through the next meeting, without worrying about the impact your decision will have 25 years from now.

The temptation to abandon the importance of the future, and satisfy the urgency of the rock throwers who want what they want and want

it now, can be highly seductive.

But sacrificing the important for the urgent is always exactly the wrong thing to do. When you were elected, you were entrusted with a sacred duty to shape the future for the next generation, and the generation after that, and the generation after that.

And although you were elected to leave a positive legacy that will still matter long after you have left office, in the middle of the political insanity it can feel like a “mission impossible” with no simple answers. But Ronald Reagan was right when he said: “People say there are no simple answers. There are simple answers. They just are not easy answers.”

Walking the talk of authentic servant leadership will help you leave a legacy that matters, and provides the simple answer to the dysfunctionality and hatefulness that seem to inspire so much civic discourse these days.

The forces of hatefulness and mediocrity make walking the talk difficult — they do not want you to think about the future, they want you to “obey.” But if you have the courage to walk the talk of authentic servant leadership, the 11 simple commitments outlined to the right will provide you the path for success.

May you have the courage to walk the talk of an authentic servant leader, and in so doing leave a legacy that matters.



**Because I am committed to creating a future that is brighter and healthier and more beneficial to all citizens, I will:**

Base my decisions on the next generation more than the next election, committed to the ideal that my loyalty must be to the entire community (both now and in the future) and not merely to those who got me elected.

Focus on mission, vision, and values as the benchmark for my decisions and recognize that my responsibility is the pursuit of the greatest good for the entire community and not the satisfaction of any particular group's agenda.

Make decisions based on fact-based evidence and not allow myself to be manipulated into bad decisions for the future based on the decibel level of critics.

Recognize that "it takes a smart man to know where he is stupid" and have the wisdom to be smart. Accordingly, I will value those who have the courage to tell me what they really think, and will listen sincerely to those who disagree with me to truly understand their perspective, recognizing that understanding other perspectives makes me a better leader.

Embrace my responsibility to govern rather than to manage; recognizing that if I am doing staff's job I am not doing my job, while also understanding and embracing the appropriately exercised governance role of holding staff accountable.

Place a greater emphasis on solutions than on problem, while refusing to offer solutions before I understand the problem.

Understand that mutual trust is the foundation for everything, and that if I refuse to trust others, they will be unable to trust me.

Protect the integrity of the process more than the rightness of my position; I will fight hard for my issue but then unify behind the governing body when the decision is made because the decision was made with integrity of process, even if I disagree with the outcome.

Understand that my deeply held beliefs, values, and positions will be strengthened, not compromised, by courteous, respectful, and civil discourse. I will not treat someone as the enemy just because we disagree.

Treat everyone with dignity and respect because of who I am as a leader ... not because of how they treat me or what I think about them.

Be a role model for civility. I will not treat my colleagues or staff in any way that would embarrassed me if my 5-year-old child treated someone the same way.



# THE RISING TIDE

MOST MEMBERS OF CML remember that when I first started the Wynkoop brewpub in LoDo (in 1988 when the rent was \$1 per square foot), we put up ads for other LoDo restaurants in our vestibule. I argued that our “real” competition was television, and that by promoting other restaurants we were creating a “rising tide” that would help us all.

A dozen years later, I campaigned on the idea that if Denver became a fair and active partner with the suburbs in efforts supporting water conservation, transit, and economic development, we could create a different and much larger rising tide. Together, we created FasTracks — the largest transit initiative in history — with all 34 suburban mayors on board.

These same mayors agreed not to “poach” businesses and jobs from each other, and Denver joined with the region to aggressively conserve water, to allow for future growth as well as to support traditional agriculture.

When I ran to become governor in 2010, Colorado was still reeling from the Great Recession, and only 40th out of all 50 states in job creation. We pledged to work with the entire state

to get our economy back on track, starting with a foundation of locally elected officials.

As my first act immediately after my inauguration, I signed my first executive order “establishing a policy to enhance the relationship between state and local government.” To begin with, we would not pass along any unfunded mandates to municipalities or counties.

This meant better communication, less regulation, and more solutions — and if we did have to create a regulation or rule, we would talk about it first.

We decided we would work together to create an efficient, effective, and transparent state government.

To address our sputtering economy, we began at the local level. We convened meetings of local civic leaders in all 64 counties, anchored by local elected officials. In every meeting we asked: What type of economy do you want for your counties?

You told us to slash red tape and bureaucracy, so we did that — we cut or simplified half of our 24,500 rules and regulations. You asked us to make life easier for small business

owners, celebrate innovation and technology in every corner, and market the state to tourists and entrepreneurs who might want to build a life here.

Together we created the Colorado Impact Fund to invest solely in Colorado businesses. We created the Colorado Innovation Network to link federal and university labs. We celebrate start-ups and even made entrepreneurs celebrities!


You helped us create Jumpstart Colorado so those who set up shop in rural parts of the state will not have to pay taxes for five years.

Our Main Street Program helped restore dozens of buildings that have led to the revitalization of countless towns.

Our economy went from 40th in the country to first.

Our rural communities still lagged, however. We realized we needed to lay fiber optic lines to every town in Colorado. Now we think broadband will reach everyone by 2022.

You led the effort along with 30,000 friends to create a groundbreaking water plan.



We balanced energy development while expanding our public spaces and cleaning our air.

Because of the support of local communities, together we got through droughts, fires, shootings, and floods.

We invested in our communities — libraries, churches, ball fields — and in the end, our love for our places became stronger. I think our affection for our cities and towns is our greatest currency.

And along the way, we did not get stuck on Democratic ideas or Republican ones. We made decisions based on doing the most good for the most people.

President Kennedy said it best: “Let us not seek the Republican answer or the Democratic answer, but the right answer.”

For nearly a decade we did something unique: used facts and data. We built a foundation of collaboration. We valued people over party. We listened harder and restored honesty and trust because there is no margin in enemies.

But that is not to say there are not challenges. Work remains between you and the next governor. We

have to fund transportation, train a 21st-century workforce, expand affordable housing, and get medical costs under control.

One thing I have learned from you, however, is that these hardest challenges are best tackled with local voices. Make sure you are heard, and sing in harmony.

I am often asked about my legacy, a question I hate because we have got four months left and this is my favorite job.

But if I have to pick, it is not necessarily the environment, the economy, or any of our traditional “successes.”

It comes back to that very first executive order: No unfunded mandates, and everything we do starts with a conversation.

I hope you have enjoyed the conversation. I hope we have created a model of compromise you are proud of that will endure long beyond any of our time in office.

Just this year, elected officials from both parties found common ground when it seemed like there were mountains between them. In many ways, it was the most productive

legislative session of our time together.

For the past seven years, we have worked hard to live up to Colorado values, and even to conform with the “Cowboy Code of Ethics” — a list of 10 rules, which I have framed in my office.

One of the rules states: “When you make a promise, keep it.” That has been our North Star. As I near the end of my time in office, I have been reminded of another cowboy code: “Always finish what you start.”

Looking back, we have met or exceeded almost every goal we set. We got our hands wet or dirty to make things work, because that is what people want, from jobs and our economy to expanding health care coverage, transportation, and broadband.

From the beginning, we focused on small businesses and jobs and greater control at the local level, because collaboration truly is a rising tide that lifts all ships.

I am honored to have been your governor, partner, and friend these eight years.

One last time: giddy up!!

# THE LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT IMPERATIVE

TODAY'S PUBLIC SERVANT IS operating in a space of disruption of new challenges requiring new ideas that require solutions built on mastering cross-sector partnerships; timely and authentic community engagement; inclusive communications; and bridging the generational gap in staffing. Leaders in all sectors, and particularly in the local government space, are being asked to address increasingly complex social issues and to work differently.

## What Is Driving Leadership Development?

No matter what sector you are in, common factors are impacting and reshaping leadership development. Transformation is at the top of the list: 86 percent of organizations surveyed by Harvard Business Publishing in its 2018 State of Leadership Development report are either currently in the middle of transformation or have completed an organizational transformation in the past three

years.<sup>1</sup> In response to this, organizations are restructuring and flattening — less hierarchy and more shared responsibility;<sup>2</sup> and are embracing the need for agility in both process and people.

Organizations and their leaders are required to quickly acclimate, shift and adapt, fully embracing change management as a part of their day-to-day. Leaders are facing shifts in the workforce with generational disconnects and rising millennial leaders; a growing freelance and contract talent pool; and the ever increasing pace of globalization.<sup>3</sup> This is playing out differently in sectors and especially in cities and states that are reconsidering equity, which oftentimes equates to developing channels of communication to authentically engage with and hear from their community; and breaking down silos, forging new partnerships to leverage expertise and funding across systems and sectors to build working collaboratives.

## What Does This mean in the Public Service and Government?

The Volcker Alliance, a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization focused on advancing effective management of government, recently looked at the needs of government employees and leaders to not only succeed in their work but also sustain their efforts. Their research underscored the top four competencies respondents felt were essential for success:

- managing your team and yourself
- responding to the public
- data and technology skills
- business acumen<sup>4</sup>

This analysis also echoes the leadership development trends seen across different sectors.

In recent analysis by LinkedIn in its *Workplace Learning Report*, the major foci of learning for organizations were: overall leadership and manager development, communication, collaboration, and technical skill



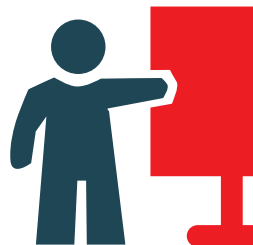
## LEADERSHIP



## IDEAS



## MOTIVATION



## TRAINING

<sup>1</sup> The 2018 State of Leadership Development. *Harvard Business Publishing*, 2018. pp. 3–4.

<sup>2</sup> Rose Cartolari, Three Trends That Will Shape Leadership Development in 2018 and Why They Matter. *Forbes*. 2018. *Forbes 3 Trends* bit.ly/2t1c8Gc.

<sup>3</sup> The 2018 State of Leadership Development. *Harvard Business Publishing*, 2018. p. 5.

<sup>4</sup> Preparing Tomorrow's Public Service: What the Next Generation Needs. *The Volcker Alliance* (New York, 2018) p. 2.



development.<sup>5</sup> The good news is that we can all learn together and share across sectors.

What is also important outside of what leaders need to know is how to deliver this content and build skills. The Volcker Alliance, in its latest report, *Preparing Tomorrow's Public Service*, dedicated a portion of its research to how public servants and leaders want to learn. Trending at the top was a desire to participate in coaching, multisession courses, mentorship opportunities, and hands-on workshops. In terms of how government leaders want to learn, most preferred to be off-site (not at their workplace) and to have access to online learning.<sup>6</sup>

### The National League of Cities University Approach

The National League of Cities University (NLCU) is seeing an uptick in demand for learning opportunities and in the following areas: management and leadership; equity and inclusion; and cross-sector

collaboration. It also is observing the trend of leading through disruption; the need for access to the latest workforce shifts both in policy and practice, such as understanding and leveraging the gig economy; and access to innovative thinkers and companies as well as to cross-sector partners.

How is NLCU shifting strategy to meet the need? Traditionally, NLCU has relied heavily on in-person learning via a course setting. However, there is a need and demand for more virtual and hybrid approaches to learning. This year, NLCU will be diversifying its learning opportunities and modalities not only in terms of increasing breadth and depth of content areas but also in how content is delivered.

NLCU also is taking note of the growing importance and emphasis on individual learning and leadership development. From Harvard Business to LinkedIn, Forbes, and The Volcker Alliance, the role of coaching is a critical piece to allow for individuals to harness their expertise and not fit a

model per se but find their individual path to leading and managing. NLCU will be exploring ways to add coaching elements into its work with government leaders.

The goal at NLCU will be to not only impart knowledge and skills but also to ensure that the learning and leadership development provided to its members is focused on capacity building. The hope is that every person who participates in an NLCU learning opportunity will leave with a new person to add to their bench of go-to people; a new or sharpened skill; and the ability to take a proactive next step in their work. NLCU seeks to be not only a resource but also a cross-sector connector and a catalyst for government and its work.

NLCU looks forward to serving its members and government leaders in forging their own learning and leadership paths. Stay up to date on the latest NLCU learning opportunities, including new programs this fall, via its website, [www.nlc.org/program-initiative/nlc-university](http://www.nlc.org/program-initiative/nlc-university).



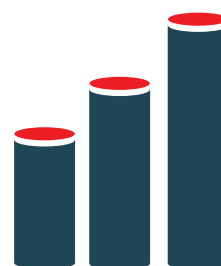
**BUSINESS**



**TEAM**



**SUCCESS**



**GROWTH**

<sup>5</sup> 2018 Workplace Learning Report. [LinkedIn. bit.ly/2ledXvs](https://www.linkedin.com/bit.ly/2ledXvs).

<sup>6</sup> Preparing Tomorrow's Public Service: What The Next Generation Needs. *The Volcker Alliance* (New York, 2018) p. 13.

# CELEBRATE

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## COLORADO CITIES & TOWNS WEEK

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## CML MUNIVERSITY

THE COLORADO MUNICIPAL LEAGUE BELIEVES THAT THOSE ELECTED MUNICIPAL OFFICIALS INVESTING time and resources to participate in educational events, in an effort to increase their knowledge of municipal government and enhance their capacity to lead, should be recognized. For this reason, in 1991 the CML Executive Board created an Elected Officials Leadership Training Program, now known as CML MUNiversity.

There is no need for elected officials to register for the program. All elected officials of CML's member municipalities are automatically enrolled. Each CML training event is assigned a specific credit value, usually based on the length of the training. Whenever an elected official participates in a CML webinar, CML in-person workshop, CML annual conference, or other credit-eligible CML event, they automatically receive the specified number of credits. Elected officials can view their credits online at [www.cml.org/muniversity](http://www.cml.org/muniversity); just log in and follow the instructions.

There are three levels to the program: Fundamental (achieved by reaching 30 credits), Leadership (achieved by reaching 60 credits), and Graduate (achieved by reaching 100 credits). Those achieving the Fundamental and Leadership levels of training receive recognition in the *CML Newsletter*, an invitation to wear a ribbon displaying achievement and acknowledgement with presentation of award at the CML annual conference, acknowledgement in the CML annual conference program, and a press release to local media. At the Graduate level, recognition also includes the official's name on permanent plaque in CML offices and a token of appreciation from CML.

CML notifies those who achieve the various levels in advance of the annual conference in June, which is where elected officials are recognized for achieving a new level in the program.

For more information or questions about MUNiversity, contact CML Membership Services Manager Lisa White at [lwhite@cml.org](mailto:lwhite@cml.org), 303-831-6411, or 866-578-0936.



*CML offers valuable and affordable training opportunities year-round that provide municipal officials with knowledge on a variety of cutting-edge topics. Through MUNiversity, my fellow elected officials and I are able to visibly demonstrate the commitment we have made to expand our knowledge base to serve our citizens to the very best of our abilities.*

— Northglenn Mayor Carol Dodge



# DEVELOPING LEADERSHIP THROUGH CITIZENS' ACADEMIES

CITIZENS' ACADEMIES ARE growing in popularity as municipalities look to expand citizen involvement in local government. Academies provide participants with an understanding of how their municipal government functions and the challenges of delivering quality, reliable services to the community.

There are four main types of citizens' academies: general government academies, police academies, fire/rescue academies, and youth commissions.

**General government academies** give citizens an overview of their local government and its operations. They work to improve engagement and help citizens gain a better understanding of their municipality, so that they have more access to resources that allow them to get involved in their community.

**Police academies** aim to give participants insight into the tasks and issues officers and departments face, and work to create a stronger relationship between citizens and law enforcement. This collaborative approach to public safety allows residents to feel more comfortable and confident in their police department.

**Fire/rescue academies** focus mainly on providing information, improving relationships, and increasing understanding of major safety procedures. They also offer insight to fire department operations.

**Youth commissions** often are designed specifically for teenagers, although there are a few camp-style commissions for younger children. They aim to improve understanding

and relationships between youth and their communities, and work to foster interest in possible career paths and educate the community's youth on relevant safety issues.

All programs generally have themes of improving citizen understanding and community engagement. Common goals of these programs include:

- education,
- reduction of crime through familiarity and trust,
- connection to the community, and
- debunking myths about the government or public safety departments.

Although police academies are generally the most common form of citizens' academy, other forms of academies have been just as successful. There are multiple examples of successful general government, fire/rescue, and youth citizens' academies all across Colorado.

One of the biggest factors to account for when starting a citizens' academy program is funding. It can include compensation for instructor(s), promotional costs, and materials and curriculums. Generally, the programs are free to participants, and funding is built into the municipality or department's budget. Outside sources can help support the budget. Promotion is another important aspect to consider when initiating a citizens' academy. Many emphasize the importance of advertising across multiple social media, web, and print platforms to reach a wide range of citizens. Alumni programs create a

promotion network of information and enthusiastic graduates to help publicize the program after having experienced it first-hand. Most other academies included opportunities for graduates to volunteer with the program, apply for positions on local boards and councils, or run for positions on city council, which can serve as great incentives for participation.

It is important to consider how selective the program will be and what the application process will look like. Many applications among the academies require passage of a background check, personal and contact information, and an explanation of the applicant's interest in the program. Youth academies often require references and responses to a few short essay questions. While most adult programs are open to everyone, preference is typically given to local residents.

If the program experiences an excess of applicants, implementing a selection process becomes important. Some choose participants on a first-come, first-served basis, while others use a random drawing and places those not selected on a waiting list. If there are sufficient funds, resources, and interest, it can be helpful to add a second session.

Proper scheduling is essential for participation. Programs range in duration from two to 11 weeks; however, the majority of programs are seven to eight weeks long. Shorter programs are helpful for teen or youth academies, which often operate like a short summer camp. Although shorter programs can be more convenient for



adult participants, they may require more hours per week or a compacted curriculum. Longer programs allow for more extensive sessions, but may be difficult for participants to commit to.

Adult programs generally offer classes on one or two weekday evenings per week, starting at 6 or 7 p.m. and concluding at 9 p.m.

One of the biggest challenges many academies faced was creating a curriculum that was interesting, relevant, and transparent. Topics proven to spark community interest include gangs, drug policy, DUIs, the uses of tax dollars, how municipal government works, and public safety.

Topics should aim to educate participants on how departments function. Coordinating with department members to determine topics and how they will be taught creates a more authentic curriculum.

Beyond lectures and discussions, most programs offered hands-on experiences. Police car ride-alongs, visits with K-9 units, tutorials on how to use tools such as guns and fire hoses, and tours of fire trucks and stations make great promotional points and help participants understand more about the department.

Some of the most difficult challenges facing citizens academies:

- staffing and funding,
- promotion and advertising,
- accessibility and attendee consistency, and
- cultivating engagement and trust.

Every program will encounter challenges in becoming effective and popular citizens' academy, but all of the programs surveyed found ways to prepare for and overcome these difficulties.

When approached with careful planning and dedication, citizens' academies can be used as a means to promote community engagement and knowledge.

## CULTIVATING COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

*By Jennifer Stewart, Fountain economic development specialist*

SINCE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CITY OF FOUNTAIN CITIZENS' ACADEMY PROGRAM IN 2016, IT HAS been proven many times over that a program of this nature directly cultivates community leadership. When municipal staff was in the planning stages of the program, the main objectives were simple: support and cultivate community leadership and, as the Fountain public safety director says, "Fill the love bank" with residents. Creating an opportunity for residents to gain the knowledge to become their own community leaders and advocates is one of the many of tangible and intangible benefits realized by the Fountain Citizens' Academy.

Prior to Citizens' Academy, community members did not have an opportunity to gain firsthand understanding of how their municipal government works. Now, not only do they learn more about their city, but Fountain has found that the participants take the information presented back to their neighborhoods and various social groups. They are able to articulate how processes work — a natural conduit to becoming a community advocate. Additionally, the participants feel comfortable in reaching out to staff or elected officials to gain greater understanding of a community concern; this has proven to be an unintended positive for staff members, as they are able to get their messages out to the public through this particular means.

The program model the City of Fountain has in place is unique in a variety of ways; it has created an extremely hands-on learning environment that keeps participants engaged. Citizens' Academy runs each year from September through November on Thursday evenings for nine weeks. A graduation presentation takes place in front of the Fountain City Council to validate the participants as exemplary community stewards and to show thanks for their commitment to their municipality.

While many citizens' academy programs across the country focus on public safety, the City of Fountain decided that an all-encompassing, multifaceted program was the route to pursue, and it has paid off with respect to achieving initial objectives.

As the participants meet each week with different municipal departments, they have the ability to work through real-life issues encountered by staff. For example, through a tabletop workshop, the Fountain Public Works Department presents the actual streets maintenance and improvements budget paired with the mile-long streets infrastructure project list. Participants are tasked to act as the streets superintendent and prioritize projects within real-life budget constraints. One piece of feedback Fountain continually receives is how eye-opening workshops like this are. These activities are influential methods of communication for participants and staff; residents better understand the issues facing the city, while staff receives valuable feedback on community concerns and ideas. The ability for the participants to see how their ideas carry weight is empowering and initiates community activism.

The proof is in the pudding. Through Citizens' Academy, the City of Fountain has had many success stories and continues to achieve the program's objectives. It is proud to have graduates who are now members of the school board elected body, Police Academy applicants, board and commission members, recycling center volunteers, and municipal transit drivers. All of these community members were inspired to get involved and take a leadership role in their community by simply participating in Citizens' Academy.





# LEADERSHIP AND VULNERABILITY

*Only when we are brave enough to explore the darkness will we discover the infinite power of our light.*

— Brené Brown

Speaking at a leadership conference for business owners, I asked the attendees to go around and introduce themselves to me. The first gentleman stood and shared his name, employee head count, and gross revenue. The next shared her name, industry, and how long she had been in business.

After the last person spoke I said, "OK. Now that I know even less about you after you shared than before, let's try this again. If we were actually friends, if we were doing life together, what would I really know about you? So finish this sentence: 'John, if you really knew me, you would know that ...'"

I told them they could answer by sharing "My favorite color is purple" or "I believe in unicorns" or "I am terrified of clowns" ... but that I expected that they go deeper than just sharing the stats of their business because a foundational component of leadership is vulnerability.

The first gentleman hesitated and then stood to speak. (The others thanked him because they were thrilled they did not have to go first!) He shared, "Most people who know me consider me somewhat invincible and very buttoned up. But if you really knew me, you would

know that I am actually fragile and have no clue what to do next in my business."

He sat down. Then, the others stood and shared:

- I am hypersensitive to the way my kids, friends, and employees treat one another because of the way I was treated as a child.
- I have a void in my life because of my inability to have children.
- I have the ability to give and receive love freely.
- I am a mother today of a 5-year-old because four years ago my brother and his wife died in a car accident.
- I am very honest and dependable, maybe even to a fault!
- My dad is my hero.
- My grandma raised me, was my best friend and I miss her terribly.
- My dad's suicide when I was 10 crushed me as a little girl but has shaped me as a loving woman today.
- I am funny, but no one knows it because I am shy.

The final gentleman stood and offered: "If you knew me well, you'd know that when I was 7, my father was murdered and left my mom and me with nothing. We were incredibly poor.

Desolate. But I have come to realize that my life curses have always become my life blessings. Always."

My friend, here is why I share this story with you: This sharing took place not around a candle at a group therapy session. This took place around a board room with some of the most successful business owners in the world.

Great leadership, in all facets of life, is the byproduct of a bold, selfless, vulnerable heart — the type of heart that knows the pain of enduring adversity, rising above it, and sharing unique talents, stories, and encouragement with others. The world craves authentic individuals who know themselves, care for others, and strive to make a lasting contribution.

When you are willing to let others in so close that they have the ability to hurt you, you have also chosen to let them in so close that they may provide everything you need. By living courageous vulnerability, you step forward toward living up to the infinite power of your promise.

And the really cool part: Those fortunate enough to know you will be ignited by your leadership and begin living up to the fullness of their promise, too!

Today is your day. Live inspired.







## MUNICIPAL HEROES

THE GOAL OF CML'S MUNICIPAL HERO AWARD PROGRAM IS TO ACKNOWLEDGE INDIVIDUALS WHO HAVE demonstrated ongoing dedication to their cities or towns and have gone above and beyond to make their communities great places to live, work, and/or play. These are the "unsung" heroes in a community who may not otherwise be acknowledged for their dedication to their city or town.

This year's winners are Antonia Lavador and George Galaviz from the Town of La Jara, Rachel Hanson from the City of Lafayette, and Steve Austin from the City of Northglenn. On June 21, they were presented with their awards during a special luncheon at the 96th CML Annual Conference in Vail. (Pictured above from left: Fort Collins Mayor and CML President Wade Troxell, Lavador, Galaviz, Austin, Colorado Department of Local Affairs Executive Director Irv Halter, and Hanson.)



George Galaviz and Tona Lavador began an outreach program to present to younger students to "make good choices" in the face of the nation's opioid epidemic. (Photo courtesy of Fox 31 News.)



Rachel Hanson began her work as a volunteer to help transform Lafayette with arts and cultural events, and gallery space. Now on staff, she oversees programs and coordinates more than 200 volunteers for a vibrant arts community. (Photo courtesy of the City of Lafayette.)



Steve Austin had lived in Northglenn for decades, and has long worked to improve life there for all residents. Now age 92, he still fixes bikes, builds trails, prepares taxes for those in need, and shovels sidewalks for seniors. (Photo courtesy of the City of Northglenn.)

To nominate a hero in your community for 2019, visit [www.cml.org/muni-hero](http://www.cml.org/muni-hero).



## LEADING THROUGH COMMUNITY INVESTMENT

*By Samantha Byrne, Lochbuie assistant town administrator*

U.S. SEN. CORY BOOKER HAS SAID THAT “LEADERSHIP IS NOT A POSITION OR A TITLE, IT IS ACTION AND example.” Perhaps this idea does not ring more true than for those leading at the municipal level. Elected officials are true stewards of their communities, where they live, often work, and invest their time and vision into the home they care for, setting an example that will hopefully manifest and develop within the constituents they serve.

Lochbuie Mayor Michael Mahoney has made it his mission to lead by example of investing in his community, not only as an elected official but also as an agent of service to those in need.

After relocating to Lochbuie, Mahoney began his municipal career as a trustee with the Lochbuie Town Board beginning in 2006 through 2008, and again from 2010 until his election as mayor in 2012. With his most recent term ending this November, he will not seek reelection but can reflect back on the innumerable changes he has seen in Lochbuie over the past 12 years.

During his tenure, the Town of Lochbuie has come back from significant debt in the early 2000s, achieving a positive balance in 2013 and making steady increases to its general fund ever since; received a \$2 million grant from the Colorado Department of Local Affairs for the construction of a new town hall and police facility that was completed in November 2016; prioritized and continues to carry out an initiative of increased pedestrian connectivity throughout Lochbuie; voted to approve funding for improvements to Weld County Road 2, a main thoroughfare; and welcomed a new RE3J elementary school, Meadow Ridge Elementary, slated to open fall 2018.

Mahoney notes that as a leader he has worked toward being a liaison, backing his board, and always striving toward compromise. And the best aspect of being an elected official? “Seeing change happen, watching a vision come to fruition,” Mahoney notes.

While many in the community may recognize him as Lochbuie’s longtime mayor, they may not be aware that he also has a habit of masquerading as the Caped Crusader. Following his 13-year service to the U.S. Army with the 10th Mountain Division, Mayor Mahoney helped to create Operation: Warriors Path, a nonprofit dedicated to combating PTSD in veterans. The organization holds events for veterans and their families, which is where Mahoney first debuted his full Batman regalia as a means to entertain the children in attendance. It was then that he began to receive requests to visit Dark Knight fans in hospitals throughout the Front Range. Mahoney has been playing Batman since 2013, and averages about two events per month while also taking on as many special requests as his schedule will allow. A comic buff, he has even had a Batmobile commissioned! Mayor Mahoney is quick to gush about the fun he has playing Batman to hospitalized children across the state, and that it is all owed to the enjoyment the kids get out of his visits.

Mayor Michael Mahoney is truly a community leader who strives to better his home by investing his energy, effort, and hope into it.





# HEALING DIVISIONS IN THE GOVERNING BODY: CAN'T WE ALL JUST GET ALONG?



THERE ARE MORE AND MORE instances of governing bodies with intractable divisions that cut across virtually all of the body's decision-making. This division is affecting productivity, driving away opportunity, and undermining citizen confidence. This article explores the causes and impacts of such divisions, and examines some possible ways to break out of the patterns that cause them.

First, though, let's be clear about the situation under discussion:

- Every governing body has disagreements, and there is nothing wrong with that. It would be strange, indeed, if all members agreed on all issues all the time. If that were the case, why would we even need five, seven, or more members?
- Sometimes, disagreements create a residue of misunderstanding or hurt feelings, but that is to be expected, too. Most governing body members are able to leave that residue behind and move on to the next matter at hand.
- This is not about the "outlier" issue, where one or some members of the body have made it their mission to separate themselves from the rest of the group, with the sole goal of embarrassing the rest and proving that they are the only "ethical," "transparent," or "responsive" (or

insert description of your choice) member of the body, at least in their opinion. There are ways to address the "outlier" issue ([www.cirsa.org/news/governing-bodies-and-the-outlier-syndrome](http://www.cirsa.org/news/governing-bodies-and-the-outlier-syndrome)).

What we are talking about here is a governing body in a condition that we can all agree is severely dysfunctional. We are talking about a body that is intractably divided, and whose every debate, discussion, and decision are characterized by lingering unresolved matters, mutual contempt, and hard feelings that calcify into hardline positions. We are talking about meetings that staff and citizens refer to as the "Thursday night fights" (or insert evening of your choice). We are talking about meetings where members regularly yell or snipe at each other, name-call, storm out, or maybe even resort to fisticuffs. And even if it is not that dramatic, meetings may still be characterized by tension, passive-aggressive behavior, an inability to see beyond the players and focus on the merits of any issue, and maybe an angry social media post or two after the meeting.

Whatever the level of dysfunction, destructive consequences can result. Once you "write off" or "demonize" colleagues ("she's just clueless," "he's completely hopeless," "I can't even look at the guy," "there's no reasoning with her, so why even bother"), there may be no coming back.

Why can't we all get along? Let's take a look at some possible causes.

*Happy families are all alike;  
every unhappy family is unhappy  
in its own way.*

— Tolstoy

*Happy councils are all alike;  
every unhappy council is unhappy  
in its own way.*

— Tanoue

## Potential Reasons

There are any number of reasons why the "marriage" of governing body members can go bad. Here are a few:

**Underlying divisions.** Underlying divisions within the community are reflected in the governing body. Communities can have fracture lines. There may be friction between the "old timer" part of the community and more newly developed areas that are full of "newcomers." The interests of "old timers" and "newcomers" may not always be the same, and "newcomers" may not recognize the history and traditions of the community in the same way that "old timers" do. These differences may be reflected in the makeup of the governing body.

Members may have been swept into office as a result of a controversial and divisive issue that divided the community. Perhaps there was a recall election. Unless the slate was wiped clean, the governing body makeup may reflect the divisions that

grew from the underlying issue. It may be difficult to get past that issue.

New or younger members may clash with veteran members. A sentiment that “you young ’uns haven’t been around long enough to understand this town” may cause unwarranted rifts. And expressing or acting on such sentiments can contribute to a feeling of “inequality” in the body. Isn’t each member entitled to an equal voice in discussion and decision-making?

That sense of inequality can also be the result of partisanship, and partisanship does not necessarily have to spring from the type of political partisanship that exists at other levels of government. Of course, municipal government is avowedly and proudly nonpartisan in the political sense. But an “in crowd” and an “out crowd” based on other considerations can be a type of partisanship that is just as problematic.

**Personalities.** Voters are not judging whether the individuals they elect will be compatible with each other, so it is possible that fundamentally incompatible personalities will end

up in the body. If you have some “alpha dogs” in the body who are in constant competition, friction might be a predictable result. If others then line up behind their favorite “alpha,” division can ensue.

Sometimes, an elected

official’s personality and proclivities seem to be just plain incompatible with holding elected office! Politics, at the governing body level, has to be a team sport: decision-making requires collaboration and consensus. One member’s “agenda” can become the “agenda” of the body only by successful team play. A “lone wolf” who lacks the capacity or desire to be a team member is not going to be successful in the body. Add a few more “lone wolves,” and frustration and paralysis are the result.

Governance is also about leadership. If the voters put someone in office who is afraid to take a stand, is perennially “on the fence,” or is strictly a follower, leadership qualities may be lacking. A majority of non-leaders can create a perception of a “rubber stamp” governing body, resulting in extreme frustration for those members who are willing to stick their necks out.

#### **Preconceived personal agenda.**

There are many good reasons why citizens run for public office. However, the workings of municipal government are not always clear until well after you are seated. So the agenda that a candidate ran on may collide with reality, and turn out not to be a workable agenda after all. Under those circumstances, clinging to the preconceived agenda is only going to sow the seeds of discord. If you have several members, each bent on pursuing only his or her own particular agenda, a fractured body can result.

One newly elected councilmember said his one campaign promise was to ensure that water and sewer rates were lowered. But when he took office, he began to understand the economic realities of operating the town’s water and sewer system, and he saw that demanding the lowering of rates was unrealistic and fiscally irresponsible. He said he had some explaining to do to the citizens, but he was not going to cling to his agenda given the realities he now understood. That is a smart elected official.

### **Potential Impacts**

The impacts of severe dysfunction and discord are manifold:

**Lack of productivity.** The body’s agenda may hit a standstill. Or getting through it might be slow and painful. Even if decisions are made, they may not necessarily be the best decisions.

**Power transfer to tiebreaker.** If you are constantly split down the middle, then you may be transferring all decision-making power to the tiebreaker (often the mayor). Is that desirable?

**Financial consequences.** If you have developed a public reputation as a dysfunctional body, then your community may be missing out on economic opportunities. Businesses want a predictable environment. Volatility may be driving them away.



## Steps to take as a governing body:

- See if you can gain consensus that there is a problem.
- Start by talking about meeting “values.”
- Form a consensus around norms or rules of conduct.

**Public embarrassment and loss of public confidence.** If you are airing your discord on cable, your TV ratings may be up, but public confidence will be down!

**Driving away the best and brightest.** People say they were reluctant to run for office because they witnessed the discord and did not want to be a part of it. So you may end up repelling, not attracting, potential leaders who could make great contributions to the community. Or you may lose great members to “burnout.” Likewise, if your community develops a reputation for governing body dysfunction, you may not be able to attract and keep the “best and brightest” for key staff positions. This can become a self-perpetuating and self-defeating cycle: dysfunctional governance repels good people, and the lack of good people contributes to dysfunctional governance.

### Steps to Consider



So you think you may be part of a dysfunctional governing body?

You may have experienced some jolts of recognition in reviewing the foregoing. If so, condolences and congratulations! The condolences are self-evident, but congratulations are also due, because recognition of a problem is the first

step to dealing with it. So now, what do you do? Here are some steps to consider:

**See if you can gain a consensus that there is a problem.** Even if you recognize it, if no one else does, you are not going to get anywhere. If there is a consensus, then you are halfway to solving the problem!

**Start by talking about meeting “values.”** The values discussion is a critical first step. (Values are the philosophical underpinnings that you want as guides for behavior in your interactions with one another.) If you can agree on these values, then additional steps are possible. If you cannot, you are going to stall out. Such values might include:

- Courtesy and civility toward one another, staff, and citizens.
- Nonpartisanship.
- Equality of participation, including equal opportunities to be part of the discussion and decision, and equal opportunities to gain, insofar as possible, the same information at the same time as needed for good decision-making.
- Acknowledgement of the role of the mayor or presiding officer in presiding over meetings. Every meeting needs a presiding officer, and in most communities, that is the mayor. The role of the presiding officer must be honored if you want to have orderly,

productive, efficient meetings. If there's no acknowledgement of this fundamental need, then you won't get anywhere.

- Engagement: a commitment to be prepared for meetings, to arrive on time, to stay for the whole meeting, to give your undivided attention during the meeting, to participate in decision-making, and to be absent no more than necessary.

- Others? These are *your* values!

**Norms or rules of conduct.** If you can form a consensus around values, you are close to the point where you can discuss (and, it is hoped, agree upon) the norms or rules of conduct that you want for the body. The content of your norms or rules will not be discussed here, because they will be specific to your community and the values that serve as the jumping-off point for them. But it is worthwhile to look at examples from other communities around the state and nation. Stay alert for revisions, because periodic fine-tuning may be happening with the examples you gather. You can see some examples from Castle Pines ([bit.ly/2tWKpH9](http://bit.ly/2tWKpH9)), Mead ([bit.ly/2IW51UK](http://bit.ly/2IW51UK)), Durango ([bit.ly/2NsG3zW](http://bit.ly/2NsG3zW), modified in 2017), Littleton ([bit.ly/2KBabv5](http://bit.ly/2KBabv5)), and Camp Verde, Ariz. ([bit.ly/2zkvwnw](http://bit.ly/2zkvwnw)). There are many other examples on the web. Why rules or norms? It is because the



## Individual steps:

- Assume good faith and best intentions.
- Listen more than you talk.
- Try to meet others more than halfway.
- Use the postures, tone, and body language of respect and engagement.
- Try some things to break down barriers.
- If you are an experienced member, mentor the newbies; if you are new, seek out mentors.
- Acknowledge and appreciate.

level of formality to be accorded really depends on your community's needs and desires. If you have members whose attitude is "Rules? We don't need no stinkin' rules," then perhaps a softer approach of agreeing on "norms" of conduct may be a good starting point. On the other hand, you might see reasons to elevate the adoption process by using a resolution or even an ordinance.

### Individual Steps

In despair? You can still help.

You may feel your governing body will never come together to recognize the problem, much less move on toward seeking solutions. Should you give



up? No! There are still things you can do as an individual. If enough individuals on the body do these things, then perhaps there will be an opening to go further! Suggestions for individuals include:

**Assume good faith and best intentions** on the part of everyone on the body. Some smart person once said that we judge ourselves by our intentions, and others solely by their actions. This perceptual gap can lead to misunderstandings and unfounded assumptions. Let's give everyone the same benefit of the doubt we give ourselves, by assuming that they, too,

are acting on the basis of honorable intentions.

**Listen more than you talk.** Do your best to see and understand things from the perspective of others. Ask questions before reaching your own conclusions, and repeat back what you think you are hearing from others, so that you know you are on the same page. Listen for points of agreement, and emphasize and build on them.

**Try to meet others more than halfway.** If everyone goes only so far to try to bridge the gaps, then you may never meet in the middle. Sometimes one person's generosity in going more than halfway is the catalyst for breaking down misunderstandings.

**Use the postures, tone, and body language of respect and engagement.** Do this even if you are not "feeling it," "acting as if" can be helpful in bringing a hoped-for harmony closer to reality. Make sure your body language and tone of voice aren't inadvertently communicating something you didn't intend. Keep your voice *down*, even if others are starting to yell. Avoid the hair-trigger, knee-jerk, angry response.

**Try some things to break down barriers.** Maybe switch up positions where you sit on the council dais. Suggest a pre-meeting dinner; breaking bread together can be a way to get people talking (make sure you have a "no-business" rule in effect).

Team-building, especially in a retreat setting, can be productive. An outside facilitator or mediator might be helpful in identifying issues that are hard to see from the "inside."

**If you are an experienced member, mentor the newbies.** You have valuable experience from which newer members can benefit. Show them the ropes, teach them your own hard-earned lessons, and model the behaviors you want them to emulate.

**And if you are a new member, seek out mentors.**

**Acknowledge and appreciate** when you see others making the same effort.

### Conclusion: "Until Next Election Do You Part."

A governing body might be characterized as a kind of arranged marriage ... one arranged by the citizens. If the conditions for civil and productive discourse are lacking from the start, it is no wonder that such a "marriage" can go bad quickly. But divorce is not an option! So start looking at ways to improve your relationships, as individuals and as a body. And take to heart the idea that by "acting as if," your deepest hope for a strong, high-functioning team can come closer to becoming a reality.





## NAVIGATING THROUGH REGIONAL LEADERSHIP

MANY OF YOU PROBABLY KNOW what councils of governments (COGs) are, and are likely a member of your local COG. COGs are regional bodies created to provide regional leadership to solve a variety of problems as well as administering a variety of state and federal programs. In Colorado, unlike other states, COGs are not defined in the state statutes, providing tremendous flexibility to be creative and collaborative in their work. Councils of governments truly are a “choose-your-own-adventure” local government.

The Southwest Colorado Council of Governments (SWCCOG) covers 6,500 square miles and includes Archuleta, Dolores, La Plata, Montezuma, and San Juan counties, including the cities of Cortez and Durango, and towns of Bayfield, Dolores, Dove Creek, Ignacio, Mancos, Pagosa Springs, Rico, and Silverton.

The SWCCOG works on a wide variety of projects and programs

that fall under the six goals: aging, environment, housing, telecommunications, transportation, and tourism. It is the fiscal agent for homeland security funding, the Southwest Incident Management Team, Regional Housing Alliance of La Plata County, and the Southwest Transportation Planning Region.

What is regional leadership? This question just seems to bring up more questions: What really encompasses regional leadership? What are the various aspects of leadership on a regional level?

At the National Association of Regional Councils last year, a session focused on partnerships. It was an interactive discussion (who wants to be talked at and stare at a PowerPoint about partnerships, anyway?), and the first thing to come up during the presentation was trust. Trust is the basis for all successful partnerships. COGs are nothing if not partnerships.

So, if COGs provide regional leadership through partnership,

trust is absolutely essential.

Leadership of a COG, leadership within a COG, partnerships at all levels throughout a COG — most everything councils of governments do is based on building trust.

Founded in 2010, with its first employee hired as executive director in 2013, the SWCCOG is one of the youngest (if not the youngest) COGs in the country. When it began, there was the excitement of addressing the biggest, most challenging problems as soon as possible. During the first year, that seemed to be establishing trust. A number of different agencies from across the region wanted to know who the SWCCOG is and how it was planning on addressing regional goals. Frequently the answer was (and sometimes still is) “I have no idea.” This interaction played out over and over, mostly due to the fact that the SWCCOG was unknown and new, and had not developed any trust. Instead of solving all the problems in the region, that first year was spent building trust to develop partnerships.





The development of trust, and therefore partnerships, looks different for each relationship. The SWCCOG Board of 13 representatives must trust the executive director to carry out its policies and be fiscally responsible, but also to provide solutions, creativity, and resources. Trust had to be built for the partnerships with member jurisdictions to be at all effective. This takes time. This takes listening. This takes lots of meetings and driving hours and late nights and engagement to learn and understand the different communities' and counties' needs. Trust to develop partnerships with a multitude of nonprofits, economic development agencies, community groups, state and federal agencies, state and federal elected officials, and even individual citizens is different and unique.

Trust is the foundation of strong partnerships. Regional leadership would not exist without partnerships. In fact, COGs are essentially nothing but partnerships. Councils of governments are

voluntary partnerships between local jurisdictions. To make COGs function, those partnerships must be built with trust, goodwill, and sound decision-making. Some days at a COG seem to have accomplished nothing, with only meetings all day — or traveling to meetings — while at the office, a very full email inbox gets fuller, staff questions go unanswered, documents wait to be signed, and other work piles up to be done. Those days, however, *have* accomplished something, and it is the most important something: building, reinforcing, and engaging in partnership development. The lifeblood of regional leadership is partnerships for collaboration and coordination to creatively solve regional needs/challenges/problems. Sometimes an analogy helps explain the work of a COG — especially for those outside of government. A good Colorado reference is a rafting trip: the COG executive director is the guide on the raft, and the board members are the paddlers — together, they get the boat (the region) from point A to point B.

Successful raft trips are based on trust and partnerships (and maybe a beer or two). Board members say they want to go one direction, and the COG has to work together and trust one another to get to that location. This is essentially what COGs do: bring local jurisdictions together in partnerships on foundations of trust and mutual respect to move through challenges and problems too large or too challenging or too common to the majority of local governments for any one agency to solve alone.

Trust and partnerships are not fixed or given. Trust is not a one-time event; it requires constant work to maintain. It is also something we all have to build internally and externally. Trust is the key to successful partnerships, and partnerships are the key to providing leadership for the various projects/programs COGs are engaged in.

How do you build trust and partnerships to provide leadership to your community?



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## PARTNERING ACROSS BOUNDARIES

*By Sam Rainquet, Grand Junction communications manager*

WHEN IT COMES TO COOPERATING AND PARTNERING WITH YOUR NEIGHBORS, COMMUNITIES ON Colorado's Western Slope know that is simply the way to get things done. When resources are limited and the distance between boundaries can be vast, working together is critical.

In the City of Grand Junction, partnering with neighboring communities, public organizations, and even private organizations is commonplace — perhaps even expected — when planning for and executing many of the projects and initiatives that help to sustain the high quality of life that is the hallmark of our area. Grand Junction has already accomplished a great deal across the Grand Valley with its partners, and there is much more on the horizon.

Looking to the future, a joint venture between the City of Grand Junction, the Downtown Development Authority, and a private hotelier will result in a major expansion of the current conference facility and will see the construction of an adjoining hotel. Also, this fall, the City of Grand Junction will be celebrating the groundbreaking for its first business located in the Riverfront at Las Colonias Park, which will be focused on outdoor recreation manufacturing businesses. Other businesses are expected to follow, and the Riverfront at Dos Rios project about a mile downriver will also be getting underway with other manufacturers, residential, and retail.

Whether it is the partnership that resulted in the 30-mile-long Riverfront Trail that starts in the Town of Palisade, winds through Grand Junction, and extends beyond the City of Fruita; or teaming up with Mesa County for park programming, animal control services, wastewater treatment facility governance; or the vision for a future new interchange off Interstate 70, collaboration is the key ingredient in the recipe for successful outcomes.

The 9-1-1 communications center, operated by the Grand Junction Police Department, provides dispatch service for nine law enforcement and 12 fire/EMS agencies throughout the region. It is a highly effective and efficient partnership that crosses many physical and organizational boundaries and has been awarded and emulated for its success.

Additionally, Grand Junction is surrounded by 1.2 million acres of public land, so it is also imperative that federal partners are woven into the fabric of much of what the municipality does, whether it pertains to watershed, outdoor recreation planning, or tourism marketing. The U.S. Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, and National Park Service are valuable team players and contribute significantly to many successful ventures.

And of course economic development requires all interests to be at the table to cooperatively accomplish that which benefits all of us. The Grand Valley has a robust partnership that incorporates the Chamber of Commerce, Grand Junction Economic Partnership, Business Incubator Center, Grand Junction Regional Airport, Downtown Development Authority, and Colorado Mesa University. The synergy created by this team covers almost every base when it comes to the art of growing and attracting business and events, and it is seeing tangible outcomes as a result.

There is much happening in the Grand Valley, and it can all be attributed to strong partnerships and collaboration.



*Photo courtesy of Visit Grand Junction.*



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## DIVERSITY IN LEADERSHIP

A JANUARY 2018 REPORT published by McKinsey & Company, *Delivering through Diversity*, expands on previous McKinsey research completed in 2015, highlighting the benefits of inclusion and diversity (I&D) in organizational leadership teams. While the specific benefits outlined in both reports focus on private sector metrics — including profitability and value creation — the public sector can gain valuable insight from the findings in considering its own leadership recruitment, hiring, and succession planning practices.

The authors report a statistically significant correlation between a more diverse leadership team and strong financial performance. Diversity encompasses more than gender: while companies in the top quartile for gender diversity on executive teams were 21 percent more likely to perform on profitability, companies in the top quartile for ethnic/cultural diversity were 33 percent more likely to do the same.

The difference in performance was seen not only at the top. Companies that lagged behind average gender and ethnic/cultural diversity also lagged behind average profitability.

To better understand the link between I&D and high performance, the report's authors looked closely at the top 17 companies in the sample and discovered advantages to I&D that could also benefit local governments. Increased diversity improves an organization's ability to:

- Attract, develop, and retain top talent, especially those workers able to adapt to the effects of globalization, rapidly advancing technology, and changing demographics.
- Improve the quality of decision-making and avoid "groupthink."
- Increase innovation and customer insight through different perspectives and creative approaches to complex problems.
- Increase employee satisfaction by reducing conflict and improving collaboration and loyalty.
- Improve a company's reputation on a larger scale beyond immediate customers.

How does an organization "deliver through diversity"? The report offers the following tips:

- "Commit and cascade." Commitment to I&D starts at the top, but the message must not stop there. Consider the role middle management plays in recruiting, hiring, and developing talent for the pipeline of future leaders. The mission to increase I&D must "cascade" through the entire organization.
- Track specific metrics to understand how I&D is improving the work you do. Data and analytics help connect the benefits of I&D to your organizational vision and can help refine I&D priorities.
- Define targeted initiatives to provide clear next steps to meet your I&D goals, including working to remove bias from recruitment and advancement processes and promoting equal pay.
- Tailor organizational strategy based on local context in order to maximize buy-in and impact.

To read the full report, visit [www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/organization/our-insights/delivering-through-diversity](http://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/organization/our-insights/delivering-through-diversity).



# BRIDGING THE LEADERSHIP GAP



IT HAS BEEN SAID MANY TIMES that the relationship between a municipal manager/administrator and his or her governing body is one of “love and hate.” When they love you, they hire you. When they hate you, they fire you. Seldom does there seem to be middle ground, as the management approach to a municipality’s appointed officials is oftentimes “hands off” or removed and usually quite dissimilar from what one might consider normal in a relationship between employer and employee.

So, when the relationship turns sour and the vote count adds one more member of the governing body to the negative column, what happens next as the municipality begins to transition to a period of new leadership?

First and foremost, most boards or councils have little time or ability, or may not even have legal authority, to manage the day-to-day operation of their communities, which involves directing staff, managing daily issues, etc. In most instances, given the abruptness of the departure, the governing body chooses to select someone from within the organization, usually a member of administrative staff, to serve as the “acting” manager/administrator, granting either full or limited authority as the chief administrative officer until either an “interim” or permanent replacement is found.

It is that interim option, and providing leadership during this time of change, that will be the subject of this article.

For most communities, a candidate for interim management can be found by contacting either CML or the regional Colorado Department of Local Affairs representative. The governing body should expect the successful candidate to be prepared to:

- perform the day-to-day operation and management duties of the municipality;
- if asked, facilitate the hiring process for a permanent manager/administrator;
- allow for telephone/email availability to the mayor, members of the governing body, and key employees on a 24/7 basis;
- provide for the special projects, duties, and assignments that the governing body may request;
- attend all meetings of the governing body;
- if requested, conduct an assessment of all government operations; and
- provide for a smooth transition to the permanent manager/administrator, including preparing a detailed transition plan.

In most instances, these services will be rendered without the interim maintaining a full-time schedule, which can be off-putting to some until one realizes that many interims bring

with them years of experience in municipal administration with the knowledge and background to handle most situations efficiently and effectively. All interims, regardless of hours worked or length of tenure, should still bring with them a commitment to serve with the best interests of the community in the forefront.

An interim’s first steps, not unlike someone new to any position, are the most important in laying the groundwork for a successful tenure. A meeting with department heads and administrative staff upon arrival is generally in order to do an initial assessment and to ensure stability in the organization. This meeting should be used to advise participants of what the interim’s full scope of services will be, according to the terms negotiated with the governing body and the interim’s expectations and management philosophies moving forward. A speedy orientation for interims is crucial so that they can come up to speed with regard to issues, projects, and priorities as soon as possible and begin earning their keep. This orientation will likely include a discussion about the organizations’ strengths and weaknesses, a quick overview of the current budget and fiscal condition, a conversation about employee needs, and possibly an early scheduling of tours of a municipality’s properties/facilities and current projects.



Not unlike permanent municipal managers and administrators, interims must expect to participate in the day-to-day administration as if they were the permanent hire. In most instances that means getting ready for the next meeting of the governing body, likely establishing an agenda, providing the information necessary for the board or council to make their best decisions, and making sure there is a good “flow” to the business at hand so that elected officials are getting their work done, but not spending hours each meeting having to do so.

It is also important for the interim to begin to build the framework, not only for staff and the governing body, but for the residents of the community, for what good government management looks like, if for nothing else than to establish the expectations for those who will follow in the permanent role.

An important part of that framework starts with communication that is equally and accurately delivered:

- Communication with staff on a regular basis, through staff meetings or one-on-one meetings, if warranted. Keeping them up to date on what is happening with the hiring process for a permanent manager/administrator, discussing administrative issues of importance, preparing for an upcoming meeting of the governing body, and doing

round-the-table updates on departmental activities.

- Communication with members of the governing body through initial one-on-one meetings to understand their perspectives on what is happening in their community and what they feel are the “issues of the day,” followed up by consistent communication, distributed on a regular basis, either through regular manager/administrator reports at meetings or establishing a running administrative list of tasks and regular meetings with the mayor.
- Communication with members of the public by having an open door policy, being available to discuss their issues, being transparent with them as to activities happening in their community, and giving them an optimistic view of the future.

Other than that, it is “business as usual” for an interim, albeit just a little different in each community. Interims are there to make sure that staff can do their jobs, acting as a resource, mentor, and mediator. And yes, they are to be the “chief administrative officer” in all aspects, when necessary. There should be no expectation that an interim cannot handle the most difficult of issues, whether personnel-related, legal or regulatory based, or because of the actions or decisions of a previous administration. In fact,

an interim can almost expect to have “fires” to put out before a permanent manager or administrator is hired. It is, for an interim, a time to earn the respect of and lead a community, even if for a short period of time. It is a time to lead by example. It is also a time to learn the ins and outs of the community and meet a lot of good people along the way, always keeping in mind the need to leave the place in better shape than when the interim arrived.

Not enough can be said about the importance of interim management. The timing of most assignments can sometimes be difficult for communities. One must be mindful that, in all fairness, if an interim is to assist in the hiring process, that person should be removed from consideration for the permanent position until all other avenues have been exhausted. That said, an interim is just that — “interim” — and most certainly should never be considered a suitable replacement for the value that a permanent manager or administrator can bring to an organization. The interim role is to be coveted, as it presents an opportunity to assist a community in need and establish a foundation for what could be a positive future for the community and its residents.



Each issue of Colorado Municipalities magazine introduces you to a key person in municipal government through the "Get to Know ..." column. Each person featured answers questions about his or her position, municipality, and how he or she ended up in municipal government.

## GET TO KNOW ... WADE TROXELL

### FORT COLLINS MAYOR AND CML EXECUTIVE BOARD PRESIDENT

#### How did you end up in public service?

I grew up in Fort Collins in a family that valued civic responsibility and service to community. At the age of 14, I served as "Mayor for the Day" for then-Mayor Karl Carson. Mayor Carson also served a term as CML president. He inspired me to understand the importance of municipal leadership.

In 2007, local community members asked that I consider running for the Fort Collins City Council. I have served on council ever since, with the past three years as mayor.



#### What do you enjoy most about your position?

I enjoy meeting with citizens, our co-creators, in our community, especially youth and young adults who are passionate about Fort Collins and want to improve it.

I really enjoy seeing the impact of local policy decisions that improve our community as a place to live, start a business, develop a career, retire, and live healthy.

I find it intellectually stimulating to work with elected officials from Fort Collins and other Colorado cities and towns, and other jurisdictions, on issues of common interest.

#### What is the most challenging part of your position?

As the mayor's term is limited to two years in office, it is challenging to get everything accomplished that I want to get accomplished, working alongside other councilmembers, in that short time frame.

#### What are some exciting things going on in Fort Collins?

There are a vast number of exciting projects currently underway in Fort Collins! Our 2017 Community Survey indicates that 95 percent of our

residents rate Fort Collins a good/very good place to live overall.

We currently are developing a broadband utility to deliver gigabit internet speed services to every premise in Fort Collins as a way to future-proof our community by being a connected city. Find out more at [www.fcgov.com/broadband](http://www.fcgov.com/broadband).

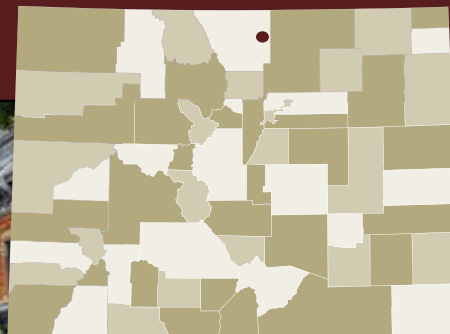
Meanwhile, Fort Collins has been recognized by People for Bikes as the most bicycle-friendly community in the United States, encompassing categories such as safety, ridership, network, reach, and acceleration. See details at [cityratings.peopleforbikes.org/city/fort-collins](http://cityratings.peopleforbikes.org/city/fort-collins).

In 2017, the City of Fort Collins became the third municipality to receive the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award. This U.S. presidential award, given by the Department of Commerce, recognizes the City of Fort Collins for "an unceasing drive for radical innovation, thoughtful leadership, and operational excellence." Learn more at [www.fcgov.com/excellence](http://www.fcgov.com/excellence).

Improving the health of the Poudre River, including improving its natural condition as well as providing accessibility to the community through its new Whitewater Park for recreation

# GET TO KNOW THE CITY OF FORT COLLINS

- The City of Fort Collins was incorporated on Feb. 3, 1873
- Population: 170,000
- [www.fcgov.com](http://www.fcgov.com)



and enjoyment, is another exciting project, see [www.fcgov.com/parkplanning/poudre-river-park](http://www.fcgov.com/parkplanning/poudre-river-park).

## What project or undertaking are you most proud of and why?

Through the Office of Sustainability, the City of Fort Collins focuses on a vibrant economy that provides for not only economic health, but also social and environmental benefits to our community. For example, the climate economy is building new businesses that are forward-thinking to improve our environmental and social well-being while at the same time utilizing innovation as a way to enhance the future health of our community.

## What does leadership mean to you?

I see leadership as providing a vision and creating an environment for cooperation to move the City of Fort Collins forward as it enhances the lives of all, while at the same time addressing the challenges of today and tomorrow in a collaborative way.

## What is the funniest or strangest thing to happen while at work?

When I have conversations with grade school kids, the questions they ask me as mayor and the perception of how the City operates are refreshing and inspire me to see life through the eyes of a child. As Art Linkletter said, "Kids say the darnedest things."

## What website(s) and/or publication(s) do you refer to when seeking information?

I visit [coloradoan.com](http://coloradoan.com), [reporterherald.com](http://reporterherald.com), and [completecolorado.com](http://completecolorado.com), as well as read the CML Newsletter and *The Denver Post*.

## What book are you currently reading? Are you enjoying it?

I enjoy thought-provoking reads such as *For the Love of Cities* by Peter Kageyama, *The New Localism: How Cities Can Thrive in the Age of Populism* by Bruce J. Katz and Jeremy Nowak, and *How Breakthroughs Happen: The Surprising Truth About How Companies Innovate* by Andrew Hargadon.

Wade Troxell is the mayor of Fort Collins, home to Colorado State University with a student population of 32,000. Mayor Troxell was first elected in April 2015 and is now serving his second term. As mayor, he is committed to a sustainable future impacting our energy, water, multimodal transportation, and environmental stewardship.

Mayor Troxell serves on the Drone Advisory Committee (FAA), Platte River Power Authority Board of Directors, Gridwise Alliance Board of Directors, and National League of Cities Transportation & Infrastructure Services Committee. He is president of Colorado Municipal League, Northern Colorado Regional Airport Commission chair, and City of Fort Collins Council Futures Committee chair.

He is on the mechanical engineering (ME) faculty and the ME associate department head at Colorado State University (CSU), where he also received his BS, MS, and PhD degrees in engineering. Dr. Troxell is an internationally recognized expert in the areas of robotics and intelligent control of distributed systems. His research has focused on autonomous robotic systems and architectures for distributed energy resources.



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Colorado Water Conservation  
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Employers Council  
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