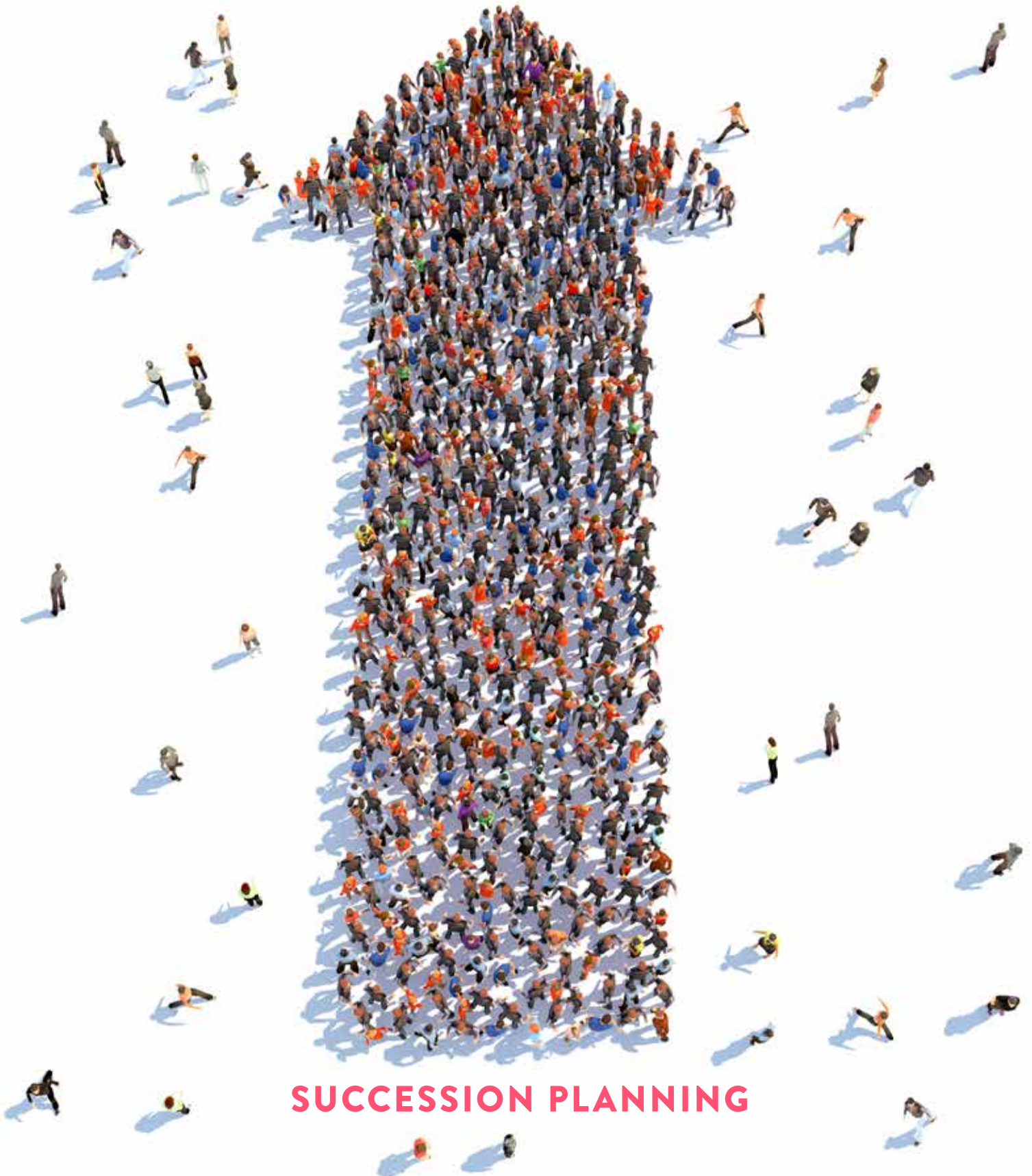


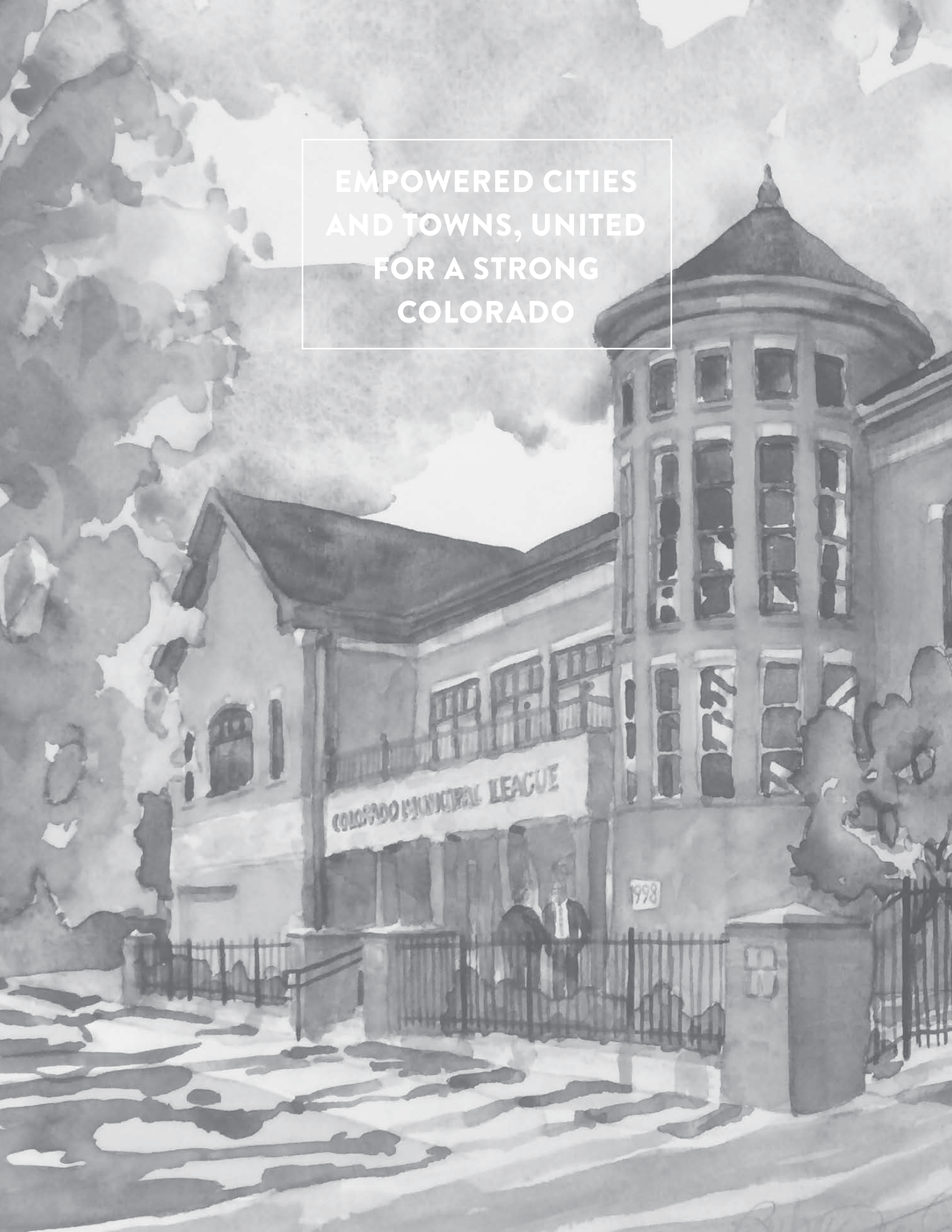
Colorado Municipalities

Vol. 99, No. 2, April 2023



SUCCESSION PLANNING

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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.

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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ABOUT SOME OF OUR CONTRIBUTORS



KEVIN BOMMER IS CML'S EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR. HE IS RESPONSIBLE TO CML'S 21-MEMBER EXECUTIVE BOARD FOR EXECUTING THE POLICIES AND PROGRAMS OF THE

LEAGUE. HE IS RESPONSIBLE FOR PROFESSIONAL, EXECUTIVE AND MANAGERIAL OVERSIGHT OF CML'S STAFF, ACTIVITY MANAGEMENT AND COORDINATION, MEMBER SERVICE OPERATIONS, ORGANIZATIONAL POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS, LEAGUE POLICY AND LEGAL PROGRAMS, AND FISCAL CONTROL. PRIOR TO BEING APPOINTED EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR IN APRIL 2019, KEVIN SERVED AS THE LEAGUE'S DEPUTY DIRECTOR FROM 2012 TO MAY 2019 AND WAS A FULL-TIME LOBBYIST FROM 2001 TO MAY 2019. KEVIN JOINED THE LEAGUE IN 1999.



GREG CATON IS THE CITY MANAGER OF GRAND JUNCTION. PREVIOUSLY HE SERVED AS CITY MANAGER OF ORO VALLEY, ARIZONA, A COMMUNITY OUTSIDE TUCSON,

AND HE SERVED EIGHT YEARS AS ASSISTANT CITY MANAGER FOR THE CITY OF DURANGO.



MARK COLLINS IS AN EXECUTIVE RECRUITMENT SPECIALIST WITH KRW ASSOCIATES. HE HAS MORE THAN 25 YEARS OF EXPERIENCE AS A CITY/COUNTY MANAGER. HE HAS AN EXTENSIVE

BACKGROUND IN THE EDUCATION FIELD AS A UNIVERSITY ADMINISTRATOR AND FACULTY MEMBER. MARK TEACHES CLASSES IN PERSONNEL ADMINISTRATION AND STRATEGIC PLANNING. HE HAS BROAD EXPERIENCE IN FACILITATING STRATEGIC PLANNING AND GOOD-GOVERNANCE RETREATS FOR CITIES, TOWNS, AND SPECIAL DISTRICTS.



GREG DALY IS CHIEF OF POLICE FOR THE TOWN OF AVON. HE BEGAN HIS CAREER IN LAW ENFORCEMENT BY GRADUATING FROM THE COLORADO LAW ENFORCEMENT TRAINING

ACADEMY AT THE COLORADO MOUNTAIN COLLEGE, SPRING VALLEY IN THE FALL OF 1995. IN 1996 HE STARTED WITH THE EAGLE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE AS A SHERIFF'S DEPUTY. HE WORKED FOR A COMBINED 12 YEARS FOR THE EAGLE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE. DURING HIS SERVICE, HE WAS A FIELD TRAINING OFFICER, DEFENSIVE TACTICS INSTRUCTOR, FITNESS INSTRUCTOR, SWAT ASSISTANT TEAM LEADER, AND PATROL SERGEANT. IN 2008 HE WAS SELECTED FOR THE POSITION OF LIEUTENANT AT THE AVON POLICE DEPARTMENT, WHERE HE ALSO SERVED AS DEPUTY CHIEF, AND INTERIM CHIEF OF POLICE. HE ALSO SERVED AS COMMANDER ON THE EAGLE COUNTY SPECIAL OPERATIONS UNIT. DALY OBTAINED A BACHELOR OF FINANCIAL SERVICES DEGREE FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF COLLEGE DUBLIN AND THE INSTITUTE OF BANKERS IN IRELAND IN 1998. IN 2012, HE COMPLETED A MASTER OF SCIENCE DEGREE IN CRIMINOLOGY FROM REGIS UNIVERSITY IN DENVER, COLORADO. IN 2016 HE GRADUATED FROM SESSION 263 OF THE F.B.I. NATIONAL ACADEMY IN QUANTICO, VIRGINIA.



ALISSA FARRELL HAS OVER TWENTY YEARS OF HUMAN RESOURCE EXPERIENCE AND CURRENTLY SERVES AS THE CITY OF ASPEN'S DIRECTOR OF ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES.

WITH A MASTER'S DEGREE IN ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE FROM COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY, ALISSA HELPS LEAD A VARIETY OF DEPARTMENTS AND INITIATIVES, INCLUDING HUMAN RESOURCES, COMMUNICATIONS, STRATEGY AND INNOVATION, CLERK'S, INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY, AND PROJECTS IN THE AREAS OF DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION (DEI), WORKFORCE HOUSING, AND ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT. THROUGH HER COLLABORATION WITH DEPARTMENTS AND PROJECT OUTCOMES, SHE CONTINUES TO FOCUS ON PROVIDING EXCELLENT SERVICE TO THE COMMUNITY AND STAFF.



MARTHA HEINZ IS AN ACCOMPLISHED PROFESSIONAL WHO SPECIALIZES IN COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND WORK-BASED LEARNING PROGRAMS. WITH MORE THAN SEVEN YEARS OF

EXPERIENCE IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR, SHE HAS ENJOYED USING HER SKILLS TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE GROWTH OF SEVERAL PROGRAMS AT THE CITY OF WESTMINSTER. SHE GRADUATED FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO DENVER IN 2016 WITH A BACHELOR OF ARTS DEGREE IN COMMUNICATIONS. MARTHA IS A POWERFUL FORCE IN THE WORKPLACE AND USES HER POSITIVE ATTITUDE AND TIRELESS ENERGY TO ENCOURAGE OTHERS TO WORK HARD AND SUCCEED. MARTHA IS INSPIRED DAILY BY HER PARTNER AND THEIR TWIN SONS. IN HER FREE TIME, MARTHA LIKES TO TRAVEL, HIKE, AND TRY LOCAL RESTAURANTS.



STEPHANIE HORVATH IS THE COMMUNITY OUTREACH SPECIALIST FOR THE TOWN OF BERTHOUD. HER BACKGROUND INCLUDES ABOUT A DECADE SPENT IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

AND ADVERTISING FOR CLEVELAND GOLF IN HUNTINGTON BEACH, CA. HER VOLUNTEER WORK WITH THE BERTHOUD COMMUNITY LIBRARY AND TWO TEENAGERS KEEP HER ENGAGED IN THE LOCAL COMMUNITY BEYOND HER OFFICIAL POSITION. SHE ALSO LOVES DOGS AND TACOS.



DALE HALL IS A LIFELONG COLORADOAN AND HAS LIVED IN GREELEY SINCE THE 7TH GRADE. HE IS MARRIED TO SUSIE AND HAS A DAUGHTER, KIMBERLY. HE AND HIS WIFE

OWN AND OPERATE A PROPERTY MANAGEMENT COMPANY IN GREELEY. HE HAS SERVED AS A WELD COUNTY COMMISSIONER WHERE HE ALSO SERVED AS CHAIR OF THE COLORADO COUNTIES INC. FINANCE COMMITTEE. HE SERVED AS A COLORADO STATE REPRESENTATIVE IN DISTRICT 48, WHERE HE SERVED ON THE JOINT BUDGET COMMITTEE. DALE SERVED IN THE ARMY DURING THE VIETNAM WAR.

ABOUT SOME OF OUR CONTRIBUTORS



DOUG LINKHART HAS SERVED AS PRESIDENT OF THE NATIONAL CIVIC LEAGUE IN DECEMBER 2015. PRIOR TO HIS WORK AT THE NATIONAL CIVIC LEAGUE, DOUG SERVED IN

ELECTIVE OFFICE FOR 18 YEARS, INCLUDING AS A DENVER CITY COUNCILMAN AND COLORADO STATE LEGISLATOR. DOUG ALSO SERVED AS THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF DENVER'S DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT. HE GREW UP IN TUCSON, ARIZONA, AND HAS LIVED IN DENVER SINCE 1980.



TAMARA NILES HAS BEEN A CITY ATTORNEY FOR MORE THAN 16 YEARS IN KANSAS AND COLORADO. SHE SERVED AS THE PRESIDENT OF THE CITY ATTORNEYS ASSOCIATION

OF KANSAS, ON THE UNIVERSITY OF KANSAS SCHOOL OF LAW BOARD OF GOVERNORS, AND ON THE KANSAS CONTINUING LEGAL EDUCATION TASK FORCE; HAS PRESENTED CONTINUING LEGAL EDUCATION ON OPEN MEETINGS AND OPEN RECORDS; AND PREVIOUSLY TAUGHT BUSINESS LAW AS AN ADJUNCT PROFESSOR. SHE HAS BEEN THE CITY ATTORNEY IN ENGLEWOOD SINCE JUNE 2021.



BRICEIDA ORTEGA IS THE DEPUTY CITY CLERK AND YOUTH CITY COUNCIL COORDINATOR FOR THE CITY OF MONTROSE. SHE JOINED THE CITY IN 2021 AS

COMMUNITY PROGRAM SPECIALIST AND TRANSITIONED TO HER NEW ROLE IN 2022. BRICEIDA HAS PRIOR EXPERIENCE WITH THE CITY OF MONTROSE, HAVING INTERNEED WITH THE CITY DURING HER SUMMERS IN HIGH SCHOOL AS CITY CLERK INTERN. SHE HOLDS A B.S. DEGREE IN BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION FROM REGIS UNIVERSITY.



ALBERTO DE LOS RIOS IS THE DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION MANAGER FOR THE TOWN OF ERIE. AFTER OBTAINING A B.S. IN ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES

AND AN M.S. AT FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY, ALBERTO FIRST WORKED AS A LONG-RANGE PLANNER IN BOULDER COUNTY SUPPORTING COMPREHENSIVE PLAN EFFORTS, SUSTAINABILITY, AGRICULTURE, RACIAL EQUITY, AND PANDEMIC EMERGENCY RESPONSE. AFTERWARD, ALBERTO TRANSITIONED TO BECOME THE EQUITY AND ENGAGEMENT SPECIALIST AT THE CITY OF LONGMONT, WHERE HE LED EFFORTS AROUND EMBEDDING EQUITY AND SUSTAINABILITY IN MUNICIPAL OPERATIONS. IN HIS ROLE AT THE TOWN OF ERIE, ALBERTO WORKS TO SYSTEMATIZE EQUITY ACROSS ALL PROVISIONS OF GOVERNMENT SERVICES.



JESSICA ROBERTS IS A HUMAN RESOURCES PRACTITIONER WITH NINE YEARS OF EXPERIENCE IN PUBLIC SECTOR HR. SPECIALIZING IN PUBLIC SECTOR HR HAS ALLOWED

JESSICA TO PUT HER MPA FROM UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO DENVER TO GOOD USE. IN HER CURRENT ROLE AS GARFIELD COUNTY'S COMPENSATION & BENEFITS MANAGER, SHE LOOKS FOR WAYS TO ENHANCE THE EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE AND PROVIDE ACCESS TO PAY AND BENEFITS THAT SUPPORT A QUALITY WORKFORCE.



ROBERT SHEESLEY IS CML'S GENERAL COUNSEL. HE MANAGES LEGAL SERVICES RANGING FROM EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT FOR MUNICIPAL ATTORNEYS THROUGHOUT THE

STATE TO ADVOCACY FOR MUNICIPAL INTERESTS IN THE COURTS. HE ASSISTS THE LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY TEAM, FIELDS INQUIRIES FROM COLORADO MUNICIPAL ATTORNEYS, STAFFS THE CML AMICUS COMMITTEE, AND FILES FRIEND OF THE COURT BRIEFS IN SUPPORT OF MUNICIPAL INTERESTS. ROBERT IS THE FORMER CITY ATTORNEY OF COMMERCE CITY. ROBERT JOINED THE LEAGUE IN 2021.



JEFF TOBORG WAS ELECTED TO SERVE AS PARKER'S SEVENTH MAYOR IN 2020 FOLLOWING A TWO-YEAR TERM AS A TOWN COUNCILMEMBER. IN ADDITION TO HIS ROLE AS

MAYOR, TOBORG ALSO IS A LIAISON WHO FOCUSES ON THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AS A REPRESENTATIVE TO THE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, DOWNTOWN BUSINESS ALLIANCE, AND METRO MAYOR'S CAUCUS. HE IS INVOLVED IN MANY NON-PROFIT AND CHARITABLE ORGANIZATIONS, INCLUDING THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE PARKER COUNCIL OF ARTS, SCIENCE AND CULTURE, DOUGLAS COUNTY COMMUNITY FOUNDATION, DADS OF PARKER, AND THE SKY RIDGE COMMUNITY COUNCIL. HE PREVIOUSLY SERVED ON THE PRESTON HILL HOMEOWNER'S ASSOCIATION AS A BOARD MEMBER AND PRESIDENT. TOBORG EARNED HIS BACHELOR'S DEGREE IN ECONOMICS. HE RESIDES IN THE PRESTON HILL NEIGHBORHOOD WITH HIS WIFE, MELISSA, AND THEIR THREE CHILDREN, PRESTON, ASHTON, AND EMILY.



KENT WILLMANN SPENT 31 YEARS PREPARING YOUNG CITIZENS BY TEACHING HIGH SCHOOL SOCIAL STUDIES IN ST. VRAIN. THE LAST DOZEN YEARS WERE DEVOTED TO

TRAINING THE NEXT GENERATION OF TEACHERS AT CU-BOULDER. HE CURRENTLY SERVES AS A TRAINER AND CURRICULUM WRITER FOR THE COLORADO MUNICIPAL LEAGUE AND SPECIAL DISTRICT ASSOCIATION PROGRAM, LESSONS ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT. WITH THE RECENT ADDITION OF A GRANDSON, HE IS THRILLED TO PLAY THE ROLE OF GRAND-DUDE.

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THE CHALLENGE OF SUCCESSION PLANNING

BY DALE HALL

COLORADO MUNICIPAL LEAGUE EXECUTIVE BOARD PRESIDENT

The COVID-19 pandemic created a lot of concern about “The Great Resignation.” In Greeley, we had a major changeover of individuals who were in director-level positions, and we didn’t seem to have anyone who was ready to take their place.

It can be a tricky proposition to try and plan for the next person in line, because the position may not be open for years and the second person in line could be waiting for the inevitable that may never come. At the same time, it’s always good to have someone cross-trained in individual duties so that in the event an employee decides or is asked to move on to other areas, there is always someone who can fill in. This requires training and confidence in your personnel and the ability to believe in the vision set out by your elected officials. In Greeley, we found after the pandemic was over that there was a need to fill the positions of several directors who had decided to move on. It was a task we weren’t necessarily prepared for. Sometimes you may not know where you’re going to get the next talent, so it’s important to be in tune with the needs of the city to determine whether you have the ability to call someone up from the ranks or bring someone on board from the outside to fulfill the goals and priorities of your council or town board members. (See page 34 for a discussion of succession planning programs.)

It is also imperative that we work with our youth to demonstrate how they can benefit by being a part of their government. It’s important to have long-term priorities established within your municipality and discuss ways to work with the community through training to create that additional interest for the future of your community. Many municipal governments have youth

commissions where the next generation can be made more aware of areas within government that affect them, and where the youth can help establish new priorities and goals (see page 46). It is important that the youth understand how they can effect change for the future and prepare themselves to be a part of local government when that time comes. Your youth commissions should teach young people how to serve their communities. CML’s “Lessons on Local Government”

program is a resource to help schools provide an education in civics (see page 48).

Most municipalities in Colorado have term limits, and it’s necessary to consider who might be able to move forward in a position that will come open because a councilmember might be termed out or wish not to run again. Your municipality may wish to create a program or work with community organizations such as a Chamber of Commerce to educate community members on what local government is all about and how to work with campaigns and

establish positions on city priorities. CML has brochures and training modules that talk about local government and how to become involved as a candidate. CML offers training on topics like “Running for Municipal Office” and “Overview of Municipal Elected Office.”

Our local government is the best government of all. It is the closest to the people and can effect change from almost an instant, with the right leaders to help our constituents prosper in the future.

Let’s stay engaged.



FIGHTING INCIVILITY WITH COLLABORATION & INSPIRATION

BY KEVIN BOMMER

COLORADO MUNICIPAL LEAGUE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

IT is no secret that most individuals who choose to run to be on their city council or their town board do so out of a love for their community and a desire to serve. There is very little, if any, financial incentive — especially given the time commitment — and there is often very little in the way of public gratitude. When confronted with the vitriol that can often come from outside city hall, from the public in meetings, or even from fellow elected officials, it is no wonder that many choose to leave office and many more likely never opt to run.

There may be no greater danger to inspiring the next generation of municipal elected officials than the impact of the toxicity in words and actions in our modern culture. Often fueled by faceless social media attacks or mean-spirited jabs at others in public settings, such behavior can go beyond verbal or written assault to that of a physical nature.

INCIVILITY IS NOT NEW

On May 22, 1856, the floor of the U.S. Senate played host to one of this

nation's most infamous examples of incivility turning violent. Sen. Charles Sumner, a Massachusetts antislavery Republican, unleashed a

**The damaging rhetoric
used in the course
of disagreement and
debate has become
much more pervasive.**

floor speech focused on the debate over whether Kansas should be admitted to the Union as a slave state or free state. The speech was laced with personal attacks on two of his colleagues who presumably supported Kansas's admission as a slave state. Sumner's speech referred to one senator as a "noise-some, squat, and nameless animal" and chastised the other's proslavery stance. Tensions were high and culminated with a vicious attack by Rep. Preston Brooks of South

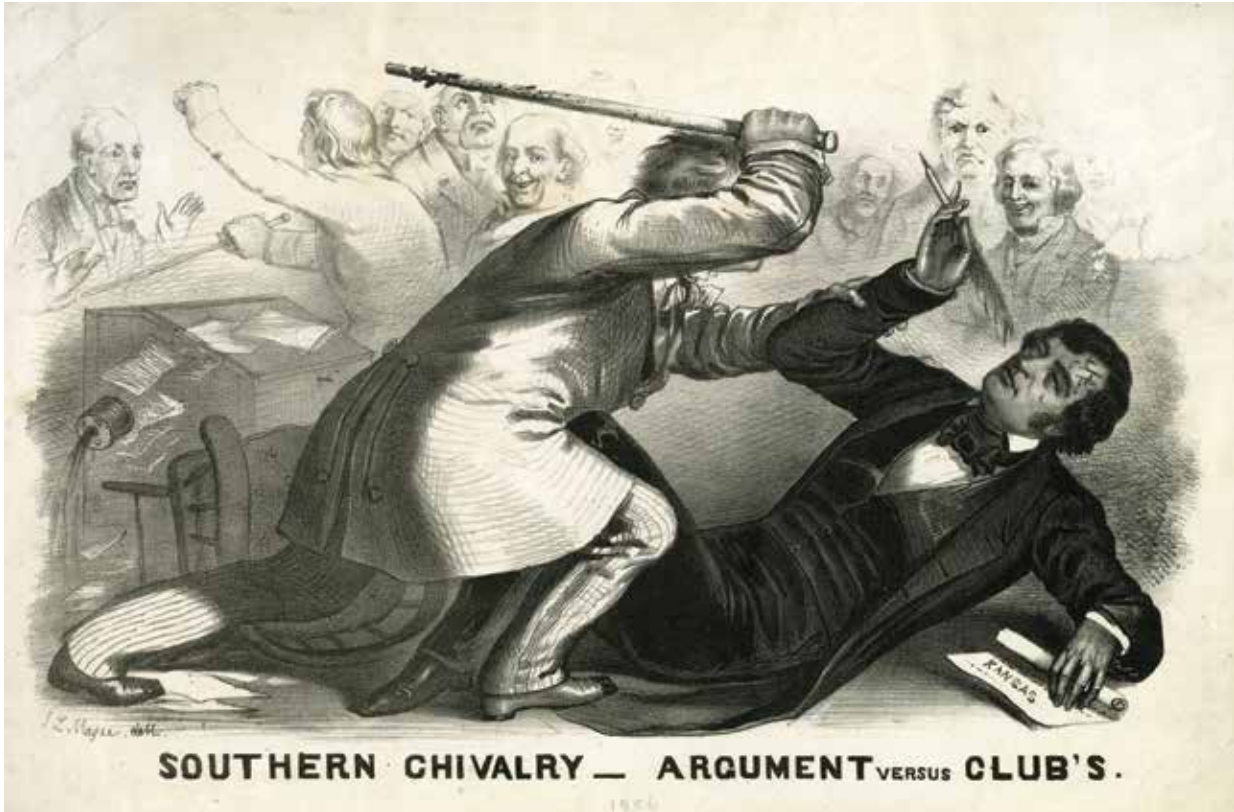
Carolina, who came over from the House of Representatives onto the Senate floor and used his cane to brutally beat Sumner. While right on the merits, of course, the manner Sumner delivered his remarks eventually, albeit inexcusably, led to the attack by Brooks.

While physical altercations are thankfully rare, the damaging rhetoric used in the course of disagreement and debate has become much more pervasive. For municipal elected officials, incivility and divisiveness has a direct impact on the effectiveness of the governing body and its members.

Elected officials are viewed as leaders in the community and words and behavior can cause either positive or negative reactions from other members of the governing body and the public. Concerted efforts are required to promote a positive perception of the governing body driven by the way its members work together.

BUILDING A FOUNDATION

What may be the most challenging part of being on a council or board,



John L. Magee / Courtesy of the Smithsonian Institution

especially for those new to elected office, is reconciling the desire to see one's individual vision and goals implemented while navigating those of his or her colleagues.

Unlike most state legislatures or Congress, being on a city council or town board requires communication and deliberation in much closer proximity and with a smaller number of people. Discussion and disagreement are necessary in deliberative bodies and an essential part of the decision-making process. However, it must be done respectfully and succinctly, and intentional efforts must be made to find ways out of conflict when it occurs.

When the discourse among elected officials breaks down, the entire organization can be cast in a negative

light and it may be difficult to inspire confidence in the democratic process by members of the public. To prevent this possibility, elected officials must be intentional about creating positive relationships with their colleagues and openly discuss how disagreements will be handled.

Many cities and towns have established rules of procedure or conduct that reflect agreed upon values, which are revisited after each election. Others have a written social contract that often outlines expectations for personal and professional conduct. Finally, reviewing and learning from past areas of agreement and success as a council or board, perhaps in a retreat or similar setting, can also be instructive. Often not top of mind is that elected

officials are also representatives of the municipality as an employer. The council or board sets the example and tone for the entire organization, and divisive words and actions can have an impact on employees. As individuals, elected officials are the center of the organizational universe, and their words and actions may have a huge impact on others.

RESPECTFUL DISCOURSE & LONG-TERM PERSPECTIVE

Disagreement is unavoidable. It is built into the system, but it need not cross the line to become harmful. Avoiding unhealthy conflict must begin with the recognition that each elected official has their own goals and priorities and that it is impossible to reconcile all of

them. Each member of the governing body must clarify and sort everyone's goals and priorities and try to understand different views. The public is best served when the process of disagreement and debate is approached with each member being open to compromise without sacrificing principles.

When disagreements do occur in a single moment, it is easy to forget that there will be many future moments. The temptation to throw down the gauntlet on a single issue may impair the relationship with another elected official who might otherwise be a critical partner on a future matter. A focus on developing long-term relationships among elected officials is more likely to lead to the ability to work through individual issues of disagreement, especially with the multitude of issues that municipal leaders must grapple with.

SOCIAL MEDIA HAS ITS PLACE, BUT TAKE CARE

The responsible use of social media is often hard to spot, especially in emotionally charged discussions around politics. The relative anonymity of a tweet from the comfort of one's own home makes it much easier to say things one may not be as willing to say to someone standing in front of them. While elected officials can certainly use social media to promote a cause or an outcome, great care should be taken to avoid saying anything negative or disrespectful to those that don't agree.

Using social media should be accompanied by being aware of its tendency for some to use it to "shout down" those who don't agree, and

elected officials should never condone or participate in it. As part of the governing body, each individual's behavior reflects on the city or town.

INSPIRATION BY EXAMPLE

Every year, Colorado loses municipal officials — both elected and staff — who are exhausted by the toll that being in public service can take when gratitude is replaced with attitude. There are elected officials angry at one another, citizens angry at elected officials, and citizens angry at each other. Only deliberate, cooperative efforts to change the narrative can slow down turnover and ensure people continue to be inspired to serve.

Since it seems there is so little progress at the national level, city and town halls may truly be the only place that the tide can be turned. The cornerstone of good governance must be good behavior, fair treatment of others, and respect for other points of view. Setting positive examples also inspires future leaders, especially younger Coloradans who are increasingly active in local issues and see local leaders in the news and on social media.

Former Wyoming Senator Alan K. Simpson once said, "Those that take the high road are not often encumbered by lots of traffic." The future of good governance and civil discourse relies upon elected leaders at every level choosing to set aside personal agendas and single-issue advocacy for a collaborative approach to governing and a commitment to respect and civil discourse.

The relative anonymity of a tweet from the comfort of one's own home makes it much easier for people to say things they may not be as willing to say to someone standing in front of them.

NEW --- PERSPECTIVES



on Succession Planning

BY JESSICA ROBERTS

GARFIELD COUNTY COMPENSATION & BENEFITS MANAGER

AND ALISSA FARRELL

CITY OF ASPEN DIRECTOR OF ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES



Public service is about people, the people who rely on essential government services, and the people who deliver those services.

Public managers, increasingly challenged with ensuring the continuity of services while handling daily tasks, may still need to formalize a succession planning strategy for their workforce needs. If public service depends on people to deliver services, then a comprehensive evaluation of mission-critical positions, and the development of staff to fill those positions must be a priority. Organizations thrive when there is continuity in mission-critical roles through succession planning. Succession planning is a tool used to orchestrate an organization's strategic plan in the skills required for key positions and formalizes the pathways for future development of current staff.

WHO SHOULD LEAD THE CHARGE?

Human resource professionals tend to facilitate succession planning. Yet many HR departments may be focused on more immediate challenges or may need more resources to develop a formal succession plan strategy. Ideally, succession planning is done before vacancies exist and is a continual process. When people leave the organization, creating a plan to address employee retention and undesirable turnover becomes imperative. Carving out time to be the architect of a succession planning strategy can help develop a talent pipeline, both internal and external to the organization. An organization known for growing and developing internal staff creates a culture where employees seek employment, and retention permeates. To be successful,

alignment between HR and leadership is necessary, with leadership as the architect and HR as the facilitator of a holistic succession planning approach.

RAISE YOUR HAND IF YOU HAVE YET TO DELIVER A FORMAL SUCCESSION PLAN

Many attempts at succession planning miss the mark and are challenged to truly integrate a well thought out plan into an organization. The most common reason succession planning does not work – in any size organization – is the lack of management support. When managers partner with HR, alongside other organizational leaders, to craft a succession planning strategy that encompasses the organization's unique needs, favorable results are increased by ensuring buy in. This process is rarely a one-size-fits-all approach, and strategies may need to vary depending on the organization's size and access to resources.

WHERE SHOULD ORGANIZATIONS START?

Best practice suggests that succession planning begins with assessing the organization's current and long-term staffing needs. A few key questions to help guide the assessment include:

- What are the core services the organization must provide?
- What key positions and skills are required?
- Are new services required in the future, and what skills are needed to deliver them?

These types of questions, along with assessment tools, establish a baseline for current operations and pinpoint the skills gaps that might be a barrier to future operational direction. Using the needs assessment to evaluate the skills employees currently have opens the door for organizations to consider the skills employees must have for organizations to thrive. However, recognizing that succession planning is often non-linear because of turnover and unpredictable circumstances, focusing on developing a learning and development strategy can buffer some of the uncertainty plaguing succession planning strategies.

LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT IS SUCCESSION PLANNING

A learning and development (L&D) plan is a broad-reaching blueprint outlining a comprehensive employee training program. A successful and intentional L&D plan connects employees to the organizational mission, vision, and values, promotes innovation and creativity, addresses core and future services, and provides an inclusive path for enhancing individual and organizational performance. While many organizations have some form of L&D programs in place, it is often difficult to define a link between these programs and succession planning. To link these strategies, utilize L&D programs to develop learning plans specific to critical positions. Focusing on positions, rather than on individuals, keeps the emphasis on competencies and protects the inclusivity of succession planning. Simulta-

An organization known for growing and developing internal staff creates a culture where employees seek employment, and retention permeates.



neously, considerations should be given to offering a curriculum that supports a variety of professional development avenues, which gives managers the opportunity to explore their employees' interests. This approach addresses succession planning for individual positions while embedding learning and development into the broader organizational culture.

Retention of key staff is essential for succession planning, and L&D programs are instrumental in providing satisfaction to high performers through continued learning and professional growth endeavors. Ensuring the skills gaps are closed through the L&D planning by measuring individual performance and organizational results creates an expansive talent pipeline for future positions.

BOOTS ON THE GROUND

To illustrate the real-world experiences in developing a succession planning strategy, we talked to two local governments about the challenges, successes, and areas they want to address in the future. A common theme between these two organizations was a commitment to a learning and development culture.

THE CITY OF ASPEN

The perspective of Sara Ott, the city manager at the City of Aspen, is that all

employees are leaders throughout the municipality. L&D has many objectives that the city is focused on, including but not limited to creating employee satisfaction, pursuing innovation of how services are provided, and reinforcing a learning culture, to name a few. Parallel to these objectives, the city's learning and development plan can be used for succession planning. As the high-cost-of-living more steadily impacts employee turnover, the city has continued to emphasize growing and developing all staff internally. By growing internal staff at the City of Aspen, not only are staff more likely to stay and flourish when promoted over external hires, they have the added benefit of already being rooted in the organization's and community's culture.

Although in its beginning stages at the City of Aspen, the city's L&D plan is in progress. A city-wide skills assessment is in process, reviewing existing employee data, such as manager feedback and employee surveys, to identify skills and competency gaps. A cross-departmental team will use the information to prioritize the curriculum, opportunities, resources, and strategy in a written plan. The curriculum is intended to include leadership, management, collaboration, and technical skill tracks

which will help build an internal talent pipeline for succession planning.

GARFIELD COUNTY

Garfield County's succession planning efforts focus on leadership development at multiple levels of the organization. For example, the Emerging Leaders program focuses on motivating and training those identified as potential future leaders to take public service to the next level. Recently promoted to county manager, Fred Jarman is passionate about public service and feels that focusing on service as a value is critical to identifying and growing emerging leaders. Additionally, the well-established learning and development program has recently been expanded, as the county seeks to determine what employees want to learn through targeted employee surveys, and to identify the leadership skills that employees need today. The next challenge for the county is aligning leadership and public service in the L&D program.

Approaches for municipalities or strategies that may run parallel to L&D programs may also include specific trainings, coaching, shadowing leaders, and/or the creation of professional development plans to address and measure improvement within the identified skills gaps. Small organizations may only need to focus on developing a few key individuals to align with mission critical positions, versus the development of a larger talent pipeline. Considerations for building skill sets in managerial, leadership, teamwork, and technical functions are recommended as a foundation for any individual or organization-wide program.

All of these methods translate to a new paradigm for succession planning by cultivating and practicing necessary skills and competencies obtained from a thoughtful L&D plan for mission continuity. This is a worthwhile journey which gives organizations a map and compass for addressing succession planning, while offering a competitive advantage through recruitment and retention.

Emerging Trends in Recruiting & Hiring Executives in Local Government

BY MARK COLLINS, KRW ASSOCIATES

AT a recent city council work session, the discussion turned to the impending challenges facing city leaders as they accepted the resignation from their existing city manager and formulated preliminary plans for a formal recruitment and selection process of a new chief executive.

It's understandable if council members appeared noticeably nervous and ill at ease. Hiring a new manager can be one of the most important and daunting responsibilities for a local governing body. Fortunately, there's a great deal of helpful information that can assist communities in this important task, beginning with an excellent "how to" guidebook from CML entitled, "How to Hire a Local Government Manager or Administrator." Additionally, ICMA also has an outstanding publication that covers the important steps in hiring chief executives. These research articles offer expert guidance to successfully navigate the recruitment and selection process.

But what are the current market conditions and trends impacting public sector employment, especially for senior executives? How has the pandemic changed the employment landscape, job movement, and traditional workplace practices? How can local government compete with the private sector for high level management professionals and top tier talent?

The following discussion is intended to provide helpful information on current trends in recruitment, retention, and hiring practices in the local government arena.

ENSURE POSITION DESCRIPTIONS & JOB PROFILES ARE UP TO DATE

It's important to review and update all related information that applies to the vacant

position. What's changed? How has the job evolved and what new duties and responsibilities are required for the position? This task should preferably be undertaken by an HR professional and then reviewed by your city/town attorney. Based on recent experience, are there new skill sets, qualifications, or expanded roles you want to see in potential candidates?

MARKET YOUR COMMUNITY

It's an extremely competitive job environment, as evidenced by smaller candidate pools. Ideally, you want to attract the best candidates to apply and take a serious interest in the position, organization, and community. A successful recruitment process begins with a well written job announcement and posting that lists the positive attributes of your community. What makes your city or town special and truly unique? Most importantly, why do community members love living there and enjoy its quality of life? Be sure to include photos that highlight community assets, facilities, landmarks, special events, and people!

ENGAGE COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS

Local government executives are expected to be attentive and responsive to their community members. Given the importance of this relationship, it makes sense that a recruitment and selection process involve local stakeholders to provide insights on the community and the expectations they would have for a new manager. Ideally, stakeholders would be involved in all aspects of the recruitment and selection process, including interview panels.

VIEWS ON COMPENSATION ARE CHANGING

It has become apparent that today's candidates are not simply examining pay as a factor in their final decision-making process. In addition to wage compensation, candidates are inquiring about flexibility in their work schedules, remote work options, and paid time off allowances. They are also expressing a strong interest in the availability of professional development and top-tier training programs. Elected officials need to be prepared to consider a full menu of benefits and options during the final stage of negotiations.

SEEK ASSISTANCE IF NECESSARY

As mentioned earlier, a recruitment and selection process can be a daunting endeavor. Many jurisdictions choose to utilize internal resources and have developed highly successful processes and procedures to hire senior managers and executives. In some instances, cities and towns seek professional and technical assistance from local entities such as DOLA or CCCMA Senior Advisors who can provide expert guidance and direction on all aspects of a recruitment and selection process. Lastly, there are numerous professional executive search firms that have the knowledge, experience, and expertise to undertake a comprehensive process from the beginning stages to a final appointment. In addition to delivering these services, they often maintain a network of contacts and professional associations that can expand the pool of qualified candidates.



DUE DILIGENCE

Be prepared to devote sufficient time and resources to complete all necessary reference checks and due diligence on prospective candidates. As a public entity, you want to avoid any “surprises” regarding a candidate who may have issues in their personal or professional background that makes them unsuitable for the position. A minimum of six references is recommended, which should include individuals that can speak candidly regarding a candidate’s experience, leadership qualities, work ethic, and general character.

SUCCESSION MANAGEMENT IS TAKING ON ADDED IMPORTANCE

Given the ongoing challenges of recruiting key personnel in local government, many jurisdictions have placed an added emphasis on succession management and have instituted programs to train existing management staff and pre-

pare them for open leadership opportunities within the organization. Highly successful organizations (public, private, and non-profit) have recognized the inherent value of “promote from within” policies that support their existing workforce, reward performance, and recognize talent in their own backyard.



Recruiting & Training with a DEI Lens

BY ALBERTO DE LOS RIOS

TOWN OF ERIE DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION MANAGER

Picture it: your staff is fully onboarded, innovation and team development are at an all-time high, and the diverse experiences of your employees are celebrated and recognized as valuable assets for your organization. Employees flourish in spaces of belonging. To reach the ideal workspace, government agencies must first commit to transforming institutional practices and understand that, by design, municipal government work is not a space where women, people with disabilities, LGBTQIA+ folks, and Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) have been welcomed. If diverse hires are brought into a workplace that does not understand their experiences or provide them with the resources they need to succeed, high turnover of diverse employees will continue.



**Equity happens collectively,
and all departments and staff at all levels of the
organization need to be involved. Avoid placing these
responsibilities solely on BIPOC employees
or just a few employees interested in DEI.**

A municipality's commitment to advancing and centering equity is multifaceted and complex; this process will take years, and it needs to involve staff at all levels of the organization. Reframing an organization's hiring practices requires time and resources; staff must be supported and empowered to implement these changes, and leadership needs to walk the talk.

I want to share with you the Town of Erie's experiences, reflections, and goals on hiring and retaining diverse talent. We believe building a strong equity-centered foundation is paramount to give new and existing employees the capacity to provide excellency in public service and to ensure everyone is welcomed and celebrated.

EVALUATE YOUR PURPOSE

The first step is to establish dialogue across the institution and create a shared understanding of why the organization prioritizes diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). Through meaning-making, staff can ask questions that pertain to organizational norms, power structures, and dynamics, and define what is needed to belong in the workplace. Change cannot happen without time and resources — a budget needs to reflect this as a priority, and staff must be able to dedicate time to implement equity. Equity happens collectively, and all departments and staff at all levels of the organization need to be involved. Avoid placing these responsibilities solely

on BIPOC employees or just a few employees interested in DEI.

REFLECT UPON YOUR HIRING PRACTICES

Where do you publish your job postings? Who is your audience? What does the data tell you about your previous applicants? Who oversees hiring applicants? How do you reduce biased decisions in the application process? How do you evaluate education and experience? What if an applicant has a criminal record? What if the applicant doesn't have a degree? How do you invite applicants of all walks of life to apply? How does staff respond to accommodation requests?

Asking staff and leadership open-ended questions will help identify opportunities within processes and assumptions in hiring. Here are some tips to get you and your team in dialogue:

- It is crucial to partner up with community members and organizations that challenge the status quo of government practices and expand the networks where you publish jobs (seek out organizations and companies that work with diverse people and institutions).
- Rethink what you consider as a minimum qualification (e.g., is a bachelor's or a master's degree the only acceptable credential?).
- Remove personally identifiable information from the application's review process.
- Convene a hiring panel that brings di-

verse lived experiences and points of view.

- Consider the potential for candidates to grow and learn in an organization even when they are not the most qualified by traditionally established standards.
- Recognize that unique and diverse educational and work experiences bring new ideas and approaches to the workplace.

BUILD STAFF CAPACITY

Give employees the resources to learn, reflect, and challenge themselves about what excellency in public service looks like. It is crucial to invest in learning and development that centers equity in the workforce and reflects an organization's budget, priorities, and vision. Collect disaggregated data and pay attention to different experiences based on identities, act and hold space to listen to what employees need. Ensure leadership has the resources and capacity to support staff; building trust is essential to growth and lets employees know that they can be the best version of themselves at work. If staff wants to innovate, welcome it and be open to failure. Not all ideas will be a good fit for the organization; do not shy away from trying new things.

CREATE AN ADAPTIVE WORKPLACE

Assuming a one-size-fits-all approach to how employees should operate in the workplace can lead to turnover. After the pandemic, many companies and institutions recognized the benefits of flexible



If staff wants to innovate, welcome it and be open to failure. Not all ideas will be a good fit for the organization; do not shy away from trying new things.

work hours and hybrid environments, especially for employees with caretaking responsibilities at home. These types of systemic changes attract a diverse workforce by recognizing and accommodating real life challenges. Similarly, consider your benefits package, policies, and employee feedback. For example, are days off more valued than other benefits? What is your definition of family and what employee benefits do you offer around this definition? Can employees take time off and be supported in times of distress? Who can employees talk to confidentially to share honest feedback without retaliation? Take time to research workplace in-

novation and regularly gauge your workforce's feedback when considering changes to benefits.

PRACTICE GRACE

Cultures of belonging acknowledge that differences are valuable and celebrated in the workplace. Institutions need to engage in difficult dialogue to grow. This process is imperfect and there is no silver bullet to address all problems, so recognize that equity work comes with making mistakes. Be graceful with yourself and others and use every moment as a shared learning opportunity. Centering and achieving equity is a marathon, not a

sprint. Change might take years to come to fruition, and the work needs to be sustained to avoid burn out. Remember that ideal picture of the workplace? Allow that to be your guide. When staff is empowered to work together towards shared and higher goals, you will gradually see changes. Celebrate the small victories and persist. The work goes on, but the impact of a thoughtfully designed, healthy, and equitable government transforms whole communities.

SPOTLIGHT: GRAND JUNCTION



Child Care for Municipal Employees

BY GREG CATON, CITY OF GRAND JUNCTION CITY MANAGER

Throughout my career, I have focused on bringing my passion for serving families and the community to fruition in tangible ways. That has probably never been more evident than with the creation of the city's GJ Little Learners Child Care Center that opened earlier this year for Grand Junction employees.

The process to build an employer-based childcare facility began as the city was experiencing increasing pressure on staff recruitment and retention. As an organization, we wanted to hire the most talented staff in addition to retaining the staff we

already had, not only because of the quality of their work but due to their dedication to public service. As we reviewed the reasons staff came to work for the city, we realized their priorities included enjoying the opportunities available for outdoor recreation as well as providing quality of life for their families. However, the popularity of living in the Grand Junction area presented barriers to finding quality childcare as fewer openings were available in licensed facilities. We also recognized regular schedules available at existing childcare facilities were not a fit for firefighters, po-

lice officers, and emergency medical services providers employed by the city who work on a shift schedule.

To realize my vision of opening a childcare facility that accommodated the needs of our employees, we initiated the first step of securing funding. In December of 2021, the City of Grand Junction was awarded an \$800,000 state-funded Employee-Based Child Care grant, which helped kick-start the project.

To help manage our costs, I had been looking for a building we could renovate that included classrooms for infants and

toddlers as well as space for an outdoor playground. One evening, I drove by what had been a former day care center with a “for sale” sign out front. The owner happened to be there, and after a tour it didn’t take me long to realize this was the perfect site to meet our needs. While the building was in pretty rough shape, it was already configured as a learning center for children, and I could see the potential to recreate the space into something remarkable for our staff and their young families.


Construction and renovation of what would become a five-room facility began in January of last year. Thanks to the dedication and skill of the city’s Special Projects team, we were able to keep construction costs low, and complete the project by September of 2022. The learning center is now fully licensed by the state as a Child Care Facility for up to 89 children, from 6-weeks to 5 years of age.

**I could see the potential
to recreate the space into
something remarkable for our
staff and their young families.**

Realizing our vision of creating the GJ Little Learners center for staff families would not have been possible without the support of our city council. They approved the initial matching funds to be combined with the \$800,000 grant and ensured long-term success by providing additional funds to expand the project to accommodate more children. The support exhibited by city council for this project is just one example of how highly they regard the employees who are working on behalf of our community.

With the completion of this new facility and by offering flexible schedules, the city is addressing a lack of childcare in our community and is able to ensure that city employees, including our first responders, have access to quality childcare for their children. While our focus has been on city employees, this new facility also benefits all of the families living and working in Mesa County by increasing the capacity of the early childhood education system.


We are very proud of the collaboration that went into making GJ Little Learners a reality and having seen my vision through to the opening of the center is truly an achievement in which everyone at the City of Grand Junction can share pride in having accomplished.



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SPOTLIGHT

Avon Police Academy Aids Recruitment

BY GREG DALY

TOWN OF AVON POLICE CHIEF

Community policing is the foundation of all that we do at the Avon police department. A good friend and retired law enforcement colleague referred to all police contacts as community policing opportunities. The philosophy of community policing evokes policing from yesteryear. As children we were influenced by the local police officer or school resource officer who knew you, your parents, and your grandparents. Law enforcement lost that kinetic connection for a while but most law enforcement agencies in Colorado have embraced this very common-sense philosophy on how we effectively serve and interact with our respective communities.

The first priority of the Avon police department is to connect with our community. “The father of modern policing,” Sir Robert Peel, posited in his “Nine Policing Principles” that policing requires public approval and public trust. If a law enforcement agency does not have the trust of its community, it lacks the legitimacy in which to operate and serve. A prime example of connecting with our community is our Latino Police and Citizens Police Academies. The Avon police department, in partnership with the Vail police department, Eagle County sheriff’s office, and Eagle police department, hosted our 14th annual Citizens Academy and 10th annual Latino Police Academy in the fall of 2022. We have had more than 350 community members graduate from our academies. The same eight-week curriculum is delivered in both English and Spanish. We initiated our Spanish language Latino Police Academy to build and foster trust because 50%



of Avon’s population and 30% of our countywide population is of Latino ethnicity.

Student participants in our academies have discussed the insights that they have garnered from their participation. “Thank you so much!” said a recent graduate in Facebook post. “My daughter (name withheld) and I looked forward to Monday nights with our fellow academy classmates and the wonderful law enforcement officers that taught us. We have a much deeper understanding of how law enforcement works together to keep our community safe. And we have deepened our respect and admiration for the women and men who serve our community.”

Another tremendous by-product of the connections made at the academies has been the successful recruitment of academy graduates to our agencies. Our agencies have collectively recruited police officers, code enforcement officers, detention officers, and police volunteers.

The eight week academy curriculum covers classroom lectures and hands-on training in the areas of emergency and defensive driving, investigating mock crime

scenes to include lifting fingerprints and DNA samples, learning about SWAT teams, response to crisis events, SWAT equipment, learning some basic self-defense, detection and investigation of alcohol and drug impaired driving, tours of the county detentions facility, combined courts, regional 911 dispatch center, K-9 demonstration, firearms training simulator, and hands on firearms safety and familiarization on the range. We host a graduation ceremony where participants are presented with a certificate and challenge coins after the last class and solicit feedback from our participants experiences.

The Police Executive Research Forum, a policing think tank, featured our academy in its paper, “Building Trust with Immigrant Communities,” <https://bit.ly/3ECdNXP>, and more recently the Latino Police Academy was featured in an investigative journalism piece, through Carnegie-Knight News21, a multimedia reporting initiative headquartered at the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication at Arizona State University, <https://bit.ly/3lw0jOs>.

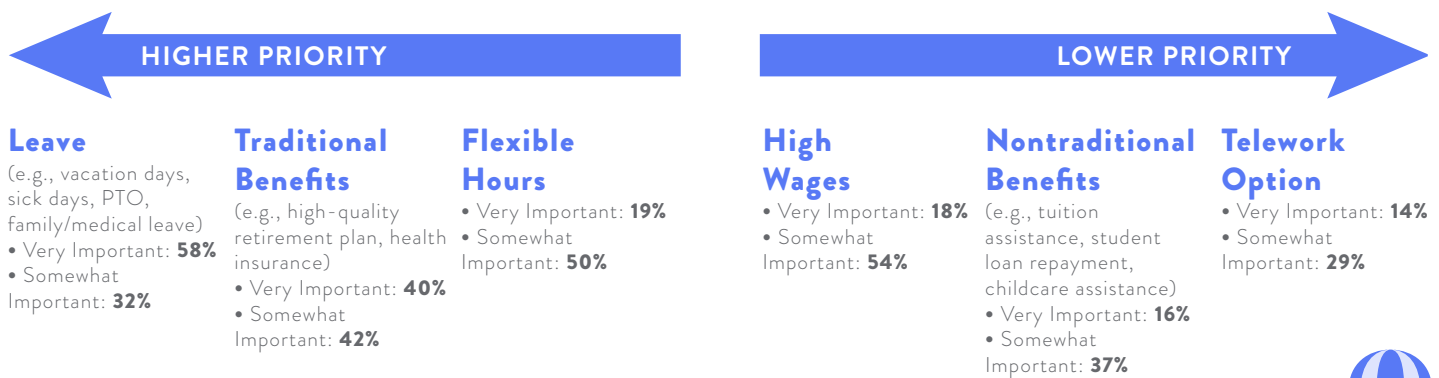
Avon PD — count on us!

RESEARCH CORNER Attracting the Next Generation of Public Servants



IN January, MissionSquare Research Institute published *New Career Entrants to Public Service: Lessons for Employers from Fellowship Applicants*. This report features findings from a survey of candidates in the Lead for America public service program. The survey gauged their motivations for working in public service, as well as their priorities, short-term goals, and career aspirations. Understanding the motivations of these young and eager candidates could help local government managers attract new talent. Explore the report at <https://bit.ly/3mwrh0X>.

1 Priorities for compensation & benefits



2 Priorities when looking for a job



3 First impressions matter

Percentage of respondents reporting the following as very important:

- 71%** Shares accurate compensation range and optional benefits on job description
- 65%** Has a transparent hiring process
- 58%** Is responsive during the recruitment and hiring process
- 30%** Communicates with personalized messages





COLORADO MUNICIPAL LEAGUE

ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Join us as we celebrate a century of service to Colorado cities & towns

Wide open skies and endless plains will provide the perfect backdrop for CML's 101st Annual Conference, happening this June at the Gaylord of the Rockies Resort in Aurora, Colorado. Pre-conference sessions start Sunday afternoon, followed by two-and-a-half days of networking with officials from across the state, learning from peers, sharing ideas, and exchanging resources.

BUILD YOUR TOOLKIT

For more than 100 years, municipal officials have relied on CML's Annual Conference to provide them with the collaboration and resources they need to better serve their communities. At this year's conference, you'll gain resources and knowledge to help serve your community even more effectively, expert insights into key municipal issues from across the state, and connections with statewide peers and resources.

CRITICAL MUNICIPAL ISSUES

Be ready to take action. Monday and Tuesday morning will start with a keynote presentation that promises to inspire, empower, and add important tools to your tool kit.

On Monday, Sam Glenn will talk to us about attitude — how to develop a good one and use it to create positive experiences. Sam's inspiring and artistic approach will have you looking at your attitude in a new way.

"If there is one thing for certain in life," Glenn says, "it is that our attitude plays an incredible role in everything—personally and professionally."

Having written more than 30 books on attitude, Glenn is considered one of the leading authorities on the subject. Make sure not to miss him at the CML conference, where he will present, *Attitude Changes Everything*.

On Tuesday, you won't want to miss Meredith Elliott Powell's presentation, *Thrive: Turning Uncertainty to Your Competitive Advantage*.

We live in a time of great change, when the relentless pace of uncertainty radically affects our abilities to grow our organizations and keep our teams motivated. Only one thing is certain—more change is coming! If you're unprepared, uncertainty will hinder your ability to drive innovation, attract top talent, and achieve bottom line results.

While uncertainty can seem daunting, the truth is, it has an upside—it always has an upside. Uncertainty can be your greatest asset to thrive, grow, and turn disruption into opportunity. But you need a plan.

Be on the lookout for a survey from Meredith ahead of the conference. Audience participation will ensure she answers Colorado's most pressing municipal questions and is ready to help you and your municipality thrive!

CELEBRATE A CENTURY OF MUNICIPAL SERVICE

For the past 100 years, CML has worked alongside Colorado's cities and towns to create the communities we cherish, and the conference falls right in the middle of our year-long celebration.

We're keeping the party going by celebrating CML's 100th anniversary throughout the conference. You won't want to miss our birthday celebration during Monday's lunch, which will include the 2023 Sam Mamet Good Governance Award. And Tuesday's discussion will bring together some of the great minds of municipal gov-



ernment from CML and the National League of Cities to reflect on the changes we've seen over the years and what to expect in the future.

SPECIAL SESSIONS FROM THE CITY OF AURORA

The City of Aurora is rolling out the red carpet for our conference and showcasing some of the incredible things happening in their community. It will be a tough choice, but you'll have to pick between two mobile tours on Monday afternoon.

The first takes you to the Binney Water Purification Facility, where you will see first-hand how it uses natural and engineered barriers to exceed water quality standards and help meet the future needs of the city. It's a great option for anyone looking to step up their water quality game.

If your community struggles with housing, you won't want to miss the second option—Aurora's Housing Continuum tour. This tour will make stops at an outdoor space for people transitioning from encampment abatements, a new affordable housing development, and a few other housing projects.

There is no cost to attend these tours, but you must sign up in advance. Make sure you check the box of the tour you want to attend when you register for the conference.

EXPLORE THE EXPANDED EXHIBIT HALL

We listened to our attendees last year and are excited to offer an expanded Exhibit Hall! Open all day Monday and Tuesday, the Exhibit Hall will host an Exhibitor Showcase each day.

Our conference exhibitors are subject matter experts in municipal projects and services and are ready help you and your municipality in several different areas. You won't want to miss it. CML thanks all our sponsors for their support of CML and our municipalities around the state.

SESSIONS ARE RELEVANT & EDUCATIONAL

We know municipal officials have concerns that run the gamut, and our conference will keep you informed and ready to serve. It will feature sessions on state legislation that affects municipalities, affordable housing, water, communications, mental health, broadband, homelessness, efficient meetings, climate change, rural resources, accessibility, small lot development, DOLA, and much, much more!

WHO SHOULD ATTEND?

Our Annual Conference has something for everyone! CML invites anyone interested in municipal government, and we have special programming for mayors, councilmembers, managers/administrators, clerks, and department heads. We have a special lineup of sessions offering CLE credits for municipal attorneys.

MUNIVERSITY CREDITS

Conference attendees will receive 10 MUNiversity credits, and additional credits will be awarded for attending pre-conference sessions.

REGISTER TODAY!

Scan this QR code to visit CML's conference webpage, www.cml.org/conference.



Schedule

The conference schedule is preliminary and will grow as more sessions are confirmed.

Sunday, June 25

1-5 p.m. — Registration

2:30-4:30 p.m.

- Pre-conference Session: Leading Organizations in Crisis
- Pre-conference Session: Strategic Planning: Developing a Roadmap for Your Community's Future

4:30-5 p.m. — Welcome to the CML Annual Conference

5-6 p.m.— Informal Reception (cash bar)

Monday, June 26

7-8 a.m. — Sunrise Yoga

7:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

- Registration
- Work Zone
- Exhibit Hall

7:30 a.m.-8:45 a.m. — Continental Breakfast

9 a.m.-10:30 a.m. — **General Session: Attitude Changes Everything**, Sponsored by CIRSA

10:45-11:45 a.m.

- Transforming Water Intensive Landscapes: Case Studies on Innovative Local Policies & Programs
- Healing Our Politics: Mental Health in Public Space
- Unlocking Clerk Superpowers as Organizational Superglue
- Succession Planning: Key to Service Continuity
- Gas v. Electric: Taking the Hot Air out of the Home Electrification Debate

12-1:30 p.m.

- 100th Anniversary Celebration Luncheon & Sam Mamet Award Ceremony, *ticked event Sponsored by Xcel Energy*
- Small Group Lunches

1:45-3 p.m.

- CLE — 2023 Legislative Update
- The Benefits of a Positive Culture in Your Police Department
- Counting Down to Zero: Ending Homelessness One Community at a Time
- Technology Accessibility for Web Content and Applications
- Financing Development with TIF: It's a Sprint, Not a Marathon

3-4 p.m. — Exhibitor Showcase

3:30-5:30 p.m.

- Mayors Mingle
- Mobile Tour: Aurora Binney Water Purification Facility Tour
- Mobile Tour: Aurora's Housing Continuum: Homelessness to Housed

4:15-5:15 p.m.

- CLE — Public Funds & Campaigning: Staying Out of FCPA Trouble
- Accessing Expanded Brownfield Resources
- Small Lot Development is Not a Small Thing

5:30-7 p.m. — Opening Welcome Reception

Tuesday, June 27

7-8 a.m. — 5k Fun Run/Walk

7:30-8:45 a.m.

- Continental Breakfast

8 a.m.-5 p.m.

- Registration
- Work Zone

8:15-8:45 a.m. — Meet the Candidates

9-10:30 a.m.

- General Session: Turning Uncertainty to Your Competitive Advantage
- CLE — Banning Lawns

Schedule

10:45-11:45 a.m.

- CLE — Construction Contracting Basics
- Innovative Solutions for Affordable Homeownership
- What's New at DOLA?
- Working with the Railroads
- The Efficient Meeting: Rules of Order
- Building Sustainable Organizations through People and Data

12:1-3:30 p.m. — **Meeting of the Minds Luncheon**, *ticketed event sponsored by Swire Coca-Cola*

1:45-2:30 p.m.

- Exhibitor Showcase

2:45-3:45

- CLE — Law Enforcement Related Internal Affairs: Policy, Practice & Legal Considerations
- CIRSA Session
- Building Intentional Relationships in Smaller Communities
- DEI Brain-based Approach to Inclusive Leading
- Broadband Funding & Resources
- Aurora's Approach to Addressing Youth Violence

4-5 p.m.

- CLE — Criminal v. Civil Enforcement of Municipal Codes
- Managing Your Messages in a Changing Media Environment
- Our Climate Future: Systems-based Environmental Leadership
- Emerging Issues Session No. 1
- Public Works Session

Wednesday, June 28

7:30-8:45 a.m.

- Breakfast for Elected Officials, which will include the Municipality Award Ceremony and special programming, The Mayor and the Manager go to the Movies: Lessons from Cinema, *ticketed event*
- Managers Breakfast, *ticketed event*

7:45-8:45 a.m. — **Continental Breakfast**

8-10 a.m. — **Registration**

9-10 a.m.

- CLE — Regulating Nuisance Businesses at the Municipal Level
- Funding Water/Wastewater Infrastructure Projects
- Destination Management
- Awareness, Avoidance & Action
- Emerging Issues Session No. 2

10:45-11:45 a.m.

- CLE — Navigating Attorney & Client Stress
- A Model for Civic Innovation
- Is a Gun Buyback Program Right for Your Community?
- Libraries as Post-pandemic Community Connectors
- Housing: An Economic Competitiveness Threat

12:1-3:30 p.m. — **Attorneys Luncheon: Speaker from the Colorado Office of the Attorney General**, *ticketed event*

Keynote Speakers



Sam Glenn

Attitude Changes Everything

Sam Glenn will help us explore how our attitudes work, how to change them, and how to harness your attitude to create positive experiences.



Meredith Elliott Powell

Thrive: Turning Uncertainty to Your Competitive Advantage

Uncertainty can seem daunting, but if you plan ahead, uncertainty can be your greatest asset to thrive, grow, and turn disruption into opportunity.

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Filling Vacancies on Municipal Boards



BY ROBERT SHEESLEY, CML GENERAL COUNSEL

Municipal elected officials leave office before the end of their terms for many reasons, including illness, family needs, a new job that requires their full attention, a move from the municipality, or a military deployment. Other times, officials are recalled from office or resign in protest. Whatever the reason, any departure leaves an essential office of local democracy empty and disrupts the governing body's work. Having a plan in place to fill a vacancy avoids interruptions and uncertainty and ensures that an effective successor is promptly selected.

APPOINTMENTS & ELECTIONS

Vacancies on municipal boards are filled in one of two ways. The governing body usually has the first opportunity to fill the vacancy by appointing a qualified elector to the position. State law and some municipal charters may set a time frame for filling that vacancy (e.g., 60 days). If the body does not appoint someone, or if time expires without an appointment, the body often must call a special election to select a successor. In some cases, leaving the seat empty may be a viable and legal option.

Each mechanism has benefits and drawbacks. Elections let voters have their say when the community's first choice leaves

office early. A special election, however, can cost thousands (or tens of thousands) of dollars. Further, state law restricts special elections from occurring near other elections. While waiting for an election, the governing body goes without a needed member and the community goes without a representative.

Because a vacancy appointee usually only serves until the next regular election (when voters get to choose who fills any remaining part of the term), time is of the essence. Appointments can be completed much faster than an election and permit the governing body to select a successor who will work best within the governing body and serve the municipality's

Although filling a vacancy can be burdensome, the full governing body can move forward with its business once the seat is filled. The body can look forward to having the benefit of the new member's unique voice and experience.

goals. For example, appointing a person with experience or involvement in the municipality's governance or work can require less onboarding time and lead to an easier integration with the body. Critics of appointments may claim voters are being ignored, but the body, as elected representatives, is fulfilling its lawful duty by making the appointment.

PLANNING FOR VACANCY APPOINTMENTS

Processes for appointing vacancies should focus on ensuring a thoughtful and timely appointment. The appointment process, as much as the appointment itself, can affect the legitimacy of the incoming member in the eyes of both the body and the community. Further, a prolonged stalemate or even an uncertain process can cause significant stress on a governing body and delay other important business.

The governing body has significant discretion to define a process for filling vacancies (unless there are existing charter restrictions). Communities should consider what interests they have in the speed of appointment, formality, and community engagement. The body may want to:

- Make the appointment a priority so the body's other work is not delayed by the lack of a member
- Avoid requirements that unnecessarily restrict the governing body's discre-

tion both in the process and the appointment itself.

- Use caution when looking to the prior elections for guidance as the results are not necessarily indicative of voters' second choice. The results of at-large races where voters had more than one choice or ranked voting results may suggest voter preference, but those results are not controlling

- Use application processes to learn more about applicants. Consider providing an informal setting like a reception or meet and greet for the public and elected officials to get to know applicants more personally

- Avoid situations where grudges or interpersonal conflict can begin even before the new member is seated. Decorum in the discussion of the appointment is critical. The person appointed will be a co-equal member of the body

- Avoid voting cannot be by secret ballot. Municipalities should consult with their attorneys to see if there are opportunities for members to indicate a preference, either anonymously or through a ranking, before an actual vote

- Find some way to encourage compromise. Ranked voting methods may help to narrow a field while avoiding knocking out qualified applicants.

- When compromise fails, have a way to end stalemate before hours (or days) of deadlocked voting. Some communities

have employed random selection methods such as a coin flip or drawing lots. Others have self-imposed deadlines after which an election may be considered or required.

- Remember that vacancy appointments are non-partisan and require service to the whole community. Bodies should consider prioritizing qualities like experience, expertise, community involvement, or collegiality over an applicant's perceived ideology or commitment to a particular position.

- Consider a local rule, subject to voter approval, to ensure vacancy appointments are open to previously-term limited officials and that time served as a vacancy appointee does not limit future service. CML has long held the opinion that the partial term of a person appointed or elected to fill that vacancy is not counted towards term limits.

Although filling a vacancy can be burdensome, the full governing body can move forward with its business once the seat is filled. The body can look forward to having the benefit of the new member's unique voice and experience. Knowing in advance what the body will do when a vacancy occurs helps to get to that point quickly.

This column is not intended and should not be taken as legal advice. Municipal officials are always encouraged to consult with their own attorneys.



Modernizing a Home Rule Charter

TAMARA NILES, ENGLEWOOD CITY ATTORNEY

IN 2021, the City of Englewood began evaluating its home rule charter for legal compliance and best practices including inclusivity, flexibility in responding to modern challenges and technology, and improving accessibility to local government. Englewood's city council first approved a review procedure, then began a review of every charter section with these goals in mind. By following a sound and public process, Englewood voters approved all proposed charter amendments on the November 2022 ballot. The modernization of the charter means Englewood, as an organization, can more easily adapt over time and bring more people to participate in public service.

HOW THE CHARTER REVIEW PROCESS WORKED

Updating a charter is a significant undertaking that requires careful consideration, public input, and intentional drafting. Englewood first reviewed its charter and applicable state law to develop procedural options to modernize the charter. Englewood charter § 8 and C.R.S. § 31-2-210(1) provide broad authority to present charter amendments for elector approval through citizen petition or council-initiated ordinance. Staff identified three procedural options: council-led review during study sessions, elected charter commission following C.R.S. § 31-2-210(2), or appointed advisory committee review and recommendation to council. After considering each, includ-

ing costs, speed, and public engagement and accessibility, the Englewood city council chose to spearhead the project themselves during monthly public meetings guided by outside counsel.

The city council first chose the methods and form of proposed amendments. Council considered proposing to scrap its 1958 charter entirely and instead adopt a modern "framework" charter that recognizes the city council's broad authority to implement evolving best practices, or instead, to maintain its existing charter but propose amendments section-by-section. After consideration, the council decided to maintain the existing format and honor the 23 prior votes by the citizens of Englewood to create the current government structure.

Council then directed staff to first bring “low hanging fruit” for consideration, or provisions that are not enforceable or legally compliant, or did not reflect modern practices. After review and comment from staff, outside counsel scheduled hybrid, streaming monthly meetings with council to evaluate provisions for amendment consideration. Following eight months of review, the council chose to advance eight amendments focused on resolving conflicts with governing law and changing antiquated provisions that affected inclusivity, accessibility, and engagement.

PICKING THE “LOW-HANGING FRUIT” TO OPEN ENGLEWOOD’S GOVERNMENT

► Gender Silence Promotes Inclusivity

Like many mid-century documents, Englewood’s Charter referred to all persons as male (e.g., “he,” “him,” or “Councilmen”) instead of reflecting today’s diverse leaders and workforce. The Englewood city council, for example, has three female council members. Staff publicly pointed out that their gender was not male, despite charter provisions referring to them in their positions as such. In response, without political opposition or controversy, the city council proposed a ballot question to make the entire charter gender silent (e.g., “Council Member” or using a title instead of a pronoun) to reflect the make-up of today’s workforce and thereby support inclusivity.

► Updated Meeting Practices Support Accessibility, Engagement, Participation

Public emergency restrictions mandated that local governments implement flexible meeting processes, electronic participation, and live streaming as a matter of necessity. Englewood’s charter previously required meetings “at the City Hall,” but that was not enforceable due to orders affecting in-person gatherings. Once emergency orders were lifted, cit-

ies maintained remote attendance and participation in some form to improve accessibility, engagement, and participation by those unable to attend in person due to work or family obligations, mobility restrictions, illness, or otherwise.

To continue that flexibility without violating the charter, the city council proposed the charter eliminate meeting locations and allow discretion for time and manner of meetings. The city council chose to maintain its weekly meeting schedule and has allowed a hybrid option for remote attendance by public, staff, and council members. While not implemented in Englewood, other options to improve accessibility and engagement could include varying meeting

Some municipalities have adopted ranked voting in their elections through charter amendments.

times by, for example, holding study sessions during the day and regular meetings after normal work hours to allow shift workers to attend or participate. Avoiding charter restrictions that prevent such flexibility is important to opening government to all.

► Ensuring Proper Representation: Wards, At-Large Seats, Ranked Choice Voting

The Englewood City Council consists of four ward representatives and three at-large members. In evaluating charter amendment proposals, the city council considered opportunities to both ensure that, beyond meeting constitutional requirements, Englewood’s structure implemented the voices of the people of the

city as much as possible. The former charter did not clearly align with applicable constitutional standards for electoral districts that require contiguous, compact districts with approximately the same number of registered voters, with the variance in number of registered voters between the district with the highest and lowest number of registered voters being minimized to the greatest extent possible. At-large seats are accountable to all voters in a municipality, but ward seats can ensure the influence of specific segments of a population. To ensure legal compliance, the city council proposed a charter amendment to this effect, but it did not reconsider its use of wards.

Englewood did not adopt changes to its voting methods, but municipalities considering revisions to their charters may consider voting alternatives that could maximize constituent representation. In 2021, H.B. 21-1071 created C.R.S. § 1-7-118, establishing a procedure for municipalities to implement “Ranked Choice Voting” (aka instant-runoff voting) effective Jan. 1, 2023. See Ranked Choice Voting, Colorado General Assembly Staff Publication (2022) <https://bit.ly/3Z6ybl8>. In a ranked voting election, generally speaking, if no candidate receives a majority of first choice votes, an instant runoff occurs by counting voters’ second choices. Some municipalities have adopted ranked voting in their elections through charter amendments.

► Board and Commission Accessibility Improves Engagement

Beyond informing local policies, accessibility to appointments and public service on commissions develop active, engaged, and informed citizens and future leaders. Service on a municipal board or commission is often a stepping stone toward a run for local office. Service on a board or commission may be considered, formally or informally, as a prerequisite to be appointed to fill a vacancy on the council.



While many municipalities do not have enough board and commission citizen seats for those interested, Englewood faces the opposite issue. Unfortunately, at times, Englewood has had more vacant positions than applicants. To ensure its boards could function as intended, the city council proposed a charter amendment to reduce the minimum board seats of charter-created boards to five members.

ADDITIONAL CHARTER PROVISIONS FOR SUCCESSION PLANNING

Municipalities considering charter amendments to promote succession planning or advance policies of inclusivity, government engagement, accessibility, and participation may wish to review and update:

- Councilmember qualifications that may unduly limit persons from service

who would bring diverse perspectives and backgrounds to elected city leadership, such as prior convictions or age.

- Term length and limits, which can increase opportunities for service but can restrict experienced, respected leaders from continuing their service.
- Processes to fill council vacancies that might discourage inclusivity and diversity or restrict the pool of potential appointment candidates.
- Appointee qualifications that may hinder the recruitment of applicants, including residency restrictions.

GOING FORWARD: THE FUTURE OF ENGLEWOOD'S CHARTER AMENDMENTS

Englewood voters considered eight charter amendments and two sales tax increases on the November 2022, ballot. While all passed, feedback included too many ballot questions/voter fa-

tigue, insufficient information on the proposed revisions, and a lack of statements for the voter guide.

The city continues to pursue this project with the expert assistance of outside counsel to support the policies of the city council and reflect the values of its citizens. By continuing its public review and consideration process, and responding to feedback received, the city hopes to propose additional charter amendments that continue to receive majority elector support.

This article is not intended as legal advice. Municipalities should consult their own counsel to determine applicable law affecting their charter provisions and the advisability of amending their own charters.

SPOTLIGHT: WRAY

EMS Cadet Program

BY KEVIN OESTMAN, WRAY EMS COMMUNITY PARAMEDIC, AND STEVE RYDQUIST, WRAY EMS DIRECTOR

Emergency Medical Services face many threats that present a peril to the state of EMS nationwide. Among the greatest of threats is the lack of workforce. In small, frontier communities such as Wray, the challenges of retaining and recruiting qualified staff are intensified.

Like many EMS providers, the Wray Municipal EMS has experienced a loss of trained staff due to retirement, and it struggles with recruiting new hires to fill those vacancies. In our region, it is compounded by the total lack of newly trained personnel to recruit. In Wray, we have been confronted with having to consider reducing the level of services provided to our community. With the nearest Level II Trauma Center being nearly 150 miles away, this consideration is not one our community is willing to accept.

In response to the challenges, a working group was organized to brainstorm, develop long-term strategies, and create solutions—with the primary goal being to “grow our own.” The inception of an EMS Cadet Program was identified as an opportunity to engage high school youth to encourage them to pursue careers in EMS. The program was designed to educate and mentor cadets with a hands on experience alongside Wray EMS providers. Realizing it may take several years, a youth engagement program has potential to positively improve both the local and regional workforce.

In year one, students shadow and observe all aspects of EMS, including daily operations, equipment familiarity, patient care in and out of a hospital setting (basic and advanced life support concepts), emergency response, scene management, and long-distance inter-facility patient transports. Students receive education in first aid and CPR. The ultimate outcome for students is to gain



a level of expectation and comfort with the field.

In year two, cadets typically meet the minimum age requirement to pursue EMT certification and are provided the instruction and mentorship to do so. An integral aspect of the cadet program is the individual mentorship, both clinically and operationally, provided by Wray EMS staff. Learning and growth is fostered through mentorship which generates personal, clinical, and operational growth for both the cadet and paramedic/EMT.

In the third and final year, the cadet continues to receive professional feedback on all aspects of EMS.

With experience and increased exposure to patient care, cadets have the opportunity to pursue and obtain certifications up to an EMT level. Cadets may elect to further increase their level of certification by becoming certified at an EMT-IV level, enabling the initiation of IV access and the ability to administer some basic medications.

While still in the early stages, the Wray

EMS Cadet program has received a high level of interest. In 2022, the first cadet class of four high school students was accepted into the program.

The program has been successful. Most recently, a graduating senior cadet plans to pursue a post-secondary health and medicine field of study next fall.

A high level observation of the program illustrates graduating high-school seniors have the ability to enter into the EMS workforce immediately. Some may utilize their experience and education to assist their postsecondary education pursuits financially, working part-time in the field. Others may choose to continue further down the health and medical career path, increasing their scope of care capability.

Engaging youth in a mutually beneficial manner is one strategy being utilized to promote the EMS profession and increase our long-term capability. Wray EMS is extremely proud of the work being done and optimistically looking to the sustained provision of services for years to come.

Creating OPPORTUNITIES for Meaningful YOUTH Civic Engagement

BY DOUG LINKHART

NATIONAL CIVIC LEAGUE PRESIDENT

When Brighton lost a high school senior to suicide in 2011, local youth did more than grieve: they took action. To help others talk about mental health issues and break down stigmas, the Brighton Youth Commission started SPEAK Week, an annual event that has taken place since 2012 to promote awareness of mental health issues facing young people. Brighton's Youth Commission and its SPEAK Week are just one example of ways in which cities are engaging young people in civic affairs. It's also a good example of why cities should engage young people: because many challenges facing our communities involve them.



Challenges like mental health, substance abuse, crime, health, and economic well-being start with young people, who now comprise a third of our population nationwide. Cities and towns in Colorado and beyond have found countless ways to engage young people, a topic that is particularly important to the National Civic League this year, including through our All-America City Awards, journal and webinars. Here are some areas and examples of effective youth civic engagement in the state and beyond.

YOUTH INPUT: COMMISSIONS

Youth commissions are probably the most common way for involving young people, but they vary widely in how much actual influence they provide, with some simply being symbolic.

The Brighton Youth Commission is one of the state's more robust youth commissions, with programs like SPEAK Week and regular consultation with the city council. The commission is a body of 22 youth and 6 adults appointed by city council to study and investigate matters impacting youth in the City of Brighton.

SPEAK starts with a week of educational activities with students and culminates in a 5k walk. The walk helps bring awareness to the severity of teen suicide while also working to educate the community and break down the stigmas that surround mental illness. The commission's work with SPEAK has greatly influenced the way our school district addresses teen mental health and suicide awareness.

YOUTH VOTING & READINESS

While the popular perception is that young people don't vote, the numbers have been rising and approach adult levels for general elections. CIRCLE, a center at Tufts University, estimates midterm turnout for people between ages 18-29 at 27%, compared to overall turnout of 46.5%. While this is slightly lower than the turnout in 2018, it continues an upward trend since 1994. In general elections, youth turnout

has averaged much higher rates, peaking at 50% in 2020.

For policy-makers who want to increase youth turnout, one of the keys is to make registration and voting easy. Both CIRCLE and the Brennan Center for Justice have shown that policies like online voter registration, automatic voter registration, and pre-registration are correlated with higher voter participation, and this is particularly true for young people. In 2020, turnout in states with voter-friendly policies was 53%, compared to 43% in states without these policies, according to CIRCLE.

Many youth engagement programs are aimed at preparing or encouraging young people to vote. Kids Voting creates tools

Volunteering
teaches a strong
sense of empathy
and citizenship.

for preparing younger kids to vote and the National Youth Rights Association advocates for policies to make it easier to vote. There are many organizations that focus on encouraging young people to vote, including Campus Compact, Civic Influencers, and Acti-Vote.

In 2018, a ballot issue in Golden would have made it the first Colorado city to allow young people ages 16-17 to vote in local elections, but the measure failed. At least six cities do so nationally, and an advocacy group called Vote 16 USA is promoting the concept. In the meantime, many states allow people to vote in caucuses or primaries at age 17 if they will turn 18 by the general election day, though Colorado does not.

DIRECT YOUTH INPUT & PROBLEM-SOLVING

Youth civic engagement does not have to be initiated by government; in fact, some of the most effective initiatives have come from youths themselves. In Denver, a group formerly called Padres y Jovenes Unidos, and now called Movimiento Poder, convinced Denver schools to change disciplinary standards to include restorative justice techniques and pull police out of schools.

One instance of a university initiating a youth program is work by students from the University of Colorado Masters of the Environment graduate program to create a youth-friendly map and a teen-friendly map of Boulder. The maps show services, community centers, kid-friendly retail, and other features of interest to children or teens.

In the budgetary realm, some cities invite young people to take part in participatory budgeting programs, either as part of community efforts or youth-specific efforts. Healthy Archuleta, a nonprofit organization serving Archuleta County, recently solicited ideas for how to spend \$20,000 to improve food systems in the county. Denver conducted a program in 2022 to allocate \$2 million in capital dollars. The 15 Forever program, a project of the Community Foundation of Boulder, engages young people to allocate mini-grants to nonprofit causes in the area. Other areas for youth engagement include fiscal mapping, which involves analyzing funding streams for youth programming, and hackathons, in which young people develop solutions to problems through data crunching.

Several years ago, in response to a catastrophic flood, the All-America City of Longmont created Supporting Action for Mental Health, a group focused on improving civic engagement and mental health services. It includes youth voices as part of its work and has created a youth-based Mental Health First Aid program and an outreach program to LGBTQ+ youth.

Youth civic engagement does not have to be initiated by government; in fact, some of the most effective youth initiatives have come from youths themselves.

VOLUNTEERING

Youth who volunteer and are involved within their communities have been shown to have higher success at problem solving, negotiation and building relationships, and being a part of their community. Volunteering teaches a strong sense of empathy and citizenship.

According to Youth Services America, early civic engagement has been found to lead to better mental health, higher levels of education, and higher household incomes. Volunteering not only creates more connected communities, it also creates safer communities. Youth who volunteer and give back in their community are 50% less likely to engage in risky behaviors.

Global Youth Service Day (which is actually multiple days) is coming up April 28-30. It is the largest youth service and civic action event in the world, and it is the only one that celebrates and builds the capacity of all youth ages 5-25 to help our communities and democracy thrive by working together for the common good. In 2022, there were 565 global partners and al-

most 600 participating communities joining together to create change and a lasting impact locally and globally.

YOUTH LEADERSHIP PROGRAMS

Youth commissions, input processes, and summits help develop youth leadership skills, though there are also many programs that directly build youth leadership. From the Youth Leadership Academy in Nederland to the statewide Colorado Young Leaders program, these programs help develop leaders for the future and can be a great tool for reaching under-represented or marginalized populations. Essay contests, like an “If I Were Mayor” program for younger kids, are a great way to nurture new leaders.

Whether it’s through advisory bodies, problem-solving sessions, or leadership programs, what matters most is that young people are seen, heard, and invited to be contributing members of our communities. Youth civic engagement is a powerful tool for building long-term community strength.

RESOURCES

- Youth voting poll
<https://bit.ly/407YsXO>
- Boulder child- and teen-friendly city maps
<https://bit.ly/3yRUyGg>
- Voting Age Status Report
<https://bit.ly/3ySic5K>
- Food Coalition’s Participatory Budgeting
<https://bit.ly/3YZvecc>
- Engaging Youth Leaders in Fiscal Mapping Process
<https://bit.ly/400YEld>

SPOTLIGHT: BERTHOUD

‘Ground Control to David Buoy’

Town gets creative to teach young people the importance of clean drinking water

BY STEPHANIE HORVATH, TOWN OF BERTHOUD COMMUNITY OUTREACH SPECIALIST

The Town of Berthoud had a drinking problem. To be precise, it had a problem with its drinking water. While it has always been safe to drink, water from Berthoud Reservoir came with an “earthy” scent every spring when warm air caused algae to bloom. To combat these blooms, the town applied for and was awarded a Larimer County grant to purchase a solar-powered, ultrasonic buoy. This little buoy floats in the reservoir, monitors water quality 24 hours a day, and knocks down the algae before it blooms using ultra-sonic waves that do not harm the fish or bugs that live in the water or people who use the adjacent trails.

Once launched, the town held a “Name the Buoy” contest for all elementary-aged children. The goal was to introduce our community to the fascinating technology deployed by the water department. The winning name — David Buoy — was submitted by 6-year-old Georgia Hills, a first-grader at Berthoud Elementary School who loves dancing to the music of David Bowie.

“The naming contest was a fun way to bring attention to some of the interesting technology we use to maintain the town’s water source,” said Ken Matthews, director of water utilities with the Town of Berthoud, “The hope was that it would inspire people to learn a little more about hydro-technology and what goes into providing potable water to a town like Berthoud.”

It was a fun contest won by an adorable young lady named Georgia and capped off with an official proclamation and a permanent sign posted along the Berthoud Reservoir Trail for all to see. The question was, how do we continue to inspire curiosity in hydro-technology and our water and wastewater systems?



To engage another portion of our community, Berthoud’s town staff members occasionally participate in monthly “Food for Thoughts” events held at the Berthoud Community Library District. Here they spend an hour connecting with community members while discussing their specialties over a meal. In the case of the water/wastewater discussion, the moderator was forced to shut it down after an hour and a half because the conversation was so lively and engaging that it showed no signs of ending. It’s noteworthy when you realize this discussion about wastewater, in all of its gory glory, was happening while they were eating breakfast. The engagement level of this event led to an invitation to participate in a podcast by the library’s C.E.O.

To further engage our community, the town is looking to participate in the local high school’s Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (S.T.E.M.) internship program. At Berthoud High School, kids enrolled in the S.T.E.M. program are strongly encouraged to participate in an internship before they receive their spe-

cialized diplomas. While not a commonly pursued career path, working with water and wastewater is a dynamic, interesting, and well-paying field. Mike Murphy, Vice President of operations at Ramey Environmental Compliance, the company that helps to ensure Berthoud’s drinking water meets or exceeds the state water quality standards, learned about this career path after a tour of a wastewater treatment facility. He says, “I love that I work outside and with my hands every day, but I also get to use my brain with chemistry, math, and biology.” He continues, “I also understand how meaningful this profession is and that I’m not only protecting people, but I’m also on the front line of protecting the environment.”

By engaging the community at every age level and in different capacities, we hope to accomplish several things: to create awareness of what goes into managing our water resources daily, help residents opt for water-smart choices in their lives, and introduce kids to career opportunities to help keep our resources well-managed in the future.

SPOTLIGHT

City of Westminster High School Internship Program

BY MARTHA HEINZ, SR. WORKFORCE OUTREACH COORDINATOR, CITY OF WESTMINSTER

When you think about a high school intern, you might not realize the value to both the student and the employer. High school students offer a glimpse of the next generation of leaders and future workers. Students get an inside look into a career path of their interest while gaining hands-on experience in a work-based learning environment. For the employer, internships bring new perspectives into industries while simultaneously paving the way for career pipelines with higher retention rates.

Over the last several years, the City of Westminster has created a variety of internship opportunities for high school and post-secondary students. As public servants and designers of local policy and community, it suits the government to take an active approach to shape the next generation of leaders. Internships accomplish this goal while discovering new talent in your own backyard.

Westminster's High School Internship Program was created in 2017, with the first class in 2018. The city partners with all three school districts within city limits including Westminster Public Schools

(WPS), Adams 12 Five Star Schools (Adams 12), and Jefferson County Public Schools (JCPS). Since 2018, the city has hosted 46 students through the internship program. Of them, 10 participated in a Virtual Mentor Program in 2021, because of COVID-19 safety restrictions.

Every year, the city searches for high-performing supervisors within its workforce to host a student for a semester. The selected supervisors work with the internship coordinator to create a job description that serves as an overview of the internship for the student as well as a carefully crafted internship work process and timeline. The city works with the participating schools to help advertise the internship opportunities and career paths by speaking directly to students or working with teachers.

Together they collaborate to recruit junior and senior students from corresponding programs or to identify students with an interest in one of the offered career paths.

High school internships can be competitive, with only six or seven internships available for an entire school district. In Westminster's newest, most popular internship, the fire department receives 25-30 student applicants each year for just one or two placements. Adams 12 students and WPS students must complete 50 hours of work-based learning within a 13-week internship. JCPS students are required to complete a 100-hour internship within the



One of the benefits of an industry project is that students are engaging in work intended to prepare them for the “real world” after graduation.

13-week time frame with the addition of an industry-related project during the summer semester.

To help students learn different strategies of research and writing, internship projects focus on a study of the industry, where students can research a topic, theory, or question they wish to pursue. One of the benefits of an industry project is that students are engag-

ing in work intended to prepare them for the “real world” after graduation.

Projects are optional for Adams 12 and WPS students. In place of a project, these students participate in scheduled enrichment events. Enrichment events can range from interviewing city leaders in a panel-like structure to touring Standley Lake to learn about the city’s conservation efforts. Enrichment events serve as an opportunity to connect with students outside their internship roles while teaching them how the city functions.

Students start their internships with an orientation, which teaches them about the city’s history, structure, mission, and values. This meeting also sets the foundation for guidelines and responsibilities. All intern supervi-

sors are required to attend orientation as well, which prepares the supervisor for mentoring a high school student. Supervisors learn about the generational differences in their students, how they like to receive feedback, and how to coach, lead, and motivate. Student interns end the semester with a commencement celebration. Upon successful completion, students receive a letter of recommendation with a certificate of completion.

As in any program, changes and updates are necessary to stay apprised of new challenges within the workforce and industry. Recruitment of the new generation of employees is no longer traditional, and governments have to step outside of their traditional-like structures to help attract and retain talent. Internship programs or any work-based learning opportunity helps bridge the issue by providing students and employers with a mutually beneficial partnership.



SPOTLIGHT

Parker Youth Commission

BY JEFF TOBORG, TOWN OF PARKER MAYOR

The Town of Parker is on a mission to grow and support the next generation of leaders by bringing their voice to town hall.

It is no surprise that there are often communication barriers between a community's elected officials and youth leaders, so to bridge that gap, the town council welcomed the Parker Youth Commission to our rank of advisory boards last May.

The purpose of this nine-member commission is to provide a means for Parker's youth to learn how their local government works and allow them to participate in the process and become a vessel for representing the needs of their peers. It will provide an opportunity for these emerging leaders to share their perspective on issues affecting the lives of young people in areas such as public safety, social issues, recreation, arts and culture, and more.

In creating this commission, we wanted to ensure that not only youth living inside our town boundary were represented, but also non-residents who contribute to the community, including those who attend one of our schools or churches or work for one of our local businesses.

By the time our selection process concluded, we were excited to have found several qualified candidates representing three of our local high schools to appoint as inaugural members to the Parker Youth Commission: Amara Fantl, Carson Flowers, Sarah Goudjil, Joey Jung, Brayden Parsons, Iris Pixler, Noor Reslan, Landon Schnell, and Aarav Varma.

In the short amount of time since this group's installation, our Youth Commission members have already conducted several meetings, elected a leadership team, and created subcommittees to focus on areas where they feel the community could ben-



“We cannot always build the future for our youth, but we can build our youth for the future.”

— FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT

efit from a younger perspective. The group also crafted an official mission statement to guide their focus:

“We, the Parker Youth Commission, serve as advocates for local youth and advise the Town of Parker, including elected officials and town staff. We strive to actively represent, engage, and educate those connected to Parker. Through the creation of unique opportunities, we seek to encourage positive change and community involvement.”

The commission has identified several goals that it plans to tackle in the coming year. Chief among them is service. The

group itself will be taking on a community service project that will benefit the Parker community at large, a proposed mural within the East-West Trail tunnel that runs underneath Chambers Road.

Additionally, the commissioners plan to empower their peers to contribute by identifying and promoting local volunteer and internship opportunities that are available for our youth.

When our town began the process of creating this commission, one of our goals was to help inspire that “next generation” of community leaders. What we quickly realized is that this group really did not need to be inspired at all. They came prepared and hungry for an outlet to contribute. We are honored to have created a forum to further grow their leadership skills and are excited to see the future steps they take to help make Parker a better place for people of all ages.

SPOTLIGHT

Montrose Youth City Council

BY BRICEIDA ORTEGA, CITY OF MONTROSE DEPUTY CITY CLERK AND YOUTH CITY COUNCIL COORDINATOR

The Montrose Youth City Council was established by the Montrose city council to encourage greater youth participation in the city's government. The city council believes youth are an important part of the community and their needs and well-being are a legitimate concern of the City of Montrose. This youth council provides a great opportunity for Montrose youth to serve in helping to strengthen and support the community by promoting active engagement in local municipal matters.

The Montrose Youth City Council is composed of students from different high schools within the city. These students are future leaders, and it is critical that they are exposed to municipal government from an early age. In addition to earning valuable leadership experience, they get involved in fun social activities that make their communities even better.

After a few years of establishing the Montrose Youth City Council, there was a need for a reference guide that would set out accepted practices and policies. Youth city council and its coordinators created a manual that includes sections that specify the establishment of the youth council, membership composition, length of terms, organizational structure, and procedures. The creation of this manual has helped our youth city council be more structured and organized.

The goals for the council, outlined in the manual, are to provide an opportunity for the youth of this community to acquire greater knowledge and appreciation for the American political system through active participation in that system; help The Montrose City Council solve problems and accomplish the goals by working directly with the representatives of the youth; serve



the youth of this community by informing the city government of the needs and wishes of the youth; planning and implementing social, educational, cultural, athletic, and recreational activities for the youth; and working with The Montrose City Council, Montrose County School District, and other local organizations to provide new opportunities for Montrose youth.

We also have a scholarship program for the youth city councilors. It was created in 2013 by City Manager William Bell. The program allows members of the youth city council to receive up to \$500 for each year served for use at an institution of higher education. For a member to be considered for a scholarship, they must be in good standing with the criteria outlined in the Youth City Council Manual.

Each year, the youth council organizes an event for teens that provides a safe space so teens don't go out and get involved in activities that may get them in

trouble. This year, the youth council partnered with the Montrose Recreation District to host a "Shamrock the Rec" event that provided fun indoor activities for teens. The youth council decided to focus on mental health awareness this year.

A recommendation for other municipalities that are interested in starting their own youth city council is to begin by drafting a manual or organizational plan and start recruiting efforts months in advance. Youth in our communities are always looking for ways to be more involved. Taking part in civil society and governance activities, such as youth councils, encourages our youth to learn how to make a positive impact on our communities.

Lessons on Local Government

A resource for teaching civics K-12

BY KENT WILLMANN, LESSONS ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT TRAINER AND CURRICULUM WRITER

“Those people are smart and they really care about our community.” This is what students say about local leaders after interacting with them in classrooms and other settings. Interestingly enough it is also what leaders say after engaging with the students. These interactions are a key part of Lessons on Local Government, which is a joint effort between CML and the Special District Association that aims to provide teachers, leaders, and students with lessons and materials to make interactions and learning about local government powerful and engaging.

Building leadership and citizenship skills by connecting students with local leaders and issues right outside their back door provides lasting benefits. Students learn they can play important roles in solving local issues and by working on local programs. Given the divisive and corrosive state of politics on the national and often the state level, the nonpartisan nature of local government allows students to see people working together to create policies and programs designed to solve problems. They learn that local government is made up of people just like them and that they too can become leaders.

Years ago I sat at my kids’ fourth grade soccer game chatting with a new set of parents. When I asked him what he did he said, “I am the Political Science Department Chair at CU-Boulder.” I shrank down in my chair, because I was a high school civics teacher. Well, about three weeks later I

worked up enough courage to ask, “What do we need to do in high school to get kids ready for college level political science?” And I ducked. I knew what he was going to say. He was going to say, MORE, they need MORE. Because that is what all college types say to high school folks. To his credit, he did not say MORE. He said, “Just get them interested and we can do the rest.” He followed that up by writing an outreach grant that resulted in several key learning experiences for our students that did just that, got them interested in local government.

One of those experiences was a city council election candidate forum. We invited local candidates to come to our high school and discuss local issues. We picked a few local issues like homelessness, recreation opportunities, and recycling programs for students to focus on. Students learned about the issues and explored candidates’ positions on campaign materials. Students then engaged in a question writing contest. Whoever wrote the best question(s) got to ask them. We had an in-school field trip so



kids could attend even if they did not have government class that period. Wow, what a day! Candidates engaged in serious debates about the students' questions and the students were hooked. I still use photos from the forum at the start of teacher workshops to show the power of local government to drive student interest.

We learned that an issue-driven approach is what creates the most interest from students. I suspect that as a local leader, you don't get many phone calls asking for an explanation of the seven steps for how an idea becomes an ordinance. Instead, you get phone calls and emails about local issues — that's what students are interested in, too. Everything from traffic laws to animal control to tattoo regulation to police relations to vaping to gun laws to water quality are of interest to young leaders. Most Lessons on Local

Government modules involve municipal issues. Our role-play simulations give students a chance to engage with each other, role-playing leaders making decisions about public safety, water resources, and recreation opportunities.

Younger students tend to gravitate to community helpers they see every day. Our Local Government is Safe, Clean, Fun, & Smart Calendar Contest asks kids to depict community workers providing services. Asking municipal department leaders to describe their programs with classrooms leads to very cool student art. Challenging older elementary students to create models for a local park that considers city regulations and meets the needs of seniors, parents, and kids alike shows just how smart and capable these young kids are. Thornton and Longmont both have parks designed in part by students.

Students can interact with local leaders in all kinds of ways that range from simple to complex. Responding to emails or texts

from students asking about local issues is one simple way for leaders to interact. Another is to seek out student input by asking young students to write letters to the mayor suggesting improvements to their neighborhood, town, or city and responding personally. Showing up in their classroom for Read Across America or to judge some presentations or projects makes a big impression on students. More complex options include mentoring individual students, helping with a Civic Action Project, or hosting a youth council.

Students are often surprised to learn that local leaders are folks that live down the street or are former students of their teacher (like the mayor of Cortez). They are even more surprised to learn how much (or more precisely, how little) leaders are paid. This is especially true when they learn how many hours are put in or how often leaders must listen to people complaining about snow removal or are accused of neglecting public safety. Perhaps most importantly, students begin to see local leadership as something they could do. Connecting with kids personally provides hope.

Lessons on Local Government has a new lesson that asks students to use local leader campaign ads to learn three things: What are issues facing our city or town? What are leadership characteristics candidates tout? What are campaign advertising techniques that are used to send messages?

One of my favorite stories involves standing in line at Kinkos behind a Longmont city council candidate who was making copies of his campaign ad. Now I get to say that local government is as close as the guy in front of you at Kinkos.



LESSONS ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Preparing Young People for Leadership

An interview with Carrie Adams, Leadership Academy program director

BY KENT WILLMANN, LESSONS ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT TRAINER AND CURRICULUM WRITER

MY former employer Silver Creek High School in Longmont has a Leadership Academy where students take leadership courses each year, work with real world mentors, and complete a Senior Capstone Project. I asked the program director, Carrie Adams, to respond to several questions about learning to lead. Here are a few of her responses.

Kent Willmann: Describe a kid(s) who connected with a local leader and what they did? Our kids have had many great connections with community leaders in the past 10 years of Capstone Projects. All of these students had local leaders as a mentor.

Carrie Adams: A young woman did an internship with BoCoPreps, and it launched her sports journalism career. She's now in the Communications Department at Kansas State University.

A student filmed the local flood for the city, chamber of commerce, and school district, went to film school at Emerson, and returned to Longmont to start his own filming business.

A young woman worked with members of the Longmont Airport Board, and is currently flying F-35's for the US Air Force.

A student hosted a benefit concert raising money for kids to have music in schools, and earned a scholarship to Juilliard and is now a performer.

A student tutored special needs students as a Capstone Project, and loved it so much he became a special education teacher.

KW: What do you see as the prime benefits from having a leadership program?

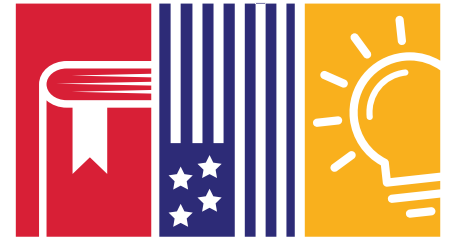
CA: We believe leadership is a skill that

can be learned and developed. By teaching leadership skills, deliberately and purposefully, we are not "hoping" kids become leaders. We are giving them experiences and opportunities to develop those leadership muscles in a safe and controlled environment.

We build on what skills kids come to the table with. Many students have been captains of their sports teams, they have been involved in middle school student council, they are in scout troops or other organizations and have had leadership opportunities. Our core values of respect, vision, teamwork, ethics, communication, and critical and creative thinking are key elements to leading. We learn conflict resolution and management, we improve public speaking, and we help build their confidence.

KW: What can local officials do to help develop leadership in their schools without a leadership program?

CA: Get involved in the schools! Email the principal and ask if they need any help, guest speakers, mentors, or experts in a course of study. Attend events at the school, sporting events, music events, and art shows. Volunteer to judge a debate. Invite students to public events. Invite them to be on city and town committees, and to assist with business events. Partner with district administrations to invest in education, with little things like teacher appreciation events, student of the month events, etc. Showing the kids the local leaders in action and inviting their voices to be heard builds a strong community and impacts kids for years to come.



LESSONS ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT

RESOURCES

- Lessons on Local Government website
<https://bit.ly/3Y5buDn>
- Poster contest
<https://bit.ly/3SAeITl>
- Silver Creek Leadership Program
<https://bit.ly/3lXklxb>
- Questions? Contact Kent Willmann
kentwillman@gmail.com

How to Reach Youth

Students are the next generation of leaders. Here are some ideas for encouraging an interest in civics and local government.



Visit a school

Encourage municipal officials to speak at schools, using this time to explain the importance of local government and community involvement.



Hold an essay contest

Sponsor an essay contest focusing on local government services. Recognize winner(s) at a town board/city council meeting.



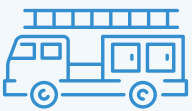
Offer tours

Invite students to come to city/town hall or other municipal facility for a tour.



Ask students for solutions

Host a competition to seek the best solution to a municipal problem, and recognize the winners at a council meeting.



Touch-a-truck day

Showcase police, fire, and/or public works vehicles at an elementary school or other popular location.



Host a roundtable

Have a discussion with high school students and municipal officials. Be sure to ask the students what they think about issues that are important in your community.



Story hour

Offer a special guest to read to kids during a “story hour” — a firefighter, police officer, mayor, council member, manager or other municipal official.



Career day

Sponsor a local government career day at a school or at city/town hall. Invite department heads to talk about their roles and the services their department provide.





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COLORADO MUNICIPALITIES

Melissa Mata, editor
Alex Miller, graphic designer
Mark Vanderbrook, circulation

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