#MNCOUNTIES STRONG

As 2019, and my tenure as your president, draws to an end, I take comfort in the position the association rests. I take little credit for all of the work done this year to get us to this point. I feel good about the hard working and innovative staff members at AMC, and how they have not only survived the building renovation but thrived and improvised to get through it. To those who have not seen the building project, we are well on the way to a late 2019 early 2020 completion. This was a necessary renovation to address health and safety issues and for association growth and efficiency.

While presidents of AMC don’t produce or implement an “initiative” for their year at the helm, they do have a vision for how the association should be directed. Julie and her team of professionals have made me proud to be closely associated with the work of AMC. Change within our association is inevitable and necessary. Handling that change with grace and understanding is a personality trait that everyone at AMC has embraced. I had a few ideas that proved to not be ready for prime time, that’s okay by me, as I know that the staff and incoming presidents will continue to push the envelope when it comes to staying fresh and showing value to every member.

We determined through a Board of Directors’ retreat that it was time to tackle some of the tough issues that tend to divide our association and that taking a well-researched and consensus driven position on controversial issues should keep us more relevant. To see where we’ll land on these issues, we are using a process that was developed and refined through trial and practice both at the Fall Policy Conference and again at Fall District Meetings. Using exercises employed by the Office of Collaboration and Dispute Resolution, we are gaining consensus and understanding among members.

AMC continues with successful newer programming like the Pathways program for new administrators. Our very successful Human Resources Helpline is being heavily utilized but we’ll need a revamp in the coming years if it is to continue, as AMC’s financial obligation continues to climb. The Preferred Business Partner program continues to meet when needed to further the cause of raising non-dues revenue.

We all hear “One Minnesota” a lot. Too much, maybe. I believe it’s important to recognize the need to work closely together to get what all counties need. However, understanding the differences between greater Minnesota, the metro area, and the vast suburban areas in between, is critical to achieving a unified front as 87 counties. It is my humble opinion that AMC has threaded that needle appropriately this year.

It was my goal this year to work hard for you and above all else “do no harm.” I believe I’ll be leaving the presidents gavel behind with the Association poised to tackle some more tough issues in the decade ahead. Thank you for hanging in there through this tumultuous year of construction and consensus building and for keeping AMC #MNCOUNTIES STRONG.

Scott Schulte
Anoka County Commissioner
2019 AMC President
The Association of Minnesota Counties (AMC) is a voluntary, non-partisan statewide member organization that began in 1909. All 87 Minnesota counties are members of the association. While county commissioners are our primary audience, all county officials and staff are also members of the association.

AMC works closely with the legislative and administrative branches of government in seeing that legislation and policies favorable to counties are enacted. AMC also provides educational programs, training, research and communications for county officials.

Our Mission
AMC unites Minnesota’s counties to achieve public service excellence.

Our Structure
AMC is governed by a Board of Directors composed of five officers, one representative from each of nine AMC districts, seven representatives from the metropolitan district, National Association of Counties (NACo) board of directors members, policy committee chairs; member services committee chairs and ex-officio representatives from organizations affiliated with AMC.

In 2019, AMC employed 19 staff members to conduct the work of the association which is divided into four broad functional service areas:

- Administrative Services
- Government Relations
- Member Services
- Research & Program Development

Our Goals
The goals for AMC are broadly outlined in the bylaws of the association as follows:

- To obtain appropriate policy responses from federal and state legislative and executive branches.
- To foster far sighted, innovative and responsive county service delivery, policy decisions and public resource utilization.
- To assure public understanding and support for the choices and decisions required to sustain good county governance.
- To develop resources to ensure the vitality of AMC programs to county government.
Building Blocks of Our Future

It has been an infrastructure year at the Association of Minnesota Counties – with a clear theme of “building” throughout our work. The organizational structure that we formed at the end of 2018 has created a solid foundation for our staff teams. We are constructing a new “Bridging Divides” initiative to guide our policy and program development work. And, after months of construction, we are also quite literally rebuilding our association headquarters from the ground up!

Late last year, we unveiled a new organizational structure that includes new managers and staff teams. We have settled into this structure in 2019, empowering teams to work closely together to launch new initiatives and approaches to our work. It provided an important support system for new staff members and continues to encourage collaboration and innovation. As you know, AMC is a small organization, with fewer than 20 staff. This reorganization has increased our ability to be strategic about managing critical resources.

For the past several years, the AMC Board of Directors reviewed options for managing the facility needs of the association. We considered acquiring adjacent properties, moving to a new location, or expanding the current building. After much deliberation, the board decided to move forward with a full remodel within the existing footprint of the AMC building. In addition to health, safety, and efficiency improvements, this provided an opportunity to reconfigure our workspace to better suit modern needs. We were able to relocate teams into common spaces, create functional meeting areas, and improve the technology throughout the building. You can read more about this once-in-a-generation capital improvement project in this annual report, and we hope you stop by to see our new building in 2020!

Finally, at the end of 2019, we launched our new “Bridging Divides” initiative. This initiative is multifaceted, but at its core, our goal is to enhance the skills of county leadership to tackle complex and divisive issues in a productive manner, both within the association, and back home across your local communities. This initiative represents a partnership between AMC and the Minnesota Office of Collaboration and Dispute Resolution (OCDR).

With leadership from Mariah Levison and Dave Bartholomay from OCDR, we designed a summer Board of Directors’ Retreat that allowed us to try out new techniques to tackle challenging topics, using transportation funding as our “test case.” It went so well that we continued this focus on transportation funding at the fall policy conference and fall district meetings, with overwhelmingly positive feedback.

The board also supported and encouraged AMC to continue to engage with other topics that tend to spark differing opinions. The consensus was: If we cannot talk about it here, then where? The Board feels strongly that we cannot sit on the sidelines during policy deliberations that affect counties. We need to have these tough conversations together as county leaders. As a result, AMC featured education sessions about immigration and recreational cannabis legalization as keynote presentations at the Fall Policy Conference. Both topics impact county operations; yet, members hold a wide variety of opinions about them. AMC is committed to ensuring that our statewide membership is well-informed, fully engaged, and prepared to move ahead even when we do not reach consensus.

As Minnesota enters an election year, we know that uncertainty and divisive political rhetoric will grow. Luckily, Minnesota county government has a tradition of working together. To continue to strengthen that tradition, AMC’s commitment to this “Bridging Divides” work crosses all of our staff teams, and will shape training sessions, research briefs, and policy discussions in 2020 and the years to come.

In sum, our “building” year has been a good opportunity to focus on the nuts and bolts of the Association of Minnesota Counties. I routinely hear from our members that our number one asset is our excellent staff team, and I couldn’t agree more. I appreciate the Board investments in our staff and facility. I am excited about the future we are building, and I am proud to work for a Board and members that are brave enough to face challenging topics thoughtfully, gracefully, and directly.

The past year was successful and productive for the Association of Minnesota Counties, and I look forward to the opportunities that await us in 2020.

Julie Ring
AMC Executive Director

Minnesota’s delegation at the National Association of Counties (NACo) Legislative Conference in Washington, D.C., with Minnesota U.S. Senator Amy Klobuchar.
In 2018 AMC’s revenue totaled $2,551,500 and expenditures totaled $2,468,250 resulting in a net profit of $83,250. The profit is largely due to staff changes in 2018, and increased interest income.

The primary source of revenue continues to be member dues, and the largest expenditure continues to be staff salary and benefit costs. Non-dues revenue—which includes meeting registration fees, affiliate management services, endorsement fees, and the AMC Preferred Business Partners program—accounts for 43% of all revenue. Increasing non-dues revenue continues to be a goal of the organization.

2018 ended with net assets of $2,973,350.
The Government Relations team is proud to oversee the development of the AMC legislative platform and priorities (both state and federal) to shape policy and advance the interests of Minnesota counties. From brainstorming ideas with county staff and drafting legislation to meeting with legislators in district and testifying in committees, AMC policy analysts work year-round to make sure county interests are forwarded (and protected!) at the Capitol. Outside of session, policy analysts also work with counties to delve into the specifics of good public policy, build relationships with outside partner organizations and departmental staff, and strategize how to move issues politically. A successful session requires a lot of preparation, leg work, and member engagement.

This year the Government Relations team helped deliver major victories for counties in all policy arenas including significant County Program Aid increases in the Tax bill, the enactment of historic row officer appointment language, limiting new shifts and mandates in the Health and Human Services arena, increasing broadband funding, and starting the process for the state assumption of 404 permitting (see 2019 session gains on the next page for more details).

Government Relations Team Widens Scope, Expertise By Welcoming New Staff

While AMC policy analysts have always worked closely with our in-house affiliate organization directors, 2019 was the first year of intentional changes to internal meeting structures to incorporate both policy analysts and affiliate directors in all Government Relations meetings. This initiative was enacted to further strengthen collaboration, bring in additional issue expertise, and encourage a more dynamic brainstorming of policy solutions.

The “enhanced” government relations team meetings now include nine total staff (six policy analysts and three affiliate directors) with broad issue expertise, backgrounds, and legislative connections. Aside from strengthening AMC’s strategic position at the Capitol, the widening of team scope has also helped to foster a more inclusive team dynamic and highlight the unique skill sets and networks each team member brings to the table.

AMC was also proud to welcome five new hires to its Government Relations team this year:

- Brian Martinson, Environment and Natural Resources Policy Analyst
- Carli Stark, Public Safety Policy Analyst and Minnesota Association of Community Corrections Act Counties (MACCACC) Director
- Leah Patton, Data Practices Policy Analyst and Minnesota County IT Leadership Association (MNCITLA) Director
- Jeanna Fortney, Economic Development, Workforce Development and Housing Policy Analyst and Minnesota Association of Professional County Economic Developers (MAPCED) Director
- Matt Freeman, Minnesota Association of County Social Service Administrators (MACSSA) Director

Our new staff have hit the ground running, showing an impressive ability to get caught up to speed on complex issues while building relationships both during and in advance of a demanding legislative session.

New Economic Development, Workforce, and Housing Subcommittee

Projected workforce shortages, income and employment inequities, lack of affordable housing, and homelessness issues that affect nearly every county in Minnesota. In response to increasing membership interest in these areas, AMC has created a new Subcommittee on Economic Development, Workforce, and Housing that will be led by AMC Policy Analyst Jeanna Fortney. The new committee will provide the proper space to ensure these topics receive adequate attention, to better understand the specific challenges counties face, as well as explore innovative solutions. As AMC develops policy stances in the future, the Economic Development, Workforce, and Housing Subcommittee will play a pivotal role in providing information and recommendations to AMC’s General Government Policy Committee.
2019 Legislative Session Gains

The November 2018 election created sweeping changes to the Minnesota legislative landscape heading into 2019 session. Newly elected Gov. Tim Walz, a new DFL-controlled House, and a strengthened GOP majority in the Senate left Minnesota as the only state in the nation with a divided Legislature. These politics played out throughout session, as both the House and Senate appealed to their bases early in session, pushing forward unique, and contrasting, proposals. After returning post Easter/Passover recess, many around the capitol were wondering how such differing legislation would ever be able to match up or allow for any grand “compromise” bargain. Adding to this confusion were a new set of expedited committee and budget deadlines that created even more frantic work in a session with the largest total bill introductions in the recent era. With one week to session’s close, it was clear that conference committee chairs were nowhere near finishing final omnibus bills, leaving a special session and possibly even government shutdown looming on the horizon.

With roughly 24 hours left in session, however, Gov. Walz, Majority Leader Gazelka, and House Speaker Melissa Hortman announced a broad-strokes budget agreement that outlined budget targets for each omnibus finance bill that cemented the standings of key session issues. While conference chairs were unable to meet session’s May 20 deadline, they continued working through the week until Gov. Walz called a one-day special session on May 24 to complete and vote on all budget bills. In lieu of the grand bargain, GOP leaders stood strong on no new transportation/gas taxes along with scrapping several controversial policy proposals for Paid Family and Medical Leave, energy renewal standards and more. In return, Gov. Walz and Democrats were able hold on to a slightly diminished, but perpetual, provider tax (1.8% instead of 2%), while also gaining increased budget targets for almost every budget area along with state government agencies. While each political party was able to cite one—or more—frustrations over process, transparency, and content of the final omnibus bills, many commented that the session showed Minnesota had proved to the nation divided government could work and that compromise wasn’t entirely broken in the political process—this proven by mostly overwhelmingly bipartisan votes for each omnibus policy bill taken on both the House and Senate floor.

In all, counties fared extremely well this session winning major victories on many member-voted county priority issues, including provisions on Section 404 permitting, broadband infrastructure, children’s mental health, opioids response funding, continuation of the provider tax, appointment of county “row” officers, and increased County Program Aid (CPA) funding.
ASSOCIATION OF MINNESOTA COUNTIES

Member Services

By Laurie Klupacs, AMC Deputy Director

A NMC offers a variety of member events, meetings and conferences designed to help county commissioners and staff keep up-to-speed on issues, enhance their leadership skills, learn, network and share best practices to help improve residents’ lives and the efficiency of county government. 2019 was a successful year for AMC with member participation and active engagement with our members.

AMC’s LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE in February attracted nearly 300 county commissioners and staff from nearly every Minnesota county.  Gov. Tim Walz opened the conference by discussing his thoughts on a variety of county issues, including his support of $30 million in new county program aid (CPA) and robust funding for improving our state’s transportation infrastructure, especially roads and bridges. Attendees then headed to AMC’s second annual “County Day at the Capitol” for meetings with legislators to discuss a wide variety of issues including combatting the opioid and substance abuse crisis, sustaining the health care access fund, expanding statewide broadband infrastructure, transportation funding, and more.  The large, united county presence at the Capitol garnered the attention of legislators, staff and decision-makers. This type of member engagement is invaluable, particularly in the early critical days of the legislative session. The conference included policy issue breakout sessions and a Legislative Reception that was attended by many members of both the House and Senate. This conference also included policy committee meetings, the “State of the Counties” address from AMC President Commissioner Scott Schulte (Anoka County), presentation of the 4H Community Youth Leadership Awards in partnership with University of Minnesota Extension, and the annual student scholarship presented by AMC Past President Commissioner Susan Morris (Isanti County).

AMC’s LEADERSHIP SUMMIT in April was attended by nearly 90 county officials and key staff interested in taking their leadership skills to the next level. The leadership examples set by county officials and staff is critical to creating a culture that attracts, retains, and motivates a workforce that can meet today’s needs. The two-day Summit, opened by Martha Roth, Membership Coordinator & Trainer from Resource Training & Solutions, gave participants the tools to discover their strengths by using the CliftonStrengths assessment. Presenter Rick Olson finished out the Summit with presentations on Creating a World Class Service Organization; Embracing a Learning Organization; and Don’t Just Manage, Coach.

AMC’s Preferred Business Partnership Program, which successfully launched in 2018 has increased AMC’s NON-DUES REVENUE in the past two years by 157 percent.

Our thanks to members of the Business Partnership Committee (chaired by AMC President Scott Schulte) for being instrumental in developing and growing the program. We are confident that the PBP program will continue to grow and thrive as we work to connect Minnesota counties with companies with products, services, and the commitment to helping you better serve your employees and constituents!

We’re always looking to bring new partners into the program in order to offer the very best products and services to our member counties, so if your county does business with a company that you think would be a good fit for the program, please let us know or have them contact Laurie Klupacs, AMC Deputy Director, at 651-789-4329. Companies can also visit www.mncounties.org/pbp to learn more about the benefits of becoming a PBP, including inclusion in the annual Minnesota County Service Directory, substantial discounts on exhibit space at the Annual Conference and advertising in our publications, in addition to unparalleled access to AMC members and county decision-makers.

More than 250 members attended AMC’s FALL POLICY CONFERENCE in September to discuss legislative issues and priorities for 2020. In addition to developing a policy platform to guide the work of AMC’s government relations team during the legislative session, workshops included Immigration Across Minnesota by Ryan Allen, Associate Professor, U of M Humphrey School of Public Affairs, and Cannabis Legalization: Lessons Learned from Counties in Other States by Eric Johnson, Washington State Association of Counties, and Eric Bergman, Colorado Counties, Inc, who each shared the impact of cannabis legalization in their states county government services, ranging from planning and zoning, licensing and regulation, tax collection, public health, human services, and law enforcement.

AMC’s spring and fall DISTRICT MEETINGS were very well attended. We enjoy these important opportunities to connect with members around the state in their own communities. These meetings provide a useful forum for regional colleagues to come together and discuss issues that are locally unique while also hearing about replicable, regional program models.

AMC members actively participate in the National Association of Counties (NACo) by serving on the NACo Board of Directors and legislative steering committees, and by attending conferences. More than 60 AMC members were in Washington, D.C., in February for the NACo LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE, where they had the opportunity to discuss federal priorities with members of Congress. Minnesota counties were also well represented at this year’s NACo ANNUAL CONFERENCE in Clark County, Nevada, where NACo President Mary Ann Borgeson appointed ten AMC members to national leadership positions. Minnesota is a 100% NACo membership state, which gives Minnesota an additional seat on the NACo Board of Directors.

Member participation is what makes an association like ours strong, and we’d like to extend our sincere thanks to all of you for making 2019 a successful year.

Save These Dates in 2020!

AMC LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE
February 26 - 27, 2020 | InterContinental Hotel, St. Paul

NACo LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE
February 29 - March 4, 2020 | Washington D.C.

AMC LEADERSHIP SUMMIT
April 1 - 3, 2020 | Grand View Lodge, Nisswa

NACo ANNUAL CONFERENCE
July 17 - 20, 2020 | Orange County, Florida

AMC FALL POLICY CONFERENCE
September 17 - 18, 2020 | Arrowwood, Alexandria

AMC ANNUAL CONFERENCE
December 7 - 9, 2020 | Hyatt Regency, Minneapolis

We’re always looking to bring new partners into the program in order to offer the very best products and services to our member counties, so if your county does business with a company that you think would be a good fit for the program, please let us know or have them contact Laurie Klupacs, AMC Deputy Director, at 651-789-4329. Companies can also visit www.mncounties.org/pbp to learn more about the benefits of becoming a PBP, including inclusion in the annual Minnesota County Service Directory, substantial discounts on exhibit space at the Annual Conference and advertising in our publications, in addition to unparalleled access to AMC members and county decision-makers.
AMC Headquarters Renovation

The Association of Minnesota Counties (AMC) headquarters building in St. Paul is nearing completion of a major renovation for the first time since it was built 30 years ago.

In 2017, the AMC Board of Directors began having discussions regarding AMC’s facilities and its capacity to address our future needs. Options discussed included moving into new space, acquiring adjacent property, or renovating the current building. After much discussion, the board determined that they preferred to stay in the current building and make necessary renovations to improve overall building health, safety, and efficiency.

A comprehensive review of the building uncovered some health and safety concerns that needed to be corrected. While most of the renovations are of the cosmetic variety (paint, carpet, new office furniture and cubicles), we also had to replace the entire HVAC system because it was identified as the source of long-term moisture issues in the building. In addition, we were required to complete the roughed in bathrooms on the second floor to be compliant with ADA code. Finally, the exterior of the building and the dome needed routine maintenance.

The project specs also included updated data cabling, energy efficient lighting, existing bathroom and workroom updates, construction for additional office space and new office furniture to accommodate not only current staff, but for expansion in the foreseeable future.

Immediately following the June board meeting, the deconstruction of our current office furniture commenced and resulted in all staff moving to the first floor and the majority working out of the Board Room. The original office furniture was disassembled and removed via public postings on craigslist and Facebook marketplace.

After spending several months all housed on the first floor, staff moved back upstairs in early November. The downstairs renovation began immediately thereafter and is expected to be completed by the last week of December.

While the footprint of the building will largely remain unchanged, the interior layout has changed dramatically. Some of the more notable layout changes include the Government Relations team moving upstairs and the Research & Education team moving downstairs. The remodel also increases our meeting space significantly and our capacity for new staff will be attainable with more modern and streamlined cubicles.

We are excited about the new space and are extremely proud of our staff for their flexibility and resilience during these past months and we look forward to serving our members in our beautifully remodeled building.

Communications Plan

Creating an AMC Communications plan has been a goal of AMC since the last Board strategic planning session in 2018. Areas of focus outlined were to evaluate our current communications vehicles and focus on how to improve our communications with members, with the Legislature, and the general public.

AMC staff solicited proposals for a communications specialist to assist us in this process during the first quarter of 2019 and selected Rosedahl Public Affairs (RPA) for the project. In early summer 2019, RPA conducted a thorough audit of AMC’s large communications inventory (including printed materials, emails, the AMC website, social media, messaging, branding, and software) and these items were reviewed, analyzed and evaluated for effectiveness. RPA solicited opinions from critical stakeholders who represent various internal and external audiences through confidential stakeholder interviews.

AMC’s Education & Training Committee met to review the results of the communications audit with staff and RPA in order to develop recommendations for proposal that was presented to the Board of Directors during the August strategic planning session. In summary, the audit showed that overall AMC utilizes a variety of communications vehicles to educate and engage with its members and other stakeholders, and that these publications are widely considered to be useful and timely. Both the AMC UPDATE and MN COUNTIES EXTRA! emails are considered essential go-to communications for members to keep up on the latest legislative and association news. Additional efforts could be made to modernize and transition the Minnesota Counties quarterly newspaper into a digital format, and resourcefully use that content on AMC’s Facebook page. Existing policy briefs and engagement opportunities could be efficiently advertised in the AMC UPDATE, as well as with legislators and the media. A renewed focus on providing policy education opportunities to commissioners, as well as additional outreach to media and legislators, is also suggested.

Our thanks to everyone for their feedback and work to help us to continue to improve our communications going forward!
The Research and Program Development team continued to implement new initiatives in 2019, thanks to ongoing leadership from the Education & Training Committee, chaired by Gary Hendrickx, Swift County Commissioner, and Research Committee, chaired by Mike Slavik, Dakota County Commissioner. This year’s strategy included a commitment to program sustainability with support from higher education and nonprofit partners across Minnesota.

Our team now contains engagement, research, and education working together to support Minnesota counties.

ENGAGEMENT & RECOGNITION

In 2019, over 25 strategic and operational PLANNING SESSIONS were facilitated with approx. 450 local leaders. AMC staff worked closely with county leadership teams, affiliates, and joint powers boards. These sessions frequently included preparation conversations, survey development, and detailed notes.

AMC joined cities, townships, and school boards again to offer free GOVERNMENT PARTNERSHIP workshops, through collaborative efforts with the Minnesota Service Cooperatives. Since the start, this new approach has yielded participation from over 750 local leaders to hear from state agency partners, the Minnesota Demographic Center and Office of Collaboration and Dispute Resolution. All workshops were offered free-of-charge and, notably, livestream options were available for the first-time this year.

COUNTY FIELD TRIPS are a new and exciting development. Commissioners and staff met with AMC staff to build relationships and support understanding of county services. From “Haven for Heroes” in Anoka County that provides recovery and transitional housing for veterans to Le Sueur County’s new justice center to Aitkin County’s growing ATV trails, AMC staff are honored to spend time with leaders across the state.

AMC’s long-time, valued partner, the University of Minnesota-Extension worked with statewide county commissioners to recognize two recipients of the 2019 COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP AWARDS. The Dodge County Pumas 4H and the Franklin Library 4H in Hennepin County were recognized for their leadership and community education efforts with congratulations at the AMC Legislative Conference.

RESEARCH & RESOURCES

The COUNTY LIBRARY INFORMATION CENTER (CLIC), located on AMC’s website, continues to be the one-stop research shop for Minnesota counties. Each CLIC topic includes one-pagers, reports, videos, or model resolutions to help county commissioners and staff learn about policies that impact Minnesota counties. From the new hands-free law to Census 2020, CLIC continues to reflect topics that support county programming and policies.

For the second year, the Minnesota COUNTY DATAPILE is available for use. Updated annually, it is a large collection of data gathered from public and non-profit organizations about counties and their communities. With over 200 data points on a variety of topics, the datapile provides raw data in a low-tech format so counties and the public can easily access and use it.

A new COMMISSIONER DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY is now in place to better leverage the strengths of AMC’s statewide membership. From veteran status to township and city experience to farming, AMC has a strong profile of the expertise across county leadership in every region.

The LOCAL GOVERNMENT SALARY SURVEY that AMC offers in partnership with the League of Minnesota Cities and Metro Cities continued in 2019. It was another successful year for the survey with participation from 78 counties.

The HUMAN RESOURCES TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM, now used by 70 counties and joint powers agencies, continued into its second year with an active document library and 20% growth in helpline contacts. The notable library addition is a 114-page sample “Personnel Policy Handbook” with 33 unique templates. This program has received over 650 questions since the beginning of the grant supported by Sourcewell Service Cooperative.

EDUCATION & TRAINING

PATHWAYS is a free program to assist the large cohort of new managers as they successfully transition into new roles. Now in its third year, Pathways continues to grow and includes half of Minnesota counties due to a significant wave of retirements. It provides check-ins from Gary Weiers of DDA Human Resources, Inc. and periodic retreats. Topics included: Budget development, handling performance issues, and dealing with job stress – among others.

A new program, the LEAD ACADEMY: PUBLIC SECTOR SUPERVISION CERTIFICATE launched in spring 2019. It is comprised of four mini-certificates to support the art and skill of supervision within local government. This program was designed with extensive feedback and was made possible through collaboration with Metro State University, the League of Minnesota Cities, and Sourcewell Service Cooperative. It opened to a strong registration response in Staples and Saint Paul. Due to popular demand, workshops are available through December 2020.

AMC’s REGIONAL WORKSHOPS were offered on a series of topics, in response to member requests:

- Onboarding New Employees and Knowledge Transfer: Emily Johnson from the State of Minnesota led a spring session that reviewed supervisory strategies to welcome new employees and capture knowledge of retiring colleagues.
Looking Forward to 2020...

Over the past few months, I’ve heard the following question numerous times: “Are you ready and looking forward to being AMC President?” I can answer in the affirmative, “Yes, I am.” Yes, because of the progression and process over the past two years. Yes, due to the exemplary leadership of President Scott Schulte and the entire Executive Committee and Board of Directors. And, yes, thanks to the professionalism and guidance of our Executive Director, Julie Ring, and all of the AMC staff.

Allow me to revisit just a few recent examples of why I also feel ready for the coming year:

This past August, the AMC Board of Directors held their annual strategic planning session where we were introduced to a model of collaborative problem solving, using transportation funding as an example. This is the same process you worked through at the Fall District meetings.

Experimenting with a different or new approach towards potentially divisive or stalled subjects demonstrates the proactive nature of problem-solving at AMC. The board and staff will evaluate and review the effectiveness of this approach, then determine if we should adopt this model of problem-solving for any number of subjects that we, as county commissioners, consider within our statewide association. Your input to board members and staff is invaluable.

During the Fall Policy Conference, we had the opportunity hear from a panel that shared their perspectives and expertise on the impact of cannabis legalization to counties and local government. My take away: a panel that shared their perspectives and expertise on the impact of cannabis legalization to counties and local government. The Academy consistently receives positive reviews.

For the second year, AMC was proud to partner with the Minnesota Council of Nonprofits high-tech “green room” to offer a three-part ONLINE SUPERVISOR WORKSHOP with Lisa Negstad. This engaging, virtual learning opportunity attracted approximately 50 supervisors. The reviews were excellent. Participants remarked that “the training really was the most practical session they’d ever taken on management and supervising.”

The AMC FUTURES Advanced Leadership Academy continues to explore complex topics that shape the work of Minnesota counties. This year’s presenters included faculty from the University of Minnesota Humphrey School of Public Affairs discussing immigration and an agricultural economist sharing data about Minnesota farming communities. This historic AMC committee reflects elected and appointed leader membership from approximately half of Minnesota counties and meets three times a year.

The NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES continued the High Performance Leadership Academy program. Twenty-two Minnesota counties have received over $20000 in total in scholarship funding. There are 35 Minnesota graduates from this 12-week program that included leadership development and discussions with colleagues across the U.S. The Academy consistently receives positive reviews.

In October, the Blandin Broadband Strategy Board (of which I’m a member) met in St. Paul. After the meeting, a long-time board member approached and congratulated me on my pending election for AMC President. He then said, “Rich, we in greater Minnesota were getting nowhere with bringing broadband to rural areas, until the Association of Counties got involved.” Wow! This statement has been on my mind since that day. It not only acknowledges the value of our organization, it reminds us of the influence that, we, as the 87 united counties of Minnesota wield. It validates the work and efforts of the whole association and is an accolade that we all can share.

Our peerless AMC staff are the eyes and ears of our membership; tracking current and pending legislation, advocating on behalf of counties, and sharing current and pertinent information with members. Their data gathering, proactive approach toward many complex subjects, organizational growth, leadership, and advocacy for counties, is always in our best interest.

AMC would not exist if not for your membership and it would not be the effective association it is without our engaged members.

I am consistently impressed by the sharing of ideas, advice, and guidance, that I witness between commissioners and county staff through our association. I believe the diversity and uniqueness of our state lends to this sharing and strengthens all counties.

Yes, I am prepared to be your President of the Association of Minnesota Counties. I look forward to continuing the work of our statewide association and, together, advancing the policies of AMC.

Rich Sve
Lake County Commissioner
AMC First Vice President
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