Minnesota Counties on National Stage

Ramsey County Commissioner and AMC President Mary Jo McGuire was sworn in as president of the National Association of Counties (NACo) on July 24 at the conclusion of NACo’s 88th Annual Conference in Travis County (Austin), Texas. McGuire was joined on stage by an impressive contingent of Minnesota colleagues, friends, and family dressed in red, when she was sworn in by NACo past president (2006 - 2007) and fellow Minnesotan Colleen Landkamer, former Blue Earth County commissioner and current state director for the USDA’s Rural Development Program.

McGuire served 16 years in the Minnesota Legislature, spending time in both the House and Senate, before becoming a county commissioner 11 years ago.

“When we connect and build relationships, we grow our leadership skills and build a strong network of support,” McGuire noted. “Together, we have unlimited potential to advance excellence and trust in county government by inspiring engagement – because everyone has a voice and everyone’s voice matters.”

“Together, county officials can lead by listening to and engaging with residents including those who are most difficult to reach,” McGuire said. “We can continuously improve and build residents’ trust in us as their public partners.”

Minnesota is a 100% NACo membership state, and all 87 counties are members of NACo. More than 60 county officials serve on NACo’s ten policy steering committees, working to shape NACo’s policy agenda at the federal level. With new leadership positions, that number will grow for the 2023-2024 fiscal year.

“Listening and learning together is part of the culture of NACo,” McGuire said during her acceptance speech. “That’s why I’ve selected Forward Together: Connect, Inspire and Lead as my spotlight for the year.”

AMC’s Executive Committee celebrates AMC President Mary Jo McGuire’s election as NACo President. L to R: AMC Past President Todd Patzer (Lac qui Parle), 1st Vice President Neal Gaalswyk (Cass), McGuire (Ramsey), 2nd Vice President Mike Slavik (Dakota), and Secretary/Treasurer Larry Lindor (Pope).
Growing Together
By Mary Jo McGuire, Ramsey County Commissioner 2023 AMC President

What a summer! This time of year, there is so much going on and yet, one thing always rises to the top of my mind: the Minnesota State Fair. Once a year, the Great Minnesota Get-Together brings Minnesotans from all over to Ramsey County to show animals, eat unique treats, and watch all sorts of entertainment! I grew up blocks from the state fairgrounds and it shaped my childhood. Of course, I loved so many parts of it, but one that I have come to truly appreciate in adulthood is the way that the State Fair brings us together, regardless of our backgrounds and beliefs. I love this about our state. It goes beyond a common love of fried food. I so appreciate that Minnesotans simply like to get together.

This July, counties from across the country got together at the NACo Annual Conference in Travis County, Texas. We identified policy areas of agreement, passed policy resolutions, and are ready to continue advocating for counties at the federal level. I also had the honor of being sworn in as NACO President for the upcoming year. I was grateful for the Minnesota delegation that joined me on stage as I took my oath. I am fortunate to be in this position because of the Minnesota team effort.

I was also glad to share my NACO presidential spotlight and theme for the year: Forward Together. There are three areas of focus for this spotlight: connect and build bridges, inspire engagement, and lead intergovernmental partnerships. As we work with all levels of government, we lead by example on how to get the work done. Each of you brings your own strengths to AMC and NACO and I’m excited to see what we’ll do to move Forward Together this year.

In my two previous columns for Minnesota Counties, I wrote briefly about the leadership moments I am integrating into AMC meetings and columns. Specifically, my column focused on the first of the Four Agreements by Don Miguel Ruiz. The agreements are (1) Be impeccable with your word, (2) Don’t take anything personally, (3) Don’t make assumptions, and (4) Always do your best. Over this year, I’ll be discussing how we might use them in our work. This column will focus on the third agreement.

Don’t make assumptions. We often make assumptions. It saves us energy to not investigate the full background of everything we encounter throughout the day. Yet, assumptions we make in relationships can get us into trouble. For example, we might assume we know why our loved one is upset; only to find out we had no ideal. As public leaders, assumptions about our residents and those we differ with can harm our ability to lead.

As representatives of our constituents, we can assume that we have the information needed about our communities to make the right decisions when it comes to roads, parks, and more. Yet, when we do community engagement open houses and hearings, we often hear brand-new perspectives and information.

As political figures, we might also assume that we know the reasons behind the decision-making of those we disagree with. These assumptions help us to put people into boxes which makes it easier to write off their voices. Yet, when we open those boxes back up, there is often a reason for the difference that is rational, even if it is not our personal approach.

Ruiz writes that when it comes to assumptions, there is a strong antidote—asking courageous questions. When we approach relationships with curiosity and hold back on making assumptions, we open up the possibility of deeper and more productive connections. We can’t truly know unless we ask.

Asking questions can be difficult. Sometimes the topic is sensitive or frustrates us. Still, when we seek out clarity by asking questions, we are more likely to have reasonable expectations of each other and avoid damaging our relationships even if we continue to disagree. Asking questions can make it easier to treat each other with kindness.

In our work as leaders, “don’t make assumptions” could look like deeper community engagement and seeking out conversations with colleagues whom we disagree with. When we seek to understand, we lead more effectively for all those we represent.

I see this in our work at AMC. Members from across the state ask each other questions and build understanding, whether during a conference meal or a committee meeting. This is our strength and I’m so grateful to be part of an organization that encourages this approach.

As we prepare for our Fall Policy Conference, we are considering what we want to add or amend in our AMC platform. While we are often diverse in our views, we know that we have more we agree on than disagree on. Together, we have a strong voice. I can’t wait to hear from you all about how we come together on our platform and move forward together as a state.

Thank you for all the work you are doing in your communities and within AMC. It is a joy to get to work with you all. I look forward to getting together in Alexandria for our Policy Conference and I hope to run into you at the State Fair!
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A Successful Session for Counties

By Julie Ring, AMC Executive Director

The 2023 legislative session included historic investments in core county programs, including County Program Aid, probation funding, and Payment-in-Lieu of Taxes (PILT), in addition to new investments in housing, transportation, mental health, family resource centers, broadband, and recycling. Items that had been on the county “to-do” list for decades saw significant funding increases or important policy changes. The AMC Government Relations staff worked hard to get these items across the finish line, while also working to educate legislators on policy items that would create new costs or policy challenges for counties. Unfortunately, there were also items that passed that counties opposed. Our full legislative summary of the good, the bad, and everything in between, is available on our website. In this article, we want to focus on our success achieving the 2023 AMC Legislative Priorities, as outlined in the table below.

The AMC Government Relations staff did an outstanding job balancing the perspectives of all 87 counties throughout the 2023 session. They ensured that county commissioners and county staff were at the testimony table when bills were debated; that our members had the information needed to contact their legislators; and that legislators’ questions were answered in a timely manner. Preparations for the 2024 session are already underway, and our staff and members will soon start work on the 2024 AMC Legislative Priorities. We hope you will be engaged!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AMC Legislative Priority Items Scorecard 2023</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>+ Success</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>- Partial Success</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>- Disappointment</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>County Program Aid</td>
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<tr>
<td>$80 million/year in NEW, ongoing County Program Aid funding starting in FY 2025 (pay 2024).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Historic investment in community supervision funding ($43 million/year) with formula recommended by AMC Community Supervision Workgroup.</td>
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<td>Mental Health</td>
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<td>Money to eliminate the county cost share for mentally ill and dangerous individuals who await transfer from one state-operated facility to another as well as investments in suicide prevention grants, school linked behavioral health grants, mobile crisis grants, new psychiatric residential treatment facility start up grants, and more. Bills also include 3% increase to mental health outpatient services rates with inflation every year until the new rate methodology is adopted. A new requirement for DHS to distribute a survey to counties to determine how many children are sent to residential facilities in other states.</td>
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<td>Transportation Funding</td>
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<td>The Legislature passed a comprehensive transportation funding bill with dedicated revenue for roads, bridges, and transit including new revenue from indexing the gas tax, adjustments to tab fees, rate equalization of the MVST, a 0.75% sales tax in the metro area for transit, a new retail delivery fee, full phase-in of the auto parts sales tax revenue to transportation, and more. In addition, a $2.6 billion capital investment bill passed with investments in local roads, bridges, and bus rapid transit as well as the local road wetland replacement program.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Housing Investments</td>
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<td>$1 billion+ investments in housing and homelessness, including: $200 million in Housing Infrastructure Bonds, $39 million for the Greater Minnesota Workforce Housing Program, $46 million for new state funded rental assistance program, added funding for other MHFA programs, $100 million for shelter capital, and increase for ESP ($30 million increase for 2024/25 and $55 million increase in 2026/27).</td>
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<tr>
<td>3% of Solid Waste Management Tax revenues will be redirected to SCORE Grants. $6.9 million in additional funding for 2024-25 with anticipated future growth.</td>
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<td>Local Public Health Funding</td>
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<tr>
<td>Significant new base funding ($9.8 million/year) for public health departments as well as a new public health emergency preparedness and response grant program of $8.4 million/year ongoing.</td>
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<td>Creation of a special revenue fund for Title IVE reimbursements as well as funding for evidence-based prevention/early intervention services, kinship supports within counties/tribes, family response and intervention grants, and more.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Broadband</td>
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<td>$100 million over the next two years. $60 million for the Border-to-Border Grant Program; $40 million for Lower Population Density Program.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Close to $200 million in state modernization and systems transformation; no county-dedicated funds.</td>
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<tr>
<td>PILT Sustainability</td>
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<tr>
<td>NCLUB/AMC-supported changes to PILT to increase payments (from $2 to $3/acre) for county and DNR administered lands as well as a supplemental PILT payment for counties with a disproportionate amount of PILT lands.</td>
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<tr>
<td>AMC-supported changes to duty disability process for injured public safety officers that prioritizes mental health treatment.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Response to Cannabis Legislation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local registration, compliance, and enforcement mechanisms; license cap of 1:12,500 residents; ongoing Local Public Health funding; ongoing local revenue sharing (20% cities/counties) of new 10% gross receipts sales tax.</td>
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4 Minnesota Counties SUMMER 2023
The possession and personal growing of cannabis became legal August 1, 2023, in the state of Minnesota, with retail, agricultural, and manufacturing cannabis businesses likely becoming licensed in early 2025. The following is a brief overview of what counties need to know at this point.

### Personal Adult-Use Cannabis
- An individual 21 years or older may use, possess, or transport cannabis paraphernalia and products.  
- An individual 21 years or older may use cannabis products in a private residence (unless prohibited by the owner) and at a business or event licensed to permit on-site consumption.  
- The use of cannabis is prohibited in a motor vehicle and at any location where smoking is prohibited.  
- An individual may not operate a motor vehicle under the influence of cannabis or hemp products.  
- An individual may not give cannabis or hemp products to an individual under the age of 21.

### Office of Cannabis Management

The Office of Cannabis Management (OCM) is being created to oversee the legalization and market of medical cannabis, adult-use cannabis, and hemp products. The OCM will establish legal limits on the use, possession, and transportation of cannabis and hemp products, and establish the cannabis industry community renewal grant program. The OCM must promote the public health and welfare of Minnesota, protect public safety, eliminate the illicit cannabis market, meet market demands for cannabis and hemp products, and prioritize growth and recovery in communities that have experienced a disproportionate, negative impact from cannabis prohibition. The Cannabis Advisory Council will be created to review the national cannabis policy, examine the effectiveness of state cannabis policy, review developments in the cannabis and hemp industries, take public testimony, and make recommendations to the OCM.

Local government will have three representatives on the council, one representative from the Association of Minnesota Counties (AMC), the League of Minnesota Cities (LMC), and the Local Public Health Association of Minnesota (LPHA).

### Cannabis Legalization Highlights for Counties

**Cannabis and Hemp Business General Operations**
- All cannabis and hemp businesses must use the statewide monitoring system.  
- Businesses can only sell products approved by the OCM.  
- All cannabis and hemp businesses must maintain and follow a security plan.  
- Individuals 21 and younger cannot enter or work at a cannabis facility, nor purchase cannabis products.  
- A local unit of government must conduct compliance checks of every cannabis and hemp business with a retail issued registration.

### Local Control

A local unit of government must certify whether a proposed cannabis business complies with local zoning ordinances within 30 days of receiving a copy of an application for a cannabis business license from the office. The OCM is required to establish an expedited process to review and respond to complaints made by a local unit of government about a cannabis business. Before making retail sales, a cannabis microbusiness, mezzo business, retailer, medical cannabis retailer, medical cannabis combination business, or lower-potency hemp retailer, must register with the city, town, or county in which the retail establishment is located. A local unit of government may impose an initial retail registration fee of no more than $500 and may also impose a retail registration renewal fee.

### Cannabis Revenue

Cannabis will be taxed by the state at 10% with an amount set by the OCM going to local governments. The amount will be split equally between counties and cities. 20% of the amount to go to counties must be distributed proportionately to each county according to the number of cannabis businesses located in the county compared to the number of cannabis businesses in all counties as of the most recent certification. $10 million dollars will go to local public health departments annually for prevention and education efforts. Imposing a local cannabis tax is prohibited.

### Counties May Consider:
- Updating human resources policies on employee drug testing and documentation of working while inebriated.
- Adding training for law enforcement on road safety to identify inebriated driving and using the pilot roadside testing system.
- Conducting a study for the purpose of considering adoption of reasonable restrictions on the time, place, and manner of the operation of a cannabis business. Issuing a study allows local governments to adopt an interim ordinance to regulate, restrict, or prohibit the operation of a cannabis business within the jurisdiction or a portion thereof until January 1, 2025.
- Adopting local ordinances pertaining to:  
  - Establishing a petty misdemeanor offense for public use of cannabis  
  - Regulating cannabis businesses water and energy use and solid waste and odor management  
- Defining hours of operation for cannabis retail businesses and number of retail stores based on population and regulating home growth of personal cannabis plants.
- Preparing for the record expungement process. The Minnesota BCA will identify individuals qualified for expungement and inform arresting or citing law enforcement agency or prosecution office with records affected by the grant of expungement.  
- Develop policy for reviewing event license requests.

### Cannabis Legalization Implementation Timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>After Final Enactment</th>
<th>August 1, 2023</th>
<th>August 2023 - March 2024</th>
<th>Mid-Late 2024</th>
<th>Late 2024</th>
<th>January 2025</th>
<th>March 2025</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Temporary Regulation of Certain Products</td>
<td>Possession, Use, and Personal Cultivation of Cannabis is Legal</td>
<td>Cannabis Expungement Board is Created</td>
<td>Local Government Cannabis Aid Begins</td>
<td>Cannabis Business Licensing Likely to Begin</td>
<td>Cannabis Businesses Likely to Open</td>
<td>Medical Cannabis Program Transferred</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Minnesota Department of Health MDH will enforce the provisions of Minnesota Statute 151.72 (the legalization of hemp-derived edibles), until the power and duties are able to be transferred to the Office of Cannabis Management (OCM) by March 1, 2025, or earlier if the OCM is able to take over these duties.</td>
<td>The use, possession, and personal cultivation becomes legal in Minnesota. Local governments may consider posing ordinances regulating the public use of cannabis. Local governments may consider updating their policies on employee drug testing and employee cannabis use.</td>
<td>The Minnesota Department of Corrections (DOC) must provide a grant to each county and city to administer a program to expunge eligible criminal records for cannabis prior to March 1, 2025.</td>
<td>By September 1, 2024, and annually thereafter, the local government cannabis aid account in the special revenue fund will be certified. Half of the local government cannabis aid will go to counties and the other half will go to cities, with payments being made in late December annually.</td>
<td>The OCM is expected to begin working with local governments to approve cannabis business licenses. Local governments may consider developing a policy for reviewing applications. Cannabis businesses will likely begin to apply for and obtain licenses. Local governments may consider developing a policy for compliance checks. Local THC licensing may continue until the OCM begins issuing licenses. If a local government has already passed a THC licensing ordinance they may want to consider revising the ordinance.</td>
<td>The Medical Cannabis Program is temporarily regulated by MDH until March 1, 2025, or earlier if the OCM is ready to manage the program before that date.</td>
<td></td>
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MCIT Board Announces $4 Million Dividend

MCIT’s actuary, Scott Anderson of Actuarial Advisors, delivered the annual dividend analysis report to the MCIT Board of Directors during its June 9 meeting. The board set a $4 million dividend in the workers’ compensation division based on that analysis.

The Board has a long-standing history of returning funds that are not necessary for the operation of MCIT to members when it is determined to be actuarially sound and fiscally prudent.

Dividend Looks at Past Performance

Anderson’s analysis is retrospective, looking at the development of both workers’ compensation and property/casualty claims paid and reserved, along with MCIT’s investment portfolio performance during the previous year.

It was reported that despite a continued trend of declining investment income and recent aggregate rate reductions, MCIT’s disciplined claims management, including a commitment to adequate claim reserving, has again positioned the organization to release funds to members.

The board’s decision to declare a $4 million dividend is allocated solely to the workers’ compensation division that experienced better-than-expected claim results. Anderson’s analysis concluded that even with an influx of PTSD claims, the division saw continued reduction in the frequency and severity of COVID-related cases and new claim development much in line with what was expected.

For the second year in a row, Anderson’s study did not support a dividend in the property/casualty division. He reiterated that this is not a cause for alarm but evidence that MCIT is accurately predicting and pricing expected losses in that division. The property/casualty division’s financial condition remains strong with contributions sufficient to cover operational costs and exposure to risk.

Members are reminded that there is no guarantee of future dividends. The MCIT Board places the highest priority on maintaining the organization’s financial integrity and fully funded status.

Each member participating in the workers’ compensation division will receive notice of its specific 2023 dividend later this month, with dividend checks distributed in November. Members participating only in the property/casualty division will not receive a dividend in 2023.

Change In Open Meeting Law

Closing Remote Locations for Medical Reasons

Section 13D.02 of the Minnesota Open Meeting Law permits a board member to attend a meeting remotely via interactive technology when certain statutory conditions are met. Among those conditions are the requirements that:

1. Each location at which a member of the body is present is open and accessible to the public.
2. Members must give notice of the regular meeting location and locations at which board members will be participating remotely.

The only concession to this notice requirement is if the remote location can be closed to the public under the limited statutory exceptions.

Effective July 1, a new law has eliminated the provision that restricted the use of the medical reasons exception to during a state of emergency declared under Minnesota Statutes, Section 12.31 or within 60 days of it ending.

Under the revised statute, a board member may participate from a location that is not open or accessible to the public if the member has not participated more than three times in a calendar year from a location that is not open or accessible to the public, and:

1. The member is serving in the military and is at a required drill, deployed or on active duty; or
2. The member has been advised by a health care professional against being in public place for personal or family medical reasons.

The law does not limit the number of times a board member may participate from a remote location that is open and accessible.

As always, at least one board member must be physically present at the regular meeting location when meeting under Section 13D.02.

Members are encouraged to consult with their legal counsel regarding how the Open Meeting Law may apply to a specific situation.
Congratulations to the Minnesotans Selected for National Leadership Roles by NACo President Mary Jo McGuire

(Listed alphabetically by last name)

• Kevin Anderson, Hennepin County: Vice Chair, County – Technology Advisory Committee (C-TAC); Vice Chair, Public Health and Healthy Communities Subcommittee
• Karla Bigham, Washington County: Vice Chair, Law Enforcement Subcommittee
• Tarryl Clark, Stearns County: Chair, Rural Action Caucus (RAC); Vice Chair, Healthy Counties Advisory Board; Vice Chair, Membership Standing Committee; and Vice Chair, Telecommunications and Technology Steering Committee
• Angela Conley, Hennepin County: Vice Chair, Community, Economic and Workforce Development Steering Committee and Vice Chair, Large Urban County Caucus (LUCC)
• Irene Fernando, Hennepin County: Vice Chair, Human Services and Education Steering Committee
• Lisa Fobbe, Sherburne County: Vice Chair, Behavioral Health Subcommittee
• Judson Freed, Ramsey County: Subcommittee Chair, Homeland Security Subcommittee
• Theresa Gillie, Kittson County: Chair, Rural Development Subcommittee
• Marion Greene, Hennepin County: Vice Chair, Immigration Reform Task Force; Vice Chair, Transit/Rail Subcommittee
• Mary Hamann-Roland, Dakota County: Arts and Culture Commission; Vice Chair, Juvenile Subcommittee; Member, Healthy Counties Advisory Board; and Member, Programs and Services Standing Committee
• David Homre, Renville County: Vice Chair, Rural Development Subcommittee
• Roger Indlieke, Kandiyohi County: Vice Chair, Economic Development Subcommittee
• Stan Karwoski, Washington County: Chair, Arts and Culture Commission; Vice Chair, Healthy Counties Advisory Board; and Member, Rural Action Caucus (RAC)
• Terry Lovgren, Pine County: Chair, County and Tribal Relations Subcommittee
• DeAnne Malterer, Waseca County: Vice Chair, Health Steering Committee; Member, Rural Action Caucus (RAC)
• Trista Martinson, Ramsey County: Chair, Veterans and Military Services Committee
• Paul McDonald, St. Louis County: Vice Chair, Outdoor Recreation Subcommittee
• Rena Moran, Ramsey County: Vice Chair, Courts and Corrections Subcommittee
• Steve Notch, Stearns County: Vice Chair, Agriculture and Food Safety Subcommittee
• John Okeson, Becker County: Vice Chair, Highway/Highway Safety Subcommittee
• Kevin Paap, Blue Earth County: Vice Chair, Agriculture and Food Safety Subcommittee
• Todd Patzer, Lac qui Parle County: At-Large Member NACo Board of Directors; Vice Chair, Rural Action Caucus (RAC)
• Rod Peterson, Dodge County: Vice Chair, Social Services Subcommittee
• Victoria Reinhardt, Ramsey County: Vice Chair, Environment, Energy and Land Use Steering Committee; Vice Chair, Resilient Counties Advisory Board
• Richard Sanders, Polk County: Vice Chair, Greene County: Vice Chair, Telecommunications and Technology Steering Committee
• David Senjem, Olmsted County: Vice Chair, Outdoor Recreation Subcommittee
• Vance Stuehrenberg, Blue Earth County: Vice Chair, Membership Standing Committee; Vice Chair, Rural Action Caucus (RAC); and Vice Chair, Transportation Steering Committee
• Timothy Sunner, Beltrami County: Vice Chair, County and Tribal Relations Subcommittee
• Rich Sve, Lake County: Vice Chair, Land Use Subcommittee
• Barbara Weckman Brekke, Scott County: Vice Chair, Human Services and Education Steering Committee
• Mai Xiong, Ramsey County: Vice Chair, Education, Children and Families Subcommittee

Commissioners Mandy Meissner (Anoka), Rena Moran (Ramsey), Mai Xiong (Ramsey), Angela Conley (Hennepin), and Irene Fernando (Hennepin).

Transportation Committee members Commissioners Joe Perske (Stearns), Mike Slavik (Dakota and AMC Second Vice President), and Stan Karwoski (Washington).

Environment, Energy & Land Use Committee members Commissioners Dave Senjem (Olmsted), Rich Sve (Lake), Victoria Reinhardt (Ramsey), and Debbie Goettel (Hennepin). Commissioner Senjem served as parliamentarian EELU resolution meeting.

Rural Action Caucus Vice Chairs Stearns County Commissioner Tarryl Clark and Blue Earth County Commissioner Vance Stuehrenberg, with RAC Chair Greg Puckett, Mercer County, WV, and NACo Transportation Legislative Director Jessica Jennings.
Minnesota Counties Receive NACo Achievement Awards

Dakota and Scott Counties Receive ‘Best in Category’ Awards; 34 Other Minnesota Programs Also Recognized

Congratulations to all of the Minnesota counties who received National Association of Counties (NACo) Achievement Awards this year, which recognize the work of counties in 14 categories that cover a wide spectrum of county responsibilities.

Special recognition was given to Scott and Dakota Counties at NACo’s Annual Conference on July 23 in Austin, Texas, as each received Best in Category awards in the areas of human services and county resiliency. Read more about the Dakota and Scott awards below and see the full listing of Minnesota award winners on the next page.

Started in 1970, the annual NACo Achievement Awards program is a noncompetitive awards program that recognizes outstanding county government programs and services. Winners earn local and national recognition and NACo often spotlights award-winning programs in congressional testimony and hearings.

Best in Category: Human Services

Scott County’s Family Resource Centers

Family Resource Centers (FRCs) of Scott County are one-stop shops helping families connect with needed services and supports to reduce family stress. The FRCs are leveraging partnerships with public, private, non-profit, and faith organizations to come together to help children and their families thrive. Programming is built upon the Strengthening Families 5 Protective Factors framework and is designed to be responsive to the unique needs of individuals and communities.

“The Family Resource Centers of Scott County provide parents tools, resources and education so they can better care for themselves and their children,” explained Scott County Commissioner, Barb Weckman Brekke. “My hope - and what the early indicators suggest - is that the growth and success of our network will result in decreased child poverty, the end of child abuse and neglect, and healthier families in Scott County.”

There are three FRC sites across Scott County: One FRC is co-located within the Savage library, another FRC is co-located in the Jordan Area Food Shelf, and the third FRC is an independent site in Shakopee. Services provided range from parenting education, peer recovery, support groups including restorative circles for our East African and Latinx communities and a father’s group, mental health supports, etc. This work represents the best in partnerships between government, non-profit providers, and faith communities. Currently, there are over two dozen partners coming together to provide FRC services. At the core, FRCs are developed with, by and for community members. The FRCs of Scott County are governed by a Parent Advisory Council (PAC), which is comprised of Scott County parents that have a variety of lived expertise. The PAC provides the foundation to ensure that overtime FRCs continue to meet the unique and changing needs of families and communities, while also providing leadership opportunities for individuals with lived expertise.

Best in Category: County Resiliency

Dakota County’s Bison Reintroduction

Dakota County, in conjunction with the Minnesota Bison Conservation Herd, has reintroduced the plains bison to the prairie in Spring Lake Park Reserve in an effort to restore one of the prime drivers of this ecosystem: grazing. The bison’s physical and behavioral traits had profound impacts on the prairie. A keystone animal, bison impact their world by focusing their grazing on grasses, giving flowers the ability to compete, and diversifying the plant species and the physical structure of the prairie.

“We are the first county in Minnesota to bring a bison herd back to the native prairie, and I’m proud of how we’ve accomplished this,” said Dakota County Commissioner Mike Slavik. “We’ve worked with bison experts and natural resource professionals from the very beginning to make sure we follow best practices to make this a success.”

During the planning phase of the project, the Natural Resource staff compiled pre-treatment data on plants, bumblebees, breeding birds, small mammals and moths and butterflies. Surveys will continue for years in the effort to ascertain the impact that the bison have on the prairie.
Minnesota 2023 NACo Achievement Award Winners

Arts, Culture and Historic Preservation
Dakota County, Trauma Informed Inclusive Lobby Redesign Project,
Sherburne County, Creating Big Elk Lake Regional Park: A Collaborative Process

Children and Youth
Dakota County, Career Success Program

Civic Education and Public Information
Hennepin County, Homestead and Property Tax Refund Project

Community and Economic Development
Hennepin County, Digital Navigation Program
Hennepin County, Driver's License Services at Plymouth Workhouse
Hennepin County, North Regional Library Refurbishment
Hennepin County, Rebuilding an Intersection: South Minneapolis Regional Service Center at Lake and Hiawatha
Ramsey County, Ramsey County Youth Works!

County Administration and Management
Hennepin County, Regional Medical Examiner Office: New Ways of Working
Hennepin County, Service Centers AI Chatbot

County Resiliency
Hennepin County, Development of the Zero Waste Program,

Criminal Justice and Public Safety
Dakota County, Jail Release Transportation Program,
Hennepin County, Adult Representation Services Housing Court Team
Hennepin County, Safe Spaces

Health
Hennepin County, Public Health's Response to Monkeypox (Mpox)
Olmsted County, Olmsted County Joint Study on Race and Racism as a Public Health Issue
Ramsey County, Ramsey County Public Health Career Pathways Program

Human Services
Hennepin County, Culturally Specific Mental Health Services
Hennepin County, Homeless to Housing Program
Rice County, Rice County (Minnesota) Behavioral Health Services

Information Technology
Hennepin County, Print Shop Saves County Over $1 Million

Parks and Recreation
Dakota County, River to River Greenway - Garlough Tunnel Public Art Project
Washington County, Central Greenway Regional Trail
Washington County, Free Outdoor Family Time
Washington County, Memorial Bench Donation Program

Personnel Management, Employment and Training
Dakota County, Employee Engagement Program
Hennepin County, Collaborative Work Center
Hennepin County, Green Jobs Pathways Program
Hennepin County, Leader Connect
Hennepin County, Successful Supervision 2
Washington County, Beyond Diversity 101 Train the Trainer Program

Transportation
Washington County, Highway 36 & Manning Avenue Interchange

Volunteers
Goodhue County, Mighty Mississippi Cleanup Challenge

Because of our local ties, we have a true understanding of the people, needs, and resources in the communities we serve.
AMC Tax Forfeiture Work Group Now Underway

By Matt Hilgart, AMC Government Relations Manager and General Government Policy Analyst

The AMC Tax Forfeiture Work Group met for the first time on Monday, July 17, at AMC's offices in St. Paul. Commissioners Chris LaTondresse (Hennepin) and Paul McDonald (St. Louis) kicked off the meeting by providing an overview of the work group, background on participants, and an outline of the group's tasks. Following introductions, the group spent the next few hours hearing presentations on the Tyler v. Hennepin Supreme Court Case, overviews of Minnesota’s current tax forfeiture process, as well as a case study of how counties with significant tax forfeited forest/rural land holdings use Minnesota’s current statutory framework to assist in land preservation, mineral management, conservation, and forest management.

Created by way of a June AMC Board action item, the AMC Tax Forfeiture Work Group is composed of over 20 county representatives from across the state and is inclusive of county commissioners, administrators, attorneys, land commissioners, auditors, and more. The group is tasked with identifying a unified county solution to revise tax forfeiture laws while protecting county interests and limiting impacts to taxpayers and residents. At the end of the meeting, participants outlined the following values to base an ultimate policy framework on:

1. Create a process that is effective in enhancing title ownership while meeting the constitutional requirements set by the courts.
2. Create a system that is administrative and budgetarily efficient, transparent, and accessible/understandable for a person going through it.
3. Create a system that provides local governments flexibility to protect the public interest.
4. Protect and enhance landowners’ ample/robust opportunities to reclaim their property.
5. Create a process that is effective in enhancing title ownership while meeting the constitutional requirements set by the courts.

AMC will be hosting a late August meeting that will include a national speaker to present to the workgroup on how other states have responded to the Supreme Court case. Staff is hopeful to be able to present a broad outline of legislative goals to AMC membership at the Fall Policy Conference for feedback and discussion. Later in fall, AMC staff and members will engage with other community stakeholders, state agencies, and legislators in attempt to coordinate a comprehensive, stakeholder-approved bill.

If you have any questions about the work group, please reach out to Matt Hilgart at mhilgart@mncounties.org.

Legislative Wins for Housing and Homelessness Solutions

By Jeanna Fortney, AMC Economic Development, Workforce and Housing Policy Analyst; Director, Minnesota Association of Workforce Boards (MAWB)

Housing and homelessness have been critical issues for counties across the state, with added investments in these areas rising to a legislative priority for AMC the last few years. The 2023 session and the state’s record surplus brought about several big wins in county priorities, but AMC wanted to draw specific attention to a handful of new housing investments (totaling $1 billion+) that should have positive impacts for counties, residents, and clients.

- $200 million for Housing Infrastructure Bonds for the biennium.
- $120.8 million for the Challenge Program for the biennium.
- $39 million for the Greater Workforce Housing Development Program for the biennium.
- $20.5 million for the Workforce Homeownership Program for the biennium ($20.25 in FY24 and $250,000 in FY25).
- $65 million for Family Homeless Prevention and Assistance Program ($55 million in FY24 and $10 million in FY25).
- $50 million for First-Generation Homebuyers Down Payment Assistance for FY24.
- $90 million for a new community stabilization program to preserve naturally occurring affordable housing (NOAH).
- $46 million for the Bring it Home Program—an state funded rental assistance program, to be run by administrators of the federal Section 8 program.
- 0.25% sales tax for the metro area for local housing needs, with revenue allocated: 50% to counties, 25% to cities, and 25% to state rental assistance vouchers for the metro.

The housing omnibus bill (HF2335/SF2566) was passed by the House and Senate and signed into law (Chapter 37) on May 15, 2023. Additionally, the Health and Human Services final bill (SF2995/HF2930) includes much needed funding to address homelessness, including $100 million to improve or expand emergency shelter facilities, with the stipulation that at least 40% of the funding must be awarded to projects located in greater Minnesota. Funding was added to the Emergency Services Program with a $30 million increase for FY24 and FY25 and a $55 million increase in FY26 and FY27. The new base budget moving will be roughly $868.7 million starting in FY26. The final tax bill (HF1938/SF1811) includes Statewide Local Housing Aid for counties, cities, and tribes for local housing needs. Counties will receive $6.8 million annually, to be distributed via a formula based on cost-burdened households. The bill also amended local homeless prevention aid to also include tribes as well as counties. With the funding starting in July, counties will now receive an annual allocation of $176 million and tribes will receive $2.4 million.

Upcoming Webinars

AMC is working with the League of Minnesota Cities to hold upcoming webinars on the new statewide local housing aid to city and county leaders and staff on August 30. A webinar geared towards Greater Minnesota will take place from 9:00-10:15 a.m. and a metro-focused one will be from 10:30-11:45 a.m. The webinars will feature housing chairs Senator Lindsey Port and Representative Mike Howard and representatives from Minnesota Housing and the Department of Revenue. More information and registration information for these events will be coming out soon.

Minnesota Housing has also released its draft 2024-2027 Strategic Plan for public comment which incorporates the new $1 billion+ funding for housing. You can find the plan on their website at www.mnhousing.gov.
AMC's Spring District Meetings
See Large Turnout, New Leaders Elected

By Ryan Erdmann, Member Engagement Coordinator

In early June, AMC staff hit the road for spring district meetings. It was a great opportunity to connect with more than 325 AMC members from 81 counties across the state. The meetings offered members an opportunity to hear from each other about post-pandemic remote work plans during county reports, get a comprehensive overview of the last legislative session from our government relations team, and learn about the upcoming transition to Next Generation 911 from Emergency Communications staff at the Department of Public Safety.

AMC President Mary Jo McGuire (Ramsey) was able to join all ten meetings and coordinated a presentation focused on “Growing Your Leadership.” This leadership moment was a brief opportunity for attendees to learn from each other and think about the impact of trust and listening on their own approach to leadership in their county.

Other guests that joined many of the meetings included local legislators, staff from the University of Minnesota Extension Service, the Southwest Regional Development Commission and more.

Elections were held for district director and alternate director positions in seven districts. The new directors representing their districts on the AMC Board are:

District 1 – Terry Lovgren (Pine), Director and Susan Zmyslony (Carlton), Alternate

District 2 – Rick Haaland (Cass), Director and Joe Gould (Beltrami), Alternate

District 3 – Joan Lee (Polk), Director and Theresia Gillie (Kittson), Alternate

District 4 – Bill Stearns (Wadena), Director and Bill LaValley (Grant), Alternate

District 6 – DeRon Brehmer (Lac qui Parle), Director and Steve Gardner (Kandiyohi), Alternate

District 7 – De Malterer (Waseca), Director and Bill Miller (Watonwan), Alternate

District 8 – Gene Metz (Nobles), Director and Don Wildermuth (Pipestone), Alternate

We want to thank all of you that were able to join us in June and look forward to seeing you again in your districts in October!
The AMC Annual Conference is scheduled for December 4-6, 2023, at the Hyatt Regency in downtown Minneapolis. Because this location brings with it a few questions and concerns, I would like to assure you that I am working with the Hyatt Regency staff and am in communication with Hennepin County commissioners as well as the Convention and Visitors Bureau regarding safety and reassurance about hosting activities in downtown Minneapolis.

In 2011, AMC signed a three-year contract with the Hyatt Regency, Minneapolis for 2013, 2016 and 2020. We had to cancel our 2020 annual conference due to the COVID pandemic. We are grateful that we were able to move the conference to the next uncontracted year, without penalty, which happens to be this year, 2023. If we hadn’t made this change, AMC would have faced penalty fees reaching close to $100,000.

AMC is obligated to meet our conference contract with the Hyatt which includes the hotel room block and food/beverage minimums. We very much hope that our loyal and active membership attend the annual conference this year as we have superb keynotes, workshops and a robust schedule planned. We expect this will be our last year at this location because members have indicated they prefer the Bloomington location.

I’d like to share a bit of history surrounding the locations and venues of our annual conference. Early in my career at AMC, the annual conference was held each year at the Radisson South in Bloomington – which is now the DoubleTree. AMC staff at the time felt that member and vendor participation was on the rise and that we were soon to outgrow the venue. We then quit using that venue and did not return to it until 2018, nearly 20 years later. During those 20 years, we rotated between the Twin Cities, St. Cloud, Duluth and Rochester. The reality is that we have the same active participation today as we had back then.

I will share some lessons that I learned during those years. First, our membership values networking with their colleagues from across the state, and this is better accomplished when all conference participants can stay at the same hotel. Second, our membership likes to have comfortable meeting rooms that are not too crowded nor tight.

Unfortunately, Duluth, St. Cloud and Rochester are unable to accommodate our members in one hotel. St. Cloud is centrally located and cost effective, but the St. Cloud Civic Center meeting rooms are not large enough. Our number one complaint is standing room only in meeting rooms or the meeting room sets are too tight. We schedule our five largest meetings, policy committees and workshops, in the five largest rooms available, and they are not large enough. Additionally, Duluth, St. Cloud and Rochester require arranging transportation between hotels to the conference site, because we have members that are unable to walk the distance, even when indoor walkways are available.

We know our members and affiliates love Duluth, St. Cloud and Rochester as meeting sites, and we continue to use those venues and bring many conferences and meetings to each location throughout the year, just not the Annual Conference. We went back to the DoubleTree Bloomington/Minneapolis again in 2018 and signed a three-year contract for 2018, 2021 and 2022 and found that it accommodated our conference very well, it has easy access, affordable hotel rooms, food/beverage and they provide free parking, which collectively saves our member counties and AMC a large amount of money.

So, back to our conference this December in Minneapolis. We know that some members have concerns about visiting Minneapolis. I want to assure you that we are working with local officials to ensure the event is not only safe and secure, but also an exceptional opportunity to learn and connect with your colleagues from across the state.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me at lklupacs@mncounties.org or 651-789-4329.
How Elected Officials Can Win At Strategic Planning & Improve Community Engagement

Elected officials work tirelessly to create policies that will help their constituents. However, it can be challenging to measure the impact of these policies. When residents are involved in the strategic planning process, they can see how their government is working on their behalf. But creating, executing on, and measuring the success of plans can be challenging, especially with the traditional way of doing things.

Envisioning A Future For Your Community Through Strategic Planning

Policymakers create rules and guidelines that direct decision-making and behavior in a particular area. Economic, social, and political factors are considered when creating policies, and policies are more successful when supporting an overall strategic plan. For example, if a county sets a goal to reduce crime, officials may create policies to expand early childhood intervention, improve public schooling, and reduce poverty.

Modernizing Your Strategic Planning Process

In today’s rapidly changing world, it is more important than ever to have a strategic planning process that is flexible, actionable, and achievable. In the past, strategic planning was often seen as a top-down process, with senior executives developing the plans and then communicating them to the rest of the organization. However, this approach is not actionable or measurable. A modern approach to strategic planning includes:

- Involving employees at all levels of the organization.
- Breaking down the plan into smaller, more manageable tasks.
- Setting clear milestones for each task.
- Tracking progress and making adjustments as needed.
- Revisiting and updating the plan regularly.

Build a Consensus Through Collaboration

Citizens want to know that their tax dollars are being used in a way that benefits them. By providing feedback on the services and projects funded by their taxes, they ensure that their government is meeting their needs. Start by gathering open-ended input on important issues and identifying common themes, then survey your community to prioritize themes. Next, develop goals and measurable action items for your top priorities and implement an action plan to track and communicate progress.

Keep it Simple & Focused

Keep your community in mind when communicating your plan. Use simple language and communication strategies to ensure everyone understands the plan. Internally, keep tasks focused and achievable, starting with the areas needing improvement. Divide your plan into three simple areas: high-level focus areas, overarching goals, and specific action items to help you reach your goals.

Stay Flexible & Adapt

Agile methodology for planning is an ideal strategy for governments because it allows you to stay flexible and plan for the "what ifs." It helps you identify viable tactics in the 1-2 year short-term that will guide your strategy over the next 2-4 years as your work toward your ultimate vision for the community over the next 4-10 years.

Keep Your Plan Alive

Don’t let your plan stagnate. Revisit it often and tweak as needed so that it remains viable and completable. Continually update progress and share internally and with constituents so they see the work being done to improve their community.

Connect the Dots to the Budget

Make it clear how your budget, and therefore tax dollars, are being used to support your plan -- down to the action item, ideally. For example, if your school district plans to partner with a consultant to improve their hiring strategy, detail that in the budget so that residents know it supports your strategic goal of reducing crime by improving the quality of education in schools.

You can download the Driving Results Through Strategic Planning eBook to learn more about the foundations of a successful strategic plan at www.cleargov.com/lp/naco-strategic-planning-report.
Serial Applicants

By Melanie Ault, DDA Consultant

Repeat applicants: Do we have to keep interviewing an applicant if they get screened in, when we have interviewed them before and know we won’t be hiring them? We don’t want to keep wasting our time or theirs when we know the applicant is not a good fit.

The safest and best approach is to continue to follow your stated procedures, which means yes, to interview them. It’s also the most defensible answer, removing the possibility of an applicant claiming they have been treated differently than other applicants in a disparate, unfair, or unlawful manner. Those are expensive claims, even to prevail, involving a lot more than the 30-45 minutes it might take to interview someone, again.

Whatever is in your policies or on application information is what you should follow. But, having a policy of not re-interviewing someone for a job in that classification within six months, or not screening in a serial applier having already interviewed the person many times before, would be extremely hard to defend.

There absolutely is a risk of an applicant’s challenge when a County abandons its selections process to exclude an otherwise qualified applicant. Do not abandon your process, even if it is starting to wear you out. For this, and every future, case, you want to be known as “the employer that consistently follows their stated screening and selections practices.” The repeated experiences of the serial applicant will attest to your unwavering consistency.

100 Point Process is Sound

Unless the applicant is applying for an excepted position like a department head, use the 100-point veteran’s preference rating scale. There is no provision for abandoning the 100-point scale because of the applicant’s prior interview history. If the applicant met the minimum qualifications/application scoring cut-off, the applicant should move along in the process.

Using the 100-point rating scale is a defensible way of deciding who will move on in the process. No negative points are awarded for having been interviewed before.

If the applicant is a veteran and you do not accept their application, or apply veteran’s preference points, a third party will decide what will happen, and the employer pays the costs. Don’t give an applicant an extra reason to file a petition with the Commissioner of Veterans Affairs.

Process is Important, Safe; Don’t Skip Steps

Even if the applicant interviewed for the same/similar position in the past, do not skip over steps because you think you know/can foresee what the outcome will be. Skipping steps sets up the employer for a costly discrimination charge. Additionally, word will get around that this employer follows procedure for some applicants, and abandons it for other applicants – not a good message to push.

Process protects all of the parties. It offers consistency, objectivity, and respect, and is designed to find the person for the job without favoritism or discrimination. Therefore, consider the repeat applicant’s application just like all other applications. Applicants can challenge when a County ignores its selections process to exclude an otherwise qualified applicant (e.g., filing with EEOC, ADEA, human rights, veteran’s preference claims).

Other Reasons

Sometimes, people apply simply to gain experience in interviewing so that when their dream job comes along, they are prepared to shine. Applicants might also want to remind you that they desire bigger roles and to think of them for future openings.

Paper Trail

Document all the selection steps and criteria considered in moving someone along in the process. Show that the factors are objective and legitimate so that to a third party, it will be obvious that the County used proper reasons for its decisions.

Letter

Regardless of veteran’s preference, or if an applicant’s second submission continues to not meet the criteria, send a letter to all applicants after you have concluded the process. It shows courtesy, helps your County’s good reputation, and might prevent applicants’ calls wondering about their status.

Scrutinize the wording. Is there something that is encouraging another application? Would rewording make a difference?

Assurance

You will never go wrong from a discrimination or unfair treatment point of view if you treat a repeat applicant just like every other applicant.

Yes, the serial applicant might be bothersome or tiresome, but there is security in following our own policies.

Don’t be exasperated. Bring your questions to the HR Technical Assistance Program at www.amcddahrsupport.com.
**Big 4 and Braver Angels Collaborate Around Difficult Conversations**

**By Matt Cassady, AMC Education & Training Specialist**

As our communities, state, and country become increasingly politically polarized, elected officials often find themselves communicating more and more with constituents and colleagues who have very different points of view. Sadly, these interactions are also growing increasingly confrontational, resulting in divisive discourse where nothing constructive is accomplished. There is a great need across the country for civil discourse, and elected officials of every stripe need to develop skills to better navigate these challenging situations.

In May 2023, the Big 4 (AMC, League of Minnesota Cities, Association of Minnesota Townships, and Minnesota School Boards Association) partnered with Braver Angels, a non-profit organization dedicated to de-polarizing our county, to offer a series of trainings around navigating difficult conversations with constituents. The goal for the project was to bring together elected officials from across Minnesota to learn practical skills for use when a constituent or colleague challenges a policy or course of action.

AMC has previously partnered with Braver Angels as part of the association’s “Bridging Divides” initiative. Braver Angels conducts training across the county to a range of audiences, and recently developed a training module specifically for elected officials. Through this module, participants learn skills for different situations they may encounter when engaging with their constituents. Ultimately, the aim of the training is to help officials show those who disagree with them that they have been heard, find areas of commonality and agreement, and be able to share their own views in a way that is most likely to be heard by the other person.

Education staff from each of the Big 4 met with representatives of Braver Angels to map out a plan to bring the training to as many of their respective members as possible. It was decided that, rather than each organization offer the same training separately, they would offer the programs to combined audiences of their members. In this way, officials from different backgrounds could connect and share experiences and learn from each other.

Four separate sessions were offered at different locations across the state, including Rochester, St. Peter, Staples, and St. Paul, on Wednesdays in May. Members of all four organizations attended each of the trainings, and feedback was overwhelmingly positive. Based on the success of this program series, the Big 4 are looking into the possibility of offering another series of these trainings soon. For more information about Braver Angels, please visit braverangels.org.

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**AMC Begins Internal Review of Legislative Policy Development Timeline, Process**

**By Matt Hilgart, AMC Government Relations Manager**

AMC Government Relations (GR) team members Emily Murray, Angie Thies, and Matt Cook will be leading internal efforts to conduct an analysis of AMC’s policy platform and priority process with an emphasis on identifying improvements to the policy development timeline and for expanded opportunities for membership engagement.

These efforts stem from a 2022 Board-identified strategic goal focused on assessing whether there might be opportunities to strengthen the ultimate product of AMC’s government relations team (the platform and priorities) by way of increased membership engagement and different approaches to the policy platform and priority process. While there is not an assumption the current processes and timelines are broken, the GR team is nonetheless energetic in its commitment to doing a thorough review and assessment for possible improvements.

The group will be focusing on the following five questions to ground their work but may end up broadening their scope if they find it meaningful.

1. Does AMC’s policy process allow for robust membership engagement?
2. Is the AMC policy process timeline effective and strategic?
3. Is the product of AMC’s policy process (priorities/platform) reflective of membership interests and helpful in advocating county interests at the Capitol?
4. Is the AMC policy process adequately understood by membership?
5. Are there opportunities within or outside the policy development process to increase membership engagement in AMC policy process and government relations work?

AMC staff will be meeting with policy committee leaders in late summer/early fall to assess how best to engage with broader membership on this work. In the meantime, if you have any questions or ideas for improvements in these areas, please feel free to reach out to:

- Emily Murray, AMC Transportation Policy Analyst emurray@mncounties.org
- Angie Thies, AMC Child Wellbeing Policy Analyst athies@mncounties.org
- Matt Cook, AMC GR Project Manager mcook@mncounties.org

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More NACo Annual Conference Snapshots

AMC and NACo President Mary Jo McGuire, Ramsey County Commissioner.

Scott County Commissioner Barb Weckman Brekke, Stearns County Commissioner Tarryl Clark, Sherburne County Commissioner Lisa Fobbe, and Waseca County Commissioner De Malterer.

Blue Earth County Commissioner Patty O’Connor and NACo Past President and USDA Rural Development Minnesota State Director Colleen Landkamer, a former Blue Earth County Commissioner.

Blue Earth County Commissioner Vance Stuehrenberg and Lac qui Parle County Commissioner Todd Patzer.
Recognizing Partnerships and USDA’s Dedication to Improving Rural Healthcare

By Colleen Landkamer, Minnesota State Director, USDA Rural Development

As a long-time member of both AMC and NACo, serving on both executive boards, establishing NACo’s Rural Action Caucus and ultimately having the pleasure of serving my colleagues as president at both the state and national levels, it’s easy to see how important public service is to me. Serving as State Director for USDA Rural Development under two Presidential Administrations is icing on the cake.

I bring this up only to exhibit the absolute honor it was to have my friend, colleague, and fellow Minnesotan Ramsey County Commissioner Mary Jo McGuire recently elected NACo President and allow me to swear her in. I’m sure I join the entire Minnesotan County family when I say, congratulations Mary Jo! We know you will represent the state’s and the nation’s counties well.

In the spirit of recognition, I’d like to highlight some recent partnerships with a few of Minnesota’s health care providers that will benefit more than 6,200 residents within Lac qui Parle, Lyon, Renville and Swift counties.

Appleton Area Health (AAH) is modernizing its telemedicine/telehealth capacity and replacing outdated equipment of its critical access facility in Appleton, Minnesota. The nearly $715,000 grant from USDA will help AAH update an aging health record system that no longer has technical support.

Dawson Area Hospital, also known as Johnson Memorial Health Services (JMHS) will be using a $1 million grant to purchase new telemedicine software that will replace an obsolete, unserviceable electronic health records system.

Island Living will be using a $54,000 grant to purchase and install equipment, meant to mitigate the spread of airborne illnesses, for an assisted living facility in the city of Bird Island.

Finally, Tracy Ambulance Service will use a nearly $92,000 grant to purchase an ambulance and related equipment in Tracy, Minnesota. The new vehicle provides a quality ventilation system and separate staff compartment for drivers, improving the safety of both staff and patient.

USDA made these investments through the Emergency Rural Health Care Grant Program, funded by the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, to help address regional rural health care challenges to build a stronger, more sustainable rural health care system for the Minnesota’s small towns and communities.

USDA is administering the funds through Rural Development’s Community Facilities Program, a longstanding program through which we’ve partnered with many counties to help residents in rural areas build or improve essential community infrastructure and purchase or replace equipment needed for essential community services.

Much like what you’ve heard at the NACo level, intergovernmental partnerships are more important than ever and require meaningful and ongoing engagement between officials at ALL levels of government. USDA appreciates YOUR partnership in bettering rural communities.

We are here to help, from the brainstorming process through project completion. Visit www.rd.usda.gov/mn to locate your local Rural Development area office and get started on your project. Remember to follow @RD_Minnesota on Twitter!

It’s Time to Recognize County Innovation and Excellence!

AMC’s Annual Awards are the perfect opportunity to celebrate county staff accomplishments and program innovations!

Submit nominations to honor individuals or programs in the following categories:

- Outstanding Service
- County Achievement
- County Conservation
- Economic Development

Awards will be presented December 5 at the 2023 AMC Annual Conference at the Hyatt Regency Minneapolis.


Visit www.mncounties.org and submit your nomination today!
Is Your Cash/Time Balance Correct?

By William Cherry, Director of Public Partnerships at three+one®

The most effective (and highest revenue-generating) municipal investment portfolios include a calculation that compares the cash-on-deposit in various bank accounts to the projected time frame, or number of days, those funds will remain in on deposit.

Cash on deposit in municipal accounts can be divided into four distinct time-horizon categories.

**Day-to-day working capital.** This category generally includes checking accounts where the funds are transitory and will only be on hand for a very short time. These types of accounts usually generate fairly low interest earnings due to the temporary nature of the liquidity.

**Transitional capital.** This category includes “funds-in-transition” investment options such as money-market accounts and local government investment pools (LGIPs). These banking choices are perfect for cash that is expected to remain on deposit for 15 to 45 days, but may be needed sooner than that. These accounts often generate higher interest earnings than a checking account, but usually not as much as longer-term investments might earn.

**Short-term investments.** This is one of the core segments of a properly balanced portfolio where a public entity can generate a very significant amount of interest income. Investments often include a laddered portfolio of fixed-rate CDs and U.S. Treasuries that can range from 30 days all the way up to six months. As each investment matures, it is replaced by an ever-revolving and rotating series of new investments at the most current interest rates as long as the funds are not needed for day-to-day working capital.

**Long-term investments.** This category can be a “cash cow” in generating revenues and often includes six-month, nine-month, and one-year fixed-rate CDs and Treasuries. For some exceptionally well-financed public entities, the timeline can even extend to 18 months or 24 months. Accurate future cash-flow forecasting allows a public entity to tap into this deep current of interest earnings which can generate huge amounts of non-tax revenue.

Is your public entity’s cash/time investment balance correct? Are you putting your funds where they’re working the hardest for you and your taxpayers?

William Cherry served for 24 years as a County Treasurer and Chief Financial Officer responsible for managing and investing public funds. He now serves as the Director of Public Partnerships for three+one and can be reached by phone at 585-484-0311, ext. 709, or by email at wec@threeplusone.us.
Association of Minnesota Counties

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MINUTES

April 21, 2023

CALL TO ORDER
President Mary Jo McGuire called the AMC Board of Directors’ meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. on Friday, April 21, 2023. The meeting was held at the Association of Minnesota Counties, 255 Charles Ave in St Paul, Introduction was made.

There was moment of silence for Anthony Owen, Pope County Deputy Sheriff who lost his life in the line of duty last week. Pope Commissioner Larry Lindor appreciated the help they received from the community and other counties.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA – COMMISSIONER MARY JO MCGUIRE
MOTION by Blair Nelson; seconded by Brad Anderson to approve the April 21, 2023, AMC Board of Directors’ agenda. The motion carried.

PRESIDENT’S REPORT – COMMISSIONER MARY JO MCGUIRE
President McGuire reported on the following:

- Earth Day is tomorrow; April is County Government month and County Health Day was Wednesday, President McGuire hopes counties are recognizing their staff in these areas.
- State of the State: AMC President Mary Jo McGuire and 1st Vice President Neal Goetz were invited to the State of the Union address by Gov Tim Walz.
- State of Main Street: State Auditor Julie Blaha presented the annual State of Main Street this past Monday. The presentation was the culmination event following four regional listening sessions in March that brought together the expertise of local government leaders and data provided by AMC. Auditor Blaha was joined by county commissioners from around the state to highlight county program aid and other local government issues.
- Mental Health Awareness is in May. President McGuire asked members to help legislators know that counties need help in this area.
- NACo Annual Conference: Registration is open for the NACo Annual Conference in Austin Texas July 1-4. President McGuire shared she is excited to be sworn in as the NACo President. She invited all Board members to attend the Fall NACo Board meeting, which will be hosted in Ramsey County in December, President McGuire will share more details when they are finalized.
- Executive Committee minutes from the meeting on March 24, 2023, were included in the packet. In addition, the Executive Committee met jointly with the MGT Executive Committee last week to discuss items of mutual interest like cybersecurity, the human resources technical assistance program, amicus briefs, and law enforcement claims.

SECRETARY/TREASURER REPORT – COMMISSIONER LARRY LINDOR
- Approval of the Minutes
  MOTION by Larry Lindor; seconded by Karla Bingham to approve the March 31, 2023, AMC Board of Directors’ meeting minutes. The motion carried.
- Approval of the Financials
  Because it has been less than a month since the last board meeting, there is no financial statement to report this month.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR ITEMS – RYAN ERDMANN, AMC MEMBER ENGAGEMENT COORDINATOR ON BEHALF OF JULIE RING
- AMC Strategic Planning update – Last year, the Board adopted a strategic plan for 2023-2025. Ryan provided an overview on the progress made Q1 in 2023. A document emphasizing progress on each goal and strategy highlights was included in the packet.
- District Meeting planning – The agenda for district meetings is filling up. MN Counties Intergovernmental Trust (MCT) will join the fall meetings instead of the typical spring meetings. Dave Bartholomay, consultant working with AMC on Leadership training, will join most district meetings to provide leadership training. District directors who have ideas on short local items to be presented during district meetings should contact Ryan Erdmann.
- Center for Public Lands Counties – At the March meeting, the Board directed staff to create an educational communication document regarding the NACo National Center for Public Lands Counties. This document will be shared with each county regarding a potential voluntary investment over the next two years using Local Assistance and Tribal Consistency Funds (LATCF) received by each county. The investment amounts to 1% of the recently distributed LATCF, a flexible, targeted federal investment in public lands counties. A letter and fact sheet summarizing the planned work of the center to use new and traditional media to tell these stories, as well as develop detailed individual research and written county profiles, was sent April 14 to county administrators. After discussion, the Board is in support of the work of the resource center and the investment.
  Motion by Vance Stuehrenberg, seconded by Brad Anderson to approve the concept and encourage and recommend Minnesota counties to support the allocation. The motion carried.

DEPUTY DIRECTOR ITEMS – LAURIE KULPACS
- AMC Legislative Conference Cancellation – The AMC Legislative Conference was cancelled this year due to inclement weather. AMC received an invoice from the InterContinental in the amount of $88,477, which was the minimum amount due per the contractual agreement. Staff consulted with AMC’s legal counsel to inquire about invoking the Force Majeure clause in the contract which states if acts of God, or other emergencies beyond a party’s reasonable control make it impossible for such party to perform its obligations under the agreement, such party may terminate the agreement upon written notice to the other party without liability. Staff is very pleased that the letter to the InterContinental from AMC’s attorney resulted in a total invoice due of $26,657.
- Preferred Business Partner Program – Chair Roger Imdieke reported on a recently signed new partner, Cache Software. Cache Software is a software company focused on Medicaid billing and care management services for home and community-based service providers and MCO billing solutions for federal agencies. AMC now has 15 premier partners to date.
- Premier Business Partner Reception – A reception will be held at the AMC building on June 22 for the AMC premier business partners and Board members. This reception replaces the exclusive funding opportunity the premier partners missed at the February Legislative conference which was canceled due to inclement weather. AMC is bringing this event back for 2023 only. Please mark your calendars.

GOVERNMENT RELATIONS ITEMS – MATT HILGART
- Legislative update – Matt and his team provided an update on several legislative issues: ARMER radio funding, community supervision formula, transportation funding bill, tax bill, Housing Affordability Aid, homelessness, duty disability, score funding, cannabis, mental health, elections funding, human services modernization, and mental health.

HOME RUN LEADERSHIP WITH DR. DAVE WEBB
Dr. Webb provided an overview on the four core leadership components needed to be a Homerun Leader: The Homerun Framework, The Homerun Formula, Discover Your Team Leadership Type and the 4 Best Consensus Questions. Dr. Webb is a former, 12-year, Superintendent of Schools for South St. Paul. He taught aspiring superintendents as an Adjunct Faculty Member at Hamline University, served as the Dean of the Spanish Immersion Programs for the Concordia Language Villages, and is the governing board president of his church in Shoreview, Minnesota. Dave recently published his Amazon Best Selling book, Homerun Leadership, and leaders most appreciate the simple 4 step framework to develop a common language to guide their team to better faster team decisions, and creating better, shorter meetings. Board members were given a copy of his book.

AFFILIATE PRESENTATIONS
The Board heard from three affiliate organizations: Garett Rohlfing representing Minnesota Association of County Feedlot Officers (MACFO), Lisa Meredith representing Minnesota Counties Computer Cooperative (MnCCC) and Gerd Clabaugh representing Minnesota Association of County Feedlot Officers (MACFO). Each affiliate representative gave a presentation about their organization, their work, and important issues.

BOARD MEMBER REPORTS
- Affiliate Representatives/District Directors/Policy Committee Chairs/WIR & NACo Board Members - Members were given the opportunity to report on key issues that effect their districts/associations. Policy Committees have not met, no report this month.

MEMBER SERVICES COMMITTEE CHAIRS
- Research Committee – Luke Johnson reported AMC received over twenty applicants for the summer research internship program and hired three graduate students. The committee will be meeting next month to decide on the project topics for the interns this summer and finalize a slate of county tours and educational opportunities. AMC’s AmerCorps member, Mary Lyons, has started research projects on jail health costs and county mental health services. Mary worked with county boards and administrators to get all 87 counties signed on to the new opioid settlement by the April 18 deadline.
- Education Committee – Rick Anderson reported educators from the Big 4 organizations (Association of Minnesota Counties, League of Minnesota Cities, Minnesota Association of Townships, and the Minnesota School Boards Association) will put on a series of trainings focused on how elected officials can better manage conflict with their constituents. Earlier this year, a subcommittee of the Education & Training Committee was formed for the purpose of designing and implementing an assessment of the educational needs of AMC members. Following this year’s successful County Government 101 conference, AMC is currently planning a follow-up program envisioned as a “refresher” course open to all members. This one-day conference has been scheduled for Thursday, August 3, and will be held at the Park Event Center in St. Cloud. Content is still in development, with the goal of offering sessions which provide more in-depth information than is available at the County Government 101 conference.
- Business Partner Committee – Roger Imdieke referred to the information listed under the Deputy Director Items - Preferred Business Partner Program as noted above.
PUBLIC SURPLUS

Public Surplus is an online auction platform designed for government agencies. AMC is partnering with Public Surplus to help counties sell surplus property online. If you are a County that has anything to sell, please check out Public Surplus as an avenue to post your auctions. There are benefits to your county, as well as the association.

- There is no cost for your county to use Public Surplus
- Buyer pays a small fee on each item sold, known as a buyers premium

AMC has partnered with the Public Surplus group to help counties sell surplus online

CONTACT PUBLIC SURPLUS TODAY TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE PROGRAM:

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