

the review

November / December 2019

the official magazine of the  michigan municipal league

Empowering Women in Local Government



LEADING THE WAY

Brenda F. Moore Brings Passion
to Her Groundbreaking Role
as League President

the review

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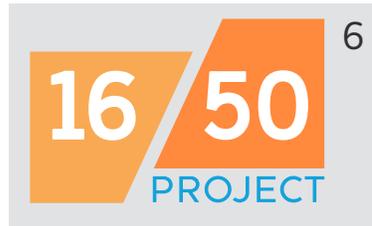
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Brenda F. Moore, the new president of the League's Board of Trustees, is enthusiastic about her hometown of Saginaw. Photo by Matt Bach.

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the review

The official magazine of the Michigan Municipal League

Volume 92, Number 6

We love where you live.

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Please recycle this magazine

Fostering Gender Diversity Benefits Us All

Following the enormous breakthroughs of the women's rights movement of the 1960s and '70s, we saw many of the gender barriers in the workplace broken down. But decades later, we continue to fight some of the same battles and women continue to face significant career obstacles. It is imperative for us to recognize the specific impediments, continue to engage in meaningful dialogue, and develop effective strategies moving forward.

Women are grossly underrepresented in the municipal executive field. It is clear that communities need to be run and designed to meet the needs of all residents. Consequently, having women in executive positions where their voices are heard, and their ideas incorporated into community decisions, is crucial. Women bring their own unique set of experiences and skillsets to the table. We know that women and men can have different approaches to problem solving, communicating, and collaborating, and that bringing together a diversity of workstyles, perspectives, and solutions can result in the best outcomes. This issue of the magazine devotes several articles to the importance of gender diversity and empowering women in municipal government.

We are doing our own hard work at the League to address this issue. We began a program last year called the 16/50 Project to help underscore and bridge the gap between the percentage of women residents in the state of Michigan (50.8 percent) and the percentage of women that hold positions as municipal managers (16 percent). This program is sponsored by the Michigan Municipal Executives (MME), the Michigan Association of Counties (MAC), and the League's Foundation. Through enhanced leadership training, the goal is to provide targeted professional development opportunities for a new generation of female leaders. Kudos to Emily Kieliszewski, the League's membership engagement specialist, who is managing the program—from designing the website to organizing the Women Leading Local Government seminars at universities and overseeing the Women's Municipal Leadership Program sessions. Putting considerable thought into the project, she has done an outstanding job.

The International City/County Management Association (ICMA), through task forces and data research, has done some great work studying and highlighting this issue over the last several decades. In a 1976 report, despite the fact that women made up half of the municipal government workforce, only 1.3 percent worked in chief administrative offices. Fast forward 36 years later to 2012, when a new task force was convened. They found that by 2003, only 12 percent of the nation's city and county managers were women. In 2013, the numbers had increased to 19.8 percent, but then decreased to 14.4 percent in 2014. They concluded in their final report, entitled "Task Force on Women in the Profession," that the demographics of an organization influence individual behavior, culture, employee health, and organizational performance. Additionally, lack of gender diversity in organizations can reduce productivity and impair financial success. You can check out the full report at ICMA.org.

I am very pleased to welcome Brenda F. Moore, Mayor Pro Tem from the City of Saginaw, as the League's new president. She is making history as the first African American woman to serve as the League's president. And, I might add, she is the fourth League president that hails from Saginaw. She brings a thirst for knowledge and an abundance of energy and passion to her new role. League staff and I are looking forward to a busy year working with her to advocate for our legislative agenda. Welcome, President Moore!

One final note... it's election time. We are your one-stop shop for all things municipal and welcome your questions and comments. Our elected officials training will begin later in November and continue into January. League staff and other experts in the field will present on a wide variety of local government topics. The seminars are a great launch to your newly appointed positions. You will have the opportunity to meet with your colleagues from around the state and learn from each other. We hope that you will check back with us often through mml.org, email, phone, or face-to-face. We are here to make your jobs easier!

Daniel P. Gilmartin

Daniel P. Gilmartin
League Executive Director and CEO
734.669.6302; dpg@mml.org



ACCELERATING EQUITY

Women's Municipal Leadership Program Empowers Five Success Stories

By Emily Kieliszewski



Transformative, bold action—that's how the 16/50 Project is bringing gender equity to local government chief administrative offices. Women make up over 50 percent of Michigan's population, but represent just 16 percent of Michigan's municipal chief administrative officers. In 2018, the League unveiled our 16/50 Project to shed light on this issue, and to do something about it.

Most notably, we're equipping women who want to lead their communities with tools and skills to step into the chief administrative role through our Women's Municipal Leadership Program (WMLP). WMLP brings coaching, networking, and critical topic training right in front of women eager to lead—and it has paid off. One year after launching our inaugural program, five women from our initial cohort of 24 participants now lead Michigan communities.

Kim Awrey

Kim Awrey says it was a presentation by Mason City Administrator Deborah Stuart that allowed her to see herself leading her own hometown of Gaylord. The current city manager has more than 30 years of

experience in everything from waste-water treatment plants to roads. The thought of following in his footsteps used to terrify her.

"Debbie talked about having a great staff and how it's their job to know," Awrey recalled. "You don't have to have all that knowledge. It was like a load was lifted off me."

Awrey, a controller and financial officer in the private sector for 23 years, was named Gaylord's assistant city manager in January. She credits her training through the League's Women's Municipal Leadership Program with giving her the skills and confidence to apply—and get selected for—her new role.

"It made me more confident," Awrey said. "I was lagging back. I wasn't confident enough to apply. I think I would have done it eventually, but not as quickly as I did. Maybe on the next go-round. Maybe not in Gaylord."

That confidence has translated to her everyday role, helping her with municipal finance and budgeting as the city begins its next budget cycle. She also serves as the city clerk and she's continuing to dig in and learn as much as she can. After all, Gaylord's current city manager is planning to retire next year—and Awrey already sees herself stepping into that role.



Ellen Glass, city manager, Linden



Frances McMullan, city manager, Ypsilanti



The WMLP was an incredible experience that helped me grow professionally and personally. Through the program, we were able to establish a strong network of powerful women that can support one another as we pursue our individual goals and our common goal of creating more female leaders in our state.



Courtney Magaluk, city manager, Scottville



Laura Lam, deputy city manager, Kalamazoo



Kimberly Awrey, assistant city manager/city clerk, Gaylord

Frances McMullan

Formerly the Ypsilanti city clerk, Frances McMullan credits the WMLP for helping her build her confidence and giving her the skills she needed for this new leadership position as the city manager. During a webinar on the current state of women entering local government management, hosted by the International City/Council Management Association (ICMA), McMullan said the program gave her the push she needed to take on the new role.

“I had been an interim [city manager] twice, and my confidence level wasn’t where it should be,” McMullan said. “After this class, I was afforded another opportunity and I was chosen for that top position.”

McMullan also has three decades of experience in local government, a bachelor’s degree in public law and government/public administration, and a graduate degree in management.

Courtney Magaluk

Courtney Magaluk, WMLP 2018 graduate and former project manager for the City of Grand Rapids, is now the Scottville city manager. She credits the program with giving her more confidence when applying for city manager roles.

“Part of that was the education in areas that I didn’t feel were my expertise, like finance,” Magaluk said. “It gave me greater confidence that I do have some familiarity on this. I felt better moving forward and speaking about the critical skills needed to secure a city manager position.”

The networking and access to an executive coach made the experience particularly valuable, she said, adding that she couldn’t have had the experience without the support from donors and sponsors who made the program possible.

“I really appreciated the support of the donors who made it possible for me,” Magaluk said. “We don’t go into local government for the money. I would not have been able to afford it. To have a program that was free—and so well put together—was huge for me.”

Ellen Glass

Ellen Glass, former clerk for the Village of Vernon, started her job as the new Linden city manager on Sept. 3. She is a graduate of the inaugural class of the WMLP.

Glass holds a bachelor’s degree in Public Administration and Community Development from Central Michigan University. She also worked as a certified grant administrator for Michigan Economic Development Corporation where she assisted communities through the grant process for state/federal funding. In addition, she serves on the Executive Board of Directors for Saginaw-Shiawassee Habitat for Humanity.

Laura Lam

Laura Lam has worked with the City of Kalamazoo since 2009, starting as the community development manager and transitioning to director of community planning and development. In 2017, she was promoted to assistant city manager. She holds a bachelor’s degree in Sociology/ Psychology from Kalamazoo College, and a master’s degree in Public Administration from San Jose State University. Lam is a graduate of the 2018 WMLP and thoroughly enjoyed her experience during last year’s class.

“The WMLP was an incredible experience that helped me grow professionally and personally,” said Lam. “Through the program, we were able to establish a strong network of powerful women that can support one another as we pursue our individual goals and our common goal of creating more female leaders in our state.”

Since completing the program, Lam earned another promotion—deputy city manager for the City of Kalamazoo.

To learn more about the Women’s Municipal Leadership Program, visit 1650project.org/womens-municipal-leadership-program.

Emily Kieliszewski is the member engagement specialist for the League. You may contact her at 517.908.0302 or emilyk@mml.org.

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Girls Making Change steps up at the Capitol in Lansing.

Girls Making Change

By Herasanna Richards

We should be empowering young women to take the lead in their communities! That's the idea that sprang into the head of then-State Representative Stephanie Chang during her first term in office in 2016. The hope was to inspire young women from Detroit to embrace their ability to become leaders, activists, and change agents by equipping them with the hands-on skills to do just that.

The program that grew from that idea was Girls Making Change, a 10-week summer fellowship based in Southwest Detroit which is open to high school girls of color residing in Michigan Senate District 1. The program's goal is to empower

young women to see themselves in leadership roles as well as educating and exposing them to experiences that ultimately prepare them to run successfully for office or serve as activists and organizers in their community. Participants engage in social justice issues in their community, organize community events, participate in leadership workshops, and even shadow a legislator and learn the legislative process hands-on. When learning about the levels of government, the cohort starts from the ground up, beginning with precinct delegates and the role they play in their community, then working up through the different levels of government.

“We should be finding ways to support young women so that they don't have to take six months to think about running for office, that they will already feel supported and know that it's something they can do.”



The girls got an opportunity to learn from U.S. Congresswoman Brenda Lawrence (D-MI 14th District).

The purpose of the Girls Making Change fellowship is to encourage and inspire high school girls of color to run for public office. Through a series of leadership and skill-building sessions, the Change fellows develop a better understanding of community and justice issues, as well as ways to civically engage to work for change.

The outcome? Young women of color envisioning themselves in the role of public office. For most of U. S. history, that feat has been traditionally perceived to be unattainable for people of color—especially women. It’s a disparity that now-Senator Chang adamantly believes we can’t afford to have.

“Having more women, people of color, immigrants—all of those things will create better policies,” said Sen. Chang.

Change is in the Works

Diversity was the theme of the 2018 elections, where the tide was changed as our state elected women to its highest offices: Governor Gretchen Whitmer, Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson, and Attorney General Dana Nessel.

Down ballot, the trend continues. Michigan’s state legislature, mirroring the U. S. Congress, now includes more women than ever in history, thus broadening the representation from our local communities and encouraging the prospect of running for office for young women. Teachers, nurses, mothers, and others with local ties are standing up to lead their communities. In addition, the overwhelming response from the recent #BlackLivesMatter and #MeToo movements has highlighted the necessity for decision-makers to come from the communities they represent. However, simply increasing diversity isn’t enough.

In September, Program Director Gabriela Santiago-Romero joined the 2019 fellows on a trip to Lansing, where they observed legislators in action on the House floor. It wasn’t necessarily what they expected to see.

“The girls were shocked to see how many legislators simply supported a bill based on how their other colleagues chose to vote,” said Santiago-Romero. “They were watching legislation that would negatively impact their lives without any intention or understanding of what that impact might be. All the way back to Detroit, the girls discussed how ‘this was messed up’ and that we needed legislators who would not only think for themselves but speak up for the residents that were relying on them to advocate for their best interest.”

Community Action Projects

Girls Making Change inspires young women to learn and build on their own life experiences to impact change.

“My favorite part is when they recognize what they can do,” said Santiago-Romero as she described her version of “The Privilege Game.” Instead of the typical structure where participants share their experiences to recognize the unique barriers that may hold individuals back, this version focuses on how much participants do possess to positively impact their community.



Girls proudly displaying their Certificates of Completion.

“Too often these young women are focusing on what they don’t have and what the problems are, but they have never considered what they do have to work with despite their circumstances,” said Santiago-Romero.

In 2016, fellows selected sexual assault awareness and prevention as their community action project. In their research among their peers, they found a majority of fellow students were either a survivor or knew one, and an overwhelming number felt they hadn’t been educated about the issue.

In 2018, then-high school senior Amina Khaliqie advocated to change the date of her high school prom when it conflicted with Ramadan. “I wanted to be an activist, but I didn’t know how to do that,” she said.



State Senator Stephanie Chang sharing her experience with the girls.

Her actions resulted in Detroit Public School Community District revising their calendar to avoid scheduling conflicts in the future and make prom more inclusive for all Cass Tech students. This has placed her on the pathway to be a strong advocate for her community—a path that would have been unlikely for Khaliq if it wasn't for the fellowship, or examples to lead the way.

"I was always amazed at [Sen. Chang's] ability to inspire all of the girls in the room, just by the words she said," Khaliq added. "The fact that she created GMC to get more women of color in office—to me, that says so much about her as a leader."

Continuing the Tradition of Support

As a leader and an example for the young women in her cohort, unapologetically supporting women as they hold public office is a no brainer. Sen. Chang appreciates the women who paved the way and encouraged her to utilize her 10-plus years of expertise working as a community organizer within various capacities in Detroit.



Forming lasting friendships is part of the Girls Making Change experience.

I was approached by my predecessor, [then-State Representative] Rashida Tlaib, as well as several other friends, to consider running for office," said Sen. Chang. "Once I got to the point where I was super excited to be running, it was like, 'Wow, it took me that long to [decide to run].'"

"We should be finding ways to support young women so that they don't have to take six months to think about running for office, that they will already feel supported and know that it's something they can do," said Sen. Chang. "It shouldn't be that hard for young women of color to decide to run for office. It should be something they already know is a possibility and that they already know the skills and how to be a good community leader and have a support system."

For more information on Girls Making Change, follow them on social media: @GirlsMakingChange on Facebook, @Gmakingchange on Twitter, or @girlsmakingchange on Instagram. 

Herasanna Richards is a legislative associate for the League. You may contact her at 517.908.0309 or hrichards@mml.org.

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CONVENTION REFLECTIONS

By Theresa Rich



The fall 2019 Michigan Municipal League Convention is a wrap. Now it's time for a moment of introspection and perhaps even a celebratory afterglow. While all of the substantive material and presentations

are there for the taking on the League website, my reflections are more from a personal lens.

Having been first elected to the Farmington Hills City Council in 2015 and now facing an up-hill write-in re-election campaign, there is a realization that my political shelf life as a city councilmember may come to a pause in a month. And so, it is from that point of view that I write these "How was Convention?" reflections.

Developing Supportive Relationships

When you are looking at the ending of something, there is often a look back at the beginning. When I was newly elected, I attended the "You Won! Now What? Newly Elected Officials Training" with a roomful of other wide-eyed, at least slightly nervous newbies who didn't know each other and were not familiar with the League. Shortly after that, I attended one

of the Weekender sessions. The sessions themselves were wonderfully informative and helped build a strong peer network. Especially in the evening, over a beverage and maybe some Frankenmuth chicken, we had conversations that provided our first mentor relationships.

Fast forward nearly four years and at least a dozen League events later, walking into a League event is a joy-filled reunion. People who were once strangers are now mentors, confidants, and proteges. We've shared stories and best practices with each other. We've commiserated and cheered. The week before Convention, Facebook posts and emails were flying with "Are you going?" and "Will I see you?" and "Can we meet up for a coffee?" The League has certainly helped us forge a community among ourselves.

As is the nature of political life, about half of the elected officials are "up" or planning to move on. That led to some extra-long hugs hello and goodbye as well as some final pushes to share in-real-life contact info so that one-time acquaintances can potentially continue the journey toward longer-term friendships based on the shared values of building communities.

My Convention Experience

Now, what about this particular Convention? There are three things that I think made this Convention particularly outstanding: location, offerings, and trying something new.

Starting with location, it was terrific to have so many opportunities to see and tour our state's largest city. As Detroit goes, so do we all. Bringing us to Detroit enabled us to acknowledge that fact and let Detroit shine. As Michigan elected and appointed officials and staff members, we need to know we are all part of an integrated whole. The biggest complaint I heard was about the traffic and parking. As some would say, that helped illustrate the need for improved public transportation.

The League did a wonderful job of providing programming opportunities that would appeal to seasoned participants as well as relative newcomers. The General Sessions were interesting, informative, and thought-provoking. The Breakout Sessions were where the challenge came in. Should we go to this one or that? Or maybe this is the time to take a tour and go out to experience something first hand?

Now, for the trying something new part, I tip my hat to the League for encouraging the affiliate groups to sponsor some of the Breakout Sessions. As vice president of the Michigan

Women in Municipal Government, I've always treasured the opportunity to network at our breakfast or luncheon at Convention as well as some sponsored training.

Michigan Women in Municipal Government Sponsored Sessions

For this year's Convention, we were delighted to be offered the opportunity to actually recommend and sponsor two of the Breakout Sessions. We sponsored one featuring the Farmington Hills Domestic Violence High Risk Response Team (HRRT), and another on human trafficking. Both sessions were well attended and set the stage for future Conventions, as well as doing good work in our communities.

The HRRT of Farmington Hills/Farmington is comprised of representatives from the Farmington Hills Police Department, City of Farmington Department of Public Safety, HAVEN, Call to Action Coalition, Mai Family Services, Oakland University, Jewish Family Services, Farmington Public Schools, Beaumont Hospital, state and city prosecutors, and the 47th District Court. The team meets regularly to pursue their goal of preventing the tragedy of domestic violence by reaching out to people in crisis and making them aware of vital services that are available. Our breakout featured members of law enforcement, an advocate from HAVEN, and a district judge.



Valerie Kindle, president of Michigan Women in Municipal Government, with Detroit City Council President Brenda Jones.



Domestic Violence session panel: Colleen Monaghan, HAVEN; Det. Sgt. Chad Double, Theresa Rich, Farmington Hills councilmember; Judge Marla Parker, 47th District Court; and Lt. Jon Haupt, Farmington Hills Police Department.



Panelists at the MUIMG-sponsored session *Human Trafficking in Your Community*.

CONVENTION

I was the moderator. A PowerPoint presentation was used as a backdrop for some facts and figures, but the richness of this session came organically from the audience. There were so many questions about who, why, what, and how that most of the hour was spent as a question and answer session. We are hopeful that the participants will take this information home and consider using this life-saving, collaborative approach in their communities.

The Human Trafficking session was moderated by Detroit City Council President Brenda Jones. Panelists were State Senator Sylvia Santana, State Representative Dayna Polehanki, Documentarian Laura Swanson, and me.

Following a presentation from Redford Township Police Department Sgt. Jennifer Mansfield, panelists shared what was happening in this area from their lens. Once again, the conversation was robust.

For those who attended Convention, I hope you also had some wonderful experiences. For all reading this, if you are continuing in public service, I strongly encourage you to consider expanding your participation in the League. Participate in training, offer to moderate a panel, or bring forward a topic for discussion. For those whose public service may be at least taking a pause after November, make sure your mentoring of those who follow you includes encouragement in League activities. 

Theresa Rich is a Farmington Hills councilmember and trustee of the Oakland Schools Board of Education. You may contact her at 248.320.5363 or trich@richcounsel.com.



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Some of Sterling Heights' strong women leaders include (l to r) Melanie Ryska, Kate Baldwin, Jennifer Varney, Barbara Ziarko, Meghan Ahearn, Deanna Koski, Mary Jaganjac, Tammy Turgeon, Marcia Magyar-Smith, and Melanie Davis.

BUILDING A PIPELINE OF FEMALE LEADERS

By Meghan Ahearn and Tammy Turgeon

What qualities define a great leader? Some words that come to mind are supportive, passionate, courageous, patient, inspirational, resilient and visionary. The City of Sterling Heights certainly has a leadership team that embodies all of these characteristics. As a matter of fact, for the last five years, Sterling Heights has been putting those leadership qualities to work implementing the 2030 Visioning Plan, which was built from the ground up incorporating the ideas of all our stakeholders to plan for a prosperous future.

The Vision Statement sets the tone for the whole plan: A vibrant, inclusive community for residents and businesses that is safe, active, progressive and distinctive. Sterling Heights—a bold vision for an exceptional quality of life.

An important component of the 2030 Vision includes a viable succession plan for Sterling Heights leadership. In the last five years, Sterling Heights has made huge strides in acquiring a more diverse team with the hiring of many talented women leaders. While the leadership qualities mentioned above don't differentiate gender, they played a direct and important role when hiring our women leaders.

For historical comparison purposes, in 2014, Library Director Tammy Turgeon was the only female member of our ten-person director team. Since then, Sterling Heights has hired women to fill the seats of the city clerk, community relations director, finance and budget director, city treasurer,



“ There will never be a
GLASS CEILING
in Sterling Heights as long as
INCLUSIVENESS
remains a guiding principle. ”

city assessor, and human resources and benefits manager. In 2018, the city promoted the first-ever female police captain and acquired the first female K-9 unit—a Dutch Shepherd named Ivy. Female City Council members also outnumber the male members four to three.

“We have worked hard to build one of the most talented leadership teams in the business and it has been possible, thanks in large part, to the addition of many talented women leaders,” said City Manager Mark Vanderpool. “There will never be a glass ceiling in Sterling Heights as long as inclusiveness remains a guiding principle.”

Special Accolades

Several of Sterling Heights’ talented female leaders have received honors from outside organizations. In 2016, Tammy Turgeon, director of the Sterling Heights Public Library and Suburban Library Cooperative, was recognized for her involvement in connecting school districts with their local libraries when she was named the Michigan Library Association Librarian of the Year. In 2017, former Community Relations Director Bridget Kozlowski was accepted into Pi Alpha Alpha, the National Honor Society for Public Affairs and Administration. In 2018, Sterling Heights Finance and

Budget Director Jennifer Varney was recognized by *Crain’s Detroit Business* as a Notable Woman in Finance. Selections for this award were based on career accomplishments, involvement in nonprofits and community organizations, and evidence that they mentor others in their field.

How Do We Continue the Trend?

The story definitely doesn’t end at acquiring talented female staff. In order to progress and innovate, Sterling Heights must continue developing those desirable leadership skills and inspire and mentor others to achieve their potential. We also have a responsibility to ensure that we have an environment conducive to growth for our female staff. One way the city has bridged the gap between career and personal life is by developing the Maternity Leave Administrative Policy. Prior to 2018, Sterling Heights had no specific policy dictating time off for new parents. Recognizing the strain of balancing work and home, Sterling Heights put a policy into place that provides new parents with some paid leave. Since its inception, over 18 employees have utilized this important benefit.



Liz Sierawski
Mayor Pro Tem



Maria Schmidt
Councilmember



Colleen Hopper
Police Captain

During the same time frame, Sterling Heights added the CareHere Employee Health & Wellness Center to City Hall. The center offers our employees high quality, low-cost, patient-centered healthcare conveniently located on-site. This has been a great added benefit for all our employees, but especially for families. The close proximity to work makes the center an ideal location to bring in children six months and older for check-ups or sick appointments. Additionally, one of the offices conveniently doubles as a breast pumping station for post-partum mothers needing a private space.

The 2019 Employee Training Initiative is another way that the city promotes growth and development with our female staff. Beginning in July, all staff was granted a one-day sabbatical. This is an employee-driven initiative wherein employees are given one paid work day to attend any training of their choosing. We have a number of employees attending female leadership classes through SkillPath and Fred Pryor. Additionally, the Executive Training component will send up to five staff from the supervisory team—which includes directors, managers, and supervisors—to attend executive leadership training. This year, two female executives will attend week-long trainings at Michigan State University and the University of Michigan Ross School of Business.

Why Is This Important to Sterling Heights?

A focal point of our 2030 Vision is to be more progressive. We are laser-focused on where our community is now and what we would like to see in our future.

“The City of Sterling Heights has an amazing leadership team that fosters inclusion and diversity, and in recent years, we have made strides in diversifying our leadership team.” said Human Resources and Benefits Manager Kate Baldwin. “We are very excited for this accomplishment and recognize the importance of continuing the momentum of expanding diversity in our organization. The Office of Human Resources has a strong focus on continuously evaluating our talent acquisition process to further develop and enhance recruitment efforts to create a more diverse workforce.”

To better serve the residents of our great city, of which 51 percent are female, who is more suited to meeting those needs than women themselves? We look forward to continuing to build Sterling Heights’ female leadership team through 2030 and beyond.

Meghan Ahearn is the special projects coordinator for the City of Sterling Heights. You may contact her at 586.446.2305 or mahearn@sterling-heights.net.

Tammy Turgeon is the community services director and library director for the City of Sterling Heights. You may contact her at 586.446.2640 or tturgeon@sterling-heights.net.



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Intelligent Giving

Tips to Make Sure Your Will Is Properly Set Up

By John M. Barr

According to AARP, a whopping 60 percent of Americans do not have a will. If you're one of them, now's a perfect time to stop procrastinating and set up a will so that you can be sure your wishes are followed—with the added benefit of peace of mind.

Having a will provides the opportunity to decide where your property goes after your death and who will be in charge of it after you are gone. It's also a good time to decide whether to make a gift to charity and potentially leave a legacy.

Without a will, the court determines who will administer your property and the state decides who will inherit your property, without considering any charitable bequests you may wish to make. The state also will take your estate if you do not have heirs and do not specify inheritors. This may or may not be what you want.

Sometimes a "simple" will is all that is needed. In many cases, however, a more extensive estate plan is more appropriate.

Estate Planning

Depending on the situation, estate plans usually employ a variety of planning documents and methods such as these: single-owned property vs. jointly owned property; insurance; retirement plans such as an IRA, 401k, or pension plan; annuities, trusts, powers of attorney; and gifts. Weaving these documents and methods together in a meaningful plan takes effort, time, and knowledge. The result, however, can give great satisfaction and peace of mind.

Proper estate planning costs money up front, but generally saves multiple times the cost later. It is best to have a knowledgeable estate planner draft the plan.

Do-it-yourself plans can have unintended—and possibly severe—consequences, such as:

- Having to get your child's permission to sell your own home
- Paying more tax than necessary
- Creating unnecessary strife within the family
- Enduring a contested will
- Property going to the wrong person or to the state,
- Leaving out a necessary heir
- Going to probate court to unnecessarily probate the estate or interpret the document, and paying unnecessary court and attorney fees

Whether you choose to work with a professional or create a simple will on your own, gifting is an important part of estate plans and living a meaningful life. Most people want to leave the world a better place and make good use of their assets. Giving to worthy causes does both.

Intelligent giving involves a bit of know-how. Some research using established tools like GuideStar and Charity Navigator or the organization's own website can help you determine whether the gift recipient will make good use of the donation. Look for information about the impact the charity has in the community and make sure its goals align with yours.

Methods of Giving

Once satisfied with the organization, determine the amount of the gift and method of giving. The amount of the gift depends on your personal finances and charitable goals. The method of giving can involve gifts of after-tax money or pre-tax money. Giving pre-tax money is generally preferable because it allows for a larger gift at a lower cost to the donor.

There are several ways to give, including:

- **Bequest in a will or trust.** A painless way to make a substantial gift from your estate after death is to simply include language in a will specifying a gift to be made to family, friends, or a charity as part of an estate plan. You may choose to make a gift of a percentage of your estate, a gift of a specific dollar amount or specific asset, or a gift to a charity if a named beneficiary predeceases you.
- **Required minimum distribution.** A person over the age of 70 is required to take a distribution from an IRA every year and pay regular income tax on the distribution. But the law allows the distribution to be donated to a charity without having to pay the income tax. The gift itself is not deductible, but the distribution does not count as income. This is especially helpful if the taxpayer does not itemize contributions. Be aware that the funds must go directly from the IRA to the charity and can not pass through the donor. In other words, the check must be payable to the charity. Stock brokers, banks, and IRA custodians are well aware of the requirements and can help with the gift.
- **Gift of appreciated property.** The stock market has been rising for some time and many investors have greatly appreciated stock in their asset portfolio. Gifting appreciated stock gives the taxpayer a donation at the higher appreciated amount and there is no capital gain to pay on the appreciated portion of the gift. To make a gift of appreciated property, contact your broker or the charity and request transfer and delivery instructions to complete the transaction.



“

Most people want to leave the world a better place and make good use of their assets. Giving to worthy causes does both.

”

Estate Plan Declaration

- Gift of life insurance. Unneeded life insurance can be gifted to a charity with little financial pain to the donor. The charity, your insurance agent, and financial planner can help with the details, but in general, this method involves listing the charity as your beneficiary. This can be done by a policy rider for a percent of the policy in large policies, naming the charity as a beneficiary of the policy, or outright donation of the policy to the charity.
- Annuities. A charitable annuity is a contract where the donor gives money to the charity and receives a benefit in return. A simple gift annuity can provide an immediate tax deduction and can provide an income stream to the donor from the annuity for a period of years or for life. Other types of annuities can be arranged such as a charitable remainder trust where you receive income for a period and the remainder then goes to charity.
- Gift of stocks and bonds. A gift of appreciated securities is an easy way for you to make a gift, with some potential tax benefits.
- Gift of retirement assets. A gift from your IRA, 401k, 403b, pension, or other tax deferred plan is an excellent way to make a gift.

More information about the Foundation and the impact your gift can have is available at mmlfoundation.org. You may also contact the MML Foundation at mmlfoundation@mml.org or at 734.669.6336. 

John M. Barr is an attorney in private practice including estate planning, serves as the Ypsilanti city attorney, represents other local governments, and is a member of the MML Foundation Board of Directors. You may contact him at 734.481.1234 or JBarr@barrlawfirm.com.

While these tips should spark some ideas on how to plan for the future, it is always wise to consult with your attorney, financial planner, or tax consultant when planning a substantial gift. Regardless of the amount or gift vehicle you choose, gifting helps the charity of your choice while giving you the satisfaction of helping, promoting your ideas and goals, and ensuring your wishes are followed.

Leave a Legacy with a Planned Gift to the MML Foundation

A gift to the MML Foundation can contribute to the betterment of local government by providing education and scholarships for municipal officials, educating young people on local government, supporting local public spaces and projects, improving the quality of life, helping communities connect with opportunities, building partnerships, and helping fix our state's municipal finance system.

Want to make sure local leaders have the tools they need to make the best decision for their communities? You can now make a planned gift to the MML Foundation by:

- Bequest. Simply include the MML Foundation as a beneficiary in your will or trust.



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BRENDA F. MOORE

Brings Passion to Her Groundbreaking Role as League President

By Matt Bach



“ My goal as president is to... encourage everyone who will listen that there is a way to accomplish their dreams like I have... you can do the same thing I did and represent your community in an outstanding way. ”

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As Michigan Municipal League's president, Brenda F. Moore is making history.

The Saginaw Mayor Pro Tem is the first African-American woman to serve as head of the League's Board of Trustees. That significance isn't lost on Moore.

"Becoming the League president was like a dream. The ultimate dream," said Moore. "It was what I wanted, and I was truly honored when my colleagues voted me in. To be the first African-American female League president, I'm excited! I'm excited for the city of Saginaw, I'm excited for the League and I'm excited for this opportunity."

"Ms. Brenda," as she's affectionately known throughout her community, is a self-proclaimed jokester who is not afraid to speak her mind, and is all about helping others. Moore loves to dance (even when no one else is dancing) and she's proud to represent the neighborhood where she grew up and still lives today.

Brenda F. Moore at a glance:

FAMILY: She has one son, James, and two grandchildren, Erin and Landen. Her son runs a car dealership in Grand Rapids and earlier this year, gifted her with a new car as a birthday present.

FAVORITE BOOKS: *The Bible* and *Becoming*, by Michelle Obama. Favorite Book within the Bible: Book of Psalms.

PEOPLE SHE'S INSPIRED BY: Her parents, President Barack Obama and comedian Moms Mabley. Growing up, Moore wanted to be a stand-up comedian, like Moms.

HOBBIES: Volunteering in the community, stained glasswork, crocheting, knitting, golf and bowling.

SOMETHING YOU MIGHT NOT KNOW ABOUT HER: She worked as a bail bond agent and bounty hunter for many years. Yes, a bounty hunter!

During a “Light Up the Community” service project on the city’s east side over the summer, Moore’s many friends and fellow community volunteers said they weren’t at all surprised that Ms. Brenda became the League’s president. In July, she stepped into the role vacated by Melanie Piana. (Piana resigned as League president to run for mayor of Ferndale). Moore served most of 2018–19 as the League vice president and became the president for the 2019–20 year during the League’s annual Convention in Detroit on Sept. 25.

Her friends say they know she’ll do an excellent job as president.

“Brenda is the perfect one to lead,” said long-time friend Dr. Kelley Peatross, regional manager of community affairs for Consumers Energy and former superintendent for the Saginaw Public School District. “She’s great at looking at everyone’s perspective and she’s all-inclusive. She’s a person for the people, she loves everyone, and she wants everyone to get what they need.”

“We need more Brendas,” said Saginaw County Prosecutor John A. McColgan Jr. “We need people who care. We love her. The only way to get things better is to have people like Brenda. I think she’ll do a fabulous job as the League’s president. That’s what we need—people in government like her who care.”

Moore’s selection as president cemented the City of Saginaw as being a historic community for the League board in a variety of ways. Particularly noteworthy are these facts:

- The League’s first president was from Saginaw—William B. Baum Sr., Mayor.
- The League’s second male African-American president was from Saginaw—Sylvester Joe Stephens, Councilmember.

- And now, Moore is the first female African-American president, and fourth president to hail from Saginaw.

“To me, it’s about moving Saginaw forward,” Moore said. “I’m not surprised Saginaw has had such a storied history with the League because we have so many good, hard-working people from our community.”

A Winding Journey

Moore’s historic road to the top of the League was far from the typical journey.

Just six years ago, she had zero political experience and was working as a bail bond agent and bounty hunter. When necessary, she would kick down doors to catch the people she was tracking who did not return for their scheduled court appointment. For her, being a bail bond agent was about helping people and she viewed it as missionary work. She wouldn’t just facilitate loaning people bond money, but she helped them navigate the court system and get assistance as needed, such as treatment for drug addiction and/or mental health issues.

“It was a fun, adventuresome part of my life,” she said. “I enjoyed it. I enjoyed helping those who really needed it. It was like a ministry for me. People today say, ‘Ms. Brenda, I remember you and you saved my life. I remember you got me out of jail, and I haven’t been in trouble since.’ Those are good stories, when I was able to help people. The good stories always outweigh the bad ones.”

Over the years, she also worked as a substance abuse counselor, Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 517M union representative and organizer, and served in a variety of roles at Buena Vista schools.



Brenda F. Moore greets young participants at a local Business Fair and shows her support for law enforcement officers at a Light Up the City event.



Brenda F. Moore began her tenure on the League Board in 2016 along with fellow trustees Brian Chapman, Dr. Deirdre Waterman, Michael Cain, Nancy De Boer, and Diane Brown Wilhelm. She now serves as president with Kimberley Sims as vice president.

Making the Leap into Politics

Her political career began as a dare of sorts, while she was fighting the closure of the Buena Vista School District where she was employed. The school district was dissolved by the state in 2013. During the battle to save the district, she found herself face-to-face in Lansing with then-State Senator Dr. Roger Kahn. It was a moment that changed her life.

“I went to Lansing and lobbied there to save the school district,” she said. “I cornered Senator Kahn in the hallway in Lansing. He was really funny and he looked at me and said, ‘You need to be in politics.’ I told him there was no way. They closed the school district, so the next year I put my name in the hat for city council.”

An underdog for sure, Moore was among 18 candidates seeking four seats. Using the catchy slogan, “If you want More, Vote for Moore!” she became the fourth highest vote getter following an exhaustive campaign, thus securing a seat on the council.

“At my 58th birthday party, I announced that I was running for city council and people laughed. I’m known as a jokester and they were like ‘Girl, quit playing.’ But my mother knew I was serious. She said, ‘She’s going to run and she’s going to win’. She was my biggest supporter. Once people in the community and my friends realized that I was serious, they rallied behind me.”

Her mother, Janie Moore, died in 2015, but got to see her get elected, and she also saw her involvement with the League. “We talked about me running for a leadership role in the League and she would always say ‘Go for it, you can do it!’ She would be so happy and proud to see me as the first African-American female president in the League.”

What’s Next?

Moore attributes her rapid climb through the League, as well as with the Saginaw City Council where she began as a council member and is now Mayor Pro Tem, to her thirst for knowledge about local government. She constantly asks the question, “What’s next?” She was inspired to learn more after attending a League training for newly elected officials. The training was led by now-retired League General Counsel William Mathewson—whom she calls “Mr. Bill.”

“I went to the session for newly elected officials in Frankenmuth and I sat and listened to Mr. Bill talk about all the things we needed to know, like the Open Meetings Act and the Freedom of Information Act. At the time, all of those things were foreign to me. But the more I learned, the more I wanted to learn. Each time I did something, I asked the League; ‘What’s next? What can I do next? What class can I take next? What can I learn next?’ Then I did everything they told me to do.”

Driven by her strong Christian faith and belief in living by the Golden Rule, treating others how you want to be treated, Moore would network at League events, trainings, and meetings and interacted with as many people as she could—all skills taught to her by her parents, James and Janie Moore, and grandparents.

“One of my personal philosophies is, your word is your bond,” she said. “You say what you mean, and you mean what you say because whatever you say, once it comes out of your mouth, you can’t take it back. Another philosophy is to treat everybody right. My mom always said, ‘The way you want to be treated is the way you treat others.’”

Presidential Mission

As League board president, Moore said her focus is on the League’s municipal finance reform campaign and the SaveMICity initiative. She wants to encourage League members to get more involved with the League and she plans to do that by telling her story.

“My goal as president is to tell my story and to encourage everyone who will listen that there is a way to accomplish their dreams like I have,” she said. “I want to go into communities and inspire others. I’ll say, ‘Look at me. I’m from little, old Saginaw and now I’m the League president. You can do the same thing I did and represent your community in an outstanding way.’ That is my platform—to tell my story.” 

Matt Bach is the communications director for the League. You may contact him at 734.669.6317 or mbach@mml.org.



CONVENTION HIGHLIGHTS



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Retirement Provisions Limited to General Durational Clause in Contract?

FACTS:

Approximately 1,600 unionized Macomb County employee retirees who worked for Macomb County under various collective-bargaining agreements (CBAs) dating back to 1989 brought a class action claiming that the county had breached the agreements in 2009 and 2010 by reducing/altering their healthcare benefits. Each CBA contained an express three-year durational provision, and none contained a provision expressly granting a vested right to lifetime and unalterable retirement healthcare benefits. Each of the CBAs also provided the retirees with specific medical coverage if certain conditions were met and contained a “surviving-spouse provision,” a supplemental-care provision upon reaching 65 years of age, and a “subsequent-employment” provision. The trial court concluded that, while the plaintiffs are entitled to lifetime healthcare benefits, the county was permitted to make reasonable modifications to those benefits. The Court of Appeals concluded that the plaintiffs are entitled to lifetime healthcare benefits and those benefits cannot be modified without their consent. The county appealed to the Michigan Supreme Court.

ISSUE:

Did the CBAs grant the retired plaintiffs vested rights to lifetime and unalterable retirement healthcare benefits?

ANSWER:

ACCORDING TO THE MICHIGAN SUPREME COURT: NO The Court began its analysis of the issues by reviewing the United State Supreme Court decision in *M&G Polymers v Tackett*, 574 US ___(2015). In *Tackett*, the USSC rejected the argument that a general durational clause states nothing about the vesting of retiree benefits. It also rejected the presumption of vesting based on provisions including those that 1) tie eligibility for retirement health benefits to pension eligibility or 2) permit continuation of a surviving spouse’s healthcare coverage following the retiree’s death. *Tackett* specifically held that “contractual obligations will cease... upon termination of the bargaining agreement” unless the contract specifically provides that certain benefits will continue beyond the contract’s termination.

Although the Michigan Supreme Court was not bound to follow *Tackett* and related USSC decisions under a statutory exemption in the National Labor Relations Act, it stated that it chose to do so, “because it is fully consistent with Michigan’s own principles of contract law.”

Citing other Michigan Supreme Court cases, the Court stated: “Our goal in contract interpretation is to give effect to the intent of the parties, to be determined first and foremost by the plain and unambiguous language of the contract itself.” The Court further quoted a prior decision noting, “A fundamental tenet of our jurisprudence is that unambiguous contracts are not open to judicial construction and must be enforced as written.” The Court noted that none of the CBAs at issue specified that the county committed itself to provide lifetime healthcare benefits. Each of the CBAs contained three-year durational provisions. Further, the Court found that the CBAs were unambiguous, precluding the examination of extrinsic evidence to determine the intent of the parties. Nor did the Court find that the “surviving-spouse provision” or related provisions created an ambiguity which would have allowed the Court to examine evidence beyond the language of the CBAs which clearly contained a three-year duration clause.

Kendzierski v Macomb County, No. 156086 (May 30, 2019)

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mml.org/resources/information/mi-med-marihuana.html

The Battle to Fund Michigan's Roads Continues

By Rick Haglund



Everyone knows Michigan roads are terrible. They're the worst in the country, according to a January study by Lvl5, a San Francisco-based company that makes high-definition maps for self-driving cars. That's bad news for a state that is working to become a global center of autonomous vehicle development, as well as for today's drivers who daily try to swerve around dangerous potholes.

And if that's not jarring enough, Michigan likely needs billions of dollars more in road repair funds for local roads than the additional \$2.5 billion a year Gov. Gretchen Whitmer says is required for the statewide system. A recent County Road Association report found that Michigan would need to spend an additional \$2 billion annually to achieve good/fair ratings on 90 percent of 22,744 miles of federal aid-eligible county roads by 2029. The additional spending would bring 60 percent of the 30,716 miles of non-federal aid-eligible local and primary roads to good/fair ratings in the same timeframe.

The County Road Association study does not include the cost of fixing Michigan's roads and streets in cities and villages, where most people first encounter potholes after pulling out of their driveways. Putting those roads in good shape could require hundreds of millions of dollars a year in funding beyond what Whitmer has proposed as "road conditions can be as bad or worse than the state-maintained system," according to a recent blog post by Citizens Research Council of Michigan research associate Jordon Newton. His post was ominously titled, "Road funding is a local (government) problem. And it's worse than you think."

Finding More Money

Many communities already struggling to provide good services to their residents in the face of tight state funding would be hard-pressed to find additional money to fix crumbling roads and bridges. In Bay City, for example, two major bridges owned by the city need some \$7 million in repairs that it can't afford. "One bridge in Bay City can make or break the budget," said John LaMacchia, Michigan Municipal League's assistant director of state and federal affairs.

Even wealthy communities such as Grosse Pointe, which enacted a dedicated road-funding millage in 2014, are finding it difficult to adequately fund street repairs. "Even with 2.5 mills devoted solely toward roads, it will take many years to catch up from more than a decade of underinvestment," said Grosse Pointe City Manager Peter Dame in this year's budget message. Last year, cities and villages received \$571.3 million from the state transportation fund, or about 20 percent of the \$2.8 billion fund.

It's not clear how much money it would take to significantly improve the condition of city and village streets statewide, although LaMacchia and Newtown say the figure likely exceeds what Whitmer has proposed and the Legislature has rejected. "The lack of data on local road conditions is the central issue making it difficult to fully estimate what it would take to fix the roads," Newton said. Michigan hasn't conducted a system-wide analysis of road conditions since 1984, he said. And counties, cities, and villages are required to collect data only on roads that are eligible for federal funding.

There are 88,000 lane miles of federal aid-eligible roads in the state and about 165,000 lane miles of roads of roads not eligible for federal aid, mostly streets in residential areas and smaller rural roads, according to the state's Transportation Asset Management Council. TAMC reported that, of roads actually surveyed in 2017, 49 percent of non-federal aid-eligible roads were in "bad" condition, compared to 40 percent of federal aid-eligible roads considered to be "bad."

Newton said, "There is still no unifying examination of city and village conditions and what it would take to get 90 percent of these roads to "good/fair" rating (if that is even the appropriate benchmark)." But LaMacchia said assessing the condition of roads in cities and villages and estimating the costs of fixing them are complex issues. Michigan has 533 cities and villages, and each has its own asset management structure and goals. "They have different road conditions they want to achieve, therefore costs could be different," he said.

Rather than focus on the individual needs of the state, county, city, and village road systems, LaMacchia said Michigan needs to take a holistic approach to funding its broad transportation system that includes public transit. "Silos are the wrong approach," he said. Most people travel daily on state, county, and city roads without knowing or caring who individually funds them. "We need to treat transportation as one network."

Still Searching for a Legislative Solution

At this writing, Whitmer and the Republican-controlled Legislature were at an impasse on additional road funding. The Legislature refused to consider Whitmer's proposed 45-cents-a-gallon gas-tax increase. And Whitmer vetoed lawmakers' one-time spending plan of \$375 million for roads and bridges, taken from the state general fund. That's not nearly enough to fix the state's crumbling roads and dangerous bridges.

"We understand the limitations, but you need more money, maybe significantly more money than what even Whitmer has proposed," LaMacchia said. "But we give the governor a tremendous amount of credit for going for a meaningful dollar amount. If we do something, it needs to be bold." 

Rick Haglund is a freelance writer. You may contact him at 248.761.4594 or haglund.rick@gmail.com.



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Michigan communities have a 22-person planning department.

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R. Brent Savidant, planning director, City of Troy



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Northern Michigan Public Service Academy

By Katie Sholander



Strong Component of Women at the Helm

The Northern Michigan Public Service Academy (NMPSA) is a nonprofit organization of local governments whose sole purpose is to provide high-quality, affordable training to Upper Peninsula municipal employees. The mission of the organization is to foster and encourage the personal and professional development of its members so they may better serve their communities and organizations.

NMPSA was created in 1999 with a partnership between Upper Peninsula municipalities, the Michigan Municipal League, and Northern Michigan University. Upper Peninsula municipal organizations often struggle with sending their employees to valuable training courses. The travel cost for training opportunities in Lansing or other various places down-state can be very substantial. That can place a significant burden on tight training budgets as well as loss of employee productivity. The NMPSA seminars are generally all held in Marquette at the Lakeview Arena Citizens' Forum Room. The use of this room is a yearly donation from the City of Marquette. With the training being held in a central location, an overnight stay is rarely needed.

NMPSA is currently funded through annual membership fees, seminar fees, and donations. Any unit of local government may join as a member. Nonprofit organizations whose operations are closely allied with a local unit of government are also eligible to join.

Currently, the training events scheduled for the 2019-2020 calendar year include:

- Active Shooter & CPR/First Aid
- Confined Spaces & Trenching Safety
- Reading Understanding and Using Financial Statements
- Effective Communication & Time Management
- Marijuana Laws and Rules Update
- Zoning and Ordinance Issues
- Ethics in Government
- Media Relations
- Freedom of Information Act
- Meth Awareness
- Contract Negotiations Training

Seminars are held approximately once per month. The presenters and trainers often provide their expertise as a public service. In the past presenters have been local attorneys, Michigan State Police employees, Northern Michigan University professors, employees of municipal NMPSA members, Michigan Occupational Safety and Health Administration employees, and more. The calendar is always evolving as members provide topics they would like to see as a seminar.



Female Leadership

NMPSA is managed by a board of directors consisting of Chair Tara Peltoma, clerk/treasurer for the City of Crystal Falls; Vice Chair Jen LePage, assistant city manager for the City of Marquette; Treasurer Mary Schlicht, treasurer for the City of Marquette; and Secretary Suzanne Sundell, deputy clerk/financial records clerk for Chocolay Township.

The organization employs one staff member, Director Katie Sholander, who just happens to be the author of this article. The director position is part-time, so I like to describe it as the perfect job for someone interested in education and local government issues, but who wants the flexibility of being a stay-at-home mom.

When NMPSA was first founded, the idea was to have the position of director set as an internship for a student from Northern Michigan University. As the years went on, it became apparent to the board that a long-term director was in the best interest of NMPSA. Since that time, the position has always been held by women. I believe women have always held this position for NMPSA primarily for the sake of family obligations. It has very flexible hours and supports working from a home office. The Board positions have also been held primarily by women. Although re-elected yearly, for the past five years the Board has been comprised of only women.

NMPSA encourages a great deal of communication between its members, director, and board members. We are proud to have been an educational resource for the municipal employees of the Upper Peninsula for the past 20 years. 

Katie Sholander is director of the Northern Michigan Public Service Academy in Marquette. You may contact her at 269.274.9800 or nm psa@marquette mi.gov.



THE LAB REPORT

Ideas, initiatives, and activities from the League's Policy Research Labs

Michigan is Leading the Way with the Next Phase of Crowdfunding: Community Capital Investment

By Melissa Milton-Pung

You may already know about the Public Spaces, Community Places program, designed by the Michigan Economic Development Corporation in collaboration with the Michigan Municipal League. And you can probably recognize one of the program's projects in your city or nearby. From historic building rehabs and splash pads to public art and recreation fields, this program has dramatically improved public spaces across Michigan.

LOCAL INVESTING RESOURCES

Michigan-based Revalue has a great fact sheet on local investing. They offer one-of-a-kind resources, services, and training workshops for Michigan residents interested in becoming local investors.

For more information, visit revalueinvesting.com.

To date, more than 230 projects have been successfully funded through the program run by Patronicity, with nearly \$8 million in public investment and \$42 million in private donation matches. These projects even have an impressive 96-percent success rate! This format takes many small pots of money and combines them to make a big impact in community projects. It has succeeded far beyond our expectations.

Now we're diving even further into what this kind of direct capital infusion can do for making private investments in local Michigan businesses, too.

The counterpoint to donation-based crowdfunding is called community capital investment. This model takes small amounts of private investment from everyday people, or larger chunks of cash investment from individual investors or equity groups, and leverages them to get small businesses off the ground. It comes with the expectation of return on that investment. Individuals interested in supporting their local businesses can invest anywhere from \$100 to \$10,000 per company, per year. Investment crowdfunding is structured to provide a return on investment, either through an ownership stake or through a debt position. Investors with a debt position are provided a pre-determined rate of return that can be structured in a variety of ways within the investment offering.

The Evolution of Crowdfunding in Michigan

To document our work on both donation-based crowdfunding and community capital investment, the League released a new report this summer, co-written with several partners. The report, "Community Investment, Community Growth: A Retrospective in Michigan Crowdfunding," tells the story of risk and championing. It chronicles the evolution of crowdfunding, including the false starts, the hard work, and the triumphs.

CROWDFUNDING MI

Invest on Main Street





Melissa Milton-Pung shared Michigan crowdfunding success stories at ComCap19 conference in Detroit.

This publication—available online at crowdfundingmi.com—is now being used at the national level as a learning tool that every state can emulate to activate a previously dormant network of community investors. By sharing case studies, it lays out the origins of the movement in Adrian, Mich., the passage of the Michigan Invests Locally Exemption (MILE) Act in 2013, and specific projects in Detroit, Traverse City, Lansing, Tecumseh, Calumet Township, and Portland.



“This report does an exceptional job of telling the story of one of our state’s best-kept secrets—how Michigan and our supporters are leaders in the nation when it comes to crowdfunding projects making a real impact in our communities,” said Dan Gilmartin, CEO and executive director of the Michigan Municipal League. “With community capital, we all can play a part in making our communities better—whether it’s with our ideas, our time, our money, or our networks. It all contributes to the inclusivity and opportunity we ultimately seek, and it gives us a voice and a stake in the process.”

“With community buy-in—both figurative and literal—donation-based and investment-based crowdfunding can fill critical gaps in access to capital for businesses and projects in all our communities,” said former MEDC Senior Vice President

of Community Development Katharine Czarnecki. “And Michigan is at the forefront of this community capital strategy.”

The return on the state’s investment has been incredible. Over \$7 million of private donations have directly matched the state investment for crowdfunded projects, and these dollars have also helped leverage more than \$40 million in additional resources in those communities.

“That’s an amazing return on the state’s investment,” said Czarnecki. “Now, we’re very excited to see other states following in Michigan’s innovative footsteps.”

Sharing Michigan’s Successes on a National Stage

We unveiled the crowdfunding report in June at ComCap19, a national conference of investors and community leaders in Detroit hosted by the National Community Capital Coalition (NC3). The conference drew hundreds of community leaders, ecosystem builders, entrepreneurs, investors, citizens, and practitioners from across the country. More about this national organization and its network of practitioners can be found at comcapcoalition.org.

Three key women in this work—Angela Barbash, CEO of Revalue, Katharine Czarnecki formerly of the MEDC, and me—participated in a panel discussion at ComCap entitled “The Evolution of Community Capital in Michigan.” We explored the reasons why Michigan is at the forefront of the community crowdfunding movement. The biggest takeaway? When you’re in a position to champion a good idea, take the calculated risk to boost the message and build confidence by transforming nebulous ideas into pilot programs.

Next-Level Economy

As for the emergence of direct investment in local startups and business expansions, it’s becoming more normalized every day. “We’re just now starting to see the market ripen for local community capital investment,” said Barbash. “Building upon what we’ve seen occur with donation-based crowdfunding, we’re now establishing legitimacy in this alternative to traditional market investments.”

Barbash’s firm is dedicated to raising the profile of this kind of next-level local economy as well as educating would-be investors to make wise decisions. “Investing in your own backyard seems like a no-brainer to most [of us] but knowing if it’s right for you is another story,” said Barbash. “We are holding workshops all across Michigan to help people dive in to the nuances of community investments. People are excited about these options—and we’re teaching people how to evaluate investments in a new way.” More information can be found at whatisgrubstake.com.

Melissa Milton-Pung is a policy research program manager for the League. You may contact her at 734.669.6328 or mmiltonpung@mml.org.

Attorneys

GARAN LUCOW MILLER P.C.
ATTORNEYS & COUNSELORS

John J. Gillooly
Municipal Law
jgillooly@garanlucow.com
313.446.5501
www.garanlucow.com

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Women Take Center Stage in League-Related Leadership Positions



By Kelly Warren

It's an exciting time for women in leadership at the League. The League Board of Trustees recently elected two women to serve as their president and vice president—the first time that an African-American woman has been selected president in the League's 120-year history. In addition, three of the League's five core affiliate groups have women at the helm. The Michigan Association of Mayors, Michigan Women in Municipal Government, and Michigan Black Caucus of Local Elected Officials all have women leaders, and the Michigan Municipal Executives has a woman as their vice president. We'd like to take this time to acknowledge some of the strong, competent, women leaders of our organization..

Brenda F. Moore, President, Michigan Municipal League *Mayor Pro Tem, Saginaw*

Brenda F. Moore was first elected to the Saginaw City Council in 2013, and after being introduced to the League by one of her colleagues, she quickly embraced the organization and began her journey towards becoming president of our statewide organization. Along the way, Moore served on the Michigan Black Caucus of Local Elected Officials board and was president of the Elected Officials Academy. She is an EOA Ambassador award recipient. (See full article on page 24.)

Kimberley Sims, Vice President, Michigan Municipal League *Mayor, Muskegon Heights*

Kimberley Sims currently serves as mayor in Muskegon Heights. After graduating from Grand Valley State University with a B.A. in Film and Video Production, she mastered the art of sharing messages. Professionally, that mastery has lent

support to the re-framing of mindsets, community actions, and advocacy that did not have a voice. Sims is working to ensure that all voices are represented in the conversation, and that they are heard. She envisions a place where residents can live, work, and play; a place where our differences don't divide us but are celebrated. Sims is a member of the Michigan Black Caucus of Local Elected Officials and is a Level 2 graduate of the Elected Officials Academy.

Christine Burns, Chair, Michigan Municipal League Workers' Compensation Fund *Village Manager, Village of Spring Lake*

Christine Burns has more than 28 years of experience as a municipal official. She has been the village manager of Spring Lake since 2012, after serving the City of Cedar Springs for more than five years, the Village of Oxford for nearly two years, and the City of Clare for more than 14 years. Burns graduated from Central Michigan University in 1990 with a BS in Business Administration, majoring in Management, then earned her MSA in Public Administration from CMU in 2006. She served on the League Board of Trustees (2016-2019) and has served on the Michigan Municipal Executives Board of Directors and as president of the West Michigan Local Government Management Association. She is the current chairperson of the Michigan Municipal League Workers' Compensation Board of Directors.

Pat Lockwood, Chair, Michigan Municipal League Foundation *Mayor Pro Tem, Fenton*

Pat Lockwood currently serves as mayor pro tem for the City of Fenton. Previously, she served as mayor of Fenton for 11 years, followed by State Representative for the 51st District. She served on the League Board of Trustees and also as League president (1994-1995). She was a National League

of Cities board member, past president of Michigan Women in Municipal Government, and former president of Genesee County Cities/Villages Association. She was awarded an MML Honorary Life Membership in 1999. From 2004 to 2010, she was appointed by then-Governor Granholm to the position of policy director for the Emerald Ash Borer Program, and she served as the commission advisor for the Michigan Department of Transportation. Lockwood has served as the legislative liaison for the Department of Agriculture and Racing Commission. She is currently on the Advisory Board for the National League of Cities and serves on their Community and Economic Development and Audit committees.

Pauline Repp, President, Michigan Association of Mayors (MAM) *Mayor, Port Huron*

Pauline Repp was born in Kent County, England and grew up in both Canada and the United States, obtaining her U.S. citizenship in 1988. Repp was elected as president of MAM at their Annual Meeting in September. In 1983, she began work at the City of Port Huron as executive secretary to City Manager Gerry Bouchard. Repp was promoted to the position of city clerk in 1989 and served in that capacity for nearly 20 years, retiring with the designation of Master Municipal Clerk. In 2009, she ran for a position on City Council. As the top vote-getter, she was appointed mayor. Subsequently, the position of mayor became an elected position, and Repp has since been elected four times. She completed Level 1 of the Elected Officials Academy, has served on the League Board of Trustees (BOT), and was a member of the BOT Convention Ad-Hoc Committee.

Lois Allen-Richardson, President, Michigan Black Caucus of Local Elected Officials (MBC-LEO) *Mayor Pro Tem, Ypsilanti*

Lois Allen-Richardson has served on the Ypsilanti City Council for 18 years, first becoming mayor pro tem in 2011. She has also been heavily involved with the Michigan Black Caucus of Local Elected Officials since its inception in 2004 and has served as its president since 2012. Allen-Richardson is a past president of the Elected Officials Academy, an EOA Ambassador Award recipient, and in 2016 she received the Jim Sinclair Exceptional Service Award. Lois serves on the Board of Trustees of the Workers' Compensation Fund and has served on the League Board of Trustees.

Rebecca Fleury, ICMA-CM, Vice President, Michigan Municipal Executives (MME) *City Manager, Battle Creek*

Rebecca Fleury has been in local government management for 19 years, specializing in the areas of public finance, community development, and public safety. She started her position as Battle Creek city manager in October 2014. Fleury currently serves as vice president of the Michigan Municipal Executives and will become president-elect in January. She is a member of the International City/County Management Association and has served as an adjunct professor for the School of Public Affairs and Administration at Western Michigan University.

Fleury is a member of the prestigious 16/50 Project Work Group, chair of the League's Municipal Finance Committee, and has served on the League Board of Trustees.

Valerie Kindle, President, Michigan Women in Municipal Government (MWIMG) *Mayor Pro Tem, Harper Woods*

Valerie Kindle was elected president of Michigan Women in Municipal Government in 2018. Prior to being elected to City Council in 2013, she served on the Planning Commission, Ordinance Committee, and as vice president of the Friends of Harper Woods Public Library. Kindle became mayor pro tem in 2017. In addition to being involved with MWIMG, she is an active member of MBC-LEO. She is currently serving as the second vice president for the Grosse Pointe Harper Woods NAACP Branch, and as a member of the Executive Board of Grosse Pointe League of Women Voters. 

Kelly Warren is the director of membership and affiliate engagement for the League. You may contact her at 734.669.6310 or kwarren@mml.org.



(l to r) Valerie Kindle, Brenda F. Moore, Christine Burns, Rebecca Fleury, Kimberley Sims, and Lois Allen-Richardson. Not pictured: Pat Lockwood and Pauline Repp.

NEW FACT SHEET

Remote Meeting Attendance by Member of a Public Body

In 2018, the Open Meetings Act was amended to require public bodies to create a policy that allowed local governing officials who are members of the military to remotely attend and participate in meetings.

Our Fact Sheet comes with a sample military participation policy and two remote meeting attendance policies from municipalities that enacted this practice for all members of the council. *Fact Sheets are available at mml.org/resources/publications/one_pagers/onepagers.htm.*

Q. Is there any way that we can hold an informational meeting, where no action will be taken, of two of our city boards and not allow public attendance? A quorum would be present. Maybe a special dinner and information session? Or would we be required to have less than a quorum of each body present for such a meeting? If we were allowed to do this, what would the posting requirement be? Out of curiosity, how are we able to have a quorum of our council and planning commission both attend a Michigan Municipal League event?

A. To answer your last question first, the Open Meetings Act (MCL 15.263 (10)) states: “This act does not apply to a meeting that is a social or chance gathering or conference not designed to avoid this act.” This provision specifically permits attendance at conferences, such as the MML Convention.

However, a scheduled meeting of either the council or the planning commission—including a joint meeting of the two—would be a violation of the OMA if it were not properly noticed, minutes taken, public speaking time allowed, etc.

You might consider a joint workshop between the two bodies. See our Fact Sheet “Work Sessions—Use by Legislative Bodies,” available at www.mml.org. However, a workshop must be treated as a public meeting and the public must be allowed to address the public bodies. The posting requirements for a work session are the same as for any special meeting—18-hours’ notice. The League also has a Fact Sheet “Open Meetings Act: Posting Requirements.”

Q. A resident is suing us over a zoning decision. Does the League help individual municipalities with court cases?

A. If the case is at either the Court of Appeals or Michigan Supreme Court, and you are a member of the League’s Legal Defense Fund (LDF), please submit a form to seek assistance through the LDF (available at www.mml.org). The LDF is interested in and committed to helping in cases that have statewide importance. If your case will affect how all municipalities handle this type of zoning case in the future, then it is worthwhile to seek LDF assistance.

The LDF is the League’s legal advocacy arm. About 75 percent of League members are also members of the LDF.

If the LDF takes the case, it will seek a planning/zoning expert who will write what is known as an amicus curiae brief (i.e. friend of the court). The LDF’s input has been valuable to the courts over the years, and both the Court of Appeals and the Supreme Court have made specific requests to the LDF to submit an amicus brief. Our LDF has been involved in Open Meetings Act, building demolition, tax challenges, billboard, and prevailing wage cases in recent years..

Q. A citizen is interested in starting a movement to amend our charter and put term limits in place for councilmembers. Who else has term limits for councilmembers or mayors?

A. At about 10 percent of all home rule cities in Michigan, it’s not very common, but there are some cities and a few home rule villages with term limits for elected officials in their charters. For instance, Allen Park has a limit of two consecutive terms for councilmembers; in Warren there is a 20-year term limit for the mayor and also term limits for council, the clerk, and the treasurer. A movement to get term limits in the Lathrup Village charter failed in 2015; however, across the state in Walker it passed in the same year. There was interest in the City of Grand Rapids several years ago, but the interest never solidified into a ballot proposal.

Q. One of our councilmembers has resigned. Our charter requires that anyone appointed to fill a council vacancy must be a “qualified elector.” What is the definition of a qualified elector?

A. Michigan Election Law defines a qualified elector as: a person who possesses the qualifications of an elector as prescribed in section 1 of article II of the state constitution of 1963 (18 years of age) and who has resided in the city or township for at least 30 days (MCL 168.10). 

The League’s Information Service provides member officials with answers to questions on a vast array of municipal topics. Call 800.653.2483 or email info@mml.org or inquiry@mml.org.



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