



MINNESOTA GOVERNMENT FINANCE OFFICERS ASSOCIATION

MnGFOA NEWSLETTER

April 2008

Excellence and Leadership in Government Finance

www.mngfoa.org

Message from the President

I've never been a revolutionary. I don't routinely challenge authority. Frankly, I've always been the good girl who did what was expected, did the right thing and never really stepped out of line. I always had an opinion and I have never been afraid to express it. I'm passionate about our work and passionate about "getting it right".

Our responsibility as public finance officers is to accurately report the financial status of our governmental units and be steadfast caretakers of public funds. Our greatest challenge is communicating to our residents in a clear and concise manner what their tax dollars and fees are paying for.

Having said all this, I think its time to evaluate the effectiveness of the GASB 34 reporting model to see if it really achieves the goals for which it was set out. Does it clarify the financial picture for those who examine it or does it just complicate the conversation?

Answer this question: how do your actual day to day financial operations work? If you are like me, you use traditional fund accounting and your monthly reports and budgets retain those rules and formats. GASB 34 is an additional reporting layer on top of what we have always done. Its extra spreadsheets and reconciliations for the CAFR, but what does the final product really tell us? Is the resulting set of financial reports more readable and comparable to other financial statements such as those from the private sector?

Government is NOT private enterprise – no matter how many times we “re-invent” it. Trying to fit our operations into a private sector type template has made the resulting reports less understandable to the people who actually read them.

What about the bond rating agencies? Won't they downgrade our debt if we don't follow the “rules” of reporting? Moody's, Standard & Poors, and Fitch are looking at the strength of our finances in order to evaluate our credit worthiness. They are using our debt ratios, fund balances and overall financial stability to make that determination. They look at our financial statements to evaluate the resources we have to repay our debt. Does the GASB 34 format really matter?

National GFOA's Executive Board issued a statement in December 2006 which said that GASB's role as the authoritative accounting standard-setting body for state and local governments should be reassessed. There is an ongoing conversation about how best to meet the need for government accounting standards and reporting from the National level all the way down to us.

Whether it is GASB or their reporting model and standards, if it doesn't meet our needs, we shouldn't spend anymore time, effort or money making it work. We should focus our resources on accounting standards and reporting that helps clarify to our stakeholders how we are taking care of the public trust.

At this time of year, when we are all hip deep in completing our annual financial reports, take time to consider if GASB 34 meets your needs and makes your report more understandable. Talk about it with your colleagues and your auditors. Let me know what you think.

A little revolution now and then is a good thing!

Robin



April Meeting

DATE: Wednesday, April 16, 2008
LOCATION: Minneapolis Sheraton Four Points
TOPIC: **Foreclosure Crisis: Why should you care? How can you help?**
SPEAKERS: Jeffrey Strand, Coordinator; Tom May, County Assessor; & Jan Duffie, Property Management Specialist
TIME: 11:30 Meeting & Program
 12:15 Luncheon
LUNCH: Cashew Chicken Breast
COST: \$15



Reservations: Please register on the MnGFOA website (www.mngfoa.org), send an e-mail to Ron Hedberg (rhedberg@cottage-grove.org), or leave a voice mail for Ron at 651-458-2832 by Thursday, April 10th.

Please remember to register for the meeting to provide that enough meals are ordered and tables are set up for the meeting.

Speaker Bio...

The speakers are from Hennepin County's Taxpayer Services Department: Jeffrey L. Strand, Coordinator, Foreclosure Prevention and Response Program, Tax-Forfeit & Property Revenue Section. Tom May is a County Assessor and Jan Duffie is a Property Management Specialist. The topic will cover the impact of mortgage foreclosures on the tax base, property tax and special assessment collections.

2008 Meeting Dates

Monthly Meetings

May 21
 No June Meeting
 July 16 – Quarterly Training
 August 20
 No September Meeting – Annual Conference
 October 15
 November 19 – Quarterly Training
 December 10



Annual Conferences:

GFOA – Fort Lauderdale, FL June 15-18, 2008
 MnGFOA – Alexandria, MN Sept. 24-26, 2008

Committee

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Executive Committee Update

- The Executive Committee did not have a meeting in March.

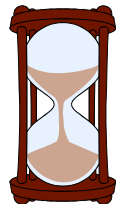
Attention All Golfers

GOLF OUTING – Save the Date!

Annual Golf Outing: Thursday May 29th, Noon

SHOTGUN Start ~ To be held at Oak Marsh in Oakdale. Information to follow in next month's newsletter.

MnGFOA-SPONSORED SCHOLARSHIPS



Calling all members!! The deadline for the **Lori A. Webster Advanced Government Finance Institute Scholarship** was March 30th. However, no applications have been received as of March 20 – so the date is being extended to April 15th. Sharon Kutzke, one of the 2007 recipients, highly recommends the experience. She said that the experience is comparable to none other. You meet people from all over the county that share the same issues in public finance as you do. The sessions are in depth and the topics are very relevant. In addition, it is a fun experience. Sharon concludes: "Don't be intimidated – just do it!"

The Advanced Institute is a great opportunity for government officers to address big picture issues facing public finance and participate in seminars with your peers. The Advanced Institute will run from July 28 to August 2, 2008 at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. You can check out the National GFOA website for more information at www.gfoa.org.

The MnGFOA provides up to 2 scholarships for members of our organization that serve in public finance. Application forms are available on the MnGFOA website or you can contact Cathy Shuman. Completed applications can be sent to cathy.shuman@ci.monticello.mn.us.

MnGFOA also provides scholarship opportunities to undergraduate students of accounting or government finance attending any college or university located in Minnesota. The **John Lilja Undergraduate Scholarship** application deadline is April 15th. The amount of each scholarship is \$1,000, and the MnGFOA awards at least one a year, up to a maximum of four. Applications are available on the MnGFOA website; completed forms can be sent to cathy.shuman@ci.monticello.mn.us.

JOB POSTINGS

FINANCE & TECHNOLOGY SERVICES DIRECTOR

Representing more than 800 cities across the state, the League of MN Cities (LMC) promotes excellence in local government. The Finance & Technology Services Director will help LMC accomplish its mission by overseeing finances of a complex and multi-faceted organization with considerable financial assets and directing the technology resources associated with providing LMC services to member cities. Hiring range is up to \$130k DOQ. Visit www.lmc.org for info. AA/EOE

2008 Executive Board Members

President	Robin Roland City of Farmington	651-463-1880
President Elect	Larry Jacobson City of Robbinsdale	763-531-1215
Secretary	Cathy Shuman City of Monticello	763-271-3204
Treasurer	Ron Hedberg City of Cottage Grove	651-458-2832
Past President	Greg Sticha City of Chanhausen	952-227-1149
At-Large	Charlie Hanson City of Crystal	763-531-1110
At-Large	Shelly Eldridge Ehlers & Associates	651-697-8504
State Rep.	Bruce DeJong City of St. Louis Park	952-924-2511

Job Changes...

Dave DuBord, Finance Director at the League of Minnesota Cities will be retiring the end of May. Dave has served the League for 23 years. Prior to that, he was Finance Director at the City of Cottage Grove and Assistant Finance Director at Fridley. Dave's last full day in the office will be April 11.

Jim Miller, Executive Director of LMC said of Dave: "It goes with out saying that we will all deeply miss the dedication and professionalism he has brought to the League day in and day out. Dave's work ethic and the conscientious way he has approached his job are an example for all of us."

Good luck and best wishes to Dave as he rides on to his next adventure!

(Rumor has it that "Hell's Accountants" will never be the same.)

Committee Chairs for 2008:

Conference	Julie Vogel	952-563-4930
Education	Sue Iverson	651-634-5132
Program	Darin Nelson	952-939-8254
Social	Judy Moll	651-747-2759
Technology	Mark Beer	763-717-4011

If you have any questions, want to help out, or have suggestions for the Executive Board or for any of the committees for 2008, please feel free to give them a call

Membership Information

If you need to update your membership information, because you have changed jobs, or for some other reason, you can do it online at the MnGFOA website. You will need your username and password. If you have forgotten your username and password, please email timesaver1@aol.com with your request.

Larry Jacobson
City of Robbinsdale
4100 Lakeview Avenue N
Robbinsdale, MN 55422-2280



Message from the Editor

Spring has officially arrived, along with the auditor's and the CAFR preparation can't be far behind. Through all the things that are going on, don't forget to share any items of interest with the members. I look forward to receiving any items you would like to have included. Send your job openings, ads, career moves, or other items of note to me by the 20th of each month and they will go in the next newsletter. Thanks!

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