

News and Updates



June 28, 2024

President's Message

Presidential Address at the FCCMA Annual Conference by Mark Cunningham

It is indeed an honor to be standing before you today. I am humbled, and I am truly grateful for this opportunity.

As some of you are aware, I began my local government employment as a janitor at the City of Jacksonville, NC's Police Department not too long after being honorably discharged from the Marine Corps in 1991.

Needless to say, you don't go from janitor to Assistant County Administrator and President of FCCMA without the grace and assistance of many along the way who afforded opportunities and invested in your potential to grow professionally and as a person.



While the list of those to whom I owe gratitude is beyond measure, I will take some of this time to express my sincere appreciation to a few.

Mike Herr – I want to thank Mike, who, as **County Manager** of **Polk County**, hired me as his **Land Development Director** in 2005. I was only a **Planner I** in **Baltimore County** at that time when Mike took the risk and gave me a career-changing opportunity. This was my beginning of Florida local government management and my real introduction into public servant leadership.

As County Manager, Mike always had something unique and positive to say about his directors, and that left a lasting impression within and has resonated with me throughout the years. Thank you, Mike!

Randy Reid – I want to thank Randy for hiring me as **Assistant County Administrator** for **Sarasota County** in 2012. This was my introduction to County Administration, for which I will be forever grateful. I can distinctly remember our interview during which Randy was totally convinced that Boy Scouts were equivalent to Special Forces Marines. Randy was the hiring authority, and I wanted the opportunity, so who was I to tell him that his perception of the Boy Scouts was a little biased?

Over the years, Randy has reached out to me with several professional opportunities out of a spirit of professional confidence and mutual respect, and that has meant a lot to me. Thank you, Randy!

Jonathan Lewis – One of my first interactions with Jonathan was a major disappointment. At the time, he was **City Manager** for the **City of North Port**, and I had negotiated a sweetheart agreement with his **Deputy City Manager** for the City to take ownership and maintenance responsibility for a dilapidated water fountain.

Shortly thereafter, Jonathan stepped in and killed the deal, an action I'm sure he secretly regretted several years after becoming **County Administrator** for **Sarasota County**.

Over the years, I have enjoyed Jonathan's support, encouragement, coaching, mentorship, and "The Look!"

Please, let me explain "The Look."

Jonathan has a way of saying: "I am not telling you what to do," and then he would give you "The Look." And whether it related to Sarasota County operations, FCCMA, ICMA, AICP, or even during playing Pickleball, as those who know him know, you don't want too many of "The Look."

One day, after serving my two-year term on the FCCMA Board, Jonathan said words to the effect: "I'm not telling you what to do, but you are going to self-nominate for

the FCCMA Secretary-Treasurer, right?" And gave me "The Look" and walked away.

I realize that this is a diverse multi-generational audience of managers and aspiring managers; so especially to you who are desirous of advancing vertically, I want to impress upon you that the path here was not direct, Nonetheless, it was educational and one of satisfying service.

The first time I self-nominated for **Secretary-Treasurer**, Horace was selected, and I thought I had fulfilled the task. Then I got "The Look" again.

The second time around, Lori was selected. Again, I got "The Look."

The third time Mike was selected. I did not wait for "The Look", rather; I self-nominated for the fourth time. And as they say, the rest is history, Here I stand before you today in your service as **FCCMA President**. And, I look at this position as just that: It is not about me. IT IS A CALL TO SERVICE.

Thank you, Jonathan, for "The Looks," the opportunities, and for trusting and believing in me.

GENERAL THANKS

I want to thank all former FCCMA Presidents for your commitment and dedication to local government management and servant leadership. Many of you encouraged and inspired me over the years and sparked the motivation that propelled me to be standing here today. Thank you!

I want to thank FCCMA staff for the magic you continually work behind the scenes to make things operate so seamlessly and look effortless. Thank you!

I want to thank the Committee Chairs, Vice-Chairs, committee members, and consultants who committed to serving our Association in the past and have committed to serving in the coming years. Thank you!

I want to thank the Senior Advisors, past and present, for your decades of selfless service to our profession and for coming back after retirement to continue to serve our Association. You are greatly appreciated.

I want to thank all the friends, colleagues, and Association members who have supported and encouraged me over the years. More importantly, I want to thank my family for their sacrifices, love, and never-wavering support of my professional growth and development. It has been a satisfying journey, and without you, it would have been difficult.

It is said that it takes a village to successfully raise a child. Well, you are the professional Managers, Deputies, Assistants, Staff, Association members, and

Consultants who relentlessly put your shoulders to the plows daily to lead, manage, build, and operate the villages across the great state of Florida. Thank you! Your service is greatly appreciated.

THE GOAL

I have been asked by many: What will your goals be as FCCMA President. I have thought about that long and hard, and as previously stated, it is not about me. Consistent with the theme of this year's Annual Conference, which is Professional Management Matters, my goal and focus will be to work with you, the Board, Officers, and members of the Association to reignite and reinforce support for the professional managers and the members of this great Association through the politically challenging times that we are facing.

We are going through a time, as professional managers and local government administrators and practitioners, when many of us are experiencing enormous levels of stress and anxiety brought on by shifts in the political climates we must perform in.

We are enduring disruptions and offenses against our professionalism and character. My goal is to work in unison with you to keep us focused on the principles and purpose of what our Association is founded upon, chief of which is: Professional Management Matters.

Professional management cannot be effectively administered without professional managers and their staff feeling and knowing that there is a sound and dependable support structure around them. You matter!

As it has been rightly noted and stated on several occasions throughout this Annual Conference, we are living in, leading, and managing in a time when five generations are active in the workforce. And regardless of what generation you fall in, I want the Association to keep focused on the fact that professional management, servant leadership, and community building are the core of our profession and the bedrock of our calling.

There are tremendous strengths, resources, and opportunities within the diversity of our Association across all generations that can be drawn upon in the coming years to reinforce the value and credibility of professional management in the public's eyes and that of elected officials. The pressures we are facing apply across the entire spectrum of the generations of managers and leaders and impact all. Creating an environment that provides programs, services, and-when practical and possible - policies that are supportive of the stability of our noble profession will be a focus over the coming year. And not just to support but to also recognize and celebrate!

In closing, I am deeply humbled and honored by your support. I look forward to serving you and to serving with you in the coming year and future years beyond my presidency in whatever capacity we can and will.

Thank you!

You matter!

Mark

Member News and Updates

The following membership applications have been received:

- Jamie Brown, District IV, City Manager/Public Works Director, City of Lake Worth Beach, Full Member
- Kaitlyn Doukas, District VII, Bachelor of Public Policy and Administration, St. Petersburg College, Student Member
- Andrea Knowles Hill, District V, Assistant Director, Intergovernmental Affairs, Broward County, Affiliate Member
- Zerry Ihekwaba, District V, City Manager, City of Homestead, Full Member
- Stefanie Rodriguez, District VI, Assistant to the Village Manager, Islamorada, Village of Islands, Affiliate Member
- Larry Tibbs, District VI, City Manager, City of Moore Haven, Full Member
- John Tidona, District III, Special Projects Coordinator, Orange County Sheriff's Office, Affiliate Member
- Brad Tippin, District VII, Development Review Manager/Interim Development Review Director, Pasco County, Affiliate Member
- Brandy Waldron, District I, Assistant City Manager, City of Panama City

If no current member comes forth with a reason why these applicants should not be approved as members, he/she will be approved for membership.

In Memoriam of Gene Miller

Gene Miller passed away on June 4, 2024, after a lifelong battle with Type 1 diabetes. He was born on November 30, 1935, in Blue Rapids, KS.

He received his undergraduate degree from **Kansas State University** and his Master's in Public Administration from **Kansas University**. A true public servant, Gene's career as a **City Manager** spanned 47 years. He served cities in several states before coming to Florida. He served the **City of Ormond Beach** until his retirement in 2000. Following his retirement, he continued for 10 more years as interim city manager in **Orange City, Oviedo, Sanford and Casselberry**.

Gene is survived by his loving and devoted wife, Janet; son Patrick (Ann); daughters Rachel and Susanne (Bruce); stepson Jason (Allison) and stepdaughter Heather; six grandchildren and four great-grandchildren; and last but not least, his loving companion Parker, whom he adored.

A celebration of Gene's life will be held on November 30, 2024, in honor of his 89th birthday. Memorial donations can be made to the Highlands/Cashiers NC Humane Society, PO Box 638, Cashiers, NC 28717 or to Halifax Hospice, 3800 Woodbriar Trail, Port Orange, FL 32129.

Conference Recordings

Recordings of all of the concurrent sessions are now available.

[Access the recordings here.](#)

Remember the MITs

Members-in-Transition (MIT)

Please take a minute to show support for the MITs by emailing or calling the members of your district. A phone call or an email can go a long way to help someone temporarily out of work. You can also help if you have any job opportunities or special projects available for which one of our MITs may be qualified.

With current technology, the project could even be done from the MIT's home. Some of the MIT have provided their resumes and indicated their areas of expertise. The resumes and areas of expertise are now available on the [FCCMA website](#). Also, please keep FCCMA staff informed of any FCCMA members who may be eligible for MIT status. You can email [Carol Russell](#).

The FCCMA Podcast



FCCMA
PODCAST

Tune in to learn from the public servants in your communities.

Streaming now on all major podcast platforms.

#FCCMAPODCAST

Listen to the Latest News on FCCMA Podcasts

Each month, FCCMA produces four podcasts featuring FCCMA members, strategic partners and other important staff from state agencies. These podcasts are a great way to learn initiatives that are working in certain cities and counties, important changes that could impact your community and more about your fellow FCCMA members.

This month's release will feature the conference keynote speakers:

- Leadership is Interpersonal Influence, Mark Zeigler
- How to Avoid Default Futures, Crystal Washington
- Work That Matters, Jeff Civilico

- [Seek to Bless, Not to Impress, Stephen M.R. Covey](#)

[Click to Hear the Latest FCCMA Podcasts](#)

Perspectives

Municipal and county leaders across Florida share how they achieve tight deadlines.



Featured Member

Meet Meridy Semones, Assistant City Manager, City of Largo

How long have you been an FCCMA member, and why did you join?

I became an FCCMA student member in 2007 when I relocated to Florida in grad school. When I started at the **City of Largo** in 2008 as a **Management Analyst**, I became a regular member.

I joined initially for networking and learning opportunities since I was relocating from Wisconsin to Florida.



Are you an ICMA member? Why did you join, and how long have you been a member?

I have been an ICMA member since 2018 after transitioning to a director role at the City of Largo. I joined ICMA for the rich learning and development opportunities, networking and participation in Leadership ICMA.

Please describe your areas of formal/advanced education.

1. Master of Public Administration (MPA) – **University of Wisconsin**, Milwaukee
2. Prsoci – Certified Change Management Practitioner
3. GFOA Certified Public Finance Officer
4. Certified ToP Facilitation Methods Facilitator
5. Executive certificates in design thinking and diversity, equity and inclusion from the **University of South Florida**

Why did you select a career in public service?

1. Inherently I wanted to help people and make my community better.
2. Growing up, my grandmother was a reporter covering City Hall and major community issues for the major newspaper in Milwaukee. It gave me a different lens into community development, local politics and what makes a community a home to its residents and businesses.
3. My initial plan after finishing my bachelor's degree was to go to law school until a professor in the MPA program convinced me to go that route.
4. It has been challenging and rewarding, and I have never looked back.

Have you always been in the public sector, or have you had experience in the private sector?

1. Professionally, I have only worked in the public sector.

Please tell us about your current position and give a brief job description if you are not a City Administrator/Manager.

1. I am currently the Assistant City Manager at the City of Largo.
2. My leadership portfolio as the **Chief Strategy Officer** includes internal services, community development and major strategic initiatives (e.g. strategic planning and budget and performance management, homelessness).

Please describe your typical day.

1. Since starting the Assistant City Manager role in May of 2024, there really has not been a typical day!
2. Each day is filled with a variety of topics that impact the long-term outcomes of the organization and community. I have the opportunity now to be more engaged in the field with team members and at community events, which has been a great change.
3. We are in the final stages of FY 2025 budget development, starting the update to the City's strategic plan and working on internal changes to boost recruitment and retention, in addition to planning (financially and operationally) for our move to our new mixed-use City Hall: [Horizon West Bay](#).

What is your favorite part of the job?

It's hard to pick one thing, but there are two things that come to mind:

1. Serving in a role that facilitates long-term strategy and decision-making, I find it extremely rewarding to see big ideas come to life. I vividly remember facilitating the **City Commission** retreat where Horizon West Bay was developed. It is inspiring to see the construction progress and the impact it is already having on redevelopment in our downtown.
2. Serving our community through caring for our team members is the other part of my job that I love. I rarely have the opportunity to directly serve our community, so ensuring that our team members have the tools, equipment, training, mental health care, and other resources they need to effectively serve is an essential part of my leadership role.

[Read More](#)

Member Article

Local Government Workforce: Benefits of Mental Health Programs

*By Stephanee Phillips, CHES, Wellness Coordinator,
Charlotte County*

"Imagine a workplace where employees step through the doors with a shared commitment: to meet not only organizational objectives but also each other's needs. This paradigm shift in perception and practice lays the foundation for an empowered, innovative,



and harmonious workforce – a workforce that thrives, evolves, and propels the organization into a future characterized by sustained achievement and shared purpose. Wouldn't we all aspire to contribute to such a workplace?" [Morris, Sean](#). Rethinking Employee Experience: A Paradigm (LinkedIn) Aug 10, 2023.

Imagining such a healthy workplace might seem impossible. According to a 2024 Gallup Poll, disengaged employees aggregately account for \$8.7 trillion in loss of productivity worldwide. How could we create a culture of well-being where the behaviors referenced by Morris are the norm? What systems would we need to have in place to promote an engaged, purpose-driven workforce?

Charlotte County is taking steps through best practices to make that imagined workplace a reality. There are a handful of best practices an employer can adopt, some of which are identified in a published review by the **National Institute of Health**. This article will explore the steps **Charlotte County** has taken and the steps they intend to take. Creating this workplace is a marathon, not a sprint. One that we believe is worth the effort.

History

Historically, Charlotte County offered only a traditional healthcare plan with minimal employee assistance program (EAP) benefits. We realized that we could be more supportive of employee needs by expanding opportunities to utilize these services in two ways. First, we added 12 hours of available leave for all employees to use for medical services at the onsite clinic, then expanded to behavioral health services. Despite concerns that employees might take more time away from work, this change did not cause any uptick in time away but resulted in engagement with their medical and behavioral health providers.

Second, we created a dedicated Mental Health Taskforce. These individuals have been instrumental in supporting our mental health initiatives and shifting to a culture that values well-being. Members of the taskforce, along with senior leaders and directors, have jointly completed the Mental Health First Aid certification. With the support of leadership and the Taskforce, we have witnessed a positive cultural change.

Last year, we added the "My Well-Being" program. This program offers behavioral health services virtually and in person with licensed clinicians to support any well-being or mental health concerns. The My Well-Being services are at no cost to the employee and dependents on the County's insurance, which eliminates the copay associated with these visits. Individuals who utilize the resources have no cap on the number of visits. The bottom line is greater access to services and less cost for

the employer and employees. Furthermore, employees see this benefit as one way the County recognizes their needs and supports them in accessing the services they need.

[Read More](#)

Events and Trainings



Breaking Down Silos in Your Organization and Building New Teams
July 11, 2024
2:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m. ET

ICMA Practice Areas: 1, 3, 4, 6, 10, and 13

Program Summary:

City and county governments often face challenges with departmental isolation, hindering collaboration and innovation. This webinar will explore the concept of organizational silos and their negative impacts. We'll delve into strategies for fostering cross-departmental collaboration and building effective, high-performing teams to achieve shared goals.

Key Learning Objectives:

- Identify the signs and consequences of departmental silos within your organization or other organizations the panel has been associated with.
- Explore various strategies to break down communication barriers and promote collaboration.
- Learn how to build effective cross-functional teams for project execution and problem-solving.
- Discover best practices for fostering a culture of teamwork and shared accountability.

Presented by:

- Terry Atchley, County Manager, Hardee County
- JaVonta Swinton, Strategic Innovation Consultant, Tallahassee

Panelists:

- Olivia Minshew, City Manager, City of Wauchula
- Douglas Baber, Assistant County Manager, Hardee County
- Diana Gallego, HR and Workforce Development Manager, City of Tallahassee

[Register Here](#)

Upcoming Webinars

Save the date for future webinar offerings!

July 11, 2024	Breaking Down Silos in your Organization/Building New Teams
August 1, 2024	Remote Work
September 5, 2024	Rules of decorum/engagement/procedures

Jobs

Below is a list of active FCCMA job advertisements accessible on our website.

[Click here](#) for details.

ABILENE, TX – City Engineer
ALACHUA COUNTY – Court Officer
BAREFOOT BAY RECREATION DISTRICT
– Senior Management Operations
Specialist
BARTOW – Police Chief
CENTURY – Town Clerk
CLEARWATER – Assistant City Manager

LARGO – Senior Accountant
LIGHTHOUSE POINT – Public Works
Director
MARCO ISLAND – Manager of Fleet
and Facilities
NEPTUNE BEACH – City Attorney
NEWBERRY – Director of Capital
Projects & Facilities

COLUMBUS, GA – Director of Engineering
CRYSTAL RIVER – City Manager
DEFUNIAK SPRINGS – Finance Director
DELRAY BEACH – Chief Procurement Officer
DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (SHREVEPORT, LA) – Executive Director
FERNANDINA BEACH – City Manager
GREATER BROWNSVILLE INCENTIVES CORPORATION, TX – Executive Director
HILLSBOROUGH CITY-COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION – Strategic Communications Manager
JACKSONVILLE – Attorney II – Regulatory
JACKSONVILLE – Attorney II – Tort/Personal Injury
JACKSONVILLE – Attorney II – Labor and Employment
JACKSONVILLE – Attorney III – Labor and Employment
JACKSONVILLE – Attorney III – Tort/Personal Injury Division
KEY WEST – Assistant City Manager
LAKE COUNTY – Budget Analyst
LAKE COUNTY – Grants Coordinator
LARGO – Fleet Manager

PANAMA CITY BEACH – Communications and Public Information Manager
PENSACOLA – City Administrator
PINELLAS SUNCOAST TRANSIT AUTHORITY – Accountant
PINELLAS SUNCOAST TRANSIT AUTHORITY – Benefits Coordinator
PINELLAS SUNCOAST TRANSIT AUTHORITY – Senior Accountant – Grants and Project Accounting
PONCE INLET – Public Works Director
SAFETY HARBOR – City Manager
SARASOTA COUNTY – Breeze Transit Facilities Manager
SARASOTA COUNTY – Breeze Transit Maintenance Analyst and Contract
SARASOTA COUNTY – Family Court Coordinator
SARASOTA COUNTY – Grants & Fiscal Coordinator – Breeze Transit Department
SARASOTA COUNTY – Manager, Inspection Services
SARASOTA COUNTY – Sports Tourism Facilities Liaison
SARASOTA COUNTY – Supervisor, Environmental
SOUTH MIAMI – Director of Public Works & Engineering
SUGAR LAND, TX – Director of Budget
THOMSON, GA – Finance Director

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