The Newsletter of the California Society of Municipal Finance Officers

Dedicated to Excellence in Municipal Financial Management

President's Message

Barbara Underwood, Director of Finance/Treasurer, City of Vista

Greetings and Happy Valentine's Day.

Our GASB 34 training has been extraordi-

The Year Draws To A Conclusion. It is hard to believe that my year as your President is almost over. It seems like just yesterday when we met in San Diego for our last CSMFO Seminar and I began my journey as President of CSMFO. It has been an exciting and eventful year and I am proud and pleased to have had the opportunity to be associated with such a high caliber organization. I am honored to have had the opportunity to play a leadership role and to assist in helping CSMFO accomplish this year's goals. I am especially appreciative of the outstanding leadership of the Board of Directors, Committee Chairs, and Chapter Chairs – who have not only continued to maintain our current high standards but have also enabled us to reach new heights. I sincerely thank both our leadership and our volunteers who have enabled the CSMFO to deliver so much too so many. I know that Zane Johnston will admirably continue to lead CSMFO through the challenges ahead and I wish him the best as I turn over the mantle of leadership to him at the end of February.

As I reflect on the past year, I'm pleased to report that the goals set at the 2001 Board Retreat for completion in 2002 were met. It's exciting to look back and see our progress. Membership involvement was increased and many new volunteers gave countless hours to reach our goals. Special Districts became fully assimilated into CSMFO and a new list serve specifically for special districts was developed along with specific training on setting rates and fees and a modification to the awards program for special districts' needs.

narily successful and has been kept affordable (this was an important goal). It was delivered throughout the State in metropolitan areas as well as rural venues so that all members had the opportunity to take advantage of this superb training. In addition, the Beginning and Intermediate Government Accounting classes were revamped and are now being offered throughout the State. Our Weekend Training was again very successful and the Coaching Program has been highly acclaimed by those who participated. Take a look at the Coaching Corner on the CSMFO web site to find out more about this outstanding program and how you can take advantage of these services.

(continued on page 7)

February 2003



The impacts of the State budget and State decisions are a daily reality for local government and special district officials. Many times we are left scratching our heads about the process leading up to the final decision. If you would like to learn more about the State legislative and decision-making processes don't miss the 2003 Annual Conference of the California Society of Municipal Finance Officers held February 23-25, 2003 in Sacramento.

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The MiniNews is your newsletter! Take advantage of our monthly publication by sharing with us your ideas. CSMFO is always seeking input from all members on topics in any department section.

Don't forget to visit the website at www.csmfo.org for the latest news!

Attachments: CSMFO 2003 Annual Conference Registration Form



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Technology Corner

Josh Betta, South Pasadena Julia James, Malibu Linda Downing, Marina Mark Alvarado, Monrovia



Down here on the Corner we've been so busy cutting budgets and packing for conferences – how's that for an ironic combination of activities? – that we thought we'd take a breather (and editorial license) this month by reprinting an article that has been making the rounds of the major media of late.

At a recent computer exposition, Bill Gates reportedly compared the computer industry with the auto industry and stated, "If GM had kept up with technology like the computer industry has, we would all be driving \$25.00 cars that got 1,000 miles to the gallon."

General Motors, on the counteroffensive, fired back a press release. "If GM had developed technology like Microsoft, we would all be driving cars with the following characteristics:

- "For no reason whatsoever, your car would crash twice a day.
- Every time they repainted the lines in the road, you would have to buy a new car.
- Occasionally your car would die on the freeway for no reason. You would have
 to pull over to the side of the road, close all of the windows, shut off the car,
 restart it, and reopen the windows before you could continue. For some reason
 you would simply accept this.
- Occasionally, executing a maneuver such as a left turn would cause your car to shut down and refuse to restart, in which case you would have to reinstall the engine.
- Macintosh would make a car that was powered by the sun, was reliable, five times as fast and twice as easy to drive - but would run on only five percent of the roads.
- The oil, water temperature, and alternator warning lights would all be replaced by a single "This Car Has Performed An Illegal Operation" warning light.
- The airbag system would ask "Are you sure?" before deploying.
- Occasionally, for no reason whatsoever, your car would lock you out and refuse to let you in until you simultaneously lifted the door handle, turned the key and grabbed hold of the radio antenna.
- Every time a new car was introduced, car buyers would have to learn how to drive all over again because none of the controls would operate in the same manner as the old car.
- You'd have to press the "Start" button to turn the engine off."

UCR Extension Spring Quarter Class

For information contact University of California, Riverside Extension at (909) 787-4111 or check out our web site: www.UCRExtension.net

April 2-June 18, 2003

The Budgetary Process in Governmental and Nonprofit Organizations, Riverside, California, Wednesdays, 6-9:45 pm, no meeting May 21, 28, Fee: \$345. Overview of the financial planning process with emphasis on budgeting techniques, financial sources, chronologies, roles and politics.



Chapter Meeting Notices



Peninsula

Thomas Fil, Chapter Chair Finance Director,

City of Belmont

Date: Friday, February 7

Time: Noon

Place: Bank of America Building -

Carnelian Room

Topic: Field trip to the Wells Fargo

History Museum

Cost: Lunch at the Carnelian Room RSVP: Nawel Voelker, City of Belmont

email:

nvoelker@ci.belmont.ca.us

phone: 650/595-7433

Please Note:

Many Chapter Meetings have been postponed until March due to the CSMFO Annual Conference February 23-25 in Sacramento, California.

Cumomia.

Please remember to email your Chapter meeting announcements to Tawni Escudero at

tescudero@cacities.org for posting to the website and inclusion

in the MiniNews.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS



Intermediate Governmental Accounting Training

March 11, 2003 Eureka, California

April 10, 2003 Burbank, California

CSMFO Annual Conference

February 23-25, 2003 Sacramento, California

Please visit www.csmfo.org for more information.

CSMFO Chapter Chairs

Chapter Assistant - Tawni Escudero, League of California Cities 916/658-8210 or tescudero@cacities.org

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CSMFO 2003 Annual Conference Update

(cont'd from page 1)



The conference theme of THE CAPITAL CONNECTION captures the focus of improving understanding of the mechanics, the players and the politics. The conference will provide education sessions with an 'insider's' perspective on the workings of state government with topics such as "Access and Influence at the Capitol", "Fiscal Reform/Regionalism Impacts", "Understanding Economic Measures" and "State Budget Legislation". Speakers include former Assemblyman Phil Eisenberg, Senate Budget & Fiscal Review Committee consultant John Decker and State Legislative Analyst Elizabeth Hill. The conference also offers a field trip to the State Capitol where you will hear presentations from key legislators including Senator Deborah Ortiz, Assemblyman Darrell Steinberg and Senator James Brulte. For those wishing to take a tour of the State Capitol, shuttle buses will provide transportation to conference participants throughout the day on Monday.

The conference education program will also include sessions related to career development, management and current issues in the finance profession. After a full day of education sessions, have some fun with Cajun food, masks, beads and the zydeco beat as we celebrate the Mardi Gras season.

The 2003 CSMFO Annual Conference offers a relevant and enjoyable experience for those involved in municipal government. For more information and registration materials visit our website at www.csmfo.org or call (916) 658-8210.

Environmental Quality Policy Committee Update

Jim Koser, City of Morro Bay

Two very important issues occupied much of the discussion at the January meeting of the Environmental Policy Committee.

The Committee discussed several items in the legislative update, and focused on the League's position regarding recycling of disposable diapers. Santa Clarita is currently in a pilot project to recycle but they are not far enough along in the process to be able to provide much detail. While the Committee decided to defer any recommendations until June when the information about the success of the pilot project will be available, there were other concerns about requirements of the grant including compliance with AB 939.

A spirited discussion addressed Senator Barbara Boxer's proposed wilderness legislation, the California Wild Heritage Act of 2002, and a resolution from Mono and Inyo counties asking the League to oppose the bill, S. 2535. Some members believed this was not a City issue, others objected to the "shotgun" approach that identifies wilderness areas throughout the State. The Committee voted to defer any recommendations.

Other items included a budget update from Chris McKenzie, League Executive Director and a discussion of the work program.

Budget Reviewer Training Survey

Joan Michaels, City of Burbank









Last year, the Budget Committee received some feedback from members looking to see Budget Reviewer training offered once again. The timing did not work out, and we would like to find out, if there is interest on a variety of levels. Between budget season and audit season, it can be tough to schedule. Depending on member response, the target training time would fall between March and June.

- Interest in having your agency serve as a training site
- Interest in attending Budget Reviewer training

The Committee is seeking ways to expand the reviewer base for this popular awards program, and these training sessions proved very popular when previously offered. Please contact Joan Michaels at (818) 238-5480 or e-mail your responses to *jmichaels@ci.burbank.ca.us*.

Don't forget if you are attending the Sacramento Conference to check out this year's award winning budgets including the inaugural recognition of Best Budget Cover!

Finance Industry Comments Exceptional Customer Service by Administrative Services Departments

Kevin W. Harper, CPA

John Contreras is relatively new as the Public Works Director of the City of San Cajoles. He has just looked at his department's monthly report and can't understand why employee benefits are so high. He received the monthly report from the IS Department and, thinking that IS can tell him how the report calculates benefits, he walks over to the IS Director's office.

Bob Fosse, the IS Director, is in his office. He has had one of those days of fielding complaints from users who each think they should be his top priority. Bob is not happy to see John at his office door. When John explains he wants to understand how the benefits rates are calculated, Bob is relieved. That is something that the Finance Department can answer! He quickly refers John to Finance.

When John arrives in Finance, the Finance Director is not there. He leaves a message with the department secretary asking the Finance Director to explain how employee benefits are calculated. The next day, John gets a voicemail from the secretary stating that the Finance Director asked her to let John know that employee benefits are handled by the payroll unit, which is part of the Human Resources Department.

John walks down the hall to see the Human Resources Director, Jean Rossi. Jean listens intently to John's question and responds that while she personally is not an expert on the employee benefit calculations, he has come to the right place. Jean calls in her payroll supervisor and introduces Sally Yoshino to John. John and Sally go to Sally's desk where John explains what he is looking for. Sally states that the employee benefits rates were established by the budget unit at the beginning of the year. Sally can provide the percentage used to calculate the amount of employee benefits charged to John's Department, but cannot explain the components of the rate.

As John slowly heads over to meet the Budget Manager, he wonders how the City has reached such a point that no one can answer a simple question, and why they don't even seem to want to try. He also wonders how he can effectively manage the Public Works Department without the support of the City's internal administrative functions.

The fictional City of San Cajoles' has several problems that keep it from providing exceptional customer service. Perhaps the biggest of these problems is that the employees of the administrative services departments (Finance, Human Resources, Information Services, Clerk, Attorney) have not been adequately trained in providing customer service to the customer departments (Police, Fire, Public Works, Community Development, Economic Development). The following steps should be taken by management to mold the attitudes and behaviors of the administrative services employees:

- **Formal Customer Service Training** should be provided to all administrative services employees. Topics should include the importance of customer service, how to provide excellent customer service and how to prioritize the required time commitments. The training should stress that inquiries like John Contreras' are *opportunities* to make high-impact customer service impressions for comparatively small commitments of time and effort. It should also stress that any request by a customer must by "owned" (i.e., any customer question posed to any administrative services employee should be answered as if the administrative services departments were one large, efficient service organization. Each person John talked to should have either obtained the answer *for* John, or at least followed up with him to assure that he received a satisfactory answer.
- **Staff Goals and Evaluations** should include customer service as a major component. No performance evaluation or set of goals for any administrative services employee can be complete without a customer service component.
- **Staff Meetings** Every gathering of administrative services employees should have some discussion of customer service. The discussion can be about plans for improving service, examples of recent successes, comments or requests from customers, training, etc.
- Continual Positive Feedback Administrative services management should look for examples of good customer service and then publicly and lavishly praise and reward those responsible. No opportunity to reward good customer service should go unpraised.

Even John Contreras would be proud.

Up the Ladder

ACCOUNTING MANAGER – Town of Windsor, CA – Population 25,000 – (Salary: \$4,920 - \$6,755 monthly, plus excellent benefits - salary to increase on July 1, 2003). The Town of Windsor is located 8 miles north of Santa Rosa in beautiful Sonoma County. The Accounting Manager, under the general direction of the Administrative Services Director, is responsible for budget development and administration, general accounting and financial controls, financial reporting and analysis, payables and related Town functions. Qualified candidates must have any combination of education and/ or experience equivalent to a Bachelor's degree in accounting or related field and four years of fund accounting experience, and four years of supervisory experience. Information systems knowledge and experience is highly desirable. A Town application and resume are required to apply. Application materials can be downloaded from our website at www.townofwindsor.com or call Human Resources at (707) 838-5360 or e-mail pthomas@townofwindsor.com. Applications must be received no later than Thursday, February 20, 2003 by 6:00 p.m. Postmarks will not be accepted.

ACCOUNTING MANAGER-City of Mission Viejo, CA. \$5,973-\$8,063/month plus excellent benefits. This position will assume management responsibility for all services and activities of the Accounting Division including accounts payable, general ledger, cash receipts, payroll, fixed assets, audits and financial reporting. Knowledge of modern and complex principles and practices of accounting program development and administration. Ability to manage, direct and coordinate the work of professional, technical and clerical personnel. Any combination of training/experience equivalent to a Bachelor's degree with major course work in accounting, finance, business administration, or related field and four years of responsible governmental accounting experience, including supervisory experience. Closes at 3:00 p.m., March 5, 2003. For application materials, call (949) 470-3088 or visit our Website: www.ci.mission-viejo.ca.us. EOE

FINANCIAL SERVICES MANAGER-

City of Menlo Park, CA. Salary range: \$75,000 - \$90,000 DOQ, plus an excellent management benefits package. Situated midway between San Francisco and San Jose, Menlo Park (pop. 32,000) is a charming mix of old and new, reflecting both the region's wonderful heritage and technology-oriented future. This is a unionized mid-management position reporting directly to the Finance Director and responsible for accounting and related functions for the City and Redevelopment Agency. The City's resources include an operating budget of \$28 million and a staff of 260 permanent and 200 part-time employees. The ideal candidate will have experience in municipal accounting and auditing; principles of financial administration; knowledge of applicable laws; data processing systems; statistics and methods of graphic presentation. Bachelor's degree in accounting, business or public administration, economics or related field required; CPA preferred. To be considered, please submit your resume immediately to: Wilcox Miller & Nelson, Attn: Bobbi Peckham or Krista Stanich, 100 Howe Avenue, Suite 155 North, Sacramento, CA 95825, 916/977-3700, Fax 916/977-3733, Email: bpeckham@wilcoxcareer.com, A detailed brochure is available upon request. The position is open until filled. The City of Menlo Park is an Affirmative Action / Equal Opportunity Employer.

FINANCE DIRECTOR - City of Calabasas, California. \$6,694-8,136 monthly, plus excellent benefits package. Request a Bachelor's degree in finance or accounting or related field (Masters degree preferred) and five years experience in municipal accounting, including two years supervisory experience. Candidates must complete a City of Calabasas application; application, resume, and any additional materials, must be received at City Hall by 5:00 p.m. on Friday, March 7, 2003. Faxed or emailed applications and/or resumes are not accepted. The Human Resources Department may also be reached at (818) 878-4225 or hrdept@ci.calabasas.ca.us for a complete job brochure and City application.

BENEFITS-PERSONNELANALYSTI/II

- County of Ventura, CA - (Salary \$3,152 - \$5,170 per month plus management benefits). County Executive Office is seeking skilled and motivated candidates with experience in Benefit Program Administration (including Deferred Compensation - 401 (K) and 457; government employee benefits, etc.). Closes January 31, 2003. Contact Human Resources @(805) 654-5129 for recruitment announcement with supplemental questionnaire and required application. Additional information please contact: http://www.ventura.org.hr.

FINANCE DIRECTOR - City of Azusa, CA. Salary up to \$100,000 + Excellent Benefits Package. Contact Information: Dr. Richard Garcia, RJA Management Services, Inc. 550 W. Duarte Rd., Suite 6, Arcadia, CA 91107, (626) 447-3318 www.rjamanagement.com, Deadline: March 3, 2003. The City of Azusa is seeking an outstanding financial leader to take the Finance Dept. to the next level. Azusa is a family-centered community located between Pasadena and Claremont. With an annual budget of \$85 million City government is setting an ambitious pace of innovation, including a \$20 million library project and substantial new investment in the Downtown and University District. The Finance Dir. plays a key management role in long-term financial planning, revenue generation and business operations. The ideal candidate will have the talent to be a key team player in managing the City's funds and of a highly motivated professional finance staff. 5 years progressively responsible financial experience, including 3 years in financial management, an MBA or MPA is highly desirable. Strength in business management and revenue generation counts more than expertise in municipal accounting. Potential for greatness is preferred over long-time experience. Call for a brochure and supplemental questionnaire or visit the RJA website. Apply no later than March 3, 2003.

President's Message

(cont'd from pg 1)

As we look towards the future, we're facing increased health care costs and climbing PERS rates at the same time the Governor is again looking to takeaway local government funding. This proposed takeaway may affect our ability to provide much needed low income housing stock and cause us to rethink the level of services we provide. Our long-range financial forecasts need constant updating because of the everchanging market conditions. But through it all, CSMFO has set important goals and reached them with the assistance of our volunteers and we will continue to do so. CSMFO's 2002 Annual Report will be sent to all of you in March and will clearly articulate our successes over the past year.

Governor's Budget. As mentioned above, the Governor's 2003-04 budget was recently unveiled and it was dismaying to all. This is, however, just the first round and it will most likely change before it is adopted in the future. We must not over-react nor under-respond to these proposals. While it is disappointing that we are again faced with State takeaways, perhaps this is just another test of all our skills. William Hazlitt once said, "Prosperity is a great teacher; adversity is a greater one. Possession pampers the mind; privation trains and strengthens it." Some of us have been around long enough that we certainly should have "strengthened" minds by now. But seriously, we will need to keep a close watch on what is happening in Sacramento and be sure to let our legislators know what impacts these proposed cuts will have on our agencies. It is important to let Sacramento know what services will have to be cut or reduced if our money is again siphoned off to fund the State budget. Stay tuned to the League website for constant updates.

"The Capital Connection". If you have not yet signed up for the annual CSMFO Seminar in Sacramento, be sure to do so soon. In light of what is currently happening in Sacramento, this Seminar is especially timely. The focus will be on improving understanding of the mechanics, the players and the politics in State government. Along with sessions targeting career development and management and current finance issues, the Seminar will provide educational sessions with an "insider's" perspective on the workings of state government. The program promises to be outstanding and will provide another opportunity to discuss solutions for this latest budget debacle. I look forward to seeing you in Sacramento.

Thank You. I would also like to take this opportunity to say "Thank You" to the outstanding members who served on the 2002 CSMFO Board of Directors: Dennis Danner, Ken Nordhoff, Janet Salvetti, Mark Alvarado, Mike Dennis, Bob Locke, Zane Johnston, President-Elect, Bill Statler, Immediate Past President, and Eldon Boone, Special District Liaison. These wonderful volunteers along with the Committee Chairs and Vice-Chairs and those who worked so diligently on various committees are what make CSMFO such a great organization. In addition, I thank our Chapter Chairs who did an excellent job of guiding our local chapters through another year. Without the numerous hours that volunteers put into CSMFO, we would not be the successful organization that we are today. My heartfelt thanks are also extended to Frances Medema, without whose help the Presidency would be much more difficult. She is without a doubt, a "shining star". The hours devoted to CSMFO by Frances, Tawni and Adrienne are much appreciated and I thank them from the bottom of my heart.

Thought for the Month. We cannot control whether change will be good or bad, we can only control how we react to change. We all will be sorely tested in the upcoming months and years and our professionalism and knowledge will be of utmost importance to our cities. I leave you with the words of Robert F. Kennedy, "Few will have the greatness to bend history itself; but each of us can work to change a small portion of events, and in the total of all those acts will be written the history of this generation." Thank you for being positive contributors to our history.

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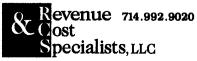
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