

## Annual Report to MACO Board of Directors

A Look Back and then Onward to the Future

### **Overview**

MACO has been in existence since 1966. The last ten years, I suspect, have seen more challenges for the association and its members than the first thirty.

One can only speculate on the future.

MACO as an organization faces challenges of addressing the membership needs for a diverse group with that diversity based on duties, age, experience, ability and geography. My observation is that the primary common threads are education and communication needs.

The relationship we have established with Century College is excellent and should provide us with continuing opportunities to meet the needs of members.

**It is important that the Education Committees stay engaged in this process and keep it fresh and responsive.**

A second key component is the effort underway to develop a curriculum for training in the property tax and related areas for members. This is being done in partnership with the Department of Revenue and the metro district (AMCO). **Again, key to the success of this effort is the involvement of the Steering Committee.**

**Are there other areas that we need to encourage the Education Committees to consider?**

Communication becomes more of a challenge the easier it becomes to communicate! The constant questions are what to communicate, to whom and when.

Issues for the Boards consideration include direction to the Administrator on the column in the AMC newspaper, the MACO website, the websites for the member associations, the MACO e newsletter and somewhat separately, the concern with institutional memory and transfer of information to succeeding Boards and officers.

**Member association websites** – how to incorporate the Auditors desire to have a website

**Institutional memory** – need to develop or enhance tools for Presidents, other officers and Boards?

**The organizational challenge that I see MACO facing is twofold – one membership and two, exertion of influence.** Two of the member associations have begun conversations on restructuring and the real possibility of the expansion of membership into MACO is also an issue to be addressed by the Board.

Membership expansion, particularly on an individual basis is a possibility for some assessors and some IT Directors. The Board also needs to address some of the ramifications of the continued combination of offices and its impact on dues structure or other operational matters. A lurking issue is always that of balancing the interests and input of metro and out state members.

An exciting trend is the stepping forth of MACO to speak out or take the lead on issues in member's area of expertise. Electronic recording of real estate records and e-commerce generally are two immediate examples. This is a change from the historical role of merely acting and speaking as administrators and shying away from policy debates. **What direction should the Board be providing in this regard to members and to the Administrator?**

## **Specific Contract Provisions**

### **1. Legislative Responsibilities**

This was a particularly challenging legislative session. There was lots of activity but not much in the way of end product. Next year promises to be difficult as well, as there will be some reorganization in the House of Representatives and the state faces a significant budget crisis. The Governor's proposed budget is anticipated to include at least a 3 per cent cut for all agencies. Not a great starting point.

MACO Platform – It was adopted at the December meeting and was slightly modified at the Winter Conference. It will need to be ready for the December meeting for the 2005 session. **Legislative Chairs should begin conversations.**

Before the session every effort is made to learn about legislation that may impact MACO members, during the session to keep up on developments and after the session to work through implementation issues.

It is important that the Leg Committees, MACO Executive Committee and Association Executive Committees stay active and engaged. You are the technical experts and another set of eyes and ears to monitor the process.

Presence at Capitol – Examples of how that is accomplished include attending the weekly meetings of all county lobbyists, meeting with legislative staff, meetings with legislators, attendance at AMC Legislative Steering Committee, attendance at hearings, coordination with other lobbyists, and communication with state agencies.

We had two Legislative Assistants supporting our efforts this session by preparing reports and monitoring hearings. That is in addition to the strong partnerships developed with other organizations and their lobbyists – including the AMC staff and affiliate groups, MCIT, MICA staff, County Attorney's Association, Deputy Registrar's Association, State Auditor, Secretary of States office, Department of Public Safety staff, Department of Health staff, Department of Revenue, Commerce Department, Veteran's Affairs, Governor's office, others representing groups such as MRESA and MLTA, the two Bankers Associations, the Real Property Section of the state Bar Association, DNR, SWCD's, MN School Boards Association, MN Association of Realtors, Newspaper Association, LMC, MN Manufactured Housing Association and the Court Administrators.

The challenge is always to be ready to act and react to specific legislation, often on very short notice. The County Computer Cooperatives regularly review potential tax legislation and the AMCO Tax Committee, was called into service to review the proposed tax bill which was never seriously considered for passage.

For Election issues, the MACO Auditors Election Committee monitors legislative activity as does the AMCO Elections Committee, and the League of MN Cities lobbyist as well as the township lobbyists, and I work closely together. There also was communication and cooperation with Tony Kielkucki, from the Office of Secretary of State, as well as, with key legislators. Kevin Corbid from Washington County performed admirably on behalf of members as well.

Were it not for our support from Senators, DFL and Republican, the election results would have been much more onerous.

Primary communication during the session was with the Chairs of each member associations Legislative Committee and the four association Presidents. They received via e mail weekly summaries of introductions of bills of particular interest to MACO members and the complete listing of introductions as provided through our subscription to the Phillips Legislative Service. Chairs and their committee members were asked to review and provide feedback on any items of particular concern. Meetings are held as it is possible to call folks together. Regular updates continued throughout the Legislative session for the general membership. Questions were responded to as they were received.

Testimony was coordinated with the Legislative Chairs/Presidents as appropriate. Members do not always have a full appreciation of the need to respond – now – on a particular issue. Oftentimes there is not a second chance to have a real impact on a piece of legislation. Members were asked on occasion, either as a group, or as a targeted group to respond to an issue. The effectiveness of the response varies.

I attended all meetings of Legislative Committees, the AMC Legislative Conference, the MACO Conference, the every two week AMC legislative Steering Committee, the weekly meetings of county lobbyists and any special meetings with legislative agenda items that it was possible to attend. If I was invited or made aware of a meeting I make every effort to be present and my recollection is that I was present at all of those meetings.

## **2. Association Administration**

Note: While the Administrator and Leg Counsel duties are treated separately, the administrative duties are almost exclusively directly tied to legislative activity, either in preparation for or as a result of the just completed legislative session. There is not much you do that the Legislature or state agencies do not touch.

I work most closely with the MACO Board and its Executive Committee, Committee Chairs, Association Executive Committees and association committee chairs. We all work to meet the needs, mostly informational, of the memberships. Individual member requests are dealt with at the discretion of the Administrator, often in consultation with the appropriate president – most common issue is a request for a survey on one or another topic of interest to the member.

I maintain the communication network for the association, which has become primarily e–mail. This requires updating e–mail addresses on a very regular basis. This also includes the master vendor/business partner list.

Respond to members – Done no longer than 24 hours and usually much shorter time frame. Same day response is always the goal. This is true for both phone calls and e mails. Faxes are only occasionally utilized today.

Newsletter – should this be activated in an electronic format?

MACO Website is periodically refreshed – a continuing excellent partnership with AMC providing staff support. Recent additions include the fee study and the legislative reports. Ideas from the Board are welcome. Should we consider an independent site ?

Conference/Regional Meetings – I work with the planning committees, MACO Board and Education Committees. When the committees fall short I will step in and assure that the event happens in a

professional manner and with relevant topics. A primary function is to identify potential speakers for particular topics and do the follow up coordination to assure the comments of the speakers are relevant.

I assist with the metro district (AMCO) speaker identification and securing and made most contacts for the Auditor–Treasurer conference speakers this summer.

I assume primary responsibility for the content at the Winter Conference, following the direction of the Board and the Education Committee.

Members are designated to assist with the logistics at the site.

Meeting Management – I provide regular staff support to Chairs, Presidents and others who have responsibility for committee and other special topic meetings.

**Member directory – do we want to do any kind of update?**

Attend meetings of MACO members. If I am invited I do everything I

can to be there. If I am invited and cannot attend I check to see if there are any issues I can get to the meeting convener prior to the meeting and then follow up to see what additional information is needed.

I have been working to develop closer working relationships with the computer cooperatives and to attend meetings to help keep them up to date on legislative and other matters of common interest.

I attempt to make the periodic meetings of Recorders with the SOS on UCC issues. I always attend the AMCO meetings and as many of their committee meetings as possible.

**Do we need to provide some focus for district chairs?**

MACO Column – AMC Paper. I write it faithfully for the AMC paper and am now doing an occasional column for the MCCC newsletter and any other opportunity. Any volunteers to write or topic suggestions ?

Promote MACO – I communicate regularly with the Assessors, AMC staff, MICA staff, County Administrators, County Attorneys and others.

Recording Secretary to the Board – continue to do.

Other duties – if it needs to be done for members benefit then I do what needs to be done, communicating with the appropriate parties to accomplish the task.