

The Administrator

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Profession loses a 'true champion'

Phineas Edgar ("Phin") Horton III, a longtime city and county manager in North Carolina, as well as Georgia, Virginia and Florida, passed away recently after a battle with cancer. He was 77.

"He was a great individual. He was passionate about the management profession," said Lenoir City Council Member Lewis Price, a former city manager himself.

Price said his relationship with Horton went all the way back to "at least" the '60s – "the 1960s," Price joked. He called Horton a "true champion."

"When someone was in trouble, he found out and gave them a call. He was, I think, a real leader for young managers coming into the profession.

"He [also] had a pretty good sense of humor. He was very vocal. We'll miss that about Phin."

Phin Horton was born October 22, 1932, in Winston-Salem, the son of the late Phin Horton, Jr., and Frances Medearis Horton. He was a third grandson of Nathan and Elizabeth Eagles Horton, pioneer settlers in Watauga County.

Horton graduated from UNC-Chapel Hill in 1954. While at UNC he managed the successful campaign of Charles Kuralt, candidate for editor of the *Daily Tar Heel*. He then completed graduate studies toward a Masters of Governmental Administration from the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania in 1958. During college, he worked first as an administrative assistant in Winston-Salem, then an intern and administrative assistant in Greensboro.



Phin Horton

after Penn was as the city manager in Mooresville, where he worked from February 1959 until January 1963. From there Horton began a string of city manager jobs in Shelby (July 1963-September 1968), Asheville (September 1968-September 1972), Valdosta, Ga. (September 1972-March 1974) and Portsmouth, Va. (April 1974-April 1975).

He then worked in the private sector for a couple of years before returning to Valdosta as city manager from October 1977 until May 1981 before going back into the private sector. From late-1987 until June 1993, Horton served Morrisville as its town manager before heading to Lauderdale By The Sea, Fla., for a similar capacity from July 1994 until September 1995. His last full-time stint was as the town manager of Holly Ridge, where we worked from March 2002 until November 2004 before retiring to Linville Land Harbor near Newland.

In the mid-1960s, Horton was instrumental in the formation of Electricities to protect the interest of N.C. Public Power Communities and to provide a unified voice on both state and feder-

In 1959, Horton began a career that would lead him all across North Carolina and the Southeast in various local government capacities.

His first job

al issues and served as its first president. In 1971-72 he was president of the N.C. City & County Management Association (NCCCMA). He was chosen to be a Range Rider (retired managers with extensive experience who volunteer their time to provide a unique source of outside counsel to their colleagues) for the International City/County Management Association (ICMA) from May 2000 to August 2002.

Needless to say, a man with that varied of a career and one who worked in so many different places touched many.

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Still time to nominate a Life Member

If you are interested in nominating someone for NCCCMA Life Membership, then send an email to Yolanda Hart at yhart@ncim.org as soon as possible.

For information about Life Member credentials, go to the NCCCMA website at <http://www.ncmanagers.org/about/newlifemembers.asp>.

New Life Members will be recognized at the President's Luncheon on Thursday, February 4, 2010, during the NCCCMA Winter Conference.

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We are so focused on our ethical obligation to the community, elected officials, and staff that most of us probably don't spend much time thinking about our ethical commitment to our colleagues.

Scenario No. 1: An advocate for recruiting new talent to the profession, the city manager didn't hesitate to take a call from a member of a U.S. senator's staff who wanted to pursue a career in local government. The staff member readily admitted that just a passion for public service combined with her federal experience alone wouldn't position her to secure the job of a city manager. She needed some serious coaching on how city management works.

During the next weeks, the city manager provided his input in response to questions she posed by email. The staff member then telephoned with an urgent request to meet the next day. Her goal of moving into a city manager's position was in sight as she had an interview at week's end. When the city manager asked where, she disclosed the information, but on a confidential basis.



They agreed to a breakfast meeting the following day. Because the manager wasn't familiar with the candidate's prospective employer, he reached out to the state league staff for some background. He learned that the community currently had a city manager as well as a considerable amount of turmoil, with a new council publicly calling for the dismissal of the police chief.

Hearing all this, the manager thought twice about his mentoring role and wondered what obligation he had to his beleaguered colleague who was attempting to steer the community through its problems.

Advice: The manager's promise to keep the interview confidential is trumped by his obligation to his colleague and to the profession. The guideline in the ICMA Code of Ethics is clear: no one should seek a position when the administrator has not resigned or been officially informed that his or her services are to be terminated.

A stealth recruitment that lacks both transparency and fairness in dealing with the incumbent manager should not be supported by col-

leagues. The city manager should share all available information with the colleague to avoid what could be an awful surprise. Next, he should enlighten the candidate about the importance of fair play and the damage to public trust when processes lack transparency.

Scenario No. 2: New to the county but with many years of experience under his belt, the county manager is working hard to resolve the current budget crisis while moving the county forward on critical fronts. As in a game of chess, almost every significant proposal he puts forth for discussion with the commission is met by opposition from one county commissioner.

Always open to opposing viewpoints, the manager is getting frustrated because the commissioner is advocating for failed strategies supported by the prior administration and is presenting detailed yet incorrect information to support his position. Where is this commissioner getting all this information?

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Calendar of Events

NCCCMA Winter Conference
Feb. 3-5, 2010
Sheraton RTP
Durham County

NCCCMA Summer Seminar
June 24-26, 2010
Sea Trail
Sunset Beach

ICMA Southeastern Summit
April 15-16, 2010
Courtyard Nashville Downtown
Nashville, Tenn.

The Administrator is a monthly newsletter of the North Carolina City and County Management Association, a professional association for city and county managers and assistant managers from counties and municipalities throughout the state of North Carolina.

For comments or suggestions, please contact Matt Lail, editor, at (919) 715-3929, fax to (919) 733-9519, or mlail@ncclm.org.



Nominations still needed for director spots

It is time again to submit names of those city and county managers and assistant managers whom you believe would be good candidates for N.C. City & County Management Association director spots.

The NCCCMA Nominating Committee must present a slate of candidates for consideration to the board to the membership at the winter conference, which will be held February 3-5, 2010, at the Sheraton Imperial in Research Triangle Park/Durham County. The committee will present its slate of officers to the membership during the opening session and again dur-

ing the business meeting. The vote will occur during the business meeting, with the successful candidates to be sworn in at the business meeting of the summer conference, which this year will be held June 24-26 at SeaTrail in Sunset Beach.

The Nominating Committee is comprised of Immediate Past President David Cooke, Wake County Manager; and past presidents Randy McCaslin, High Point assistant city manager, and Charles Penny, Rocky Mount assistant city manager.

The committee is looking to recommend

three directors to serve a two-year term expiring in June 2012. The nominees should represent two municipalities and one county. The committee is also looking for someone to fill the slot of Secretary/Treasurer and Second Vice President (a municipal member).

Please submit the names to the nominating committee members. Cooke may be reached at dcooke@co.wake.nc.us; McCaslin may be reached at Randy.McCaslin@HighPointNC.gov; and Penny may be reached at Charles.Penny@RockyMountNC.gov.

Phin Horton, continued from page 1

"Phin has been an inspiration and friend to all who knew him," said Cherryville Manager David Hodgkins. "He was especially helpful to those among us who have been in transition or 'embattled.' He was my mentor and friend, and he is responsible for getting me into the 'manager business.'

"He will be sorely missed."

Horton was known as a staunch supporter of both NCCCMA and ICMA, and was a big proponent of the Range Rider program.

The NCCCMA recently made a \$100 contri-

bution to Aaron Baptist Church, P.O. Box 266, Montezuma, N.C. 28653 in Horton's honor.

Horton was an accomplished equestrian, training and showing three and five gaited American Saddle Bred horses up and down the eastern seaboard. It was at a horse show where he met his future wife, Bunny. Horton is survived by Bunny, his wife of 44 years, as well as four daughters, Ann Farmer (Mark), Pam (McNulty) Terwilliger (Tom), and Susan Majors (Brian), all of Durham, and Mary Nash of Wake Forest; and nine grandchildren, Cole Farmer,

Evalee, Scott and John Michael McNulty, Zackary Terwilliger, Emma Majors, and Sarah, Laura and Cameron Nash. He is also survived by his sister, Carolyn Rogers (Sam) of Leesburg, Va.

A death notice in the *Durham Herald-Sun* stated that Horton "hoped to be remembered as a 'good fellow' and he surely will."

No doubt about that.

Ethics, continued from page 2

The county manager finally realizes and confirms that the former assistant county manager, who was unsuccessful in getting promoted to county manager and is now serving as a manager elsewhere, is in regular communication with this county commissioner.

Advice: It is unethical for the former assistant to discuss county business with his former commissioners without the knowledge of the incumbent manager. When contacted by a colleague's governing body members, ICMA mem-

bers have an obligation to let their colleague know about the contact and to bring it to an end.

How should the county manager deal with this situation? The best option is the direct one: call the colleague to ask that he cease and desist because his backdoor communications are disruptive and unfair. Surely this individual, who is also new to a manager's position, will understand how critical it is for the manager to quickly build credibility and trust with the gov-

erning body.

If this approach doesn't work, the county manager should report the matter to ICMA. The Code of Ethics encourages members to report possible violations so that they may be vetted in the formal peer review process.

— Martha Perego, ICMA-CM
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