



BOARD TALK

Massachusetts Recreation and Park Association

This page is an exciting new venture through the Massachusetts Recreation and Park Association, and will be a regular feature of the monthly newsletter. It is being created WITH and FOR members of appointed and elected boards, to provide an opportunity for them to share and learn from each other. Please make copies of this page and hand it out to board members each month.

SURVIVING THE FINANCIAL TIMES

It is hard to stay upbeat and focused when reading today's financial news. Each day seems to bring stories of people losing jobs, and in some cases, your board may be looking at the loss of some of the staff who have worked with you for many years.

So what can an appointed or elected board do to help your organization survive these times? How can you help your organization not only survive but thrive!

As the advocates for your organization, it is up to you to promote the values. Mayor Daley of Chicago has said, *"If a city takes care of its schools, parks, and libraries, everything else will follow."* Wouldn't it help to share this quote with those in your community responsible for setting financial goals, and then be able to give specific examples of the value of your work to the community?

Many senior administration public officials are members of the International City Management Association (ICMA.) One of the tenants of this association is the commitment to the ancient Athenian Oath to *"transmit this city, not only not less, but greater, better, and more beautiful than it was transmitted to us."* Doesn't your organization play a vital role in this goal? If you are in municipal government, shouldn't the work of your organization be seen to be as vital to the long-term health of your community as those typically referred to as public safety?

It is probably time to put aside at least a half of a day for your board and staff to sit down together and brainstorm and ask yourselves tough questions.

- What have been your major achievements in the past ten years?
- Are you meeting the mission set forth for your organization? Do the board members have specific goals to be working on to achieve your mission? Does the staff?
- Through your strategic planning, what goals have you achieved and what are in place for the next 3 to 5 years? What tactical or operational goals has the staff achieved and plan to achieve?
- How are you balancing the current needs of those you represent with those in future generations?
- What partnerships can be created so that the community receives its services and facilities but without the financial burden being completely yours?
- Is it possible to create volunteer opportunities that translate into program scholarships?
- Can you utilize these difficult times to make changes that will help your organization in the long term, something that may not have been accepted by the community during better days?

The ICMA has helpful information on their website at <http://icma.org>, including a booklet that provides ideas to help navigate the financial crisis. Utilize information from other MRPA members, too...together we can survive!

Patricia Carey, CPRP, Director
Needham Park and Recreation Commission
1471 Highland Avenue - Needham, MA 02492
Telephone: (781) 455-7521
E-Mail: pcarey@town.needham.ma.us

Renee Dufour, CPRP, MRPA President
MA Dept of Conservation & Recreation
200 Davol Street - Fall River, MA 02720
Telephone: (508) 675-3455
E-Mail: Renee.Dufour@massmail.state.ma.us