



# MnGFOA Newsletter

January 2024

*Excellence and Leadership in Government Finance*

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## President's Message

By: Mary Kaye Wahl

Happy 2024! I hope that your 2023 was filled with memorable moments and the start of your 2024 has brought optimism and brightness to your life 😊

I've had the pleasure of being a part of this wonderful organization since 2012. I initially joined for several reasons—being relatively new to my position, the desire to connect with others in a similar professional realm, and the aspiration to step out of my comfort zone. Fast forward just a few 😊 years and a handful of ventures beyond my comfort zone, and here I am—MnGFOA President. Serving in this role is an honor, and I must admit, I feel a bit unworthy. Over the years, I've gained so much from this organization in terms of mentorship, connections, and education, and I'm thrilled to give back in this capacity.

With the symbolic ball drop and we officially start the new calendar year, our committees are already hard at work planning educational line-ups, fostering social connections, expanding our government finance community through outreach, and continuously seeking ways to enhance our organization. Later this month, the Executive Board and Committee Chairs will convene

to further discuss and develop plans for 2024. Did you know that this year marks MnGFOA's Diamond anniversary? We're celebrating 60 years as the premier professional organization representing governmental finance and accounting professionals.

As we transition into this Diamond year, I would like to highlight some changes to the Executive Board and Committee Chairs:

**Executive Board:** Nicole Meyer concludes her 5-year term on the Executive Board, while Gina Foschi begins her term as Treasurer. Pa Thao and Brad Falteysek conclude their At-large appointments, and Kristen Vipond and Chris Knopik start theirs. Joel Merry will continue as State Rep, Tina Lannes transitions to Secretary, Mark Ebensteiner as President-Elect, and Nate Reinhardt as Past President. A warm welcome to the new Board members and an extension of gratitude for the ones that have served over the past year.

**Committee Chairs:** This year, we have a blend of new and returning chairs. Melissa Schlingman and Jackie Heinz will lead the Conference Committee, Joe Starks the Education

Committee, Hannah Lynch and Jennifer Vucinovich the Program Committee, Kari Carlson and Michelle Hoffman the Social Committee, Justin Juergensen the Student Outreach Committee, Jeanette Boit-Kania, Joe Rotz, and Janice Brandt the Technology Committee, and Cory Kampf, Lynn Cornwell, and Nate Reinhardt the Mentorship Committee. Thank you all for stepping forward or continuing to lead these committees, and special thanks to past chairs—Tonya Kusmirek, Jennifer Stanley, and Gina Foschi. I'm excited to ring in the Diamond year with all of you. If you have any questions about getting involved, suggestions on how MnGFOA can better serve its members, or ideas for expanding connections, please don't hesitate to reach out. I'm committed to strengthening our association with your input and collaboration.



# JANUARY MONTHLY MEETING

Date: Wednesday, January 17, 2024  
 Time: 11:30 AM – 12:30 PM  
 Location: Wherever you are  
 Cost: Free  
 CEU: 1.0 on request  
 Speaker: Jim Alexander, Project Director, Metro Transit's Southwest LRT project



## Southwest Light Rail Project (Green Line Extension)

The METRO Green Line Extension (also known as the Southwest light rail project, or SWLRT) is a generational investment in our region's transit system that adds 14.5 miles to the existing METRO Green Line, which connects downtown Minneapolis, downtown Saint Paul, and places in between. The new segment adds more stations in Minneapolis, plus St. Louis Park, Hopkins, Minnetonka, and Eden Prairie. Nearly 56,000 people live within a half mile — or approximately a 10-minute walk — of the project corridor. Jim Alexander will review the project, timeline, and financing and funding sources.

### Speaker: Jim Alexander

Jim Alexander is the Project Director for Metro Transit's Southwest LRT project (Green Line Extension). SWLRT, Minnesota's biggest public works project, extends from the Green Line in downtown Minneapolis through St. Louis Park, Hopkins, Minnetonka, and Eden Prairie.

Prior to working on SWLRT, Jim was the Design Manager on the Central Corridor LRT project (Green Line). Jim also served as Project Manager on the delivery of the Go-To smart card-based regional fare collection system. Before joining Metro Transit, Jim was a consulting geotechnical engineer in Seattle.

Jim has a Bachelor of Science in Civil Engineering from the University of Wyoming and a Master of Science in Geotechnical Engineering from the University of Washington. He is licensed as a Professional Engineer in Minnesota.

## Upcoming Training Opportunities

**Cash Basis Accounting Training (Beginner and Intermediate)** is coming in February, in partnership with the League of MN Cities! Training is open to all!

Beginner – February 20, 10:30am – 12:00pm  
 Intermediate – February 27, 10:30am – 12:00pm

Keep an eye on the [Events Calendar](#) as more details will follow.

## Membership Renewals

Annual Memberships expire at the end of February each year. All renewals must be done online at [www.mngfoa.org](http://www.mngfoa.org). You may still pay by check by following the renewal steps online and then sending your check made payable to MNGFOA to the 2024 Treasurer:

Gina Foschi, MNGFOA Treasurer  
 803 Old Highway 8 NW  
 New Brighton, MN 55112

Gina may be contacted at:  
 651-638-2105

**RENEWAL  
 REMINDER**

# On to new adventures!

Brenda Davitt is finally retiring on January 31st with 38 years of experience working with local governments. Her career began as an intern working for Washington County then wanted to give city government a try and worked for the Cities of Roseville and New Brighton. After retiring from PERA, she wanted to continue to help other local governments and completed her career consulting with Abdo Financial Solutions. She is looking forward to traveling, working with her gardens, and enjoying her family.

Let's Celebrate

Retirement Party Happy Hour for Brenda

On Thursday, February 1<sup>st</sup> from 3 to 7 p.m.

High Pines Brewing Company

2704 Snelling Avenue, Roseville, MN

RSVP preferred but not necessary to Lynn Cornwell by January 22<sup>nd</sup>

[Lynn.Cornwell@moretoncm.com](mailto:Lynn.Cornwell@moretoncm.com)

Appetizers will be provided with a cash bar



## JOB POSTINGS

Summary of Job Openings:

Position Title	Entity	Closing Date
Accounting Administrative Assistant	City of Forest Lake	Tuesday, January 2, 2024
Utility Billing – Accounting Tech II	City of Woodbury	Thursday, January 4, 2024
Accounting Coordinator-Finance	Blue Earth County	Thursday January 4, 2024
Deputy Chief Finance Officer	Minneapolis	Tuesday, January 16, 2024

Links and further details can be found on the [Jobs & Volunteering](#) page



## 2024 MN GFOA Networking Events



February 24, 2024

Polar Plunge in Blaine - for Special Olympics



April 2024

Meat Raffle in Rogers



May 2, 2024

Cinco de Mayo Celebration (Location TBD)



Summer 2024

MN Twins Baseball game at Target Field Minneapolis



Summer 2024

MN United Soccer game at Allianz Field St Paul



September 25-27, 2024

Annual Conference in Alexandria, MN - Fun networking events are being planned!



November 2024

Tie Blanket Event - Autumn Grove Park Building 1365 Lydia Ave W, Roseville, MN  
Make blankets for metro area charitable organizations that serve at-risk teens.



Nov - Dec 2024

Second Harvest Heartland On-Line Food Drive



## 2024 OFFICERS AND BOARD MEMBERS

**President**

Mary Kaye Wahl  
Carver County  
952.361.1511

**At-Large**

Kristen Vipond  
Otter Tail County  
218.998.8034

**President-Elect**

Mark Ebensteiner  
City of Becker  
763.200.4250

**At-Large**

Chris Knopik  
CliftonLarsonAllen  
612.397.3266

**Secretary**

Tina Lannes  
City of Albertville  
763.496.6802

**State Representative**

Joel Merry  
City of Minnetonka  
952.939.8254

**Treasurer**

Gina Foschi  
City of New Brighton  
651.638.2105

**Past President**

Nathan Reinhardt  
City of Shakopee  
952.233.9326

## DID YOU KNOW?

That if you have changed e-mail addresses you need to subscribe to the ListServ with your new email address. We have had a number of inquiries as to why members may not be receiving the ListServ e-mails. Since the ListServ is managed by a different platform than our membership renewals and newsletters, changes to e-mails need to be changed in both locations. The ListServ tab is at the top of the homepage.

## 2024 Committee Chairs & Vice Chairs

Conference Committee – plans and coordinates topics, speakers, and all other aspects of the annual fall conference

Co-Chairs Melissa Schlingman, City of Shakopee and 952-233-9329  
Jackie Heinz, City of Montrose 763-575-7435

Social Committee – plans & organizes social activities for membership through the year

Co-Chairs Kari Carlson, City of Bloomington and 952-563-8725  
Michelle Hoffman, CliftonLarsonAllen 612-397-3269

Program Committee – plans topics and speakers for the monthly meetings

Co-Chairs Hannah Lynch, City of Lino Lakes and 651-982-2405  
Jennifer Vucinovich, US Bank 651-466-8750

Education Committee – plans and coordinates October accounting classes and other training sessions during the year other than the fall conference

Chair Joe Starks, City of Fridley 651-277-5230

Student Outreach Committee – The Student Outreach Committee is responsible for connecting with students to introduce them to career possibilities in government finance. Committee members attend career fairs and on-campus events, and also promote the John B. Lilja Undergraduate Scholarship.

Chair Justin Juergensen, City of Hutchinson 320-234-4256

Technology Committee – operate and improve the organization’s website and other technology

Co-Chairs Jeanette Boit-Kania, Ramsey County, 651-266-8057  
Joe Rotz, City of Apple Valley and 612-986-4722  
Janice Brandt, City of Coon Rapids 763-767-6442

Mentorship Committee – The committee helps engage our members in developing our future and the future of local government finance in Minnesota

Co-Chairs Cory Kampf, Anoka County, 763-324-1751  
Lynn Cornwell, Moreton Capital Markets and 952-777-3227  
Nate Reinhardt, City of Shakopee 952-233-9326

Please contact any member of the Board of the Committee chairs directly if you are interested in participating on any of the committees. Committee participation does not require a lot of time and is a great way to meet people and share ideas.

## Message from the Editor

This is YOUR newsletter. If you wish to share items of interest with the membership, such as job openings, career moves, or retirements, please email them by the 21st of the month for inclusion in the next newsletter. Thank you!

Mark Ebensteiner  
MNGFOA President Elect  
763-200-4250

