MMRMA’s Annual Meeting has always featured stellar training sessions by top presenters. Their objective is not just to hold members’ attention, but also to provide insights, information, and tools they can use to achieve satisfaction and success at work and other areas of their lives.

Powers: Make the Most of Everyday Life
In this year’s Thursday keynote session, John Powers conveyed the importance of loving who you are and what you do. He reminded his listeners of the value of life by eloquently pointing out that “There is a first time and a last time for everything,” whether it’s sitting on the porch chatting with a loved one, carrying a child in your arms, or going into work each day. With that in mind, he said, it’s essential to bring passion to even the simplest moments in our lives.

On Friday, Powers outlined a proven step-by-step plan for keeping the promises you make to yourself. He stressed the importance of writing your promises down and referring to them often so you don’t lose sight of your goals. And it’s not enough to make the promise; you also need to understand why the goal is important to you, make a plan, and be persistent in attaining the personal achievement you seek. Member response was enthusiastic, and one was motivated to write, “I left this session with a promise to myself to begin writing goals for the future.”

Healthy, Productive Living
Joining Powers were two powerhouse health gurus, Jo Lichten, PhD, RD, and Peter Nielsen. Dr. Jo explained how to “reboot” our systems to stay energized and be more productive. She focused on getting adequate sleep, tweaking diet, boosting exercise, and using stress management techniques to maximize energy. Her tips included eating more protein in the morning and carbohydrates in the evening, and limiting caffeine after noon. One respondent commented, “I learned that I should promote healthy eating, because better health means fewer sick days and better productivity.”

Peter Nielsen lives healthy and well despite his battle with Crohn’s disease, yet he has been Mr. International Universe, Mr. World, and is a nationally renowned personal trainer. He cited the acronym HOPE—Having Optimum Positive Emotions—as a major contributor to his success. He also discussed the importance of exercise, an anti-inflammatory diet rich in omega 3s, and the benefits of probiotics.

Nielsen’s message of personal responsibility was not lost on his listeners: afterward, one member commented, “I learned that when it comes to my health, ‘nothing changes if nothing changes.’”

MMRMA is proud to have hosted another outstanding Annual Meeting, thanks in large measure to the enthusiastic participation of its membership.
In addition, the Board monitors and evaluates each policy at least once each year for compliance and content, adding, deleting, and modifying policies as needed. These policies are compiled in the MMRMA Governance Manual, which can be viewed online in the Members Only section of www.mmrma.org.

The manual is organized into four sections:

**Organization and Planning.** These basic policies form the foundation of MMRMA. They include provisions for establishing our core documents—the Joint Powers Agreement and Coverage Documents—as well as the mission statement, shared core values, and long-term goals. Together these documents foster MMRMA’s culture and character and guide its strategic direction. All our actions and activities are measured against these basic principles.

**Governance.** The overall governance framework is established in these policies. They define Board responsibilities and activities, set forth procedures for election of the Board of Directors, and outline the committee structure. These policies also address ethics and a code of conduct.

**Finance.** Sound financial policies are essential to make certain MMRMA can meet its obligations today and for many years to come. This section describes MMRMA’s reserving policy, net assets (required capital), and investment guidelines. Recognizing our fiduciary responsibilities, these policies provide for the utmost due diligence regarding financial reporting, internal controls, and independent audits.

**Operations.** The organization and planning policies articulate a commitment to excellence. Operations policies take this a step further by requiring best practices in underwriting, claims handling, litigation management, and human resources, including professional development.

This governance structure is a tremendous asset to MMRMA members. It assures them that their organization is governed and operates efficiently and cost-effectively using state-of-the-art business practices.

MMRMA’s governance documents follow through on our commitment to encourage member participation and work in an open and transparent manner.

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Committee Resources Inform Sound Risk Management Decisions

By Jack Barron
Risk Control Consultant

FINANCIAL ADVISOR Howard Marks, author of *The Most Important Thing: Uncommon Sense for the Thoughtful Investor,* writes that what separates a successful investor from the rest is risk control. Risk control is invisible in good years, he says, which doesn’t mean it isn’t important. Only in bad times, he reminds us, do we find out who had risk under control and who did not.

MMRMA’s Administrative Advisory Committee operates under a similar philosophy. For over two decades, the committee has worked diligently to keep members’ municipal risk under control.

Committee Publications
The committee’s published guidelines and model policies cover a wide range of topics, primarily focusing on employment issues, land use, and zoning. Also included within its scope are the increasingly relevant topics of emergency management, electronic communications, and public policy on issues such as the controversial Michigan Medical Marihuana Act.

Other committee work includes videos for member in-service training on the subjects of workplace violence, emergency preparedness, and zoning. It has also created several dozen public policy brochures on proven risk control measures that member administrators use to make more informed risk management decisions. All these publications are available in the Members Only section of www.mmrma.org.

The committee focuses on issues such as employment, land use, zoning, and the increasingly relevant topics of emergency management and electronic communications.

The Administrative Advisory Committee has nine volunteer members who meet at least every six weeks to discuss common member concerns, recent legislation and court decisions, and other issues relevant to public employers.

These discussions often generate published resources, developed with the assistance of MMRMA’s two law firms, whose representatives regularly attend committee meetings.

Recent examples of this collaboration are two companion handbooks on the Michigan Open Meetings Act and the Freedom of Information Act.

Each committee member serves a three-year term, with the option of renewing for an additional three years, which most members do. The committee has also greatly benefited from retired former members, who continue to share their accumulated wisdom and counsel. While these welcome contributors cannot vote on committee business, their impact is evident in the committee’s portfolio of risk management resources.

Opportunity for Involvement
Any MMRMA member employee who serves in an administrative capacity is eligible for membership on the Administrative Advisory Committee. Those interested in learning more about serving are welcome to attend one of our meetings. Dates and times are posted on MMRMA’s website under Upcoming Meetings.

The committee encourages members to submit their ideas for future projects of mutual member concern. Contact Jack Barron at 734 513-0300.

In this way, the committee will continue to offer timely risk management guidance and risk control techniques for the benefit of all MMRMA members.
By Jack Barron, Risk Control Consultant

EACH YEAR, William D. Wagoner, former planning director for Livingston County and past chair of MMRMA’s Administrative Advisory Committee, presents a course for members titled Planning For a Disaster-Resistant Community. The most recent session, held September 8, 2011, in Grand Rapids, had an excellent turnout and was very well received.

While Wagoner has presented this workshop at state and national conferences, he especially appreciates the opportunity to bring his message—the need to integrate community planning with emergency management—to MMRMA members.

The workshop teaches members how to integrate emergency management with community planning.

The course is further enhanced by the inclusion of four emergency management brochures authored by Wagoner and published with the support of MMRMA and the Administrative Advisory Committee:

• All-Hazards Risk Management: Developing Disaster Resistant/Sustainable Communities
• Hazard Mitigation Planning
• Integrating Hazard Mitigation and Comprehensive Planning
• Issues of Public Policy in Emergency Management for Local Communities

Copies of these award-winning brochures can be downloaded in the Members Only section of www.mmrma.org.

The overriding theme: no community is sustainable unless it is also disaster-resistant. The human and economic costs of disasters to communities are escalating so rapidly that it may not be possible to recover adequately if effective action isn’t taken before they happen.

Participants learn how to integrate hazard mitigation planning in the community planning process, and how to incorporate hazard identification and risk assessment techniques to determine a community’s vulnerability.

Wagoner’s mantra, “Think globally, act locally,” highlights the importance of timely local action, precisely because there is no standard solution to mitigating disaster risks.

Course tools and techniques cover concepts such as pre-event hazard mitigation through land use planning, disaster preparedness, disaster response and recovery, and hazard and risk assessment.

Asked why this workshop is so important to MMRMA members, Wagoner replies, “The management of risks is one of the great challenges of the 21st century. The ever-growing human, economic, social, and environmental losses due to natural, technological, and man-made hazards underscores the need for a systematic approach to manage these risks.”