



2024 WCMA Winter Conference

SPEAKER & MODERATOR

BIOGRAPHIES

(listed alphabetically)

Don Bernards

Don is well versed in structuring affordable housing transactions, including the tax issues. Don is adept at creating a checklist of major issues for each project that can put a deal at risk. Immersed in the affordable housing practice, Don has a wide range of experience with projects, owners and investors and has built a wide network of contacts within the field. His enthusiasm and passion for the industry are infectious. “It’s not just about numbers,” he says, “it’s about the end product and growing capacity.” Don has worked on affordable housing transactions in 26 states.

Thomas Cameron

Thomas is an attorney in the Public Finance group at Quarles & Brady, where he primarily assists public entities with taxable and tax-exempt debt offerings. Prior to joining Quarles & Brady, he was a municipal attorney where, among other things, he negotiated development agreements and economic development incentives, including with respect to guarantees of workforce and affordable housing.

Travis Coenen

Travis Coenen is currently the Village Administrator of Wrightstown Wisconsin, a community of approximately 3,237 residents and growing. Wrightstown is located directly between Green Bay and Appleton, Wisconsin, where he is responsible for village administration and management under the direction of the Village Board. Travis has twelve years of experience in operations and financial management at multiple levels and types of government. In addition to his experience at the Village of Wrightstown, Travis’s background includes positions with City of De Pere, the Village of Wrightstown Water and Sewer Utility, and Project Manager for multiple Wisconsin based utility contractors. Travis is also an active member of; WCMA Emerging Leaders, WCMA Conference Committee, WCMA Scholarship Committee, WCMA DEI committee and Strategic Task Force, WCMA/ILCMA Joint Conference Committee, as well as member of ICMA and ELGL. Travis was the recipient of the WCMA’s president’s award for contribution to the organization at the 2023 WCMA summer conference. Travis spends his free time coaching youth sports, volunteering in many community nonprofit organizations, and enjoying time with his wife and three children.

Igna Cushman

Inga Cushman is the Human Resources Manager for the Village of Cottage Grove. Before accepting this position in August 2023, Inga worked for the City of Milton for 16 years in various capacities – from human resources management and developing the City’s strategic plan, to park planning and historic preservation efforts. She earned her MPA from Northern Illinois University and is a SHRM Senior Certified Professional (SHRM-SCP).

Ben Fauske

Ben is a confidence researcher who equips leaders with the tools to build their ideal careers. His clients describe him as passionate and committed to their success. Thousands of leaders have used the Authentic Confidence Process to build the careers and teams they deserve. The process creates a coaching culture in organizations that drives employee engagement and customer confidence.

Prior to founding RISE Leadership and creating the Authentic Confidence Process, Ben was the Director of Organizational Development for a Canadian based multi-national corporation with over 1100 employees, headquartered in Montreal, Quebec. He led the training and leadership development process from the executive level to the shop floor.

Ben specializes in leadership development training, executive coaching, culture development, employee engagement and performance management. Ben has led talent development and culture assessments for individuals and teams.

Organizations looking to implement a leadership development platform to increase employee engagement and drive productivity have found significant results in the customized process. Ben works with local service driven organizations to large global corporations.

Alex Gorachev

Alex Goryachev is a globally recognized technology operations executive, a Wall Street Journal Bestselling author of "Fearless Innovation," and an expert in advancing innovation culture and monetizing new technology. With over 20 years of experience in the digital transformation industry, he has successfully commercialized emerging technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), the Internet of Things (IoT), and others, turning disruptive concepts into ecosystem-centric business operating models.

As the former General Manager of Global Innovation Centers and Managing Director of Innovation Strategy at Cisco, a \$50B technology giant, Alex pioneered the concept of ecosystem co-innovation. He created and led a global network of emerging technology innovation centers in North and South America, Europe, Middle East, and Asia Pacific, unifying and advancing strategic co-innovation partnerships and advanced technology programs with internal and external customers, partners, developers, academia, and governments.

In addition to his senior leadership roles in the Office of the Chief Architect and Technology Officer, Emerging Technology Group, and Corporate Development, Alex created award-winning employee innovation and development offerings, providing ~70,000 employees with meaningful opportunities to innovate, regardless of their grade or function. His extensive track record includes building and leading global cross-industry business and technology teams, focused on revenue and market share growth, customer acquisition, and profitability through new digital products and offerings.

Today, Alex is an Innovator-in-Residence at the Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation, Tulane University, and a Technical Advisory Group member in the International Standards Association (ISO), defining global common standards for Innovation Management. He is a regular contributor to Forbes, Entrepreneur, and Chief Executive Magazine, and an Editorial Advisory Board Member for Innovation Leader Magazine.

Alex has received numerous industry awards for innovation and culture transformation and is a sought-after expert who shares his knowledge and experience with diverse audiences, from startups to Fortune 500 companies. He equips Senior Leaders, as well as HR, Operations, Strategy & Planning teams with pragmatic and actionable steps

to understand and accelerate technology adoption, optimize processes, change culture, and turn any organization into an evergreen innovation machine.

Alex Goryachev is a dynamic, engaging keynote speaker and workshop facilitator, with a wealth of experience in technology and innovation. He has delivered 257+ speaking engagements and workshops on 4 continents. Alex's candid, thought-provoking, yet entertaining speeches and workshops demystify innovation, and encourage the audience to re-think corporate norms to survive, grow and prosper. Alex masterfully combines best industry practices with his own international startup and corporate experience, equipping the audience with actionable steps that can change the culture and turn any organization into an innovation machine.

Amy Harriman

Amy Harriman is an Associate with Quarles & Brady. She assists public and private companies with a variety of complex business transactions related to corporate governance, mergers and acquisitions, and securities. While attending law school, Amy worked as a student associate for the Law & Entrepreneurship Clinic at the University of Wisconsin Law School, where she provided transactional legal services to entrepreneurs, startup companies and nonprofits. She regularly worked on general business matters related to drafting agreements, letters of intent, copyrights and trademarks, and leases.

Marie Koko

Marie Koko joined the UW-Madison La Follette School of Public Affairs in 2019 as Director of Career and Employer Services after 10 years as the Career & Internship Specialist for Government/Policy/International Affairs & Law (GPIAL) at SuccessWorks. She earned her bachelor's degree in corporate finance from Drake University and her master's in counseling from Concordia University. Before joining UW-Madison, she worked at Concordia University-Chicago, Florida Gulf Coast University, and The University of Nevada-Reno in career and academic advising roles.

Bob Lavigna

As Senior Fellow – Public Sector for UKG (Ultimate Kronos Group), Bob advocates for, promotes and advises on effective practices that enable government to attract and retain talent. He previously was Director of the Institute for Public Sector Employee Engagement, Assistant Vice Chancellor and Director of Human Resources for the University of Wisconsin - Madison, Vice President – Research for the nonprofit Partnership for Public Service and Director of the state of Wisconsin merit system. Appointed by the Governor and unanimously confirmed and twice re-confirmed by the State Senate, he is the longest-serving merit system director in Wisconsin history. While at UW, he was also an adjunct professor in the La Follette School of Public Affairs. Bob began his career in the federal government, with the U.S. Government Accountability Office.

He is a Fellow of the National Academy of Public Administration and was selected as a “Public Official of the Year” by *Governing* magazine. Bob is a past national president of the Public Sector Human Resource Association and past chair of the American Society for Public Administration Section on Personnel and Labor Relations. He writes frequently on HR topics for professional publications, and has spoken at conferences and events across the U.S. and abroad. Bob's book, *Engaging Government Employees* (Harper Collins), is the first book to focus on employee engagement in the unique environment of the public sector. He has a B.A. in public affairs from George Washington University and an M.S. in human resources management from Cornell University.

Desmond Lomax

Desmond Lomax has a 20-year career in corrections, public safety, clinical services, and law enforcement. Desmond began their career in 2000 as a Sergeant in the Correctional Division of the Utah County Sheriff's Office. In 2013, they joined the Utah Department of Corrections where they served as the Community Programming Unit Director, Program Director/Therapist Supervisor, and Clinical Therapist. In 2012, they opened DNA Health Consultants, where they practiced mental health counseling for individuals, couples, and groups. In 2020, they joined The Arbinger Institute as Co-Director of Public Safety Practice/EDI expert and STEPS RECOVERY CENTER as Director of Clinical Services. At Arbinger, they have been an internal facilitator in Utah and have expanded their focus nationally and internationally.

Desmond Lomax obtained a master's degree in Mental Health Counseling/Counselor from the University of Phoenix between 2006 and 2009. Desmond also received a BA in Political Science from Brigham Young University between 1993 and 2003. In addition, Desmond has obtained a Leading with Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Certificate from the University of Utah in February 2021, an EMDR Basic Training Certificate from Trauma Recovery, EMDR Humanitarian Assistance Programs, Inc. in August 2018, a Certified Public Manager from the NATIONAL CERTIFIED PUBLIC MANAGER CONSORTIUM in May 2018, an IACP Leadership in Police Organizations Certification from the International Association of Chiefs of Police in December 2008, and a Certified Clinical Mental Health Counselor (CCMHC) from The National Board for Certified Counselors in September 2012.

Gavin Luter

Gavin Luter is the Managing Director of the UniverCity Alliance, a network of leaders at UW-Madison serving as the front door for local governments who want to leverage teaching, research, and service to improve their communities. He received his doctoral degree in Education Administration from University at Buffalo where he ran a university/community/ community partnership in the Fruit Belt and Commodore Perry Neighborhoods. He also spent time as the Education Projects Coordinator at United Way of Greater Knoxville after working at the University of Tennessee-Knoxville's Howard Baker Center for Public Policy as Student Civic Engagement Coordinator.

Elmer J. Moore

Elmer Moore, Jr. was appointed by Gov. Evers in April 2022. Mr. Moore previously served as the executive director of Scale Up Milwaukee for the Greater Milwaukee Committee. He has a proven track record in creating public-private partnerships and innovative programs that support business development and job creation resulting in over 1,400 jobs created for more than 200 Wisconsin organizations and securing more than \$60 million in new capital investments. He has also secured national foundation funding that provides programming for entrepreneurship growth and resources to address the racial wealth gap.

Advancing innovative solutions and resources that provide equity for all has been the foundation of his career. Mr. Moore will leverage his background in business development, job creation, strategic partnerships, and community engagement to support WHEDA's commitment to growing housing equity and economic opportunity.

Cory Poris Plasch

Cory Poris Plasch, MPA, President/CEO of CP2 Consulting. Cory has nearly ten years of experience with strategic planning, stakeholder engagement, and performance management. She has served in variety of leadership positions in the public and private sector including Executive Director of the Wisconsin City/County Management Association, Membership Director for the Alliance for Innovation, and most recently as Vice President of Strategic Development at POLCO. Her local government experience ranges from 911 Dispatcher to the City Manager's Office in several communities. She speaks across the country on topics including emerging trends in strategic planning, the use of data, civic engagement, engaging historically underrepresented populations, and innovation in local government. She has a Master of Public Administration degree from Northern Illinois University with a specialization in Strategic Public Management and Leadership and a Strategic Planning certification through the George Washington University Center for Excellence in Public Leadership.

Emmeline Pratke

Emmeline Pratke is the Career & Internship Specialist: Government, Policy, International Affairs, & Law for the UW-Madison SuccessWorks office, which is the career services office for the College of Letters and Sciences. She received her undergraduate degree in Political Science & French from UW-Madison and a Master's in French Studies specializing in International Higher Education from UW-Madison.

Dianne S. Robertson

Retired in 2019 from the Village of Thiensville after 21 years of service. I served as Village Administrator and Zoning Administrator. Also served some time as Clerk and Treasurer. (1998-2019). Served as Interim Village Manager for the Village of Greendale for 3 years. Also served as Clerk and Treasurer for 6 years. (1992-1998). Served as Interim Village Administrator for the Village of West Milwaukee. Also served other positions including Clerk, Treasurer and Accountant. Served 19 years with the Village of West Milwaukee. (1973-1992). Dianne serves as a Senior Advisor for ICMA and WCMA.

Dr. Scott E. Robinson

Chair of the Department of Public Administration at Northern Illinois University. His work on emergency management and risk communication have been awarded the Kaufman Award from the American Political Science Association and the Newland Award from the American Society for Public Administration.

Samuel A. Schultz

Sam is an experienced community development professional helping both the public and private sector with shore and long-range community planning projects. He has extensive experience with economic development, zoning, and land divisions ordinances, community engagement, and parks and open space projects.

Chris Smith

Chris focuses his practice on real estate development, eminent domain, and property tax. He has significant experience in all phases of real estate development with a particular emphasis on drafting and negotiating development agreements.

Caitlin Stene

Caitlin Stene is the Director of Administrative Services for the City of Sun Prairie where she oversees the human resource, clerk, finance, IT and assessing departments. Prior to working for the City, Caitlin served as the Deputy Administrator/Clerk for the Village of Waunakee and the Administrator for the Village of Cross Plains. She received her MPA from the University of Kansas (Rock Chalk!) and is a SHRM Senior Certified Professional.

Chris Swartz

Chris Swartz has served as a municipal manager in Wisconsin for over 30 years, most recently as Village Manager for the Village of Shorewood (2004-2017), Administrator for the Village of Sussex (1990-2004) and Clerk-Treasurer Administrative Coordinator Village of East Troy (1986-1990). He started his career as a researcher for the Citizens Governmental Research Bureau/Public Policy Forum (1983-1985). He retired from Shorewood in 2017 as a credentialed manager as designated by the International City Management Association ICMA). After retirement, Swartz became a Partner with Public Administration Associates, LLC which provides Municipal Executive Recruitments, Organizational Audits, and Interim Management Services.

Swartz has a Master of Science degree in Urban Affairs from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (1983) and an undergraduate degree from University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point. Swartz has been recognized for his innovative approach to economic development, strategic and financial planning, organizational development, and intergovernmental cooperation. He is known as a mentor to emerging public administration leaders through his tenure as an adjunct professor within the Masters of Public Administration (MPA) graduate program at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. Swartz has been formally recognized for his lifetime achievements, including Wisconsin City/County Management Association “Meritorious Service Award” (2015), James R. Ryan Lifetime Achievement Award from the Public Policy Forum (2017) and Wisconsin Economic Development Association Fredrick C. Pearce Lifetime Achievement award (2017).

Lee Szymborski

Lee Szymborski is a Senior Vice President with GovHR USA/MGT Consulting and has been with the firm for over nine years. He has conducted more than 185 executive searches in that time. Prior to that, Lee spent more than 30 years serving local governments in Wisconsin and Illinois, including 15 years as City Administrator in Mequon. He is graduate of UW – Milwaukee, with an MS in Urban Affairs and a BA in Political Science and English. Lee is active in Rotary International and serves as a board member for a non-profit organization, in addition to other volunteer activities.

Brion T. Winters

Brion represents businesses, developers, banks, municipalities, and individuals on a wide variety of real estate-related issues ranging from drafting custom purchase agreements, condominium documents, development agreements and easements to creating or expanding tax incremental financing districts, negotiating, and drafting complex lease agreements and advising on various zoning and land use issues.