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#### *Setting Up Shop & More Firsts*

By the end of 1959, President Joseph G. Harrison of Worcester County and the SACCOM leadership agreed that staff and office space would be needed if the organization were to grow and prosper. The SACCOM Board of Directors then developed an interesting proposal that would address office space issues and staffing, while keeping in mind the budget limitations of the young organization.

The Board suggested to the University of Maryland that "a position be established in the University to employ a member of the staff to serve as the executive secretary of the Association," using the example of a similar arrangement that the Maryland Municipal League (MML) had had with the University since the late 1950s. According to former Executive Director William Ratchford, the University was "expanding its public service program" with MML and the Municipal Technical Advisory Service, and sought to develop a similar relationship with the counties.

The Executive Secretary would be a member of the University faculty, and it was expected that, in addition to his Association duties, "he teach one course each semester and participate in usual academic activities." He was expected to devote about one-fourth of his time to these responsibilities. As a result, the University expected to "enlarge student interest in county and state government, and... offer a channel for practical educational interchange of great value to students at the University in their preparation for public service and other areas of responsibility," thereby strengthening "its own instruction in local and state government through study and service with county officials." The University would provide the office space and money needed to make the position of Executive Secretary a reality, while benefiting from the Executive Secretary's addition to the academic community.

The University agreed to this mutually beneficial proposal and the drafting of an agreement began. By February 5, 1960, a "memorandum on cooperative arrangements" proposal between the University of Maryland and the Association addressed the position of Executive Secretary, office space and finances. The agreement called for the University to budget the better part of the Executive Secretary's salary and about 2/3 of the part-time stenographer's salary. The Association would pay for the balance of the staff salaries, office furniture, and all operating costs. The University would provide office space "without additional direct cost to the Association." The University would then select and appoint an individual to the faculty, through "usual academic procedures;" an individual whom the Association also "desires to select as its Executive Secretary."

The Association and the University then began recruiting candidates for the position. The Association interviewed three finalists from about 30 applicants, and by majority vote and prior screening by the University, Robert Lovelace became the first Executive Secretary of the Association. Lovelace had served as city manager for several municipalities across the country prior to his service with SACCOM, and had most recently been a consultant to the Municipal Technical

Advisory Service at the University of Tennessee. *Executive Secretaries and Directors are discussed in Chapter 5.*

Beginning in June of 1960, office quarters were located in Symons Hall on the University campus, but only until construction had been completed for the new Business and Public Administration Building. The remainder of the Association's stay on campus through August 1966 was spent in these new offices. *MACo offices are discussed in Chapter 4.*

### **First Publications**

After setting up shop at the University of Maryland, Lovelace set to work producing several publications for SACCOM's membership. For the first time, the organization had the resources to create newsletters, directories, and other bulletins to keep the membership informed and unified throughout the year.

The first *Directory of County Officials* was distributed at the 1961 Summer Meeting. It contained 34 pages and each copy cost \$3.00 to purchase, though it is unclear whether the publication was complimentary for members. *Courthouse News and Notes*, the newsletter of the "Maryland Association of County Commissioners," was first published on July 15, 1960. In that first issue, Lovelace laid out the publication's basic purpose: "to supply whatever information an association like ours needs in order to achieve common progress."

In addition to this monthly newsletter, Executive Secretary Lovelace began producing special Legislative Bulletins "as circumstances required." During the 1961 General Assembly Session, 20 issues of the *Legislative Bulletin* were published. At the end of the year, Executive Secretary Lovelace reported that the *Directory*, the *Legislative Bulletin*, and *Courthouse News* were all "firsts for the Association." *Publications are discussed in Chapter 9.*

### **First Legislative Session**

Following the Association's involvement in the first General Assembly Session as a unified organization in 1952, Legislative Committee Chairman and Baltimore County Executive Christian H. Kahl, who served as President in 1962 and was later awarded a Lifetime Membership, reported on the Legislative Committee's work to the Board of Directors. He stated that "a number of legislative seeds have been planted which, though they may not ripen into fruit for a session or two, are nevertheless firmly imbedded in ground which is at least partially plowed and partially harrowed." He further reported "a successful first Session as a fully organized Association." *Legislative Affairs are discussed in Chapter 7.*

### **First Elected County Executive**

During this time the Association's Nominating Committee was actively developing a slate of officers. It recommended Baltimore County Executive Christian Kahl for Vice-President at the Annual Business Meeting on January 12, 1961. Discussion ensued as to his eligibility for holding Association office, since he was not a county *commissioner* or a *councilman*, as the bylaws specified, but was the first elected county *executive* in Maryland. Once it was determined that Kahl was a

"popularly elected official," members of the Board withdrew their objections and he was voted as Vice-President without dissent.

The debate would again surface the following July, following a voting session by the Constitution and Bylaws Committee, in which "the one remaining question on voting was that of the Elected Executive in Baltimore County." According to Ratchford, that question was, "Could a separately elected executive be a member of the Association?" It was determined that "this one unique post in the State did, in fact, come within the spirit of the Constitution," and Kahl was granted voting privileges and became eligible to hold Association office.

As the organization grew and tackled arising challenges like those discussed above, a name change was only sensible. The name of the Association was changed in January 1962 to the Maryland County Commissioners' Association (MCCA), reflecting that, "active voting membership should be limited strictly to elected County Commissioners." It was decided that the phrase "or acting in that capacity" should be retained for flexibility. According to Ratchford, in addition to these technical reasons for the name change, SACCOM had proved to be simply undesirable and "was not considered positive" as an acronym during the 1961 legislative session. The Committee did recommend the name change and the resulting constitutional revisions were approved by the membership at the Winter Meeting that year. The Association's name change to MCCA was noted in the January 1962 issue of the newly renamed *Courthouse News*.

### **A Possible Conflict of Interest**

In September 1961, Lovelace resigned as Executive Secretary to return to a former position in Tennessee. The Board appointed William S. Ratchford II to serve as Acting Executive Secretary until a permanent replacement could be found. Thomas Kelly was appointed Executive Secretary in 1962 and following his resignation at the end of 1963, Ratchford was appointed as Executive Secretary again in 1964.

As Ratchford became more indispensable to the Association, it became increasingly clear that working with both MCCA and the University of Maryland was more than a full-time job and sometimes presented a conflict of interest between the University and the Association. Citing a need to increase staff to enhance the Association's capacity to represent county government at the State level in legislative activities, the Association amicably severed ties with the University and moved the offices to 5 State Circle in Annapolis beginning in August 1966. According to Ratchford, the underlying reason for severing ties with the University. He said the General Assembly adopted State budget bill language that specified that no person, paid from a State Agency appropriation could lobby the legislature, except for that particular agency. Questions had begun to arise about Ratchford's lobbying for the Association while the University paid a portion of his salary.

With more office space available, and an increased need for staff to assist the Executive Secretary in his duties, the move to 5 State Circle included the addition of two other employees. Now that the Association had three staff people, the Board directed Ratchford to draft the Association's first personnel policy. The policy, approved by the Board in November 1966, asked "that all Association employees guard against relationships which might be construed as evidence of favoritism, coercion, unfair advantage or collusion."

### **Folding in the Remaining Jurisdictions: Calvert County and Baltimore City**

As Executive Secretary, Ratchford believed his role was to focus initially on "helping counties to think as an organization and understand [that organization's] value." At that time, there were only 90 county elected officials in Maryland, and of today's 24 jurisdiction members, only Calvert County and Baltimore City were yet to join the Association's ranks.

Ratchford recalls approaching Maryland State Comptroller Louis Goldstein with the idea of a joint visit to the Commissioners of Goldstein's Calvert County to discuss the merits of Association membership and to invite them to join MCCA. Shortly after that persuasive visit, the county enthusiastically joined the Association and has supported MACo ever since.

Active members of the Maryland Municipal League (MML), Baltimore City representatives began expressing a desire to become a member of MCCA as early as 1967. At the Board's November meeting that year, the leadership determined that the Constitution, which was being revised, should include a provision that "Baltimore City be considered as a county" to facilitate its membership in the organization. If the Constitution was approved by the membership, then Baltimore City "should become a member ... and... Mayor Thomas J. D'Alesandro, III should be invited to attend the 1968 winter meeting." The Board minutes reflect that the issue was discussed at the 1968 Summer Meeting, though the membership did not approve the constitutional revisions until the January 7, 1969 Annual Meeting.

It is worth noting that those proposed constitutional revisions also provided each county with only one vote "in matters of legislation or election of officials," and eliminated the rotation of the presidency between the Eastern Shore and the Western Shore. This was an important step for MCCA as it ensured the fair distribution of power in Association decisions, governance, and perhaps most importantly, legislative matters.

After the constitutional revisions were approved, Baltimore City Mayor Thomas J. D'Alesandro expressed in a letter to MCCA that Baltimore City was "pleased to be a member of the Association," would pay the dues and further, "recommended (City Council President) William Donald Schaefer as the City's member on the Legislative Committee."

Today, former Governor Schaefer remembers that, "they [the MCCA Board of Directors] initially didn't want us. They thought Baltimore City would be too heavy handed and try to run the show." According to Comptroller Schaefer, Baltimore officials "had to convince [MCCA] that we only wanted one vote. Being the biggest jurisdiction, they felt we would demand most of the votes and control it." He credits Janet Hoffman, who was then Baltimore City Fiscal Adviser, for many years, as "the catalyst for getting us in. She said 'we need to belong to MCCA.' Everyone in the State trusted her. She went to all the Legislative Committee meetings with me. I just sat there like a bump while Janet answered all the questions."

It should be noted that Ms. Hoffman was so well respected that the Association honored her with a resolution in 1985, upon her retirement as Director of the Office of Intergovernmental Relations for Baltimore City. She received a standing ovation at that Winter Conference Business Meeting, a fitting testament to her colleagues' recognition of her vast knowledge and expertise.

Once again the Association's name did not reflect its entire membership; MCCA now counted the Baltimore City Mayor and City Council Members among its ranks. Following the 1968 General Assembly session, Harford County Commissioner John O'Neill remarked that "some confusion" existed when he appeared before the General Assembly as President of the Maryland *County Commissioners' Association* that year, when, in fact, the Association now also represented Baltimore *City* elected officials. The name of the organization no longer reflected the true make-up of its membership.

The MCCA Board discussed the issue and proposed changing the name of the Association to the Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) to clarify the identity of the organization's members. The name change was approved in the revised *Constitution and Bylaws* at the August 1968 Summer Meeting. The organization had once again further defined itself as it moved ahead to serve all of its members.