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Rebirth of the City of Bell California City Managers' Response

By **April Davila** of Tripepi Smith & Associates

Ryder Smith of *Tripepi Smith & Associates* has done some wonderful work with and for California public agencies. He is a forward thinker who aims for results first in importance rather than process. This Special Issue of the City Manager Newsletter by Trackdown features an article written by **April Davila** of *Tripepi Smith & Associates* focusing on actions the California city manager community has taken to address the ethical and moral erosion of local government in the City of Bell. Though we have done some minor editing this writing is the product of the staff of *Tripepi Smith & Associates*.



Professional management is predicated on a selfless and effective team of folks who care about doing good work, and care about each other. Pictured here is a Bellflower team reunion conducted a few years back. Bellflower should not be confused with the City of Bell. They are two separately municipal jurisdictions.

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Rebirth of the City of Bell California City Managers' Response

It's seven o'clock on the evening of July 27, 2011, and **Ken Hampian** is sitting in the front row of the city council meeting in [Bell](#), California. After a thirty-minute conversation with the city council, he now waits in the packed auditorium as the four newly elected members of the city council and the Mayor privately discuss whether he will step in as the city's Interim Chief Administrative Officer (CAO). Five-days prior, Ken had been enjoying life as the retired City Manager of [San Luis Obispo](#), with hardly a passing thought of [Bell](#), but a single word, emailed to him on the night of July 22 changed everything.


With a population of about 35,000, the city of [Bell](#), sits just southeast of downtown [Los Angeles](#). Its' two and a half square miles of corporate limits are bisected by the Long Beach Freeway, Route 710. It's a modest community, and most certainly never expected to make national headlines until scandal shook the local government in July, 2010.



Retired [Fairfield](#) City Manager **Kevin O'Rourke**, who served as the Interim City Manager in [Stockton](#) is pictured here standing outside of [Bell](#) City Hall.

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Robert Rizzo, served as the Bell Chief Administrative Officer at the time the scandal was exposed, and his name has become synonymous with fraud and deception. He and seven (7) other Bell city officials are currently awaiting trial on several felony charges including misappropriation of public funds and falsifying official records. Special elections were held after their arrests, and a new city council and mayor stepped in without any official training or preparation.

An Interim CAO was selected. Interim CAO **Pedro Carrillo** was tasked with finding a permanent replacement. However, the first recruitment effort, which ended on July 8, did not produce a single applicant for the position. The City Council then extended the application deadline to July 22 – Pedro's last day on the job.



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Retired Mountain View City Manager **Kevin Duggan**, a past president of the City Managers' Department of the League of California Cities, and Cal ICMA, currently the West Coast Manager for the International City/County Management Association (ICMA).

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Bell's inability to attract CAO applicant with their first RFQ was a significant red flag. It quickly caught the attention of **Robert O'Neill** and **Kevin Duggan** at the International City/County Management Association (ICMA). "Up until that point there was an assumption that Bell was doing fine," Kevin said, "that they were getting things resolved themselves." But the situation was worse than it appeared. The damage caused by poor and dishonest management, along with the ensuing controversy, all but dismantled Bell's local government. When the dust settled, only one department head remained. With little or no general policies in place – not even an employee handbook – the organization was reeling. Trying to make sense of the mess left after **Bob Rizzo**'s arrest, while managing the day to operations of the city, required not just a CAO, but an exceptional one; someone with enough experience and management skill to help get them back on track.



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Rebirth of the City of Bell California City Managers' Response

With ICMA's help, word of the CAO opening in Bell was more widely promoted. When the Interim CAO term ended on July 22, 2011, the extended recruitment had produced 40 applications, but due to significant understaffing, the application envelopes had not even been opened. With no near term options available, Mayor **Ali Saleh** reluctantly stepped in to serve as city manager – an unsustainable arrangement, to say the least.



www.brandywindev.com

On the Friday that the Mayor stepped in as city manager, the members of ICMA took it upon themselves to help spread the word of Bell's immediate need for an interim manager, starting with their associates at the League of California Cities (LCC) and the California City Management Foundation (CCMF). "Within 2 hours we were all brainstorming," said **Kevin Duggan**. "There was such a quick recognition of the opportunity here. It just clicked."



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Before the night was through, Atascadero City Manager **Wade McKinney**, current President of CCMF, who had previously urged retired San Luis Obispo City Manager **Ken Hampian** to consider an assignment to assist Bell with messages like: "It could be fun!" forwarded ICMA's urgent call for short-term help with only a one word: "Interested?" By Sunday, Ken had committed to the very short-term assignment. "The past leadership of (Bell) obviously did great harm to the community and the city government," he said, "but harm was also done to the City Management profession and to public servants in general. This was an opportunity to show Bell what honest, ethical, professional service can do for a community."



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Atascadero City Manager since 1997, **Wade McKinney**, who serves on the Cal-ICMA Board and is a long-time Board Member and current President of CCMF. Wade began his career in Planning in the La Puente in 1979. Wade worked as a Department Head in Taft and then as Shafter City Manager from 1986 to 1997.



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Ken Hampian agreed to take on the job for one month, but insisted it be pro bono. In exchange for a \$59 a night motel room, a modest per diem for food, mileage reimbursement and a cell phone, Ken jumped in to tackle three main challenges; to find a longer term interim (and perhaps permanent) CAO, to assemble a team of pro bono assistants like himself to help Bell get back on its feet, and to confront the facts of what challenges Bell's city council will have to deal with in the coming years.



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When the City Council returned to the open session on that fateful night of July 27th, they informed **Ken Hampian** that he had been confirmed by a 5-0 vote, and welcomed him to sit in the CAO's seat straight away. Ken had every intention of just observing that first meeting, but it was not long before the council was turning to him for advice. "This is a really bright, smart city council, but none of them have served in elected office before," said the new Interim CAO. By the end of the night there was no question that he was fully engaged as the city's CAO. "If you had told me five days earlier where I would be that night, I would have said you were out of your mind."

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That city council meeting went until two in the morning. Six hours later **Ken Hampian** was back at City Hall to begin his first full day as Interim CAO. Retired Salinas City Manager and former ICMA West Coast Manager **Dave Mora** was waiting for him, and they were soon joined by **Kevin Duggan** and **Kevin O'Rourke** of ICMA. The three set to work sorting through the 40 unopened applications for CAO. There were a handful of promising applicants, but group recommended that the recruitment deadline be extended once again, to allow ICMA, the LCC and CCMF to launch an all-out direct, "personal" outreach effort on Bell's behalf.

"ICMA has people in Iraq, Afghanistan and all over the world trying to help communities restore or establish good effective local government," said **Kevin Duggan**. "If a city council in east L.A. is in need, it just doesn't seem reasonable that our profession won't step in to help." Five days later, the additional recruitment push resulted in another 20 applications – including some very strong ones.

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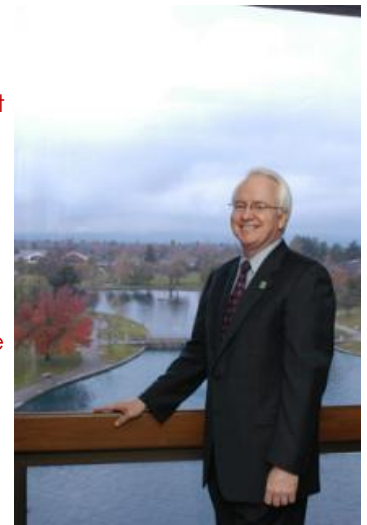
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"Once CCMF, ICMA and the League put their blessings on this effort," said **Kevin O'Rourke**, "good managers began to step up." What's more, offers for pro bono assistance came flooding in from all over the state. Finance directors, independent consultants, police deputies, city managers and assistant city managers both active and retired have contacted **Ken Hampian** to add their names to the list of people willing to come help in any way they can, all pro bono. The Institute of Local Government sent a proposal for training workshops they were prepared to offer for free on topics such as Effective City Council Meetings, and Involving the public in the budget process. When asked why they have offered to help they all give a variation on the same answer: "it's just the right thing to do."

"There is no right way to do something wrong!"

Retired Fairfield City Manager **Ken O'Rourke**, a past President of the City Managers' Department of the League of California Cities, a Cal-ICMA Board Member and past CCMF Board Member. Kevin is also a former West Coast Regional Vice President on the ICMA Executive Board.



"Something about this crisis struck a nerve with those of us in City Management," said **Ken Hampian**. "Most of us got into local government because we're passionate about service."



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By the end of **Ken Hampian's** second week on the job, the applicant pool for the Bell CAO position had been pared down to three excellent contenders, and on August 12th **Arne Croce** was named the next Interim CAO of Bell. Arne is a well-known retired City Manager from San Mateo, California where he served for eighteen-years. He retired in 2008. In addition to his time working in the bay area, Arne has worked with USAID on a local government project in Iraq, assisted with the modernization of the financial system in Lebanon, and consulted on projects in Singapore and Mexico.



Ken Hampian, seated, at work at Bell City Hall.

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Due California Public Employees' Retirement System (CalPERS) rules, regulations and restrictions, **Arne Croce** will not be able to join the Bell management team as a long-term replacement. However, his tenure as Interim CAO will represent a crucial phase in Bell's recovery and development. Arne worked pro bono during his first week, overlapping with **Ken Hampian's** final days, to assure the smoothest possible transition. "It couldn't have turned out any better," says **Kevin Duggan**.

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To be placed on an email notification list for future events and resources, contact **Kevin O'Rourke** at kevin@kolgs.com. Those who would like to host or help organize a Support Network meeting in other regions should contact one of the following individuals:

Kevin O'Rourke at kevin@kolgs.com
Mike Garvey at garveycg@yahoo.com
Frank Benest at frank@frankbenest.com
Rod Wood at rjwood@rjwoodassociates.com
Mary Strenn at mstrenn1@socal.rr.com





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Rebirth of the City of Bell California City Managers' Response

Introducing professional management with **Arne Croce's** appointment is just one of the many ways in which Bell is getting back on its feet. With the support of the city management community as a whole, Bell is taking its first steps toward a complete overhaul of its local government. City council meetings have already begun to transform from cacophonous, eight-hour ordeals to calm and respectful assemblies. The financial challenges ahead are being addressed methodically and (with the help of pro bono consultants) expertly. Trust is beginning to build again, and if there is a plus side to the ordeal that Bell has been through, it has become a highly engaged populace. Led by a City Council that is unwavering in its commitment to reform – and with continuing guidance from professional managers – Bell has the potential to not just survive, but to thrive.

-Written by **April Davila** of *Tripepi Smith & Associates*

This excellent piece by **April Davila** of Tripepi Smith & Associates has received broad exposure being published in a number of places. However, we believe as **Ryder Todd Smith** of Tripepi Smith that the city management community has earned the recognition.



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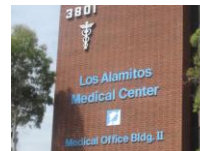
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Picking Up the Pieces: Belvedere City Manager

 **George Rodericks** was spotted recently outside of Buckingham Palace in London during a European vacation. **Kellee Fritzal** of the Huntington Beach management team was spotted at a Padres/Florida game at Petco Park in San Diego. Fremont City Manager **Fred Diaz** has announced the appointments of **Nadine Nader** as the new Fremont City Clerk/Assistant to the City Manager, and **Kelly Kline** as the Economic Development Director. With former Executive Director **John Shirey** becoming the Sacramento City Manager, retired Contra Costa County Redevelopment Executive Director **Jim Kennedy**, 60, will take the reins of the California Redevelopment Association (CRA). New Mountain View City Manager **Dan Rich**, former City Manager in Campbell, says that he does not drink coffee. Frisco, Colorado City Manager **Michael Penny** graduated from California State University, Long Beach with a degree in criminal justice. He is currently a finalist for the Littleton, Colorado City Manager post. Long Beach City Council Budget Oversight Committee has recommended the elimination of Deputy City Manager **Reggie Harrison's** position. City Manager **Pat West** describes the post as "vital," and is looking at the issue as a budget issue aimed at the City Manager's office, not as a specific reduction item. Former member of the Hawaiian Gardens staff team, **Rita Gallardo**, currently lives in Sacramento and works for the State Senate. Marie, the daughter of former City Clerk in Bellflower, Solana Beach and Camarillo **Deborah Harrington** recently was married.

Of course, Marie made a beautiful bride. Congratulations to her also for passing her RN Boards in July. **Cheryl Lopez**, formerly of Willdan's marketing staff and a member of the staff of the League of California Cities prior to that, says that the "DC Earthquake was caused by all of America's forefathers simultaneously rolling over in their graves!" There are many who agree, including former Willdan marketing team member **Sarah Weaver Stangel**, currently an Oregon resident. **Anne Samuelson Williams**, Central City Association Vice President of Legislative & Legal Affairs, a Claremont McKenna College and **USC** alumnus, has been spending some time in the heat of Sacramento. **Julie Brown** of the Amador County staff, agrees with our statement: "Stop with the drama and get on with it!" La Palma, where **Dominic Lazzaretto** is City Manager, was named by MONEY magazine as being one of America's Best Places to Live for 2011. Assembly Member **Das Williams**, a former member of the Santa Barbara City Council, supports efforts to make it difficult for local governments to contract out library services. He authored a bill that would place strict conditions on cities contemplating contracting out library services regardless of cost-efficiencies. A LCC lobbyist notes that some cities may be forced to simply close libraries due to the **Das Williams** legislation. Los Altos City Manager **Douglas Schmitz** has announced his retirement at the end of March, 2012.



Actor **Robert Culp**, 79, passed away last year (March, 2010). Well known for appearing in the "I Spy" television show with **Bill Cosby**, his first television series was "Trackdown" where he played Texas Ranger **Hoby Gilman**. The late actor **Steve McQueen** got his first shot at a television series by playing **Josh Randall** on an episode of Trackdown. His spin off series "Wanted Dead or Alive" launched his career. The Trackdown company name has its genesis with the Trackdown television series. The 79-year old actor fell and hit his head while taking a walk near his home. He was rushed to Queen of Angels hospital after a jogger found him and called 911. Of the screen he was involved in civic efforts, the latest was an effort to oppose construction of a \$42 million elephant exhibit at the Los Angeles Zoo. The City Council voted to move ahead with the project as planned.

More Pieces Picked Up: Former Paramount Mayor **Henry Harkema** passed away at the age of 100 on August 31. City Manager **Jack Lam**, 63, was given a wonderful send-off to his retirement by the community he has served for the past 33-years. Jack has earned a reputation as one of California's best professional City Managers. He plans to travel next month to Kenya and Rwanda as he retires and leaves the City Manager duties to his successor, Assistant City Manager **John Gillison**. Two high-ranking members of the Sacramento city staff resigned prior to new City Manager **John Shirey** reporting for duty. Assistant City Manager **Cassandra Jennings** has accepted a post with the Sacramento Housing and Redevelopment Agency, and the Director of the Department of Utilities, **Marty Hanneman** has resigned for "personal reasons" effective September 16. Fort Bragg Council Member and former Mayor **Jere Melo**, 69, died of gunshot wounds in a rugged area outside the City while search for marijuana farms with a friend. Brookings, Oregon City Manager **Gary Milliman** says: "**Jere Melo** was a friend. He was on the Planning Commission and the City Council while I was City Manager and I continued to work with him after leaving the City. He was the lead forest land manager I worked with when I managed the Skunk Railroad. The Skunk Train passes many miles through lumber company property. I also worked with Jere on many community projects. He was a fine man." Former Los Alamitos Mayor Dean Grose, adds: " I knew Jere and he was helpful when I ran for the League of Cities as a small city rep from Southern California. I didn't win, but he help mentor and encourage me. Tragic loss. One of the good guys." **Linda Ruffing** is the current Fort Bragg City Manager. American Canyon City Manager **Richard J. Ramirez** says that his final day is "fluid," as he has agreed to stay on beyond his original October 1 retirement date in order to help provide a smooth transition when the new City Manager is selected. American Canyon Human Resources Director **Bronda Silva** notes that the City received 92 resumes for the City Manager post. It is believed that a new City Manager should be on board by November. Hercules is suing former City Manager **Nelson Oliva** and three of his children for about \$3 million, alleging conflict of interest in connection with the family consulting business. The company, NEO Consulting Inc., dba: Affordable Housing Solutions Group, is currently owned by **Walter McKinney**. The City has also refused to pay the severance called for in the City Manager's employment agreement. St. Helena will conduct a second round of interviews for City Manager applicant finalist on September 20. **Karen Scalabrini** is currently serving as Finance Director

and Interim City Manager. Executive recruitment expert consultant **Bob Murray** is assisting the City. Orland Chief of Police **Paula Carr** returned to duty and then resigned. MMASC Past-President **John Keisler** is the new Business Operations Manager for the Long Beach Parks, Recreation and Marine Department. When Napa City Manager **Mike Parness** was on medical leave this year, Assistant City Manager **Nancy Weiss** was Acting City Manager. El Segundo City Manager **Douglas Willmore** is a former County Administrator in Salt Lake County, Utah. He took the El Segundo post following the retirement of City Manager **Jack Wayt**. Doug holds a BA from George Mason University and an MPA from the University of Utah. **George Troxcil** is currently the Interim City Manager in South Gate. George is a retired South Gate Chief of Police. Riverside County economic development administrator **Teresa Gallavan** is the new Economic Development Director/Assistant City Administrator in Lompoc; **Laurel Barcelona** is City Administrator.



The upper left picture is the Cerritos Post Office, which still stands next to the August 31, 1986 crash-site of the Aeromexico DC-9, Flight 498, and a Piper Cherokee Archer II that took the lives of 82 people and destroyed 11 homes and severely damaged 7 other homes. Cerritos hosted a 25th Anniversary Remembrance Ceremony. The picture at the left bottom is of **Kellee Simpson Hearther** and her three daughters: Jamie, Katie and Jessie at LAX. At the top right is an old picture of **Bob Muns** by a Marin Municipal Water District sign, and at the bottom right is a picture of Trackdown's **Jack Simpson** in 1954 or 1955.

"Get off your butt and make some footprints in the sands of time. Nobody wants to make 'butt' prints in the sands of time." --The Late **Bob Moawad** of Edge Learning Institute

