

City Manager Training Report from Texas Municipal League
113th Annual Conference October 29 -31, 2025.

Per the City Manager employment agreement section 12, the *“Employee agrees to provide and turn in all receipts for such expenses and to provide the City Council with a report of what information was learned or obtained at the next reasonable Council Meeting after attending a conference or training session.”*

The training session was located at the Fort Worth Convention Hall. The total cost for registration was \$420, Hotel was \$775.72. Total cost for the airfare round trip was \$137.61, and \$51 for parking. The City Manager did not seek reimbursement for per diem.

As part of the training, I attended the following:

October 29, 2025

- In the opening session with John O’Leary, best-selling author and speaker of ON FIRE: Ignite a Radically Inspired Life, I learned an inspiring story about his incredible journey of survival after suffering burns over 100% of his body. However, the deeper message wasn’t just about his own inspiration—it was about how his father’s strength and attitude inspired him. The greatest takeaway from this session is that happiness is a choice, and true happiness begins with gratitude.
- 2025 Legislative Update- Informative session about the outcomes from the 2025 Texas legislative session, the implementation of key bills, and the impact on our cities. Ensuring that the City of Leon Valley is in compliance with any new mandates. It was presented by Bennett Sandlin, Executive Director; Monty Wynn, Executive Director Designee; Bill Longley, General Counsel; JJ Rocha, Grassroots and Legislative Services Manager; and Mike Martin, Legislative Counsel, Texas Municipal League.
- Legal Q & A: heard the answers to legal questions that were posed by various cities. The biggest takeaways were that the city attorney should not have a romantic relationship with a councilmember, you can have a distance requirement for vape shops, cities can have ordinances that regulate dangerous dogs, but can't adopt ordinances that apply only to certain breeds. There are other questions on open records requests and quorums, but Leon Valley complies. Presented by Amber McKeon-Mueller, Director of Legal Services; Mike Martin, Legislative Counsel; Tad Cleaves, Assistant General Counsel; Sarah Tompkins, Legal Counsel; and Stephanie Huser, Legal Counsel, Texas Municipal League

October 30, 2024

- Effectively Engaging Your Community About the Texas Legislature. The discussion was about how to effectively engage our community about high-impact bills. The presenters focused on how the City of Georgetown engaged its community to develop its legislative agenda, created resident advocates during the legislative session, and alerted its community about important legislation. Presented by Josh Schroeder, Mayor; David Morgan, City Manager, and Leah Clark, Intergovernmental Relations Manager, City of Georgetown.

- Building Trust and Community Engagement, Offline. This session discussed the importance of face-to-face engagement in a digital world. It illustrated how in-person remains one of the most effective ways to build trust between local governments and the communities we serve. We learned how cities like Bedford built a successful Citizens Academy to educate residents, how Georgetown brings city departments directly to the public at community events, and how Richardson established a resident council that brings HOA and neighborhood association leaders together monthly to stay informed about important community projects. Presented by Greg Sowell, Director of Communications, City of Richardson; Don Magner, City Manager, City of Richardson; Aly Van Dyke, Director of Communications and Public Engagement, City of Georgetown; and Molly Fox, Director of Communications, City of Bedford.
- Lunch Session was From Leadership to Leadering: The Shift We Need for the Future We Want. The keynote speaker was Nancy Giordano, renowned strategic futurist and leadership provocateur. Her presentation was about how city leaders should champion progress in a rapidly evolving world. She discussed changing from traditional leadership roles to a more collaborative approach. She discussed the use of AI and how the impacts could help shape cities moving forward.
- Attended the Exhibit hall, visited with Asphalt Zipper, Deckard Technologies and HDL about Short Term Rentals, looked for companies that conduct masterplans and looked at Christmas decorations for the city's tree lighting.
- Whose role is it anyway: This was a game-show-inspired session, given by City Attorney Thomas Gwosdz we learned about the laws, rules, and best practices for dividing up the work between the mayor, city council, the city manager, and city employees. We learned things like, whose job is it to create the budget, who hires employees, and who has the authority to purchase.

October 11, 2024

- Improving Resident Satisfaction with Government. The presentation showed a groundbreaking link between effective human resource practices and increased resident satisfaction with local government services and overall quality of life. They showed data across municipalities – including case studies from two Texas cities—illustrating that employee performance management, well-being, compensation, and recruiting have a direct correlation in responsiveness and trusted city services. Presented by Bob Lavigna, Senior Fellow, Public Sector, Ultimate Kronos Group
- Brunch session- This session ended at 12 pm I left at 11:15 a.m. to catch my flight. However, the session was given by Frank Ashley, who has spent more than 35 years in the Texas A&M University System. My takeaway from what he discussed was how ethical leadership impacts relationships.