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Contact: Jessica Cowles, ICMA Ethics Advisor
(202) 962-3513; jcowles@icma.org

Professional Local Government Management Association Censures Member for Ethics Violation

WASHINGTON, DC – James Freed, the city manager in Port Huron, Michigan, was publicly censured by the Executive Board of the International City/County Management Association (ICMA) during its June 11, 2022 meeting. The Executive Board’s (Board) decision included revoking his designation as an ICMA credentialed manager.

The Board determined Mr. Freed’s personal social media post directed to Michigan’s Governor following the city’s successful appeal of a state workplace safety violation did not reflect the highest standards of ethical conduct and integrity and was especially inappropriate for an ICMA credentialed manager. The Board concluded Mr. Freed’s preemptive declaration to city employees that he would never implement a specific law or policy when it is the manager’s duty to do so is contrary to the principles outlined in Tenet 3 of the Code. Finally, the Board found his commentary to a colleague on the Michigan Municipal Executives listserv failed to adhere to his ethical obligation to treat colleagues with professional respect.

The Board determined Mr. Freed’s conduct violated Tenet 3 of the ICMA Code of Ethics. This Tenet pertains to a member’s ethical obligation to uphold public confidence in their position and the local government management profession as well as demonstrate the highest standards of honesty and integrity in both their personal and professional conduct.

The ICMA Code of Ethics states:

Tenet 3. Demonstrate by word and action the highest standards of ethical conduct and integrity in all public, professional, and personal relationships in order that the member may merit the trust and respect of the elected and appointed officials, employees, and the public.

Guideline on Public Confidence. Members should conduct themselves so as to maintain public confidence in their position and profession, the integrity of their local government, and in their responsibility to uphold the public trust.

ICMA has a Code of Ethics for our members. As a member of ICMA, Mr. Freed agreed to abide by the Code of Ethics when he became an ICMA member. Any member who appears to have violated the Code of Ethics is investigated in a peer-review process by the Committee on Professional Conduct (CPC) and violators are subject to an array of sanctions including private and public censure; revocation of the credentialed manager designation; membership suspension; and/or membership bar or expulsion.

About ICMA

ICMA, the International City/County Management Association, advances professional local government worldwide. The organization’s mission is to create excellence in local governance by developing and fostering

professional management to build sustainable communities that improve people’s lives. ICMA provides member support; publications; data and information; peer and results-oriented assistance; and training and professional development to over 13,000 city, town, and county experts and other individuals and organizations throughout the world. The management decisions made by ICMA's members affect millions of individuals living in thousands of communities, from small villages and towns to large metropolitan areas.

Sent via email to:

Detroit Free Press via dboucher@freepress.com

The Detroit News via srahal@detroitnews.com and rburr@detroitnews.com

Port Huron Times Herald via jssmith@gannett.com

Enclosed: ICMA Code of Ethics