



## WEDNESDAY, March 25

**7:30 a.m. – 8:45 a.m.:** Registration and Continental Breakfast

**8:45 a.m. – 9:00 a.m.:** Welcome and Introductions

**9:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.:** MMC Advanced Academy I – Four Keys to Joy in Your Journey with Brenda Viola

**Session Description:** An uplifting, hope-infused keynote that audiences rave about. Brenda Viola reframes happiness as something you create, not chase—unlocking four transformational keys that shift people from pressure to peace, stuckness to clarity, and self-doubt to purpose. A memorable reset with HOPE at the center of it all.

**10:30 a.m. – 10:45 a.m.:** Break

**10:45 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.:** MMC Advanced Academy I – The Case for Culture: Creating a Workplace People LOVE with Brenda Viola

**Session Description:** Is your organization grappling with disengagement or retention challenges? Do you or your co-workers struggle with the "Sunday Scaries" when you think about going to work on Monday morning? Brenda Viola will share the P-E-O-P-L-E framework that has shaped nationally ranked workplace cultures, giving leaders tools to create environments where people feel valued, energized, and inspired to contribute their best. A strategic yet heartfelt roadmap to becoming an employer of choice.

**12:00 p.m. – 1:00 p.m.:** Lunch on-site/Business Meeting

**1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.:** MMC Advanced Academy I – Teamwork Makes the Dream Work/Annabell the Octopus: A Story About Friendship with Brenda Viola

**Session Description:** A charming, unexpected keynote with a powerful leadership message: you don't have to do it all alone. Through the heartwarming story of Annabelle the Octopus, audiences rediscover the courage to ask for help, collaborate, and pursue long-held dreams. Playful, poignant, and unforgettable, this session is served with cookies and milk.

**3:00 p.m. – 3:15 p.m.:** Break/Snacks/Visit with Vendors (Scavenger Hunt)

**3:15 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.:** MMC Advanced Academy II – Who Has That Power with Kristina Wilson

**Session Description:** It is not always clear in local governments what responsibilities fall to the county commissioners versus department heads versus the manager. There is also a significant lack of clarity around the roles of the clerk and attorney in many jurisdictions. This session will analyze the manager form of government and delineate what responsibilities, roles, and authority fall to each entity within that governmental structure

**4:45 p.m.:** 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Reception

**THURSDAY, March 26**

**8:00 a.m. – 9:00 a.m.:** Registration/Visit with Vendors (Scavenger Hunt)/Continental Breakfast

**9:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.:** MMC Advanced Academy II – Conflicts: Scenarios with Kristina Wilson

**Session Description:** This interactive session will review the law surrounding ethics and conflicts of interest. Participants will then work in groups to apply their knowledge to real-life scenarios. The groups will have a chance to share and discuss various approaches and learn practical tips from other participants.

**10:30 a.m. – 10:45 a.m.:** Break/Visit with Vendors (Scavenger Hunt)

**10:45 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.:** MMC Advanced Academy II – Public Comment Periods: New Developments with Kristina Wilson

**Session Description:** Drafting and applying clear rules for the public comment period is a constant struggle for many counties. This session will review the statutory and constitutional rules surrounding public comment periods, with a particular focus on new case law developments that might impact how counties draft and implement these rules.

**12:15 p.m. – 1:15 p.m.:** Lunch on-site (Scavenger Hunt)

**1:15 p.m.: Scavenger Hunt Game Ends** (Please submit your completed forms to the Registration Desk)

**1:15 p.m. – 1:30 p.m.: Vendor Recognition and Drawing of Vendor Door Prizes**

**1:30 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.:** MMC Advanced Academy II – Introduction to Emergency Management with Taylor Morris

**Session Description:** This session will provide a basic introduction to the emergency management field in North Carolina, with a particular emphasis on fundamental concepts from the North Carolina Emergency Management Act (EMA). The session will focus on: (1) understanding what constitutes an “emergency” and “emergency management” under the EMA; (2) introducing participants to the concept of the “preparedness cycle” in emergency management; (3) showing participants on a high level how North Carolina local governments fit into a larger local, state, and federal coordination framework for emergency management; (4) connecting emergency management to other areas of local government work; and (5) providing participants with suggested follow-up materials and resources helpful for clerks involved with emergency management.

**3:30 p.m. – 3:45 p.m.:** Break/Snacks

**3:45 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.:** MMC Advanced Academy II – Clerking Mechanics and Certification - Clerk-Led Panel

**Moderated by:** Phyllis Nowlen, Clerk, Cleveland County Board of County  
Maria Hass, Clerk to the Board, Cherokee County

**Session Description:** During this panel discussion, seasoned clerks will discuss best practices and lessons learned for nuts-and-bolts duties and responsibilities for the clerk's role. Topics include minutes, agendas, and agenda packets, certification, and more. In addition to prepared topics and questions, the panel will allow time for audience questions and participation.

**6:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.:** Networking Reception with Open Cash Bar  
Copper Ridge on the Neuse  
2706 Old Cherry Point Road, New Bern

**7:00 p.m. – 10:00 p.m.:** Banquet and Installation of NCACC Officers  
Copper Ridge on the Neuse  
2706 Old Cherry Point Road, New Bern

## **FRIDAY, March 27**

**8:00 a.m. – 9:00 a.m.:** Registration/Continental Breakfast

**9:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.:** MMC Advanced Academy II – How County Boards Do Their Work with Kristina Wilson

**Session Description:** This session will explore the different forms of action that county governing boards might take, including ordinance drafting and adoption, and the specifics surrounding resolutions and proclamations. This course will also explore policies and rules of procedure and the particulars of how to decide which form of action to take, and accompanying legal requirements.

**10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.:** MMC Advanced Academy II – Empathy: Your Customer Service Superpower with Brenda Viola

**Session Description:** A game-changing session for public servants. Brenda breaks empathy into the actionable C-A-R-E model, teaching teams how to genuinely connect, defuse tension, and transform everyday interactions into moments of impact. Practical, energizing, and deeply human—this workshop elevates service from transactional to unforgettable.

**11:00 a.m. – 11:15 a.m.:** Break

**11:15 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.:** MMC Advanced Academy II – A Call to Rest with Brenda Viola

**Session Description:** This session offers a reset on what rest truly means. Brenda teaches attendees how to protect their energy, reduce negativity, and set healthy boundaries so they can show up with clarity and strength. A modern, much-needed skillset for sustainable success - a perfect closing to a memorable conference.

**12:15 p.m. – 12:45 p.m.:** Goody Bags and Door Prizes

## **CONTINUING EDUCATION CREDIT INFORMATION:**

- The MMC Advanced Academies are presented by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Government (SOG) and the North Carolina County Clerks Association. The SOG is the International Institute of Municipal Clerks (IIMC) approved provider of educational programs for clerks in North Carolina.

- Clerks who successfully complete MMC Advanced Academy I will be eligible for 2.25 MMC/CMC points and 4.5 credit hours towards recertification as an NCCCC or, if applicable, certification or recertification as an NCMCC.
- Clerks who successfully complete MMC Advanced Academy II will be eligible for 4.75 MMC/CMC points and 9.5 credit hours towards recertification as an NCCCC or, if applicable, certification or recertification as an NCMCC.
- **Partial credit is not available for either Academy.**

#### **PRESENTER BIOGRAPHIES:**

##### ***Brenda Viola:***

Brenda's decade as Public Information Officer for a major Philadelphia suburb sparked a national speaking career, culminating in the publication of *The Public Servants' Survival Guide*, a breakthrough book that resonated widely across both public and private sectors. Her signature keynote—centered on reclaiming joy in work and life—has become a sought-after framework for organizations seeking to tackle burnout, build resilience, and create cultures where people thrive. Her keynotes are rooted in research, enriched by lived experience, and delivered with the authenticity that has become her trademark. Audiences consistently describe Brenda's presentations as energizing, life-changing, and unforgettably human. A Certified Virtual Speaker and proud member of the National Speakers Association (NSA), Brenda delivers high-impact programs both in person and online with equal effectiveness and warmth.

##### ***Kristina Wilson:***

Kristina Wilson joined the School of Government in September 2021. Her work focuses on local government structure and authority, board procedures, and public records and transparency issues. Wilson earned her J.D. cum laude from Wake Forest University School of Law where she was a published member and executive online editor of the Wake Forest Law Review. Wilson earned undergraduate degrees in English and Spanish cum laude from Georgetown University. She is a member of the North Carolina State Bar.

##### ***Taylor Morris:***

Taylor Morris is an assistant professor at the School of Government. In his role, he works to teach, research, and advise in emergency management and code enforcement law. Morris joined the School in 2025. Before joining the School of Government, Taylor served as an assistant city attorney for the City of Asheville, North Carolina, located in Buncombe County, where he mainly grew up. Previously, he worked as an associate in the Los Angeles office of Quinn Emanuel Urquhart & Sullivan LLP, a national and international litigation firm. Morris earned his undergraduate degree at Harvard College and J.D. at Yale Law School.

##### ***Phyllis Nowlen:***

Phyllis Nowlen was appointed Cleveland County's Clerk to the Board in May 2017 and is currently the North Carolina Association of County Clerks President and serves on several subcommittees of the Clerk's Association. She is certified as a North Carolina Master County Clerk (NCMCC) through the North Carolina Association of County Clerks and a Certified Municipal Clerk (CMC) through the International Institute of Municipal Clerks (IIMC). She is actively working towards her Master Municipal Clerk (MMC) through the IIMC. Her career in local government began in 2002 in Central Florida. During her tenure in Florida (2002 – 2015), she was an E-911 dispatcher and Field Training Officer. Nowlen was then promoted to the position of Training Assistant at the Institute of Public Safety. She served on the Critical Incident Response Team (CIRT) and was a certified state background investigator and general instructor. She graduated Magna Cum Laude from Vincennes University.

##### ***Maria Hass:***

Maria Hass has served Cherokee County since 2006 and wears multiple hats within the organization. In addition to serving as Clerk to the Board, Maria serves as Assistant County Manager and Airport Director. Some of Maria's roles and responsibilities as Assistant County Manager are direct supervision of various

county departments; responding to citizen and Department Head inquiries, concerns, and complaints; Public Records Clerk; Website Administrator; HR backup; short and long-range project planning, and budget research and development. As Clerk to the Board, Maria performs all duties of the Clerk and serves as a liaison between citizens, employees, and the Board of County Commissioners. As Airport Director, Maria hires and supervises airport staff, is responsible for airfield safety and compliance, long-term capital expansion planning, and budget development. Maria also serves on several local and regional boards and committees for Cherokee County.