

In This Issue

Greetings from Greg

Position Changes

Member Spotlight - John McCarthy

Tedd's Take

Certificate News

A DAO in the Life - Diane Rebertus

Civic Engagement Best Practices - Town of Abingdon

Mel's Poetry Corner

Innovation Edge

Calendar

Greetings from Greg



Greg Kelly

Greetings from Greg "You Can't Make This Stuff Up"

You would think that local government managers would focus almost totally upon implementing budgets, enforcing ordinances and policies, and seeing that the normal day to day services are taking place in an effective and efficient way. Often, however, at least for me, I have found that the most trivial of matters occupy much of my daily time as well as my "my down time" on the weekends or during vacations. For example, I have had calls on weekends or while I was out of town about chickens running at large, loud neighbors, dogs barking late at night, feral cats on the loose, and even deer invading the town and eating residents' flowers and presenting traffic hazards. I guess I thought I had heard it all when I received a complaint that a Chinese restaurant in town was feeding the feral cats out behind the restaurant. Trust me, though, it turned out not to be a tragic dining nightmare, just another legitimate concerned citizen taking pity on the abandoned cats. While that complaint was way out there and was both serious and amusing, a request I received last week takes the case. In that regard, a local resident called the Town Hall and inquired as to whether or not she could put her pet wolf on display in front of the Town Hall during our yearly Virginia Highlands Arts and Crafts Festival. I'm not kidding, this was an actual legitimate request and believe it or not an actual live wolf. I should probably lay a little foundation for you for this one, as many of you have likely dealt with squirrels, groundhogs, farm animals, and abandoned pets or other trivial and unexpected situations with local domestic and wild animals. So here goes. Abingdon, which was chartered in 1778, was formerly known as Wolf Hills. As the story goes, frontiersman, Daniel Boone, was traversing our regional territory

when a pack of wolves penned him, his companions and his dogs down deep into a cave in the center of town. The location today is marked by an historic property now known as the Cave House, with the actual cave still open for limited viewing on the property. According to historians, Daniel Boone made it out of Wolf Hills unscathed and nonetheless for wear, but yet the town became known as Wolf Hills and the story looms as a large part of Abingdon's founding history. As a result, the wolf has long been a symbol of Abingdon for more than 200 years. Based on this connection to Abingdon's founding history, I viewed the request to display the wolf as legitimate and somewhat an interesting concept. However, as the attorney in me emerged and the reality of the liability that comes with any wild animal on display in a very open and public place revealed itself, I quickly realized that the novelty of the request was not worth the risk to public safety. I'm sure VML Insurance would love to get the claim that someone was attacked at the Abingdon Town Hall, not by an angry citizen, but by a wolf. We've definitely had our share of crazy liability claims before, but this one would top the list. Be that as it may, this true story is just another day in the life of unexpected local government events that "you just can't make up". I have gradually learned to anticipate the unexpected things that you can't make up. And of course, the unexpected stories never seem to end.

On a more serious note, I want to address a topic that touches all of us in local government and has become a heated national issue, the Police. Just so you know in advance, this topic touches me deeply and personally, as my father was a police officer for 43 years. In fact, he worked his way through every rank in law enforcement up to Chief, he held two (2) college degrees in law enforcement and he was a graduate from the FBI National Academy. Hence, he built his life and his profession around law enforcement and was truly a "dyed in the wool" cop through and through. That being said, and in light of current events, I personally feel the need to express a few things about the police. First and foremost, and my father, who is now deceased, would echo the same, there are good cops and bad cops. I do not question that. However, by and large, it was my father's experience, and mine, both as the son of a cop and now as a local government administrator overseeing the services provided by local police, that the overwhelming majority of our police officers are good people with the most dignified motives of serving and protecting the rest of us from harm. Now, I can't begin to count the days, or the tears that I shed, when I was growing up and I saw my father come home in the 60's and 70's with scraped knuckles, elbows and knees, black eyes, bruises and torn uniforms from bringing in the bad people who threatened our homes and our town. As a kid, I thought it was really bad back then. However, now when I see the police as an "institution" being singled out and being verbally vilified in the press as if it were some "institution of corruption", and when I witness individual officers being killed for no apparent reason, as a local government leader, I feel compelled to spread the word that being a police officer is a proud, courageous and honorable profession in local government. Despite the fact that it is indeed an honorable profession, it is often overlooked and goes underappreciated by the public and even elected officials. Police officers are often the first to publicly be blamed for tragedy, but yet, they are also the first to be called for help in a dangerous situation. Sure, there are officers who are not good representations of honorable police officers in this country, but by and large, most of the police are moral, hardworking individuals with families and responsibilities, much like all of us. As I was recently making my rounds through downtown Abingdon I noticed

some graffiti on a warehouse that said "Police the Police". After my initial thought of anger not over the vandalism but over the content of the message, I could somehow feel the spirit of my father in the back of my mind, telling me to ***just remember that the majority of all police officers are good people and they are there to legitimately serve and protect. It's only a few who abuse the job and tarnish the reputation of the institution of law enforcement.*** That being said, I encourage you all to "police your police" but to always offer up a compliment or a thank you to those **good officers** who put their lives on the line each day, in the name of public safety. Rest assured that my hat is always off and my heart is always touched by all the **good cops** that give their all and put their lives on the line every day so that we can all live, work and visit in peaceful and beautiful communities that we can be proud of throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia. To hopefully bolster the point that I am trying to make, I currently own a pistol that was once cocked and placed into the back of my father's head, back in the day when cops walked the beat and shook the doors. On one such night, my father rattled an unlocked door at a local grocery store only to eventually encounter a burglar with a long violent criminal history. Imagine the fright that my father must have felt when he heard that gun cock and the cold steel press against the back of his head. He lived to tell me that story and I now own the gun because he was not just lucky, but because he was well trained, and he used his professional tact to talk a hardened criminal down and then take control of the situation. Folks, stories like this are real and happen every day, even in a small town such as Abingdon, not just in large metropolitan areas. My story has a happy ending, unfortunately, many law enforcement stories do not end as happily, such as the recent events in Dallas, Baton Rouge and San Diego. With what is happening across the country, I encourage you all to advocate to provide your respective localities with the best law enforcement leadership, the best training, the best equipment, and to always reward the good cops and, yes, to very diligently police the bad ones. A pat on the back of any good cop, a kind word of encouragement and thank you goes a long way. Let us all hope that tomorrow brings a better and safer day for us all from the crazy violent attacks that currently exist.

I leave my proselytizing about law enforcement with some appropriate musical lyrics from the late Country Music Hall of Famer Merle Haggard's classic song "Are the Good Times Really Over":

***Are we rolling down hill like a snowball headed for Hell
With no kind of chance for the flag or the liberty bell
Wish a Ford and a Chevy
Would still last ten years like they should
Is the best of the free life behind us know
And are the good times really over for good***

Until next time, please join me in welcoming the following new members to VLGMA: Philipp Gatherer, Town Manager of the Town of Appomattox; Robert N. Geis, Deputy City Manager of the City of Chesapeake; Mary A. Zirkle, Town Manager of the Town of Buchanan; Vivian Seay Giles, County Administrator/County Attorney of Cumberland County; and Terri W. Morris, County Administrator of Floyd County. I look forward to meeting you all in person in the near future. I also want to thank all of our cities, counties and towns who are helping to grow our membership, because as you can see, we are, indeed, growing, as this month

demonstrates. Likewise, with my prior challenge to grow our membership, let's keep growing our Certificate Program by continuing to enroll members from our staff. To date I have had six (6) Abingdon employees graduate from the program and I currently have three (3) in the program. If a Town of 8500 can do that some of the larger localities should easily be able to match or exceed that. Let's make Virginia the best trained group of local government professionals and lead the way in preparing for the next generation.

[Contact Greg Kelly](#)

Position Changes

July 2016



- Anthony Romanello, administrator for Stafford County for the past 13 years, has been appointed deputy manager for Henrico County.
- Rebecca (Becky) Dickson, former Goochland County administrator, has accepted a part-time, interim appointment as deputy administrator for Chesterfield County.
- Angela Clem, assistant manager for the town of Woodstock, has been appointed interim town manager.
- Ken Vittum, manager for the town of Pearisburg since 1988, has announced his retirement effective December 31, 2016.
- Dan Taber, manager for the town of Dumfries for the past 5 years, resigned and announced his retirement.
- Kathie Noe, Scott County administrator, announced her retirement effective December 31st.
- Randy Keaton, deputy executive director for the Hampton Roads Planning District Commission, has been appointed Isle of Wight County administrator, effective September 1st.
- Andrew (Drew) Trivette, assistant city manager for Bristol, VA, has been appointed assistant city manager for Williamsburg, effective August 29th.

Member Spotlight - John McCarthy



John McCarthy

Mr. McCarthy has left the building
July 6, 2016 · by Roger Piantadosi · RappNews

But not before 200-plus toast, tease the county administrator at a moving retirement party
Last Friday night, not long before the final day - today - of his more than 10,900 as an employee of the County of Rappahannock, Virginia, more than 200 of John W.

McCarthy's friends, family and colleagues gathered for a private party at the Castleton Festival Theatre to mark McCarthy's extraordinary 30-year tenure as county administrator.

Read more [here](#).

Tedd's Take



Tedd Povar

Bristol Virginia Utilities Authority - Cultural Destruction

I have always maintained that one of the most important elements of a chief administrative officer's (CAO) job is to set the tone and culture for the organization. It can be as fundamental as getting to work on time, being courteous to citizens and staff, maintaining a sense of humor and joyfulness about the job and its mission, and valuing everyone regardless of station in life. The organization looks to the CAO to set the standard, and the staff will model their behavior, in great degree, on what they see and hear.

In Bristol, the utility authority was a highly progressive and respected entity for decades. It was aggressively entrepreneurial and creative, bringing several utilities, including internet connectivity, to previously unserved areas-places deemed not cost effective to even consider. Theirs were great achievements in an area of the state suffering from low income and high unemployment. Bristol Virginia Utilities (BVU) became a nationally recognized and celebrated example of what an authority could achieve given leadership and gumption.

More recently, BVU's culture of public service and achievement turned to selfishness and corruption. Nine officials pled guilty to various federal felony charges including bribery, bid-rigging, tax evasion, and fraud, just to name a few. The guilty included the CEO, board members, and staff. In some cases, one person was lining his/her pockets independently of others' schemes, meaning corruption became the culture of the organization rather than a single organized conspiracy.

It is rather astounding how BVU changed, rather quickly, from an outstanding public service entity to a vehicle for self-indulgence and outrageously unethical behavior. It demonstrates how easily this can happen when the mission and ethical standards are lost, and unprincipled actors are in charge.

As leaders of public service agencies, each of us must be dedicated to, and demonstrate each and every day, the highest standards to ensure there is no cultural "drift" throughout our organizations. The slope can be slippery.

For more information on what transpired at BVU, go to:

http://www.roanoke.com/news/bristol-virginia-utilities-shows-culture-of-corruption-entitlement-and-greed/article_5ef651bc-4629-5554-a45e-8b35a815daa7.html

[Contact Tedd Povar](#)

Certificate News

**THE Graduate Certificate
in Local Government
Management**



*"Preparing the Next Generation of
Local Government Leaders"*

The summer is quickly coming to an end, even if the heat may be here to stay. While the summer classes are winding down, the Certificate program is in full swing to get ready for the fall. Classes will begin on August 22nd with great enrollment. Before then, though, there is just enough time to squeeze in one last vacation or come to the third annual Certificate Professional Development Conference on August 8-9 at the Hotel Roanoke. Either way, the last month of summer will surely be fun.

Someone who will definitely be having fun this last month will be Becky

Dickson. Becky will be teaching her first class in the program this fall and will be using these next weeks to put the finishing touches on her course. Currently, Becky is serving as Interim Deputy County Administrator for Management Services in Chesterfield County after having retired this spring from serving as Goochland County Administrator. Moreover, she is the immediate past president of VLGMA and has served that group for many years. Overall, Becky will be a great addition to the program, and we look forward to a great semester.

If you are looking to become a part of the Certificate program, either as a student or as a professor, then Stephanie Davis will be looking for you. On site recruitment at local governments is a great way to introduce the Certificate to employees, so feel free to contact her if you would like a session conducted with your staff. Stephanie is always available at sddavis@vt.edu or 804-980-5549.

A DAO in the Life - Diane Rebertus

Creating Value

What is value? According to dictionary.com value is the regard that something is held to deserve; the importance, worth, or usefulness of something or it could be a person's principles or standards of behavior; one's judgment of what is important in life.

Gloucester County recently hired a new County Administrator from the private sector. While this could make life interesting for both him and his new team; he seems to be fitting in quite well. But he originally hails from Gloucester County....he has come home, so to speak.

Six months into the job, our new Administrator shared his vision for "creating value" in Gloucester County. An email was sent to department heads and constitutional officers containing detailed concepts he wanted his team to grasp, and I paraphrase, for maintaining and/or enhancing services while maintaining or reducing costs in line with the Board's vision for the County. That's got my name all over it I said to myself! Always eager for a challenge and new project, I quickly ticked off a number of ways that the Library could enhance service delivery to maintain and lower costs.

As the days passed and I continued ruminating over this concept, I began to think of the numerous definitions of the word "value." The Library offers lifelong learning classes, activities, and events to our community, that's a value. Purchased at deep discounts, we offer a variety of books, materials, and e-services - now that's a whole lot of bang for the buck!

Library employees are some of the most dedicated and hard working people I know. That's definitely a value to the community. Patrons come back again and again for the welcoming smiles, friendly faces, warm hellos (often acknowledging patrons by name), that list can go on and on. But the Library's not the only County department that provides value packed service - all the County departments do. I'm sure citizens in your County get top-notch service too!

My mind continued to explore this idea of value and creating value. What's important in life? Surely, one's work in the County is important. We all do a great deal of important things every day to enhance service delivery in our communities. But at the end of the day (sorry for the cliché but it is so apropos)



Diane Rebertus

when it's time to leave the office, what's most important?

What's most important to me is my family. When I first began my career in Gloucester County a little chant arose almost daily, "Family comes first!" What a nice, welcoming sentiment I said to myself, glad others know that too!

I continued to think about what's important to me and how I create value in my life and others' by doing simple things: letting people in front of me in traffic, calling my Mother, working hard on a project, being considerate of others, expecting great things from my staff, getting rid of negativity, providing excellent Library services to my community, surrounding myself with those who have good values and work ethics, this list can go on and on too...

So, at day's end, make sure to include something that's important to you. Those long, lazy days of summer that loomed ahead of us in March are almost over now! Do what makes you happy, spend time with those you love, enjoy fine foods (or plain, old hamburgers on the grill), drink a glass of sparkling wine or a Mason jar of cold, iced tea. Of course, creating value means different things to different people. But basically, it's about creating value in everything you do, at work and at home. These things are important to me. Remember what's important to you!

[Contact Diane Rebertus](#)

Civic Engagement Best Practices - Town of Abingdon



Matthew
Johnson

Citizen Engagement - Is Your Current Process Broken?

As I considered what to write about for this month's citizen engagement article, I tried to reflect on what "citizen engagement" really means to me. For me, it's a complex web that ultimately requires us as individuals to be accountable for how we as local government leaders interact with our own communities. As a professional planner, I relish the opportunity to engage with citizens, learn about their desires for their community, and work diligently to bring their visions to fruition. At the end of the end of the day, it seems that true 'engagement' is measured by how well a jurisdiction listens to its constituents and how well it reacts to the feedback that it receives. I would like to challenge each of you to reflect on your engagement processes and consider how they might be improved.

In many jurisdictions it appears that the process for engaging our citizens is either completely broken or in serious need of a complete overhaul. Think about the last time you attended a public meeting. Do you recall if the board permitted comments from the public? If so, I am willing to bet that public comments were limited to a specific time, perhaps three minutes or less. Were people able to present thoughtful ideas in that amount of time? Did citizens seem frustrated? Did the board look engaged?

Most local government public meetings are conducted using an antiquated formula: staff members present items, citizens are given three-minute increments to make comments or ask questions which often go unanswered, and officials deliberate and vote. Often there is little true *interaction* between the board and the public. Public turnout at meetings is often dismal at best, where earnest attendance will earn you a label as one of the "usual suspects". Dare to speak often and you may earn the label of "local curmudgeon". True public participation is often non-existent. When agendas contain routine items, this formula may

seemingly work fairly smoothly. However, throw in a controversial topic and the problems with this approach become all too painfully clear. Public trust in government is at all-time lows and levels of polarization are extremely high.

Recognizing that the current format of public engagement is broken, we seek to find alternatives which may be helpful in correcting public perception and foster effective civic discourse. While these efforts often require a great deal of creativity, energy and commitment to succeed, the payoffs are often worth it. Research has shown that effective citizen engagement builds trust, creates a greater sense of community, enhances problem solving and may even increase the likelihood that citizens will financially support future projects. In order to be more productive, I would propose the following three steps to consider when implementing a citizen engagement program:

1. Determine **why** you want to engage citizens in the first place.

Is it because you feel that it is the "right" thing to do for democracy to flourish? Or, do you wish to glean information about a specific initiative or project? Perhaps it's because you hold to the ideal that effective government calls for engagement with the public. Each reason calls for a different approach and success will be measured by different metrics.

2. Determine what citizen engagement **looks** like and **who** is responsible for implementing the process.

Engagement can take on many forms. It may be one-way communication where the government issues notices to the public. Or, it may involve dialogue shared among participants in a group setting. With advancements in technology, engagement can take place almost anywhere at any time. I would suggest that successful citizen engagement will involve elected officials, staff members, community groups and organizations, and citizens themselves. The successful implementation of citizen engagement processes requires well-designed approaches which are supported by both residents and officials alike. It stands to reason that people are more likely to uphold their responsibility to act when their participation was welcomed and when their contributions are used.

3. Determine **who** you are trying to engage.

What is meant by the term "citizen"? It is easy to define a citizen as one who has the legal status of "taxpayer" or "resident". However, most local governments are also responsible for servicing those who live outside of their jurisdictions but are a part of the greater *community* which surrounds them. Therefore, I would argue that it is important to be engaged with citizens who do not meet the traditional legal definitions as well. The more inclusive we are in citizen engagement efforts, the better. This is why many citizen engagement programs have focused on the end-user as a "customer", which better defines the roles and expectations of both the local government as well as the user.

Once a local government knows *why* it wants to engage citizens, what that approach *looks* like, *who* is responsible, and *who* you are trying to engage, then it is ready to begin implementing an engagement process. There are various methodologies to implementing citizen engagement strategies. Many of those

approaches are highly effective. And, many of those same approaches are highly ineffective. The difference in success appears to lie in *how the government responds* when the public voices its opinions. Success hinges on whether or not the government listened to what was said by the public, what action is taken based on what was said, and whether or not it was it worth the time and effort to participate.

[Contact Matthew Johnson](#)

Mel's Poetry Corner



Mel Gillies

The Power of Patience

Patience allows each moment to be
its unique identity.
Be still and trust enough to wait for...
what this moment has in store.

Patience allows silence to reveal
the Truth that awakens, comforts, heals.
Discover what this virtue can bring

by inviting the still small Voice within to sing.

Breathe deeply and in patience wait
as Love quietly percolates.

[Contact Mel Gillies](#)

Innovation Edge

Manatee Millennial Movement (M3) Brings County Government to the Next Generation

"Stop talking about us and start talking to us!"
That's the resounding message from Manatee County, Florida millennials. This group of 18-35 year olds are chomping at the bit to have their turn to influence Manatee County and have been in the local news for the past few months tackling issues of affordable workforce housing.



Who Are They

Born between 1980 and 2000, this generation of young adults grew up with technology. 87% of online adults in the US age 18 to 29 use Facebook, with 53% on Instagram, 37% on Twitter and 34% on Pinterest. More than 85% of millennials in the US own smartphones and touch their smartphone more than 45 times a day.

One-third of older millennials (ages 26 to 33) have earned at least a four year college degree, making them the best-educated group of young adults in US history and consequently the ones saddled with more debt. They're more diverse even within their own generational cohort. Millennials also go by Generation Y, Global generation, Echo Boomers, net generation, and baby boomlets to name a few.

Read the full article by Simone Peterson, Neighborhood Services Specialist for Manatee County, FL [here](#).

About the Alliance for Innovation: The Alliance for Innovation is inspiring innovation to advance communities. As the premier resource for emerging practices in local government, we are building cultures of innovation and connecting thought leaders in the profession with the help of our partners International City/County Management Association and Arizona State University. We are accessible and valuable to all levels of an organization. You can learn more about the Alliance at www.transformgov.org or contact me at saburnett@transformgov.org

Calendar

Upcoming Events

VLGMA Professional Development Committee (PDC) Meeting - September 9, 2016 in Staunton at the Stonewall Jackson Hotel.

VLGMA Executive Committee Meeting - October 10, 2016 in Virginia Beach as part of the VML Conference.

SEI Alumni Program - October 23-25, 2016 at Darden. More info available soon. [More Dates](#)

Future Newsletter Articles



A goal of this e-newsletter is to keep you informed on activities relative to our profession. As with any membership-based organization, contributions by members are welcome and encouraged. Topics can range from a recent achievement in your locality to an upcoming event with networking potential to human interest stories about current or retired members. To contribute simply send your brief e-newsletter content (~5 sentences or less) via email to [Molly Harlow](#).

Future Newsletter Articles

[VLGMA Website](#)
[ICMA Website](#)
[Alliance for Innovation](#)
[Virginia Municipal League](#)
[VA Association of Counties](#)
[Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service](#)
[ELGL](#)
[Website Contact](#)



VLGMA, P.O. Box 400206, Charlottesville, VA 22904

[SafeUnsubscribe™ {recipient's email}](#)

[Forward this email](#) | [Update Profile](#) | [About our service provider](#)

Sent by mjh3a@virginia.edu in collaboration with



Try it free today