



VLGMA September eNews

Supporting local government managers
building great communities through
inclusion, innovation and leadership

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Greetings from Greg



Greg Kelly

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

Let me take the opportunity this month to speak to you a bit about the political uncertainties and change that we are often faced with in local government. During my tenure as a town manager I have been very fortunate to have been able to surround myself with a very good team of professionals in department head positions who are very adept at accepting and embracing political change when it occurs. However, often times when change occurs it has the tendency to lower the morale of the subordinate staff in many departments. I think this is, in part, due to the fact that department heads and management are in more direct and constant communication with council members than the rest of the staff. So when there is a change in political leadership, whether it is a result of a heated controversial issue or simply a result of someone choosing to retire from the Council, it, nonetheless, creates some uncertainty in the minds of the staff that perhaps the staff has done something wrong and their jobs, benefits and work place environment are at risk of changing to their detriment. However, as has often been proven to me, again and again, change may bring about uncertainties and lead to transitions, but if we choose to accept and embrace it we can use change to bring about fresh ideas and positive results that all of the staff, the Council and the public can be proud of. That said, how we manage change is

highly important in our profession. While there is truly no magic way to effectively manage change, I have developed my own method that I have found comfort in.

In that regard, I usually begin this process immediately after there is a change in the Council by having a staff meeting among the department heads to discuss the transition and to encourage them to welcome each new council member and treat them with the same respect that they have with all prior council members, and for them to join with me on trying to make the next chapter of our town's history a more positive and productive adventure than the prior chapter. Then I encourage the department heads to spread the word among the troops that all is well and we are still working with the same ultimate goal in mind....to keep our town moving forward as a great place to live, work and visit. The goal is always the same, however, the speed with which the troops realize that and accept it is always a bit uncertain. Next, I reach out to the newly elected officials and welcome them to the team and schedule meetings to present them with a brief new council member orientation and introduce them to all of the department heads followed by a personal tour of all of the departments so they can view exactly what a day in the life of a town employee entails. This is also a good icebreaker for all of the staff to meet the new members and put a face to a name. I have found this to be very effective in setting the tone from the very beginning of the changing era that we (Council, management and staff) are all "team players" regardless of differing priorities and ideologies, and at the end of the day, we all should strive to collectively make a positive difference in our community. I try to drive this home by stressing ethics, professionalism and providing them with a copy of the Athenian Code that I often read to them to ensure that they get the message that being on board our team means that we are going to leave behind a better Town of Abingdon than that one that we found when we first joined the team. The last thing I do to try to embrace positive political change is that my assistant town manager and I actually go with them to Richmond for their newly elected officials training program presented by VML. This is usually the first and perhaps the best opportunity to have some one on one time with each of them, both, professionally and socially. During this process, we try to introduce them to as many people as we know from across the Commonwealth so that they are able to begin to develop a network system among their colleagues to confide in when they face uncertainties in their role on the Council. We are also able to talk to them and answer questions and help coach them as they go through the program.

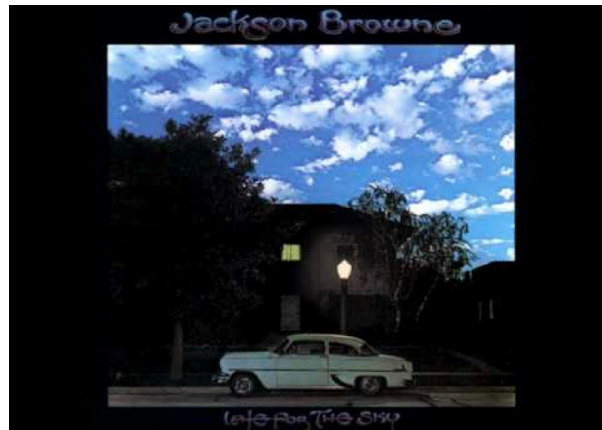
While I'm not saying this way is the best way to deal with political uncertainties and change, it has proven very effective to me in creating a "team" atmosphere rather than a "them and us" environment that is often fraught with lack of trust, secrecy, and internal unrest among the troops. In sum, the process should always be dealt with, with proper timing, tact and taste. If its handled that way, my prediction is that positive results will usually avail themselves. I did not just make this process up by myself nor did it just miraculously appear, rather I learned this method from years of networking with many of you and through various continuing professional growth sessions at VLGMA, VML and ICMA Conferences pertaining to adapting to transitions and change.

Now, speaking of conferences, let me use this opportunity also to touch upon the upcoming ICMA Conference in Kansas City, MO later this month. If you had of asked me twenty years ago if I would ever visit Kansas City, I would have likely

brushed the question off with an emphatic "no way". Well here's another "you can't make this stuff up moment". As fate would have it, Abingdon was invited to the All American Cities Award shortly after I became Town Manager. While there I got on the elevator one evening with a very tall and pleasant gentleman from Gastonia, NC. We both exchanged pleasantries and spoke briefly about where we were from, yet we never introduced ourselves. After getting off the elevator I felt as if I knew this person or had at least seen him somewhere before. On the day of the awards program I sat in and watched Gastonia deliver its presentation. Much to my surprise the person whom I had shared the elevator and a brief conversation with was none other than NBA legend and hall of famer, James Worthy. The cool thing about him was that despite his fame and fortune he exuded the aura of a very professional but ordinary person who was extremely proud of his hometown and who was committed to help bring about productive change there. Gastonia did in fact win that year. I thoroughly enjoyed Kansas City and thought that would, likely, be my first and last trip there. However, two years later my oldest daughter, Kaitlin, pleaded with me to take her to see the Farm Aid Concert which just happened to be in Kansas City. Being the music lover that I am, she didn't have to twist my arm too badly for me to say yes. The concert was great, the food incredible and I was able to explore much more of KC than I was able to the first time. As we left, I thought how nice it would be to visit one day again, but, I knew that, in all likelihood, I would not. Fast forward now to last Fall where, in my role as VLGMA President Elect, I was selected to be on the ICMA Conference Planning Committee. So off to KC yet a third time. While there this time I got to meet and network with a diverse group of leaders and ICMA staff from all over the country. It was probably one of the most rewarding experiences during my professional career. I got to participate first hand and voice my opinion about what actually goes into conference planning on such a large scale as an ICMA conference. I can assure you that you are in for a wonderful experience if you are able to attend. The conference speakers are top of the mark and the educational sessions, as well as with the social functions and tour opportunities are bound to please. While there, this time, I saw the full city in all of its glory. Its nickname, by the way, is "The Paris of the Planes". Having been to Paris, France, I can attest to this comparison given all KC has to offer. There is a bounty of beautiful fountains and tree lined avenues, a rich cultural history, fabulous food, a great musical heritage, professional sports and entertainment venues, and one of the best shopping opportunities you will ever experience in your lifetime. With that said, I hope I have enticed you to meet me Kansas City for my fourth trip in ten years. Trust me you will not be let down.

Let me conclude with a short story about my last trip to Kansas City. After the conclusion of the second day of the planning process I rewarded myself on my 54th birthday with a ticket to see Jackson Browne who was in concert directly across the street from my hotel. As I listened to the music I had some thoughts that evening of how time changes and presents us with all kinds of uncertainties both personally and professionally. It being my birthday I could not help but have thoughts of my father who had passed away the previous June. Then, somewhere in a song I found a small piece of closure and a small piece of wisdom as Jackson sang "For a Dancer". No, I'm no dancer but the song much like many of Jackson's songs and many other great songwriters is metaphorical in nature and can apply to us all personally and professionally in different ways. The underlying message, for me, was to keep a close watch for unknown change and adapt and make the best

of it when it arrives, and then use all of the knowledge that you have learned along the way to make a positive change. You really have to listen to the whole song to get your own message, therefore, I am going to attempt a first in a VLGMA Newsletter and try to link you up to listen to the entire song, so here goes. I hope it works. Click [here](#).



Until next time, please join me in welcoming the following new members to VLGMA: Kimberly Irvine, Social Services Director for York County; Durrell Scott Mills, Deputy City Manager for the City of Suffolk; and Lydia Pettis-Patton, City Manager for the City of Portsmouth. I look forward to meeting each of you and welcoming you in person in the near future, perhaps in Kansas City.

[Contact Greg Kelly](#)

Position Changes

August 2016

- John G. Kines, Jr., retired Prince George County administrator, has been appointed to the Virginia Board of Social Services. John recently completed 12 years service as a member of the Virginia Commission on Local Government.
- Glen "Skip" Skinner, executive director of the LENOWISCO planning district commission, retired. Duane Miller, deputy director, has been promoted to executive director.
- Thomas Mattis, Colonial Heights city manager since 2010, has been appointed city manager for Elgin, Texas.
- Doug Barnes, retired administrator for Spotsylvania County, has been appointed interim administrator for Stafford County.
- Angela Clem, interim manager for the town of Woodstock, has been appointed manager there.
- Charles Hartgrove, Ashland town manager for the past 13 years, has been appointed deputy city manager for Lynchburg.
- Katie Nunez, Northampton County administrator for the past 11 years, has stepped down from that post. John Andrzejewski, finance director, was appointed acting administrator.
- Kathleen Seay, director of finance and management services for Hanover County, has been appointed deputy administrator there.
- Ron Carlee, former city manager for Charlotte, NC, and previously manager for Arlington County, VA, has been appointed a visiting assistant professor at Old Dominion University's Strome College.



SEI Review by Danny Davis



Danny Davis

SEI: I didn't think it could be this great

The problem with everyone telling you how great something will be...is that you fear it won't meet your expectations. Not so with the Senior Executive Institute (SEI). I was honored to attend SEI 2016 with 29 other amazing local government managers from across the country, and what I experienced was one of the most compelling and challenging training opportunities you could ever hope for. Over this intense, nearly two-week period, we learned about leadership, interpersonal development, emotional intelligence, team-building, and high performance governance concepts (to name a few topics!). More than the nuts and bolts, though, we were challenged to think different, be authentic and vulnerable, and remember why we are in this business of public service. Most importantly, I was reminded that leadership starts with me. As I set the tone for my work and responsibilities, I can help others give their best to the community. We are a team, and we must work as a team to be the most effective. I am even more convinced of the great talent that resides in the Town of Purcellville staff, and my goal is to strengthen and empower our teams to help Purcellville continue to progress and prosper. I can say for certain that the rest of my SEI group came away with the same feelings about leadership and their organizations, and I hope many of you have the opportunity to attend SEI in the future.

[Contact Danny Davis](#)

Tedd's Take



Tedd Povar

BREAKING NEWS!!!!!!! (or is it?)

Is it just me? Or is anyone else sick and tired of almost everything on the news being called "Breaking News"?

I'm old school. I watch the news from 6 pm to 7 pm most evenings. I get the local stuff from 6:00 to 6:30, and then follow the family tradition of watching NBC Nightly News from 6:30 to 7:00. When working out at the YMCA in the early afternoon, I tend to watch CNN via closed captions while listening to ESPN.

What drives me nuts is that the local news and CNN, in particular, cannot go two minutes without a "breaking news" story (or two or three) that is not big... or new. Usually, the story is many hours, if not days, old. I think CNN is still calling the Louisiana flood a "breaking news" story. Today, the same network's example of "breaking "non-news is "Donald Trump speaking in NH. Watch CNN." Come on! It's just a campaign stop!

I suppose the premise is that if an announcement isn't labeled as "breaking," it will seem insignificant to the viewer or listener. The producers have to make it appear spectacular, even if it isn't.

The phrase is so overused by all the networks, it has lost its meaning and ability to draw attention. I no longer stop what I am doing or pay particular attention to such stories. I've become numb to the words "Breaking News." The

only time I'm truly grabbed is when regular programming is interrupted by a "Special Report" from XYZ News. Sometimes the "report" is nothing more than the President's scheduled statement on some important matter; but I still react as though the interruption means something terrible has happened, like when Kennedy was shot.

I love the news, but, like so many things, it is being destroyed by overzealousness and sensationalism. The overuse of "Breaking News" is just another example. Unfortunately, responsibility and honesty in reporting are being sacrificed in the process.

[Contact Tedd Povar](#)

Certificate News



The fall is a busy time for the Certificate program. Below are some updates to the various happenings in the program. If you have any questions, please contact Stephanie Davis at sddavis@vt.edu or 804-980-5549.

Professional Development Conference

The third annual Professional Development Conference in Local Government was held on August 8 and 9 in Roanoke. The conference spanned the full two days and was packed with excellent opportunities for all. The combination of panel discussions, workshops, and speakers served to provide an engaging and successful conference made this time a highlight. Planning is already underway for next year's conference. If you are interested in joining the steering committee for conference planning, please email Stephanie Davis.

Fall 2016 Certificate Enrollments

Class has begun! Certificate enrollment for this fall is 74 students, including 24 new students in the program. Everyone is off to a great start, and we can hardly wait to see what this next generation will do.

Recruitment Planning

Over the next two months, the director will be planning the recruitment sessions for the calendar year 2017. If you are interested in hosting a recruitment session for your employees, please email Stephanie Davis.

Internships

If your locality is interested in hosting a MPA intern for Summer 2017, please email Stephanie Davis. We are always looking for opportunities to place our students with local governments.

A DAO in the Life - Carol Steele

A day in my life... What does a day in my life really look like? I think my typical days are similar to many others. Added up over time, our work impacts thousands of people's lives in a good way. It may not seem like we are getting anywhere, but we participate in important projects that help make our communities better places to live and work.

When frustrated by daily struggles, political chaos, and demanding schedules that we frequently face, it can help if we take time to reflect on the big picture rather than on never ending to-do lists. Construction of schools, parks, utility lines, and additional public services, are some of the ways we strive to meet community needs and keep our localities competitive and thriving. We create places where young people want to be after graduation or at least to return to after they have sown their wild oats. We promote services for people with all levels of income and do all we can to help businesses grow. This work requires partnerships with other employees, departments and community members. Together we are making great strides.



Carol Steele

During my 30 years in local government, I've seen a lot of progress. One of my favorite projects started with a 100 acre land donation. Since that time we have raised more than \$2 million in donations, in-kind support and grants. We now have 7 athletic fields (3 with lights), two ponds, trails, gardens and more. It took nearly 16 years, but it's a success that will benefit Gloucester County for generations to come.

I've also been fortunate to be a part of planning and organizing community celebrations. From our county's 350th anniversary to our annual Daffodil Festival to hosting the largest Revolutionary War reenactment in the Country, we put on events that attracted thousands of tourists, helped families form long lasting memories and started unique community traditions.

These are just a couple of examples of how our efforts pay off. It may seem that things take too much time, that there are too many controversial issues before us and that we aren't getting anywhere, but we are still moving forward. I appreciate the opportunities that I've had to make a difference in Gloucester County. A day in my life and yours is a day about customer service, meeting needs, partnering with others and helping to positively shape the future. Not too bad for a day's work!

[Contact Carol Steele](#)

Civic Engagement Best Practices - VML "If I Were A Mayor"



In the overwhelming morass of curriculum standards and SOLs, it seems that civics education sometimes gets lost. Furthermore, as citizens become more and more cynical about government and its effectiveness, it is critical that we begin to turn the tide by making sure that our youth understand the value and importance of local government. I believe that the Virginia Municipal League (VML) has a role to play in facilitating civics education in the Commonwealth. To that end, our first initiative was the establishment of an "If I Were Mayor" essay contest.

In the second year of the program, over 1,000 seventh graders from around the state submitted essays for consideration. It is so exciting that children in Virginia spent time thinking about local government. Perhaps more importantly, they thought about what it would be like to have their voices heard and to serve as a leader in their community.

At VML day at the Capitol in January, we honored eight regional winners (including one statewide winner). The awards were presented by the Governor

and it was a very special occasion for the students, their families, their teachers, and their communities.

We know that localities are engaged in a variety of projects to promote civics education and we hope that your community will consider participating in this year's contest. The announcement will be mailed to teachers in the third week of September. We will also be sending a notification to mayors at the same time.

Please encourage your mayors to work with the local schools regarding this contest. For example, in some communities, mayors visited 7th grade classrooms. In others, the teachers took the kids to town/city hall for a tour. Whatever path your locality decides to follow with respect to civics education, teaching young people about local government is one of the most important projects that we can undertake. It is my sincere hope that VML's essay contest, along with future projects, will be of assistance to you in achieving this goal.

For more information on the If I Were Mayor essay contest, go to <http://www.vml.org/education/essay-contest> or contact me at 804-523-8521. [Contact Kim Winn](#)

Mel's Poetry Corner



Mel Gillies

The Power of Gentleness

Gentleness gets submerged in society's
competitive stance
but only recessed until given the chance
to defuse aggressiveness with love's light.
A candle glow can pierce the darkest night.

A gentle heart shines with true nobility.
No one is immune to its spiritual harmony.

Gentleness is the confidence and gallantry
to be kind and forgiving unconditionally.

This awareness is fully present and sees
when a simple hug can fulfill a deep need.
Strength grows as we recognize and demonstrate
that tenderness is the texture with power to permeate.

Life's fabric softener with its compassionate touch
relaxing the impetus to join the frantic rush.
This gentle silence that subliminally calms
is for stressful souls, a healing balm.

[Contact Mel Gillies](#)

Innovation Edge

**Have you heard about Workforce Wednesdays?
Read on.**

In the Fall of 2015, the Local Government Research Collaborative (LGRC) released [a report](#) and subsequent



webinar, Red Tape to Green Tape, that looked at why grievance policies are important and the impact they can have on all levels of an organization. What particularly makes this relevant to this month's WorkforceWednesday topic? Primarily the fact that the research showed most organizations surveyed had grievance policies that were nine or more years older, which is significant because newer policies are perceived as more effective. Take a moment to reintroduce yourself to the report ([here](#)) and webinar summary, and leave us your feedback in the comments below or [in the KN](#). As we continue our #WorkforceWednesday series, diving into the issues facing the local government workforce, we wanted to take a look at HR and personnel policies. More particularly, antiquated policies. Read the full article on the Alliance's website [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

ICMA News

Check out ICMA's 2016 Annual Conference Workshops - and reserve your space today!



ICMA University workshops offer interactive, intensive training proven to develop skills and enhance knowledge while supporting ICMA members in addressing the ICMA Practices for Effective Local Government Management.

Seats are filling up fast!

At ICMA University we believe in Active, Results-Based Learning.

ICMA University workshops cover an array of leadership development, professional development, change management, and organization development topics presented in a way that allows attendees to hit the ground running with the skill building tools they learn.

[Click here and reserve your seat!](#)

Second Chance--If you already signed up for the ICMA Conference you can still add a workshop by calling MCS with credit card information 800-745-8780 or by email customerservices@icma.org

VLGMA/SEI Reception at the ICMA Conference

For those attending the 2016 ICMA conference in Kansas City, the VLGMA/SEI reception will be held as follows:

Place: The Dubliner (Paddy's Bar)

Address: Kansas City Power & Light District, 170 E 14th St. (0.4 miles (7 min. walk) from convention center, across the street from Sprint Center)

Date & Time: Monday, September 26th 5:15pm - 7:30pm

Website: <http://www.thedublinerkc.com>

Brick Industry Association



Withstanding the Test of Time and Elements: The Resiliency of Brick

The Brick Industry Association (BIA) was proud to be a Silver Sponsor of the 2016 VLGMA Summer Conference. We enjoyed being a part of the conference and appreciate the opportunity to provide additional information through the VLGMA newsletter.

While at the conference, we received numerous questions and comments ranging from the use of design guidelines for the purpose of historic preservation to the resiliency and longevity of brick architecture. This is not surprising in a state that is home to Bacon's Castle, the oldest brick dwelling in the United States.

What makes brick such a resilient building material?

Brick is a traditionally non-combustible material, which means that no part of it will ignite or burn when subjected to fire. Brick maintains a one-hour fire resistance rating for exterior walls, which is critical to the prevention of building damage, injury and death. Brick structures can also slow or prevent the spread of fire.

Brick provides exceptional protection from wind-blown debris that can result from severe storms, hurricanes and tornadoes. A windblown 7*** foot 2x4 will penetrate the wall of a non-masonry structure at a speed of 25 mph, while the same object would need to exceed 80 mph to penetrate a brick masonry wall.

Brick is the most sustainable green building material made. During firing, brick emits no toxins and is 100% recyclable. It is simply fired clay and shale - a material that is readily available, inexpensive and can be reused in new construction or recycled to make new brick.

Brick clay pavers are especially environmentally-friendly, allowing water to filter back into the ground with little to no water run-off. A surface constructed with properly fabricated and properly maintained clay brick pavers will meet the credit criteria for "100% perviousness."

Not only can brick withstand the test of time and elements, its versatility as a building material enables it to withstand the caprice of consumer trends. According to a recent study by the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB), baby boomers rank brick highest over other home exteriors.

About the Brick Industry Association

Founded in 1934, the Brick Industry Association (BIA) is the nationally recognized authority on clay brick construction representing the nation's distributors and manufacturers of clay brick and suppliers of related products. Visit gobrick.com for more information and resources.

Calendar

Upcoming Events

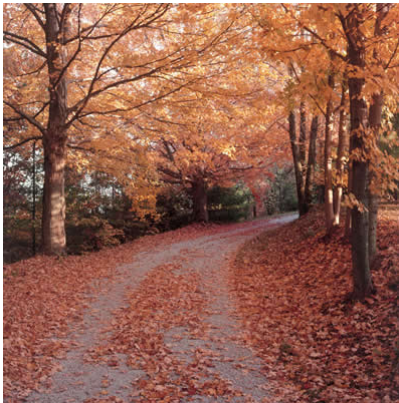
VLGMA Professional Development Committee (PDC) Meeting - September 9, 2016 in Staunton at the Stonewall Jackson Hotel.

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 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](#)

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