

April 2020 eNews

Presidential Musings From James



It is March 31st and the Governor has just issued a stay at home order and the POTUS suggested that we should back off his earlier plans to open up for the sake of the economy. Those same people that many said did not deserve a higher minimum wage are like zombies on their feet, stocking our groceries, driving trucks and cooking takeout food. I don't know where this roller coaster will go next or how many twists and turns it will take before you actually read this.

The stress I see in the workforce and the community is palpable. My normal bag of "you are doing amazing, we are making it, hang in there" is like a sprinkler to a house fire. We have been on the edge of this for so long, people are getting event fatigue. My staff have transitioned from thinking I am paranoid, to right on target then to the fatigue part where they wince when I call. They want normal. I would typically get departments together in such a crisis and keep them going. We can't do that. Social distancing's impact on leadership is challenging. We are all doing budgets that are in fact works of pure fiction at this point as none of us know where things are going. There is an end to this and an economy to rebuild, but when and how are moving targets. I wish I had some sage guidance. I wish I could give you the strength and endurance you need. I don't have a darn thing. I can hit you with that sprinkler and remind you that "you are doing it, you are leading through it, hang in there".

That is where we land this month: leadership is all we have left. Your Council/Board are looking to you to define outcomes and a process to get there. You can do it. Many of us have likely had thoughts in our quiet moments such as "I did not sign up for this" or "this is overwhelming". We all do, but then we put the suit on and keep that sprinkler on the house fire, keep people engaged and keep the organization moving forward. As we get through this and recover after this, effective managers and leaders will chart the way. I won't mislead you, this will be the toughest six months of your career BUT you are up to it and we will help each other.

We are not the give up group. We are the ones that have to see it through. We are the ones people turn to. We are the ones that have to have a path forward and a plan. I have seen you do it and learned from most of you.

VLGMA has not filled your inbox with COVID-19 related items (how many emails have you gotten?). If you are looking for help on a specific issue, reach out. I can setup a virtual meeting with any manager and the membership who wants to brainstorm on specific issues.

Just so I don't leave you without some ideas, here are some of the things we have done: We gave all staff two weeks special leave that can be used at the discretion of the department head. We have stopped in-person transactions (we have a drive-through!). We have suspended utility cut-offs and our local electric supplier has done the same. We have sent out thousands upon thousands of \$3 coupons for take out food with the goal to help those who have reduced income and the restaurants. This goes along with the normal use of PPE and the suspension of all meetings. I am trying to forward a plan to shut down non-essential operations. My door is closed for the first time in 13 years. It is eerily quiet without the flow of folks in and out of the building.

Finally, our Summer Conference is in jeopardy. I see no functional way to hold it. We need fellowship now more

than ever, but we need to get past this challenge first. The Governor's order may allow us to cancel with a reduced penalty. We will be having a conference call this week and I will be seeking input from the Board.

[Contact James Ervin](#)

Tedd's Take



Cultural Conflict and COVID 19

Over the past few and very long weeks, we've all had plenty of time to think about our country's response to the COVID 19 virus—and why our response is so different from that of many other nations. Here are a few of my ruminations:

1) This is a country founded on personal freedom and liberty. Collectivism is not our strong suit, but our current challenge calls for unity of purpose and action. It is dangerous, at present, to be independent and do as you please. We are trying to reverse over two centuries of norms in a matter of weeks—a massive task.

[Contact Tedd Povar](#)

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Institute of Government Update



Thank you for your continued leadership and resilience during this challenging chapter of our times. I know that this pandemic will continue to place much responsibility, further burdens, and challenging decisions on local government organizations. It is in times of crisis that communities are reminded of the significance of our profession.

Since I started in this position last September, the Virginia Institute of Government (VIG) has gone through some significant changes. The Senior Executive Institute (SEI) and Leading, Educating, and Developing (LEAD) programs and the Constitutional Officer Professional Development program (Treasurers and Commissioners of the Revenue) are now part of the VIG family. We also recently launched the Municipal Leadership Academy in partnership with the Virginia Municipal League for both new and existing elected officials.

[Contact Charles Hartgrove](#)

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Certificate News



The Local Government Certificate students enjoyed meeting managers, colleagues and other students at the VLGMA Winter Conference this year. Thank you to everyone who made the event a success!

The Certificate program will be offering two summer courses for students who are interested in entering the program this year. The deadline to apply is May 1, 2020. Students can complete the program by

May of 2021 with the additional offerings.

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Alliance for Innovation

It is during times like this when our communities rely on their local government teams for so much, and the team at the Alliance is *tremendously proud* to work alongside you and support your efforts. We know there are significant demands on your teams right now, and pivots you are making in your own organizations to keep operations running. And of course, the health and well-being of you and your teammates are our top priority.

To ensure your safety, and be mindful of the shifting priorities, **AFI has been able to move the TLG 2020 conference dates to Sept. 1-4**. These four days of fiery positive energy will be a welcome inspiration and a coming together of passionate local government professionals – just what we all will need to reboot and reenergize!

Anyone who has already registered for the conference under the original dates will have their registrations automatically transferred (while the some hotel blocks will be available, hotel reservations will need to be re-booked).

If you haven't registered, registration is still open at transformgov.org/tlg2020 . And as a reminder, because of AFI's partnership with the association, **members can register now with discount code VLGMA to save \$50 off the registration cost**. Follow along on Twitter at #TLG2020 to keep in touch with the latest conference updates, or reach out to our team at conferences@transformgov.org with any questions.

Civic Engagement



Civic Engagement in the Coronavirus Era

April 2020

By: Brian S. Thrower

Now, more than ever, we as public administrators need to be aware of the need to engage our residents, businesses, and elected officials. The coronavirus epidemic has taken our county hold and forced a temporary semi-shutdown of our schools, city halls, public buildings, restaurants, and other non-essential businesses. Who knows when things will go back to being “normal”?

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A DAO in the Life



The April 24th DAO Meeting is cancelled. Chesterfield County is planning to host a meeting at a future date.

ICMA has gathered resources [here](#) to help and support local governments during these difficult time.

Mel's Poetry Corner

Leaders of Hope

An incomparable gift is hope,
an invisible, powerful, sustaining rope,



extending in the cavernous dark
to uplift an anxious heart.

Flowers in such a way,
elevate our day
and with a gentle, subtle force
point to our divine Source.

Flowers of hope are we
as public servants in our communities,
responding to those who desperately need
the gift of kindness and beauty.

If in goodness, we invest,
an impact on all human consciousness.

In each of us, infinite power
to grow communities that flower.

[Contact Mel Gillies](#)



Position Changes And Other Events

March 2020

- Michael Stallings has been appointed as the town manager of Smithfield effective April 20. He has served as the town manager of Windsor since 2010.
- Tedd Povar has joined The Berkley Group as part of their Executive Transition Assistance team. He previously served as the long-time associate director of the Virginia Institute of Government at the Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service and as a local government senior executive.

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