

February 2020 eNews

Presidential Musings From James



Just like April showers bring May flowers, November elections often bring changes in leadership. Many of our fellow VLGMA members have found themselves “in transition” after January organizational meetings. That is politically correct speak for fired. It is probably easier to understand the trauma and impact to a peer’s life if you use the politically incorrect term.

Such an event is particularly challenging for a manager/administrator. To do the job right, you have to lead your staff with passion and affection. Genuine caring. You also have to do the same with the community. “I am just in it for the money” said no manager ever. To be successful you have to care. Care about the place, its challenges and its future. Care about the people, struggling or succeeding, thriving or just getting by. It is a nasty coincidence that to be effective you have to be personally invested. This is pitfall number one.

The phrase “in transition” is weak when compared to the emotional impact of being pulled from a team that you have passion for and a community you have dedicated yourself to. What makes it worse is the reason often given is simply “we want to go in another direction” or similar. What this translates to (again clarifying politically correct phraseology) is “you were so good at implementing the prior Board’s/Council’s agenda, we associate you with it”. That is pitfall two of the profession. If you have a talent for organizing effort around an elected body’s agenda, you may go out with them versus being recognized as the capable leader you are.

Don’t take this as complaining. We willingly expose ourselves to this risk. We negotiate agreements that make it fairly easy to send us out the door. The day we are hired, we are negotiating the terms of our termination. Why? Well, *we all serve that higher moral purpose*. We want to facilitate local democracy and let an elected body govern, up to and including moving us along. When the staff we love and the community we have helped build is taken from us we will even give nice quotes for the press release, wishing them well and thanking them for the opportunity to serve. Simply put, as a profession, we are a class act. We are professional local government management in action and how we handle ourselves in such trying situations is part of why Virginia is a strong Council/Manager state. Only the fellow managers know the reality of missing your great team, being pulled from the community you were so invested in.

So come to our Winter meeting and find a member who is in transition and buy them a beer. Toast to their class, grace and strength. While you are at it, think about your employment agreement and review it with a perspective that knows it will come into play one day. Is it fair and balanced and does it offer enough protections for you and your family if you too one day have to move aside gracefully? And when that time comes, take a lesson from our struggling brothers and sisters in management and hold your head up and be thankful for the chance to serve.

Please join me in welcome our new VLGMA members Blue Wooldridge, VCU Professor Emeritus; Amanda Kaufman, Bedford Deputy County Administrator; William Thompson, VA Tech MPA Student and Chris Boies, Clarke County Administrator.

[Contact James Ervin](#)

Upcoming ICMA Events



[Leadership ICMA Class of 2021 starts May 17-24, 2020 College of Charleston, SC](#)

Class of 2021 will begin their leadership journey by attending the ICMA Leadership Academy May 17-22, 2020 at the College of Charleston, SC with seasoned managers.

[ICMA Athenian Project October 11-17, 2020 Airlie House, Virginia](#)

Participants embark on a 9-month journey to transmit their self, their community, and the profession greater and more beautiful than each was transmitted to them as they connect with other servant leaders, re-ignite their passion, define their legacy, and gain a stronger understanding of the responsibility behind the defining questions of... If not you, who will lead in these times? If not now, when?

[ICMA Gettysburg Leadership Institute May 13-15, 2020](#)

With civil unrest and growing leadership challenges we think of the 3-day battle of Gettysburg and get curious about the problems faced there that mirror our challenges in public sector leadership today.

Tedd's Take



Turmoil in the Ranks

The last two months have seen an unsettling number of forced resignations and terminations within Virginia's local chief administrator ranks. While changes can be expected when governing bodies reorganize after November elections, the number of changes this cycle seems atypical... and unnerving.

The question is, "Why is this happening?"

[Contact Tedd Povar](#)

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Alliance for Innovation



Registration is now open for the Alliance for Innovation's 2020 Transforming Local Government conference. Check out all the details below, and when registering, please use code **VLGMA**. For any questions about the event, the Alliance team can be reached at conferences@transformgov.org or 888.496.0944.

[Read More](#)

VRSA Celebrates 40 Years



VRSA celebrates 40 years!

In 2020, the Virginia Risk Sharing Association (VRSA) will celebrate 40 years of providing financial stability through risk management for Virginia political subdivisions.

What does that mean?

40 years ago, finding coverage for the unique exposures faced by local governmental entities was difficult. Coverage available through commercial insurers was limited, and premiums were volatile, rising dramatically from

DAO Article Authors Needed



Calling all Deputies, Assistants and Other local government employees...

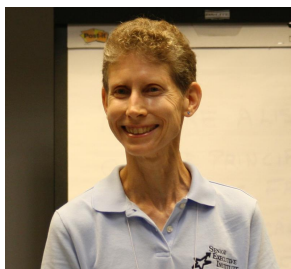
VLGMA needs you to write an article for their popular "DAO in the Life" series. These articles are a great way to highlight the valuable roles of deputies, assistants and other employees. They are also a great way to get more involved in VLGMA. Popular topics have included locality projects where the DAO has played a critical role, interesting research about the profession, professional development opportunities, and valuable tips for success in a DAO role. Email Molly Harlow at mjh3a@virginia.edu to sign up and share your DAO story.

Certificate News



We are off and running for a new semester at Virginia Tech and the Graduate Certificate in Local Government Management. Thank you to Anthony Romanello, John Budesky, Peter Huber and Greg Kelly for teaching this semester. We have 15 new local government students and have over 45 students enrolled this semester. In addition, we have one new local government administration course with junior and senior level students enrolled. We ARE preparing the next generation.

Mel's Poetry Corner



Life's Gifts

Light dancing off the edges of suspended crystal,
 a poem with poignancy inexplicable,
 the extravagance of luscious honey or a smile so kind,
 life offers moments precious, divine.

Go on a treasure hunt and with a child's eye see
 the ordinary as mysterious and magnifique.
 Life is ceaselessly giving you an unsolicited lift,
 a spontaneous, gratuitous, non-taxable gift.

[Contact Mel Gillies](#)



Position Changes And Other Events

January 2020

- Bonnie Svrcek, city manager of Lynchburg since 2016, announced her retirement effective June 30. She previously served as Lynchburg's deputy city manager for 17 years and as the assistant town manager of Blacksburg.
- Michael Carter, Smyth County administrator for more than a decade, resigned his position effective January

10.

- Rhonda Russell has been named assistant county administrator/community development director of Charles City County. She previously served as the assistant director of planning-comprehensive planning for Newport News.
- Monica Smith-Callahan has been named deputy county manager for community affairs of Henrico County effective February 18. She is currently serving as the assistant superintendent of policy, equity, and communication for the Virginia Department of Education.
- William Kerbin, Jr., town manager of Onancock since 2016, has been appointed the municipal manager of Woodstock, Vermont effective March 25.
- Brian Thrower, former town manager of Smithfield and city manager of Emporia, has been appointed town manager of Crewe.
- Eden Freeman, city manager of Winchester since 2014, has submitted her resignation effective March 16. She has accepted an offer to be the deputy city manager of Greenville, South Carolina
- Brenda Garton has been named interim county administrator of Orange County effective January 15. She most recently served as the interim city manager in Lexington.
- Tom Foley, county administrator of Stafford County since 2016, has announced his retirement effective July 1, 2020 after 30 years of service to Virginia local governments. He previously served as county executive of Albemarle County and county administrator of Caroline and Cumberland Counties.
- Julie Walton has been named deputy county administrator for Prince George County. She has served as the director of community development and code compliance since 2012 and has been employed by the county since 1994.
- Jonathan Lynn, Surry County administrator since March 2019, was asked to resign his position by the board of supervisors at their January 2 organizational meeting. Melissa Rollins, formerly the assistant county administrator, has been named county administrator.
- Ted Voorhees, Powhatan County administrator since 2017, was asked by the board of supervisors to provide his resignation effective December 6.
- Tom Rose, Patrick County administrator since 2011, did not have his contract renewed by the board of supervisors and has been removed from his post effective immediately.
- Jay Scudder has stepped down from his position as city manager of Buena Vista. He has served in that role since 2011. He has agreed to continue to serve as the interim city manager while the city council conducts its search for the next manager.

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