

July 2019 eNews

Presidential Musings From James



A Noble Cause

I get to pen a few of these notes for our newsletter; other than giving some general directional guidance to the board and running a few meetings, that is my “at bat” as your association president. As I begin my term, indulge me a moment to remind you what VLGMA is and why it is essential to our life as Managers or aspiring Managers.

Simply put, the job of a local government manager is nearly impossible by design. Demographic change is afoot at the national level, seeping into our gentle burghs and counties, creating both a true crisis of direction and questions about the role of government. Politics is the way we analytically evaluate values, and changing values create a changing political landscape. The diversity is shocking as some states and locales have legalized marijuana and others are still striving to eliminate abortion and what is left of welfare. This incongruent diversity of thought exists in the bodies we serve and is just as lopsided in expected outcomes.

On top of this, our fiscal worlds are equally challenging. New revenue is hard fought or off the table. Any expense better not violate a sacred value of one side or the other. Want to pay your people fairly? Good luck. Budgeting can be the lowest common denominator that each member of a governing body holds. As elected bodies fracture, treating your staff fairly and innovating in your economy become harder and harder. You will have better luck building an animal shelter than a homeless shelter and nobody even questions the inhumanity in that perspective.

Add to this that those very employees are often under fire, figuratively and, sadly, literally. Our world is one where the shootings at Sandy Hook and Virginia Beach are fact and there is no trend nationally or locally that looks to change that. Public safety has become an awkward balance of serving a community which films your every move as a law enforcement officer because too many of them think “you” are the risk.

So here you are. You are the person who is responsible to make some sense out of this and make some progress. Your span of responsibility is nearly infinite and your span of control is minute. The people you answer to disagree at a fundamental level but each feel they have the mandate of the voter. So, in a cheesy announcer voice, you hear “At times like this, I take VLGMA”.

Though it is true that VLGMA offers some technical know-how at our conferences (stormwater, broadband, legislative updates and the like), its real purpose is to give you strength and tools to sustain yourself and your community. It gives you mentors, coaches and contacts that help on the worst of days. Most importantly it gives you the emotional power to be an effective convener of a solution-finding processes.

Problems transform from “insurmountable challenges of the offices” to “real world struggles that you can focus the community and elected body around” not because of your problem-solving skills but because of your leadership. VLGMA seeks to grow that leadership and to help transform issues from intractable differences to solvable problems around which a consensus can be built. The status-quo becomes nothing more than today’s challenge as you shift from struggling with elected officials to striving with them to do great things.

Yes, this sounds like leadership syrup, but VLGMA is the only association I know of that hires a Poet and Imagineer to play a role at our meetings. It is important to keep in mind that Mel wasn't there to make you happy or relaxed for the day, she was there as a very cornerstone of what we strive to do. Providing the emotional perspective and capacity to successfully lead is core to our mission.

As Mel, Carmie, Billie and Tedd (we should have an event for him!) move on to a well-deserved retirement, we have to keep our mission in focus and find a path that is equally empowering to our membership without this amazing group of long-serving allies.

VLGMA strives to take new managers from playing “whack a mole” with problems to helping communities do great things. What is on offer is rarely a solution, but very often a process to go from solver to enabler, from action-focused to convening those that must come to agreement. These are the skills that have sustained me in my profession and I did not have them when I entered it. As we figure out what we look like without these great folks, see yourself as part of the solution – be involved with VLGMA and help it be a resource for leaders for another 30 years.

Please join me in welcoming our newest VLGMA members: Joel Hensley, Student, Hanover County; Eric Pollitt, Town Manager, Town of Glasgow; James Morani, Town Manager, Town of Abingdon; Tarron Richardson, City Manager, City of Charlottesville; Joseph Tucker, Detective, City of Lynchburg; and Gregory Fried, Captain, Fairfax County.

[Contact James Ervin](#)

Congrats to James Ervin



Congrats to James Ervin
on his election as President of the
Virginia Local Government Management
Association (VLGMA)

On Behalf of the Board of Directors and Staff at
VML/VACo Finance.

ICMA Annual Conference - MITs

ICMA's Annual Conference will be held in Nashville, Tennessee from October 20th through the 23rd. MITs as in previous years will be granted complimentary registration.

This year in addition to this professional development benefit,

ICMA has a limited amount of funds available to provide conference travel assistance stipends to our members who are in transition to offset travel related expenses. If you are interested in receiving a stipend please contact me by email at rceasar@icma.org. Your email should specify your estimated total travel costs, the portion you will be able to cover and the amount you are requesting from ICMA.



Rosalyn Ceasarm Senior Program Manager, MIT & Senior Advisor Programs, Member Benefits &

Tedd's Take



It wasn't that long ago...

On the way home from the office recently (yes, I still get by the office from time to time), I listened to an NPR report discussing how visitors from outside the South are amazed how frequently and vigorously the Civil War is still being deliberated. The report brought to mind how brief United States history is when compared with the history of the rest of the world.

[Contact Tedd Povar](#)

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Civic Engagement - County of Albemarle



Focusing on Resilience: Advancing Recovery by Addressing Untold Histories

During the summer of 2018, the Albemarle County Board of Supervisors formally supported the adoption of a local Community Remembrance Project. Drawing inspiration from the Equal Justice Initiative (EJI)'s Community Remembrance Project, the Albemarle County Community Remembrance Project is specifically intended to be a community-building activity that creates a more equitable and inclusive narrative of our public history that is broadly accessible to residents.

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A DAO in the Life - Leslie Beauregard



Lessons Learned – 2007 to 2019

I was looking through some old files recently and found something I wrote called Lessons Learned. I have no idea why I wrote it or for what publication, if it was indeed for something like that. I am pretty sure I wrote it for local government professionals early in their career. It was written in 2007 which seems like a lifetime ago. I was only 10 years out of graduate school, four years into my tenure at the City of Charlottesville, with one child at the time who was also only four years ago. I actually mentioned my Blackberry device! I talk a lot about having a great boss to help me along with these things. Well, now I am the boss and the mentor and the substance sure does apply just as well now as it did back then. So I thought it would be fun to share these musings that really do stand the test of time. And as I said then, these “lessons” remain to this day as influential as ever:

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Derek Stamey 2019 Outstanding Assistant



Derek Stamey, Goochland Deputy County Administrator wins the 2019 VLGMA Outstanding Assistant Award.

Mel's Poetry Corner



Painting a Vision The Art of Leadership

With our paint brushes and canvas, we portray
our aspirations for a future day.
Painting a vision, a common lens through which to see
our future thriving, dynamic community.

Vivid, unique, challenging, focused, shared, clarity.
An ambitious vision could become our reality.

Relationships are our medium of choice
that gives the art of leadership its voice.
With a palette of people and events,
a leader, collaboratively, invents.

The highest of the performing arts,
for a leader, from the stage, never departs.
Living a life of integrity and purpose,
envisioning the possibilities and opportunities of public service.

We can provide the invitation designed
to bring citizens together in a whole new frame of mind.
Leadership is convening, valuing relatedness, presenting choices
and appreciating the diversity of voices.

We all have a deep-seated intrinsic need
to leave a lasting legacy.
Local government public servants have a huge vested interest
in making their community a viable success.

A decaying, depressing downtown or a Williamsburg, our children and
grand-children, bequest?
Local government is where the power and the responsibility rests.
Twenty years from now, what do we want to be?
A homogeneous mass suburbia or a beautiful, distinctive, vibrant, historic community?

A difference, we can make
in the future reality, we envision and shape.
A powerful legacy, we leave.
The masterpiece of painting a collaborative dream.



Position Changes And Other Events

June 2019

- Angela Lawrence, town manager for Chase City for the past 2.5 years, has been appointed Dayton town manager.
- Steven "Steve" Rosenberg, Staunton deputy city manager for the past six years, has been appointed city manager there effective 6/30.
- Linda Lumpkin, former deputy administrator for Essex County and long-time public servant, passed away June 22nd.

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