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March 2020 eNews

Presidential Musings From James



Thanks for all those who came out to our great Winter Conference. I had a blast with the amazing content that strove to help us be better leaders, better people and better at our jobs.

The VML staff that attended seemed to also appreciate a break from the General Assembly session. And speaking of that, what a roller coaster. Two things have come up recently that touch on some of our core issues as managers. Not being political and the higher moral purpose of the job.

The challenge to not be political was driven home by Senator Stanley's well intended but ill-fated attempt at securing a 3% raise for Sheriff's office Deputies across the state. It failed. Regardless of your personal non-work opinion on this issue, the reason it failed is tied to our core philosophy as managers. In short it was voted down due to the recent public struggle regarding proposed gun legislation. Some elected Sheriffs exercised their right of office to take a "political" stand and go so far as to state that they may not enforce certain laws. Some members of the General Assembly exercised their political prerogative to not reward the employees of those other elected officials. You see, political actions have political consequences. As managers, we strive to avoid getting into such situations as ultimately it is our employees and citizens who bear the brunt of things when they go sideways. Resolutions in support of the 2nd amendment were taken as political stands and given a political reprisal.

Even the appearance of being political can have an impact on the team. I had a code enforcement officer pulling campaign signs that were creating a line of sight issue. They were photographed doing this and the allegation that they were working to support the opponent of the sign owner started circulating. I also had a police officer once make social media comments about a local election. Though each of these things were legal and legitimate, did they help me secure fair salaries and benefits for these hard working folks? No, it created noise, distraction and the appearance/assumption that we were "political". Once things become politicized, merit, facts, planning and logic are all useless.

We are reminded to keep to the higher moral purpose by the proposed legislation on collective bargaining. I will not draft or vote on such legislation and can't comment on it being "good" or "bad". We are taught that as managers we are serving the higher moral purpose of helping a community enact local democracy and the best level of self governance in the world. How are these things related? Well, an article in today's Wall Street Journal shows the disconnect that was created when New York passed the same legislation. When the recession hit, we were able to freeze positions and freeze wages. New York? They were roped into back to back 3% and 4% pay increases (remember, our budgets generally dropped about 8%). The short of it is that the voters had a portion of their self governance removed as a large chunk of the decision-making of the locality was turned over to contracts and negotiations that would be the rule regardless of any direction in which the voters wanted to take the community.

It does seem incongruent to vote down a 3% raise and at the same time contemplate a program where regular raises could be demanded regardless of economic conditions. In the long run the second is a more advantageous outcome for the effected staff.

That said, the collective bargaining approach is an end-run around political disfunction. Teacher and Law Enforcement pay in the Commonwealth is in the middle of the pack nationwide, but low compared to the size of our economy. Perhaps handing wage and benefit negotiation over is a solution to how politically challenging it is to pay market wages and provide meaningful benefits. I don't know how this will work out, but I do know my job is helping a group of men and women elected to govern do just that. Anything that makes that harder is a challenge.

Please join me in welcome our new VLGMA members Brian Martin, Saltville Town Manager and Greg Jones Gate City Town Manager.

[Contact James Ervin](#)

Upcoming ICMA Events



ICMA needs host communities for the YSEALI Professional Fellows Program:

[https://icma.org/programs-and-projects/yseali-professional-fellows-](https://icma.org/programs-and-projects/yseali-professional-fellows-program)

[program](#)

ICMA Gettysburg Leadership Institute – 2020 Spring Program Applications Due March 13

Your local government colleagues consistently rate ICMA's Gettysburg Leadership Institute as one of the best programs they have ever attended! The Gettysburg Leadership Institute, scheduled for May 13-15, 2020, will offer 30 senior local government managers an opportunity to explore the leadership lessons of Gettysburg while enhancing their thinking about personal leadership, organizational effectiveness, disaster management, and other concepts. Team rates available. >> **Apply by Friday, March 6**

Link: <https://icma.org/gettysburg-leadership-institute>

Applications are now being accepted for the Mid-Career Managers Institute May 2020 Cohort!

Mid-career professionals who are looking to develop their leadership abilities and gain new perspectives on critical issues facing them today are encouraged to apply to the Mid-Career Managers Institute. The program includes admission to the ICMA Williamsburg Leadership Institute, four mini courses, occurring throughout the duration of the program, a credentialed manager to serve as your coach and the completion of a Management Application Project ensures participant receives 6-months credit towards the **Credentialing Program experience requirements**. **Application Deadline is March 29, 2020. Apply now!**

The **ICMA Emerging Leaders Development Program** offers you specialized skill building and exposes you to content at the leadership level. Build a cohort of local government leaders and engage about emerging trends, issues and opportunities to improve departmental collaboration. Get ready to hone the skills you need to maximize your local government management expertise: <https://icma.org/emerging-leaders-development-program>

Tedd's Take



It Really Depends on Where You Sit

Collective bargaining for public employees has become a major part of the new Democratic majority's agenda during this session of the General Assembly. As a former city manager, my initial reactions were dismay and chagrin—that is, *before* I attempted to “walk in the other guy's shoes.”

[Contact Tedd Povar](#)

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Alliance for Innovation



The Alliance for Innovation’s national conference, Transforming Local Government (TLG) 2020, is just around the corner – May 5-8 in Phoenix... **there’s still time to register!!** What’s in store? You’ll hear from futurists, trailblazers and entrepreneurs as they unleash their super-powers. All the details about the conference are available at <https://www.transformgov.org/tlg2020/>. Missed the early bird pricing? Not to worry, because of our association’s partnership with the Alliance, **you can register now with discount code VLGMA to save \$50 off the registration cost.** For any questions about the event, the Alliance team can be reached at conferences@transformgov.org or 888.496.0944.

Civic Engagement - Arlington County



Combating the Demise of Older Adults at The Hands of Opioid Abuse & Misuse

By Michelle Thomas, County of Arlington

Arlington’s Virginia Insurance Counseling and Assistance Program (VICAP) provides free, unbiased, confidential health insurance counseling for Medicare beneficiaries. Annually (between October 15th and December 7th), the Open Enrollment Period is a time when beneficiaries can change their Medicare Advantage and Prescription drug plans (Part D).

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A DAO in the Life



A DAO in the Life

by Ande Banks, Harrisonburg Deputy City Manager

What began as an intimidating question – “Ande, would you like to assist with the planning for the Winter Conference?” – turned into an extremely gratifying experience through which I would better understand and appreciate VLGMA.

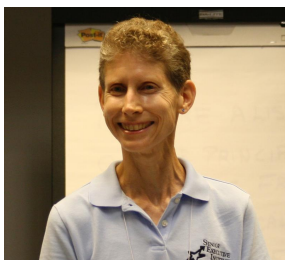
Prior to being asked by Tim Fitzgerald, Augusta County Administrator, to participate with the planning process, I began wondering how I might become more involved in VLGMA. Maybe like many, I joined the Association and have enjoyed training opportunities, attending conferences and certainly appreciated the relationships with colleagues, but that is largely where my investment in the Association ended.

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Mel's Poetry Corner

To My VLGMA Friends

A life in the public sector is a pivotal position to be



to heal and build resilient communities.

You are the Light that keeps the vision and the values alive and integrated into the experience of our community lives.

It is the daily leadership work of professional local government managers that sustains

quality governance despite the turbulent, capricious political frame.

Your purpose, your leadership, your vision ensures that our democratic values will endure.

Life well run, what does it mean?

We have to think, lead, collaborate resourcefully.

Stimulating progress while preserving the core, embracing change while holding to the truths that forever endure.

I am so grateful to have absorbed the rays your leadership light and presence make

and for all these years and this moment to reach out and thank you – I am filled with gratitude.

Contact Mel Gillies



Position Changes And Other Events

February 2020

- Scott Davis has been named town manager of Farmville effective February 21. He had been serving as the interim town manager since August 2019 and served as the assistant town manager since 2017. He previously served in various elected and staff leadership positions with Colonial Heights.
- Mary Beth Price has been named interim city manager of Winchester effective March 17. She previously retired in 2019 after serving as the Shenandoah County administrator. She also served in various leadership positions with both Shenandoah County and the Town of Strasburg.
- Fred Presley has been appointed as the Stafford County administrator effective July 1. He has served as deputy county administrator since 2017.

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