

May 2020 eNews

Presidential Musings From James



What a month. I hope by now most of you have found your sea legs and gotten into the rhythm. Sara from Amherst emailed me last night stating that things were normalish. Though we have not gotten that stable here, the change fatigue is abating and staff are starting to take on the seasoned staff sergeant persona that comes with trial and endurance.

As we wove our way through April we got to see a conflict of values across the country. Since we do this for a living, I think we had a special perspective on the “end the shutdown” protests as I suspect, like me, many of you saw them as the struggle between the polar opposite values of community versus liberty (Boles value model). The contrast was so stark that it was almost shocking. I saw one car with “your health is not worth more than my liberty” painted on it. We want to jump on the “wow what an idiot” train, but if we think it through it helps us in our jobs. We deal with that all the time. If you have a budget surplus (don’t laugh), are your elected folks likely to use it to hire more police officers, build a park or lower taxes? The answer is based on what they value and seeing that interplay nationally is informative. Since I value community slightly more than liberty, I was on the “wow what an idiot” train, but at least I understood their perspective. Many of these folks have fallen ill and many of them have driven infection rates up in states that were otherwise contained.

We also saw the General Assembly decline to move elections and to keep them nearly as-is (at the peak of the Virginia infection period). Some applaud this and some decry it as risky. Values again. Personally, I am disappointed as the individuals running for office in my community can’t effectively mount a campaign and that erodes the higher moral purpose of the job...enabling democracy.

Many of you have also had a task with the technology divide, not only with your student age population, but with your elected officials. Can you get a 75 year old elected official who has never owned a computer on a Zoom meeting? Can they effectively be a part of the governing body in a format with which they are completely unfamiliar? A number of questions and deficits have been exposed that we will likely work to address as the months roll on.

How are we dealing with all this uncertainty and challenges? My staff and I have fallen back on the basics. I keep reminding people that we won’t be better at this because of how smart we are. We won’t alter the outcome by being brilliant. We can make a dent by being kind, compassionate and caring. Keep your heart in the game even if your head has no idea what the next steps are. Innovation and risk-taking from an emotive position is an easy sell. We launched a massive free food program in partnership with our local restaurants and the normal bureaucratic “head in the game” monster reared its head with “how will we prevent abuse?”, but the heart in the game perspective guided us to move forward with trust and compassion versus extending the design of a program days or weeks to create some sort of needs based solution. This is just one example of lots of micro decisions that we have found easier to make when leading from an emotive perspective.

By now I hope you have seen the announcement regarding our summer conference. We will have a virtual encounter and it will feature an opportunity for you to vote me out of office! We all desperately need a chance to

“be together”, to prop each other up and honestly a safe place to have a good cry and be human. That time will come. Until next month, lead from your heart and keep your staff safe and engaged.

[Contact James Ervin](#)

Tedd's Take



The Indispensables

As a result of the COVID-19 crisis, our definition of who is an *essential* worker has expanded. Of course, those in the medical profession are more essential now than ever. But what about sanitation and transit workers? And grocery store stockers and cashiers? And restaurant employees—servers, kitchen staff, and delivery folks—who are laboring, at great personal risk, to provide meals to hospital employees and the general public? These people, in many cases faceless to us prior to this outbreak, are now critical to our day-to-day lives as we rely on them for necessary services.

[Contact Tedd Povar](#)

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Institute of Government Update



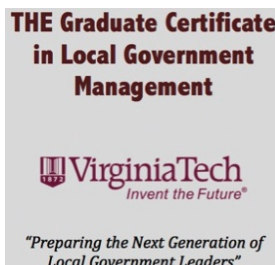
As your organizations grapple with next year's budgets, we thought it would be appropriate to share a recent interview with Terry Rephann about the challenges our economy will continue to face due to the pandemic. He is a regional economist with the Center for Economic and Policy Studies at the Cooper Center. Terry is also a former two-term city councilman for Cumberland, MD. He recently completed a financial impact forecast that covers both Virginia state and local governments. Please find his full report,

a one-page infographic, and the interview link below.

[Contact Charles Hartgrove](#)

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Certificate News



The Local Government Certificate program is working to connect finance officers and local government managers through a series of weekly webinars. The webinars focus on financial impact related to COVID-19 and sharing information for better decision making. Please visit this link:

<https://spia.vt.edu/leadership-development/localgovcovid19.html>

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Alliance for Innovation



Alliance for Innovation – Transforming Local Government 2020 Conference Goes Virtual

Local governments are already dealing with the financial impacts of this crisis. To support our Alliance Membership Community during this time we will be offering deep discounts on the cost of the TLG 2020 Experience. In addition, the TLG Experience will include 100% free access to furloughed and

laid off employees of Alliance for Innovation Member organizations.

What about current registrations?

- If you are already registered for TLG we will provide you an organizational credit, allowing you to provide access to additional members of your team. Alternatively, you may request a refund in the amount of the difference in the registration fees, or a combination of the two. We will forward new attendee information when it becomes available.
- If you requested a cancellation due to travel restrictions, Alliance staff will be reaching out to discuss your registration on an individual basis.

TLG continues to be the gathering place for trailblazers and entrepreneurs to unleash their super-powers! We look forward to seeing you online Summer 2020. 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.

A DAO in the Life



Leading During a Pandemic

By Donna Krauss, Stafford Director Community Engagement and Human Services

I agreed to write this article long before any of us could imagine where we would be amidst this current health crisis. The past eight weeks have created a mental exhaustion unlike anything I have ever experienced. The need to analyze vast amounts of information to make decisions was at times overwhelming. The unknown created concerns, fears, anxieties and worry among our community and within our organization. As public servants, it is our passion to protect and support the needs of our citizens.

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A Message from Past President Joe Casey



Joe sent this message out to his Chesterfield County staff on April 24th and it tries to capture the spirit of what our profession is going through...

I've had many good opportunities to enjoy seeing people "up close" excel at their talents. For most of my life, it has been a combination of friends, family, teachers and co-workers. It has also been actors, singers and other performers. When you are up close to all of these talented folks, sometimes you don't get an appreciation for all that is around them to help make their talent shine to their fullest.

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Mel's Poetry Corner



Acceptance

Acceptance is the understanding and patience to allow
whatever arises to be okay somehow.

Not to resist what is, is peace
and a life affirming, liberating release.

You don't have to like it to be
accepting of what is an incomprehensible, unprecedented tragedy.
The distress, the uncertainty, the angst will not cease
but in the midst of it all, there is peace.

We call it Grace when acceptance comes
for healing has begun
and healing lets in just enough Light to see
a glimmer of Love's ever present, comforting reality.

[Contact Mel Gillies](#)



Position Changes And Other Events

April 2020

- Sandy Wanner has been appointed as the interim town manager of Windsor effective April 21. He is part of The Berkley Group's Executive Transition Assistance team and most recently served as the interim town manager of Smithfield.
- Ted Voorhees has been appointed as the Orange County administrator effective April 5. He previously served as the Powhatan County administrator and has held several other local government positions in North Carolina and Virginia.
- Wendell Seldon, former Winchester City Manager and long time public servant passed away April 13th.

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