

November 2019 eNews

Presidential Musings From James



I just returned from assisting the staff at the Weldon Cooper Center host a one day leadership summit at the UVA Wise campus.

We spent a day going over one of the first tiers of local government leadership: consensus building. We brought in Russ Linden from the UVA staff to lead a workshop and I strove to set the stage as to why consensus building was essential.

It is our intent to create a series of these events featuring a mix of practitioner perspectives and academic guidance based solely on core leadership skills. You can think of it as a mini-SEI road show. Our working focus for the next event will be innovation in local government.

It has been my position for the past decade that our localities are not as fiscally challenged as they are innovation and consensus challenged. Odds are I can find a way to fund, even if it takes a few years, an innovative concept around which I have consensus of the elected body. The roadblock is rarely the dollars but a strong enough consensus that “this” innovative project merits the dollars. A true consensus can endure the pain of funding whereas a general agreement cannot. Consider the following “we agree that a strong parks system is part of our economic development strategy but we have to live within our fiscal constraints” versus “making a sense of place that is unique and harboring to our desired quality of life is essential and parks are a budget priority”. One carries the level of agreement and could be nothing more than a check box position on an issue. The other is a consensus formed from long engagement and carries through to results. We spent a fantastic day focusing in dwelling in and getting two that second zone where projects and initiatives are supported widely enough that they survive encounters with opponents and budgetary realities.

As we look to our next focus, innovation, we are sort of tipping our hat to what many of our elected officials have said (at least in the 80's!): Government should be run more like a business. In many areas that is plain false (don't get me started), but in one area they are onto something. Successful business fail early and fail often. They embrace innovation at a pace that produces results, allowing for the fact that only one in ten initiatives will deliver significant results. You may recall our core speaker (Nick Kittle) on the subject at our recent summer conference. Simply put we as a rule are very very afraid of failure. While Nick focused on department level activities, we hope to define innovation at the elected and manager level and take a deep dive into how it can be facilitated, nurtured and encouraged. The difference is that the private sector has pure profit as a measure of innovation success and we have some very complex indices of community health (of which the economy and jobs is only one). The labor will be coming up with a framework that elected officials buy into as a measure for innovative success.

As we look to 2050 when it is forecast that 70% of Americans will live in urbanized areas, non-urbanized localities have to crack open the innovation tool kit to continue to not just survive, but to thrive. Virginia is blessed with many urban areas where growth is the problem versus lack thereof, but the core need is helping the non-urbanized localities transition in this changing economy. I am delighted that the Weldon Cooper Center is taking hold of this

challenge along with VGLMA. It was great to see them out in Wise, breaking trail for the government they serve.

Please join me in welcoming our newest VLGMA members: Brandie Schaeffer, Warrenton Town Manager and Patrick Mauney, Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Commission Executive Director.

[Contact James Ervin](#)

Editorial: Why local government matters



Editorial: Why local government matters

The Roanoke Times

A few weeks ago, we wrote approvingly of the first summit of local governments from the Alleghany Highlands and Roanoke Valley and New River valleys. The official purpose of the Sept. 12 meeting, was for local elected officials to get a briefing on the research taking place at the Virginia Tech Carilion Academic Health Complex — and the economic potential it holds for the whole region.

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Williamsburg Leadership Institute



Williamsburg Leadership Institute

Today's best leaders have a deeper appreciation and fresh perspective on change, civility, continuity, values, and leadership. In this program, you'll discover the relevance of lessons learned in Williamsburg in the 1770s and compare them with what is happening in our communities today. This transformative experience will enable you to become the type of leader that provides citizens with the best tools and information to create a well-informed and involved community.

The endorsement below is provided by Molly Harlow, attendee at the 2019 Institute:

The above description doesn't do the value of this program justice. It is skillfully led by Jack Tuttle, Retired Williamsburg Manager and Felicia Logan, ICMA Leadership Development Director with expert assistance from Colonial Williamsburg. The experience is immersive and engaging while allowing for attendees to wrestle with value tensions and leadership questions that are important and relevant still today. It is worth the time and investment in your development to attend!

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Tedd's Take



Why do people behave unethically or illegally?

Having just returned from the Nashville ICMA conference and its heavy doses of ethics, and now watching what is happening endlessly in Washington DC, I have been thinking about what drives people to act unethically or illegally.

Sure, this behavior is easy to explain with such traditional reasons like self-interest, greed, bad parenting, low self-esteem, unfortunate circumstance, but maybe there is another underlying cause that needs more consideration: it's just easier!

[Contact Tedd Povar](#)

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A DAO in the Life



I'm Just Not Gonna Do It...

Richard Caywood, Assistant County Administrator
County of Roanoke

I'm just not gonna do it....I'm just not gonna do it. For six years, and through two County Administrators, I managed to avoid going to either the UVA Senior Executive Institute program or the Harvard Senior Executives in State and Local Government program. I had looked into both programs and I halfheartedly attended an informational session at an ICMA conference. However, to be totally honest, the thought of being away from home and work for two full weeks of “training” sounded like a punishment for some awful transgression. What were they really going to teach me that I didn’t already know? Who would take care of everything I was going to miss back at the office? And didn’t I already have vacation plans?

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Civic Engagement - County of Prince George



You too can work with the Federal government!

Prince George County IGSA with Fort Lee – how to engage a military base.

It is not often that the Federal government appropriates funding to a local government. But, that is exactly what happens when local government leaders actively engage their military counterparts and keep the lines of (emergency) communication open, literally. A sidebar discussion eventually led to an

Intergovernmental Support Agreement (IGSA) signing ceremony on February 8, 2019 between Prince George County and Fort Lee.

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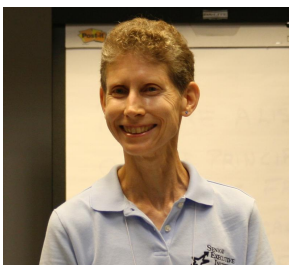
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Mel's Poetry Corner



Just Remember

When citizens show their appreciation of your leadership,
just remember there are days like this.
When the board retreat goes off without a glitch,
just remember, there are days like this.

When the most contentious employee decides to quit,

just remember, there are days like this.

When everything is checked off on your have-to-do list,
just remember, there are days like this.

When after restarting your computer, the problem is fixed,
just remember, there are days like this.

When your child asks for your advice and guidance,
just remember, there are days like this.

When that decadent chocolate croissant, you choose to resist,
just remember, there are days like this.

When your jury duty is definitively dismissed,
just remember, there are days like this.

When all the red lights, you just happen to miss,
just remember, there are days like this.

When a lover tenders a sweet unexpected kiss,
just remember, there are days like this.

When expressing love is your only reason to exist,
let every day be just like this.

[Contact Mel Gillies](#)



Position Changes And Other Events

October 2019

- Neil Showalter, finance director for the town of Mount Jackson, has been appointed interim town manager there.
- Amanda Kaufman, deputy city manager for Marion, Iowa, has been appointed deputy administrator for Bedford County effective November 6th.
- Dusty Forbes has been appointed town manager for Chase City.
- Brian Thrower, town manager for Smithfield, resigned. Sandy Wanner, retired James City County administrator, has been appointed interim manager.
- Joe Waltz, town manager for Front Royal since June 2017, and a 14-year town employee, resigned effective November 8th.
- Chris Boies, assistant VP of business operations for facilities administration at George Mason University, and a former town manager for New Market, has been appointed Clarke County administrator effective December 2nd.

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