

## October 2019 eNews

### Presidential Musings From James



Every thing counts in large amounts.

Local governments are now being drawn into the national hoopla regarding religion. Who would have thought? National groups are fighting to put each locality into their “win” column.

The “In God We Trust” organization began by soliciting (dare I say pressuring?) localities to put the phrase in their meeting chambers. We all scrambled and worked with our legal teams and became familiar with the *Lemon* test. Referring to god is only permissible by a government if the following three items are met: It serves a secular purpose, it has a primary effect that neither advances nor inhibits religion, and has no excessive entanglement between church and state. So the phrase was permitted in many of our Council/Board meeting chambers.

Having gotten past the display of our national motto in our meeting areas, the same organization began asking localities to display the phrase on their police/sheriff patrol cars. If you have not encountered this yet, you will soon enough. Once again we have rolled up our sleeves and taken a good hard look at it. In the case of my community (I do not speak for VLGMA here) this request fails the *Lemon* test. Simply put it has a primary effect of advancing religion AND creates excessive entanglement between the church and the state. How you might ask? Faith or lack thereof is one of the Federally protected metrics we work around as employers. Am I not promoting religion when I place such a phrase on a work item assigned to an employee who is agnostic? How about a pantheist? Would we allow an employee to cover the sticker with one of his/her own that said “I trust in no God” during their shift? Pedantic as it may seem, the answer is no and therein lays the core of the issue from an employment perspective. The potential EEOC claim from such a path is by definition an entanglement.

“In God We Trust” became our national motto in 1956 and the 1971 *Lemon v. Kurtzman* decision by the Supreme Court put down ground rules for its use in government. That very ruling has stood as a test for the use of the motto and remains to this day. It was the cornerstone of preventing the phrase from appearing on every Tennessee license plate, but allowing it as an optional plate.

I have tried to steer this down a much more neutral and useful path by asking that we show our faith through our actions. Are we advocates for the poor, do we support the exercise faith in our community and workplace, do we have compassion in our stance on issues that are relevant to our citizens? Don’t put a sticker on a car, but help me address homelessness, hunger and crime against the poor. I mentioned before that it would be far easier to approve an animal shelter (a use by right) versus a homeless shelter (special use) in my locality. In many ways it is the classic conflict of faith in the US. Does your faith make you righteous or humble? The righteous side seems tinged with some political correctness that we work hard to keep out of the workplace.

The short answer to this is to stick to the ICMA ethics guidelines and allow elected bodies to govern as they choose but per #4 Recognize that the chief function of local government at all times is to serve the best interest of all the people and per #10 Resist any encroachment on professional responsibilities. Putting a motto in a meeting chamber is the domain of the elected body, but doing so on patrol vehicles is the domain of the Manager. This is one instance, of the two in over thirty years of work, where I have had to say that a particular issue was the domain of management, not politics.

Please join me in welcoming our newest VLGMA members: India Adams, Assistant City Manager, City of Petersburg; Casey Armstrong, Assistant County Administrator, County of Rockingham; Megan Aubrey, Director of Administration Bedford Regional Water Authority; Charles Boyle, Executive Director, Thomas Jefferson PDC; Patsy Budd, Clerk/Treasurer, Town of Gretna; Perry Eisenach, Public Services Director, City of Winchester; Rhonda English, Director of Engineering, Bedford Regional Water Authority; Shawn Hershberger, Development Services Director, City of Winchester; Amanda Jarratt, City Manager, City of Franklin; Christine Lewis, Deputy Registrar, City of Virginia Beach; Melissa Lewis, Clerk/Treasurer, Town of Bowling Green; Paige Lynch, Police Officer, County of Roanoke ; Krystal Onaitis, City Manager, City of Covington; Donna Patterson, Director of Elections, City of Virginia Beach; Jen Satterlee, Contract Management Specialist, City of Virginia Beach; Justin Stauder, Assistant County Administrator, County of New Kent and Jill Underwood, Director of Finance, Bedford Regional Water Authority.

[Contact James Ervin](#)

## VLGMA/SEI Reception at the ICMA Conference



FOR ALL THOSE ATTENDING THE ICMA CONFERENCE IN NASHVILLE THIS MONTH, remember to attend.....

### **The VLGMA/SEI Reception - Monday, October 21st**

Drinks and nibbles provided

**Time:** 5:00pm - 7:30pm

**Where:** BB King's Nashville Blues Club

**Location:** 152 2nd Ave North

Nashville, TN 37201

Phone: 615.256.2727

**Website:** [www.bbking.com/nashville](http://www.bbking.com/nashville)

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## ICMA Job Opening



ICMA is seeking a Director of Advocacy for Professional Management of Local Government. More info available [here](#).

## Tedd's Take

### The Netherlands

The name "Netherlands" stands for "lower lands" and there couldn't be a



more apt description. With 78% of the population living at or below sea level, the country has been dealing with "draining the swamp," literally, for centuries. Windmills dot the landscape, pumping water, alongside more modern equipment, from the lowlands into higher retention lakes which then empty into the North Sea at low tide. It is an endless process: no dike or barrier is 100% tight and the annual rainfall rate exacerbates the situation.

[Contact Tedd Povar](#)

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## A DAO in the Life



### Responsibility with Organizational Change

Donna Krauss, Stafford Director Community Engagement and Human Services

A little over two years ago, Stafford County Government experienced a period of great transition. We welcomed a new County Administrator on the heels of an interim County Administrator. More than half our department directors were new hires. It was a time of uncertainty and trepidation. Often in these types of situations, there's a "hurry up and do it" attitude. Our new County Administrator chose a slow and methodical approach, using the time to evaluate the organization and to gather input from department directors on where we came from, where we were and where we wanted to go. The resulting discussions helped us shape our workforce engagement, culture, vision, values and our effectiveness as leaders. It took time and commitment, something that seems a luxury in the midst of change.

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## Civic Engagement - Falls Church



### Falls Church Engagement

**A Community Effort to Develop a Group Home**

The Miller House Project, initiated by the City of Falls Church and completed in partnership with Community Residences, Inc. (CRi), is an example of inclusive affordable housing and community engagement.

This project:

- Demolished an existing City owned vacant building to create new affordable housing options for people with disabilities, not existing within City boundaries.
- Expanded accessibility and income integration.
- Promoted inclusionary practices by supporting people with disabilities and engaging them in activities and events with other people in the community.
- Provided integrated housing opportunities for the special needs population that still lived in the Commonwealth's Training Centers and Institutions, long after the DOJ 2012 ruling.

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## Certificate News

The Graduate Certificate in Local Government Management is seeking your input on establishing a **Virginia Tech Local Government Alumni**

**Association.** This association would serve as a hub for students and alumni of the Graduate Certificate in Local Government Management. If you are interested in joining, please provide your contact information below. Anyone who is interested in preparing the next generation of local government leaders and managers is welcome to join the VTLGA! We would like to gather a database of interested parties and work on activities beginning January 2020.

[Read More](#)

## Mel's Poetry Corner



### Squirrel Jazz

Trapeze artists without props,  
O Squirrel, you dance fearlessly across tree tops,  
risking all in dramatic, aerodynamic feats,  
creativity requires such paradigm leaps.

In contrast to such exhilarating excitement  
is your life devoted to secure investment.  
Conservative bankers, always making a deposit  
of treasures cached in secret closets.

Your life shows us the way  
to balance responsibility with exuberant, socializing play.  
You have an insurance policy that guarantees  
vacation time can be enjoyed guiltlessly.

Learning through careful observation,  
you are masters of imitation.  
Nothing is copy righted in your society.  
Expertise is shared joyfully.

O Squirrel, you respond unpredictably  
when vehicles bear down threateningly.  
Do we likewise act irrationally  
when overwhelmed emotionally?

How you love to gossip and chatter  
about any old or new local matter  
and if you have an emphatic remark,  
tails become an expressive punctuation mark.

Energy, balance, healthy seeds and nuts may  
be treasures we should all squirrel away.

[Contact Mel Gillies](#)





## September 2019

- Christopher Price, deputy county executive for Prince William County, has been appointed Chesapeake city manager effective November 4th.
- Selena Cuffee-Glenn, chief administrative officer for the city of Richmond, was terminated by Mayor Stoney after an investigation into nepotism. Lenora Reid, deputy CAO, has been appointed interim CAO.
- Kevin Fauber, town manager for Mount Jackson and a 32 year veteran of town management, announced his retirement effective September 30th.
- Don Unmussig, Cumberland County administrator since July 2019, resigned.
- Desiree Moreland, assistant town manager for Berryville, and a town employee for 43 years, retired September 30th.

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