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### Greetings from Greg



Greg Kelly

### Greetings from Greg "You Can't Make This Stuff Up"

I hope everyone had a Happy St. Patrick's Day if you are Irish and even if you're not but want to be. Actually, regardless, I hope you had a blessed day. With a name like Kelly it's hard to hide my true colors of Irish decent. But having a name like Kelly brings forth one of those crazy stories of mine that I can't really make up. My mother, rest her soul, was a Fleming....Irish to the max and my father, rest his soul, was a Kelley... Irish to the max as well. So here's the part that I simply can't make up, somewhat mystical I guess. At an early adult age my dad decided to pull a James Dean... "Rebel Without a Cause". For some strange reason he decided to informally change his last name from "Kelley" to "Kelly". Sounds a bit rebellious but innocent nonetheless. After all, what could dropping an "e" really do? Regardless, at some time shortly thereafter, yours truly came along into the world, and guess what? My name officially listed on my birth certificate is Gregory Warren Kelly, no "e". My first name was after Pope Gregory I, and my middle name was after Warrenton, VA, which was close to where I was born in Remington, VA while my parents lived in Manassas. As such I became the

first "Kelly" in my family. Not a problem for me, in fact in many ways cool, that is until I began to do my family lineage and quickly realized just how important that "e" really was. As it turns out, my family arrived in this country's founding history and my ancestors actually fought in the Revolutionary war as well as in the Civil War. My family was not part of the Great Irish Famine which brought multitudes of the Irish immigrants decades later. So what's in an "e"? Apparently, a ton. In fact I found out that in Ireland there were Kellys, Kelleys, O'Kelleys, Kellies and O'Killia. So not just did my father's innocent and rebellious drop of the "e" change my names spelling, it moved me out of one clan into another one and also converted me from one religion to another. Hence, he transformed me, albeit innocently from pure lineage into the mongrel cur that I am and actually relish. Regardless, I'm Irish to the core and I love it, whether, pure or mongrel cur. Whether my dad did this out of rebellion or trying to be cool I don't really know. He was a little of both, but mostly cool. Miss him a lot.

A little rebel, eh? On to my next story you can't make up and then I hope to bring it all home. Many decades ago, I made a profound statement to my grandfather, and old retired coal miner and country gent. The statement was a quote from a Charlie Daniels Band anthem of the time, "Be proud you're a Rebel, cause the South's going to do it again". I was an innocent teenager at the time but loved the song and my Southern roots. My grandfather appeared perplexed that I would make such a statement and asked why I would say such a thing. I responded by saying that we were from the south and were Rebels in the Civil War and we could rise up again and prove ourselves victorious in the future. He laughed at me and said that I was gravely mistaken. In fact, he informed me that our family was part of the Union and we were Yankees. Guess that explains why I always pulled for the Yankees in baseball. I always believed he was joking because we often took opposite sides just for the fun of it. Needless to say I took my two daughters to see the Rolling Stones in concert on July 4, 2015 in Indianapolis, Indiana and on our way home we stopped at a Civil War Memorial on the Kentucky/Virginia line as we came back into Dickenson and Wise County Virginia. At the Memorial, which was a dedication to both Union and Confederate troops we noticed the names of my great-great grandfather, Harvey Kelley and his father, my great- great- great grandfather William Kelley engraved into the Memorial. I quickly discovered that they were officers of the Kentucky Militia (Union Forces) and that they truly were Yankees and not Rebels. Needless to say what my grandfather was trying to tell me was true but fell on a naïve teenager's deaf ears.

So where am I going with these stories? Simple, in fact. We all work in complex environments in local government, yet we should never take simplicity for granted. Even an "e" makes a difference sometimes, so pay attention to the simplicities of life and never take them for granted, And also, we should listen to those wiser than us...sometimes the elders really know the real truth better than we do. In the end, I laughed with my dad over the crazy name change and, yes, somehow, I still think it's cool. However, I regret that I made fun of my grandfather and never got to tell him of just how proud I am to be that Yankee that I never knew I was and of what his ancestry really stood for.

All of this said, I hope that you all see the underlying message, sometimes the simple things are important and yet are often overlooked. As such, we should be proud of where we come from and we should really listen closely to what the

people in our communities have to say because it really could be important, just as simple as an "e" in a name or a comment blown off in jest. In my work as Town Manager I have arbitrarily thrown out RFP's for simple things, but important in my mind, such as the cover page referring to the Town of Abingdon as the "City" of Abingdon, or misspelling the name as "Abington". Likewise one of the most difficult times I ever had to deal with from the Town's yearly audit stemmed from one time when our auditor simply cut and pasted a prior year's tax rate as the actual tax rate used in that audit. It was a simple cut and paste mistake that did not affect the audited numbers as the correct tax rate was used in the calculations, yet it led some Council members to seriously question the figures and overly scrutinize my tax projections in the next budget cycle. Another simple oversight that led to another major headache for me was a write up and material finding in the audit relative to Federal grant funds that the Town received that totaled \$500,012, which by law triggered a separate independent audit requirement of federal funds since they exceeded \$500,000. The bottom line was the funds were spent correctly, but that extra \$12.00 cost me a major headache in trying to explain the material defect in the audit. Had I been aware of this, I would have gladly coughed up \$13.00 of my own money to keep it below the threshold. I believe that number has now increased to \$750,000. These are but a few examples of how the simple things can mean a lot to the local government professional. So, that said, never underestimate the importance of the simple things.

Before, I leave, please remember "Local Government Education Week", the first week in April. Go out and teach your children well. They are the future of Local Government. Also, I encourage all of you to enroll one or more of your staff in the Virginia Tech Graduate Certificate Program. Registration for next semester closes on April 15. These are both important VLGMA initiatives to prepare the "Next Generation". Do me proud as your President and enroll several new students into the program.

Finally, let me send you off into Spring this month with a great Irish hero of mine' song, Van Morrison's, "Into the Mystic" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CEvsDuJYEnI>. After all, we are gypsies of a sort in this profession, and this group, at least for me "rocks my gypsy soul'. Hark! Please join me in welcoming Todd Meredith , Town Manager of Pearisburg and David Smitherman, County Administrator of Pittsylvania County as our newest members of VLGMA. I look forward to greeting them in person soon, perhaps at the VLGMA Summer Conference.

[Contact Greg Kelly](#)

## Position Changes and Other Events

March 2017

- Jim Bourey, city manager for Newport News since 2013, resigned. Cindy Rohlf, assistant city manager, was appointed acting city manager.
- Sanford (Sandy) Wanner, retired James City County administrator, and veteran of multiple interim assignments, has been appointed interim executive director for the Newport News/Williamsburg Airport Commission.



- Diane Hyatt, 30 year Roanoke County employee, including assistant administrator from 2009 until her retirement in 2012, passed away.
- Dan Campbell, Madison County administrator, has announced his intention to retire effective September 1st.
- Cindy Rohlf, acting city manager for Newport News, has been appointed city manager there.

## Mobilegeddon



### What's the deal?

Okay, so maybe the name is a little extreme, but you can't deny the ever-expanding world of mobile. The term "Mobilegeddon" came from the web development community nickname for Google's updated algorithm which prioritizes mobile-friendly websites over non-optimized sites. Since the release of this new algorithm, there has been an extreme shift for businesses and governments to prioritize the responsiveness of their mobile site.

ComScore came out with research that visually documented how quickly mobile surpassed desktop in usage in 2014.

Despite the jump to mobile, we are still seeing local government websites being overlooked and underutilized with their antiquated sites.

If your website looks like it hasn't been updated since 1999, that's okay. You're not alone. The technology wizards at TechCrunch discovered that around 44% of Fortune 500 companies are not mobile friendly. If you're not sure whether your site is up to par, [Google released a test](#) that allows anyone to type in their website URL and instantly find out whether or not their website is mobile friendly.

### Why should I be concerned?

We understand that budgets are tight and time is crucial, but if your government website failed the test, then you're missing out on economic growth. When someone searches for the site on a mobile device and they recognize that it isn't mobile responsive, they're going to do one of two things:

1. They will leave the site, find a local office number, and call in with their question. Your office staff will then be responsible for fielding complaints and questions.
2. They will leave the site with a bad first impression and attempt to find the information elsewhere. Information that is possibly inaccurate.

In addition to the visitor detraction, Google will also lower your placement for Search Engine Optimization and your community is less likely to find you in the first place. The graph below demonstrates just how many of your citizens own a smartphone.

Yes, we are amazed too. Technology may move quickly and sometimes it feels like you can never keep up, but creating a mobile site is not an *if*, but a *when*. It's

an imminent change and with the market still increasing in size, you're losing out on an opportunity to expand your reach and engage with your community.

### **How much will it cost?**

The initial cost is highly dependent on what you want your mobile site to do for your municipality, but we at Municode can give you a quote or consultation. Just fill out the form and we'll contact you to chat. What we know for a fact, is your municipality is losing money and causing stress on its employees that are responsible for fielding complaints and questions that could have otherwise been avoided with a mobile responsive website.

### **Where do I go to get started?**

Municipal websites have a refined service that they offer. Therefore, to make sure that your website can serve its purpose most effectively, you will want to hire a company that has a proven track record with assisting government agencies. You want someone who understands who you are, what you do, and how to create beautiful, elegant, and accessible websites with a (very) tight budget.

**Did your website pass the mobile-friendly test? How do you feel about going mobile? We'd love to hear your thoughts.**

[Contact Municode](#)



## Tedd's Take



Tedd Povar

## Mile Markers

While there are plenty of depressing and controversial issues to chew on at the state and federal levels, I'm going to pick something as mundane as mile markers on our interstate highway systems. How's that for avoidance?

Is it just me, or do most of you also have no clue where an incident is when a traffic reporter says, "There's an accident on the northbound side of Interstate XX at mile marker XX"? I remember exits by name, not by number, and I certainly don't know where every mile marker is on a given highway. Sometimes they throw us ignoramuses a bone by adding "just south of the 'so and so' exit." That helps tons. Thanks!

I wonder how many folks know that interstate highway mile markers go from south to north on odd-numbered interstates, like I-95, and go from west to east for even-numbered interstates, like I-66.

I also wonder how many people realize that interstates themselves are numbered from south to north and west to east? This makes no sense to me given that the United States grew from north to south, and east to west! Wasn't the East Coast the first with paved roads and highways? Then why is our main north/south interstate #95 and not #1? And why is Interstate #5 in California and #1 in Hawaii? And isn't it foolish that Hawaii has an "interstate" anyway? Think about it!

So, given all that is swirling in Washington, DC, and in Virginia, this is what I chose to spout off about this month. Mundane feels good right now.

[Contact Tedd Povar](#)

## Thirty Years of VLGMA

### Thirty years of VLGMA

Kathleen D. Guzi is a life member with 30 years of local government experience. She started her career in Bedford County as a budget analyst rising through the ranks to County Administrator. She completed her career as County Administrator in neighboring Botetourt County. During her tenure she was always active in VLGMA. She was awarded the Outstanding Assistant Award in 1989. She first served on the Executive Committee in 2000-2002. Soon after, Kathleen joined the ranks of officer and was President in 2008-2009.



Kathleen Guzi

### The Passing of the Torch

I have fond memories of my first VLGMA conference. The year was 1989 and I had been promoted to an assistant county administrator for Bedford County the previous year by our newly appointed County Administrator, Bill Rolfe. Bill was responsible for enrolling me as a member of VLGMA. He told me going to the conferences was a very important and beneficial part of local government management and invited me to attend the summer conference. However, I was a new mom and had never left my one year old son to go out of town so I was torn. Well, Bill made it easy. He completed the paperwork for me to attend the conference. You see it really wasn't an invite; it was a requirement.

So there I was in Va Beach missing my son but determined to make the best of it. Bill Rolfe, his wife, my husband and I arrive at the opening reception. Bill, his wife and my husband each see someone they know and they take off in different directions. The only 3 people I know at this conference left me standing alone. So I told myself, it was time to meet new people. And that I did! It really wasn't that hard. I walked up to a small group and introduced myself making sure they knew it was my first conference. I was immediately invited to join the group. Everyone was very welcoming.

The following day, one of the sessions at the conference separated us into groups based on the years we were born. This exercise proved extremely beneficial as I was able to meet other managers who were primarily assistants with similar years of experience. That group of manager served as a key support system for my 30 years in local government.

We represented cities, counties and towns but we were primarily from counties. I do not recall us being aware of the tensions that existed when VLGMA were formed. We were never members of Virginia ICMA, all we ever knew was VLGMA. This was our organization and we were proud and excited that our managers wanted us to be active members of VLGMA. I experienced an organization that was dedicated to promoting and supporting professional local government management. Over the years, each of us served on VLGMA committees including the Executive Committee and several of us went on to become officers and eventually President.



As I reflect back on that group of managers and the early years of VLGMA, I realize that group is slowly passing the torch to the next generation of VLGMA. At this past winter conference, several of us commented that it is unsettling as well as exciting to look around and see so many new, young faces. Unsettling because that group of young assistants grew up, many became managers and now are starting to retire. Where did the time go? It is an exciting time because an organization is only as strong as its next generation. And our next generation of managers and leaders are active and engaged. Over the years, we have made advancements toward welcoming new managers and first time conference attendees, but we need to be committed to improving. We need to continue to reach out to the students. Seeing so many students at the winter conference was very refreshing and holding the Certificate class at the conference was a great idea.

So, the "old guard" needs to stick around and continue to stay active and provide the historical perspective and support that comes with years of experience. We need the managers that we hired and mentored to be the next generation to stay active in the organization because now it is your turn to mentor the next generation. And for our next generation, if you are involved stay involved. If you are not involved, give serious thought to what opportunities are available.

So whether you are young or old , a newbie or have years of experience, in the early, middle or late years of your career, get involved or stay involved. VLGMA is 30 years strong, but we need each and every one of you to ensure the next 30 years are even better!

[Contact Kathleen Guzi](#)

#### Certificate News



The weather has begun to brighten and spring is in the air. As our students finish their semester and prepare their final assignments, the prospect of the coming summer keeps spirits high.

While our current students are busy finishing their work, our former students are coming together to help support the future of the Certificate program. A new alumni advisory council has been established to help maintain and build relationships fostered by the program. In addition to support from Stephanie Davis, the council consists of Matt Hankins of Rocky Mount, Mallory Stribling of Fauquier County, Paul Drumwright of Goochland County, and Krisy Hammill of Charlottesville. The council has a survey available to maintain contact with alumni and encourages all program alumni to complete it. It can be found here:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/TheCertificatealumnicontactinformation>.

In addition to the survey, there are a few programs coming up offering opportunities to learn and to network. These include the Alliance for Innovation's workshop on Local Government Challenges Today and Tomorrow. Dr. John Nalbandian will be leading the workshop through the topic of "Thinking Like a Leadership Team." The workshop will be in Newport News on April 11th from 9:00

a.m. to 4:00 p.m. There is also a Capital Improvement Plan workshop co-sponsored with VGFOA in Roanoke on April 25th. For more information, please contact Stephanie Davis.

In addition, the deadlines for registering for the fall and summer semesters is quickly approaching. If you are interested in any of the Certificate's courses or programming, Director Stephanie Davis is always willing to answer questions. She is focusing on attending a number of conferences this year, so be on the lookout for her. For any questions, feel free to contact her at [sddavis@vt.edu](mailto:sddavis@vt.edu) or 804-980-5549.

### In Memory of Diane Hyatt



Diane Hyatt

### Roanoke County assistant administrator 'left legacy of doing things the right way'

By Alicia Petska [alicia.petska@roanoke.com](mailto:alicia.petska@roanoke.com)  
981-3319

For decades, Diane Hyatt was a quiet, behind-the-scenes force in Roanoke County, keeping its books in order and helping to shepherd countless projects through the process.

"I would say you can't look anywhere in Roanoke without seeing something she had some part in creating," said Penny Hodge, assistant superintendent of operations for Roanoke County Public Schools.

"Her legacy across the entire valley is pretty wide."

A California native who moved to Roanoke as a teen, Hyatt devoted a 30-year career to Roanoke County, starting out in its finance department in 1982 and retiring as an assistant county administrator.

Remembered for her sharp financial expertise and unfailing ability to keep a cool head, she helped shape projects ranging from the regional landfill to the new South County Library.

She also served as a role model and mentor for other women in government as she rose through the ranks in a series of promotions that took her from accountant to chief financial officer to assistant administrator.

"Without even realizing it, for year and years, I modeled my growth as a young professional and as a young leader after what I was seeing her demonstrate," said Hodge, who got her own start working in the school system's finance office some 29 years ago and became fast friends with Hyatt.

"She was the ultimate professional, calm, cool and collected at all times," Hodge said. "A real collaborator and a quiet leader."

On Sunday, after a long battle with cancer, Hyatt passed away at the age of 63.



She's survived by her husband of 43 years, Wayne, as well as two sons and three grandchildren.

"We decided we were going to get married on our second date," recalled Wayne Hyatt, who affectionately referred to his wife as "Ace."

"The top card is the ace and, well, she was my top card," he said.

Hyatt always had a way of winning people over with her quiet, easygoing demeanor, he added.

"She had so many people who respected and loved her," he said. "She impacted a lot of people."

Hyatt was the first person Salem leaders thought of back in 2013 when they found themselves in need of an interim finance director after the retirement of longtime director Frank Turk.

Only a few months into her own retirement, she agreed to pitch in and ended up serving the city for about five months.

"I think we were all very relieved when she agreed to come out of retirement for a little while and help us out," said Salem City Manager Kevin Boggess, who worked with Hyatt for years both in Salem and in his prior post as Vinton town manager.

"I don't know that I can say enough good things about Diane," he said. "She was one of those people who was always easygoing and pleasant to be around, but also incredibly good at what she did. She got so much done and built what I think was a very good, sound, fiscal foundation for the county."

One of Hyatt's signature projects was the new South County Library that opened its doors in 2012. Hyatt, a firm believer in the importance of moving to a more modern, engaging model of library, oversaw the work as project manager.

"It was a very difficult project," said Clay Goodman, who was the county administrator at the time. The first round of contractor bids came in over budget, he recalled, and had to be redone to ensure the project stayed on target.

Hyatt led the charge to keep the work on budget while ensuring the final product could stand the test of time.

"It's now a great facility that will continue to serve the citizens of Roanoke County and the surrounding area for years to come, because of Diane's efforts," Goodman said. "She left a legacy of doing things the right way."

Legislation to Help State, Local, and Tribal Governments Counter Cyber-Attacks

For Immediate Release: March 2, 2017

Contact:

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Comstock Press Office: 202-225-5136  
Warner Press Office: 202-228-6884  
Gardner Press Office: 202-224-5941



## **Representatives Kilmer & Comstock along with Senators Warner & Gardner Introduce Bipartisan Legislation to Help State, Local, and Tribal Governments Counter Cyber-Attacks**

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Today, U.S. Representatives Derek Kilmer (D-WA) and Barbara Comstock (R-VA) along with U.S. Senators Mark Warner (D-VA) and Cory Gardner (R-CO) introduced bipartisan, bicameral legislation to help state, local, and tribal governments more effectively counter cyber threats.

According to a 2015 Ponemon Institute study, 50 percent of state and local governments faced 6 to 25 cyber breaches in the past 24 months. In the past year hackers also breached more than 200,000 personal voter records in Illinois and Arizona. Most states currently use less than two percent of their IT budget on cybersecurity.

*The State Cyber Resiliency Act* would set up a cybersecurity grant program that would provide resources for states to develop and implement effective cyber resiliency plans. This includes efforts to identify, detect, protect, respond, and recover from cyber threats. It also encourages states to invest in the cybersecurity workforce.

*"Cyber-attacks are a threat to our communities," said Kilmer. "Too often we hear stories of personal records being compromised by hackers punching holes in our cyber defenses. It's time we had better protection for consumers, workers, businesses, and governments. I'm proud to join with my colleagues to introduce a bipartisan plan that gives states more tools to fight back against these attacks and encourage the continued growth of a talented cyber workforce in our region and across the nation."*

*"As Chairwoman of the Research and Technology Subcommittee, cybersecurity has been a focus of mine since the beginning of my Chairwomanship," said Comstock. "I hear stories everyday where personal information of Americans is compromised and used by cyberterrorists. Cybersecurity has become even more critical to our nation as government agencies and private companies rely on technologies that are susceptible to hacking. The resources in the State Cyber Resiliency Act will give states the means necessary to protect their citizens from cyberattacks like those at OPM and IRS so that personal information remains private."*

*"One of the fastest growing threats to our country is the danger posed by cyberattacks. From data breaches at retailers like Target and Home Depot to ransomware attacks on cities' transportation networks, cyberattacks pose a significant threat," said Warner. "Despite the velocity of the threat, 80% of states lack funding to develop sufficient cybersecurity. I'm proud to partner with Reps. Kilmer and Comstock, and Sen. Gardner, who co-chairs with me the Senate Cybersecurity Caucus, to provide grants to state and local jurisdictions so they are better prepared to take on the emerging challenges in the cyber domain."*

*"It's critical that our state and local governments invest in cyber preparedness and training, and I'm proud to work with Senator Warner and Representatives Kilmer and Comstock to create a grant program to help our communities with this effort," said Gardner. "Colorado is at the forefront of our nation's cybersecurity efforts and home to the National Cybersecurity Center in Colorado Springs. As the threat of cyber warfare intensifies, it's important that local governments are properly prepared to deter and protect themselves from cyber-attacks."*

*"Cities manage substantial amounts of sensitive data, including data on vital infrastructure and public safety systems. It should come as no surprise that cities are increasingly targets for cyberattacks from sophisticated hackers," said National League of Cities (NLC) President Matt Zone, councilmember, Cleveland, Ohio. "Cities need federal support to provide local governments with the tools and resources needed to protect their citizens and serve them best. We applaud Congressman Kilmer for introducing this bill and urge Congress to pass it swiftly."*

#### A DAO in the Life - Matt Hankins



Matt Hankins

It's hard to work in local government and not have days that surprise or embarrass you. Whether it's that candid conversation with a resident in your preferred grocery store, a question that comes up at church or the Rotary Club members who look to you for answers because, well, you're supposed to know everything, we all face challenges living and working in our communities.

One of my most memorable candid conversations came not in a council meeting but in a Planning Commission meeting. I arrived in Rocky Mount at the end of a churn. The previous town manager, assistant manager and police chief had all left Rocky Mount's service within about six weeks, leaving the town with new management and new leadership for two of its departments.

After a few months on the job, I started to feel like I had my feet solidly under me as I worked to take on leadership in some projects important to the community. As community development director, I felt I had started to gain some rapport with my town planner and the planning commission. As I offered a project update to our commissioners, one told me he had a hard time believing me. I do my best to be honest, and asked him why. In a straightforward way, he told me that I wouldn't be in Rocky Mount in a couple of years. He said our town was a stepping stone for people who wanted to go to other places and do other things, but needed somewhere to start. He told me that he liked me, but didn't believe that either I or the town manager had Rocky Mount's best interests truly at heart because we weren't invested in the long term.

That's a heartbreaking moment for a local government manager, but 10 years later, it still affects my decisions as a department head and community leader. As hurtful as the candidness was, it led me to be able to ask and answer this question every time I have a decision: What's best for this community in the long run? I'm sure many of us have faced those challenges of building trust with community members and community leaders as we step into a new job, particularly when a

community is emerging from, or still in the midst of, turnover, change and tumult. How do we take that next step and move community members into trusting that we have the community's best interest at heart, and not just a selfish desire to serve until a better opportunity comes along?

I offer these three suggestions and reminders.

Be open. Candidness is a two-way street. We should give our community leaders the same straightforward and honest answers that we expect in return, always being prepared to recognize that discomfort often leads us to examine the possible answers and reevaluate our positions and those of others.

Be ethical. The ICMA tenets are there to guide us as best practices, as pillar principles and bedrock cores of our professional lives.

Be prepared to change. When candidness leads to a challenge to principles or decisions you have developed, recognize that we have boards, commissions and councils for a reason, and that we are here to implement the community's vision, not just our own.

The planning commissioner and I both attended Emory & Henry College. Over the past 10 years, we've grown to be close friends, not just through that association or through Planning Commission, but because we share common interests. While he still thinks I'm not going to serve out my career here, he thinks I might stick around for awhile longer. This time, I think he might be right.

[Contact Matt Hankins](#)

#### Civic Engagement - Frederick County

### A Civic Engagement Lesson from Norman Rockwell

By: Jay Tibbs

Deputy County Administrator for Human Services  
Frederick County, VA



Norman Rockwell, (1894-1978), "Freedom of Speech," 1943, Story illustration for "The Saturday Evening Post," February 20, 1943. Norman Rockwell Museum Collections. 1943 SEPS: Curtis Licensing, Indianapolis, IN

*"The human spirit finds many ways"*

*to be heard. People speak out. We write.  
We sing. We create works of art.  
In every language and form of expression,  
we offer opinions, tell stories, share dreams  
and lift our voices in protest.*

*Freedom honors this gift. It gives  
each one of us the opportunity  
to tell who we are,  
to say what we stand for,  
to express our love for others,  
and to show our gratitude."*

I do not know the speaker of the above quote, but I first saw it accompanying the above picture of Norman Rockwell's *Freedom of Speech* painting, which was the first in a series of four paintings depicting the four basic freedoms identified in President Franklin D. Roosevelt's State of the Union address delivered in January 1941.

So, what does this painting have to do with civic engagement? In today's political environment where our public discourse has devolved from one of respectfully listening and engaging in a dialogue regarding opposing views into one of name calling and shouting down those who have an opposite viewpoint, this painting illustrates how citizens can positively and respectfully engage their government and their elected officials.

The *Freedom of Speech* painting and above quote were presented to the Frederick County Board of Supervisors by a citizen who attended a board meeting at which numerous people of differing viewpoints spoke passionately, yet respectfully, during the public comment portion of the meeting. This citizen was so impressed not only with the manner in which the citizens engaged the Board, but also the attentiveness and respect the board members gave to each speaker, regardless of where they stood on this particular issue. This individual felt the painting embodied what they had witnessed that evening and provided the painting and quote in a frame so it could be displayed in the board room at all times, as a reminder of how our public discourse should be.

I am sure that most, if not all, of you are neck deep in your budget process. And, as you know, a part of that process is the public hearing on the budget. This year as you listen to the public comments during your respective hearings take some time and observe the manner and tone in which the citizens address your board or council. Are they passionate? Are they respectful? The important thing to take note of is that they are engaged. Many are like the man depicted in the painting. They might not wear a suit or fancy dress. They might not be the most eloquent speakers. However, they are all interested enough in the budget that they felt it necessary to come to the meeting and share their comments.

*"The human spirit finds many ways to be heard."* That my friends is what civic engagement is all about.

[Contact Jay Tibbs](#)



Mel Gillies

## Eye of the Beholder

We have a penchant to only see  
what we first believe  
and so our lives become  
archaic, solitary prisons.

But if we question all that we unconsciously assume,  
we allow a Presence to awaken and bloom  
with an aliveness so exquisite and sublime,  
now is an effervescent springtime.

The less trodden path of possibility  
lifts the veil of dogmatic predictability  
allowing the worldly anesthesia to wear off  
and ignite the revelation of illumed thought.

What is eternal does not age or decay.  
Spiritual expressions glow brighter every day.  
Open your emptied mind and embrace  
a limitless circumference.

[Contact Mel Gillies](#)

## Innovation Edge

### Recognizing the City of Charlottesville and Albemarle County



The City of Charlottesville and Albemarle County have recently teamed up and joined an elite cohort of cities and counties participating in SolSmart, a national program that guides localities in lowering the costs and barriers for the community to go solar and encourages solar energy development. To receive a SolSmart designation, communities must take action to reduce solar "soft costs," which are non-hardware costs that can increase the time and money it takes to install a solar energy system. Examples of soft costs include planning and zoning; permitting, interconnection, and inspection; financing; customer acquisition; and installation labor. Reducing these costs will lead to savings that are passed on to consumers. Read more [here](#).

**About the Alliance for Innovation:** The Alliance for Innovation is inspiring innovation to advance communities. As the premier resource for emerging practices in local government, we are building cultures of innovation and connecting thought leaders in the profession with the help of our partners International City/County Management Association and Arizona State University. We are accessible and valuable to all levels of an organization. You can learn more about the Alliance at [www.transformgov.org](http://www.transformgov.org) or contact me at [saburnett@transformgov.org](mailto:saburnett@transformgov.org)





The City of Falls Church will host the Spring DAO meeting, on April 28, 2017 at The Falls Church Fellowship Hall at 115 E. Fairfax Street, Falls Church, VA 22046 [directions and parking: <http://www.vre.org/> ] from 10:00am through 3:00pm. Planning for the meeting is shaping up. The focus of this DAO meeting is: "Creating Vibrant Communities and Economic Benefits through Arts and Cultural Resources and Public-Private Partnerships". More info is on VLGMA's DAO [website](#).

Registrations for this great opportunity for only \$20 can be made [online](#). Payment can be by credit card online, or mail a check to Molly Harlow, whichever works best for you. Please register by **April 14th** and invite any other DAOs that may benefit in your organization to do the same. Please do not hesitate to reach out with any other questions or comments you may have.

All the best, The City of Falls Church Planning Team  
Cindy Mester, Assistant City Manager  
Nancy Vincent, Human Services Director  
Jason Widstrom, Public Works Principal Engineer

#### Nominations Sought for VLGMA Executive Committee



The Nominations Committee is seeking expressions of interest from members who would like to serve on the VLGMA Executive Board.

Open positions include six Executive Committee positions (term of two years) and the officer position of Secretary (who also serves as the Board Liaison to Civic Engagement Committee and Communications and Networking Committee). The Secretary is expected to continue up the line through the offices to ultimately become President of VLGMA. Descriptions of the duties and committee assignments are noted on line: [http://icma.org/en/va/about/constitution\\_bylaws](http://icma.org/en/va/about/constitution_bylaws)

To qualify to serve as an officer of the organization, you must be a "Member" as defined in Article III, Section 1A - see Article IV, Section 1 of the VLGMA Constitution. Given that the Constitution and Bylaws are silent in this area for members of the Executive Committee, those members can be a member, associate, affiliate, retired, or life member, as defined in Article II, Section 1.

The Executive Committee meets prior to both the Winter and Summer Conferences, and usually one or sometimes two more times a year at the President's discretion.

It is VLGMA'S goal to prepare and encourage the next generation of local government leaders. We encourage those willing to carry that torch to volunteer

to serve the organization.

Interested members should email Nominations Committee Chair Brenda Garton, at [bgarton@fcva.us](mailto:bgarton@fcva.us). In your expression of interest, please indicate if you have served on the Executive Committee before, list any committees on which you have served, and include any other information you think might inform our decision. The deadline is **Friday, April 29**.

## Calendar

### Upcoming Events

VLGMA DAO Meeting - April 28, 2017 held in and hosted by the City of Falls Church. More info online [here](#).

VLGMA Summer Conference - June 21-23, 2017 at the Virginia Beach Sheraton Oceanfront Hotel. [Registration](#) open now.

[More Dates](#)

## Future Newsletter Articles



A goal of this e-newsletter is to keep you informed on activities relative to our profession. As with any membership-based organization, contributions by members are welcome and encouraged. Topics can range from a recent achievement in your locality to an upcoming event with networking potential to human interest stories about current or retired members. To contribute simply send your brief e-newsletter content (~5 sentences or less) via email to [Molly Harlow](#).

## Future Newsletter Articles

[VLGMA Website](#)  
[ICMA Website](#)  
[Alliance for Innovation](#)  
[Virginia Municipal League](#)  
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