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Becky Dickson

Don't ever take a fence down until you know why it was put up.... Robert Frost

Another favorite quote...oh my... have I stepped in it a time or two! This is especially true when you are new to a locality..... I have to admit I have taken down a fence or two only to try to quickly put it back up! Admittedly, I have upon occasion been too quick to want to resolve an issue, assuming I understood the issue (the real issue), or change a process and was just "too busy" to take the time to learn the history of the "fence"- how and why it got there.

There are absolutely times when we are compelled to take immediate action- but there are other times we can take a bit more time and feel a situation out. When we can evaluate the "fence" from all sides.

I learned this lesson the hard way. Its easy to fall into the trap of quickly evaluating a situation and then acting on it without context or history. We size it up from our perspective and make a decision-we take down the "fence". And when it comes down and no one was prepared for it or wanted it down (like it was a situation with a 20 year history you didn't take the time to understand) you know it! The proverbial fence can be among members of your community, your organization or even your Board or Council.

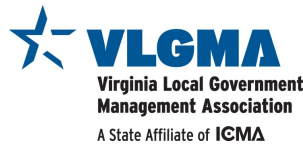
As we all know, context, background, understanding the perspectives of all is critical for success.

So before you take "it" down... do your homework.. its much easier than rebuilding the "fence".

Welcome to our new members - Matthew Lawless, Boones Mill Town Manager; Paula Nofsinger, Frederick Human Resources Director; Erik Johnston, VACo Director of Government Affairs; Beau Blevins, VACo Director of Intergovernmental Affairs and Amity Moler, Page County Administrator

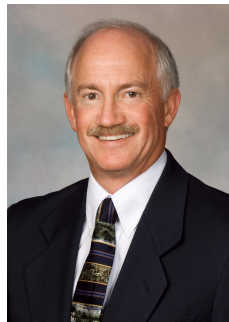
Becky, signing off from beachside...
[Contact Becky Dickson](#)

Position Changes July, 2015



- Terri Morris, Floyd County assistant administrator and current interim administrator, has been appointed administrator there.
- Jim Spore, Virginia Beach city manager, announced his retirement, effective January 1, 2016.
- Lydia Pettis-Patton, associate director for the Illinois Institute of Technology, and a former employee of the city of Portsmouth beginning in 1986, has been appointed Portsmouth city manager effective September 1st.
- Timothy Wilson, South Boston town manager since June, 2014, resigned.

Tedd's Take



Tedd Povar

A Lot to be Proud Of

We know we do local government pretty well in Virginia. It appears that others recognize this as well. In the last 30 days, a couple of items have come across my desk that

demand additional publicity, so here goes!

First, the National Association of Counties and the Center for Digital Government announced the 2015 Digital Counties Survey winners. The annual survey recognizes leading examples of counties using technology to improve services and boost efficiencies. Virginia is extremely well represented, as follows (by population categories):

500,000+ - Fairfax County - 1st place

250,000 - 499,999 - Chesterfield County - 1st place and Loudoun County - 4th place

150,000 - 249,999 - Arlington County - 2nd place

Up to 150,000 -

Montgomery County - 3rd place

Roanoke County - 4th place

Gloucester County - 6th place

Albemarle County - 7th place

Certificate News



The summer is quickly coming to an end. While the summer classes are winding down, the

Certificate program is in full swing to get ready for the fall. Classes will begin on August 27th with full enrollment. Before then, though, there is just enough time to squeeze in one last vacation or come to the second annual Certificate Professional Development Conference on August 3-4 at the Hotel Roanoke. Either way, the last month of summer will surely be fun.

In addition to the transition of the seasons, the Certificate is also going through a professorial transition. Greg Kelly, Town Manager of Abingdon, will be taking over Bob Stripling's Local Government and the Professional Manager class this fall. Greg is a proud member of the first graduating class of the Certificate program and has an MPA from Virginia Tech and a JD from George Washington University. Furthermore, Greg is currently the President-Elect of VLGMA and is an ICMA Credentialed Manager. As a longtime friend and supporter of the Certificate program, Greg is happy to take this next step. We wish him the best during his first class on the other side of the lectern and know that he will do much to inspire the next generation of local government leaders.

If you are looking to become a part of the Certificate program, either as a student or as a professor, then Stephanie Davis will be looking for you. On site recruitment at local governments is a great way to introduce the Certificate to employees, so feel free to contact her if you would like a session conducted with your staff. Stephanie will be in Falls Church on August 13th for an information session and is always available at sddavis@vt.edu or 804-980-5549.

Find the Certificate online:



Franklin County - 10th place
(That's out of 10 per category!)

Last, but certainly not least, as noted in the 7/15/15 issue of VACo "County Connections", Jonathan D. Sweet, county administrator for Grayson County, was recognized as the national 2015 County Leader of the Year by American City & County Magazine. See the full article [here](#).

Congratulations one and all!

[Contact Tedd Povar](#)

A DAO in the Life



David Moorman

A colleague used to often say, "Everything communicates." She stressed it with her staff to reinforce the importance of attention to detail. And she was absolutely correct. Everything DOES communicate. Too often, I find myself failing to be mindful and careful about this.

While it is true of us, individually - how we talk and act, our manner, how we keep our work space, who and what we invest our time and energy in -- it is also true of the communities and organizations we serve.

The physical character of our communities demonstrates the value we place on our communities - whether we cherish and protect and preserve them or neglect or abuse them; whether we carefully and intelligently anticipate, project, plan and sustainably execute or plod blithely and blindly ahead reacting as we are forced and blaming misfortunes, failures and mistakes on everything and everyone but ourselves, the victims. The value we place on our community communicates a message about the value we will place on the investments of others in our community:

Civic Engagement Committee Shares Best Practices: City of Harrisonburg



Ande Banks

In an effort to enhance students' knowledge of local government and born out of a long-time successful program in Frederick County, the City of Harrisonburg

developed a Service Learning Program with Harrisonburg High School (HHS).

With a condensed schedule, HHS honors students completed their academic and SOL related work in four of the five units leaving the final grading period for a field experience with city staff. The initial project possibilities were created and vetted by department directors and school staff. The project scopes were then pitched to the students by a department representative and the student teams picked which project they would complete.

The final projects included consideration of the location for a new fire station, residential guide, update and report on sustainability efforts, a downtown business survey and a public education piece on the city's public transportation network. These projects were completed in collaboration with city staff and culminated in presentations to city council on May 26 of this year. The video of those presentations can be seen on the city's website [here](#).

Everyone involved counted the pilot program as a complete success and are in the planning phases for year two of the Service Learning Program. If you have questions or would like more information please contact me at: ande.banks@harrisonburgva.gov. Both Jay Tibbs, Deputy County Administrator for Frederick County, and Tara

whether their investment will be safe, enhanced or at risk.

The financial character of our enterprises demonstrates our stewardship and political and managerial discipline. It reveals the seriousness with which we take our responsibility and/or our ability to provide for the general health, safety and welfare of those who rely upon us. What does my county's historic and current financial condition say about our government's ability to assume and fulfill its obligations and commitments? Does it promote confidence or invite doubt and suspicion?

Everything communicates. Regardless how humbling or even embarrassing it may be to pause and seriously evaluate what is being communicated through the people, processes and decisions we can control or influence (including ourselves), it is part of what we need to do and to teach others to do. "What does this communicate?" should be one of the litmus tests we apply to every decision we make.

While none of us can completely control the world around us, as local government managers, we have more control and influence than most. How much attention do we pay to details? If, by nature, you, like me, are more of a "big picture" person, paying attention to details may require extra effort (and noticing details is NOT the same as micro-managing!) Because everything communicates, if we want to ensure what we want is being communicated, we have no choice but to become very active observers. And we have to be willing to attend to the details that do not communicate what we want.

So, I am on a mission to change the details of my desk top because it's screaming, "I'm a crazy mess!"
[Contact David Moorman](#)

Woolever, Social Sciences Coordinator for Frederick County Schools, were instrumental in assisting city staff in creating the new program. It is also worth noting that much of the work of implementation of the program fell to Harrisonburg Social Studies Coordinator, Kirk Moyers, and HHS Government teacher, Jay Hook.

Innovation Edge



At the NCCCMA summer conference a presentation was made by Leisha De-Hart Davis who is with the UNC School of Government at Chapel Hill. Her presentation was on the recent work funded by the Local Government Research Collaborative whose research focuses on significant issues facing local governments. In my experience, local government grievance policies are not often discussed, especially in this type forum, but with Leisha's presentation many questions were raised and attendees gave pause to reflect on their policies, many of which they admitted were out of date. Should your policy be updated? How can you minimize grievances? How can you better track the path of grievances? This is a significant body of work, and I encourage you to find out more information on the Alliance [website](#).

The Alliance for Innovation is a network of local governments driving innovation throughout their organizations. You can learn more about the Alliance at www.transformgov.org or contact me at saburnett@transformgov.org. [Contact Sallie Ann Burnett](#)

Mel's Poetry Corner

Sincerity

DAO Meeting October 16th



In an effort to reach out to fellow municipal government workers in the further reaches of our commonwealth, the Historic Town of Abingdon will host the Fall DAO meeting on October 16 from 10:00am through 3:00pm. As this may be a long trek for many overnight accommodations have been arranged. Town Manager, Greg Kelly, has negotiated a spectacular rate at The Martha Washington Inn and Spa. An initial block of 25 rooms in the hotel are offered at the rate of \$159.00 per night and the rate is available October 15th through October 17th. Be sure to book your room fast, as the rate will only be available for booking through August 21, due to this being the peak tourism season for the Town of Abingdon. To further entice interest in the meeting, the first 25 people to register for the conference and book a room will receive your choice of one complimentary ticket to a play at the Barter Theatre or one bike rental/shuttle pass on the Virginia Creeper Trail. To make room reservations go to: www.themartha/VLGMA-DAO and follow the instructions on the link. Additional tickets for both attractions will be available for purchase on site or online. Greg has advised that if the 25 blocked rooms fill up by August 21, the Hotel will open up another block at the same rate. We will also have two sponsored receptions at this conference. The first one is on Thursday evening at the Hotel courtyard at 5:00pm. The second one is on Friday at 5:00pm at Heartwood



Mel Gillies

The world is but
our stage
for the comedies and
dramas in which
we engage.

Am I following a script
composed by me?
Is this role aligned with
my true identity?

It takes many rehearsals before
we can even start
to hear the inner promptings
of our heart.

Self-knowledge and the courage
to be free
are the necessary queues
for authenticity
and if ignored on our odyssey
beware the makings of a tragedy.

We only fool ourselves when we believe
that others are unaware of our sincerity.
Sincerity reminds us in all we do
to our own self we must first be true.

May this little poem be forever more
with heartfelt love, sincerely yours.

[Contact Mel Gillies](#)

Calendar

Upcoming Events

PDC Meeting - August 21, 2015 in
Charlottesville

Deputies, Assistants and Others (DAO)
Meeting - October 16, 2015 in Abingdon
[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.

Artisan Center. Trolley Service will be
provided from the Hotel to the Artisan
Center. The cost for this exciting event
is only \$20.00, which covers the
registration. There is no extra cost for
the receptions. For further information,
please go to www.vlgma.org Please
note that any local government
employees are welcome to attend. The
agenda for the meeting will be
forthcoming in the near future. We look
forward to seeing a large turnout and a
wonderful meeting in Abingdon. Please
mark your calendars and register online
to attend.

Calling All DAO's



Calling All DAO's...

Ever wonder how
articles are selected
for the column "A Day In the Life of a
DAO"?

Here's how... if you have a subject
that you would like to discuss, or a
thought you would like to share... then
please volunteer your services! We
welcome all submissions. As we are
largely a volunteer organization, please
help us help you stay connected and
promote one another, by becoming
actively engaged in this organization and
supporting our efforts.

If you would like more information on
the process, please contact either Sherri
Neil, Communications & Networking
Chair (neils@portsmouthva.gov), or Molly
Ward, SEI Coordinator/Leadership
Development (mjh3@virginia.edu).

Quick Links

[VLGMA Website](#)

[ICMA Website](#)

[Alliance for Innovation](#)

[Virginia Municipal League](#)

[VA Association of Counties](#)

[Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service](#)

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](#).

[ELGL](#)
[Website Contact](#)



[Forward email](#)



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