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Maurice's Musings



Maurice Jones

Maurice's Musings

The holiday season is absolutely my favorite time of the year. Thanksgiving is the perfect kick-off to the season with family, food, football and purposefully spending a little time being thankful for the many blessings we have in our country. I also love that beginning on Thanksgiving weekend I can pretty much hear Christmas music on the radio whenever I want. I'm just giddy about the possibility of listening to Nat King Cole crooning "Chestnuts roasting on an open fire" five or six times a day. Seriously, I never get tired of that song. I am one nostalgic dude and Christmas music just immediately sends me back to a time

of pure joy and excitement and innocence.

Maybe I'm projecting a little bit but it seems like many people are, generally, in a better mood during the holidays. They smile more often, wish you happy holidays and tend to be more generous and forgiving. We seem to need more of those good tidings today than ever before. The political atmosphere in our country has made it virtually impossible to have civil conversations about ... well ... anything. Toxicity is almost everywhere. In Washington, D.C., compromise has become a four letter word. Each side is just waiting for the next controversy to tear down the other. And it has now seeped into local government in a way that should be concerning to us all.

As you might imagine, the events of this past summer have generated strong feelings here in Charlottesville. Many people are still saddened and angry our community became, momentarily, the nation's epicenter for hate. They have packed the City Council chambers to express their anger and dismay. They are upset with the City's response, and that of the Virginia State Police, to the events of August 12th. And although we may have different opinions about what happened that day it is understandable people are distressed. However, the way in which a number of folks have expressed their feelings will not advance the discussions over how we move forward or continue to find solutions to important issues. This way of communicating, through shouting and profanity and accusations, at some point, needs to give way to real dialogue and due diligence and solutions.

Although this example is extreme, we all have stories about how we, our elected officials and staff have been maligned during the course of doing business. Whether it occurs during meetings, in the traditional media or online through social media, there always seems to be someone, somewhere waiting to pounce. Quite frankly it is exhausting. And unfortunately the people we have always counted on to be the rational folks in the room, the voices of reason have, logically, decided they do not want to put themselves in the line of fire. I don't blame them for not expressing their support of our efforts. The reaction to their defense of local government will be swift and overwhelmingly negative.

So, how do we get things done when people are screaming at us? First, we have to find a way to get people from the speaker's podium during Matters by the Public, to the tabletops of discussion. For instance we are working with a community group to plan a series of dialogues about this past summer where residents from all walks of life can come together and talk. Those discussions will go well beyond the rallies and tragedy we experienced and dig a little deeper into the challenges we're still facing. And then more importantly we, as a community, will develop action ideas to address our most pressing problems.

Secondly, we must continue to express the importance of civility. Some of our critics scoff at our calls for civility in meetings but we must remain steadfast in our defense of having critical discussions without the cursing or demeaning of others whose only transgression is to have a differing opinion. On too many occasions in recent years, we have seen people shouted down, or booed because they had a different perspective on an issue. This is a direct threat to the democratic process. If we are not the defenders of that process, who will be?

I know this article took an unexpected, and somewhat dark, turn. You probably had Nat King Cole's dazzling baritone voice in your heads when all of sudden, bam! I'm taking you down the path of discussing incivility. For that I ask for your forgiveness. But this is a critical issue. Not just for us and our staff but for a future generation of local government leaders. If we continue down this path, many of tomorrow's promising administrators may decide it's simply not worth it and seek other opportunities in life. This work, our labor of love, is too important to let that happen.

Now, I'm going over to my radio and dialing up some Christmas tunes. Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays to all of you! Cheers to a healthy, prosperous, safe and civil 2018!

Please help me in welcoming our newest VLGMA Member Aretha Ferrell-Benavides, Petersburg City Manager.

[Contact Maurice Jones](#)

Position Changes and Other Events

November 2017

- Garrey Curry, Jr., deputy administrator for Gloucester County, has been appointed Rappahannock County administrator effective January 1, 2018.



Tedd's Take



Tedd Povar

No Reason to Panic

Given that we are entering the heaviest travel season of the year, I thought it appropriate to address head on yet another of my pet peeves-interstate drivers who panic when approaching a police car (or other emergency vehicle) parked on the shoulder with warning lights flashing.

The panicked drivers are usually in the right lane and think that the law requires them to move over to give the police officer or other emergency responder more room, and thus a better margin of safety.

Unfortunately, many drivers slow down dramatically as they approach the flashing lights, put on their blinkers, and attempt to move to the left in the densest traffic. This can create a situation more dangerous than whatever caused the police to stop in the first place. When a car swerves left with little warning, forcing other drivers to take evasive actions, everyone is put at risk-all drivers and passengers in the immediate area and the emergency personnel stopped on the side of the road.

Here's what the law stipulates: "...requires any drivers approaching an emergency vehicle that is displaying flashing, blinking or alternating blue, red or amber lights on a highway to proceed with caution. ... If changing lanes is not possible, drivers should proceed with caution and maintain a safe speed for highway conditions."

And so as we head for the highways this holiday season, we need to educate our friends and fellow drivers. Let them know that 1) they will not get a ticket for not moving over 2) they shouldn't panic and 3) as Sergeant Phil Esterhaus said every week on Hill Street Blues, " Hey, let's be careful out there!"

[Contact Tedd Povar](#)

Millennial Spark in Arlington

Check out the Millennial Spark in Arlington!



**Michelle
Thomas**

By: Michelle Thomas, County of Arlington
MPA Candidate, Old Dominion University

The Real Estate Ranking Site, [Niche](#), identified Arlington as the #1 Best City for Millennials in America! This came on the heels of this [Washington Post](#) article also naming Arlington as the Best City for Millennials! According to the U.S. Census Bureau's [2015 American Community Survey](#), Millennials make up 30-40% of Arlington's 223,945 residents. Research indicates that although there are a significant amount of creative and brilliant minds in Arlington, Millennials remain underrepresented in the County's civic life. Arlington's unique approach and collaboration between the [Ballston Business Improvement District](#) (BID) and County Board Vice Chair [Katie Cristol](#) (who is also a Millennial) changed that.

In the Spring, more than five dozen Millennials attended a meet-and-greet at the BID's office to connect, engage, and share ideas around topics that mattered the most. Examples of dialogues included affordable housing, creative outreach tools to ensure we remain an inclusive community, and transportation. With this conversation, we gathered data that pinpointed residents in their twenties and thirties towards Civic Associations and Advisory Groups and engaged them! We also shared resources and then directed them to the new [Engage Arlington](#) forum, a resource sharing hub for constituents to talk about what matters to them the most. The result, a significant number of Millennials spoke up!

In addition to the Engage Arlington Forum highlighted above, Arlington also offers the [Engage Arlington](#) website that highlights new initiatives taking place now, which include open budget roundtable meetings, car sharing options in Arlington, virtual County Board Meetings, and a call to volunteer, or join a Civic Association or Advisory Group! As a result of the collaboration between Katie Cristol, County Board Vice Chair and the Ballston BID, our Millennial engagement list serve increased to 485 members!

Lastly, Arlington County's [Voting and Elections Office](#) provides opportunities for Millennials and high school students to volunteer and assist with In Person Voting through the Concierge and High School Page Program on Election Day! Volunteers ensure voters present valid ID's, use a paper ballot, and successfully cast their electronic ballots! Since the High School Page program was launched, volunteerism among Generation Z has increased by 85%!

While not all-encompassing, above are just a few of the many ways Arlington engages its residents. The plethora of networking opportunities and resources offered are tools that welcome motivation, leadership, and drive. Our County continually strives to include our highly idealistic Millennials who often exert strong positions around social entrepreneurship and other avenues. It is our goal to remain accessible, informed, and responsive to meet the public's needs and welcome your feedback on how to incorporate enhancements to make our jurisdiction better!

[Contact Michelle Thomas](#)

Another fall semester is coming to a close as students and professors are preparing for their final classes and assignments. This fall has been busy for all involved with the program, but the reward at the end is surely worth the effort.

As we come together with family and friends this coming month, take the time to look to the future. After all of the ups and downs of 2017, perhaps next year will be the time to make a positive change for both you and your community. The Certificate program offers such an opportunity for anyone willing to put in the effort. The next step is just a phone call away.

As the year ends, Stephanie Davis is getting ready to recruit the next batch of Certificate students. The deadline to apply for the spring is January 1, so the time is now to start thinking about taking that step. For any questions, she can be reached at sddavis@vt.edu or 804-980-5549.

Civic Engagement - Town of Warsaw

Civic Engagement - If I Were Mayor & Other Acts of Youthful Leaders

By Lee Hood Capps, Economic Strategist, Town of Warsaw

The 2016 elections in Warsaw had a voter participation rate of under 12% of registered voters. This per cent was higher than the two previous municipal elections. The mayor of Warsaw is elected every two years by the members of council. The Council members by a divided vote elected a new mayor with a transformative vision for Warsaw, the county seat of Richmond County and the Northern Neck's third largest community by population.



Lee Hood Capps

That vision supported by Council and staff focused on a re-awakening of citizen leadership, commitment and investment into the community. Successful main street, stormwater and commercial revitalization grants have lead the way for other commercial expansions, new businesses opening and private investment in Warsaw. Providing an intention foundation for this Warsaw resurgence is a commitment to youth and visible youthful leadership and engagement in community life.

Three vibrant partnerships demonstrate the *Warsaw Model* which is emerging and available as a 'kick-start' method for creating active youthful voices in a community with the demographics of an aging population. First, in partnership with the YMCA's summer "CILT - Campers in Leadership Training" Program for middle schoolers, the town piloted "Civic Thursday's" for youth which introduced water treatment, fire and public safety services via 'hands on' activities. The program highlight included an election of a youth town council - AND - the youth town council elected youth 'mayor for a day'. The youth council conducted a council meeting and the youth mayor held a press conference with actual

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members of the press photographing and asking the questions and publishing a front page article.

This year, Mayor Randall Phelps has highly encouraged seventh graders in Warsaw to participate in the VML sponsored, "If I Were Mayor" contest. The contest provides the second noticeable outreach for Warsaw's elected leadership to reach out for the engagement, ideals and civic commitment for the 'next person up' generation to be active now in making Warsaw their dynamic home town.

The third partnership of Council, town staff with youth to be visible in the community involved the partnership with the **VilDonEdutainment, Inc.** (501©3) arts organization. Entitled 'Mission-Focus' middle schoolers identified the resources and capacities of the community. Fourteen civic groups, schools and public agencies were contacted over the summer to have their contributions to Warsaw depicted on painted canvas through the art work of the youth. A communitywide unveiling and reception for the agencies, town council and young artist was held in the town park. The 'Mission-Focus' artwork remained on public exhibit during the summer.

The next civic engagement project with the town and youth partnered with **VilDonEdutainment, Inc.** is the construction of the community "LOVE" sign. The sign is being built and designed principally by youth. It will be placed in the center of Warsaw's revitalized business district in the Spring of 2018.

For Follow-up: On Warsaw's overall civic/youth engagements contact town manager, Joseph Quesenberry, jquesenberry@town.warsaw.va.us or VLGMA Civic Engagement Committee Member, Lee Hood Capps, lhcapps@town.warsaw.va.us or for VilDonEdutainment, Inc. , 'uplifting youth using arts', contact Donna Jackson, www.vidonedu.org or donna.jackson@vildonedu.org.

LHC:FINAL-VLGMA Newsletter - Warsaw's Youthful Civic Outreach-Word, December 2017, CAPPS Ltd.

2018 VLGMA Winter Conference

2018 VLGMA Winter Conference Registration

Looking back twelve months ago, the winter conference invitation referenced "an unprecedented and brutal election process in 2016." Unprecedented times certainly continued in 2017 to include national attention being focused on Virginia. "Brave Leadership during Challenging Times" is the theme of the 2018 VLGMA Winter Conference to be held February 14-16, 2018 in Charlottesville. Our focus will be on enhancing our leadership within our organizations and communities during demanding times. We have an enriching program planned.



Our Wednesday afternoon pre-conference session is an ICMA University Workshop called "Leadership Strategies to Move Communities from Disruption to Renewal."

This workshop focuses on natural, civic, and political disruption using case studies, conversations with content experts and action planning. Participants will identify disruptions large and small, positive and not-so-positive and create an action plan to better manage community disruptions when they arise. This

workshop may provide a new perspective about disruptions and will build skills to better lead through community disruption and create connection and renewal.

On Wednesday evening, there will be a reception planned at The Paramount Theater, a venue that was named the 2017 Outstanding Historic Theater by the League of Historic American Theatres.

The remainder of the conference continues to reinforce the themes of brave leadership as well as some nuts and bolts sessions about fundamental tools that are critical during challenging times. Featured speakers and topics include:

- Maurice Jones, Charlottesville City Manager will reflect in the events of the summer.
- Dr. Ron Carlee, from Old Dominion University (former Manager of Charlotte, NC and Arlington, VA) will talk about topics impacting local government leaders today.
- Noah A. Simon, City Manager of Lexington will lead a team presentation with Lexington Mayor Frank W. Freidman and Lexington Police Chief Samuel Roman. This session will review the issue of permitting "dueling" parades occurring in the community on the same weekend. The presenters will share how they managed an anti-racism parade, a southern heritage parade and other "spontaneous" events over the course of the same weekend.

As always, there will be plenty of time to network and interact with your colleagues. The popular Speed Coaching session returns with a broader focus. We encourage you to participate in this exercise as a way to collaborate and learn from others. Concurrent to this session will be a roundtable session covering a variety of topics to include Charlottesville's Open Data policy and portal, sexual harassment training best practices and effective executive searches.

The pre-conference workshop is included in the full registration. We'll also have the one-day Thursday only registration option for those who can't make the entire conference. New last year, is the ability to register for just the pre-conference session on Wednesday which includes the evening reception. This could be a great option to expose other staff to VLGMA in addition to discussing an important topic facing communities across the nation.

Mark your calendars now for another fulfilling conference. Registration opens on Monday, December 4th. Sign up early to get the best rate! We look forward to seeing you in Charlottesville!

Committee Co-Chairs --

[Leslie Beauregard](#), Charlottesville Assistant City Manager

[Laura Fitzpatrick](#), Chesapeake Deputy City Manager

[Conference Website](#)

[Online Registration](#)

[Omni Hotel Reservations](#)



Nancy Vincent

Nancy Vincent
Director, Department of Housing and Human Services
City of Falls Church

When I moved into the position of a DAO (I'm an "O" being a department director), I had to think very consciously about employee development and succession planning. Working in a small city, I also had to consider the breadth of individual duties and how to prepare staff for the next step which may contain exponentially greater responsibility. So we initiated two programs designed to prepare future leaders for roles as managers of programs or people. The first are Learning Circles made up of 8-12 cross departmental, high impact employees brought together to discuss emerging issues inside and outside the organization. These groups provide an opportunity to share different perspectives, stimulate professional and personal growth, and network with colleagues from disparate functions and backgrounds. The groups meet bi-monthly for two hours over a pizza lunch. Wyatt Shields, Dana Lewis, Amy Maltese, and I facilitate the groups. Topics of discussion have included work/life balance, career development, leadership, managing difficult people, emotional intelligence, local government management, and more. Maurice Jones and others have been kind enough to be guest speakers. Conversations are confidential, providing an informal and comfortable setting for professional development. These flexible, peer-directed learning experiences energize and cross-pollinate employees, building organizational depth and robustness. There is no sunset on these groups so some staff members have been able to participate for several years. The only cost for these meetings is a couple of pizzas.

The second is a formal mentoring program. What's unique here is that it is not a Human Resources program but something created and staffed by the City leadership. The goal of the program is to encourage the personal and professional development of a mentee through the sharing of knowledge, expertise, and experience. This program has been an effective, low cost strategy to reward high potential employees with personal attention and guidance, to develop employees, and to keep the most knowledgeable and experienced performers engaged and energized. Mentors go through an intensive training every year which is the only cost of the program outside of staff time. Department Directors, along with the City Manager and Assistant City Manager, served as the original mentors. Staff who were former mentees are eligible to serve as mentors for future cohorts. In this way, the reach of the group is extended each year. Mentees do not self-select but are nominated by their supervisors. The mentoring pairs set up a contractual agreement and work toward well-defined goals. The program lasts 12 months with a new cohort every year, although mentoring pairs may choose to continue the relationship informally.

These two programs are helping the City with the challenge of holding on to the best and brightest along with preparing them for future leadership positions.

[Contact Nancy Vincent](#)

Innovation Edge

Do you need to be innovative to be a great leader? What about consistent? Or, loyal? For Decatur, Georgia City Manager Peggy Merriss, those have been

benchmarks for her career, amongst others. Join the Alliance for a conversation between Peggy Merriss and Jerry Newfarmer of Management Partners on **December 7 from 1-2pm EST**, to hear about:



- What it takes to have a career as an innovative city manager
- Implementing innovative policies and change management

Find out more information on the upcoming webinar: [Managers Forum - Innovation in the Field](#) [here](#). Member cost is \$49; non-member is \$99. Why not do a brown bag lunch and fill the room to see the webinar?

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 or contact me at saburnett@transformgov.org.

Mel's Poetry Corner



Mel Gillies

Penguin Concord Dance

O Penguin, you make your earthly home
in regions where you are starkly alone.
Joys supernal and the depths of despair,
the highs and lows of your frontier fare.

You are the statuesque emperors of the Antarctic,
governing your insulated, desolate Republic
with a gentleness and simplicity so rare -
what in our lives could ever compare?

If thoughts of self pity should ever consume
and feelings of hopelessness loom,
remember these birds who in the bleakest conditions
live collaboratively with an innate, inspiring resilience.

They find purpose in the art of survival
with an awareness that everyone is pivotal.
Abiding together in enlightened concord,
the Penguin-ultimate, Marine, esprit de corps.

This holiday season, despite its hectic pace,
what a contribution we all can make
by emulating our Antarctic friends and be
an inclusive, kind and supportive community.

[Contact Mel Gillies](#)

Upcoming Events

Winter Conference - February 14-16, 2018 at the Charlottesville Omni Hotel.
Registration is [open](#).

Summer Conference - June 20-22, 2018 at the Virginia Beach Oceanfront Sheraton Hotel. More info in the Spring.
[More Dates](#)

Update Email Address



Making a change? To continue to receive the monthly eNews and other VLGMA notices, please email [Molly Harlow](#) to update your contact information.

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

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