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Greetings from Greg



Greg Kelly

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

As this calendar year came to an end, I could not help but reflect upon all of the major events that have happened to me over the course of the year and how they have impacted my community and what I have learned from those events. In the interest of brevity, I will limit this letter to only one such event, really that has in ways occupied my entire year. The most noteworthy event was the Town being sued in a very contentious rezoning of a large tract of historical green space from agricultural use to general business use for a major commercial development, multi-use sports complex and a small outdoor amphitheater. This lawsuit followed the second reading and approval of the rezoning at a public hearing that had to be moved from the Town Hall to the Southwest Higher Education Center because of the size of the crowd and fire code restrictions. The suit began just around this time last year and was just concluded a few weeks ago with the Town prevailing. Having been a local government attorney and having a separate Town Attorney on staff, I was always confident that we had conducted the public hearings properly and that the rezoning was fairly debatable and therefore could not be deemed arbitrary and capricious. Nonetheless, the underlying rezoning issue transformed our little town from a town where there was

little civic engagement to one where there is now regular heavy engagement. In addition, this event led to two incumbents losing their seats on Council, mid-way through the lawsuit, the selection of a new Mayor, countless rapid-fire FOIA requests anytime there is a public hearing or action item on the agenda, and split our community, even friends and families, into "them" and "us" factions. These latter two impacts have taken a great toll upon the morale of the town staff, and the thoughts of the scrutiny that lay ahead with any future major public policy decision. Many of you are aware of this event and you have offered me lots of helpful advice and insight into my dilemma. For that I am grateful as your wisdom and advice have provided me with much comfort and confidence in moving forward.

So there are several lessons to be learned from my experience as you can imagine. First, we need to take the time, as administrators, to gage the pulse of the "will of the people" and not just merely rely upon the politicians for that. Second, never assume that the public is not paying attention even when they are not showing up at meetings. Third, learn to sell your cause in advance, both to the public and the press. Fourth, transparency and public input are vital to local government decision making process. And last, but not least, try to keep a level head, welcome debate, never take the criticism personally, and move on. This last lesson learned can best be summed up in a song that Jimmy Buffett wrote after Hurricane Katrina, entitled "*Breathe In, Breathe Out, Move On*". I attach the link [here](#) for you to take in the description of how to deal with the aftermath of the community destruction that happens with a hurricane. While Abingdon and many of your communities do not have real life catastrophic hurricanes, we all experience community storms of controversy that we have to find ways to deal with, overcome, learn from and move on. Believe me, I have listened to this song hundreds of times over the past few years to help me keep a level keel and to help me realize that no matter how bad I think a controversial event is there is usually somewhere else in the world where it is worse.

Just as the calendar year ended with reflection, the new one begins with resolve and planning of how to best move forward. Accordingly, I take those lessons learned from last year and now put them to positive use by moving forward with what I deem to be a great long term project that will help promote and sustain Abingdon's growth and quality of life for generations to come. As such, my professional resolution for this New Year is to keep moving forward with honoring the past and having faith for the future for the Town of Abingdon, which just happens to be the Town's motto, *Honor Pro Antiquis, Fides Pro Futuris*. That said, I think that the one thing that draws all local government leaders together in commonality is just that. We all know we are not in this line of work for the money, rather, most, if not all of us, are in it to make a difference in our community, while striving diligently to adhere to the Athenian Oath by returning and leaving our respective communities, "not only, not less, but greater and more beautiful than they were transmitted to us."

Let me end on an extremely uplifting note for the upcoming year. It has recently come to my attention that VLGMA celebrates its 30th birthday this year. While local government administrators have been regularly and actively assembled as a group in Virginia since 1947, it is my understanding from our own resident historian, Ed Daley, that VLGMA first officially became an independent

organization of local government leaders in 1987. So, as we move forward we hope to use this as a theme and have various articles published in the newsletter each month from various members of VLGMA about what it has meant to the past, present and future of our profession. With that said, here's to a big Happy Birthday this year for VLGMA!

Until next time, *Breathe In, Breathe Out, Move On!* And a Happy and Prosperous New Year to you all!

[Contact Greg Kelly](#)

Position Changes

December 2016

- John H. Hughes IV, Children's Services Act coordinator for the city of Lynchburg, has been appointed assistant city manager there.
- Neiman Young, currently a company commander for the US Army at Ft. Bragg, NC, has been appointed administrator for King George County.
- Tom Foley, Albemarle County executive since 2011, and deputy there for 11 years, has been appointed Stafford County administrator, effective February 1, 2017. Doug Walker, deputy county executive, has been appointed interim executive effective that same date.
- Steve Miner, Accomack County administrator since 2004, has announced his retirement from public service after 32 years, effective January 31, 2017, and his plans to join a private consulting firm.
- Timothy Wilson, former town manager for South Boston, has been appointed Essex County administrator.
- Sabrina Joy-Hogg, chief deputy city manager for Norfolk since 2011, has been appointed deputy city manager for Charlotte, NC.



VLGMA Breakroom - VML Legislative Day and VACo Legislative Day

VLGMA Breakroom - VML Legislative Day and VACo Legislative Day



Virginia Municipal League's Legislative Day is on January 25, 2017. The break room (coffee, soft drinks and snacks) will be open from 1:00 p.m. to 2:45 p.m.

located in the 8th Floor West Conference room in the General Assembly Building. We are also hosting the breakroom for the Virginia Association of Counties' Legislative Day on Thursday, February 2, 2017 from 1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. in the same room, 8th Floor West Conference room.

Have you registered for the Winter Conference Yet??



Have you registered for the Winter Conference Yet??

Don't miss out!!

We start with a half-day session on Wednesday afternoon with a fantastic slate of speakers. Focusing on relationship building, community policing, and inclusive leadership, we will hear from Laurie Robinson, co-chair of the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing. Download a copy of the final report from the VLGMA website if you don't already have a copy. We will learn about innovative community policing efforts from Chief Sean Dunn and his staff at the Martinsville Police Department. The city's overall crime rate has decreased 21% this year with a 48% reduction in violent crime that Chief Dunn attributes to their all-encompassing community policing efforts. Former Charlotte City Manager and current ODU Professor Ron Carlee will talk about his Charlotte experience and response to an officer involved shooting and police/community relations. We will also have a presentation on body-worn cameras and other cutting-edge technologies and use of analytics with James "Chip" Coldren, Managing Director for Justice Programs at CNA in the Institute for Public Research in Arlington, VA. Given recent police events throughout our country that have garnered significant attention, this workshop is especially timely as we confront changes in our society. This workshop is included in the full-conference registration. In addition to the full conference, we're also offering a Wednesday-only registration for \$50. Why not send other members of your staff to this great session? VLGMA membership is not required to attend.

The conference continues with a great lineup of speakers and networking opportunities with your fellow VLGMA colleagues. Our dynamic lineup includes:

- US Senator Mark Warner (to be confirmed very soon) and Richmond Times-Dispatch journalist Jeff Schapiro in a conversation about community relationship building, changes in political culture, and changing expectations of public servants. After the election we just experienced, hear from folks who are acutely attuned to the political arena.
- Jim Regimbal will present on the current status of the State Budget and where we go from here. We'll also have legislative updates from those in the know.
- We'll get transportation policy and funding updates from VDOT Commissioner Charlie Kilpatrick and DRPT Director Jennifer Mitchell.
- VML Insurance will present an important risk management session focusing on cyber security and risk analysis.

We will also have a return of speed coaching for students and those new to the profession to hear from some of our more "seasoned" members. There will also be time for some in-depth nuts and bolts discussion regarding current issues facing our members and the debut of a new civic engagement video. Some of the best learning occurs when we discuss our issues with each other.

There is something for everyone. You won't want to miss out on this great conference. Make sure to [register](#) today!!

Tedd's Take

Never Assume They Know



Tedd Povar

With every new local election, one problem becomes more apparent. But it is a problem with a solution.

It is a mistake for administrators to assume that their board or council members understand either the workings of local government or the governing body's role within that system.

Administrators may assume-and hope-that their new governing-body members have done some homework, prior to running for office, on the responsibilities of elected officials, or that they would quietly learn from their experienced peers as time went on. Administrators may also think that the current members learned the ropes long ago and that it would be insulting to orient them again.

Wrong, wrong and wrong.

Being a member of a board or council is a part-time job and is usually not the most important thing these individuals do day to day. If they work and have family obligations, there is little time left to study up on the nuances of the council-manager form of government and the do's and don'ts that make for an effective relationship between the elected body and the hired professional.

After working in this realm on a daily basis, administrators may come to believe local government structures and systems are easy to understand. As with any job, eventually it becomes less complicated, and you start to presume anyone should be able to understand it with little effort. Not so.

After every election, when a new governing body is constituted, time should be taken to conduct a formal review of the basics of the council-manager system: the separate roles of the elected political leaders and the hired professional manager, objectives, procedures, and rules of order for meetings.

It'll be time well spent. Never assume they know.

[Contact Tedd Povar](#)

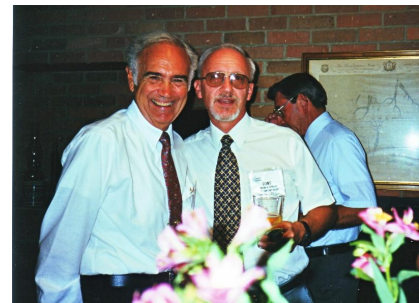
Thirty Years of VLGMA

Thirty years of VLGMA

June 30, 2017 is the thirty year anniversary of the merger of Virginia county administrators, city managers and town managers into VLGMA. Some sessions at our Summer Conference will relate to this celebration. As preparation, some of our members will reflect on our past and their future expectations in the newsletter.

Clint Strong is a Life Member of VLGMA and ICMA.

He served on the VLGMA executive board and he served as our fifth association president in 1991-1992. Clint was city manager of Hopewell from 1977 until his retirement in 2000. He previously served as city manager of Groton, Connecticut and in a number of positions in Cincinnati, Ohio and in California. Clint received the 35-year service award from ICMA in 1999.



Clint Strong with Wendell Seldon

Transition of the Virginia ICMA and Growth Pains

Clinton H. Strong

Having served on the executive board of the Virginia ICMA before the transition and then on the new VLGMA, I was asked to share my recall of this transition. A brief discussion on our history may help with perspective.

The City Manager plan was initiated in Staunton, Virginia in 1908 from a desire of this community for more accountability and efficiency in doing the public's business. An immediate trend setting decision was to hire a manager from outside the city and Charles E Ashburner was retained from Richmond to set a new pattern. A new way of doing business had come to town. A few years later a Code of Ethics was written to define expectations of this position. The core of the code was for the City Manager to refrain from participating in partisan activities, resist any encroachment on his responsibilities and handle all personnel matters on merit. City Managers had to be strong, independent thinking individuals able to resist traditional encroachments and slowly create a business model promoting efficiency, merit and accountability. The Code of Ethics set the standard all City Managers were expected to meet. Virginia City Managers prided themselves as being a unique breed bringing professionalism to local government. Virginia City Managers considered themselves set apart and up until the 1970's attended City Manager gatherings in suit and tie to set a higher standard.

In 1969 the Ethics Code was expanded to include all appointed executives in cities, counties and local governments which laid the groundwork for eventually transitioning to the VLGMA.

Virginia independent cities are full service communities providing all local services as compared to counties with a mixed combination of service levels with the state providing many of the services provided by cities for their residents. Counties had limited financial resources and required fewer urban type services, but all this was changing.

I recall leadership, especially from Sonny Culverhouse and Bob Noe in 1986 through 1987, which led to the decision to replace the Virginia ICMA with the VLGMA with full inclusion of county executives. Discussions were lively with sincere opposition to change. All of the old fears that county managers had less responsibility, were partisan and not willing to stand firm in resisting encroachment were voiced, but yielded to recognition of the ever increasing professionalism of many county executives especially in northern Virginia. The conclusion was that city and county executives could all benefit from sharing experiences and promoting cooperation and professionalism.

The VLGMA was created in 1987/88 to replace the Virginia ICMA, with 12 executive officers to include 5 county execs, 1 town manager and 6 city managers. Not all city and county executives accepted or participated in the expanded association. Some outstanding and active City Managers immediately removed themselves from all association activity and never returned. The new VLGMA however continued to abide by the Code of Ethics, but with greater diversity in type of government, gender and race and therefore became more representative of their communities.

[Contact Clint Strong](#)

Member Spotlight - Jim Oliver

"City work is noble work": Former Norfolk city manager named its First Citizen

By Linda Lamm English, Correspondent - The Virginian-Pilot



Jim Oliver

He once managed the city. Now, he's its First Citizen.

Jim Oliver said it was "wonderful" and "humbling" to be recently named Norfolk's First Citizen in Civic Affairs. The Cosmopolitan Club of Norfolk will present him with a Distinguished Service Medal on April 8 at the Norfolk Yacht and Country Club.

"I've loved this city all my life," said Oliver, 74. "It means something to think that my city would notice what I have done. There are so many people who deserve it before me."

Peggy McPhillips, the Cosmopolitan Club's president, got to know Oliver when she was interviewed and hired by him in 1997 for the position he created, city historian. It's a job she still holds.

The First Citizen award, she said, is a "special thing every year, but he is so deserving. I was impressed that he really valued our local history."

Oliver said history "creates cultural awareness." He was city manager from 1987-1999.

While he's being honored for past contributions to Norfolk and the region, he's also being recognized for continued "civic engagement," McPhillips said.

Read more [here](#).

[Contact Jim Oliver](#)

Certificate News



With the new year begun, new and returning students are getting ready for classes and the next steps toward better professional development. To help get our students even more motivated, we like to recognize our recent Certificate graduates from this past semester. We had 25 students join the ranks of our alumni. Please join us in congratulating them.

Chuck Banner, Town of Abingdon
Jill Cooper, Fairfax County
Joseph Carter, Loudoun County
Kevin Costello, Town of Abingdon
Richard Cabellos, Fairfax County
Heather Diez, Fairfax County
David English, Montgomery County
Patrick Elwell, Roanoke County
John Grieser, Amherst County
Larry Grant, CPAP
Shawn Gordon, James City County
Steven Greenway, City of Roanoke
Brett Hinson, Henrico County

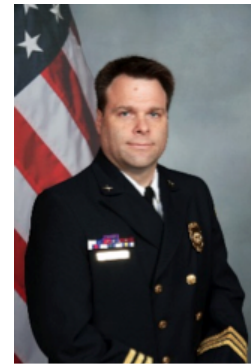
Khristina Hammill, City of Charlottesville
Michael Hudgins, City of Newport News
Donal Janderup, City of Williamsburg
Matthew Kraegel, Henrico County
Roberta Longworth, Fairfax County
David Malewitz, City of Lynchburg
Buddy Rizer, Loudoun County
Lee Rees, Town of Culpeper
Brian Sprouse, City of Lynchburg
Chad Throne, City of Charlottesville
Marcus White, City of Charlottesville
Brandon Zuidema, Garner, NC

If you or someone you know is interested in the Certificate program, Director Stephanie Davis will be planning recruiting sessions this spring. Feel free to contact her at sddavis@vt.edu or 804-980-5549.

A DAO in the Life - Robert Lee

Organizational Trust

Recently I had to complete a research project for an educational program that I was participating in and I struggled a bit to find a topic. I began to review some previous internal surveys in addition to observing behaviors throughout the organization when I realized that we have a possible trust issue. Now I know what you are thinking, I did get my supervisor's permission before venturing out on this topic and airing some dirty laundry. With that being said I conducted my research on organizational trust and ways we could establish it within our department.



Robert Lee

Commonly people think of organizational trust think of it from the consumer perspective of how they feel about a particular company. This research; however, was focused on organizational trust from the perspective how people within the organizational trust the organization and the people they worked with. The internal surveys I spoke of earlier showed that personnel felt as if they could not share their ideas or opinions, they could not take risks without penalty, their committee work was not accepted and there was a lack of communication throughout the department. Couple these feelings with people copying supervisors on emails as a measure of getting someone to follow through on their work, people circumventing the structure to accomplish things as well as other behaviors that are contrary to good conduct and you have organizational trust issues.

Now on the surface this sounds bad but as a department we do provide a good service and accomplish a lot; however, we can accomplish much more as we improve our trust. My research showed that we are similar to many organizations with this struggle but there are many steps we can take to build up our organizational trust. We actually do most of the things that are recommended to build organizational trust but we may lack consistency or follow through on them. Out of my research I developed nine recommendations for us to implement to help us improve moving forward, many of which we were doing but just needed to

follow through. So with the New Year upon us I provide you with the following recommendations to keep in mind:

- Include employees in the development of the organization's mission, vision or values
- Communicate expectations across all levels of the organization
- Actively listen and follow through on commitments or promises
- Provide methods for employees to communicate up, down and across the organization
- If you utilize committees make sure they have clear expectations and guidelines
- Provide consistent organizational updates to keep employees informed
- Create opportunities for employees to have question and answer with the supervisor or director

As a supervisor lead by example, it sounds cliché but hold yourself to the same standards as you hold the employees, the rules are for all of us not just some of us.

[Contact Robert Lee](#)

Civic Engagement - Albemarle County

April 2017 Local Government Education Week: Plan now to partner with our future (K-12 students!) to learn what we are all about!



In 2012, the General Assembly adopted House Joint Resolution #93 proclaiming the first week of April as Local Government Education week, in honor of the formation of the Council-Manager form of government in the City of Staunton, VA. The VLGMA Civic Engagement Committee has been developing tools to engage K-12 students, our future leaders, in order to acknowledge good community building work, educate on government services provided at the local level, and increase students' awareness of career opportunities in local government. This will help us strengthen interest in local government management/public service as a viable career.

January is the perfect time to start planning for this year's Local Government Education Week, April 3 - 7. Each year, VLGMA asks each locality's governing body to adopt a proclamation honoring this week as part of this effort. A template is provided on the Civic Engagement webpage on the VLGMA website www.icma.org/vlgma. However, adopting a proclamation is not enough to genuinely engage in a partnership with the local school district and the young people of our community. We hope each locality will develop an engagement plan that meets your local need.

In Albemarle County, efforts are underway to reach a wider cross-section of the community, particularly youth. Two strategies continue to yield tangible benefits - digital and focused engagement. Digital engagement has been increasing steadily over the past several years, allowing citizens to access information online in numerous forms, on-demand. Albemarle hosted several "live Tweets" in 2016,

where staff shared key points on the budget development, small area plan process, and a bond referendum and responded to questions in real-time. Short informational videos hosted on YouTube allow citizens to hear and see content without having to attend an in-person meeting. Online feedback forms like SurveyMonkey and Google Forms let citizens respond to specific questions about an issue, which staff use to craft more responsive policies and programs. All of these tools are easily shareable by citizens, who spread the word about the issues they care most about. Focused engagement looks more like traditional community meetings and public hearings - but instead of hosting a stand-alone meeting, staff attend events that citizens are already engaged in - Ruritan Club, PTO, Chamber of Commerce meetings, but also drop-ins at the local library branches and tabling at local athletic fields. These focused conversations engage people who don't typically attend local government meetings and generate observations and interactions that help citizens of all ages develop an appreciation for and a better understanding of local government.

So how will your locality mark Local Government Education Week? Here are some ideas for local activities focused on engagement with K-12 students:

1. Provide for all school and public libraries the elementary school level book, *Out and About At City Hall*, which is available at: <http://www.capstonepub.com> This a great illustrated resource that describes what services a locality provides and is affordable at about \$20 each in hard cover;
2. Conduct guest readings of the books to elementary classes;
3. Participate in VML's "If I were Mayor" essay contest;
4. Conduct 7th grade website scavenger hunt to learn about public services;
5. Develop a high school service learning program;
6. Conduct mock Governing Body meetings;
7. Share the Teacher's Resource Guide, including sample lesson plans designed for upper middle/high school students, to be used as part of the curriculum for meeting civics/social studies standards of learning; and/or
8. Be a guest speaker to middle or high school students regarding your career as a City or Deputy Manager and/or discuss community projects (e.g., annual budget, redevelopment effort or capital infrastructure improvements) that the students will see occurring or read in the news.

Check out this website link www.icma.org/vlgma for additional great resources and feel free to contact us with questions and/or to share additional ideas.

[Doug Walker](#) and [Emily Kilroy](#)

Mel's Poetry Corner



The Seasons of My Soul

Nature exhales in fragrant glory -
an opera proclaiming an uplifting story.
The up-heaval as the new up-roots the old.
The spring time of my soul.

Passion expresses in carefree delight

Mel Gillies

in a crescendo of palpitating light.
Fruitful, dynamic, an integrated whole.
The summer time of my soul.

A sentimental love song gently fades away
lamenting the shortening of the day.
A detachment, liberation, an exhilarating letting go.
The autumn time of my soul.

A chant of acceptance of what is.
Hibernation lets transformation begin.
The unadorned beauty of Self to expose.
The winter time of my soul.

Every day, every year, every moment, eternity flows
as the seasons, the symphony of my soul.

[Contact Mel Gillies](#)

Innovation Edge

Toward Being a Best Managed City: Austin Launches a Dynamic Online Sustainability Dashboard,
by Lewis Leff, Senior Business Process Consultant, City of Austin Office of Sustainability, TX



Austin has a long-standing reputation as a leading green city, both nationally and internationally. But how do we know it's true? While numerous policies and programs have been created to support sustainability, how are we actually performing as a city?

In 2010, then City Manager Marc Ott established Austin's first Office of Sustainability; a key function of the newly formed office was to monitor and report on sustainability-related projects, programs and initiatives underway in the City of Austin. In August of 2016, the Office of Sustainability's second [annual report](#) on sustainability performance for municipal operations was released, and in October the Office was proud to announce the launch of a [Sustainability Dashboard](#) for Austin, which includes community-wide data as well as measures on municipal program performance. To read more about the Sustainability Dashboard and the three key organizational objectives, click [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 or contact me at saburnett@transformgov.org

Calendar

Upcoming Events

Virginia Municipal League's Legislative Day breakroom - January 25, 2017, 1:00-2:45 p.m. located in the 8th Floor West Conference room in the General Assembly Building.

Virginia Association of Counties' Legislative Day breakroom - February 2, 2017, 1:30 p.m.-3:30 p.m. in the same room, 8th Floor West Conference room.

VLGMA Winter Conference - February 15-17, 2017 at the Stonewall Jackson Hotel in Staunton. Conference materials and registration [here](#).

[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](#)
[VA Association of Counties](#)
[Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service](#)
[ELGL](#)
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