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Brenda's Bytes

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Brenda Garton

As you all know, I just started a new position as County Administrator in Frederick County. With that position, I have added seven new elected officials to my list of members of Boards of Supervisors for whom I have worked. I've served as County Administrator in four communities since starting in the profession in 1993, and have worked for forty elected supervisors. Wow.

As part of my initial efforts in learning about my new community, I'm meeting with the members of the Board of Supervisors one-on-one - to hear their perspectives, to get to know them a little better as human beings, to tour their districts, to ask what they expect of me, and to listen to their issues, concerns, and goals for the community at large and the organization. I have shared one of my observations with all of them: they act like gentlemen and treat each other and staff with respect. How awesome is that! I'm a lucky County Administrator.

The group dynamic is an interesting animal, isn't it? How well the members of the governing body work together has a huge impact on the functioning of the local government unit, on how we and our staffs feel about coming to work every day, and about how our citizens view the local government unit. As we all know, even a change of one person in a group -- in this case a governing body -- can change the

way the group functions as a whole - sometimes for the better and unfortunately, sometimes for the worse. It is always our hope that with each election and the resulting changes in the group, the overall group dynamic will continuously improve toward better functioning and decision-making.

How can we facilitate that process? Good orientation for new members is important. Making sure new members have opportunities to attend VACo and VML training and orientation for new elected officials can also be critical to their understanding of their roles as part of a governing body. I have also found that training for the Chair that VACo provides (and I'm sure VML offers something similar) can be helpful for the new leader of the group, but also for other members to understand the role of the Chair and their role within the group.

All in all, over these almost twenty-two years of doing this job, I can honestly say that while working with some elected officials can be more challenging than with others, each and every one of those forty men and women - at the heart of their service - genuinely wanted to serve their communities and make them better. It helps to boil down what elected officials say and do to that fundamental understanding. While they may not take staff's advice, they may make decisions that are based on pressures we may not understand or may not even be aware of, and they may disagree amongst themselves on how to get there, overall they are all trying to improve the quality of life for their constituents and in their communities. And part of our role is to help them accomplish that goal.

Well, it's been a whole year of service as your President. How is that possible?

It's been a pleasure and an honor to serve as VLGMA President. As I have said, the organization is comprised of consummate professionals, and I have always felt so very proud and humbled to be a part of it and to get the opportunity to know and work with all of you.

I can't honestly say that I've fully accomplished everything I set out to do. Jack Hobbs graciously volunteered to help coordinate a membership effort with ICMA and we are working on that task. We have welcomed a number of new members to the organization, but then again, we've also lost some members. Our winter conference was excellent, and our summer conference promises to be so as well. I think we've all worked to encourage members in our organizations - especially those who aspire to serve as a manager some day - to join the organization and attend the conferences. We've been somewhat successful in those efforts, but there is always more to do.

Thank you all for giving me the opportunity to serve as President of this wonderful organization and to get to know each of you just a little better.

Charge ahead and keep working in conjunction with your elected officials to make your community a better place. You DO make a difference!

I hope to see you all at the summer conference in June. Congratulations to Becky

Dickson as she takes over as President in June!

I would like to take a moment to recognize our new VLGMA members: Kenneth Criner, Rocky Mount Police Chief; Mark Taylor, Spotsylvania County Administrator and Steven Bond, Hampton Assistant City Manager

-Brenda

[Contact Brenda Garton](#)

Tedd's Take



INFRASTRUCTURE AND PROSPERITY

Last month, I had the opportunity to accompany my youngest son on an adventure - his move from Greensboro, NC to Mesa, AZ via U-Haul truck and car

trailer. While the 4 day, 2,150 mile trip made for great memories as any father/son escapade should, it also displayed America's amazing infrastructure, and how critical it is to its economic prosperity.

95% of the trip was on one interstate - I-40 - stretching through NC, TN, AR, OK, TX, NM, and finally AZ. Overall, the road is in pretty good shape, aside from one stretch in Oklahoma that could really use some help! Portions were under active repair, including many bridges. It was good to see work being done, but we all know this is not the norm. Nationally, only a small fraction is being attended to, and the needs far outweigh current resources.

The ratio of 18-wheelers to cars was virtually one-to-one. The amount of "stuff" that moves over I-40 from coast-to-coast is striking. Once in the Great Plains and high desert, I-40 parallels a major Burlington Northern/Santa Fe Railroad line. The number of freight trains using that route per day is incredible. While folks in the east are used to a mix of passenger and freight trains, and a relatively low frequency rate of such traffic, out there the line is

A DAO in the Life



Sherri Neil

Leadership and the Importance of Strength of Character

Many DAO's are striving to one day assume the "Big Chair" in their respective organizations, or to assume the role as the City Manager or County Administrator in a different locality. Ambition is a wonderful thing to have, it is what keeps us driven and motivated to do more, work harder, and strive for achievements to add to our professional profiles. But what are we doing in due process to hone an all-important leadership skill, our character? Far too often, people are placed in supervisory and management positions due to their academic skills, knowledge of particular subject areas, or who they know, with little or no ability to be a successful leader of people.

I recently read an article entitled "De Motivated" by Mike Henry. In the article he spoke about the "Top 12 Signs Of Un-Leadership". I found this list very thought provoking. Although he suggested his readers take an honest look at their selves and identify any of these traits that they may possess, I could not help but to also think of the numerous persons I have encountered over the years that were serious "Un-Leaders."

Today, local government administration/management exists in

always occupied by another 100 car train.

All of this pointed out one very obvious fact - that the current debate about fixing and maintaining this country's roads, rails, airports, and other commerce-dependent infrastructure is supremely important to our present and future economic competitiveness and security.

There should be no debate, and we need to quit talking and move to action. Just get out on the road... it's so obvious!

[Contact Tedd Povar](#)

[Position Changes](#)

May, 2015



- Sanford "Sandy" Wanner, retired James City County administrator, has been appointed interim manager for Gloucester County.
- Matt Reges Lawless, who recently completed an ICMA management fellowship with Albemarle County, has been appointed town manager for Boones Mill.
- Ryan Spitzer, assistant town manager for Vinton, has been appointed town manager for Strasburg.
- W. Brent Robertson, management and budget director for Roanoke County, has been appointed administrator for Franklin County, effective June 29th.
- Stewart E. Shaner, Jr., administrator for Amherst County from 1984 to 2000, passed away at the age of 70.

Certificate News



Summer is here! The students are back at work, and everyone is off on vacation.

very highly politically charged environments. At any time a manager, deputy or other can find themselves on the firing line, and others are suddenly thrust into roles that they may not be ready for as leaders. In other cases, the inability to connect with and motivate employees within their organizations gets filtered to their Board of Supervisors or the City Council members leading to managers, deputies, directors, etc. losing their positions.

So, prior to this occurring to any of you who are reading this article, and while there still is time (and in case you did not read this article) I would like to share these "Un-Leadership" traits with you, and encourage you to honestly look at your own leadership character traits. To be a successful leader, one that is able to engage and motivate staff, you do not want to embody any of the "Top 12 Signs of Un-Leadership" as described in Mr. Henry's article:

1. Make yourself the purpose of everything the organization does.
2. Withhold information and then criticize others for not being as smart as you.
3. Compensate yourself (or a small, inner circle) exponentially better than the team.
4. Reward suck-ups and brown-nosers.
5. Answer questions someone asks of your team member.
6. Interrupt people. Finish their sentences.
7. Insist on being right. Never admit fault, or always have an excuse.
8. Show team members where they fall short; It's only for their good...
9. Remind them how you helped them by showing them where they fell short.
10. Change direction or priorities regularly.
11. Shoot messengers.

Planning for the Certificate Professional Development Conference on August 3-4 at Hotel Roanoke is in full swing, and the season of transitions is upon us. These coming months will surely be busy.

One person who is especially busy this summer is Jack Tuttle, City Manager of Williamsburg. He will be ending a tremendous career in local government this summer after over two decades of service to Williamsburg and many more years to local governments across the country. One simply has to drive through Williamsburg (preferably in a bus with the right people on it) to see the impact that Jack and his team have made to the colonial capital. To honor his career and to let him give back once again to the Certificate program and the next generation of leaders, Jack will be the keynote speaker at the Certificate Conference this summer. This will be an excellent opportunity to hear the life lessons of one of the great contemporary local government leaders. In addition to giving the keynote, Jack will continue to teach in the Certificate program.

In addition to Jack staying in contact with the program, Bob Stripling is still making his way around the state recruiting future students. Even though Stephanie Davis has assumed the reins as Program Director, it is really hard to get rid of Bob. He will be recruiting in Virginia Beach on June 11 and in Loudon County on June 17. He will also be with Dr. John Nalbandian for workshops in Charlottesville on June 8 and in Stafford County on June 9. The work and fun never stop. If you are interested in joining the Certificate program, just contact Stephanie Davis at sddavis@vt.edu or 804-980-5549 or Bob Stripling at 540-448-1102.

Find the Certificate online:

12. Ask people to do something, but before they can do it, do it yourself because they weren't moving fast enough.

If you are honest with yourself, as I was, you will probably see yourself at some time or another embodying one or more of these negative leadership characteristics. There are probably a number of other "Un-Leadership" traits that could be added to this list, such as taking yourself too seriously, or thinking you are more important than you are ... "title tripping"... at least becoming conscious of and eliminating these 12 character flaws is a great start in improving our ability to effectively interface with and motivate others.

Our VLGMA Summer Conference is offering a Mini Workshop on Engagement, Motivation and Leadership with a focus on how to engage disengaged and actively disengaged employees. If you see yourself in most of these 12 leadership character flaw traits, you may want to sign up for this workshop (smile).

Prior to then, I submit to you, that if "the shoe fits" and you are honest enough to wear it, then it is time to reverse course before you find you thwart your own professional advancement and successes due to your un-leadership traits. In closing, I share with you a statement that Mr. Henry included in this article "*Character-based leaders can always improve, not just their behavior, but their who-they-are.*" Have you checked your character lately? [Contact Sherri Neil](#)

Prince George County Named
Top Workplace in Richmond Region

Prince George
County
Government has
been named one
of the top



ICMA Is Accepting Applications for the 2017 Class of Leadership ICMA



Early acceptance deadline is July 1st so that successful candidates can be notified prior to the ICMA Annual Conference in Seattle Washington. The final candidates will be selected October 15th. Contact Felicia Logan, ICMA Leadership Development Director at FLogan@icma.org with questions.

Leadership ICMA is a two year program designed to increase the leadership capacity of high performers who have management experience and a desire to become City, Town or County managers in the next 5 years. Bob O'Neill and Felicia Logan are the primary instructors for this leadership development opportunity,

The first meeting of the class will be in Washington DC at the ICMA offices in December of 2015. Virginia graduates or current members of the Leadership ICMA program include Laura Fitzpatrick, City of Hampton; Noah Simon, City of Lexington; Mike Goodman, Arlington County; Roselyn Oglesby, City of Portsmouth; Telly Whitfield, City of Newport News. David Ellis, Rashad Young, and Nelsie Smith also attended Leadership ICMA while in Virginia.

[ICMA Website](#)

Innovation Edge



New to the Alliance website: Innovation Now. This is a site on our home page that features some of the latest topics and articles from our



l to r: Supervisor Melvin Jones, Chairman Bill Robertson, Jeff Stoke, Nancy Shaffer, HR Director photo credit: Percy Ashcraft

workplaces in the Richmond Region for a second year in a row in a report released March 22nd by the Richmond Times-Dispatch.

Prince George is listed as one of 10 workplaces for mid-sized companies having 125-399 employees.

Prince George County is the only local government entity listed among the top workplaces.

"We are very proud of this recognition," stated County Administrator Percy C. Ashcraft. "To be listed among many of the top companies in the region is a real compliment to the leadership of our Board of Supervisors and work ethic of our employees."

The Times-Dispatch teamed with Workplace Dynamics, a suburban Philadelphia-based company that has conducted workplace surveys for dozens of other newspapers across the country. Workplace Dynamics had employers participate in a comprehensive survey, including having employees completing a short survey about their workplaces. Employers who scored the highest locally - and met national benchmarks - made the list. Workplace Dynamics looked at many factors, including how engaged employees are, how employers encourage community involvement, and how businesses promote diversity.

The process was open to any employer - private, public, government and nonprofit - in the region that had at least 35 employees last fall when the surveying was conducted.

In addition to midsize companies, categories included mega-size, large-size

members as well as tips and suggestions from the Alliance staff. Currently, we're featuring [A TLG 2015 Attendee's 5 Conference Themes](#), [City of Carlsbad Parks and Rec Streamlines Operations](#), and registration information for an upcoming webinar series being put on by Zelos: [Innovation Burst: Making Quality Decisions in Different Situations](#). There's lots of great information on Innovation Now. Check it out!!!

If I can be of any assistance, please don't hesitate to reach out to me at saburnett@transformgov.org, or 800-777-2509.

[Contact Sallie Ann Burnett](#)
[Mel's Poetry Corner](#)



Mel Gillies

Faithfully Yours

All is well,
 faith proclaims
 through all the worry,
 the fear, the pain.
 Beneath the slings and
 arrows of our
 discontent,
 Love is present.

Faith is the awareness of our spirituality
 and our eternal divine Reality.
 From the darkness of tragedy,
 the arousing seed of possibility.

Faith is the stance
 to not be a victim of circumstance.
 In the ashes of destruction, a new
 identity is found
 and no longer earth bound.

Our consciousness can interpret our
 experience
 as a melodrama or an improvisational
 dance.

This path, this choice, is not easy at all.
 But, oh, so grace-full.

[Contact Mel Gillies](#)

[Calendar](#)

and small-size. One overall winner in each category will be selected at the Sterling Workplace Awards program May 7th at the University of Richmond Modlin Center for the Arts.



[Prince George County](#)

[Virginia Tech's School of Public and International Affairs \(SPIA\)](#)



Public-private partnerships (P3) are increasingly being used to solve public problems; however, when organizational cultures collide and trust is not established among partners, the project can derail or become very costly. During the June 10th VT P3 Leadership Workshop: A Focus on Culture & Trust, participants will analyze a factual, mixed-use development P3 case that illustrates the importance of understanding culture and building trust through community engagement and transparent processes.

This workshop is tailored for experienced professionals (project managers, architects, attorneys, government executives, etc.) who wish to enhance their leadership skills by gaining a deeper understanding of the impact culture and trust can have on the success of moving a P3 project forward. This is also an opportunity to network with other professionals experienced in leading P3s.

Upcoming Events

2015 VLGMA Summer Conference - June 10-12, 2015 at the Sheraton

Deputies, Assistants and Others (DAO) Meeting - October 16, 2015 in Abingdon
[More Dates](#)

Quick Links

[VLGMA Website](#)

[ICMA Website](#)

[Alliance for Innovation](#)

[Virginia Municipal League](#)

[VA Association of Counties](#)

[Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service](#)

[ELGL](#)

[Website Contact](#)

Registration for this workshop closes on **June 5th**, so please register today! For further information, please contact Rosa Krewson at rosac@vt.edu.

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](#).



[Forward email](#)



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