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Maurice's Musings



Maurice Jones

Maurice's Musings

So, here's some good news. Despite all the negativity in the world - the coarsening of political discourse in our society, the seemingly weekly images of a devastating mass shooting somewhere in our country and the constant reminder that the people we serve are generally suspicious of institutions these days - despite all of that, local government is still getting the job done. We go about our business every day providing the services our residents expect and deserve, even when they are hopping mad at us for one reason or another. What we do not always do well is promote or celebrate our good work - either externally

or internally. That needs to change.

There are many reasons localities drop the ball on marketing our successes - lack of time and lack of resources to do so are a couple that come to mind. Another, for some of us, is the fear of the "Negative Nellies/Neds". They are the folks who complain about everything. You will find many of these naysayers populating the comment section on just about every news website, and occasionally raining on everyone's parade during public comment at your Council/Board meeting. Regardless of the success of an initiative, the "negatives" doubt the results or quickly change the subject to another, less positive, issue.

Unfortunately in today's day and age, when conflict sells and all arguments are considered to have equal weight despite the facts, the media often provides a platform for those constant critics. This constant barrage of controversial stories can be damaging to a locality's reputation and also affect the morale of your employees. That's why it is more important than ever to communicate our positive stories to the public and our staff, without worrying about the inevitable barbs from the critics.

One step we're taking in Charlottesville is to enthusiastically report on the services and investments we're making in areas like affordable housing. We are now spending millions of dollars each year to help create or preserve affordable housing units. Recently the City Council approved over \$4 million in funding to increase the number of affordable housing opportunities for low income residents. Instead of simply relying on the media to present that story we used our social media platforms to spread the word. We also penned a letter to the editor of our local newspaper, jointly signed by me and the Council, explaining what the City is doing to address inequity in our community.

Internally, we recently launched a new employee recognition program entitled "Doin' Good". It's an effort to recognize and celebrate our employees and their hard work. The premise is simple. If you see a colleague going above and beyond to provide excellent service then nominate him/her for a Doin' Good award. At the end of a quarter, our Doin' Good Committee reviews the nominations and awards the top candidates with gift cards. We also announce the winners and tell their stories to all the employees. So far the program has been well received and folks feel, well ... "good" about the recognition.

I'm well aware that none of this is "rocket surgery". It's just a reminder that we as leaders need to let go of that feeling of dread that someone will criticize us whenever we acknowledge the positive impact we are having on our communities. We must listen to the naysayers and respond accordingly but we cannot let them keep us from communicating our optimistic narrative. We owe that to our employees and our residents.

Thanks to everyone who has emailed me about Maurice's Musings. If you have ideas about topics I could address please feel free to contact me at mjones@charlottesville.org!

Please help me in welcoming our newest VLGMA Member Gary Swink, Lexington Assistant City Manager/Finance Director.
[Contact Maurice Jones](#)

Position Changes and Other Events

October 2017

- Todd Walters, assistant town engineer for Christiansburg, has been appointed manager for the town of New Market effective November 6.
- Valmarie Turner, community services director for Seminole County, FL, has been appointed assistant administrator for Loudoun County.



- Brian Henshaw, former town manager for Haymarket, has been appointed planning and zoning director for Shenandoah County.

Tedd's Take



Tedd Povar

ICMA Conference-2017

For those of you who have the opportunity to attend the International City/County Management Association's annual conference, but choose not to, please reconsider and go next year.

Here are several reasons to attend:

- 1) Meet and learn from over 3,600 of your peers from all over the United States and the world. And yes, your locality's issues are not dissimilar from their communities' challenges.
- 2) Your biggest problem is deciding which session is most valuable as there will be two or three running concurrently that you will want to attend.
- 3) There are numerous site visits that provide direct contact with the people who solved a problem or made the improvement.
- 4) A conglomeration of vendors display the latest tools for virtually every type of municipal function-from engineering to human services to public safety to financial management.
- 5) Attend keynote presentations that are simply unaffordable and, therefore, inaccessible except at such a large convention. Top, provocative talent such as Richard Florida provide insights about the future challenges for municipal management. Spellbinding.
- 6) Next year the conference is in Baltimore. Drivable, so less expensive.

2017 was somewhere around my 36th ICMA conference, and they simply do not get monotonous. Most of us enjoy municipal management because no two days are alike. The same goes for this gathering of the faithful-it's constantly evolving and always worthwhile!

[Contact Tedd Povar](#)

Complimentary Governing Webinar

Complimentary Governing Webinar: Oakland County, MI leaders talk about how G2G Marketplace can help governments

In 2014, Oakland County, Mich., created G2G Marketplace -- an online store that offers solutions from government partners and approved vendors -- to help other governments easily research, purchase and implement technology and services. **Now, Oakland County leaders Phil Bertolini and Kevin Bertram are joining us for an hour-long webinar at 11 AM PT/2 PM ET on Nov. 15** to talk more about how the G2G Marketplace can help governments streamline technology adoption and overcome some of their more pressing challenges, including the looming retirement wave, uncertainty with federal regulations and funding, and increasing demands from citizens for improved services.

[Join our webinar](#), G2G Marketplace: Oakland County's Solution to Providing Better Citizen Services, to learn more about the value G2G Marketplace brings and how governments can take advantage.

Featured Speakers:

- **Phil Bertolini**, CIO/Deputy County Executive, Oakland County, MI
- **Kevin Bertram**, IT Applications Services Leader, Oakland County, MI
- **Allison Young**, Technical Manager, Laserfiche
- **Moderator: Paul Clanton**, Former CIO, Douglas County, CO, & Senior Fellow, Center for Digital Government

[Register now](#) to join the discussion and learn:

- How G2G Marketplace helps governments adopt technology to overcome common pain points
- Examples of technologies offered and the benefits agencies are realizing
- What to expect in the future from the G2G Marketplace

The first 60 people to log on will receive a \$10 Amazon gift card - you must be a government professional and you must stay logged on for the entire duration of the webinar in order to qualify for the gift card. Please feel free to share this information with any colleagues you feel would benefit from attending, and do let me know if you have any questions!

Raquel Figueira

Registration Coordinator

Government Technology | a Division of e.Republic

<http://www.govtech.com/events>

800-940-6039 ext. 1341

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Civic Engagement - City of Lynchburg



A Different Thought on Citizen Engagement Taking Planning to the People

Tom Martin, AICP
City Planner, Lynchburg



The City of Lynchburg is revising its Downtown Master Plan to build upon past successes and establish a new 20 year vision for the "heart" of the Lynchburg region. The new plan Downtown 2040 is being prepared in partnership with the Downtown Lynchburg Association, Hill Studio, Arnett Muldrow & Associates, Alta Planning and Hurt & Proffitt, Inc.

The city has always prided itself on having excellent civic engagement, yet the city wanted this process to go beyond the usual planning meetings, this process needed to be "epic". The planning process involved: a kick-off meeting with guest speaker, Melody Warnick, author of "This is Where You Belong, The Art & Science of Loving the Place You Live", multiple listening sessions geared toward specific topics, and a three day on-site design forum. While these sessions were all well attended and resulted in useful information, announced sessions typically result in attendance by those who have a special interest in the area.

A vibrant downtown is an indicator of a healthy city, and a successful downtown is frequented and available to all city residents as an employment, arts and cultural center of the region. In an effort to receive input from those who would not typically attend planning sessions, an on-line survey was established that garnered over nine hundred responses and the city wanted more. In an effort to make sure that input was received from a wider geographic area the project team conducted nine "pop-up" events during August 2017. These events were held at a variety of retail centers, the library, the community market and the city's five higher education institutions and designed to engage citizens outside of the central business district for the planning of the downtown.

As the name implies, a pop-up event implies the project team sets up unannounced and engages citizens on a planning topic and in a few hours pop-down. This type of event is unique in that it allows the planning team to receive input from a wider variety of people that would not normally fill out on-line surveys, come to scheduled planning sessions or have mobility issues. As a result this allows the project team to gain a broader perspective on planning issues.

The pop-up event will differently be part of future planning initiatives in the city and we encourage you to try them in your locality. Here is a list of helpful tips for your pop-up sessions:

- Think about the logistics: You will need tables, chairs, ez-ups, easels, and other supplies that are easily transportable and transferred from team to team. Allow enough time for setting up, taking down and moving to a different location.
- Create a brand for your planning process: Design meeting materials, web sites and handouts that identify your process. Consider investing in flags or banners that will make the pop-up event easily recognizable.
- Choose your locations: Choose locations that will give you a diverse representation of your population. Contact retail centers and institutions early to get permission and agree upon an acceptable time.
- Choose your questions: Think about what information you are trying to obtain and design your pop-up questions accordingly. Some citizens may be willing to stay and talk, others will only be willing to provide input if it can be done quickly.
- Remember: An engaged and informed citizenry leads to good government.

[Contact Tom Martin](#)

It is hard to believe that the semester is already a little more than half over. As November arrives, many of those final projects that seemed so far away in August are now just on the horizon. Our students will be working hard in the next month to ensure that they finish the semester strong. While they are certainly up to the task, now is certainly the time to encourage them.

**THE Graduate Certificate
in Local Government
Management**



*"Preparing the Next Generation of
Local Government Leaders"*

As we continue to look ahead, it is time to start thinking about the spring semester and beyond. To help spread the word about the Certificate program to a broader audience, Stephanie Davis will be hosting a WebEx meeting on November 30, 2017, at 12:00 noon. This online Local Government Certificate Information Session is available to anyone interested in the program. You will have plenty of time to apply for the spring semester by the January 1st deadline if the meeting sparks your interest.

Also in the spring, retired long-time administrator Peter Huber will be joining the Certificate faculty. Huber retired as Pulaski County Administrator on January 1 after more than 30 years in the profession. Since then, he has also served as the Interim Town Manager for Amherst. Huber's wealth of knowledge and experience will surely be a tremendous asset for the program.

For more information about the WebEx meeting or the spring semester generally, contact Stephanie at sddavis@vt.edu or 804-980-5549.

Highlighting Promising Succession Planning Practices

Highlighting Promising Succession Planning Practices

SLGE's newest report - [Succession Planning](#) - features case studies which highlight how the City of Sunnyvale, CA, State of Tennessee, and Hennepin County approach succession planning as part of their strategy to attract and retain talented employees.



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Senior Fellow Elizabeth Kellar and Communications Manager Amber Snowden spoke to ICMAtv to discuss the report's findings. View the interview [here](#).

SLGE staff were joined by Michael Rossman, the Chief Human Resources Officer for Hennepin County, MN and over 200 attendees for a free webinar on October 17 to discuss how state and local governments can use succession planning to anticipate and address workforce challenges. View the webinar recording [here](#).

The SLGE webinar was offered in partnership with the International Public Management Association for Human Resources (IPMA-HR) and Kronos.

A DAO in the Life - Bonnie Svrcek

**A DAO in the Life
Bonnie Svrcek
Lynchburg City Manager**



Bonnie Svrcek

Okay. I get it. I am not a DAO any longer. I asked Molly for some indulgence to share a few thoughts on the transition from a DAO (for me it was a "D"...Deputy City Manager) to a CAO (Chief Administrative Officer (for me, it's a City Manager)).

I just returned from the International City/County Management Association (ICMA) Conference in San Antonio and if I was asked once I was asked 100 times "how has your first year as City Manager" or "is it what you expected" or "were there any surprises"? I was asked this so many times that I honestly got tired of answering these questions. Here are my general answers to these questions that I hope are helpful to you in your career path.

First, "how was your first year as City Manager" and "is it what you expected". My response was "it was hard" and "I am not really sure that I had any set expectations". In fact, "freshman years" much harder than I expected. While Kim Payne (former City Manager in Lynchburg) and I worked together as what I believe were kindred spirits for 16 years, there are just some things that you are not going to know or be taught or experience until you actually fill the shoes of the CAO. To steal a line from Oprah, this is what I know for sure: while freshman year of serving as City Manager is hard, I believe the lessons learned and the difficult challenges that came my way were incredible learning and growth opportunities for me. And, what I also know for sure and with ever neuron in my fingertips as I type this, I know that there is no other place I would rather be because as CAO I am in a very special place to lead and influence and make a difference both internally in my organization and externally in my community. I truly "get" to lead in a way that is extraordinarily different and more energizing than any other position in my career. The challenges and opportunities are immense and sometime overwhelming. I believe that such challenges and opportunities require leadership and "exercising leadership" is what I get to do as CAO.

Second, "were there any surprises?" Hardly a day has gone by when I have not gone home and told my husband "this is what I could not have made up today"---mostly good, sometimes bad and occasionally ugly. Yes, there have been surprises! I do see "surprises", the bad and the ugly ones, as opportunities to solve problems and evaluate how I need to lead change and hopefully never experience that particular bad or ugly surprise again.

I believe with every ounce of my being that local government management is truly a very special call to public service. This job will continue to be hard with the many challenges ahead---budgets, polarizing elected bodies, succession planning, civility...the list is long. The best thing is that DAO's and CAO's all have the very special opportunity to "...transmit this City (or Town or County!), not only not less, but greater and more beautiful that it was transmitted to us". (from The Athenian Oath-a timeless code of civic responsibility)

Thanks for listening and my very best wishes that your path in local government is as challenging and enriching as I have found my path to be.

[Contact Bonnie Svrcek](#)

Innovation Edge

At BIG Ideas in October, the work paper Navigating the Waters between Local Autonomy and State Preemption looked at the field of work written by Robert Dahl, Who governs? The U.S. Constitution refers only to two powers that rule: the federal government and the state government. Therefore, local governments are looked upon merely to delivery public services.



In 1868 Supreme Court Judge John Dillon established what is now known as "Dillon's Rule", which established that local governments are only extensions of their state. Mandates must be carried out and they are often at the mercy of the local government to exercise public authority. This came about in response to corruption in local politics, and the progressive era brought us the council manager form of government. "It appears that we're in another era of preemption," stated Dr. David Swindell, Director and Associate Professor at Arizona State University's School of Public Affairs. "Local governments should be given the opportunity to experiment and be innovative. That's where the laborites of democracy are", he said.

Read the full paper [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.

Mel's Poetry Corner



Mel Gillies

The Fruit of Gratitude

Beneath all our incessant worries and woes and catastrophes,
a silence of incomparable bounty.
Peace and grace and sacredness bloom
in this empty, radiant room.

Gratitude can take you there
to be acutely alive and aware.
The ego no longer commands center stage.
Love is engaged.

A shower's cascading warmth, a mountain view.
Savory, serendipitous moments for gratitude's menu.
A hummingbird's visit, an evocative song, a pause to breathe.
I know you can add lots of your own grateful moments to these.

Let your daily cuisine always include
the seasoning of gratitude.

A pumpkin can grow to an enormous size
like our heart, when gratitude presides.
Gratitude is truly a miraculous yeast
transforming life into a perpetual Thanksgiving feast.

[Contact Mel Gillies](#)

Calendar

Upcoming Events

Winter Conference - February 14-16, 2018 at the Charlottesville Omni Hotel. More info in November.

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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