

VMCTA EXECUTIVE BOARD
MEETING MINUTES
Wednesday, November 1, 2017
Barre Town Offices

MEMBERS PRESENT: President Donna Kinville, South Burlington; Past President Lucrecia Wonsor, Killington; 1st Vice President Georgette Wolf-Ludwig, Fairlee; 2nd Vice President Tracy Borst, Thetford; Treasurer Audra Girouard, Concord; Secretary Dawn Custer, Hubbardton; Auditor Deanna Robitaille, Montgomery; Members at Large - Karen Richard, Colchester; Diane Judd, Holland; Debra Hawkins, Pawlet and Stacy Jewell, St. Johnsbury

OTHERS PRESENT: Abby Friedman, Director of the Municipal Assistance Center (MAC) at Vermont League of Cities and Towns (VLCT)

9:30 a.m. – President Donna Kinville called the meeting to order.

REVIEW AND APPROVE MINUTES OF August 3, 2017

Lucrecia Wonsor made a motion seconded by Georgette Wolf-Ludwig to approve the minutes of the August 3, 2017 meeting as presented. All were in favor. The motion carried.

NEW BUSINESS

A. Updating *Handbook for Vermont Municipal Clerks* with VLCT Assistance

Donna Kinville informed the Board she spoke to Abby Friedman, Sandy Pinsonault, Town Clerk of Dorset, and Karen Richard about updating the *Handbook for Vermont Municipal Clerks*. Abby Friedman explained VLCT is reviewing all VLCT publications for updating. She asked for the Board's input as to what is the best and most helpful information to be included. The Board was asked to collaborate with VLCT on the update. Lucrecia asked if the handbook was available in Word so the Board and VLCT could divide and conquer the project. Stacy Jewell noted the first step would be for VLCT to update the statutes before the Board jumps in. Georgette noted best practices for land records need to be updated as well. Abby asked if clerks still find the handbook useful. The consensus of the Board was yes. Georgette noted when she was a novice clerk she used it all the time. Lucrecia noted a lot of the handbook is directly from statutes. Karen added there have been major changes in access to public records. Abby agreed adding VLCT lets the Secretary of State's (SOS) Office take the lead on elections. Georgette observed there wasn't a lot of information in the handbook regarding electronic copies, meetings, posting changes and open meeting laws. Lucrecia suggested adding a section on computer indexing systems. Deb Hawkins noted vital records statutes are changing. Lucrecia asked if other state departments needed to offer input. Stacy suggested VLCT update the statutes and on the side the Board members could read through the handbook and offer input. She noted at quick glance most of the items included have not changed. Abby stated she would include Megan Wheaton-Book's, Records Analyst for Vermont State Archives and Records Administration, email regarding records retention. She noted there are records retention posters and asked if they were still relevant suggesting an e-version. She explained some things change yearly and asked what was the best way to update. Deanna Robitaille suggested an appendix like the ones received for statute updates. Georgette suggested a resource sheet for clerks and treasurers noting whom to contact in each department and note the VMCTA and VLCT websites. Karen asked about updating the Treasurer's handbook. Abby stated that was going to be updated as well and VLCT is deciding what direction to go in. The Clerk handbook is being revised first. She added if the Board is interested in it being a co-publication with both organizations, VLCT would like clerks to review it before it goes to publication. Karen suggested Carol Dawes, Barre City Clerk, review it. It was decided VLCT would update statutes then Carol Dawes would be asked to review it before it was given to the E-Board. Abby suggested having it ready by the next VMCTA Annual Meeting and a possible session at the conference led by clerks. She added MAC is available to help. Karen noted the handbook is a great tool for clerks. The Board thanked Abby for her help.

B. Tax Exempt Status for Rooms and Meals

Donna explained VMCTA is a 501(c)(3). Because the annual meeting is not held at our facility we are charged rooms and meals tax. The way around this would be to have the clerk's municipality mail checks directly to the facility made out to the facility. Lucrecia noted clerks who paid with municipal checks did not pay tax. Georgette noted the association paid a lot in rooms and meals tax. Lucrecia stated a little of \$2,000. Stacy suggested VMCTA could make out a check to one of the towns then the town could write a check to the facility. Tracy suggested that was not the best option. Donna suggested investigating it further suggesting State Treasurer Beth Pearce could be sought out for advice. Georgette asked how much it would add to the conference registration fee if rooms and meals tax was added. It would be about \$17 per person. Lucrecia suggested increasing the vendor fee. She added vendors are very important and if more sponsorship money came in the fees could be kept the same. Increasing the single day attendance to \$85 was helpful. Some towns paid \$150 for two days but did not stay for dinner. Georgette suggested a check box be added to the application that could be checked if they weren't staying for dinner.

C. Annual Meeting – 2018 Venues and Dates

Donna reported she contacted Lake Morey Inn, Basin Harbor, Jay Peak, Burke, and the Sheraton in South Burlington. Lake Morey does a bucket type of pricing. Pick this level and get this and this and this. There isn't anything addition for AV or room fees. Diane asked if Jay Peak's price included the resort fee. Karen stated the person renting the room pays the resort fee. Donna explained the Courtyard was approached and did not return calls. The Sheraton is unavailable. Stacy suggested making certain there was room for vendors to set up. Donna explained they were told to expect between 20 – 25 vendors. They were all given a copy of last year's set up to make certain they had everything needed. Georgette noted Vermont Government Finance Officers Association asked VMCTA to not hold its Annual Meeting September 8-11, 2018 because it conflicts with their event. Diane noted her surprise as to how many clerks do not go for training. Karen noted she would like to see it be mandatory adding election training is mandatory. Days were discussed. If Tuesday and Wednesday then some members would have to be out of the office on Monday to set up the meeting. Wednesday, Thursday and Friday were also suggested. Donna stated she would send out the 20th and 21st as the dates letting the venues know what was wanted for breakfast and lunch, send it out and see what comes back.

D. Brainstorm How to Promote Vermont Clerks Better and More Effectively

Donna explained she would like the Board to brainstorm on how to increase our voice and get our influence back. She suggested handing out brochures at the alcove in the Capital building. There is a lottery to draw names of organizations interested in being there and a small fee. Karen stated there are still clerks wondering what a gap day is. Tracy suggested putting together a list of directives we'd like to see from the SOS. Karen suggested enforcement of the mandatory election training. Tracy suggested an outreach for new clerks. Lucrecia noted clerks in the state are not unified. Clerks should be supportive of initiatives that help all clerks. Not all clerks are fortunate enough to have towns that support them. Karen added clerks are encouraged to talk to their senators and representatives about their positions. Articles in the local papers was a suggestion. Tracy suggested changing the term of gap to something else that will be accepted. Make certain the legislature and SOS know the clerks want and encourage people to vote. Karen noted it is difficult to get people on board when their party wants it a different way. Tracy suggested the Board reach out to the parties, possibly meetings with the Democrats, Progressives, and Republicans. Deanna suggested a letter be sent asking our representatives and senators to attend an E-Board meeting. Karen agreed adding representatives could attend county meetings with specific topics. Donna agreed to invite party chairs to an E-Board meeting noting it appears clerks are viewed as being in opposition to people being able to vote.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Treasurer Audra Girouard stated she had two warrants. One finished the fiscal year and the first one for the current fiscal year. Deanna Robitaille made a motion seconded by Diane Judd to sign checking account order for August 3, 2017 – October 31, 2017 in the amount of \$34,521.42 and the October 1, 2017 – October

31, 2017 order in the amount of \$1,062.26. All members voted in favor. The motion carried. Audra reported she did the final report to close the last fiscal year and a list of the assets. There is also the final report for October. The Town of Brookfield put a stop payment on its membership check. The bank is charging \$15. The Board suggested Audra call the bank and ask for the charge to be removed. Audra noted regarding membership renewals that she will be keeping a spreadsheet to note who is paying for the next fiscal year in advance and deposit the money right away. Lucrecia noted for vendor sponsorship at the Annual Meeting she sent an email in August to the vendors noting how much they gave last year and asking them to match it.

OLD BUSINESS

A. Review 2017 Annual Meeting

Donna noted 87 responses to the questionnaire were received. The average miles traveled was 72. Fifty-two respondents stayed overnight. Everyone loved the Human Resources session. People thought there was too much chatter at the tables and suggestions were made to move the speaker to the center of the tables. Everyone loved Cyber-Security and Tax Collection. Land Records was mixed. Georgette noted everyone got stuck on one issue in that session. There was a lot of good material she was unable to get to. Donna continued noting everyone liked the Balancing High Tech and elections. Everyone thought Stacy and Donna Kely, Town Clerk of Barre Town, did a great job with the Nuts & Bolts session. Suggested topics included – clerk’s responsibility regarding the grand list, dealing with the public, and vital records. One comment was old clerks hang out together and new clerks didn’t feel welcome to join them. Stacy suggested everyone arriving early could be invited to help stuff packets. Deanna asked how many applied for scholarships. Audra answered two. Stacy noted money was made at the spring training and added she didn’t think that should be the objective for the Annual Meeting because it is expensive for towns. Lucrecia noted the two-day annual meeting fee barely covers the meals. She suggested the rate could be raised from \$150 to \$160. Deb noted without our sponsors we’d be in the hole. Georgette asked what other conference venues did regarding the rooms & meals tax. Lucrecia stated it wasn’t an issue. The venues recognized VMCTA as a 501(c)(3) and didn’t charge. She suggested the two-day price be raised to \$160, the single day to \$85 and the vendor fee could be raised \$25. Donna added a lot of clerks pay for their membership out of their own pockets.

i. Refund Qualifications

Lucrecia explained a clerk contacted her Friday after the final numbers were sent. The meals are expensive. It could leave the clerk with a bad feeling if nothing were refunded and she might not sign up to attend again. Lucrecia suggested if it is real health issue there could be a partial refund. Tracy suggested a loss of life within the family might be another reason to consider a partial refund. Diane noted she believed a deadline is a deadline. Lucrecia noted there were a few last-minute meals added for vendors and the Association wasn’t charged. Tracy suggested refunds could be given on a case by case, no policy, no form. Lucrecia suggested only half of the amount. Karen Richard made a motion seconded by Tracy Borst to refund \$75. All members were in favor. The motion carried.

ii. Combining Attendees

Donna explained a town requested to be able to shift attendees, have different people attend different sessions. Audra asked which one would get the lunch and how would this be tracked. Lucrecia stated one town let her know from the beginning which person would be attending which session. Karen noted her office does it with VLCT workshops. Lucrecia suggested it wouldn’t be resolved today but everyone should think about it.

B. Review VLCT Town Fair (VALA/VMCTA Joint Session)

Georgette noted she liked the session with the listers adding more clerks should be there. It is too late in the day and most of the clerks and listers don’t have problems with the clerk or listers in their office. She noted she thought it would be good for the clerks and listers to attend the Select Board training. She also suggested it would be good to promote training for clerks and listers. VMCTA could send letters asking the

Select Board to support clerk and treasurer training. Karen noted more clerks attended than have in the past. Georgette added there was a space issue. You couldn't get into some of the sessions because the rooms were packed. Donna informed everyone VMCTA is short nametags and lanyards. She noted she would put a shout out on the listserv.

C. Membership Update

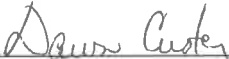
There are 95 unpaid towns, 292 clerk members and 151 paid towns.

OTHER BUSINESS

Stacy asked about handing out the mousepads from the annual meeting. Board members took pads for their surrounding town attendees to pass out.

The E-Board meeting was set for December 19, 2017, 9:30 a.m. at the Barre Town Offices. A buffet lunch was suggested. Donna noted she would invite political party chairs.

Adjourn: President Donna Kinville stated if there were no objections the chair would adjourn the meeting. There being none, the meeting is adjourned at 12:45 p.m.

Attest: 
Dawn Custer
VMCTA Secretary