

VMCTA EXECUTIVE BOARD
MEETING MINUTES
Tuesday, December 19, 2017
Barre Town Offices

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

OTHERS PRESENT: Deb Beckett, Williston Town Clerk, Member of the VMCTA Legislative Committee; Brandon Batham, Vermont Democratic Party Political Chair; Rob Hipskin, Vermont Democratic Party Data Director; and Jeffrey Bartley, Vermont Republican Party Executive Director

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

REVIEW AND APPROVE MINUTES OF November 1, 2017

Lucrecia Wonsor made a motion seconded by Karen Richard to approve the minutes of the November 1, 2017 meeting with corrections. All members were in favor. The motion carried.

NEW BUSINESS

A. Formalize Procedure with Political Party Chairs

Donna Kinville explained the questions to discuss with the political party chairs were reviewed with Heather Shouldice, VMCTA's Lobbyist. The key items to discuss are the gap day and the fee structure. Karen Richard suggested whatever leads the party chairs would be welcome as well. Donna suggested we ask how the Association could garner party support without it appearing partisan. The Progressive Party wanted to attend the meeting but was unavailable to do so.

B. Discussion on Mandating Election Training and Other Clerk/Treasurer Training

Karen Richard noted there has been discussion with the Secretary of State (SOS) regarding mandating training and it keeps being pushed back to the Association. The SOS would like the clerks to take the initiative and he in turn will back them. The SOS offers required election training every other year but no one tracks it; there aren't any consequences for not attending. Elections have been an issue the last few years and training should be mandatory. Debra Hawkins wondered what possible consequences could be. Karen suggested being unable to certify and election. It was asked if other states do this. Karen agreed to check. She suggested making courses available online noting it doesn't have to be difficult. People being trained for jobs can go online for their training. There should be something in place that will prevent a person who is running an election being able to state they weren't aware of something. Tracy Borst noted it should be SOS based training, not VMCTA. Karen added it can be done, the Department of Taxes just did one. Stacy Jewell agreed suggesting a webinar.

C. Education Committee Update

Tracy Borst reported the first meeting is this afternoon. There is thought about reminding clerks on the listserv that Vermont Elections Management Software training counts toward certification. Donna Kinville asked what classes are needed at this year's Annual Meeting. Tracy acknowledged the Committee hasn't reached that point yet and are focusing on the new clerk training and the 2017 Annual Meeting review.

D. Proposed Fee Increase

Lucrecia Wonsor passed the Fee Committee's recommendation to the Board. If the per page fee continues the recommendation is \$15 per page. This would increase the cost of a 20-page mortgage the most – from \$200 to \$300. The fee structures of other states were reviewed. Changing the fee to \$40 for the first page and \$5 per additional page had two concerns brought to the Committee. The first being no one would file a Certificate of Name Change; the second concern was the cost for recording Municipal Records. Karen asked how the \$40/1st page and \$5/additional would affect a 20-page mortgage. Lucrecia answered any document 8 pages or more would cost less than the per page fee. Towns sent in their numbers, how many documents, pages and property transfers they recorded in a year. Ira recorded 66 documents in 2016 and under the new fee structure they would receive more. Some towns thought it would cost too much to record a Quit Claim and PTTR for all the mobile homes in the parks. Some towns believed they are currently losing money since the last increase was so many years ago. Deb Beckett noted her assistant went through all of Williston's recordings and thought the town would have a loss because they record so many mortgages. Lucrecia noted for every town that sent a spreadsheet with their recording numbers for a year, none lost money. Donna agreed explaining in the long run the costs of recording the smaller documents would offset the costs of the larger ones. Lucrecia added numbers are more accurate when a year's worth of recording is used to calculate the fee structure. The concern is the smaller towns. One only recorded 11 documents in a six-week period. Karen questioned what people pay for driver's licenses explaining that is paid for once every four years. Recording a Quit Claim for a mobile home only needs to be done once. She asked how \$10 being put aside for restoration affects clerks who are paid fees. Lucrecia reported there are towns that do not set money aside for restoration. There are towns that won't budget and don't let the clerks set money aside. She believed mandating it would help smaller towns put money away and the clerks on fees. It will take a few years to see how it works for towns and the fees could be reviewed on a schedule of every three years. Various fee schedules were discussed by the Board. Karen Richard made a motion seconded by Diane Judd to approve the higher first page and lower additional page fee schedule. Karen noted VLCT recommended using a model that works in other states rather than try to pass a fee structure that has no history. There will be electronic recording in the future and third party notaries. All were in favor. The motion carried.

10:30 CONVERSATION with the VERMONT DEMOCRATIC PARTY

Donna Kinville thanked Brandon Batham and Rob Hipskin for coming. She explained the Association wanted to have a conversation with the parties before the legislative session began. Board members introduced themselves. Donna explained the Board represents the Vermont clerks and the intent of the meeting is to open the line of communication between the clerks and the parties. She explained elections are near and dear to Vermont clerks and we, as clerks, would like to see 100% voter participation at elections. The clerks are looking for a freeze day the day before an election. Things can get hectic going into an election and the day would be to give clerks the necessary time to review the election and make certain all the ducks are in a row. She asked Brandon and Rob the best way to garner non-partisan support. Brandon and Rob discussed with the Board the gap day, same day voter registration, the accuracy of the DMV registrations, the number of voters the day before an election and its drawbacks. The need to get accurate checklist to the printer before the election. The desire to make voters feel empowered and not discourage them. A Board member explained how after an election is over the votes and ballots need to be added. Someone voted in one town and by the end of the night had registered in another town. Brandon stated he wouldn't discourage the clerks from trying to model Vermont after Maine. Rob agreed adding there were a lot of issues the clerks face the parties weren't aware of. Donna explained the gap day did not mean if someone came in to the office and handed in a voted ballot it wouldn't be taken. The ballot would be received just as it would be if it came in the mail.

Donna informed Brandon and Rob the fees for clerks' recordings haven't changed in ten years and is not on a three-year review schedule as other fees are. She explained the Association is looking at a fee structure similar to ones in other states. Brandon encouraged the Board to talk to the people serving on the Ways and Means Committee and the Finance Committee. He asked if it was presented to the legislature in the past. Karen answered no adding it is being worked on with VLCT. Brandon and Rob discussed this a little further with the Board and encouraged the Board to pursue it with members of the legislature.

Donna noted the Board had been discussing mandatory election training. Karen suggested clerks be certified to run elections and could possibly have online classes. It was suggested there be something in the legislature for mandatory elections training for town clerks. Brandon believed given current history the Board could find enthusiasm from legislatures for this. He noted anything that increases clerks' professionalism would be well received. Rob explained he is the one who seeks voter participation reports after elections. Donna explained the Board wanted to reach out to the parties because we aren't on different sides. It was agreed clear participation checklist are needed for floor votes as well as Australian ballot votes. The state primary was discussed. Donna thanked Brandon and Rob for attending the meeting and their time.

11:00 CONVERSATION with the VERMONT REPUBLICAN PARTY

Jeffrey Bartley arrived after Brandon and Rob departed.

Donna thanked Jeff for attending and Board members introduced themselves. Donna explained the purpose of having party members attend the Board meeting was to open lines of communication between the parties and the clerks. She explained there were a couple of items the clerks are hoping to see go through the legislature this year. She further explained elections are near and dear to every clerk comparing it as a party and the clerks would like everyone to come. The Association is again hoping for a gap – step back – day to make certain all our ducks are in a row ahead of election day to maintain election integrity. Discussion with Jeff followed. People tend to put things off until the last day and will show up the last day available to vote before an election. Currently that is the day before the election. The question as to how to garner non-partisan support was asked. The gap day was discussed. Some see it as suppressing a vote and that is not the case. It is not a partisan issue. People can register to vote on election day and do. A Board member explained how she sends out a letter welcoming new voters in her town. Eight letters were sent back – Return to Sender – because no one by that name lived at the address given when they registered on election day.

Donna explained the clerks would like to see a change in the fees structure and to have it be included in the review cycle. There hasn't been a fees increase in ten years and some towns feel they are losing money. This was discussed a little further.

Donna explained there has been discussion about mandatory training for clerks, elections training being the easiest place to start. She suggested clerks be certified to run an election. Karen noted it shouldn't be a process that is difficult. Elections training is currently required but not tracked. Tracy suggested someone trained in elections should be required at every recount. Training was discussed a little further and the need for consistency between cities and towns in the way they are reported. Donna thanked Jeff for attending the meeting and his time. Jeff thanked the Board for inviting him.

The Board broke for lunch.

NEW BUSINESS(cont.)

D. Proposed Fee Increase (cont.)

Tracy noted it isn't a fee increase but a restructuring of the fees. Lucrecia stated it has been shown to attorneys and they are in favor of it and notice the recording mortgages will be less. Money for restoration, preservation and computerization would be required to be set aside at \$10 for the first page and \$1 per additional page of recording. Diane explained it is to help towns that aren't putting any money aside or budgeting any. Comparing the proposal to other states, Connecticut and Rhode Island are the only others doing recording at the town level and their fees are a lot higher. Karen suggested she could meet with a Representative for advice on how to present the proposal. Some are concerned with the costs to townspeople. It only affects those who are changing their real estate; mortgages will be lower. Donna read a letter provided by Deanna Robitaille, Montgomery Town Clerk and VMCTA Auditor from the Franklin County Clerks. Lucrecia suggested putting on the listserv examples of the differences in 1 page, 4 page, and 20-page recording costs before and after, adding the Committee worked with other states and VLCT regarding the repair, preservation, and computerization funding. Karen suggested the wording should not

just say preservation but things required to archive. During discussion, it was decided to change the recording costs of plats to \$30, municipal recordings to \$20, and the Certificate of Name Change would be treated as a regular document, \$40 for a 1st page. Debra Hawkins made a motion seconded by Stacy Jewell to accept the fees schedule as modified. All members voted in favor. The motion carried.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Treasurer Audra Girouard reported the warrant for \$347.75 consisted of two refunds, checks ordered, Annual Meeting attendee gifts, fundraisers and name tags. Dianne Judd made a motion seconded by Karen Richard to approve the warrant in the amount of \$347.75 for November 1, 2017 through December 18, 2017. All members voted in favor. The motion carried. Audra reminded the Board a \$15 fee for a stop payment on a check was charged to the Association; the bank waived the fee. Lucrecia turned in her credit card; a new one is needed for Donna. A letter was received from Amazon Smile. They will donate .5% to VMCTA as a charitable organization if people choose VMCTA as their charitable organization of choice for purchases made through smile.amazon.com. She asked the Board's permission to complete the necessary paperwork. Once approved by amazon a notification could be put on the listserv. The Board approved by consensus.

OLD BUSINESS

A. Tax Exempt Status for Rooms and Meals

Donna stated she spoke to the state and state agencies are tax exempt. She noted this is something she will be working on suggesting it might be processed through the state treasurer.

B. 2018 Annual Meeting Venue

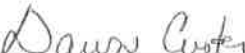
Donna noted it was down to the Holiday Inn in South Burlington and the Hampton Inn in Colchester. The concern is room for vendors. Rooms are limited in size. Next to the Holiday Inn is the Windjammer Conference Center. The Hilton was contacted and they think the rooms would be between \$160 - \$179 with no charge for the conference rooms. Parking is \$15/day. The Hilton is looking like a better option, nothing is finalized. The Sheraton is booked. All venues can do an Athenian. The Capitol Plaza wasn't available for Thursday. It was suggested the conference could be Tuesday and Wednesday. Donna stated she would check the Hampton, investigate the Capitol Plaza for Tuesday and Wednesday, and continue getting pricing from the Hilton for Wednesday and Thursday. It was agreed having ample room for vendors was a priority.

C. Reflection on Conversation with Political Party Chairs

The Board was surprised by the different views presented by the parties. Everyone was glad the line of communication was open and hoped it lead to future discussions and legislative support.

The next E-Board meeting was set for January 23, 2018, 9:30 a.m. at the Barre Town Offices.

Adjourn: Lucrecia Wonsor made a motion seconded by Debra Hawkins to adjourn the meeting at 1:28 p.m. All members voted in favor. The motion carried.

Attest: 
Dawn Custer
VMCTA Secretary