

**VMCTA EXECUTIVE BOARD  
MEETING MINUTES  
Thursday, April 11, 2019  
Barre Town Offices**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** President Donna Kinville, South Burlington; Past President Lucrecia Wonsor, Killington; 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President Georgette Wolf-Ludwig, Fairlee; 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President Tracy Borst (via phone), Thetford; Treasurer Audra Girouard, Concord; Secretary Dawn Custer, Hubbardton and Members at Large – Charles Degener, Woodstock; Deb Hawkins, Pawlet; Stacy Jewell, St. Johnsbury; and Diane Judd, Holland

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Jill Remick & Deanna Robitaille of Property Valuation & Review, and Carol Dawes, Barre City Clerk

9:02 a.m. – President Donna Kinville called the meeting to order.

**REVIEW AND APPROVE MINUTES OF December 6, 2018**

Georgette Wolf-Ludwig made a motion seconded by Lucrecia Wonsor to approve the minutes of the December 6, 2018 meeting as presented. All members were in favor. The motion carried.

**NEW BUSINESS**

**A. Property Valuation & Review (PVR)**

Jill Remick thanked the Board for the opportunity to speak. Currently PVR is working on an update – the Grand List Software Project. The department would like feedback from the clerks, listers and assessors. Currently the department is on a fact-finding mission to find a software system and the best provider. The State requires PVR reach out for competitive bids. PVR is in the middle of the scheduled listening sessions. Input is being sought from clerks, treasurers, assessors – a wide net is being cast. The hope is to replace or upgrade the current grand list software. There is better technology available. There are a lot of manual inputs in the current software, which uses a lot of valuable time. The State agency wants a competitive bid process. GIS (Geographic Information Systems) would like it if the grand list software to be able to interface with theirs. The hope is not to have gaps with other municipal interfaces. There are legislative funds for this project. There are unknowns to be determined. The RFPs (Requests for Proposals) have been sent, published and are being returned. The narrow focus of the project is to meet statutory requirements. A pooled rate is being asked for to allow towns to use the chosen vendors' other software if they choose. The RFPs will be arriving this week. It had to happen during the current legislative session to secure funding. There will be demonstrations available, hopefully by May. NEMRC (New England Municipal Resource Center) and FAS (Fund Accounting Software) are bidding as well as others. The hope is to have a contract signed by this fall with a two year overlap in implementing. It is to be as user friendly as possible. PVR will host all the trainings; it is included in the funding. The budget request was for \$10 million which includes training, staff time and implementation. Concerns have been expressed from towns in the midst of reappraisals. PVR does not want this to interfere with that process. Transition will be a significant part of the plan is having pilot towns. Concerns have been heard that PVR is taking over assessing properties. That is not the case nor does the department want to. A lot has changed since 1995 when the software currently used was brought in. It is the Tax Department's responsibility to provide the grand list software. The department will be surveying towns regarding internet speed, computer versions, what works well and what doesn't work well.

Stacy Jewell expressed her concern regarding the loss of the link between the tax administration and grand list programs which the NEMRC system currently provides. She wondered if there would be a separate tax administration program or if the NEMRC system would still be utilized. Jill answered the current systems being used by towns could remain in place. Diane Judd noted it would be nice to have pre-payment of

taxes show on the tax bill when they are printed. Lucrecia Wonsor added the cloud based services offered by the current software provider aren't the best. Her office is frequently booted out and printing documents requires additional steps. If you miss the opportunity to print some reports it is an opportunity lost. It was asked where vendor demos would take place and if clerks would be invited. Jill stated she would like to have a couple of clerk representatives present. The room is small and there is a ten-member procurement board. A Board member noted that changes at the State level frequently seems to mean an increase in the workload on the municipal side. Emails for liens sometimes don't come until three days after the date of the lien. Carol Dawes noted there is new language to be added noting the date the clerk prints the liens is the record date. Diane Judd expressed a concern about Current Use noting, as a lister, items are returned zeroed out. Unless a lister prints the sheet that had the information before it is sent to the state they would have no clue what was entered when it was sent to the state. Regarding the Grand List Software Project Deanna Robitaille noted there is interest in a public facing view of the grand list. Georgette Wolf-Ludwig explained Fairlee opted not to put its grand list online because so many properties are second homes which are vacant most of the year. Jill agreed there have been concerns expressed about confidentiality especially with E-911. Killington has its grand list online but omits mailing addresses It was suggested grants could be offered to towns with hardware issues. Choosing a vendor that has other modules available for towns to have an option was suggested – in case the NEMRC system can't interface.

## **B. Legislative Committee Report**

Carol Dawes introduced herself as the Barre City Clerk/Treasurer and the Chair of VMCTA's Legislative Committee. There are two bills the committee has been spending time on. H.526 Clerk Fee Bill. This has been the accumulation of a couple of years of work and discussion. An increase in recording fees is being sought. Suggestions weren't met with universal applause. One early suggestion was a format not used by Vermont and had the first page at a higher fee with additional pages at a lower fee. The House Government Operations Committee signed on as sponsors of the fee bill. The bill represents a collaboration of multiple groups who work on land records all the time. Everyone is behind it. It is now in the Senate. It was going to be voted out of committee tomorrow but has been delayed. There will be a report required every three years which gathers how much has been set in the Repair & Restoration Fund and where your town is with computerization. Georgette asked who is responsible for gathering the information. Donna Kinville answered VMCTA will form a new committee responsible for collecting the data. Carol noted the bullet points of the H.526 bill are:

- Expansion of information to be collected with the #1 goal – digitization
- Increase in recording from \$10/pg. to \$15/pg. except PTTRS which are \$15/doc.
- Vault time from \$2/hr. to \$4/hr.
- Plat recording \$15 to \$25
- Of the \$15 per page \$4 is mandated for a restoration and preservation fund which has been expanded to storage and digitation of records
- This takes the responsibility of the restoration fund out of the hands of select boards – many clerks had no select board member support, some had tons. If a clerk has sufficient funds set aside in the budget they can certify there is enough money and didn't set the \$4 per page aside.

It was asked how this certification process would happen. Carol thought there would be a form. One concern expressed by clerks is unused money being absorbed into the general fund. A hope to have language added stating unused funds would be rolled over.

- Multiple recordings on a single sheet would be paid as multiple recordings
- New plats (subdivision & boundary changes only) must be submitted digitally to VCGI
- Mylar recorded in land records is the "official" document. This goes into effect July 2020
- Receipt of liens – new language has date and time stamping
- Returning documents – towns bear the cost but welcome postage paid envelopes – there is a need

- to establish best practices and enforce it
- Set guidelines for standardization for when documents are entered and searchable, date and time stamped, and an index of some kind is available so it can be searched.

Tracy Borst asked if a day book was required. Carol answered there is no statutory requirement for a day book. She added no one to date has said they disapprove or will work to kill the bill. Most are neutral or in support.

S.107 passed the Senate and is in the House Gov Ops Committee. It is fairly long and a lot of it is general housekeeping – making it gender neutral, campaign finance items, etc. What affects the clerks:

- Voters can sign as many petitions as they want for all elections
- Primary recount, if it ends in a tie the party will decide who wins
- Currently email UOCAVA and military absentee ballots. That will expand to allow the ill and disabled to receive ballots the same way. In the case of an emergency (clerk discretion if it is an emergency) absentee ballot requests can be accepted up to and including election day. Currently tabulators can't read plain paper. The ballot must be entered manually or transposed onto a ballot. The next generation of tabulators, in the 2-4 year timeframe, will be able to scan plain paper.
- Justices of the Peace are not required to deliver ballots out of town
- The Board of Civil Authority can vote to allow in office early voters to put ballots in tabulator, not those received via mail.
- Retention of unused ballots – not “unvoted” ballots – as soon as an election is over the unused ballots can go.

It was tried to have language inserted to allow write-ins not to be tallied for primary and general elections and to only count declared write-ins who have registered with the Secretary of State. This would have left the others to be counted simply as “undeclared” write-ins. There were concerns tied to the grassroots level which would leave out locals who might decide over the weekend prior to the election to run.

H.104 the Notary Fix passed the house without the fix – adding being notary as part of a clerk's job. It is in the Senate Government Operations Committee and the draft language is still not in the bill. It is on the radar and we will likely see the language in the bill somewhere.

H.36 mailing liens won't go anywhere.

H.143 Appoint Town Agents – VMCTA doesn't have a position

H.418 Allowing 16 & 17 year olds to vote – VMCTA has no position on this proposal. The concern is the process. It requires a separate checklist and a separate ballot. It won't move in this session.

H.444/S.174 Choice Ranked Voting – Secretary of State Jim Condos is in support of this believing it will provide a clearer indication of the winners. Ranking gives percentage points based on the rank. Current tabulators won't be able to do this and it will have to wait for the next generation. Hand count towns will take forever. It will be very expensive.

H.106 Municipal Self-Governance – they want to set up a self-governance committee with ten towns participating.

S.148 – None of These Candidates – a “None of These Candidates” would be added as a ballot option to primary and general ballots. It would not be counted as a blank vote but as an actual vote for None. None could win the election. It won't move this session.

S.96 Water Funding – possible collecting the fee on the property tax bill. The current version of this bill does not include any language about how the money will be collected.

Carol continuing to report -

Non-Legislative Vital Records – there is a group – Stacy Jewell; Wanda Morin, Colchester Asst. Town Clerk; Joyce Mazzucco, Randolph Town Clerk; Donna Kelty, Barre Town Clerk and Carol Dawes. The group has monthly conference calls about how to do certified and non-certified copies of vital records. The new bill requires clerks to collect identification and the Dept. of Health is still working on a rule that had no clerk input. Parts of the rule are still unacceptable.

- Visitors to vital records areas will be escorted
- Materials to make certified copies, including computers and copiers, will be locked and secured.

The rule is not being changed but softer language has been added. A lot of what is being experienced is because they cannot and will not do anything without first running it by their lawyers. There is some undercurrent we aren't aware of. All suggestions receive the same, we must run it by our lawyers, response. The biggest challenge with their new software system (VRIMS) is the amount of data entry. There will not be a way to pre-register or group register people. Funeral home employees must fill out the application every time they want information. It has been tried to pre-register Deputy Registrars. Donna asked if it would be usable by July 1<sup>st</sup>. Carol answered with broader, softer language, yes keep the certificate paper locked up, don't leave it in the printer, it should be reasonable. She noted she explained the layout of her office and they said there wasn't an issue. It was suggested they have policies written as procedures and it has been reported that is the direction in which they are moving. The application was supposed to be written with input from the Dept. of Health and VMCTA. The VMCTA has not had any input to date. Stacy added the software system has been built around that application. Georgette hoped the training would make everything very clear. Carol noted anything from 1909 forward can only be printed from VMIRS. An application must be completed even for uncertified copies. Indexes will be available online. The system has built in correspondence – can't find what you are looking for – not enough information was provided on the application.

### **C. Education Committee**

Tracy Borst reported the spring training will be on April 18<sup>th</sup> in Fairlee and May 2<sup>nd</sup> in West Rutland. The speakers, meals and handouts are all set. The Annual Meeting is close to ready. Heather Shouldice, the VMCTA Lobbyist, was asked to be the opening speaker. She has been too busy to respond and either Stacy or Donna will ask her. There is a back-up plan. May 1<sup>st</sup> is the deadline for speaker bios and courses to apply for IIMC points. The general session will be on Diversity & Inclusion: How to Run Your Work Life So It Doesn't Run You. James Ognibene will be presenting again, an election session for clerks – Best Practices for Poll Worker Recruitment, sessions on Records Management, Open Meeting Law with Jim Barlow, Tax Collection, Cash Management, and the U.S. Department of Labor talking about the updates to labor law. Anita Duquette is available to come for an Athenian Dialogue if the committee decides to include one. At last year's annual meeting the Athenian only brought in enough money to pay for the flight of the speaker, which is all she charged for. Breaking even isn't bad, we don't want to lose money. We will need to make \$700ish. Attendance could be bigger if it is announced early enough and a new book is being used. A separate registration page will be included in the registration packet for the Athenian asking for a separate check. That would enable the check to be returned if the Athenian is canceled.

### **D. Blockchain**

Donna reported she and Dawn Custer have been working with Propy regarding blockchain recording of land records. They have learned the U.S. is different and are at a point now where the process can begin. Everything is signed, done, recorded and sent through the system. They created their own version of ACS or COTT system. She explained they would like her to sign a contract and she would prefer to do a Memorandum of Understanding. They will sit in the office a couple of days a week and will take information from the town's system and enter it in their system. The town won't charge. Propy will be doing 2 – 3 months of data entry. VSARA does not use blockchain. Dawn noted they asked her to use their

software exclusively and she didn't feel comfortable with that. When asked they said no other state in the U.S. is using their software but they have feelers out elsewhere. Donna noted the state is setting up for electronic recording of records and backing blockchain.

#### **E. VMCTA Website**

Lucrecia reported the domain is registered with Network Solutions. It is renewed every five years. The renewal is \$194.95, only a \$10 increase. Private registration of the domain name protects against SPAM and is \$49.95 for five years bringing the total to \$244.90. It is not budgeted. A motion was made by Donna Kinville and seconded by Georgette Wolf-Ludwig to pay \$244.90 for the five-year renewal of the VMCTA website and private registration of the domain name. All members voted in favor. So, voted.

### **TREASURER'S REPORT**

Treasurer Audra Girouard reported she had an unclaimed property report. She was checking to see if we can collect it. She presented a warrant for \$19,606.20 - the lobbyist, the memo cubes, NEMCI, and more. Audra asked if the scholarship committee has the authority to dispense funds and close an account or does the E-Board authorize its closing. It was decided the E-Board should close it. Georgette Wolf-Ludwig made a motion seconded by Diane Judd to close the Allison Kaiser and Spencer scholarships and add the money to the scholarship line item or spend per the discretion of the Scholarship Committee. All members voted in favor. So, voted. Lucrecia Wonsor made a motion seconded by Deb Hawkins to approve the warrant for \$19,606.20 and its signing. All members voted in favor. So, voted.

Charles Degener suggested budgeting the forgotten line items each year with a \$0 place holder to serve as a reminder in the years they are due to have monies budgeted.

### **OLD BUSINESS**

#### **A. State Filing of VMCTA name**

Donna reported no money is due for the state registration of the association's name if it is done on time. This year we had to pay because we hadn't filed in a while.

#### **B. Update on filing of Tax Documents**

Audra explained when filing the tax documents there was a question asking if we are involved in lobbyist activities. She noted she would have answered yes. She found out if she had answered yes it would have put the tax-exempt status in jeopardy. Stacy asked if clarification was still needed regarding VMCTA's fiscal year. Lucrecia noted it should be October 1<sup>st</sup> – September 30<sup>th</sup> to coincide with membership renewal. It was believed the E-Board made the decision and it was announced at an Annual Meeting. Donna noted the Constitution Committee should put together the language so it will go in the packet to be voted on at the Annual Meeting.

#### **C. Card Room**

Donna reported it was a fun day and new things were learned. If the members of the Senate didn't go to lunch they wouldn't have been seen. To receive a spot in the card room we must apply every year. It will then go into a lottery drawing. It was noted it was good having the room early in the legislative session. It was suggested the 3<sup>rd</sup> week in February be asked for next year. There are extra memo-holders to sell for a fundraiser. Audra noted she would like to split the cost of the memo-holders and apply part of the cost to the annual meeting.

#### **D. Annual Meeting**

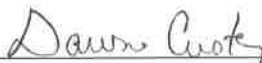
Donna reported the Annual Meeting is at Lake Morey Resort September 12<sup>th</sup> & 13<sup>th</sup>. The Athenian Dialogue will be on the 11<sup>th</sup>. Room rates are \$149 for a single or double, \$159 for a triple and \$169 for a quad. The quotes – price per day per person - \$46 for breakfast, snack, lunch, and a snack. The banquet is in the \$30s. The audio visual and other items are included in the package cost. The Terrace Room will be used for general sessions, the welcome, breakfast, vendors and one concurrent session. Lakefront Room has stadium seating. The Morey Room will hold the banquet. Tracy noted one of the speakers quoted a price for room and travel and she was given a couple of options. If they flew in to Burlington someone could pick up the speaker up or maybe they could take the Dartmouth coach.

**OTHER BUSINESS**

Lucrecia reported Deanna Robitaille called to say PVR wants a list of documents from the listers for VSARA. Deanna also reported the Town of Montgomery select board is adding a certification requirement to the town and assistant clerks' job descriptions.

The next E-Board meeting was set for June 19, 2019 at Lake Morey Resort.

**Adjourn: Lucrecia Wonsor made a motion seconded by Georgette Wolf-Ludwig to adjourn the meeting 12:35 p.m.**

Attest:   
Dawn Custer  
*VMCTA Secretary*