

**VMCTA EXECUTIVE BOARD
MEETING MINUTES
Friday June 5, 2020
Via Zoom (an online meeting provider)**

MEMBERS PRESENT: President Georgette Wolf-Ludwig, Fairlee; Past President Donna Kinville, South Burlington; 1st Vice President Tracy Borst, Thetford; 2nd Vice President Julie Graeter, Colchester; Treasurer Audra Girouard, Concord; Secretary Dawn Custer, Hubbardton; and Members at Large – Charles Degener, Woodstock; Diane Judd, Holland and Diana Vachon, Shelburne

MEMBERS ABSENT: Member at Large Deb Hawkins, Pawlet and Auditor Sue Gage, Brandon

OTHERS PRESENT: Carol Dawes, Barre City Clerk/Treasurer; Lucrecia Wonsor, Killington Town Clerk/Treasurer and Sandi Pinsonault, Dorset Town Clerk/Treasurer

10:08 a.m. – President Georgette Wolf-Ludwig called the meeting to order.

AGENDA REVIEW AND MODIFICATIONS

Georgette asked the Board’s permission to amend the agenda allowing discussion pertaining to Amazon business services at the end. The Board agreed by consensus.

NEW BUSINESS

A. Committee Update – Carol Dawes, Legislative Committee Chair

Carol Dawes informed the Board she just finished presenting to the House Government Operations Committee. The senate approved modifications to a bill approved earlier this session. It gives the Secretary of State’s Office (SOS) the power to modify elections as they see fit for this year, 2020. This makes mailing all November Presidential Election ballots a possibility. Changes were made to the part pertaining to decisions being made in consultation with and requiring the approval of the governor. The SOS and governor have been back and forth regarding the way to proceed with the November election. The governor wants to wait until after the August election for a decision. The bill passed by the senate removes the need for the governor’s approval; there were no other changes. In a discussion, Carol had with Senate President Pro-Tem Tim Ashe, it was noted there was no universal approval from the town clerks. A lot of the concerns were procedural. Clerks, as a whole, will work closely with the SOS. The bill now goes before the house for approval. The governor welcomes the change, he did not want to be involved in the decision to that degree. Sandi asked, to make certain, if the legislative body was aware the decision was only for the 2020 election cycle and as of December 31, 2020 it was off the table. Carol replied yes adding it is in the bill. The bill clearly defines it is strictly for the upcoming state elections and the SOS can work with local communities regarding how to proceed with local elections. Lucrecia noted some towns have special Town Meetings in conjunction with the November election. She wondered if those ballots would have to be mailed to everyone by the clerk’s office. Donna Kinville stated the Town Meeting ballots can be added to the November ballot if it is ready by the end of August. Carol explained it is not a problem with local election laws. The select Board only needs to approve the language early which will allow it to piggy back with the November ballot. Sandi wondered if the need for those interested in running for Justice of the Peace still had to complete petitions this year or if it was waived. If the Justices are chosen by caucus, do caucuses still need to be held? Carol believed caucuses still need to be held adding she would ask about the need for a petition for non-caucus towns. Lucrecia wondered if the decision regarding mailing ballots for the November election would be made before the August primary. Carol answered before. She explained ballots will be mailed to all active voters. If the office is open people can vote in person. A question pertaining to same day voter registration was asked. If someone votes absentee then registers in a town other than the one in which they voted absentee on election night, is the SOS committed to prosecuting. Carol agreed it could happen adding if the person is caught they could be held accountable under pains and penalties for perjury. Donna asked if the legislature discussed the need for the affidavit for

undelivered absentee ballots. Carol noted she knew it was discussed and is on the list of items still to be figured out. Georgette asked what clerks should do if someone comes in to vote early and we know the ballots were mailed. Would the voter need to complete an affidavit? Carol answered yes noting whichever ballot arrived in the clerk's office first would be the one to count. Sandi wondered about towns that have multiple people with the same name. How will clerks know which "Joe Smith" the ballot belongs to. She noted she had concerns about a lot of things that could potentially go wrong which aren't being considered by the legislature. Carol stated she would bring all of the concerns to Will Senning, Director of Elections. The certificate envelopes are being pre-printed without the bar code. She stated she will try to work with the SOS to make certain there are as many identifiers as possible. Georgette noted some states put trackers on the ballots. She wondered if Vermont will be doing the same thing to make certain ballots are being received. Carol explained she didn't think ballots were being forwarded but would be returned. The SOS is working with the national address system and doing a postcard mailing ahead of time to try and clean up addresses. She added she would ask Will to send an email to clerks explaining what the actual processes will be from the mailing side. Carol further explained other things are being considered, allowing for the opening and feeding of ballots into tabulators so there aren't thousands to do on election day. Extending the counting of ballots to a possible three days beyond the election but no ballot received after the election are to be counted.

Georgette thanked Carol for her work on behalf of the Association and for her time today.

B. Land Records/Website Committee

Lucrecia Wonsor reported Bobbi Brimblecombe, Marshfield Town Clerk/Treasurer, added a portal link on the VMCTA website. It is a link which will link to towns that have online land record access. Georgette stated she looked at it and it looks great adding it is nice it is in two places on the site. Lucrecia reported Deputy Secretary of State Chris Winters sent a survey regarding digitization of land records. He is trying to get funding with CARES Act funds. Donna explained the task force consists of the same groups that worked on the fees bill last year – attorneys, clerks, title researchers, etc. Carol noted he is trying to get enough money from CARES to digitize all towns' land records. Lucrecia explained it is time to update the website. She stated she would put something together for the E-Board to review. Sponsors will be needed to make it affordable. The website needs to be updated so it will be responsive to the different devices being used to access it. Georgette wondered what it would cost so sponsors could be solicited and money added to the budget. Lucrecia suggested the Board consider adding the availability of taking credit card payments for conferences. It was suggested the Board start putting money aside for the upgrade which will be in the \$5,000 range. There is also the monthly charge currently being paid. Sandi wondered if CARES money is received, will towns who have been proactive receive money. Carol stated there are too many moving parts that need to be made part of the nuts and bolts of the plan to figure it out yet. It will be considered and part of the discussion.

C. New England Association of City and Town Clerks (NEACTC) Update

Georgette explained Tammy Legacy, Roxbury Town Clerk was unable to attend. There are concerns about the upcoming November conference. It is still up in the air. This year would be when Vermont does its fundraising. Diane Judd wondered if the November conference was canceled would that move all future hosting states out a year. It was noted while that seems fair, other states already have their venues booked and other things in place for their years.

REVIEW AND APPROVE MINUTES OF APRIL 24, 2020 and MAY 5, 2020 MEETINGS

Donna Kinville made a motion seconded by Donna Diane Judd to approve the minutes of the April 24, 2020 meeting as presented. All members were in favor. The motion carried.

Donna Kinville made a motion seconded by Donna Diane Judd to approve the minutes of the May 5, 2020 meeting as presented. All members were in favor. The motion carried.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Treasurer Audra Girouard reported the warrant was emailed. There was one payment to Vermont Government Finance Officers' Association (VTGFOA) for \$1,000. It is the annual amount budgeted. Georgette added she received a nice note from Abbie Sherman, VTGFOA President, thanking VMCTA for its annual support. Diane wondered if a bill for annual support was received from the International Institute of Municipal Clerks (IIMC) Region I yet. Audra answered no adding it usually arrives toward the end of our fiscal year. Julie Graeter made a motion seconded by Dawn Custer to approve the warrant in the amount of \$1,000.00 for the period of April 22, 2020 through June 4, 2020. All members were in favor. The motion carried. Audra noted the financial report shows it has been very slow 2-3 months. Community National Bank sent \$2,500 for its sponsorship of the Annual Meeting.

OLD BUSINESS

A. 2020 Annual Meeting/Conference

Georgette reminded Board members there was discussion about the Annual Meeting at the May 5th emergency meeting. Since that time, an official email has been received stating Vermont League of Cities and Towns has cancelled its in-person annual conference. Georgette wondered how VMCTA should handle its Annual Meeting. We don't know how COVID-19 will play out in the fall. Julie noted she had concerns about towns' budgets being tightened. She explained Colchester froze its budget and no travel is allowed. She questioned whether we, as an Association, want to risk all clerks in one room that close to a general election. Andy Masters, one of the speakers being considered for a general session at the conference can do a virtual presentation. His contract price is \$2,500 and it still needs to be discussed with the Education Committee. Georgette expressed she struggles with the decision to have the conference or cancel it because September is unknown. The Annual Meeting portion can be held remotely and she agreed there is concern with all clerks being together that close to an election. It would be better to be proactive with things we know we can do. Tracy Borst agreed noting the Tunbridge Fair already canceled. The IIMC is holding virtual classes. New England Municipal Clerk's Institute (NEMCI & A) hosted one last week. It sold out in an hour which helped cover the fixed cost. One hundred people attended. Andy Masters is dynamic and anything he offers would be fabulous. Four hours is a long time. There is talk about IIMC, NEMCI & A, and all institutes conducting seminars online with sessions on how to train the trainers. A consistent rule seems to be no sessions longer than 2 – 3 hours. Georgette stated the Education Committee can work out the time and send out an email explaining sessions would be virtual. The Annual Meeting could be one day and the sessions another. She suggested the Board have a special meeting about how to conduct the Annual Meeting. The four course requirements need to be met and we want to be certain people can continue obtaining education points. The City of South Burlington has GoToMeetings that can hold a couple of hundred people. Tracy explained NEMCI & A will be offering online trainings in July & August. It will be finalized next week. There could be on demand self-paced classes offered to New England clerks only. Each is \$50 - \$75 and worth one IIMC point. Tracy Borst made a motion seconded by Diane Judd to cancel the 2020 VMCTA in-person Annual Meeting & Conference and host a remote Annual Meeting with the education component to be determined. All members were in favor. The motion carried. Georgette noted it is very sad. She explained Lake Morey Inn, the venue VMCTA booked for its Annual Meeting & Conference is facing a huge struggle with all conferences being canceled. She asked if the Board would approve using that venue for 2021. It was agreed by the Board. Tentative dates for the 2021 Annual Meeting & Conference were set for September 22-24, 2021. The VMCTA constitutional requirement to give a six month notice before the Annual Meeting was discussed. Georgette stated September 14, 2020 can be kept as the Annual Meeting date. Julie suggested the education portion could be held over multiple days later in the week. It was suggested the education portion could also be later in the month. Sandi noted this is an opportunity for the Education Committee to think outside the box. She suggested the trainings could be pre-recorded for people to take at a time convenient for them. They could sign in and have a test at the end. It could be offered to a broader group of people. Tracy suggested recording the mandatory courses making them available online until July 1, 2021. Georgette wondered if VMCTA could charge an access fee. Tracy explained she learned something needs to be charged or people don't show up for the seminars, or show and don't stay. It was believed a fee could be

charged. Financing speakers like Andy Masters was discussed. VLCT will help with the virtual classes and taking the money this year.

Georgette noted since the Board voted not to hold the in-person conference we need to touch base with vendors. How do we keep them engaged? Can we get support from them or a commitment for them to attend and sponsor next year? Sandi noted we are all in the same boat. Some of the vendors aren't allowed to leave their offices. Donna suggested vendors could put together a 10-minute video to add to the online conference for clerks and treasurers to watch noting their new offerings or services they provide. It could be added to VMCTA's website. Sandi agreed to put together a draft letter. Diane Judd agreed to reach out to Community National Bank and see if the conference funds received can be used toward education classes.

Georgette noted she did not want to tell the membership the in-person Annual Meeting & Conference was being canceled without having a plan. She suggested something be put on the website announcing the Annual Meeting portion will be held remotely and the educational portion is to be determined. Sending a mass email to all clerks or mailing postcards was discussed. It was noted the Annual Meeting is for VMCTA members only. It was agreed a mass email would be sent using the SOS's email list. It would include notice the in-person Annual Meeting & Conference was canceled. The Annual Meeting for VMCTA members will be held on September 14, 2020 and the Education Committee will send out information about remote class offerings.

OTHER BUSINESS

A. Amazon

A customer service representative from Amazon.com wondered if a VMCTA business account could be created. It would offer one place for all clerks and treasurers to access. Some clerks are fine with the idea, some had concerns. About 12-15 are registered, it is the goal to have all towns. Donna wondered if towns that have existing accounts would have their individual accounts merged with VMCTA's. Concern was expressed that non-member towns would use the VMCTA account. It was agreed the account would be a good thing for all clerks and treasurers. Concerns were expressed that Joe public may access the link that would be on the website. It was believed a tax id-number would be required. Donna Kinville made a motion seconded by Audra Girouard in favor of creating a VMCTA master account at Amazon.com for all town clerks and treasures in Vermont, if, in so doing it does not cancel previously existing town accounts. All members voted in favor. So, voted.

B. Democracy Fund

Georgette explained it is a non-partisan election organization based in Washington D.C. They offer webinars on elections, conducting them, mailing ballots, how to set up polling places and more. She noted she would like to add a link to their resources under resources on the VMCTA website adding she had previous Board approval to do so. She noted it is a great resource.

The next E-Board meeting was set for July 10, 2020; 10:00 a.m. via Zoom.

Adjourn: Georgette Wolf-Ludwig adjourned the meeting with the consensus of the Board at 12:08 p.m.

Attest: _____
Dawn Custer
VMCTA Secretary