



VMCTA

NEWSLETTER OF THE VERMONT MUNICIPAL CLERKS' AND TREASURERS' ASSOCIATION

**CELEBRATING
88 YEARS!
1936-2024**

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Heidi Racht
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Welcome to the 14th edition of the VMCTA newsletter.
Your submissions are welcome — or feel free to contact a member of the committee with an idea.

Fall Conference in Montpelier Less than a Week Until We Gather to Learn, Socialize

Our Annual Meeting and Fall Conference - next week! - at the Capital Plaza Hotel in Montpelier promises to be educational, inspirational and fun. We are pleased to be in Vermont's capital, across the street from our beautiful State Capitol with its stunning golden dome, just one of the many sites to visit while we are "in residence."

The week will begin with a day of election training, conducted by the Elections team at the Secretary of State's Office on September 10 – the day before the conference.

In addition to conference sessions and the opportunity for IIMC points, and events, you can meet with vendors who will be onsite to answer your questions about their services and products.

The Fundraising Committee has been working hard on a Silent Auction and 50/50 raffle. You can also look forward to lots of door prizes and vendor raffles. Any funds raised helps to keep trainings affordable.

Committee member Mitzi Fleming said, "We are looking for items that can be used for the raffle, such as baskets of goods, a homemade item, a bottle of wine or alcohol just to name a few."

She explained, "We sell raffle tickets, and you place your ticket in the container of the item you want to win."

Also, a Live Auction will be held at the banquet, so if you have a larger item that would be appropriate to auction off bring it with you. The more auction items the more money we raise, plus it is a fun time.

If you do not wish to win stuff, no worries, there will also be a 50/50 raffle. So bring your cash, checks and support our wonderful organization."

Feel free to contact Mitzi Fleming with any questions or if you are not attending the conference, but have a donation. She will work with you to coordinate drop off or pick up: mfleming@moristownvt.gov

The Certification and Continuing Education Committee has recently reviewed 20 applications for certification. Sixteen were approved and the other four applicants will be able to apply again soon. Please remember that you must sign the attendance sheet in each session in order to get IIMC or VMCTA credit (or both!) for attending the training.

Corrections to the Spring 2024 Newsletter!

Here is a correction to our list of new clerks and treasurers:

Teegan Dykeman-Brown, Calais Town Clerk (2023)

Apologies for an omission in the list of certifications:

Lucrecia Wonsor, Killington, Clerk Magna Cum Laude Certification (2021)



Executive Board

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John Odum, Montpelier City Clerk
jodum@montpelier-vt.org

MEMBERS AT LARGE - 2 Years

Therese Lounsbury
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tlounsbury@wilmingtonvt.us

Sally Ober, Lincoln Town Clerk
clerk@lincolnvermont.org

Greetings from Your President

I urge one and all to take advantage of our Annual Conference as there will be wonderful opportunities to learn.

Networking is also very important as we as Clerks and Treasurers rely on each other to help when we call upon each other.

VMCTA Committees are a very important part of our organization. If you haven't considered being a part of a committee, I urge you to check them out on our website.

Without our committees and the dedicated professionals that commit to them, we would be hard pressed to function.

Get involved in our organization as it is very fulfilling and rewarding.

—Diane H Judd, CVC, CVC, MMC



FIRST THURSDAY TRAININGS

Open to the first 95 VMCTA members who sign up.

Register online at: www.vmcta.org

30-minute presentation ~ 30-minute Q & A

Free for all active VMCTA members!

Sponsored by the VMCTA Certification & Continuing Education Committee

Feb 1 - Primary Tips (78 attendees)
March 7 - Post Town Meeting Requirements (49 attendees)
April 4 - Intro to Records Management (44 attendees)
May 1 - How to become certified (51 attendees)
June 6 - August Primary (97 attendees)
August 1 - Vermont Statewide Parcel Program Updates
September 5 - TBD
October 3 - Diversity, Equity & Inclusion
November 7 - TBD
December 5 - TBD

4 - 5 PM
virtual via Zoom

Mark Your Calendar and then Take Action

2024 NEW ENGLAND ANNUAL CONFERENCE

November 20-22, 2024

Newport Marriott Hotel & Spa, Newport, Rhode Island

For details, go to:

<https://newenglandclerks.org/meetinginfo.php?id=13&ts=1722517882>

Carol Dawes Retires Amidst Many Accolades

As Town Clerks and Treasurers, we are blessed to have many talented people come in to our lives, both in our communities, and as our colleagues.

For many of us, Carol Dawes is at the top of that list. The Northfield Vermont native retired in May, after nearly 20 years of service to the city of Barre, both as a City Council member, and the last 16 as Clerk treasurer.. Carol served as the long time chair of the VMCTA's Legislative committee, making her the point person for the association's agenda during Vermont's annual legislative session. As has always been the case with her life, she's taken the next step, with a bid for a seat in the House.

Many of our association's members have looked to Carol for advice. "I only tried to step in, If I knew the issue forwards and backwards, or if I had time to do the proper research." Her original career was as a dairy farmer, and then took a complete left turn to work as a theater stage manager in Manhattan. She came back to Vermont to work as director of the Barre City Opera House, before the past two decades

Well Done!

Susan McNamara-Hill, City Clerk of Essex Junction, on earning the prestigious Certified Municipal Clerk, CMC, designation from the International Institute of Municipal Clerks (IIMC) in August 2024.

Kathleen Kelly, Town Clerk/Treasurer of Rockingham, on earning the prestigious Certified Municipal Clerk, CMC, designation from the International Institute of Municipal Clerks (IIMC) in September 2024.

Margaret (Peggy) Neisner, Assistant Town Clerk of Killington, on earning the prestigious Certified Municipal Clerk, CMC, designation from the International Institute of Municipal Clerks (IIMC) in September 2024.

The Certified Municipal Clerk (CMC) is one of the two professional designations granted by IIMC and is designed to enhance the job performance of the Clerk in small and large municipalities. To earn the CMC designation, a Municipal Clerk must attend extensive education programs, often totaling more than 120 educational hours. The CMC designation also requires pertinent experience in a municipality. The CMC program prepares the applicants to meet the challenges of the complex role of the Municipal Clerk by providing them with quality education in partnership with institutions of higher learning and State/Provincial/National Associations. The CMC program has been assisting clerks in excelling since 1970.



Carol Dawes was presented with a bouquet of flowers at the VMCTA Spring Training in Fairlee in late April.

of public life.

Carol's interest in the Legislature was an outgrowth of her work chairing the VMCTA's Legislative committee. "The job is always changing, with new laws being passed very year. I feel I can help add to that process from a Clerk and Treasurer's point of view."

Her advice for the association's members, from the very new to those who continue to place their **What Would Carol Do** bracelets in a prominent place, is to share their knowledge base with each other

"We should all help out the newer Clerks and Treasurers, as we received help from others when we were new. Whether we are the lone full time employee, or even working part time, we are not alone and should lean on each other for support."

—Article and photo by Tim Arsenault

WELCOME TO OUR WORLD

VOLUME 1

WELCOME TO OUR WORLD

Stories from Vermont Town Clerks



Published August 2024
by VMCTA Fundraising Committee
Edited by Patti Lewis, MMC, CVC, CVT
Illustrations by Taylor Quenneville
Volume 1

\$10⁰⁰ each

A BOOK

- BY CLERKS
- ABOUT CLERKS
- FOR CLERKS (and anyone who enjoys good stories)

VERMONT MUNICIPAL CLERKS & TREASURERS ASSOCIATION

ATHENIAN LEADERSHIP DIALOGUE

VIRTUAL ONLY!

Sept 26-27, 2024

9:00 AM - 12:30 PM

VMCTA members - \$65

Non VMCTA members - \$80

Register online: <https://vmcta.org>



Things You Save in a Fire by Katherine Center

About this book: This book is not one of my usual choices; it's fiction, a story about a female firefighter who moves from Texas to Boston. We will discuss cultural differences, the gender gap, her vulnerability and bullying. But there is a love story weaved into this book too. I hope you enjoy this easy read during a Presidential Election season.

"Cassie Hanwell was born for emergencies. As one of the only female firefighters in her Texas firehouse, she's seen her fair share of them, and she's a total pro at other people's tragedies. But when her estranged and ailing mother asks her to give up her whole life and move to Boston, Cassie suddenly has an emergency of her own. Katherine Center's *Things You Save in a Fire* is a heartfelt and healing tour-de-force about the strength of vulnerability, the nourishing magic of forgiveness, and the life-changing power of defining courage, at last, for yourself." [excerpt from Amazon]

What is an Athenian Dialogue?

Dialogues are conversations between the participants whether in person or on a virtual Zoom screen. It's a small class. These dialogues offer the opportunity to share experiences, professional and personal, as they relate to the author or the characters in the book. Athenian Dialogues explore leadership qualities in yourself. Take notes as you read the book and bring your favorite quote from the book.

You must read the book or the audio book before the dialogue.

Worth 3 points towards CMC or MMC after completion of the assessment.

Be sure to take notes as you go along, as they will be invaluable during discussions and assessments. Engage actively with the material, and don't hesitate to share your thoughts and insights with your peers. This will enhance not only your understanding but also the collective learning experience.

Remember, the goal is not just to complete the assignment but to genuinely grasp the concepts and themes presented. Happy reading, and best of luck with your assessment!

About the Facilitator, Dawn Michanowicz, MMC: Dawn [Mc-kan-o-wits] is a Master Municipal Clerk, retired after 20 years of serving the public in Massachusetts. She was born in Europe, speaks several languages and has a BS degree in Political Science. She always dreamed of becoming a career US Foreign Service Officer but discrimination against women in the 1970's shifted her path. Instead she started her career in New York City with an international shipping/trucking corporation. After a decade in that industry, she opened her own small import/export firm and soon after moved to New England to raise her family. From the high stress of her work and personal life, she began to study healing modalities to calm her anxiety, her obsessive list making and her desire for perfection. Since 2001 she has mastered Yoga, Reflexology and Energy Medicine teaching mindfulness seminars and offering retreats. Her skills as a facilitator are well known; she brings creativity, joy and humor to all her classes. Please feel free to reach out to her with questions, anytime.

Hinesburg Town Clerk Retires After Long Career

by Corey McDonald

Missy Ross — or “Missy” — grew up in Manchester, going to town meeting day elections as a child and watching her father, Ferdinand “Nundy” Bongartz, moderate the whole affair.

Bongartz, a Vermont public service legend, spent 26 years as Manchester’s moderator and spent years on the town’s Selectboard, Planning Commission and School Board and served on the regional planning commission and the state Environmental Board.

The apple, in this case, does not fall very far from the tree. This month, Ross will wrap up a career spanning almost a quarter century, ending her 22-year tenure as Hinesburg’s longtime clerk and treasurer.

She is Hinesburg’s longest serving clerk in more than a century — since at least 1900. She’s also served on the board of the Hinesburg Nursery School, on the town’s Planning Commission and was part of the Hinesburg Land Trust when it first got underway.

“It is with both sadness and anticipation that I move forward to the next chapter of my life,” she said. “I’ve had the distinct pleasure of holding one of the most rewarding jobs in Vermont — a job steeped in history and tradition.”

Ross has been the “face of business” in Hinesburg, Selectboard Chair Merrily Lovell said, “a warm and friendly face, one who treats every person with special respect and interest in a way that empowers us all.”

For 22 years, she’s greeted everybody in town seeking out dog licenses or marriage licenses, people begrudgingly going to pay their taxes or their water bills and myriad other requests.

“I’m definitely going to miss it. I’ll miss my colleagues, and I will miss just seeing everybody on a regular basis,” she said. “It will be an adjustment for sure, but I’m lucky to have a lot of good friends in the community.”

The Town Clerk is the official in town that, in more ways than the town’s State Representative or even the Selectboard, is “a face to the community,” former Vermont Rep. Bill Lippert said previously, “the person in office that most people in the community interface with.”

It’s what she’ll miss the most, Ross said.

“People have just been really wonderful to get to know and no matter how small their request or problem might have been, it was the most satisfying thing,” she said. “I really, really enjoyed that.”

A native Vermont resident, Ross grew up in Manchester and then attended Middlebury College and later the University of Vermont, eventually settling in Hinesburg. After first serving as the town’s Recreation Coordinator, she moved on to the Town Clerk and Town Treasurer positions in October 2001.

Since then, she’s seen a lot of change — most recently, seeing COVID-19 completely disrupt Vermont’s town meeting day tradition.

Hinesburg, since the pandemic, has opted to use Australian ballot instead of the traditional in-person voice vote during annual meeting.

Hinesburg’s informational meeting “had fairly good attendance this year, considering there wasn’t voting on anything,” she said. “But I do think it is partly an equity issue, to allow people the opportunity to vote on the budget

— people who may have difficulties attending a meeting. As our population ages, I think it’s good to give those people an opportunity to vote by ballot.”

The town is set to see even more change in the coming years, as the town’s village center is expected to grow and transform as hundreds of new housing units come down the regulatory pike.

There’s some anxiety there, for sure — impacts on traffic congestion on Route 116, for example — and as a town gets larger, it gets more and more difficult to maintain those local traditions that are unique to Vermont towns, she said.

“On the positive side, it can be a good thing to infuse the town with new people who bring a new enthusiasm to volunteer committees and are looking for an opportunity to get involved.”

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Missy Ross. Courtesy photo

Essex Selectboard Honors Former Clerk and Treasurer Susan McNamara-Hill, Who Now Works Solely for the City of Essex Junction

by Kate Vanni

In honor of Susan McNamara-Hill’s seven years of service to the Town of Essex, the Essex Selectboard adopted a resolution of appreciation. McNamara-Hill’s last day with the Town was June 28. She is now the sole clerk and treasurer for the City of Essex Junction.

McNamara-Hill began training for the Town clerk and treasurer position in 2016 and was officially appointed for the Town of Essex in January 2017. Spanning seven years, McNamara-Hill served two municipalities before and after their separation.

“Susan has performed laudable service in managing all elections, vital statistics, required reporting and customer transactions during her Essex tenure,” the resolution states.

In 2019, McNamara-Hill led an effort to digitize land records, which created a more efficient

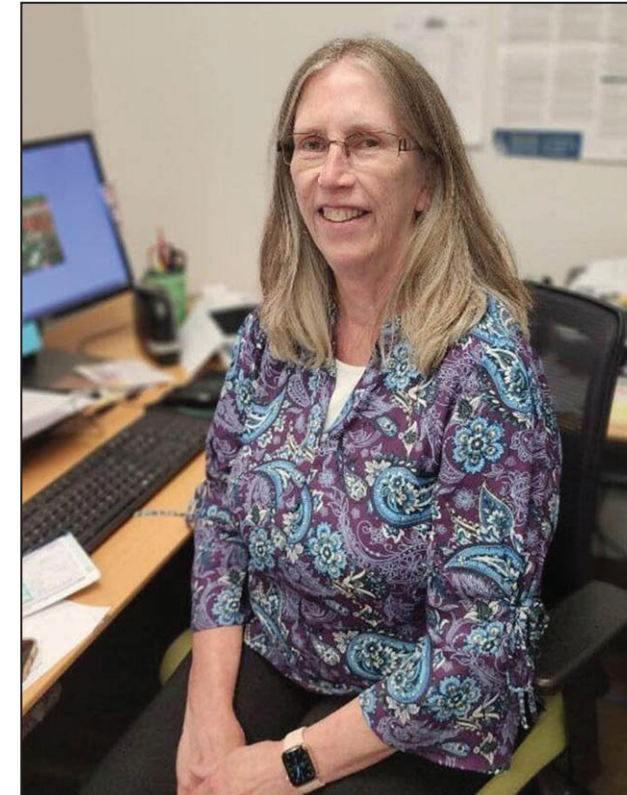
process with an online index. These actions were particularly valuable during the pandemic, according to the resolution.

“Susan played a crucial role during the pandemic when clerks were often the only employees working in the office to answer customer inquiries and provide critical support to other departments that were working remotely,” the resolution states.

During her time with the town, McNamara-Hill mentored many municipal employees and election volunteers who learned from her leadership and meticulous attention to detail.

“The Selectboard, on behalf of the staff and residents of the Town of Essex, hereby extend our most sincere appreciation to Susan McNamara-Hill for her commendable service,” the resolution states.

Reprinted from the Essex Reporter. Published on July 17, 2023.



Ross from previous page

“People will hopefully be out and outside and be able to chat with people. I think that’s a better form of growth to have ... I hope that that will help us maintain that community feeling.”

Ross will be replaced by Heather Roberts, the town’s Assistant Town Clerk and Treasurer, who ran uncontested in this year’s election.

“As I pass the torch to the next Town Clerk and Treasurer, I want to say thank you for your years of support, goodwill and good wishes for the future,” Ross said.

This story first appeared in The Citizen [Hinesburg] on March 16, 2023. And was reprinted in VTDigger on March 20, 2023.

Editor’s Note:

We still have a small bit of catching up to do with the news from the past three years (although don’t have this information yet) and hope to get one more newsletter out in 2024 - after the General Election and the New England Conference in November. Feel free to send in news, photos, tips and anything else you can share with all of us to huntingtonclerk@gmavt.net. Please put NEWSLETTER in the subject. Thanks.

Deadline is December 1.

So many venerable clerks and treasurers have retired and their local newspapers have run stories. They are here so you can read about them and feel inspired (much better than learning from an obituary!)

IIMC Study Abroad Provides Cultural and Professional Opportunities

by Heidi Racht

Last spring, I was lucky to be accepted into the IIMC Study Abroad Program and got out my credit card and made the deposit to go with other clerks to Belgium and the Netherlands. I will be honest. It was a lot of money, but my sons urged me to go. They were enthusiastic.

I received lots of tips and some travel books and tons of encouragement from people in my town. We went in September - thus, missing the VMCTA Fall Conference - and it was fantastic.

As a way to garner community involvement in this adventure, I did a couple of bottle drives. People in the community responded generously. They would bring bottles up to the house and unload them into our barn from the trunk of their cars or the back of their trucks. We took seven very full loads to the local redemption center.

This motivated me to send a few social media posts - and I am still getting comments. It was tight to write them while experiencing being in the moment (I wrote the last one while in the airport waiting to board for home.)

Here is the first one that I sent when we got to Amsterdam.

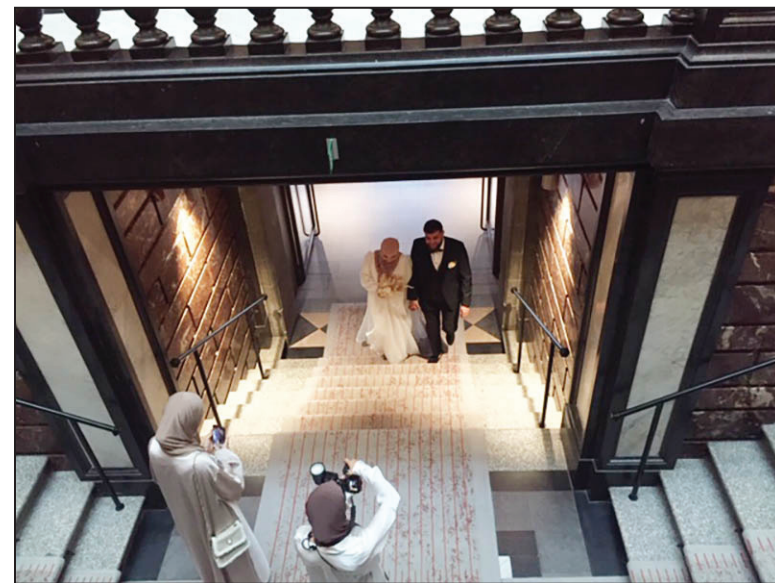
September 18, 2023

Today is Monday and we have arrived in Amsterdam.

I left on Tuesday, carpooling from Vermont with Tammy, the Roxbury Town Clerk, and Sandy, Dorset Town Clerk. We flew out of Bradley International Airport in Hartford, Connecticut, with clerks from Connecticut and New Hampshire. In Dublin, we met up with two clerks from Massachusetts and then in Brussels with two clerks from Texas, who are now honorary New England Clerks. Our group of nine spent three nights in Brussels, where we visited the city and had a wonderful tour of the Brussels City Hall. Such history! Such beauty! I was moved to write to Huntington Selectboard chair Dori Barton and

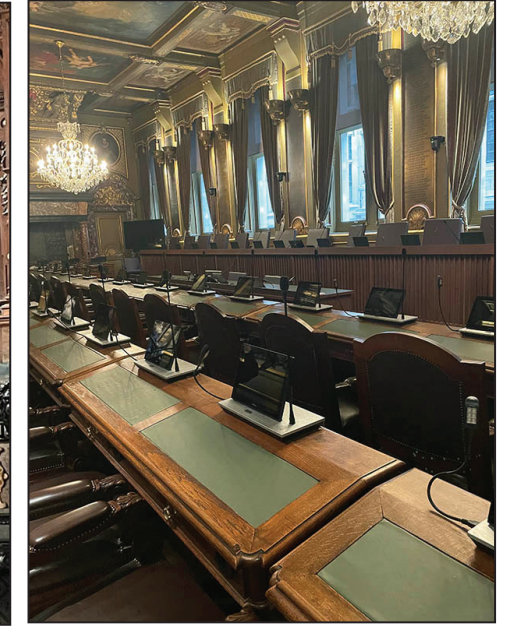
ask (a joke) for ARPA funds for the town office to include a fountain, two putti and Corinthian columns to replace the posts on the front of the building. Seriously, the history here is deep and complicated - we all learned a lot (and it makes me realize how proud I am of our town's buildings and what we all accomplished in Huntington in our 200 years - comparatively, we have accomplished so much - and without boiling oil, beheadings and burnings at the stake). To be perfectly honest, I was ignorant about Belgium and am excited to do more reading. We were told that over 70% of the population in Brussels is non-native - it is an international city - and it has played major roles in European history, especially in the 20th century.

Leaving Brussels, we stopped in Ghent for a couple of hours and
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Two scenes from Antwerp City Hall: Town Officials met with our group and answered questions. They were formally dressed and all wore a medallions with ribbon. Below: On Mondays, marriage licenses in Antwerp were free, so City Hall was busy all day with happy couples and their families.

Photos from the IIMC Study Abroad Sights



Meeting room in the Stadhuis (City Hall) in Antwerp and wall carvings in the hallway.

Council room in Antwerp City Hall.

Photos taken by Sandy Pinsonault



Front door detail.



Gravensteen Castle in Ghent, Belgium. Built in 1180, it is the only remaining mediaeval castle, with a moat and largely intact defence system, in Flanders.

Continued from page 8

Beer wagon parked outside the Royal Museum of Fine Art in Brussels. Museum patrons can get some culture, wander over and get a cold draft out of the back.



Bicycles amidst window boxes in Brugge. Streets in historic city were all cobblestone: challenging for those unsteady on their feet - and definitely giving your feet a workout.



then went to Brugge, a Medieval town, and spent two nights and a day there. Brugge has one of the very few Michelangelo sculptures that was commissioned out of Italy during his lifetime (and it was stolen from the city twice - by Napoleon and then by Hitler - but it was rescued by undercover art experts, and resides there in a place of honor and behind bullet-proof glass in a cathedral).

And Brugge is where the program started. We are now part of a group of 48 people. Today, we headed to Amsterdam. On the way, we stopped in Antwerp, where we had a program in the City Hall (and got the tour) and then visited the shipyards. Antwerp, we were told, is the second largest port in the world. At one point in history, it was second only to Paris as the larg-

est city in the world. Since we are newly arrived in Amsterdam and it is supertime, I can't give you any impressions. It is very different from the other cities that I can see. So, in a couple of days, I will write again.

I have taken a ton of photos but haven't figured out how to

share them without spending a lot of time on it. Since this is a once in a lifetime trip, I do want to focus on being here and not spend a lot of time on the computer.

Not to rub in it, but the days have been cool and sunny. No rain until today, but it promises now to be a bit wetter in Amsterdam. I did pack an umbrella.

Thanks for reading.

VMCTA Committees

The following is the VMCTA Committee List:

- Awards
- Budget
- Certification & Continuing Education
- Constitution
- Curriculum
- Fundraising
- Legislative
- Membership
- Municipal Records
- Nominating
- Public Relations/ Newsletter
- Scholarship
- Website

Check out the VMCTA website for a description and find one that suits your interests and talents. And get involved!

Certification & Continuing Education Committee

- Clyde Jenne, Hartland
- Heidi Racht, Huntington
- Jessica Alexander, Jericho
- Elizabeth Karle, Mt Holly
- Sara Haskins, Morristown (Chair)
- LaDonna Dunn, Westfield
- Therese Lounsbury, Wilmington
- Charlie Degener, Woodstock

Photos from the IIMC Study Abroad Sights



In Giethoorn, declared to be the most beautiful and a fairytale village in the Netherlands, where the inhabitants and visotrs can only sail around, walk or cycle to transport themselves.

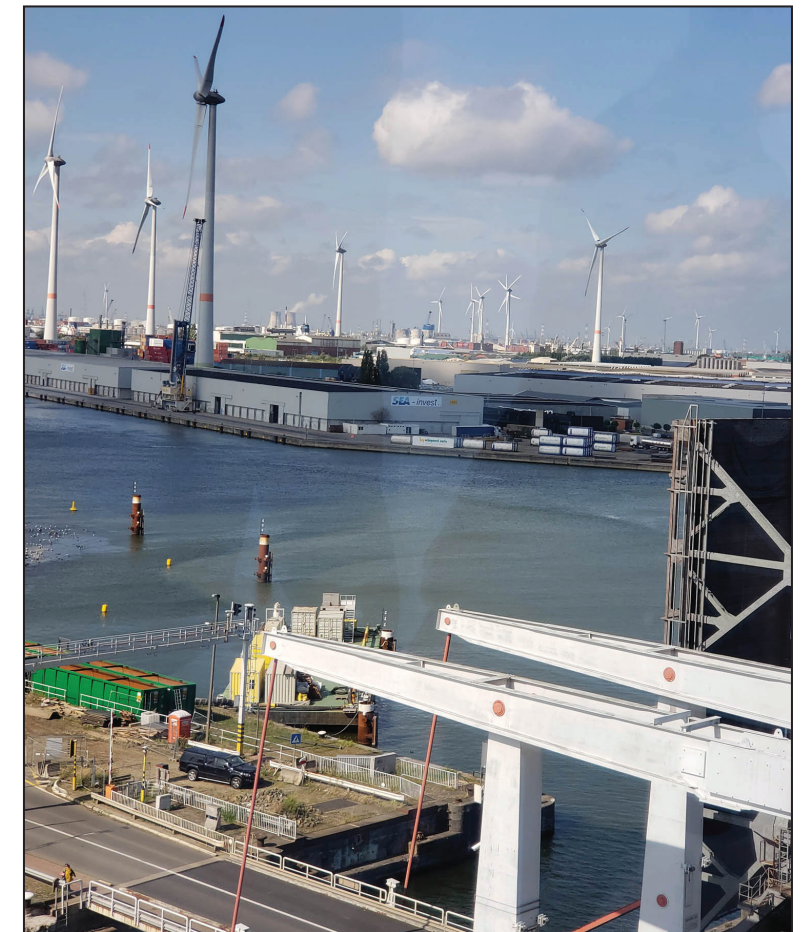


After a sobering visit to the Anne Frank Museum in Amsterdam and walk around the city, the group of nine stops for hot chocolate and pie.

Photos taken by Tammy Legacy



Windmill in Zaane Schans, Netherlands.



The Sealock IJmuiden, which is the largest sealock in the world. It is located in the rural areas around Amsterdam.

A tour of one of the largest orchid growers in the Netherlands – Dutch growers are the orchid champions of Europe.



Middlebury Will Get a New Town Clerk in '23

by John Flowers, April 28, 2022

Incumbent local officials taking a pass on another term usually try to let people know a couple months prior to election day. It's a courtesy to prospective candidates who need to reorganize their lives to take on the task of public service.

Middlebury Town Clerk Ann Webster has decided to give her



Longtime Middlebury Town Clerk Ann Webster will not seek re-election when her term expires next March (2023). She is announcing her decision now in order to give prospective candidates plenty of time to think about running. Photo: John Flowers

prospective replacements 10 months warning, noting the rigors of presiding over what is essentially the central nervous system of the shire town's records and elections.

"I always assumed I'd be running one more term, that I'd retire at 70," said Webster, now 65. "I think a lot of the decision to do this now is if I just don't run for another term in March, then a new person coming in doesn't have to have an election year as their first year, and then they'd be going into a presidential election year after that."

Webster was appointed Town Clerk-Treasurer not long after the horrific events of September 11, 2001. She replaced exiting Town Clerk John Pomainville, then ran successfully for re-election to the post in March 2002.

The Town Clerk's job seemed like a great fit for Webster, who had tons of business management and financial experience to offer.

She'd spent 13 years managing the Middlebury Natural Foods Co-op. She'd worked in the banking industry and had logged

several years in Vermont Bicycle Touring's finance department before being laid off in the wake of the impact 9/11 had had on the tourism industry. Actually, clerical work was in Webster's blood; several of her relatives had served in the town offices through the years, including an aunt, Betty Fitzpatrick, who'd been administrative assistant to several Middlebury town managers.

Some of Webster's toughest weeks on the job were her first, when she found reams of orphaned town documents within the old Middlebury municipal building at the intersection of College and South Main streets.

"When I first came, there was a lot of organizing to do," she said. "The first time I opened up the downstairs vault, there was so much stuff in there — even on the floor — you had to step on things. And to a certain extent, I didn't know where some things were. So I dug in and starting sorting through things."

That included plenty of land records and property transfers on what looked like tissue paper.

"I almost threw them away," she said, "until one day, a researcher came in and asked me for an older property transfer record and I realized, 'That must be what those (tissue paper documents) were.'"

Digital Records These days, property transfer documents — as well as pretty much all of the information and archives the town clerk deals with — are part of a permanent, digital record. In the years before the 1970s, municipal officials just staked out vault space and stacked documents that weren't immediately filed.

It's safe to say that future town clerks will owe a debt of gratitude to Webster for spearheading the organization and digitization of municipal records.

It wasn't an easy task. In addition to choosing a company (Cott Systems) to do the heavy lifting, Webster had to determine how records could be accessed.

"A lot of the clerks were hesitant; they are all public records, but there seemed to be a hesitation about whether there was anything in those records that shouldn't be public," she recalled.

But she and Cott figured it out. And if there was one silver lining to the COVID-19 pandemic, it's that it provided time to complete the Herculean records transition. Cott scanned paper records dating back to 1955, according to Webster.

continue to the next page

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Digitization and automation have made things more convenient for researchers and residents. A few strokes of a computer keyboard can get you to a lot of what you need, especially as it relates to all of the land records — liens, property transfers, lease agreements and rights of way.

Oddly enough, not everyone was pleased with remote access — at least not at first. Some local researchers wanted to come into the office and actually handle the books, Webster said. But they transitioned.

"Even when researchers were coming in, they were using the online system, so they were getting used to it," she said.

The few remaining on-site researchers were finally weened from the municipal building by the COVID-19 pandemic.

"People were kind of forced into using (online research), and found they liked it," she said.

Meanwhile, changes at the state level allowed people to more easily obtain all birth and death records online from town clerks, rather than in person.

"It's nice when people call us from St. Albans and we say, 'You don't have to come to Middlebury,'" Webster said.

Vote by Mail With more municipal business conducted online and by mail — and with a pandemic-era election process that now allows easier voting by mail — Webster is seeing far fewer visitors now than she did 20 years ago. The Vermont Secretary of State mailed ballots to registered voters for the primary and general elections in 2020, and now it's looking like a permanent offering. The mail-in system also allowed town clerks to update their voter checklists, Webster noted.

A secure drop-off box at the Middlebury municipal building has proven a convenient way for people to remit payments, license renewals or election material at the time of their choosing.

"There's a lot less foot traffic," Webster noted.

But that hasn't meant less work.

"I'm totally in favor of early voting and mailing ballots to everyone... but it's incredibly labor-intensive," she said.

Town clerks need to verify the voter's eligibility, fold the ballot, stuff it into an envelope, create a label and ensure the system reflects the person is voting by mail. Then the clerk receives the filled-out ballot, ensures it's been submitted by the right person, plugs the ballot into the tabulation system, and makes a record of that vote and the person's status on the checklist.

And if someone's ballot is returned defective, the clerk's office has to follow up with the voter and give them a chance to correct it.

"It's like you're doing the whole voting step for them," she said.

Though she expects more people will use mail-in and absentee voting, Webster pointed out town clerks and their helpers still have to set up polling places, which in some cases can take days.

Webster's legacy will also include having overseen the 2017 relocation of town records from the old municipal building to the current one at 77 Main Street.

While some of her colleagues feel nostalgic for the old digs, Webster was thrilled to move out.

"I found the work environment very toxic," she recalled of the old town offices, located in the reclaimed remnants of the Middlebury High School that burned many years ago.

"It was almost immediate comfort," she said of the current space.

Upholding Democracy Webster hopes the town clerk's position draws several enthusiastic candidates. She believes those interested should possess a dedication to upholding democracy, the Constitution and election laws; be a "people person"; have great organizational skills and the ability to meet deadlines; experience as a paralegal; and be comfortable setting up new office systems and tweaking them based on evolving state standards and policies.

"I'm hoping someone will be interested who is much younger than me, is very tech-savvy and wants to keep moving things forward — website, Zoom meetings, these changes that are happening now that I find myself more resistant to," she added.

So what will Webster do when she's released from her rigorous professional regimen?

She'll have more time to hike, to volunteer with the Champlain Valley Unitarian Universalist Society, to return to choir singing and to tackle puzzles. She's an avid "Wordle" player and also enjoys reading.

Webster will look back most fondly on her friendships with election volunteers and co-workers, the regular contact with the public, and finding something different to do on the job each day.

"It's been the hardest job to figure out how to leave," she said.

Reporter John Flowers writes for the Addison County Independent.

Legislative Committee

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Bobbi Brimblecombe, Marshfield
Carol Dawes, Barre City (Ad Hoc)
Hilary Francis, Brattleboro
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Karen Davis, Ira
Julie Graeter, Colchester
Sally Ober, Lincoln

PR for You

Members of the PR Committee are able to get out information for to newspapers after the annual meeting about awards and recognitions. However, we still need help to get the word out!

If you are a new clerk or treasurer - or assistant - please take the time to fill in the spreadsheet that is on the VMCTA website (hopefully, a one-time effort that can be merely updated) and send it back soon. It is a spreadsheet, rather than a PDF, so the information can be typed in and edited efficiently, copied and inserted into a release and doesn't have to be retyped. Please remember, it

will help the Committee to do this easily, which means it will actually get done.

Here is the link: https://vmcta.org/images/downloads/Public_Relations_Newsletter_Documents/individual_clerk_treasurer_information_sheet.xls

If you have a photo of yourself that we can keep on file, please send it in, too. Visuals in a newspaper ALWAYS create more interest.

Thanks very much.

—Heidi Racht

for the Newsletter/PR Committee

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Sandy Pinsonault, Dorset (Chair)
Audra Girouard, Concord
Tammy Legacy, Roxbury

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Sandy Pinsonault, Dorset (Chair)
Dawn Custer, Hubbardton
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Belinda Harris Clegg, Wolcott
Peggy Neisner, Killington
Lily Trajman, Norwich
Michelle Warren, Craftsbury

Municipal Records Committee

Bobbi Brimblecombe, Marshfield
(Chair)
Jessica Alexander, Jericho
Carol Dawes, Barre City (Ad Hoc)
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Barbara Graham, Williamstown

Budget Committee

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Diane Judd, CVT, CVC, MMC
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Morristown

Nominating Committee

Sara Haskins, MMC, CVC, CVT
Morristown (Chair)
Kathleen Kelly, Bellows Falls
Tammy Legacy, Roxbury

Next Issue

Coming in early December. Feel free to make a submission at any point to go into the next newsletter.