



# VMCTA *news*

NEWSLETTER OF THE VERMONT MUNICIPAL CLERKS' AND TREASURERS' ASSOCIATION

**CELEBRATING  
OVER 80 YEARS!  
1936-2020**

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## **VMCTA Newsletter / PR Committee**

Linda Parent, Richmond  
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Heidi Racht  
Newsletter Design / Edit

**Welcome to the 11th edition of the VMCTA newsletter.**  
Your submissions are welcome — or feel free to contact a member of the committee with an idea.

## **Municipal Clerks Week** Celebrating the 51st Annual Professional Municipal Clerks Week

May 3 through 9, 2020 is the 51st Annual Professional Municipal Clerks Week. Initiated in 1969 by IIMC (International Institute of Municipal Clerks) and endorsed by all of its members throughout the United States, Canada and 15 other countries, the week is a time of celebration and reflection on the importance of the Clerk's office.

In 1984, President Ronald Reagan signed a proclamation that officially declared Municipal Clerks Week the first full week of May.

In 1994 and 1996, President Bill Clinton also signed proclamations confirming Municipal Clerks Week.

Municipal clerks are the local government staff who:

- Maintain the official Selectboard or City Council minutes, ordinance books and all records and documents.
- Index all official actions of these governing groups.
- Issue licenses and permits.
- Process contracts and agreements.
- Keep community history and vital records.
- Administer elections, registration and voting.
- Are often the face of their town or city's government to its residents and taxpayers.

While you are working alone in your office with your door locked to the public, stand up and take a bow - you deserve a long round of applause. Imagine it!

## **Professional Development Delays** Cancellation of VMCTA Spring Trainings, NEMCI&A, IIMC Annual Conference and More!

**N**ow, we are in our offices, usually working alone, waiting for life to get better while we do our jobs in new and interesting ways that usually take much longer

than they did before the middle of March. Welcome to the world in a pandemic. At this point in time, Vermont Clerks and Treasurers

*continue to page 7* ➡



Professional Municipal Clerks Week  
May 3 - May 9, 2020



## Executive Board

### PRESIDENT

Georgette Wolf-Ludwig, CMC  
Fairlee Town Clerk  
(802) 333-4363; Fax (802) 333-9214

### PAST PRESIDENT

Donna Kinville, MMC  
South Burlington City Clerk  
(802) 846-4105

### FIRST VICE PRESIDENT

Tracy Borst, CMC  
Thetford Town Clerk  
(802) 785-2922, Ext. 10; Fax (802) 785-2031

### SECOND VICE PRESIDENT

Julie Graeter  
Colchester Clerk & Treasurer  
(802) 214-5521; Fax (802) 264-5503

### SECRETARY

Dawn Custer  
Hubbardton Town Clerk & Treasurer  
(802) 273-2951; Fax (802) 273-3729

### TREASURER

Audra Girouard, Concord Treasurer  
(802) 695-2910; Fax (802) 695-2552

### AUDITOR

Sue Gage  
Brandon Town Clerk & Treasurer  
(802) 247-3635, Ext. 203; Fax (802) 247-5481

### MEMBERS AT LARGE

#### Two Years Term until 2021

Charlie Degener, Woodstock Town Clerk  
(802) 457-3611; Fax (802) 457-2329

Diane Judd

Holland Town Clerk & Treasurer  
(802) 885-4440; Fax (802) 895-4440

### MEMBERS AT LARGE

#### One Year Term until 2020

Debra Hawkins, Pawlet Town Clerk  
(802) 325-3309, Ext. 1; Fax (802) 325-6109

Diana Vachon, Shelburne Town Clerk  
(802) 985-5116; Fax (802) 985-9550

# Thoughts from the VMCTA President

Hello VMCTA Membership,

Who would have ever imaged in the beginning of this year when we were working on budgets, town reports and elections the impact that the Covid-19 would have in our offices?

I, for one, had a hard time with the adjustment of closing the office. Working at home was something new to me. I still go to the office a few hours a week, but now I'm alone. That was an adjustment as well. My town is small, but I have a busy office. Now it's so quiet. Anyway, I truly felt blessed when I opened my email and realized I was not alone in this. Our listserv was still open to all of us and it was good to read the emails from our membership.

The VMCTA Executive Board approved opening up our listserv to non-members during this pandemic. This was a great way for us to reach out to Clerks and Treasurers during this time of isolation. As of now we have almost 30 Clerks and Treasurers that have join in!

I'm so proud of all of our members, you are truly amazing people. You have all taken a terrible situation and found new and innovated ways to help your communities. I'm afraid we may still have a long road ahead of us, but I feel confident we will pull through these challenging times.

Stay well,

—Georgette Wolf-Ludwig, CVC/CMC  
VMCTA President



*Georgette Wolf-Ludwig, Fairlee Town Clerk, enjoys a joke with Vermont Secretary of State Jim Condos after her swearing-in as the new VMCTA President at the Annual Awards Dinner in September 2019. Photo: Heidi Racht*

## Congratulations!

**Diane Judd**, Holland Town Clerk, who earned her MMC (Master Municipal Clerk) from the IIMC (International Institute of Municipal Clerks) in December. In Vermont, seven active clerks have this prestigious designation; in the United States, there are 1341. The MMC program is the second and more advanced of the two professional designations granted by IIMC. The MMC program is an advanced continuing education program that prepares participants to perform complex municipal duties. The program has an extensive and rigorous educational component and a professional contribution component. MMC applicants must demonstrate that they have actively pursued education and professional activities.

**Diana K. Vachon**, Shelburne Town Clerk, for earning the prestigious Certified Municipal Clerk (CMC) designation from the International Institute of Municipal Clerks (IIMC). This honor was achieved after training and community and professional service. Vermont has 19 CMCs; nationally, there are 4624.

### Vermont Certifications in 2019

#### Certified Municipal Clerk

**Timothy Arsenault**, Vernon

**Barbara Courchesne**, Springfield

**Frederick Charles Degener III**, Woodstock

**Marlene Hall**, Shaftsbury

**Sara Haskins**, Morristown

#### Municipal Clerk Level 1

**Lisa Bragg**, Strafford

**Susan A Johnson**, Cornwall

**Regina Josler**, Assistant Town Clerk, Strafford

**Carol Dawes**, Barre City

#### Municipal Treasurer Level 1

**Lisa Bragg**, Strafford

**Susan A Johnson**, Cornwall

**Carol Dawes**, Barre City

#### Advanced Clerk Summa Cum Laude

**Tracy Borst**, Thetford

**Georgette Wolf-Ludwig**, Fairlee

## And Now... Some Love from Fairfax



*Even though February 14 seems a lifetime ago, we can all use the expression of love sent our way from Deborah Woodward, Fairfax Town Clerk/Treasurer.*



### Certification & Continuing Education Committee

Julie Graeter, Colchester (Chair)

Jessica Alexander, Jericho

Charlie Degener, Woodstock

Clyde Jenne, Hartland

Diane Judd, Holland

Donna Kelty, Barre Town

Patti Lewis, Fayston

Heidi Racht, Huntington

# Hope Endures

Contributed by Jessica Alexander, Jericho and Diana Vachon, Shelburne

## 2019 Highlights

Vermont Town Clerks and Treasurers paddled a community dragon boat in the Lake Champlain Dragon Boat Festival on August 4, 2019. The name of our boat is the state motto, **FREEDOM & UNITY**. Last year, we had 11 towns represented. This year we had only five (East Montpelier, Essex, Huntington, Jericho and Shelburne). Jeff Flavell, independent



The Mighty 11. Photo: Lee Crohn

title abstractor, was also on our team and helped with the Town Clerk/Treasurer recruitment. Actually, he said whenever he walked into a Town Office and asked “Are you going to paddle in the boat?” he was met with “What are you talking about?” At least, he tried. He is planning to paddle with us next year too and is already excited about getting more Town Clerks and Treasurers involved.

Our roster dwindled down from 14 to 11 on race day – to paddle a boat made for 20 paddlers, a drummer and a steers person. For our first race, we recruited the executive director of Dragon Heart Vermont, Nina Atkinson, to be our drummer. Though we were small in numbers, we were mighty and finished our first 200 meter race in 1 minute 14 seconds. “We won our lane.”

Our tent sight was next to the Community Bank team. Luckily, Shelly and Anita were there from municipal banking. They helped recruit nine more paddlers to fill our boat for the second race. We were able to recruit a Dragonheart Vermont drummer during the Zumba

warmup. We won our second race in a time of 61 seconds, which qualified us for the next race.

The race schedule between Community Bank’s second race and our third race was too tight, so we thought we were going to need to paddle as the mighty 11 again. One of our members went out to find more paddlers. She found a team that did not make the finals but still wanted to paddle. So we entered the final race with a full boat. Our steers person was Nini Anger, Assistant to the Town Manager in Shelburne. Nini pumped up for our third race. We lined up at the start with Norwich Universtiy on one side and Dragonfuel on the other. We had an awesome start, really paddling together in time. We continued to have a great race. I remember hearing the announcer with a little surprise in his voice as he called out “It is the Vermont Town Clerks in the lead, Freedom & Unity.” We paddled strong and finished the race out in front. We won division E, the WCAX Cup – the fastest boat in the slowest division. If you are interested in paddling this year, the date is Sunday August 2.

We were strong in spirit and short on fundraising this year. The pledge partner with Dragonheart Vermont was the McClure Miller Respite House. Once again, the Town Clerk’s and Treasurers boat, **FREEDOM & UNITY**, represented us well. We showed resourcefulness, perseverance and caring for our communities.

Here is a dragon boat mantra for a bit of inspiration, penned by Phil Chan of Melbourne Australia:

*Play the game for the games sake; be modest in victory and generous in defeat.*

*The most important thing in dragon boating is not to win, but to take part, just as in life -- it is not the triumph but the struggle.*

*Be true to your fellow paddler.*

*Paddle not for yourself but for your team.*

*Work hard. Be strong. Expect no reward and reward will come.*

## 2020 Updates

Dragonheart Vermont has always been firmly connected with our local health care community as patients, as supporters, and yes, as health care workers ourselves.

*continue to page 5*

# Retired, But Not at All Retiring, Today

by Tim Arsenault, Vernon Town Clerk

According to Wilmington's Susan "Susie" Haughwout, the two hardest things about being a Town Clerk are entering and leaving the profession. The nearly 25-year Clerk will be retiring on May 1.

"My assistant and I are alternating days, because of COVID-19, and the Selectboard has not yet appointed a successor," Haughwout said, saying the current circumstances make an orderly transition extremely difficult.

It was just as difficult her first few years on the job.

"My family moved to Wilmington when I was a child, and after college I was gone for about 20 years before my husband and I made the decision to move back. She was appointed as an assistant about six months before her predecessor retired.

"When I first ran for Town Clerk, there were people



*Susie Haughwout discusses land records at the 2019 VMCTA Spring Training in Fairlee. Photo: Heidi Racht*

## Dragonboat continued

We support this community now through our essential work or by staying home, by saying thank you, and by providing direct assistance wherever we can.

We are choosing to remain HOPEful that our community, with its commitment to social responsibility and healthy living, will be able to gather for our 15th Lake Champlain Dragon Boat Festival in early August. We encourage you to register to participate as an act of HOPE and confidence in our community's future.

Our choosing HOPE, however, does not prevent us from planning for the possibility that our event might look very different come August—and might even be virtual. We will make a decision by mid-May about how to proceed. Please contact us if you have questions or have a great idea that you'd like to share with us.

This year's festival may be virtual, so that means you can participate even if you are fearful of the water. A YouTube video link to our team, Freedom & Unity, winning our division: <https://dragonheartvermont.org/>

It is funny at the end when you hear the radio announcer's surprise that we are a boat of Town Clerks. If you have interest in joining our team 2020, please email Jessica in Jericho, [jerichovermont@yahoo.com](mailto:jerichovermont@yahoo.com) or Diana in Shelburne, [dvachon@shelburnevt.org](mailto:dvachon@shelburnevt.org)

who backed an opposition candidate, and it took about 12 years for that to stop happening."

Haughwout is best known for her actions before Tropical Storm Irene hit the small resort town, when she was able to move the town's land records hours before high water flooded her office. She sees "parallels" between the storm recovery time, and the COVID 19 pandemic: "just the sense of uncertainty, and having to think on your feet." It was that kind of quick thinking which led the Vermont Municipal Clerk Treasurers Association to name Haughwout the 2014 Vermont Clerk of the Year.

She has enjoyed the customer service part of the job "you need to be a detective" to help residents, as people may not be sure of what they are seeking. The challenges include needing to communicate with community members and Selectboards, as people "often don't understand what we do."

Haughwout admits her future plans include selling their Wilmington home, and retiring to North Carolina. Her advice, for any new clerk is to "take advantage of any training you can get, and seek out other area Clerks that you can contact for advice."

"I made some very good relationships with colleagues," she said, "and those will always be cherished."

## Legislative Committee

Carol Dawes, Barre City (Chair)  
Tim Arsenauly, Vernon  
Bobbi Brimblecombe, Marshfield  
Curry Galloway, St. Albans City  
Stacy Jewell, St. Johnsbury  
Donna Kinville, South Burlington  
(Ad Hoc)

## Website Committee

Lucrecia Wonsor, Killington  
(Chair)  
Bobbi Brimblecombe, Marshfield  
Donna Kelty, Barre Town

## Fundraising Committee

Nellie Noble, Granby (Chair)  
Karmen Bascom, South Royalton  
Susan Johnson, Cornwall  
Diane Judd, Holland  
Betty Ritter, Cabot  
Open Position

## Scholarship Committee

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

## Nominating Committee

Julie Graeter, Colchester (Chair)  
Donna Kelty, Barre Town  
Kathleen Neathawk, Rockingham

## Membership Committee

Nellie Noble, Granby (Chair)  
Sara Haskins, Morristown  
Patti Lewis, Fayston  
Diana Vauchon, Sherburne  
Open Position

## Tip Top Tips

When I was at VEMS training in Lyndon on the 8th, Lori said that if we have a question or notice we need to send to the elections division, and not to one of them specifically, we should send it to this email address. They all get the message. That way if one of them is busy or out of office another member can respond: [sos.elections@sec.state.vt.us](mailto:sos.elections@sec.state.vt.us)

— Nellie Noble, CVC/CVT—*Nellie Noble*, Town of Granby

## Commas Count

What is the difference between a kleptomaniac and a literalist ?

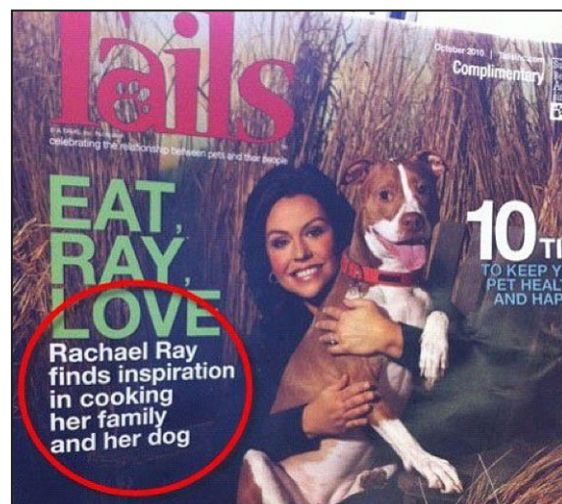
The literalist takes things literally.

The kleptomaniac takes things, literally.

## Commas Save Lives

Let's eat, Grandma!

Let's eat Grandma!



## 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!

## Next Issue

Best guess is early to mid summer. Feel free to make a submission at any point to go into the next newsletter.

## Cancellations and Postponements from page 1

ers are working hard to stay safe and well - and keep their family members healthy and in many cases, educated.

In addition to having Zoom meetings, dealing with nonstop telephone and email requests for information and documents, fielding concerns from residents and organizing whatever needs to be organized, and sanitizing and cleaning (have our offices ever been cleaner?), another change in our professional lives is that we will have little or no opportunity for professional development in the manner that we have been accustomed. Our cherished contact with our peers at meetings, conferences and trainings has been put on hold until we can gather safely.

The VMCTA Spring training, which is organized by the Education Committee has been postponed indefinitely. The Committee had been discussion scheduling a training this summer and has talked about a number of options. The next meeting is planned for May 8 - via conference call, naturally. Stay tuned.

Another important event that is held every summer is NEMCI&A, (New England Municipal Clerks Institute and Academy) has now been cancelled. Clerks who have planned to attend this summer and have paid their registrations will have their payments returned. All 2020 scholarships will be honored in 2021.

Board chair Tracy Borst, Thetford Town Clerk, in an email to the VMCTA membership said, "It is with great sadness I announce we will not be holding NEMCI&A this summer. This unanimous decision at a recent board meeting was not made lightly. There are so many unknowns in the near future with COVID-19 and, COVID concerns aside, we considered attendance will be a challenge for many, with election delays, budget shortages and office back logs created from stay home orders, for all New England Clerks.

## Clerk of the Year



*Lucrecia Wonsor, Killington Town Clerk, was named the 2019 Vermont Clerk of the Year. She received this award from by Georgette Wolf-Ludwig, right, and Donna Kinville at the banquet at the VMCTA Annual Meeting in September 2019. Photo: Heidi Racht*

On behalf of the 2020 NEMCI&A Board, I wish you all the best of health and recovery from this world wide pandemic. I am hoping 2021 will be a fabulous year for NEMCI&A to return, ready to provide the education experience we are known for."

And these excerpts from an email from IIMC:

"As you know, IIMC and the 2020 Conference Host Committee have been working diligently to find a way to produce a conference this year amid the COVID-19 pandemic. The Hyatt Regency Host Hotel has been very accommodating and cooperative during this unprecedented planning process. Other 2020 dates were offered from the Hyatt Regency, but they were not a good fit for IIMC and its members. Moreover, with the current uncertainty and with no definitive end in sight as well as the feedback we have received regarding travel restrictions, travel bans and combined with the overall feeling that there wasn't a strong comfort level to convene in 2020, it became evident

that the Conference needed to be cancelled.

On Thursday, April 9, 2020, the IIMC Board of Directors in conjunction with the 2020 St. Louis Conference Host Committee have agreed to officially cancel the 2020 IIMC Annual Conference. In the Board also voted to award the 2025 conference to St. Louis.

This is a tremendous disappointment regarding all those participating in the Conference, from the Board to the Host Committee to the attendees. Member safety was and always is our primary concern. In the end, this was the right decision.

On behalf of the IIMC Board of Directors, the Host Committee and IIMC staff, we hope everyone stays safe and healthy and we look forward to seeing you at a future conference."

The Committee reported it would be in touch with registrants about refunds and cancellation options.



Vermont Clerks at the NEACTC (New England Association of City and Town Clerks) Annual Conference in November 2019. The conference was held in Rockport, Maine.

## PR for You

Members of the PR Committee were 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 asistant - please take the time to fill in the spreadsheet that was sent to the VMCTA listserv or download it from the 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. It will take some time to put in the information, but, please remember, it will help the Committee to do this easily, which means it will actually get done.

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

## NEACTC Conference



Tracey Borst, Thetford Town Clerk, is administered the oath as Chair of the Board of Directors of NEMCI. Photo: Heidi Racht

### Pandemic Word of the Week: Draconian

In the 7th century B.C., an Athenian statesman was given the job of writing down and clarifying previously unwritten laws. These laws were shockingly severe, mandating the death penalty for offenses as minor as stealing a cabbage, or even for mere idleness. Anyone who failed to pay financial debts to someone of a higher social status could be sold into slavery.

This legislator's name, Drakon (or in English and Latin Draco), is the source of our own word for something "harsh" or "severe," draconian. By the way, Draco was succeeded by a reformer named Solon who proceeded to make those existing laws much more humane, starting with forgiving all debts. Today in English the word solon refers to a wise lawgiver, or more generally, a legislator.

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# TOWN MEETINGS

# PUZZLE # 6

BOARD

BUILDING

BYLAWS

CAUSES

CITIZENS

CIVIL

COMPLAIN

GAVEL

GROUPS

HOMES

INSPECTION

LAWNS

LEADERS

NEIGHBORS

NOISE

ORDER

PARKS

S E E C N A I R A V D L S O

H N G Q I N S P E C T I O N

M S W A L Y B E U D K U N R

C L R A V H P P M G R S E E

I N R E L E O Q S O T O I S

T O P C E L L E W N H E G O

I I S A I T R E E C N N H U

Z T T C R V N D A I I G B R

E C I K I K I U A D R Y O C

N E O C B S S L L O E W R E

S T E O E E P I U O P R S S

V O A R S M U P M Y V Y S I

I R U O O B S T I M R E P O

D P D C R E C O G N I Z E N

PERMITS

RESOURCES

POLICIES

SERVICE

PROTECTION

VARIANCE

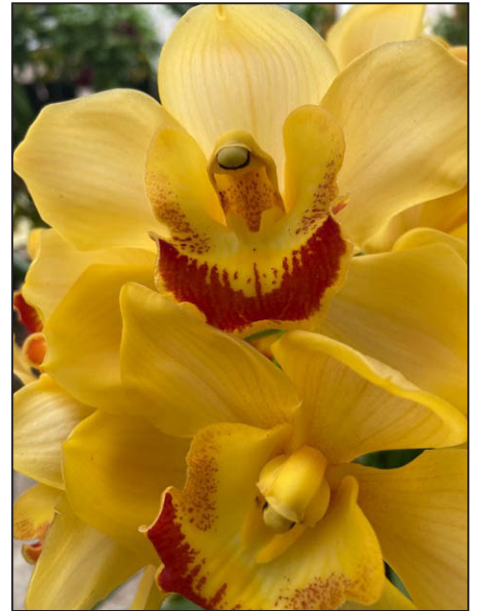
RECOGNIZE

VOLUNTEERS

RESIDENTS

*Submitted by Linda Parent, Richmond Town Clerk*

# Beauty in Shrewsbury



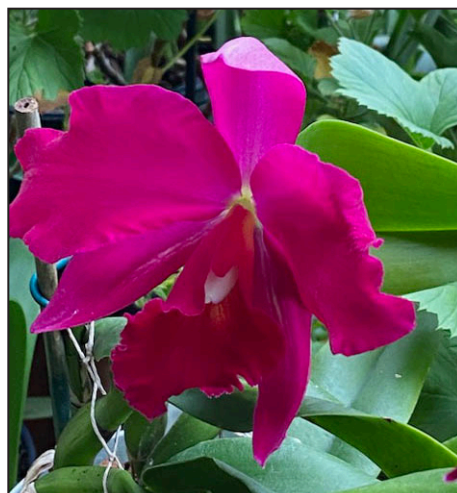
He explains, “It was always my hope to bring an orchid or two to the Conference to contribute to the auction, but they are not in bloom usually when the conference is held, so attendees wouldn’t know what they were bidding on.”

These beautiful photos will certainly give Vermont Clerks and Treasurers, a pretty smart bunch, a good idea!

Shrewsbury Town Clerk Mark Goodwin is sharing photos of some of the beauty in his life.

Goodwin says, “The metaphysics of the world seems to a shifted out of skew a bit. Last weekend I started a virtual indoor garden tour, so that folks in town could share their indoor houseplants that they had been tending to all winter but now can’t have anyone over to share them with.”

His hobby is to grow topicals, primarily orchids and various flowering plants in a Vermont Victory Greenhouse (from Cornwall!!). Goodwin says, “This is what keeps me calm.”



## Editor’s Note:

Another newsletter, Part 2, will be sent in early summer, as not everything is here and this really needed to go out.

In this next issue, we will have:

1. More photos from the September 2019 VMCTA Conference
2. updates on what is going on in the local offices as we walk down the COVID path
3. Updates on trainings and other VMCTA events
4. News from the VMCTA Committees, some of which are meeting through social media
5. Retirements - there are more clerks and treasurers who have retired this year.
6. Welcome to new Clerks and Treasurers, elected and appointed in 2020.
7. All-new, exciting message from VMCTA President Georgette Wolf-Ludwig
8. Anything fun that you would like to tell us!

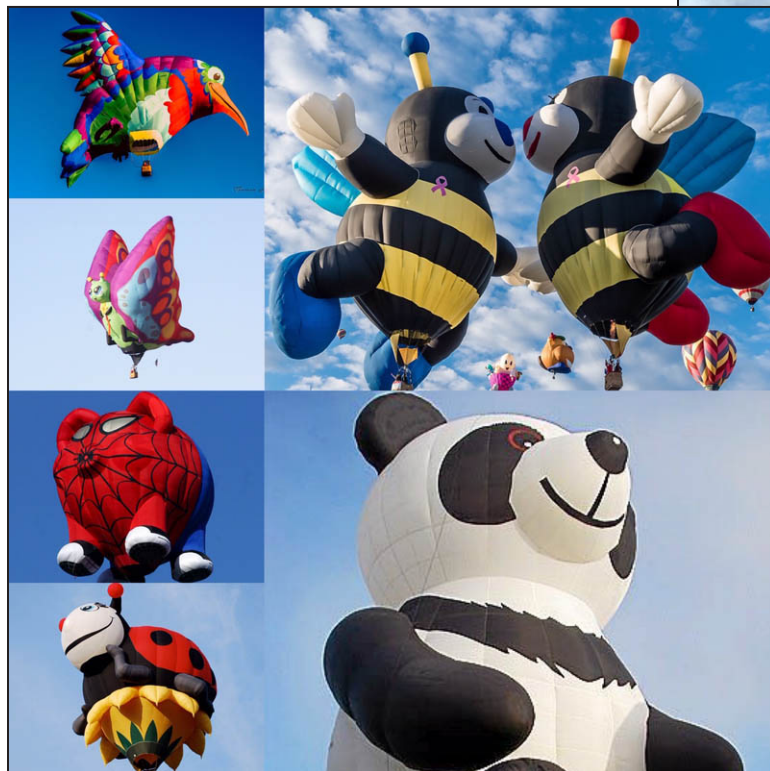
## Clerk/Treasurer Gets a Natural High

With so many different recreation opportunities available in our beautiful state, the Clerk/Treasurer of the Town of Cambridge follows a different path. For over 35 years, Mark Schilling has been a hot air balloon pilot and owner. He started his ballooning career in the '80s when his wife gave him a gift certificate for a lesson and ride. This began a passionate hobby which later expanded into a career, including a commercial ride business, piloting a hot-air airship, and touring the world flying many different special shaped aircraft. Schilling still owns three balloons, which he flies in the Champlain Valley and at several Northeast balloon events. His children grew up with ballooning and still occasionally act as his flight crew. His oldest son David is the principal of Danville School, but still finds time to continue his flight training with his father. His two grandsons, Marlboro residents, recently had their first hands-on experience.

Prior to his election in 2016, Schilling traveled extensively as a special shape pilot. His adventures took him to Mexico, Canada, Ireland and Japan. Since the election, the full-time position keeps him



*Above, flying at the 2019 Quechee Hot Air Balloon Festival. Left, some of the special shapes Mark Schilling has flown. Courtesy photos.*



closer to home, but he still finds occasional opportunities for travel. This season Schilling again flew in both the Quechee and Stoweflake balloon events, and plans to attend the annual Adirondack Balloon Festival in September.

“Ballooning is magic,” says Schilling. “The best part is sharing the wonder of the sport with others, especially first-time participants. Soaring thousands of feet over the countryside or inches over the tree-tops is an experience impossible to duplicate in any other aircraft. Anyone who flies with us knows why we say: THERE’S NO AIR LIKE HOT AIR!”

You can find some answers to common ballooning questions at [www.odysseyballoons.com/facts](http://www.odysseyballoons.com/facts)