

VLCT NEWS

A PUBLICATION OF THE VERMONT LEAGUE OF CITIES & TOWNS

SERVING AND STRENGTHENING VERMONT LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

January 2008

MANAGING CONTENTIOUS SITUATIONS

In recent years, as municipal budgets have tightened, so have the household budgets of their citizens. Media reports about rising fuel and health insurance costs are constant. As a result, it seems that citizens' patience at the "front desk" and during public meetings has decreased as tax rates have increased.

AT THE FRONT DESK

One measure of this shift in civility may be the number of irate citizens that municipal officials and employees encounter each day. As public service employees, one of our most challenging issues is providing civil cus-

tommer service to an irate resident. What we say and do in this situation accelerates or decelerates the confrontation.

What is an employee to do? Diplomacy must rule!

Don't:

- Take the bait by getting angry yourself.
- Take anything that is said personally.
- Try to immediately convince the

(Continued on Page Nine)

VLCT BOARD OF DIRECTORS PROFILE

BOB RUSTEN, MANAGER, WILMINGTON

It is a fact that local government officials do not have the broad sweep of legislative or regulatory power that their federal and state counterparts do. And, while local officials might occasionally wish they could issue a mandate to the federal or state government, many would probably think long and hard about giving up their position in the government closest to the people.

As a former state representative, new VLCT Board member and Wilmington Manager Bob Rusten is happy melding the best of both levels of government. By joining the VLCT Board, he has figured out how to keep a hand in statewide issues, while he works closely with the citizens of Wilmington.

(Continued on Page Eight)

2007 VERMONT PLANNING CONFERENCE



The 2007 Vermont Planning Conference took place on Friday, November 30 at Vermont College in Montpelier. A sold-out crowd of more than 200 packed sessions that covered the Conference theme of Healthy – Efficient – Vibrant 21st Century Communities. Keynote speakers Jon Isham and

Sarah James spoke to attendees on Climate Change and EcoMunicipalities, respectively. Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development Secretary Kevin Dorn and state Senator Ginny Lyons presented the Annual Planning Awards, and the day concluded with the Vermont Planners Association Annual Meeting.

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DAVE LEWIS TO JOIN VLCT CONSULTING GROUP

Killington Town Manager **Dave Lewis** will join the VLCT Municipal Assistance Center's external consulting staff later this year. Lewis recently announced his plans to retire from his position in July 2008, after 32 years as Killington's manager.

Lewis' broad expertise in municipal management will be a valuable addition to the current portfolio of services that MAC offers to Vermont municipalities. He is interested in providing interim manager services, assistance with municipal operations, and project management services for municipal construction and public works projects.



Dave Lewis

The Municipal Assistance Center has been informally operating its VLCT Consulting Group for the last year, as it assesses member needs and matches them with external consultants. Through this program, two external consultants have provided on-site human resources support and interim manager services, services that MAC staff cannot provide.

"Municipal Assistance Center staff members are operating at capacity to provide our inquiry, workshop, publications, on-site training and consulting services," said MAC Director Dominic Cloud. "Because of this, and because we cannot logistically place a staff member 'on the ground' in a town for a special assignment like

interim management, we have decided to boost our capacity by bringing on additional, outside consultants."

Dave Lewis joins **Harry Snyder** and **Paul Myers**, who are already members of the VLCT Consulting Group. Please watch for more information about this program in late winter. VLCT is working on marketing materials that will explain consultants' backgrounds and areas of expertise, and how to hire a consultant. For immediate information, please contact Dominic Cloud at dcloud@vlct.org or 800/649-7915.

- Katherine Roe, VLCT Communications Coordinator

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LEGAL AND REGULATORY NOTES



DEEMED APPROVAL AND REMAND

DEEMED APPROVAL REMEDY NOT APPLICABLE TO DRB REMAND

Once again addressing the hot topic of deemed approval, the Environmental Court has clarified that the remedy is not available when a matter has been remanded to a development review board (DRB) for further action and the DRB fails to issue its decision in 45 days. In re: Miller Conditional Use Application, 59-3-07 Vtec (Nov. 5, 2007).

Generally, state statute provides that a DRB is required to issue a decision within 45 days after the close of evidence. If the DRB does not issue a decision within the 45-day window, that failure results in the pending application being deemed approved on the 46th day. 24 V.S.A. § 4464(b)(1). In this case, the Ludlow DRB issued a decision on a conditional use application. The decision was appealed to the Environmental Court. The Court remanded the case back to the DRB so that the DRB could reconsider its decision and issue more complete findings. (Ludlow is among the handful of Vermont municipalities conducting on the record review in accordance with 24 V.S.A. § 4471.) The DRB held no further evidentiary hearings but issued a second decision some five months later.

In light of the delay, the applicants requested that the Court award them deemed approval, contending that the failure of the DRB to render its second decision within 45 days of the Court's remand order entitled them to have their conditional use application deemed approved. The Court rejected this argument, noting that 24 V.S.A. § 4464(b)(1) refers to actions by an appropriate municipal panel. Since no mention is made in the statute of the time limits

imposed upon a municipal panel after a remand order from the Environmental Court, and in light of the conservative application of the statute directed by the Supreme Court, the Environmental Court declined to read into the deemed approval doctrine an applicability to municipal panel decisions when a case has been remanded for reconsideration and further findings.

A copy of the decision can be obtained at: www.vermontjudiciary.org/tcdecisions/Miller%20Conditional%20Use%20Application,%2059-3-07%20Vtec.pdf

- Jim Barlow, Senior Attorney, VLCT
Municipal Assistance Center

VERMONT MINIMUM WAGE INCREASE

Effective January 1, 2008, Vermont's minimum wage will increase to \$7.68 per hour. The federal minimum wage, which it supercedes, is currently \$5.85 per hour.

IRS MILEAGE RATE INCREASE

The Internal Revenue Service recently announced that its rate for business miles in 2008 will be 50.5 cents per mile. (For more information about mileage reimbursement see this month's Ask the League.)

NEED A WRITTEN LEGAL OPINION?

LOOKING FOR EXPERTISE DRAFTING A NEW ORDINANCE?

NEED HELP UPDATING THAT PERSONNEL POLICY?

VLCT's attorneys can provide your municipality with legal assistance at highly competitive rates. Please call **Jim Barlow** or **Garrett Baxter** for more information at **1-800-649-7915**.



SAMPLE PROJECTS:

- Water & Sewer Ordinances
- Zoning Bylaws
- Municipal Charter Amendments
- Highway Ordinances



NEW HAMPSHIRE TOWNS RECEIVE 2007 ICMA AWARD

The International City/County Management Association's (ICMA) Community Partnership Award recognizes programs or processes that demonstrate innovative, multi-participant involvement between and/or among a local government and other governmental entities, private sector businesses, individuals, or nonprofit agencies to improve the quality of life for residents or provide more efficient and effective services. This year, ICMA presented the Community Partnership Award in the less-than-10,000 population category to the Town of New London, New Hampshire, and Town Administrator Jessie W. Levine, and to the Town of Newbury, New Hampshire, and Town Administrator Dennis J. Pavlicek for the Tri-Town Assessing Intergovernmental Agreement.

With no income or sales tax, New Hampshire relies solely on the property tax to support municipal and county budgets. Thus, the fair and accurate assessment of real estate is crucial, and property owners are expected to pay their fair share based on the market value of their property. In 2004, the towns of New London and Newbury had completed, and were in the process of defending, their town-wide revaluations to update the market value of property, and their neighboring town, Sunapee, was ready to do the same. The three towns surround Lake Sunapee, a popular vacation and retirement destination that saw multimillion-dollar real estate sales in recent years. However, property value updates had not been conducted since the late 1980s, so some tax bills quadrupled to as high as \$60,000. Needless to say, this produced significant resident dissatisfaction.

While the revaluation process would have gone more smoothly for everyone had it been handled by an experienced assessing staff, none of the three towns had enough residents or properties to justify a full-time assessor. But the town managers realized that by sharing the employment of an assessment professional, each town could provide its residents and businesses with more equitable property assessments and better customer service. They estimated that the combined annual expense of their current assessing practice was about \$287,000, including legal appeals and tax refunds (with interest) to property owners; however, a shared full-time assessor and assistant assessor would cost only \$213,000, and each town would still benefit from regular staffing and continuity of service. With this information, the managers developed a plan for a joint assessing department and presented it to their boards of selectmen in November 2004.

The boards of selectmen authorized the managers to draft an intergovernmental agreement. This proposal - the first of its kind in New Hampshire and perhaps in New England - was approved in May 2005. In addition to standard clauses governing its purpose, duration, and termination, the agreement created a joint board to "hire and supervise the [assessor and staff] and to oversee the sharing of time and costs associated with the joint positions." The joint board has five members: the three managers, a selectman, and a citizen; the latter two rotate annually among the three towns. While the board is not responsible for any assessing functions or responsibilities, it does oversee administration of the joint assessing department and has sole authority over the equitable distribution of the assessors' time, the compensation and performance evaluation of the two assessing positions, and establishment of the department's annual operating budget.

The intergovernmental agreement explicitly outlines the financial arrangement among the three towns. Newbury budgets

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ASK THE LEAGUE

FLOOD HAZARD/WASTEWATER REGS; IMPACT FEES; MILEAGE REIMBURSEMENT

Our town has adopted flood hazard regulations. These regulations are based on the Vermont model flood hazard regulations and provide that new and replacement water supply systems must be designed to minimize or eliminate infiltration of floodwaters into the systems. They also provide that on-site waste disposal systems must be located to avoid impairment to them or contamination of them during flooding. In light of the new state regulations prohibiting municipal regulation of wastewater and water supply systems, are these provisions of our flood hazard regulations still enforceable?

Yes, they are. The state regulations you refer to are the Environmental Protection Rules promulgated by the Wastewater Management Division of the Department of Environmental Conservation. Environmental Protection Rule 1-501 provides, in part, that provisions of existing municipal ordinances and zoning bylaws that establish technical standards and criteria for the design, construction, operation, and maintenance of

water supplies and wastewater systems are superseded (i.e., no longer in effect) by the technical standards and criteria of the new state regulations.

The provisions of your flood hazard regulations pertaining to water supply and waste disposal systems are actually requirements of federal law. Forty-four C.F.R. §§ 60.3(a)(5) and (6) state that municipalities which adopt flood hazard area regulations must require, within flood-prone areas, the following:

- new and replacement water supply systems must be designed to minimize or eliminate infiltration of flood waters into the systems; and
- on-site waste disposal systems must be located to avoid impairment to them or contamination from them during flooding.

These requirements are not optional. A municipality that adopts flood hazard area bylaws in order to qualify for the na-

tional flood insurance program (NFIP) must adopt and enforce these requirements through its flood hazard bylaws.

At first glance, complying with both Rule 1-501 and 44 C.F.R. §§ 60.3(a)(5) and (6) would appear to be impossible for most Vermont municipalities. Rule 1-501 essentially prohibits municipal regulation of water supply and wastewater systems unless the municipality has taken delegation of the state's regulatory program. At the same time, 44 C.F.R. §§ 60.3(a)(5) and (6) require municipalities participating in the NFIP to regulate wastewater and water supply systems in flood-prone areas. However, according to officials at the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources, wastewater and water supply permits issued by the state will meet the requirements of 44 C.F.R. §§ 60.3(a)(5) and (6). So, notwithstanding the apparent conflict, municipalities can enforce the provisions of their flood hazard regulations relating to water supply systems and on-site waste disposal systems and still abide by Rule 1-501's prohibition against local regulation of water supply and wastewater systems by requiring applicants to produce copies of their state-issued water supply and wastewater permits.

While some municipalities might require applicants to obtain these state permits prior to the issuance of a local permit for construction in the flood hazard area, and while there is arguably authority to do this arising directly from the federal regulations, the better approach may be to require applicants to produce them prior to commencement of construction or issuance of a certificate of occupancy. This can avoid the "killer issue" scenario whereby an applicant is forced to expend significant money to obtain a state wastewater and/or water supply permit, only to be later denied approval of the project because of a relatively inexpensive, but nonetheless insurmountable, issue arising out of the flood hazard bylaw. On

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ASK THE LEAGUE -

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the other hand, this approach can cause local zoning officials to have to revisit and amend their previously issued permits if, for example, the state permit requires a redesign or

“hook-up fee” and not an “impact fee.” The commissioners’ authority to assess a hook-up fee derives from 24 V.S.A. § 3313(a) which states “(w)ater commissioners shall have the supervision of such municipal water department and shall make and establish all needful water rates, charges, rules, and regulations for its control and operation.”

are reimbursed under what the IRS calls an Accountable Plan, the employee must provide the proper documentation for the reimbursement to be tax-exempt. The IRS definition of proper documentation is “the substantiation of the time, place, amount and business purpose of the expense.” When a municipality reimburses an em-

“An impact fee is a charge levied by a municipality on a new development to cover the cost of capital projects that will benefit or are attributable to the new development.”

relocation of the project. If this latter approach is followed, municipalities should consider amending their flood hazard regulation to prohibit the initiation of construction in the flood hazard area unless and until the requisite wastewater and water supply permits are issued by the state in accordance with 24 V.S.A. § 4414(13) or providing for the issuance of certificate of occupancy under 24 V.S.A. § 4449(a)(2).

- Jim Barlow, Senior Attorney, VLCT
Municipal Assistance Center

Can the board of water commissioners levy an impact fee on new development?

No, but the selectboard may do so by creating an impact fee program via ordinance or bylaw. 24 V.S.A. § 5203(a).

An impact fee is a charge levied by a municipality on a new development to cover the cost of capital projects that will benefit or are attributable to the new development. For example, a municipality may levy an impact fee on a new subdivision for construction of a water line extension. Such a fee, however, may only be charged if a municipality has:

1. a municipal plan in place;
2. developed a reasonable formula to assess the impact fee (24 V.S.A. § 5203(a));
3. a capital budget and program in place (24 V.S.A. § 5203(a)); and
4. confirmed its impact fee program with its regional planning commission (24 V.S.A. § 4350).

Without the ability to levy an impact fee, the board of water commissioners could charge to recover the cost of connecting new users to the municipal water system. The board would do so by amending the municipality’s water ordinance. Technically speaking, however, this fee would be a one time

We advise you to amend the ordinance to read that all charges, rates and rents shall be adopted by the board of water commissioners at a regular or special meeting by resolution. Approving these fees by resolution and not as an amendment to a water ordinance will insulate them from the political process by forgoing the possibility of being disapproved by virtue of permissive referendum.

- Garrett Baxter, Staff Attorney, VLCT
Municipal Assistance Center

Our town reimburses employees who use their personal vehicle for town business at a rate of 32 cents per mile. The selectboard would like to raise the rate and wondered if they have the authority to do so.

The selectboard is responsible for establishing a policy of reimbursing municipal employees, or not, when employees use a personal vehicle for municipal business. The selectboard may also determine when and how the reimbursement rate would be adjusted according to variable costs, such as the cost of gasoline. Because reimbursement can be a substantial cost to the municipality, the cost should be incorporated into the municipal budget that is approved by the voters at an annual meeting.

As a guideline, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) sets a business mileage reimbursement rate at the end of every year for the subsequent calendar year. Employers commonly use the rate set by the IRS. This rate is based on fixed and variable costs, such as depreciation or lease payments, maintenance and repairs, gasoline, oil, insurance, and license and registration fees and other fees associated with operating a motor vehicle.

Note, however, that a municipality can set a higher or lower rate per mile.

Any reimbursement for business travel to employees must be done in accordance with IRS regulations. When the business expenses

employee at the IRS mileage rate (or lower rate) under an Accountable Plan, the reimbursement is exempt from income and payroll taxes.

If the employee is reimbursed without providing the proper IRS-required documentation, then the amount is reimbursed under what the IRS calls a Nonaccountable Plan and the entire amount is taxable income to the employee and subject to all employee and employer payroll taxes.

If a municipality sets a higher rate, the amount above what the IRS sets is not exempt from payroll taxes. The new rate for 2008 is set at 50.5 cents per mile. For example: Using the rate for 2008, a municipality reimburses an employee 75 cents per mile (IRS rate is 50.5 and the excess is 24.5 cents) for business travel under an Accountable Plan. The employee travels 100 miles, incurs a travel expense of \$75 and provides the proper documentation substantiating the expense. The non-taxable amount for traveling the 100 miles is 100 times .505, or \$50.50. The taxable amount for traveling the 100 miles is 100 times .245, or \$24.50. The reimbursement amount of \$50.50 is non-taxable; however, the reimbursement amount of \$24.50 is taxable (subject to all employment taxes – income tax, employee and employer Medicare tax, and employee and employer Social Security) since it is an excess amount over the IRS mileage rate. If the employee did not provide the IRS-required substantiation for the expense, the entire reimbursed amount of \$75 is taxable income to the employee and subject to all employee and employer payroll taxes.

You can obtain more information about the business mileage reimbursement rate from the IRS Web site, <http://www.irs.gov/newsroom/article/0,,id=176030,00.html>.

- Stephanie Smith, Senior Associate, VLCT
Municipal Assistance Center



BOB RUSTEN-

(Continued from Page One)

"You can get lost in the big issues," he commented, "but sometimes it is the small issues that give you the most satisfaction." Rusten speaks from experience – his areas of expertise at the State House focused on some of the state's most complex, and ongoing, public policy puzzles: education funding, tax issues and economic development. He served for ten years as a representative from Halifax, Wilmington, and Whitingham; his committee assignments included four years on Government Operations and six on Ways and Means.



Bob Rusten

Rusten cites a summer job that he had when he was 12 or 13 years old as the impetus for his public service career. "I was working with people who had no control over their work experience, and I felt it was important to change that. Of course," he joked, "since none of us had a driver's license, it was a little hard to organize meetings." His teenaged labor organizing behind him, Rusten went on to attend Temple University from 1968 through 1972.

He did not forget his early work experiences as a factory worker and manager of job training programs. "Most of my adult life, I've been involved in helping people become empowered to improve their situations," he said. "I view my public service as an extension of that."

Rusten has been manager in Wilmington for a year and a half. (His other local government experience includes seven years as moderator for Halifax.) He made the transition from legislator and small busi-

ness owner to local government official when he realized he could no longer manage his consulting business and give the legislature the time that it needed. "This is a major problem for the legislature," he commented. "It is populated now by retirees or people whose employers grant them the time off that they need to serve. There are very few self-employed or small business owners left." This worries Rusten. "A mix of people in the legislature is critical to getting good legislation out of there."

In Wilmington, Rusten went right to work getting its citizens involved in identifying the root causes of the Town's problems. "Together, we identify the issues that are of concern to people, set up committees, give them a charge, freedom and flexibility, and let them go," he said. Of course, if town funds are needed, the committees are more closely monitored but still maintain their basic autonomy.

Committees are working on economic development projects, environmental issues, the budget and roads, and education. In some cases, Rusten is encouraging a regional approach to promote efficiency and effectiveness. "We can't control the price of oil, but we can figure out how we can minimize oil use and we can buy our oil jointly [with other towns] to get a good price," he said. Wilmington also has a contract with another town to educate that town's middle schoolers.

A grassroots, citizen-based local government needs excellent communications to achieve its goals. Wilmington issues a weekly newsletter via e-mail and puts its selectboard agenda (and all background materials) on its Web site. Town meeting surveys are taken and the results shared with citizens. Complex information is reconfigured to make it easier for citizens to understand – one recent initiative was to link Town Meeting agenda items with specific budget items through a system of identifying lines and numbers. "All of this creates more work for the staff," Rusten said, "but they do a great job at it."

Looking ahead to his first legislative session as a member of the VLCT Board, Rusten is eager to join what he calls "a respected voice" at the State House. Tax pol-

icy and education funding continue to intrigue him, and he clearly feels a sense of urgency about these issues. "We need to look at taxes and education with a broad scope and not continue to tweak them," he said. "The state is taking more control over education. Do we want to slow this and return to more local funding and more local control, while maintaining equal education opportunities? Which way are we going?"

Rusten feels that the similar questions of direction could be asked of the state's economic development planning. "Do we want to attract new businesses or help grow the ones who are here already? What businesses would meet the state's environmental and revenue goals?"

"I don't want to imply that work is not being done in these areas," he said. "But more needs to happen, and, if it is happening at the state level, it needs to be communicated to the local level." Rusten would like to try more of his "neighborly" approach at the State House. "Four towns going to the legislature have more power than one," he said, noting that the VLCT Board is uniquely positioned to facilitate these efforts.

"Our membership is diverse, but a lot of the problems aren't," he wisely concluded. Welcome to the VLCT Board, Bob!

- Katherine Roe, VLCT Communications Coordinator

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Each month, the *VLCT News* contains display advertisements from a variety of businesses seeking to serve Vermont's municipalities. The revenue from these advertisements helps lower our cost to produce the newsletter. If your municipality is planning a future purchase of products or services offered by our advertisers, please consider contacting them, and don't forget to let them know you saw their advertisement in the *VLCT News*. Thank you.



MANAGING SITUATIONS -

(Continued from Page One)

person that what he or she is saying is incorrect.

- Smile. (You may be accused of not taking the complainant's comments seriously).
- Offer instant solutions. Instead, reserve the right to respond after you have evaluated and researched the concern.
- Let body language send the wrong signals to the citizen. For example, avoid nodding affirmatively, crossing your arms in front of your body, raising your eyebrows, etc.

Do:

- Let the person speak without interruptions.
- Actively listen; take notes.
- Ask clarifying questions at the appropriate time.
- Remember to thank the person for bringing this matter to your attention.
- Remember that it is his or her town - we are temporary custodians of the shareholders' (citizens') assets.
- Conclude the conversation by stating when and by whom a response to the concern will be made.

Even with these best practices in place, if you are one of the few Vermont municipalities with a police department, you may wish to install a silent alarm from the town office to the department's dispatcher. Alternatively, or in addition, you might establish a protocol that your receptionist or other front-line staff can use to call in back-up and warn nearby staff of a dangerous situation. (Editor's Note: VLCT Loss Control Consultants can offer sample protocols and more specific advice in this area to VLCT PACIF members.)

DURING A PUBLIC MEETING

Most of the advice listed above also pertains to citizen participation in public board or commission meetings. However, because there is often more than one citizen who wishes to participate in the discussion at these meetings, you should be familiar with your board's rules of procedure for managing public comment and the Vermont Open Meeting Law's section on the public's right to express its opinion.

We'll start with some general advice from VLCT Municipal Assistance Center (MAC) Attorney Jim Barlow: "Selectboard members need to remember that selectboard meetings are meetings in the public, not meetings of the public." This dis-

"As public service employees, one of our most challenging issues is providing civil customer service to an irate resident. What we say and do in this situation accelerates or decelerates the confrontation."

inction between regular board or commission meetings and meetings of the public (such as town meeting) permits a board to adopt rules of procedure that accommodate citizen participation and allow it to get its work done. These rules are very helpful when a group of upset citizens crowds into your meeting room! (Town meetings and quasi-judicial/public hearings follow their own, specific rules or laws and are not covered here.)

The Vermont Open Meeting Law states:

At an open meeting the public shall be given a reasonable opportunity to express its opinion on matters considered by the public body during the meeting as long as order is maintained. Public comment shall be subject to reasonable rules established by the chairperson. This subsection shall not apply to quasi-judicial proceedings. 1 V.S.A. § 312(h)

Boards balance the public's right to express its opinion with their need to accomplish their business in a civil atmosphere by adopting formal rules of procedure. The

Municipal Assistance Center's model rules have two provisions on managing public comment:

At the beginning of each selectboard meeting, there shall be ___ minutes afforded for open public comment. By [unanimous/two-thirds/majority] vote, the selectboard may increase the time for open public comment and may adjust the agenda items and times accordingly.

and

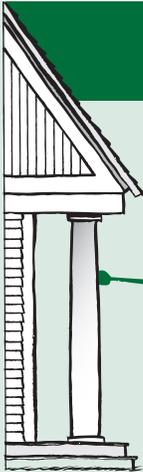
Public comment on issues discussed by the selectboard, if not offered during the open public comment period, may be offered during the meeting with the permission of the chair. Such comment, if permitted, shall be

limited to ___ minutes, unless by [unanimous/two thirds/majority] vote, the selectboard increases the time for public comment.

For the majority of public board or commission meetings, the flexibility afforded by these rules would allow even a spirited public discussion of town issues and leave everyone with the satisfaction of being heard. But, if the "front desk" pointers listed above - coupled with a refresher on the rules of the meeting - don't defuse a particularly contentious situation, board members do have a few options.

According to Attorney Barlow, "the chair can remind the attendees that they are acting outside the rules of the meeting, that they have been afforded their full opportunity to participate, and that the board's objective is to complete the business of the town. If the interruptions continue, the board can recess the meeting until folks can get themselves under control, or end the meeting and take the matter up at a later time."

To remain calm when faced with heated comments from a citizen is always a great New Year's resolution to make. Good luck!
- Patrick C. Scheidel, Manager, Town of Essex, and Katherine Roe, VLCT Communications Coordinator



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VLCT PACIF, VERMONT POLICE ACADEMY BEGIN TRAINING PARTNERSHIP

VLCT PACIF has initiated a training partnership with the Vermont Police Academy that will result in the Academy offering a two-day course to PACIF member police officers in 2008.

VLCT will pay tuition and training equipment costs for the course; police departments will be responsible for salary and travel costs associated with sending officers to the course. The courses will be repeated four times dur-

ing 2008, in March, May, August and November. Each course will have a limit of 20 officers; priority will be given to officers who have not been to the Academy in five years or more.

The content of the course will be based on an analysis of PACIF claims. Areas of high claim frequency, such as law updates and specific training needs, will be incorporated in the curriculum. The tentative curriculum includes:

- updates on pertinent case law;
- importance of having and following department policies, including best practices;
- car stops: unknown risk (also known as "routine"), high risk/felony, search and seizure;
- building search techniques; and
- use of force review and scenarios.

VLCT PACIF is offering the course as part of its ongoing efforts to reduce the number of claims its members incur. "While the frequency of liability claims has remained relatively constant in recent years," VLCT Loss Control Manager Joe Damiata said, "the average cost has risen sharply. Updating and educating officers in the field by bringing them back to the Academy is a loss control option that we are excited to offer our members."

VLCT PACIF members should watch their mail in January for registration materials for this new program.

- Katherine Roe, VLCT Communications Coordinator



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ICMA AWARD -

(Continued from Page Five)

for the total cost of the department and is reimbursed quarterly by New London and Sunapee, which budget only for their pro rata shares. To ensure that all three towns are being served, the agreement contains the following statement: "The Towns recognize that due to revaluation, litigation, or other large projects, one town may require disproportionately more of the Joint Assessor's attention for a period of time, and that in the long run, use by all Towns should balance out. This is a chance that all Towns are willing to take and the Towns enter into this Agreement with that knowledge."

Along with the assessor and assistant assessor, the tri-town department also has three assessing clerks, each of whom had been previously employed by one of the towns. The department standardized assessing procedures in the three communities, incorporating state law and local forms, and all three towns use identical versions of the same appraisal software.

In its first annual review of the new department, the joint board unanimously agreed that its performance had exceeded expectations. Of note were the reduced number of errors, particularly those lead-

ing to property tax appeals; the benefit of having the in-house assessor provide testimony in trials; and the increased effectiveness of having experienced employees. Customer service has greatly improved as well. Taxpayers know that an assessor is available in their town on specific weekdays, and each town has an employee who supports the assessors, schedules appointments, and manages day-to-day questions on a timely basis. And the tri-town assessing budget has remained consistent, changing only to reflect increases in staff salaries and benefits.

By educating taxpayers about the assessing process and minimizing inaccurate assumptions, the joint assessing department has promoted public confidence that property taxes are being assessed fairly and equitably. Even in New Hampshire, where towns pride themselves on autonomy and independence, no one can dispute the benefits of intermunicipal agreements.

(Reprinted by permission of PM, the ICMA public management magazine, October, 2007, published by the International City/County Management Association.)

WORKING TOGETHER IN VERMONT

There are several ways for Vermont towns to work cooperatively. The most informal might be a handshake deal between two towns to swap the plowing and sanding of roads that are located closer to the other's garage. Towns might also share services such as specialized highway equipment or join a pool for insurance purposes.

More formally, the statutes provide for several types of cooperative efforts, from specific areas such as sharing of town manager (24 V.S.A. § 1232) and fire mutual aid systems (20 V.S.A. §§ 2981, 2992), to the general enabling legislation, Intermunicipal Cooperation and Services, in Title 24, Chapter 121. Two different structures are contemplated under the general law: **union municipal districts**, in which a new legal entity is created, and **interlocal contracts**.

Either type of agreement must first be recommended by a joint survey committee, comprised of three members from each community, one of which must be a member of the planning commission. A representative of the regional planning commission must be chosen by the municipal commission representatives to be an ex officio member. 24 V.S.A. §§ 4831-4833.

Either type of agreement must be approved by the State of Vermont attorney general. 24 V.S.A. § 4802. The union municipal district must be approved by a vote of each town by Australian ballot (24 V.S.A. § 4863), whereas the interlocal contract must be approved by the legislative body, subject to approval of the necessary expenses by the voters. 24 V.S.A. § 4901. An alternative to using the intermunicipal cooperation processes set up in the statute would be to have a special act of the Legislature authorize the exact operation you have in mind.

(Adapted from the VLCT Handbook for Vermont Selectboards)

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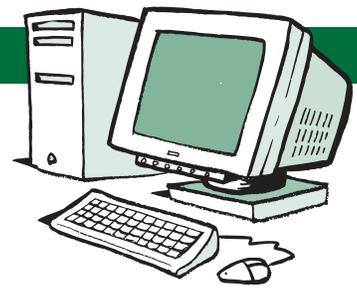
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Tech Check



LAPTOP SAFETY AND SECURITY

Last month, I touched briefly on several basic items about making your computers more secure. This month's subject is more specific: Laptop safety and security. First, let me say that the basic security points mentioned in December's newsletter – keeping the operating system and applications patched, using anti-malware programs, having a strong password, etc. – apply to laptops as well, but should be emphasized even more. Desktop computers stay in your office – to some extent, the threats must come to them. Laptops, on the other hand, move

around; they have more places where they can be exposed to harm.

Wireless networking, WiFi as it's called (short for wireless fidelity), is probably the single greatest point of vulnerability for laptops. If you do not know how to use WiFi with relative safety – and I use the word relative deliberately – then you should not use wireless networking at all. This is because you can never guarantee complete safety when you use WiFi: all you can do is increase the difficulty for someone attempting to get into your system. If determined,

knowledgeable hackers want to penetrate your laptop, you will not be able to stop them.

Secure your office and home networks.

Your office WiFi network is probably well configured if it was professionally installed. If you do not have an IT staff person who is knowledgeable about these things, ask your vendor about the system. He or she should be able to tell you if encryption is turned on and what other steps have been taken. When vendors toss out terms that you don't understand, such as "SSID" or "WEP" or "WPA2," ask them to use words you can understand. Remember, they work for you and were hired to make your network secure. If you would like definitions for some of these terms before you have a conversation with them, look at: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wireless_security.

Most likely you take your laptop home. If you have broadband Internet access at home, you probably also have wireless. You need to take the responsibility to secure that network. Otherwise, your lack of security at home will render meaningless all the precautions taken at the office. Find someone to configure your home network for you or learn how to do it yourself. A couple of on-line guides are: <http://compnetworking.about.com/od/wirelesssecurity/tp/wifisecurity.htm> and <http://www.microsoft.com/windowsxp/using/networking/setup/wireless.msp>.

Don't use WiFi that is not encrypted with WPA or WEP, at a very minimum. There are more and more public WiFi "hotspots" where you can connect to the Internet for free. Most of these are wide open with no security at all. Your best bet is to avoid using them. Your second best choice is to use public WiFi only where you receive a card

(Continued on Page Sixteen)



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TRIVIA

Ray Belair, Administrative Officer for the City of South Burlington, lead quite a pack of folks out “hunting” for the first answer to December’s Trivia. He knew that *Rutland Herald* Editor, Howard L. Hindley, published *The Gentleman from Hayville* in 1909.

Here is our first challenge of 2008, in recognition of all the laws that will soon be considered in the State House:

According to Vermont law, when is it illegal to build a fence?

Contact us with your answer: VLCT, 89 Main Street, Suite 4, Montpelier, VT 05602, tel. 800/649-7915, fax, 802/229-2211, e-mail, kroe@vlct.org.

BURLINGTON CHIEF NAMED DPS COMMISSIONER

Burlington Police Chief **Tom Tremblay** was recently appointed by Governor James Douglas to serve as the next Commissioner of the Department of Public Safety.

Tremblay has been a member of the Burlington Police Department since the early 1980s, starting as a uniformed officer before working his way up to the department’s top job. He has served as the chief of police for the past four years. Tremblay officially assumes his new duties for the state on January 7, 2008. He joins the department at a time when the state is just beginning a broad examination of the provision of police service at all levels of government.

The Department of Public Safety is comprised of a variety of public safety inter-

ests, ranging from the Vermont State Police to Emergency Management to the Division of Fire Safety. Its budget in FY08 is approximately \$78 million.

Tremblay will replace current Commissioner Kerry Sleeper, who is retiring.

CONGRATULATIONS

Garrett Baxter, Senior Associate at the VLCT Municipal Assistance Center, was recently sworn in as a member of the Vermont bar. With this momentous achievement came a promotion at VLCT to the position of Staff Attorney. Double congratulations, Garrett!



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HERE WE GROW AGAIN

VLCT welcomed **Bill Hall** to its staff in November, to fill the newly-created position of Deputy Chief Financial Officer.

Hall came to the League from the Town of Hartford, where he was Finance Director for the past ten years. There, he administered annual budgets totaling \$15 million, drafted financial policies for selectboard approval, oversaw the installation of new accounting software, and wrote, with his staff, a complete procedures manual for the finance department. Hall is also active as an Executive Board member for the Vermont Government Finance Officer's Association and the New England States Government Finance Officer's Association.



Bill Hall

Hall graduated from UVM with a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration and shortly thereafter became a Certified Public Accountant. He ran his own CPA practice from 1976 until he sold it in 1999.

Hall will assist VLCT Chief Financial Officer **Michael Gilbar** with a variety of financial and accounting projects. Eventually, Hall and Gilbar hope to offer consulting advice directly to VLCT member municipalities.



Kathy Soler

Heading into the VLCT PACIF renewal season, Director of Group Services **Dick Park** was very pleased to announce the addition of **Kathy Soler**, Senior Underwriter, to the VLCT staff. Kathy began work in late October. By now, many PACIF members have probably already met or spoken with her in conjunction with their annual renewal.

Kathy will work closely with **Ken Canning**, Deputy Director of Group Services, **Vicky Abare**, Senior Underwriting Assistant and **Danielle Brown**, Underwriting Assistant. VLCT has one more position to fill in this department, that of Underwriting

Manager, which was vacated earlier this year when Ken was promoted.

Kathy's most recent work experience was with Pro Stock Kitchens in Peterborough, New Hampshire, where, as operations manager, she managed marketing, sales and service. Her work there followed seven years in the insurance field in positions including underwriter, salesperson, underwriting manager, and account executive. Kathy is excited to be back in the insurance field; her only difficulty in making the move from New Hampshire to Vermont has been in finding a home with suitable accommodations for her five dogs, five horses, and five cows!

Welcome, Bill and Kathy!

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TECH CHECK -

(Continued from Page Thirteen)

with an encryption method and a passkey for the system. What if you must use a system with no encryption? Get on and off as quickly as possible – and hope you don't get hit while you are connected.

Disable your network adaptor(s) when they are not used. WiFi, Bluetooth and even Infrared interfaces are all pathways into your PC. Bluetooth and IR devices have their own control programs that let you turn them off. Unless you have a need for them, leave them off permanently. Some vendors' laptops will have their own programs to enable and configure the built-in wireless adaptor. If this is true for yours, learn how to disable the adaptor or turn off the radio. (Some models now come with a switch to turn off the wireless antenna.) Most systems will use Windows' own control for the WiFi. You can usually disable these by clicking the Windows "Start" button, find the "My Network Places" or "Network Connections" icon, right-click on it and choose "Properties." This will open a window with an icon, probably labeled "Wireless Network Connection." Right-click on this and choose "Disable." Use the reverse process to "Enable" it. The "My Network Place" icon may also be on your desktop.

Moving beyond wireless, let's address some other issues relating to laptops.

Always use a firewall, either the version that comes with Windows or a third-party package. At your office you may have one

built in to the network and not need one on the PC. However, at home or on the road, you need protection. No matter how you connect to the Internet, you probably need to use a firewall. In Windows XP this is set in the "Control Panel" -> "Security Center" -> "Windows Firewall."

Laptops are valuable, easy targets for theft. You probably paid between \$600 and \$2000 for yours. You wouldn't leave that much cash unattended, so don't leave your computer alone either! This bears consideration wherever you go and whatever you do. Some common sense pointers gleaned from the Web and experience.

- Don't put it down "for just a sec" at the airport ticket counter or the baggage carousel. Some suggest, when you travel with a friend, have one person go through security first while the other unloads the laptops on the inspection table and watches them until they go through the scanner to the first person. Only then will the second person follow.

Need to nap in the airport? Wrap the shoulder strap around the chair and your leg. Or hold the bag in your lap. Another option if you travel a lot is to use a motion alarm or a proximity alarm. The latter has two parts, one for your pocket and the alarm for the case. If the case moves too far from you, the alarm sounds. Thieves do not like noisy bags.

- Speaking of bags, use an inconspicuous case. Get a small laptop sleeve and carry it in a regular bag or briefcase. Definitely do not use a flashy bag that is emblazoned with a large "computer inside" logo.
- This may seem obvious but it happened to a Vermonter not too long ago: Don't leave your PC on the seat of your car. Put it in the trunk.
- At conferences or meetings, take the computer with you when you leave the room. Or invest in a cable lock and attach the PC to the table if you can.
- Know what data is on your laptop and what not to put on it. Don't carry sensitive information. You've all read the news. Encrypt and password-protect any data you must carry. Back up your data onto an external or network drive at the office. If you do, you'll know what is lost and compromised.
- Always use an account and password to log on. Without those, someone needs only to power up the PC to use it.
- Do not use your browser's ability to save passwords. If someone gets into your PC, he or she can then get to your Web accounts.
- Record all serial numbers, models, makes, etc. along with software codes. Mark the PC with your personal information. If it just gets lost and not stolen, you may get it back.
- Treat it with care. A laptop is usually made out of plastic and contains many components in a small volume. It will break if you bang it. Also, support it evenly when you carry it while it is open. Don't hook a thumb over the edge with your fingers under as if you are carrying a plate of food.
- And don't forget your power cord!

- Jim Burke, Director, VLCT Information Technology

(Questions? Contact Jim at jburke@vlct.org.)



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HELP WANTED

Chief Operator, Water/Wastewater. This position with the Town of Randolph involves a variety of activities associated with operating and maintaining the Town's wastewater treatment facility and collection system, its water purification and water distribution system. The Chief

Operator is responsible for the operation of these facilities consistent with state and federal requirements and sound operating procedures. Candidates must possess at least a Class 3 Water Operator's License and a Class 2 Wastewater Operator's License. Salary, \$37,000 to \$47,000, DOE, plus an excellent benefits package. For more information, please call John Rotter, Public Works Director, at 802-728-4048. To apply, submit a letter of interest and resume with three references to: Chief Operator, Town of Randolph, Drawer B, Randolph, VT 05060. The Town of Randolph is an equal opportunity employer. (12-13)

Finance Director. The Town of Hartford, Vt. (pop. 10,366), a nationally accredited (CAFR) community in Upper Valley of the Connecticut River, seeks an exceptional candidate to fill a key management position. The candidate must have knowledge of fund accounting, local, state and federal laws pertaining to finance, demonstrated supervisory skills, be accomplished in budgeting and purchasing, have extensive knowledge of computers and computerized municipal accounting systems, be organized, able to work under pressure and meet deadlines, and be a team player able to establish and maintain excellent working relationships with employees, elected officials and the public. A combination of skills and experience demonstrating these requirements may be considered. Minimum qualifications include a bachelor's degree in finance or accounting (CPA preferred) and five years of progressive municipal or governmental accounting experience at a supervisory or departmental level. Salary range, \$60,809 to \$74,291 DOQ, plus a very competitive benefits package. To apply, submit letter of interest and resume **by January 11, 2008**, to Hartford Town Manager, 171 Bridge Street, White River Junction, VT 05001. Electronic submissions to hrieseberg@hartford-vt.org en-

couraged. The Town of Hartford is an equal opportunity employer. (12-11)

Highway Laborer. The Town of Stowe, Vt. has an immediate opening for a Highway Department Laborer to maintain Town roads, bridges, sidewalks and storm drains. Duties include operating pickup trucks and light equipment, snow plowing, hauling supplies and materials, street sweeping and roadside mowing. High school diploma or equivalent and a valid Vermont driver's license required. This is a full-time position with excellent benefits. IBEW union membership required. Salary, \$11.05-\$13.11 per hour (Pay Grade 3), dependent upon qualifications and experience. For a complete job description and employment application, go to www.townofstowevt.org, or call 802/253-7350. To apply, send application to Town of Stowe, Attn: Susan Moeck, P.O. Box 730, Stowe, VT 05672. **Position open until filled.** (12-11)

Municipal Assessor. The City of Montpelier, Vt. is seeking applications for employment and/or proposals for contract services for a qualified property assessor. Interested individuals must have property assessment experience in a community with a commercial and business presence, preferably in Vermont. Firms offering proposals must be approved under Rule 86-P65 of the Vermont Department of Property Valuation and Review. Duties include preparing the annual grand list, updating assessments, hearing appeals, preparing information for the Board of Civil Authority, meeting with citizens, overseeing property re-appraisals as they are periodically required, and all other related duties enumerated in Vermont statutes (particularly Title 32) and the City of Montpelier Charter. The City's budget has most recently provided for a three-day per week employee. We are, however,

(Continued on Page Nineteen)

VLCT NEWS CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING POLICY

The *VLCT News* welcomes classified advertisements from municipal entities, public agencies, businesses and individuals. This service is free for VLCT members (regular, contributing and associate); the non-member rate is \$37.00 per ad. Ads are generally limited to 150 words.

The *VLCT News* is published every month and usually reaches readers by the third week of the month. Ads are also placed on the VLCT Web site as soon as they are received.

The copy deadline for advertisements is the first Friday of the month for the next month's issue. However, space is occasionally available for late additions. Please feel free to check with the editor for availability.

For more information on classified and display advertising in the *VLCT News*, please contact Katherine Roe, Editor, *VLCT News*, 89 Main Street, Suite 4, Montpelier, VT 05602, tel. (800) 649-7915, fax (802) 229-2211, e-mail kroe@vlct.org.



LINKING YOUR COMMUNITY

Are you hearing from community members who need help and do not know who to call? Do you know who to call in order to help them? At Vermont 2-1-1, we realize that navigating through the complex human service delivery system in Vermont isn't easy. Vermont 2-1-1's mission is to help people by assessing their needs and directing them to non-profit and/or state government services throughout Vermont. 2-1-1 is the number to call for information about health and human services and organizations in your community. And we will provide follow-up as necessary.

Vermont 2-1-1 is a program of the United Ways of Vermont. This public/private partnership only succeeds with the critical support of the Agency of Human Services and many other community partners.

In addition, Vermont 2-1-1, Emergency Management, the Department of Health, and the Local Emergency Planning Committees have been working together during emergency drills and live responses. 2-1-1 staff members have participated in emergency preparedness drills, updating town emergency plans (if we aren't in yours, please contact us!), and the Vermont Pandemic Planning Summit. Whether you are a town clerk, health officer or town service officer, we want to help you help your community to be prepared and get connected.

You are invited to establish a link on your Web site to the Vermont 2-1-1 Web site located at www.vermont211.org. By doing so you are giving your community a valuable resource to get help, give help and discover options. Our Web site is currently

being updated to include our 24/7 hours of operation, new call center location and a library of reports. And, access to our database of helpful resources is a click away!

LAND AND WATER CONSERVATION FUND GRANTS

The Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation recently announced the grant deadlines for the 2008 Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). The Department will conduct an educational workshop for potential applicants via Vermont Interactive Television on Wednesday, January 9, 2008 from 5-6:30 p.m. **The deadline for 2008 applications is Friday, February 22, 2008.**

The LWCF program provides grants for the acquisition, conservation and development of outdoor recreation areas and facilities. Eligible applicants include cities, towns, villages, school districts, fire districts and intermunicipal districts. Examples of projects funded in recent years include tennis courts in Jericho, baseball and soccer fields in New Haven, basketball courts in East Montpelier and a "natural playground" in Waterbury.

Since its inception in 1965, the Fund has provided Vermont communities and state agencies with more than \$28,000,000. More than 66,000 acres of outdoor recreation land have been acquired and more than 500 recreation projects have been developed or restored.

For more information about the program, please contact Pat Peterson in Waterbury, 802/241-3653.



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CLASSIFIEDS -

(Continued from Page Seventeen)

open to a variety of arrangements, as long as all assessment requirements are met. To apply, please submit a cover letter and resume or professional contract proposal **by January 11, 2008** to William Fraser, City Manager, 39 Main Street, Montpelier, VT 05602. (12-6)

City Manager. The City of St. Albans, Vt. (pop. 7,500) seeks an energetic, innovative City Manager. This position by City Charter is responsible for the day-to-day operations as well as community relations, financial management and implementation of the City's policies. The City Manager reports directly to the Mayor and City Council. He or she oversees full-time police, fire, public works and recreation departments, as well as a state-of-the-art water/wastewater treatment facility that serves the greater St. Albans community. The current operating budget is approximately \$8 million with over 60 employees, some of whom are unionized. The successful candidate will be resourceful and possess excellent and proven communication and people skills. The applicant should possess a degree in public administration or have experience in this or related fields. Salary, \$60,000 to \$75,000, commensurate with experience; excellent benefit package. To apply, please send cover letter, resume and three letters of

reference in strict confidence **by December 31, 2007** to: Mayor Martin Manahan, 100 North Main Street, St. Albans, VT 05478, or e-mail to martin@handy-pontiac.com with City Mgr. Search in the subject line. Incomplete or late resumes will not be considered. St. Albans City is an equal opportunity employer. (11-29)

Fire Chief. The Town of Norwich, Vt. is seeking applicants for the position of Fire Chief. The Chief's position, which will be the department's first full-time employee, is appointed by and reports to the Town Manager. The Fire Chief will work alongside a full-time police chief and full-time public works director. The fire department is a paid-on-call department with 37 active members and a budget of \$330,000. It operates out of one fire station and serves a population of 3,600, spread across 44 square miles. The department operates one rescue/pumper, one pumper, one aerial ladder, one tanker, one mini-pumper/utility and one forestry vehicle. This hands-on position requires an associate's degree, Fire Officer II or equivalent certification, four or more years of progressive supervisory responsibility in fire fighting, fire prevention, training and EMS, and strong communication, interpersonal relations, leadership and supervisory skills. EMT-B or higher certification is desirable. Salary range, \$55,000-\$65,000, depen-

dent upon qualifications; excellent benefits. For additional information and a copy of the application, go to <http://norwich.vt.us/> and choose Fire Department. To apply, send cover letter, application, statement of qualifications, resume and three professional references **by January 11, 2008** to: Fire Chief Search Committee, P.O. Box 376, Norwich, VT 05055-0376. E.O.E. M/F. (11-29)

Fire Chief. The Town of Hartford, Vt. (pop. 10,366) seeks a career-oriented progressive professional to continue the Department's expanding services. Candidates should have at least 10 years of progressive senior/executive command level experience in municipal fire services as either Assistant Chief/Deputy Chief or Battalion Commander of similarly sized or larger organization or equivalent combination of education and experience. Must have a demonstrated record of success working positively with the public, staff, budget development and management, exceptional problem solving and planning skills, and the ability to establish and implement long-term vision and goals together with a commitment to provide quality services. Minimum requirements include a bachelor's degree from an accredited college/university, preferably in the field of fire sciences/administration or related field, and a history of continued training. Prefer seasoned officer who has attained one or both of his/her Chief Fire Officer and/or Executive Fire Officer Designations. The Department is considered to be one of the most progressive, dynamic emergency services organizations in the state/region. It recently achieved International Accreditation. Overall operating budget of \$2.3 million, with a staff of 23 providing a broad spectrum of emergency services. Salary, \$74,090 to \$84,672 DOQ with very competitive benefits package. To apply, send letter of interest, resume and salary history **by January 4, 2008** to: Office of the Hartford Town Manager, 171 Bridge Street, White River Junction, VT 05001. For more information, call 802/295-9353, e-mail hrieseberg@hartford-vt.org or visit our Web site, www.hartford-vt.org. The Town of Hartford is an equal opportunity employer. (11-16)

Vermont State Infrastructure Bank (SIB) Loan Funds are Available

The Vermont State Infrastructure Bank (SIB) is a low-interest loan program operated by the Vermont Economic Development Authority (VEDA) and the Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans).

Eligible Borrowers include municipalities, regional development corporations, and certain private sector companies.

Eligible Projects must be transportation-related, enhance economic opportunity, and help create jobs. Examples are road construction or reconstruction, certain facilities related to rail transit, and bridges and intermodal transportation facilities.

Funds are also available to help eligible groups and individuals purchase 7-15 passenger commuter vans.

To learn more, visit www.veda.org or call: 802-828-5627.





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Calendar

For more information about the following workshops or events, please contact Jessica Hill, VLCT Manager, Administrative Services, tel., (800) 649-7915; e-mail, jhill@vlct.org. Or visit <http://www.vlct.org/eventscalendar/> and select a workshop for more information or to register on-line. (The on-line registration option is available for VLCT workshops and events only.)

Mid-winter Municipal Roundtable.

Wednesday, January 16, 23 and 30, 2008, VLCT Offices, Montpelier. Sponsored by the VLCT Municipal Assistance Center and VLCT PACIF. These evening, mid-winter roundtables will focus on three common challenges to governing rural communities: Managing Conflicts of Interest (January 16), Ordinance Adoption and Enforcement (January 23), and Personnel Management (January 30).

Municipal Grants Symposium. Thursday, January 17, 2008, Elks' Lodge, Montpelier. Sponsored by the VLCT Municipal

Assistance Center. This popular workshop will bring together numerous state, federal, and private grant-making sources for a discussion of their unique programs and how municipalities can best position themselves for effective applications.

Wellness Coordinator Workshop. Thursday, January 31, Capitol Plaza, Montpelier; Thursday, February 7, Cortina Inn, Mendon; Thursday, February 14, Hampton Inn, Colchester; Thursday, February 21, Comfort Inn, St. Johnsbury; Thursday, February 28, 2008, Wilmington Town Offices. Sponsored by the VLCT Health Trust. Topics for this workshop, repeated in the five locations noted above, include the Leader wellness incentive program, introduction of the 2008 exercise ball program, and an update from the Trust's employer assistance program.

Planning and Zoning Forum. Thursday, February 7, 2008, Elks' Lodge, Montpelier. Sponsored by the VLCT Municipal Assistance Center. This popular workshop will convene planning and zoning

officials from across the state for a discussion of current planning and zoning initiatives. Particular attention will be paid to low impact development, effective subdivision regulation, and enforcement strategies.

Stewardship of the Urban Landscape

(SOUL) Tree Steward Training. Monday evenings, February 18 to April 14, 2008, 6-9 p.m. Offered at seven locations around the state through Vermont Interactive Television (VIT) sites in Castleton, Montpelier, Middlebury, White River Junction, Lyndonville, St. Albans and Williston, SOUL is an eight-week course that combines technical information on tree care (including proper planting and maintenance) with leadership skills. Registrations accepted until February 8, 2008 on a first come, first served basis. Tuition for the course is \$75, and includes a training manual and other course materials. For more information and to register, please visit www.uvm.edu/extension/soul/, e-mail soul.treesteward@uvm.edu or call 866/860-1382.