

# VLCT NEWS



A PUBLICATION OF THE VERMONT LEAGUE OF CITIES & TOWNS

SERVING AND STRENGTHENING VERMONT LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

August/September 2009

## MUNICIPAL POLICY PREVIEW

The four VLCT municipal policy committees have convened to discuss local government's policy platform for what is sure to be a difficult legislative session due to the continued economic hardships facing Vermont and the rest of the nation.

“ VLCT recommends the creation of a new education finance system that takes into consideration both the Brigham decision and the lessons of the past 11 years.”

— VLCT FAIR Committee

The policy committees cover a wide array of topics of interest to local government such as education finance, transportation funding, land use policy, environmental regulation, and public safety. The committees review amended drafts of the policy, then make

their recommendations to the VLCT Board of Directors. Once the board gives the policy its approval in the early fall, the whole document is presented to and approved by members in a town meeting-style event during Town Fair. This year, Town Fair is on October 1<sup>st</sup>, and will be held in Barre at the Barre Auditorium.

The Finance, Administrative, and Intergovernmental Relations (FAIR) Committee has recommended to the board that education finance once again be a priority issue, as the proposals to shift more and more General Fund expenses to the Education Fund – and by extension property taxes – continue to mount. More than \$26 million was shifted to the Education Fund for state FY10, and more could be on the way with the continued discussion of transferring the responsibility for funding the teachers' retirement system to the Education Fund.

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## VERMONT ECONOMY STATE TAX REVENUES CONTINUE TO DETERIORATE

On July 16, the legislature's Joint Fiscal Committee received the latest Economic Review and Revenue Forecast Update, and learned that, due to the continued worsening of the economy, there is another \$46.8 million larger hole in the current and next state budgets than was projected when the legislature adjourned in June. The entire VLCT Board of Directors attended the meeting to learn of the fiscal crisis the state still faces and to express to the committee members their opposition to shifting these problems to local governments and property taxpayers. Unfortunately, they learned that plans are already in the works to raise the state education property taxes next year to offset the impact of the shifts that have already transpired.

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## VLCT ANSWERS YOUR 2009 TOWN FAIR QUESTIONS

### What is Town Fair?

Town Fair is an amazing gathering of Vermont local officials, employees and volunteers, joined by VLCT staff and board members, vendors with a municipal connection, and guests.

### What is this year's theme?

Local Officials: Vermont's Super Heroes.

### Why should I attend?

To learn from a wide variety of workshops, network with your peers, attend local government organizations' annual and special meetings, and help set VLCT's legislative priorities for the upcoming year. In addition, there is a trade show filled with the exhibits of more than 80 vendors, whose products and services help municipalities run more smoothly.



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## TOWN FAIR

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### **When is Town Fair?**

Thursday, October 1, 2009.

### **What time does Town Fair begin?**

Join us at 8:00 a.m. for registration and a wonderful continental breakfast at the Conversation Café, which is generously sponsored by the Chittenden Bank and VLCT. You will want to arrive as close to 8:00 a.m. as possible to give yourself time to eat and visit trade show exhibits before the workshops begin at 9:30 a.m.

### **When is the VLCT Annual Meeting and who can attend?**

The Meeting begins at 1:30 p.m. in the Main Room in Alumni Hall. Anyone may attend, but you must be the Voting Delegate (one is permitted from each member city or town) to vote.

### **What are some of this year's special events?**

■ The VLCT Municipal Golf Tournament is back. Join us on Wednesday, September 30 at the Country Club of Barre.

■ The Trade Show will be housed in two, completely enclosed buildings. Visit vendors in the basement of the Barre Municipal Auditorium or the B.O.R. The B.O.R. isn't just for large equipment (though it sure is handy to kick the tires under the cover of the big dome). You will find everything from banking and bridges to software and various types of equipment. Be sure to allow time to visit both buildings.

■ An extensive list of training and educational workshops offered by VLCT staff and outside experts.

### **How do I register?**

Watch your mail for a complete Town Fair registration kit or visit our website at [www.vlct.org/eventscalendar/townfair/attendeeinformation/](http://www.vlct.org/eventscalendar/townfair/attendeeinformation/) to download a form. Register before September 4 to save \$10.00 per person!

## FOR NEWCOMERS TO TOWN FAIR

This glossary will help you understand all of the goings-on at Town Fair.

**Annual Meetings, PACIF/Unemployment.** The VLCT Property and Casualty Intermunicipal Fund and the VLCT Unemployment Trust hold a combined annual meeting to hear reports from the past year and elect board members and officers.

**Annual Meeting, VLCT.** Voting delegates (one from each member city and town) discuss and approve VLCT's legislative platform, the VLCT 2010 Municipal Policy. Delegates also elect officers and new members of the VLCT Board of Directors.

**Awards Luncheon.** A perennial favorite at Town Fair is the traditional turkey dinner with all the fixings. We will recognize the recipients of the annual VLCT awards.

**Conversation Café.** An informal gathering place, located this year in the middle of the trade show exhibit hall for your convenience. Plan a little downtime with your friends and enjoy coffee, tea, juice and a selection of morning munchies. Sponsored by the Chittenden Bank and VLCT.

**Local Government Dinner.** A Town Fair eve tradition that affords VLCT the chance to recognize Town Fair award winners for their accomplishments and thank VLCT Board members for their contributions to VLCT. The Dinner will be held on Wednesday, September 30, at the Capitol Plaza Hotel in Montpelier. All are welcome to attend.

**Raffle.** VLCT gives away \$100 gifts to ten lucky raffle winners. Many exhibitors raffle off lovely gifts, from a Vermont products basket to samples of their own wares. Sponsored by Northeast Delta Dental, Statewide Aquastore, New England Tank, and Weston and Sampson.

**Trade Show.** More than 80 companies and organizations dedicated to serving municipalities around the state will be exhibiting their products at Town Fair. Bring your questions and be ready to learn about the different ways our exhibitors' products can help your municipality achieve its goals.

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# 2009 TOWN FAIR EXHIBITORS

## THE "FAIR" PART OF TOWN FAIR!

As of press time (mid-July), nearly 40 vendors have signed up to exhibit their products and services at Town Fair. If you have never been to Town Fair's trade show, you have missed one of the most fun and festive events. A cross between an old-fashioned county fair and an indoor market, the trade show gives municipal officials the opportunity to visit with vendors and check out their offerings. It's not to be missed!

**CARTOGRAPHIC ASSOCIATES**  
Municipal mapping and GIS solutions, focusing on an accurate spatial framework that can be implemented in any community.

**CHITTENDEN BANK**  
Financial services.

**CLARKS TRUCK CENTER**  
International trucks.

**DIG SAFE**  
Non-profit call center to promote public safety and prevent utility damage.

**DOPP & DOPP ASSOCIATES, INC.**  
Prefab, pre-engineered steel bridges.

**DUBOIS & KING INC.**  
Consulting engineering firm.

**DUFRESNE GROUP**  
Engineering consultants.

**EASTERN SYSTEMS**  
Business and municipal printing.

**FORCIER ALDRICH & ASSOCIATES**  
Consulting engineering.

**GREAT WEST RETIREMENT SERVICES**  
Deferred compensation.

**GOVDEALS**  
Online auction services to government organizations.

**G.W. SAVAGE CORP.**  
Fire and water mitigation and restoration.

**HOYLE TANNER & ASSOCIATES, INC.**  
Consulting engineers.

**HR Sentry**  
Online human resources administration tool.

**INVEST EAP**  
Employee Assistance Program.

**MCINTIRE BUSINESS PRODUCTS**  
Carries largest inventory of binding, laminating and presentation products in New England.

**MERCHANTS BANK**  
Financial services.

**NATIONAL FIRE SPRINKLER ASSOCIATION**  
To protect lives and property from fire through widespread acceptance of the fire sprinkler concept.

**NORTHEAST DELTA DENTAL**  
Administers dental benefits to over 700,000 people in Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont.

**NORTHEAST MAILING SYSTEMS, LLC.**  
Digital postage meters, mailing machines, folder/inserters.

**NORTHEAST STIHL**  
Stihl handheld outdoor power equipment.

**PROJECT ROADS SAFE, VERMONT DEPT. OF LABOR**  
Workplace traffic safety.

**RINKERS COMMUNICATIONS**  
Two-way radios and pagers.

**STANTEC INC.**  
Consulting engineers.

**STATEWIDE AQUASTORE – NEW ENGLAND TANK, INC.**  
Storage tanks.

**STERNBERG LIGHTING**  
Manufacturer of decorative street lighting and site furnishings.

**SYNTECH SYSTEMS/FUELMASTER**  
Provides hardware and software to manage and control access to fuel products.

**TD BANK**  
Financial services.

**TENCO NEW ENGLAND INC.**  
Municipal equipment for snow/ice removal/street sweeper/sidewalk tractors.

**UNUM**  
Disability and life insurance.

**USDA RURAL DEVELOPMENT**

**VERMONT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY**  
Economic development lender; financial assistance to eligible entrepreneurs, manufacturers, agricultural enterprises and corporations.

**VERMONT MUNICIPAL BOND BANK**  
Municipal finance and bonding.

**VERMONT MUNICIPAL RETIREMENT/UNCLAIMED PROPERTY**  
Retirement/unclaimed property.

**VERMONT SECRETARY OF STATE'S OFFICE**  
Election services.

**WESTON & SAMPSON**  
Civil and environmental engineering.

## NEWCOMERS

*(continued from previous page)*

**Wellness Events.** The VLCT Health Trust and VLCT PACIF join forces to offer health screenings for osteoporosis, blood pressure, diabetes and cholesterol. Non-

members may participate for \$20.00 Chair massages are also available.

**Workshops.** Local government officials, volunteers and employees can pick from a wide variety of educational workshops offered by VLCT staff and outside experts.

The "curriculum" this year includes water issues, 2010 Census planning, agricultural regulations, ortho mapping, retirement issues, an occupational health roundtable, and many more!

*Jessica Hill  
Manager, Administrative Services*



# LEGAL AND REGULATORY NOTES



## FURTHER PREEMPTION OF ZONING JURISDICTION OVER TELECOM FACILITIES

Act 54 (H. 313), among other things, expands the jurisdiction of the Vermont Public Service Board (PSB) over telecommunication facilities, support structures, and ancillary improvements. Previously, a certificate of public good could only be obtained from the PSB for installation of three or more telecommunication facilities that were part of an interconnected network, and only when the structures extended more than 50 feet above the ground. 30 V.S.A. § 248a(a),(b). Now providers will be able to obtain a certificate of public good for a single facility regardless of height. The PSB's expanded jurisdiction encompasses not only cellular telephone facilities and structures but also smaller wireless Internet installations.

This change potentially presents a significant intrusion into local regulation of telecommunication facilities as the PSB's assumption of jurisdiction over a telecommunication facility exempts the facility from local zoning regulation. 24 V.S.A. § 4412(8) (C). Regulations adopted by a municipality under 24 V.S.A. § 2291(19) that would otherwise apply to telecommunication facilities are also expressly preempted. 30 V.S.A. § 248a(h). Nevertheless, municipalities should be aware that telecommunication providers may still obtain telecom permits locally rather than seeking a certificate of public good from the PSB. Municipal regulatory bodies also appear to retain authority to amend existing local permits.

In light of these points, we still recommend that municipalities have zoning by-law provisions or ordinances that address telecommunication facilities. Municipalities that seek to promote development of telecommunication infrastructure may consider

adopting local bylaws or ordinances that are less stringent than the PSB's review criteria. The new law also provides that if an applicant obtains or is denied a permit by a local board, the applicant may not apply to the PSB for approval of the same or substantially similar facility.

In reviewing telecommunication facilities applications, the PSB is required to give substantial deference to the "land conservation

measures in the plans of the affected municipalities and the recommendations of municipal legislative bodies and the municipal and regional planning commissions regarding the municipal and regional plans, respectively." Local officials may base their recommendations on a local telecom ordinance or zoning bylaw.

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### UPCOMING TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

PRESENTED BY  
VLCT'S MUNICIPAL ASSISTANCE CENTER

September 17, 2009

#### Managing Stormwater through Low Impact Development (LID) Techniques – a Primer for Planning and Zoning Officials

Delivered in the evening via interactive television, this workshop will focus on low impact development (LID), a new trend in stormwater management. LID stormwater management employs practices and design approaches that maintain natural drainage patterns and retain more stormwater on site as an alternative to conventional costly infrastructure. After a brief overview describing how LID works, professionals in the field will discuss innovative stormwater systems using LID and how to incorporate language into your town's regulatory documents.

#### OCTOBER

- Cash Management: Banking and Investments
- Contracting for Municipal Projects
- Budget and Financial Management

#### NOVEMBER

- Preparing for a Successful Town Meeting
- Planning and Zoning Forum
- Basic Governmental Accounting
- Delinquent Tax Collection

VLCT's 2009-2010 Calendar of Training and Events with detailed workshop information will soon be mailed to members and posted on our website ([www.vlct.org](http://www.vlct.org)). You may also call 800-649-7915 or email [info@vlct.org](mailto:info@vlct.org) for information.



## LEGAL/REG. NOTES

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This change was effective June 1, 2009, when the bill was signed into law.

The legislature made additional amendments to Chapter 117 that bestow some new authorities on appropriate municipal panels (AMPs) and administrative officers. The additions to Chapter 117 are sections 4455 and 4470a in Title 24. Section 4455 allows a municipality to petition to the environmental court to revoke a municipal land use permit if a permittee violated the terms of a permit or obtained a permit based on "misrepresentation of material fact." This ability to petition the environmental court to revoke a permit is similar to authority given to an Act 250 land use panel under 10 V.S.A. § 6027 (g).

Section 4470a also allows an administrative officer or an AMP to reject an application when an applicant makes a misrepresentation of material fact. This change should not have a significant effect on zoning administrators or AMPs, which have always

had the authority to evaluate information provided by an applicant and reject an application on the basis that such information was factually incorrect. However, the addition of 4470a may have some implication for administrative officers. The ability to reject an application due to materially misleading information begs an administrative officer to question evidence or to ensure accuracy of the information on zoning permit applications. This authority could make a zoning administrator's job more difficult.

Curiously, this new section of the law also permits an AMP to award reasonable attorney's fees after notice and an opportunity for a hearing in accordance with 3 V.S.A. § 809. Section 809 outlines the process by which an AMP will notice and hear the case to award fees. It is decidedly differ-

ent from the hearing process outlined in 24 V.S.A. § 4464. The AMP may award fees to "any party or person who may have become a party but for the false or misleading information or who has incurred attorney's fees or costs in connection with the application." The AMP should consider whom if anyone was affected by the misleading information and whether parties incurred attorney's fees. This is a quasi-judicial process where the AMP will take evidence and issue a written decision, which is appealable to a higher court. We recommend that, prior to holding a hearing and awarding attorney's fees, the town consults with its municipal attorney or the Municipal Assistance Center.

*Stephanie Smith AICP, Senior Associate  
VLCT Municipal Assistance Center*

## THE 2009 VLCT MUNICIPAL CLERK FEE SCHEDULE POSTER

The Municipal Assistance Center will distribute the 2009 VLCT Municipal Clerk Fee Schedule in mid September. Please note that September 1 marks the effective date of the new equal marriage law. (For more information, visit [www.leg.state.vt.us/misc/s115faq.pdf](http://www.leg.state.vt.us/misc/s115faq.pdf).)

DESCRIPTION	CHARGE	LOCAL CHARGE	MUNICIPALITY AND/OR CLERK FEE
Administrative Fee	\$100.00		
Annual Report	\$50.00		
Assessment	\$10.00		
Business License	\$25.00		
Building Permit	\$150.00		
Code Enforcement	\$10.00		
Contractor License	\$25.00		
Drinking Water	\$10.00		
Electric License	\$25.00		
Environmental	\$10.00		
Excavation	\$10.00		
Fire Department	\$10.00		
Food Service	\$25.00		
Gas License	\$25.00		
Health Department	\$10.00		
Home Inspection	\$10.00		
Inspection	\$10.00		
Insurance	\$10.00		
Land Use	\$10.00		
Landfill	\$10.00		
License	\$10.00		
Medical	\$10.00		
Miscellaneous	\$10.00		
Municipal Clerk	\$10.00		
Notary Public	\$10.00		
Open Space	\$10.00		
Ordinance	\$10.00		
Other	\$10.00		
Permit	\$10.00		
Plan Review	\$10.00		
Professional	\$10.00		
Public Works	\$10.00		
Recycling	\$10.00		
Registration	\$10.00		
Residential	\$10.00		
Sanitation	\$10.00		
Septic	\$10.00		
Signage	\$10.00		
Special Use	\$10.00		
State	\$10.00		
Street	\$10.00		
Subdivision	\$10.00		
Survey	\$10.00		
Tax	\$10.00		
Transfer	\$10.00		
Trust	\$10.00		
Utility	\$10.00		
Vehicle	\$10.00		
Water	\$10.00		
Waste	\$10.00		
Waterfront	\$10.00		
Wholesale	\$10.00		
Workshop	\$10.00		

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## VLCT UI TRUST MEMBERS SHIELDED FROM STATE'S BASE WAGE INCREASE

Recent changes in state unemployment funding will not have an appreciable effect on municipalities that are members of the VLCT Unemployment Insurance Trust. Why is this? Some background is in order.

In accordance with federal and state statutes, the Vermont Department of Labor (DOL) operates Vermont's unemployment insurance system – it administers the program, collects funds, adjudicates cases, and pays claims. The funding for this system comes from two categories of contributor: taxable and reimbursable. By law, most employers have "taxable" status and must pay state unemployment taxes, which are held in the state's unemployment fund until they are needed to pay claims. Municipalities, however, are permitted to opt for "reimbursable" status and pay the state only for the actual claims made against them. Many municipalities choose to do this through the VLCT Unemployment Insurance Trust (UI Trust), which collects and pools funds from all trust members – spreading the risk of claims payment across the members – and reimburses the state as appropriate on a quarterly basis.

The state and the UI Trust maintain their respective unemployment funds according to very different rules. Whereas the state Unemployment Fund is administered by the DOL under statutes passed by the state legislature, the UI Trust fund is administered by VLCT Risk Management Services per the Trust's bylaws and under the oversight of the UI Trust Board of Directors. The state fund has become seriously depleted in recent years for two reasons: the formula for filling it has not been kept up to date with rising earnings

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## FEDERAL MINIMUM WAGE INCREASE

Effective July 24, 2009 the federal minimum wage increased from \$6.55 per hour to \$7.25 per hour. Vermont's minimum wage, which supersedes the federal minimum wage, is \$8.06 per hour.

## ANCIENT ROADS DEADLINE APPROACHES

The first important deadline of Act 178, otherwise known as the "ancient roads" law, is a little more than six months away, and towns hoping to retain these roads should be acting swiftly and vigorously.

The February 10<sup>th</sup> deadline for towns to file copies of sworn certificates is, effectively, the deadline for municipalities to add Class 4 roads to town highway maps in order to avoid their potential reclassification as "unidentified corridors" on July 1, 2010. On July 1, 2015, all unidentified corridors that haven't been reclassified – and only those unidentified corridors – will be automatically discontinued. That means local officials should act soon if they wish to retain these public rights-of-way.

While the law does require municipalities to map all Class 4 town highways and legally established trails by 2015, the immediate focus is only on the narrow subset of roads that may become unidentified corridors on July 1, 2010. For a road to become an unidentified corridor, it must meet **all** four of the following criteria (19 V.S.A. § 302 (6)):

1. It must have been legally established.
2. It must not appear on a town highway map/sworn certificate on July 1, 2010.
3. It is not a legal trail.
4. It is "not otherwise clearly observable by physical evidence of their use as a highway or trail."

If the road does not meet all four of the criteria, it is and remains whatever category of road it has always been.

In order to add a road that may otherwise become an unidentified corridor to the sworn certificate and highway map, the municipality must provide the Agency of Transportation with the following:

- a description of the highway or trail;
- a copy of any surveys of the highway or trail;
- minutes from the meeting where the legislative body decided to make the mileage changes and add the highway or trail; and
- a current highway map with the changes (additions or deletions) sketched on it.

The process for adding a road that potentially becomes an unidentified corridor in 2010 is slightly altered from the normal sworn certificate filing and town highway mapping process: prior to adding a highway to the map that is "not otherwise clearly observable by physical evidence," a town must notify affected property owners in writing 45 days in advance of a duly warned public hearing scheduled to discuss the possible addition or deletion of the highway in question.

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### VEDA Has Interest-Free Commuter Van Financing Available for Eligible Borrowers

With today's high fuel costs, it makes more sense than ever to economize on transportation costs for your organization. In cooperation with VTrans, VEDA has loan funds available through the Vermont State Infrastructure Bank to help qualified non-profit companies, and groups of individuals that form a non-profit, finance up to 90% of the cost of 7-15 passenger commuter vans. VTrans fully subsidizes the interest charges and application fee.

Visit [www.veda.org](http://www.veda.org) or call 802-828-5627 to learn more.





## ANCIENT ROADS

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In the five-year period between 2010 and 2015, towns can still retain unidentified corridors. To do so, however, will require local officials to go through the process established in Title 19 for the laying out, altering, or discontinuance of a town highway – a process that may require the town to compensate affected landowners, among other things.

When trying to determine whether or not to add a road that might otherwise become an unidentified corridor, local officials should think like police detectives who are building a criminal case. Gather as much evidence as possible about whether or not the road was legally established and where it is on the ground. Sometimes this will prove difficult, since some records may have been lost, destroyed, or never recorded in the first place. Do the best job you can, because at the end of the day the decision is yours to make – and defend.

For more information, contact the VLCT Municipal Assistance Center at 1-800-649-7915 or [info@vlct.org](mailto:info@vlct.org).

## MUNICIPAL PLANNING GRANT APPLICATIONS DUE IN SEPTEMBER

Municipal Planning Grants (MPGs) will be available from the Vermont Department of Economic, Housing and Community Development in 2009, though with less funding than in previous years. Applications are due September 30, 2009, and grant awards will be announced in November. Municipalities may apply for up to \$15,000 for single applications or up to \$25,000 for multi-town (consortia) applications. Only one application per municipality may be submitted, and all applications must be submitted online.

Information about the program, eligibility requirements, competitive criteria, and instructions for applying are available at [www.dhca.state.vt.us/Planning/GMS/OnlineApplication2010.htm](http://www.dhca.state.vt.us/Planning/GMS/OnlineApplication2010.htm). Contact Wendy Tudor with any questions at 802-828-5249 (direct line), 800-622-4553 or via email at [wendy.tudor@state.vt.us](mailto:wendy.tudor@state.vt.us).

## ON THE ROAD WITH BILL HALL

William Hall, VLCT's Chief Financial Officer, has been spending more time on the road lately. The past two months have seen an increase in the call for finance workshops and consulting projects, and the rest of the summer looks to be just as busy.

Much of his work has centered on "Capital Improvement Programming," a two-hour onsite workshop that gives town officials a roadmap for preparing their own long-range capital improvement plan. The workshop, largely funded by Municipal Education Grants from the Vermont Department of Housing and Community Affairs, teaches participants how to formulate policies for preparing a capital plan and the funding related to capital purchases, how to establish priorities for ranking proposed projects, how to analyze the town's finances and its ability to fund capital projects, and how to assemble the plan document.

Other consulting projects have kept him traveling as well. Bill helped one town change the format of its general and high-

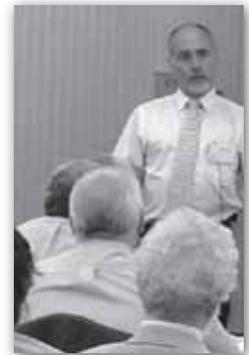
way fund budget to comply with the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) recommended chart of accounts, and to restate its year-end financial results from the cash basis to the modified accrual basis. This will give the town better financial information and allow it to more accurately assess the costs of various town programs. Another town wanted to know how to improve its delinquent tax collection. In addition to establishing a policy to collect delinquent taxes, Bill and the town discussed changing the number and date of tax payments and changing the fiscal year so collection deadlines fall earlier in the year. Still another town has asked for a review of its accounting procedures. The town is small and only a few employees perform multiple functions, so this review will stress separation of duties and proper authorization of transactions.

Bill's extensive fiscal background allows him to discuss a wealth of financial topics. If a monetary matter is troubling your town, please call the Municipal Assistance Center to schedule a meeting.

## VLCT FINANCIAL CONSULTING AVAILABLE

**VLCT's Chief Financial Officer, Bill Hall, is available to assist towns and cities on a wide range of financial topics, including:**

- Capital improvement program planning
- GASB 34 implementation
- Financial reporting
- Purchasing, bidding and other financial policies
- Debt management
- Complying with audit recommendations
- Management of cash and investments
- Basic governmental accounting
- Preparing for an outside audit
- Internal fraud risk assessment/internal control review



*Bill Hall*

**FOR MORE INFORMATION ON FINANCIAL CONSULTING AND POSSIBLE DISCOUNTS FOR PACIF MEMBERS, PLEASE CALL ABBY FRIEDMAN AT 1-800-649-7915.**



## MUNI POLICY PREVIEW

(continued from page 1)

In addition to having a lengthy open discussion at Town Fair in the morning about what role, if any, local government should play in the education funding debate, the committee is proposing that the membership consider the following policy position:

“Given the fact that:

- Education finance is largely being controlled by the state,
- Each year the state has raided the Education Fund, with this year being the largest raid yet,
- For next year, there is already discussion of even greater raids on the Education Fund,
- While this is happening, local officials continue to spend significant time trying to understand, explain and implement the education finance system,

VLCT recommends the creation of a new education finance system that takes into consideration both the Brigham decision and the lessons of the past 11 years. Local officials are willing to assist in the creation of a new system, provided that such efforts will be taken seriously by the administration and the legislature.”

The position is one borne of frustration with the current method, and a desire to see something new.

The Transportation Committee discussed the need to continue working on finding long-term, sustainable funding solutions for the state’s transportation infrastructure needs. The committee’s recommendations also include a number of calls for the federal and state rules and regulations associated with project management to be reexamined and amended so that projects can be done more efficiently for reduced cost.

Language specifically pushing for the protection of local highway program funding, especially Town Highway Aid, is also a recommended priority item.

Recommendations on health care, housing, environmental regulations, and land use policy are contained in the Quality of

Life and the Environment Committee’s section of the Municipal Policy. Among that committee’s recommendations is a significant slimming down of the health care section, as local officials watch the burgeoning federal debate with great interest. Health care costs – an ever-expanding percentage of municipal budgets – are never far from the minds of local officials.

Regional policing, a topic beginning to surface with greater frequency in conversations around the state, was discussed in detail by the Public Safety Committee. The supervision of offenders in the communities by the Department of Corrections is a perennial topic of interest, and it remains a prominent one in the 2010 proposed Municipal Policy.

For a copy of the proposed 2010 Municipal Policy, visit the Advocacy section of the VLCT website at [www.vlct.org](http://www.vlct.org) or call 1-800-649-7915.

Copies of the draft 2010 Municipal Policy should be arriving in members’ mailboxes in September. While amendments to the policy may be submitted until October, it is best to get them to us early so that they may be reviewed by staff and the board, and typed up if necessary. A form to use for suggesting amendments to the policy is included in the mailing. Amendments may also be offered from the floor at the annual meeting.

Be sure your town is represented at Town Fair and the annual meeting on October 1 in Barre. Every city and town in the state has a vote on the 2010 Municipal Policy.

*Trevor Lashua*

*Senior Associate, Advocacy and Information*

## TRIVIA

Hey, what happened? Last month, no one correctly answered that **Burke Mountain** is the more familiar name for the Vermont peak whose Native American name is “Long view in all directions.” Ah well.

This month’s question is aided by a documentary photograph.



**In the summer of 1985, a British team built a temporary 48x16-foot billboard somewhere in Vermont to photograph for an airline’s promotional calendar. Because it was dismantled within two weeks, it didn’t fly in the face of Vermont’s Billboard Law. Where was it erected?**

Email your answer to [dgunn@vlct.org](mailto:dgunn@vlct.org). Then watch this space in the surprisingly enlightening October issue for the answer.



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## VERMONT ECONOMY

(continued from page 1)

The consensus forecast was developed by the legislature's consulting economist, Tom Kavet of Williamstown, and the administration's expert, Jeff Carr of Essex. They expect the state's General Fund revenues to drop \$24.1 million below that expected earlier for this current fiscal year and another \$22.7 million in FY11 that begins on July 1, 2010. This will be added to the \$67.4 million projected state General Fund budget shortfall already expected at the end of FY11, according to figures prepared by the legislature's Joint Fiscal Office. Revenues destined for the state's other two funds – transportation and education – are not projected to do as poorly, though both are predicted to lose more revenue than what was projected in April.

The report states that *“economic conditions affecting State revenues continued to worsen during the past quarter, deepening and lengthening an economic contraction that ... has reached epic proportions. This downturn will clearly be more severe than any since the Great Depression, and whether characterized as a “great recession” or “near depression,” is far from over. Aside from the severity of the decline, the prospects for a quick or powerful recovery are dimmed by still dysfunctional credit markets, continued private sector deleveraging and self-reinforcing negative feedback loops from deteriorating labor markets.”* Specifically commenting on the Vermont economy, the report finds that:

- Though better off in many respects than some parts of the country, the Vermont economy is reeling from the effects of this recession, with year over year job losses likely to approach 13,000 in June and no quick end to the slowdown in sight. ... [T]he unemployment rate has soared, and ... is headed to a peak rate that could eventually top 9% in 2010.
- Of particular concern to future labor market conditions, initial claims for unemployment insurance in Vermont, which is a leading labor market indicator, remained at near record levels in May.... This does not suggest a quick reversal of the net job losses now impact-

ing the State – or support for income or consumption tax growth in FY10.

- Housing markets in Vermont and the U.S. also remain distressed – offering no clear sign they have reached their nadir in this cycle. Both single family and total housing starts in Vermont reached new record lows in May, and Vermont home prices registered their first aggregate year over year decline in the first quarter of 2009 (-1.2% on an FHFA basis).
- Housing prices in Vermont are likely to continue to drop for 5-7 quarters, before showing very modest growth for an extended period – much like the housing cycle experienced in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Although non-building construction (streets, highways, bridges, transmission lines, etc.) will benefit from federal stimulus funding and exhibit solid growth over the next two years, it will fall well short of the economic contribution represented by residential and non-residential construction, particularly in terms of the employment impacts per dollar of expenditure.

These points on the real estate market bode ill for municipal and state education property resources. Whereas the huge run-up in property values in the recent past (Vermont's education grand list grew by 55.5 percent over the six years between 2002 and 2008) has allowed local tax rates to remain constant or decline, declining property values will either mean increased tax rates or less revenue for municipalities and schools to spend (or maybe both) for the foreseeable future.

As we reported in the *VLCT Legislative Wrap-up*, the legislature shifted about \$23.2 million of state costs to the property tax through the Education Fund for this year and a comparable amount was expected next year, even before this recent revenue downgrade. As a result, the Education Fund reserve account is now projected to be below its statutory minimum of 3.5 percent by the end of this fiscal year. Combined with a 9 percent increase in property tax adjustments projected to be paid next year due to job losses and reduced family income, this

has the Joint Fiscal Office staff recommending that the education tax rates on home-steads and non-residential property each be raised by a penny for the coming year. If this comes to pass, it will be the first time these rates have risen since the passage of Act 68.

These reasons and the possibility of legislators feeling the need to shift more of the costs of state government to the Education Fund – and, thence, the property tax – drew the VLCT Board of Directors to the legislative meeting. In private conversations with individual legislative leaders on the committee, the local officials made clear that forcing them to raise property taxes to solve the state's fiscal woes was not an acceptable option. The Board has committed to working on this issue aggressively over the coming months.

Local officials need to be aware of the impact of the economy on not only their own communities and local budgets, but also the state's situation and the potential spill-over impact that will cause. VLCT will continue to provide you updated information on this topic throughout the year, and certainly when the legislature comes back to work in January.

The full report is available at [www.leg.state.vt.us/jfo/State%20Forecasts/2009-07%20July%20Forecast.pdf](http://www.leg.state.vt.us/jfo/State%20Forecasts/2009-07%20July%20Forecast.pdf)

Steve Jeffrey  
Executive Director, VLCT

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## MEET ME AT THE ZONING FAIR

On July 8, 2009, land use officials from around the state attended the Municipal Assistance Center's first Zoning Fair to discuss development application forms and procedures. Participants represented a wide range of experience and variety of skills. The Fair provided a forum where administrative officers (AOs) could sit together, exchange ideas, and work collectively to improve the administration of their local review process. Participants provided copies of their development review forms to VLCT, which are now available in our Resource Library, <http://resources.vlct.org/>.

The Fair began with a discussion of each administrative officer's role in his or her community. Most AOs provide support to one or both municipal land use boards in their towns to varying degrees, such as warning meetings and hearings, drafting appropriate municipal panel (AMP) decisions, determining whether applications are complete, and general administrative assistance. Surprisingly, many fulfill their duties as part-time employees of the town, including one individual who volunteers his time as the administrative officer.

We also noted that Vermont law does not prescribe the form or content of development applications, submission process or requirements. It is up to individual municipalities to define procedures and create documents that result in efficient administration of the land use program. The devil is, of course, in these details, and many recently appointed AOs said they inherited forms that needlessly complicated the development review process for both staff and applicants.

“...Vermont law does not prescribe the form or content of development applications, submission process or requirements. It is up to individual municipalities to define procedures and create documents that result in efficient administration of the land use program.”

Some common problems included confusing instructions, requests for information that could not be adequately addressed on

an application form, and requests for irrelevant or duplicate information. Participants noted that the plans themselves contained a substantial amount of information (e.g. setbacks, lot size and coverage) and questioned the benefit of requiring that this information be on the form as well. Sometimes, providing the information on a plan and a form resulted in contradictory information, which if not caught, led to difficulty in enforcing a permit.

Another common occurrence was placing the burden on applicants to provide information that should be the responsibility of the AO, such as zoning district or flood plain determinations and required requisite reviews. According to Vermont law (24 V.S.A. § 4448 (d)), the AO determines what requisite reviews are necessary, and bylaws likely place district designation with the AO. A better practice is to include this information in a section clearly indicated “for office use only,” along with fields for date received, payment received, and application number.

*(continued on next page)*

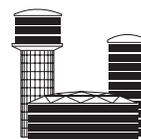
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## ZONING FAIR

(continued from previous page)

The size of a municipality and its development review bylaws may also dictate what information is necessary on the form. The group noted that an urban municipality could request setback information on a zoning permit application – most lots are rectangular. However, rural towns are more likely to have large, irregularly shaped lots, and this information could be clearly depicted on a plan. Some local land use regulations allow an AO to approve a “minor subdivision” (defined by the bylaw) the first time one is requested. Subsequent subdivision requests on the same parcel may require requisite review

by an AMP. Therefore, tracking this information on a form is important and instructs the AO how to treat future requests.

In many municipalities, the permit application form also serves as the issued “municipal land use permit.” This may lead to documents that do not reflect the approved project or unnecessary information being recorded in the land records. Attendees agreed that a better practice is to have separate documents – an application form and a separate permit – so that the document recorded in the land records succinctly and accurately reflects what was approved.

After reviewing a few application forms, the group arrived at some best practices for what zoning permit application forms should at a minimum include:

- name and contact information of property owner;
- name and contact information of applicant;
- physical address of subject property;
- location for signatures (landowner signature if required by the bylaws); and
- contact information for the administrative officer.

Information in a “for office use only” section could include:

- zoning district designation;
- type of prerequisite review required;
- date received and date determined to be complete; and
- a docketing or tracking number.

Of course, a request for information does not end with a simple form answering who, what, and where. Your bylaws dictate what, if any, additional information is necessary, and it follows that more complex applications will require more information. Checklists that correspond to maps, studies, and other information required by the bylaws, in addition to a simple application form, could be a “double check” that the application includes all the necessary information before scheduling a hearing before the AMP. The diversity of responsibility bestowed on AOs in administering the application process and the degree of complexity of municipal land use regulations will dictate forms and process.

Hinesburg is an example of a community that uses one application form for development review. Depending on the type of requisite review, the AO then distributes the applicable checklist (subdivision, conditional use, or site plan) describing what additional documentation must be submitted along with the application form.

Most Fair attendees found it helpful to confer with others who hold the same position in local government and who struggle with similar issues. They, and we, look forward to the discussion of more ideas in future MAC-sponsored land use workshops.

*Stephanie Smith (AICP), Senior Associate  
VLCT Municipal Assistance Center*

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## NEWS TO USE

### HEALTH TRUST MEMBERS WITH NEWLY NON-DEPENDENT CHILDREN

Health Trust subscribers with children ages 19 to 25 who are no longer eligible as dependents under your health coverage, please note: If your children live in Vermont, Green Mountain Care may have other coverage options available without the typical 12-month waiting period. Green Mountain Care administers low-cost and free coverage programs for the state including Catamount Health, VHAP, Dr. Dynasaur, and others. Even if former dependents find employment which offers health care, they may receive assistance in paying their portion of premiums. Contact Green Mountain Care at 1-800-250-8427 or [www.GreenMountain-Care.org](http://www.GreenMountain-Care.org) for additional information.

### QUARTERLY C101 HEALTH CARE CONTRIBUTION FTE CHANGE

All employers are required to report wages to the Vermont Department of Labor on the quarterly C101 reports, also known as the Employer's Quarterly Wage and Contribution Reports. Also required on this report are any health care contributions (HCCs) due from the employer based on the employer's FTEs (full-time equivalents) as calculated on the employer's HCC worksheet and entered on lines 16-18 of the report. Since Vermont initiated this mandatory HCC reporting, the state has allowed employer FTE exemptions which employers may subtract from their totals. From October 1, 2008 to June 30, 2009, the exemption was six FTEs. Please note that with the third quarter C101 report for 2009 (the period

from 7/1/09 to 9/30/09), the FTE exemption has changed from six to four, and it will remain at four indefinitely. Therefore, if your group has a total of more than four FTEs, you are required to pay your health care contribution portion as detailed on the worksheet provided by the state.

If you have any questions regarding Vermont's health care contribution reporting requirements, please contact the Vermont Department of Labor at 802-828-4344. You may also contact Kelley Avery, VLCT's Benefit Program Administrator, at 800-649-7915 for assistance.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Designated Employer Representative (DER) Trainings.** 8:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon, two Tuesdays and seven Thursdays in July and August at the locations listed below. For each half-day course, Louise Sylvain of ParaMed Plus will train DERs for their role in facilitating drug and alcohol testing of those employees whose job requires them to have a CDL. Registration forms will be mailed in June to PACIF members and to non-PACIF Drug and Alcohol members of record. Others interested in the training should contact Shawna O'Neill at 802-229-9111 or [sonell@vlct.org](mailto:sonell@vlct.org).

**Thursday, August 6**  
Windham Solid Waste Management District  
327 Old Ferry Road, Brattleboro

**Thursday, August 20**  
Bennington Fire Station  
130 River Street, Bennington

**Thursday, August 13**  
Rutland City Waste Water Facility  
10 Green Hill Lane, Rutland

**Thursday, August 27**  
Hartford Municipal Office  
171 Bridge Street, White River Junction

**Safety from A to Z for Supervisors, Team Leaders and Safety Teams and Committees.** 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. (lunch and breaks included), Friday, September 25. Asa Bloomer State Office Building, Rutland. Sponsored by Vermont Safety & Health Council (VSHC). Topics may include safety leadership, inspections, investigations, JSAs, ergonomics, training, LOTO and machine guarding, chemical safety, and emergency preparedness. \$75 VSHC members; \$100 non-members. Information: VSHC President Pauline Singley, [paulinesingley@myfairpoint.net](mailto:paulinesingley@myfairpoint.net) or 802-352-4427. Registration: Rob Towle, [rtowle@reynoldsandson.com](mailto:rtowle@reynoldsandson.com) or 802-775-4906.

**Local Officials Golf Outing (LOGO).** Wednesday, September 30. Barre Country Club. The ever popular golf tournament is back, in conjunction with Town Fair. Please contact Ken Canning at VLCT ([kcanning@vlct.org](mailto:kcanning@vlct.org)) for more information or to sponsor this event.

**Vermont Safety and Health Council Fall Expo.** Thursday October 8. Lake Morey Inn and Resort, Fairlee. Learn more at VSHC's website, [www.vshc.org](http://www.vshc.org).

**Flu Shot Clinics.** Various times and locations in October and early November, sponsored by a grant from CIGNA and hosted by Health Trust members for their participants. Find the complete schedule at [www.vlct.org/insurancerriskservices/programs/wellnessinitiatives/](http://www.vlct.org/insurancerriskservices/programs/wellnessinitiatives/).

# MENT SERVICES

## SPOTLIGHT ON SAFETY: STOWE

[Editor's note: An intermittent series, Spotlight on Safety, is taking shape in these pages. Two issues ago, we shone the light on Winooski for inviting VLCT and OSHA trainers to present an all-day training on various safety-related issues. Here, we offer a look at Stowe's initiative in spearheading safety-mindedness throughout its operations.]

On the second Thursday of every month, always at the same time and place, the new Stowe Safety Committee convenes. For an hour, representatives from every work area in the municipality consider safety-related events that have occurred since the previous meeting. They read reports of injuries and near-misses and discuss tactics for preventing recurrences, they learn the status of plans to assess and correct unsafe situations, they hear about any safety trainings that were completed by employees, and, most important, they recommend specific new safety procedures to the town manager. The representatives are from all levels of the

organization and are appointed to the committee by their department heads; the police and electrical unions can each provide an additional representative. The town manager and the presidents of the Stowe Police Officer's Association and IBEW Local 300 respectively may attend any meeting. Susanne Gann, Stowe's HR Coordinator, chairs the meetings and prepares and distributes each meeting's agenda in advance and the official minutes afterward.

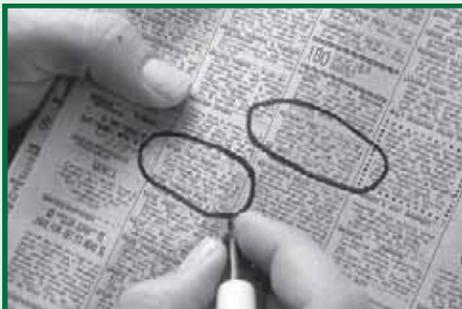
"We helped them get started by providing a lot of samples and reference materials they could use, and I have gone to most of their meetings to help them learn exactly what to do, but they have shown great interest and energy," says Chris LaBerge, VLCT Senior Loss Control Consultant.

Chris sees Susanne and Stowe's Town Manager, Charles Safford, as an effective team working in the town's favor: Susanne's work is hands-on – she is closely involved with every aspect of the committee's meetings. Charles keeps himself fully apprised of the committee's activities but chooses not to attend meetings – unless he will be specifically needed – so committee members will speak openly and consider all problems and solutions as thoroughly as necessary. The Stowe Selectboard's policy on safety and wellness gives the town manager overall responsibility for municipal loss control efforts, and Charles takes the committee's recommendations very seriously.

*(continued on next page)*

### EMPLOYER GUIDEBOOK TO REDUCE TRAFFIC CRASHES

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), and Network of Employers for Traffic Safety (NETS) have joined forces to create *Guidelines for Employers to Reduce Motor Vehicle Crashes*. This booklet includes a worksheet for calculating your municipality's total cost of vehicle accidents and features a 10-step program to help improve traffic safety performance and minimize the risk of motor vehicle crashes. To receive your guide, contact Norman James, Manager, Project Road-Safe, Vermont Department of Labor at 802-828-4172 or [norman.james@state.vt.us](mailto:norman.james@state.vt.us).



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## SAFETY SPOTLIGHT

(continued from previous page)

What got all of this started? High workers' compensation claim rates in the past four years. These have given Stowe a higher than average experience modification factor, resulting in the town's current high contribution rates. Charles and Susanne learned all about it when they met last winter with Chris and two of VLCT's Risk Management Services managers, John Condon (Underwriting), and Joe Damiata (Safety and Health Promotion). Although John and Joe had a lot of sobering information to report, the three also presented a range of solutions, including the idea of forming a safety committee to review and help address safety issues.

But meetings alone won't solve the problems: people have to be committed to changing the status quo. Stowe has an excellent head start in its town manager. Charles has made it one of his personal goals to reduce the town's experience modification factor, so he is working to have a new safety consciousness permeate all levels and areas

of Stowe government. Joe agrees with this logic: while the people closest to the work know best what they are up against, buy-in and support must come from management to get changes to stick. The most effective safety committees involve employees of various levels, so good ideas can be raised, developed, and implemented.

“Even if our safety effort doesn't result in financial savings, it will have been worth it if we prevent even one injury. I would rather spend money up front on prevention than later on contributions due to high loss experience, and VLCT PACIF actively supports this philosophy.”

— Charles Safford, Town Manager, Stowe

Stowe's Safety Committee is still young (its first meeting was in April) so Chris will continue to attend many of its meetings. He has been busy so far with answering loss control questions and teaching committee

members what to look for in evaluating potentially unsafe situations. The committee is already developing a plan for a program of department-by-department safety inspections. Chris will be actively involved with the first one or two, and the committee will take the inspections from there. Who knows exactly what else the safety committee will turn its attention to and in what ways it will continue to serve the employees of Stowe? “Everything is still so new that we don't have a clear system yet, but the overall goals – reducing workplace injuries and having a staff that is better off and happier – won't change,” says Susanne.

Ione L. Minot,  
Contributing Writer, VLCT News

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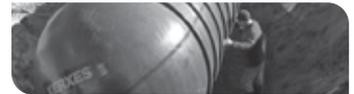
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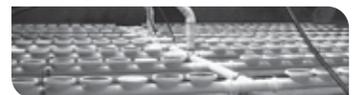
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# TEACHING AN OLD LOG NEW TRICKS

This past April and May, wooded areas near four Vermont municipalities were serenaded by the whine of chain saws while some 40 PACIF participants took a two-day safety course called The Game of Logging (GOL). Not your average chain saw training, this course introduces even seasoned woodsmen to a level of planning, precise cutting, and controlled felling that they might never encounter otherwise. The training is newly offered by PACIF, but the GOL fundamentals were established in Sweden in the 1960s.

Many aspects of chain saw use are the same whether you use “old school” or GOL techniques: hand position and body stance while sawing, wearing safety gear (steel-toed boots, chaps, a hard hat, and ear and eye protection), making sure no bystanders are in harm’s way, checking and maintaining the saw, sharpening the blade, and dealing with limbs that are under tension. PACIF’s GOL training covered all of these – and then some.

The main feature of the GOL technique is in felling trees. Briefly, the “old way” uses the side of the chain saw bar, cutting a narrow V-shaped notch more than halfway through the front of the trunk (where you want the tree to fall), then cutting in level

“The Game of Logging methods take a lot of the uncertainty and fear out of cutting down trees. When you’ve done your scouting and you’ve measured, you are much more confident that the tree will land where you want it to. All of our trees landed within a foot of the flagging tape.”

— John Condon, Manager, Underwriting, VLCT

from the back until only a thin “hinge” remains and the tree is ready to break, and last quickly getting at least a few feet away before the tree falls. Hopefully it falls where you intended; there is little time between the back cut and your retreat, and the actual direction in which the tree falls can change in the last moments.

Felling a tree in GOL involves a shallower, wider notch at the front and more detailed, pre-planned work – using what is called a “plunge cut” – in the back. In addition to the hinge, the GOL technique leaves a “trigger”, a small area that the cutter does

not saw through until he (or she – which of our readers will be the first woman to take this class?) has paused, stepped back, looked to make sure that no one is in the felling area, and reviewed his retreat path. He can take minutes, if necessary, before he resumes his cutting position, cuts (“releases”) the trigger, and retreats. This is especially important because 85 percent of logging fatalities occur within 12 feet of the trunk: having time to get at least that far away before the tree falls increases the cutter’s safety rate significantly. Using the GOL technique, the final cut is a

*(continued on next page)*

**Stu Johnson**, the Road Commissioner of Cornwall, attended forestry school 35 years ago and has been using chain saws ever since. Stu took the two-day PACIF course because he wanted to better understand the GOL principles and to practice the techniques that he had been introduced to in a one-day course offered through Vermont Local Roads. At the PACIF training, he asked a lot of pointed questions and thought through the answers thoroughly.

“I highly recommend GOL for anyone who has to cut trees. It is excellent, especially for harder trees, and I fully appreciate the safety advantages of this technique – of being in more control of the tree. The concepts are certainly hard for old-school guys like me to understand, and using the GOL strategy and technique is slow if you’re set in the old ways, but the two-day course with hands-on practice helped me a lot. I know I’ll get better and faster as I get to do it more.”

Several people in Stu’s class were so eager about the GOL approach that they recommended that PACIF sponsor the third day of the course – which deals with difficult (e.g. leaning) trees, roadside work, and storm damage. While PACIF is strongly considering doing that, Stu Johnson says “Even if towns have to pay for it themselves, it’ll be worth the money.” That’s high praise from an old-school skeptic with years of experience in municipal government as well as in the woods.



*Plunge cuts (note the saw plunged into the stump, left) are essential to the GOL technique. The specially prepared stump (right) allows the instructor to add points for each student whose plunge cut is level and properly positioned.*



## OLD LOG NEW TRICKS

*(continued from previous page)*

mere nick to release the trigger, and the cutter has time to get a safe 12 feet away while the tree starts to fall.

How does the Game part come in? Two ways: devising a winning strategy for felling trees while working safely (man vs. surroundings), and the friendly competition that is incorporated in the training (man vs. man).

1. A winning strategy is applied through all levels of operation, from keeping the saw teeth optimally sharp to determining exactly where the top of a tree should land and using calculations (and, if necessary, wedges) to put it there. Developing a felling plan takes more time than with “old school” cutting, but experienced GOL loggers agree that you get faster at it with time, and it more than pays off in tidier work and fewer injuries.
2. The competition involves a point system: adding for good technique and accuracy, and subtracting for safety violations. After having a clear explanation of what to do, each student gets hands-on experience while the others watch carefully. His actions and results are then evaluated by the trainer and discussed by the group. This way, everyone learns from each other’s mistakes, and they all see how their scores compare. At the end of the training, the top scorer gets a Game of Logging t-shirt and bragging rights.

“ **This course’s true strength is its explicit rules for discipline and focus, and rewarding the use of these rules in the scoring system.** ”

— *Ed Stewart, Co-Founder and Member, Stowe Mountain Rescue Team*

The PACIF-sponsored GOL course is specifically designed for road crews and other municipal workers. With only eight to 12 participants in each two-day class, everyone

has time to have hands-on practice in the major skill areas and receive specific feedback from the instructor. Based on the success of

the course this year, PACIF will offer it for years to come.

*Ione L. Minot,  
Contributing Writer, VLCT News*



*Instructor Allen Sands “reads the stump” to evaluate the quality of a student’s cut, then notes the results – up to two points for each of five criteria – on his score sheet.*



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## HISTORY MYSTERY

All of Chittenden County towns' historical societies plus interested citizens are celebrating a free "History Mystery" quadricentennial event during the month of August. Brochures containing clues in riddle form will be available at selected locations such as town hall, libraries, farmers' markets, historical society meeting sites, and senior citizens meetings throughout Chittenden County. There are 18 riddles, one for each town in Chittenden County plus Buel's Gore. "History detectives" must visit each town to solve the riddles.

Here, for example, is the riddle for Buel's Gore:  
Shaped like a triangle in the southeast corner of the county  
With more antlered than human residents in this community  
There are no schools, churches, police or firemen on duty  
Rugged and forested on Route 17, a place of natural beauty.  
What do the locals call Route 17?  
M \_ C \_ \_ L \_ \_ \_ \_ T \_ \_ \_ \_ \_

And here's Westford's:  
Shiver me timbers, it took a long time,  
New decking, a roof, and abutments remind,  
Nevermore does Westford have to sigh at its sight  
And ponder about this structure's plight.  
T \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ E \_ \_ \_ \_ I \_ \_ \_

The deadline to submit brochures with the riddles answered is September 1. Entries with all correct answers will be entered in a drawing for one of 18 prizes to be held September 27. Prizes reflect their Chittenden County origins. For more information, call Ginger Isham at 802-878-4875 or email her at [Ishvrg@aol.com](mailto:Ishvrg@aol.com).

## LISTEN HERE! FREE PODCASTS ON HEALTH AND WELLNESS

CIGNA Healthcare has launched a series of podcasts to help people learn about health, wellness, and how to use their health care plan. The extensive audio library resides at [Istimetofeelbetter.com](http://Istimetofeelbetter.com) and is available to everyone, not just Health Trust subscribers. Combining the strengths of CIGNA and Healthwise – a respected non-profit health information company – Istimetofeelbetter.com is an interactive health education website that offers a variety of resources, including hundreds of podcasts from CIGNA's clinical experts.

It takes a few clicks to get to the podcasts. From the Istimetofeelbetter.com home page, click on the "... to be in good health" tab, then, under any topic you like, click on Learn More. In the box on the right, look for Audio Articles and click on either English or Espanol. When you are in the Audio Library, click on any underlined topic and scroll through the list on the right to choose a podcast to listen to or download.

Podcast topics include various conditions and diseases, how to sleep better, workout tips, tips for children's oral health, how to use information on quality and cost to select a health professional, and information on the health care industry. This library will continue to grow as CIGNA taps its expert staff – leaders in many clinical fields ranging from exercise physiology to dentistry. Each month, CIGNA will add new podcasts full of timely information that people can use in their everyday lives.



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# VLCT STAFF NEWS AND NOTES

VLCT welcomes **Elizabeth Harrington** as our new Research and Information Assistant in the Municipal Assistance Center. Liz has many years of legal experience – she worked for nearly 10 years for the Vermont Judiciary, including Rutland District and Family Courts, the Court Administrator’s Office, and the Vermont Supreme Court. She also worked for Vermont Law School and a law firm in Montpelier.



*Liz Harrington*

In 2006, Liz was a “seat filler” at the 78th Academy Awards. A seat filler’s job is to slip into the vacated seat of an Oscar winner when he or she leaves to claim an award. Thus, the theater always looks full when the TV cameras scan the audience. Some seat fillers also get to stroll up and down the red carpet that leads to the theater entrance so the walkway has the appearance of constant traffic. Liz’s ability to perform this job with panache and efficiency will surely assist her in her MAC duties.

Liz grew up on Cape Cod where her father, a psychologist, and her mother, a psychotherapist, advocated hypnotizing lobsters before boiling them. Now she lives in Montpelier with her partner and three hockey-playing sons. Liz is excited to be at VLCT and anticipates working here until retirement.

**Chelsea St. Amour** is our new part-time receptionist. Since June, she has been the friendly voice you hear when you call the office on Thursdays and Fridays. Before joining VLCT, Chelsea was lead expeditor with Power and Telephone Supply in Bethel. She also has five years of sales and marketing experience with Fiori Bridal Boutique in Essex. Currently enrolled at Johnson State as a marketing major, Chelsea expects to graduate this fall. She also owns an organic products

company (shampoo, lotion, soap, etc.) called Little Turtle Organics. Chelsea, her husband, and baby boy live in West Brookfield.



*Chelsea St. Amour*

Chelsea consented to answering a few more personal questions:

VLCTN:

Have you ever wanted to design a roller coaster?

CSA:

No, I’m terrified of heights!

VLCTN:

What are your least favorite colors?

CSA:

Orange and lilac.

VLCTN:

Is your company called Little Turtle Organics because you use parts of the turtle’s carapace in any of your products?

CSA:

It’s called Little Turtle because I thought about my son who is still so little his movements are like a baby turtle. I also picked it because turtles are green, and my products try to be as environmentally friendly as possible. So no, no turtles are harmed in the making of my shampoo.

Excellent responses, every one of them. So you can see she’s ready to answer *any* questions her callers toss her way.

Since January, VLCT’s own Sonia Rivera, Roxanne Pike, and Amanda Moshinski have worked the front desk and the various duties that that position entails. Amanda completed her degree in Accounting and moved on to a permanent full-time position in the Finance Department. Sonia and Roxanne will continue to be the front desk superstars Monday through Wednesday (while also working in our Human Resources and Production departments, respectively). So you’ll always get a friendly, knowledgeable person on the line. If for any reason no one is available to answer the phone, you will be greeted by VLCT’s automated system. You can access the staff directory by dialing 5 as soon as you hear our greeting. General messages will always be forwarded as soon as possible. If you have any questions regarding VLCT’s switchboard, please contact Jessica Hill, Manager, Administrative Services, at [jhill@vlct.org](mailto:jhill@vlct.org).

So, let’s see, welcome Liz and Chelsea, thanks a bundle, Sonia and Roxanne, and well done, Amanda!

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**Pronunciation:** 'E-zee

**Function:** adjective

**Inflected Form(s):** eas·i·er; -est

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# Classifieds

Please visit the VLCT website to view more classified ads: [www.vlct.org/marketplace/classifiedads/](http://www.vlct.org/marketplace/classifiedads/). You may also submit your ad via an email link on this page of the site.

## VLCT NEWS 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 \$41 per ad.

Classified ads are generally limited to 150 words and run for one issue. These ads are also placed on the VLCT website for up to one month.

The *VLCT News* is published eleven times per year (the August and September issues are combined) and reaches readers during the first week of the month.

The copy deadline for advertisements is the first Friday of the month prior to the issue date. Space is sometimes available for late additions; please feel free to check with the editor for availability.

For more information on placing classified ads in the *VLCT News*, contact [classifieds@vlct.org](mailto:classifieds@vlct.org). For details on display or municipal marketplace advertising, email [vlctnews@vlct.org](mailto:vlctnews@vlct.org). Instructions for ad requirements may also be downloaded at [www.vlct.org/aboutvlct/vlctnewsletter/advertisinginformation/](http://www.vlct.org/aboutvlct/vlctnewsletter/advertisinginformation/).

## HELP WANTED

**Underwriting Manager.** VLCT's mission to serve and strengthen Vermont local governments makes all the difference in our work! Our property, casualty and workers' compensation insurance trust (PACIF) is self-insured and our work culture is based on service and member retention rather than profit-driven pressures. If this sounds like a change you'd welcome, we'd love to learn more about your underwriting back-

ground. We seek a seasoned underwriting professional to manage all aspects of the underwriting division who is willing to roll up his/her sleeves to provide direct service to larger or more complex members and others when needed. The position supervises a stellar staff of three. Responsibilities include: helping implement new underwriting software, developing new services and products; preparing an annual business plan; managing the Underwriting Division's budget; updating and maintaining underwriting standards, rates, and manuals; approving workers' comp. audits; overseeing the renewal process; and providing new member quotes. Must be willing to travel (mostly within Vermont) and attend night meetings when required. Requirements: Bachelor's degree (or equivalent experience) in related field plus at least ten years of insurance industry or risk pooling experience, CPCU and ARM-P designations, supervisory/management experience and a working knowledge of pooling concept of insurance preferred. Excellent communication, analytical and presentation skills are needed. We offer a quality workplace with dedicated colleagues and an excellent total compensation package including defined benefit and defined contribution plan choices with up to 12.1% total employer contribution, long-term care insurance, choice of two health plans and more. Please submit cover letter, resume, and contact information for three references to [jobsearch@vlct.org](mailto:jobsearch@vlct.org) with Underwriting Manager as subject. E.O.E. (7-21)

**Police Officer.** The Town of Castleton is currently seeking experienced, full-time certified applicants for the position of Police Officer. This position is part of the Local 1201, Council 93, AFSCME, and works under the direct supervision of the police chief. The Officer performs duties as required by departmental policy and Vermont state law and participates in required training. Benefits includes health, dental, life, vision, retirement, vacation, sick leave, and personal time. To apply, send letter of application and resume **by September 15, 2009** to Charles Jacien, Town Manager, PO Box 727, Castleton, VT 05735. You may also hand-deliver it to 556 Main Street in Castleton. E.O.E. (7-16)

### Comptroller, State of New Hampshire.

The ideal candidate will be confident and self-motivated, a passionate leader with strong financial skills and the ability to simplify things in layman's terms. He/she will be patient, insightful, knowledgeable, and credible, and be able to deal with adversity and diversity. The ability to coach/mentor, roll up your sleeves, and hit the road running and multi-task are essential. Communication skills are critical, as the Comptroller will be required to testify at hearings and speak in the public arena. This opportunity is perfect for the person who enjoys a challenge, wants an opportunity to make a difference, and where the challenges and rewards are great. Requirements: experience with GAAP and GASB; CPA (MBA preferred); ten years experience in public financial management and reporting; strong leadership skills; and a demonstrated financial management and confidence in one's ability. Email [len@snowdenassociates.com](mailto:len@snowdenassociates.com) or telephone 603-431-1553. (7-2)

**Town Administrator.** The town of Rockport, Mass. is seeking a Town Administrator. Rockport is located on the tip of Cape Ann next to Gloucester, 40 miles north of Boston. It has a year-round population of 7,700 which doubles in the summer tourist season. The town is governed by a 5-member Board of Selectmen and has an open Town Meeting form of government. Rockport has a \$23.4 million operating budget, an AAA Standard & Poor's bond rating and, like all Massachusetts municipalities, is financially stressed. Excluding 142 full-time school employees, it has on staff 75 full-time employees and 166 part-time employees, including volunteer firemen, EMTs, elected officials, DPW and library workers, and seasonal employees. An additional nearly 300 volunteers are members of town boards, commissions and committees. The town administrator has an office staff of 1½ persons. Requirements: at least 3 years of direct municipal administrative experience in a New England type of open town meeting form of government, preferably but not exclusively in Massachusetts; relevant administrative

*(continued on page 23)*



## VLCT UI TRUST

(continued from page 6)

rates, and the current economic downturn is increasing the number of claims drawing from it. In contrast, the UI Trust's fund is in fine shape because it is run according to fiscally conservative principles: contributions to it are determined annually using a formula that involves the state base wage, the claims history of Trust members, and the potential for a year of particularly high claims.

Recent legislation enacts various changes to reduce the depletion of the state fund. One change involves the "base wage," the amount of each employee's annual income on which the state calculates its unemploy-

ment insurance premiums. The base wage of \$8,000 was set in 1982 and was not adjusted to keep pace with real wages until this year, when it is being raised to \$10,000. This amounts to a very sudden increase of 25 percent which will certainly be felt by "taxable" employers. Moreover, the base wage increase will be compounded in coming months by an additional rise in the state's unemployment tax premium rates. On the other side of the equation, the state capped the maximum benefit that any one claimant can receive at \$425 per week. Even with all of these measures, the legislature, acknowledging the need for more change, set up a study committee to comprehensively consider all issues that affect the solvency of the Vermont unemployment fund and to develop recom-

mendations for reforms to reestablish and to assure the state fund's long-term solvency.

Meanwhile, the UI Trust funding model is such that, all other things being equal, the recent base wage increase will be offset by a reduction in premiums. These premiums will have to rise when claims among members increase, as claims inevitably will before the current job market improves. Even so, the fact that the UI Trust's funding formula accounts for a high-claims year will help buffer the impact of increased premiums. And, of course, the generally low turnover of municipal employees always puts members at a statistical advantage when they pool their risk with municipal employers rather than joining the statewide unemployment pool.

*Dave Sichel, Deputy Director,  
Risk Management Services, VLCT*



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## A CORRECTION

In the July issue's article about Vermont summer activities ("What d'ya want to do this weekend?"), I mentioned a crop circle conference to be held in Bolton in late October. Right time of year, however it occurred last year. Fortunately for all of you cereologists, an Earth Spirit Conference is scheduled for November 6-8 (2009) in Shelburne that will include "lessons from the crop circles ..." Honest.



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## CLASSIFIEDS

(continued from page 21)

or supervisory capacity within the public sector that demonstrates successful work history in the areas covered in the position description; a Bachelor's degree, preferably in public administration or a related field (Master's in public administration desired); strong and demonstrably successful people skills when working for the governing Board of Selectmen, an informed and involved citizenry, and with a committed cadre of town staff and volunteers; strong, broad analytical skills and municipal financial and budgetary skills; demonstrated success in project management, including grants procurement, collective bargaining, conflict resolution and Massachusetts municipal law. A willingness to relocate is desirable, but not required. A detailed position description is available on the town's website, [www.townofrockport.com](http://www.townofrockport.com). Starting salary, \$90,000 to \$105,000, with benefits, DOE. To apply, please email a cover letter and resume by **August 27, 2009**, to

[rockporttownadministratorssearchcommittee@town.rockport.ma.us](mailto:rockporttownadministratorssearchcommittee@town.rockport.ma.us). We recommend you use a private email address as confirmation of receipt of an application. Any additional correspondence will be by email. For additional information about Rockport, visit the Town's website, or call (978) 546-6786. (7-30)

**Town Manager.** The Town of Islesboro, Maine seeks to fill the position of Town Manager. Located in Penobscot Bay, Islesboro is a full service island community with a Selectman/Town Meeting/Town Manager form of government and a budget of \$3 million, excluding schools. Its permanent population of 600 increases seasonally to 2,500. The Board seeks an individual with strong financial management and budgeting skills, personnel management experience, computer ability, strong communication skills, strong administrative, leadership and managerial ability, and education and training in municipal management or a related field. Candidates with comparable experience are encouraged to apply. Salary negotiable based upon experience and training. To

apply, send resume, cover letter, and salary history by **August 28, 2009** to Director of Personnel Services, Maine Municipal Association, 60 Community Drive, Augusta, ME 04330. You may also email your application to [HumanResource@memun.org](mailto:HumanResource@memun.org). Islesboro is an Equal Opportunity Employer. (7-28)

## FOR SALE

**Fire Trucks.** The Town of Bethel is retiring two fire trucks: a 1954 General Pumper (vintage), and a 1981 Chevrolet 3500 4x4 with aluminum box body and 454 engine (originally used as Type 1 ambulance). Sold in "as is" condition with no warranty whatsoever. Call 802-234-9340 for more information or to schedule an appointment to see the vehicles. Trucks sold individually. Submit bid(s) in sealed envelope clearly marked Fire Truck Bid(s) **by August 27, 2009** to Bethel Town Office, 134 South Main Street, Bethel, VT 05032. The Town reserves the right to reject any or all bids deemed to not be in the best interest of the Town. (7-2)



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## Calendar

*For more information about the following workshops or events, please contact Jessica Hill, Manager, VLCT Administrative Services, tel. (800) 649-7915; email [jhill@vlct.org](mailto:jhill@vlct.org). Or visit [www.vlct.org](http://www.vlct.org)'s Events Calendar and select a workshop for more information or to register online. For non-VLCT events listed below, please contact the individuals directly. (The online registration option is available for VLCT workshops and events only.)*

### Designated Employer Representative

**(DER) Training 101.** Offered at various locations around the state. This new course is designed to help employers comply with mandatory federal regulations on the drug and alcohol testing of CDL drivers. For complete details and a site near you, please visit [www.vlct.org/eventscalendar/](http://www.vlct.org/eventscalendar/).

### Managing Stormwater through Low Impact Development (LID) Techniques – a Primer for Planning and Zoning

**Officials.** Thursday, September 17, 2009. Sponsored by the VLCT Municipal Assistance Center and your local Regional Planning Commission. Delivered in the evening via interactive television, this workshop will focus on a new trend in stormwater management, low impact development (LID). LID stormwater management employs practices and design approaches that maintain natural drainage patterns and retain more stormwater on site as an alternative to conventional costly infrastructure. After a brief overview describing the science behind how LID works, professionals in the field will discuss innovative stormwater systems using LID and how to incorporate language into your town's regulatory documents.

### Town Fair Local Officials Golf Outing

**(LOGO).** Wednesday, September 30. Barre Country Club. The ever popular golf tournament is back in conjunction with Town Fair. Registration materials will be included in your Town Fair packet. Please contact Ken Canning at VLCT

([kcanning@vlct.org](mailto:kcanning@vlct.org)) for more information or to sponsor this event.

**Town Fair 2009.** Mark your calendar for Thursday, October 1! This year's Town Fair returns to the Barre Municipal Civic Center. Registration materials will be sent out in late July.

**Cash Management: Banking and Investments.** This regional workshop will be offered on October 6 at the Hartford Town Offices and October 8 at the Milton Town Offices to better meet the needs of our members.

**Contracting for Municipal Projects.** October 13, 2009. Capitol Plaza Hotel, Montpelier. Sponsored by the VLCT Municipal Assistance Center.

**Budget and Financial Management.** October 28, 2009. Capitol Plaza Hotel, Montpelier. Sponsored by the VLCT Municipal Assistance Center.

The 2009 Workshop Calendar will be mailed soon and includes a whole array of training to suit all of your needs!