

Dave Sichel Retires

In 1978, a young man – whose name, if we mentioned it, you’d probably recognize – began his career in local government in Delaware, Ohio. (That’s a city north of Columbus, not an atypical merging of two states.)

Four years later, David Sichel (See? You did recognize it!) packed his bags, rented a truck, and headed to the Town of Brattleboro, Vermont, which had hired him to be the Assistant Town Manager and Town Planner. Even though the rental truck inauspiciously ran out of gas just short of Brattleboro, he spent the next six years there, where his resume would also expand to include Finance Director.

During that time, a hard insurance market swept the country. In Vermont, there was little competition among insurance carriers, underwriting criteria became more stringent, insurance premiums skyrocketed, and some carriers simply chose not to renew municipalities’ policies. Despite Brattleboro’s good loss history, Dave was having trouble finding affordable insurance for the town. Instead of struggling alone, he called the Vermont League of Cities and Towns to ask for assistance. His understanding of the insurance market prompted VLCT, which had been receiving many such calls from its members, to invite Dave to serve on a committee tasked with figuring out a solution. That solution was the founding, in 1986, of VLCT PACIF (originally as the Property and Casualty Insurance Fund; in 1992 “insurance” was replaced with “intermunicipal” to suit a new regulation), which initially provided liability and property coverage to 27 municipalities. Dave was on the founding board of directors until 1988, when PACIF had grown enough to need a field representative. Dave applied for the job, was hired, and began working for VLCT in October of that year.

Dave has had several job titles at the League, all in its insurance arm: Director of Risk Management and Field Services, Deputy Director of Group Services for External Affairs and Planning, Deputy Director and then Director of Group Services, and, most recently, Deputy Director of Risk Management Services. But the titles alone don’t explain the myriad ways that he has helped to develop and maintain VLCT’s insurance pools. In PACIF’s early days, Dave helped Risk Services Director Tom LoPizzo keep the fledgling fund running reliably in its reinsurance arrangements with major carriers. Together, they devised a workable strategy to add workers’ compensation coverage at a lower price than commercial carriers were offering

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Dave's self-effacing style belies how readily he handled whatever has been required of him. For years, he single-handedly performed all of PACIF's underwriting calculations and recorded them on large green ledger sheets; later, he transferred the paper system into Excel spreadsheets. He was involved in the decision to hire in-house claims adjusters — a change that nearly doubled the number of VLCT staff members in a matter of months. He devised the various health insurance plans that were available through the VLCT Health Trust, and he joined the lobbying arm of VLCT to advocate for the trusts's workers' compensation and health insurance concerns before the Vermont Legislature. When it became clear that Vermont's implementation of the ACA would eliminate the health insurance component of the Health Trust, Dave enacted the boards' decision to merge the Health Trust with the Unemployment Insurance Trust to form the current VERB Trust. For many years, Dave has also planned for, attended, and documented the board meetings of all of VLCT's insurance trusts (a responsibility that few people aspire to).

Dave has also applied his insurance acumen outside of VLCT. When he was a member of the advisory committee of the Green Mountain Care Board, he helped them reform statewide health insurance strategies, thanks to his familiarity with the practical workings and pricing of health insurance. He was a long-time member of Northeast Delta Dental's Consumer Advocacy Board, served on the board of directors of the National League of Cities Risk Information Sharing Consortium, and was Vermont's representative on the NLC Mutual Insurance Company board for 25 years.

In October, Dave celebrated his 30th anniversary of employment with VLCT and simultaneously announced his bittersweet retirement. We will miss Dave's insights and historical knowledge of all things trust-related. We will miss his subtle wit. Some of us will miss his company during lunchtime walks around Montpelier. Others will recall that, during a significant remodeling of the League offices, Dave's entries in the staff contest to name the League's three new conference rooms were Vermont microbreweries. All of us appreciate Dave's contributions to this organization and to the range of insurance products and services that VLCT's trusts have provided in the past and continue to offer to members.

In his new life of full-time leisure, Dave plans to travel a bit, pursue his hobbies of genealogy and philately, and just plain relax. We presume that some of his relaxation will take place at a local microbrew or two.