

Meet Kail Romanoff, VLCT's Newest Staff Attorney

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In much of the civilized world, kale is known as a leafy green vegetable that plays a key role in the construction of antioxidant-rich smoothies. But at VLCT, kale – or Kail, really – is a recent addition to the Municipal Assistance Center: Exactly one hundred and fifty years *to the hour* after Yellowstone National Park was established as the first national park in the world, John “Kail” Romanoff began his VLCT career as Staff Attorney 1.

One might expect a possible descendent of the Imperial House of Russia (1613-1917) to have, you know, supercilious airs or something. But not Kail! No, he’s as down to earth as anyone who studied environmental and land use law at Vermont Law School and later served as Underhill’s zoning administrator can be. And it’s that last gig that has already proved to be invaluable in his work at VLCT.

“Beyond simply preparing me to respond to planning and zoning inquiries,” Kail writes in an email, “my time as Underhill ZA [as well as the town’s de facto planning director] gave me first-hand experience with the mechanics of running small town government.”

Because he worked in such a small office, Kail was privy to much of the goings-on in town, whether they concerned the selectboard, the listers, or the town clerk. And since he was an attorney (though he didn't officially act in that capacity), he was often included in conversations that gave him insights into some of the practical difficulties that small municipalities face – insights he can now use “to better advise our members, or at least be more quickly up to speed in understanding what they deal with,” he adds.

Prior to his still burgeoning lawyering career, Kail applied his undergraduate degree in geography from UVM to work as a land surveyor in Vermont and Wyoming. And while the two states are rather disparate geopolitically, Kail's surveying skills were tested in a remarkably similar fashion in both places: In Vermont, he updated right-of-way data for state highways and recorded GPS coordinates of ROW boundary markers for the Agency of Transportation; in Wyoming, he surveyed Julia Louise-Dreyfus' vacation home and the shared property line of Harrison Ford's ranch for his neighbor. Why, the work was like two peas in a theodolite pod!

Born and raised in Jericho, Kail now lives in Underhill with his wife and two young daughters. He is an avid skier and spends as much time as possible in the mountains around his home with his dog, Ruth – which is short for Ruth Bader Ginsdog (anagram: tough badger rinds). He is also a seasoned machete wielder: “Surveyors often carry machetes to clear lines of sight for their equipment to take measurements,” he says. “One of the many perks of the job.”

Each day on the job at the Municipal Assistance Center expands Kail's knowledge of municipal law, a situation he relishes. Add to that relish two beef patties, special sauce, lettuce, cheese, pickles, and onions on a sesame seed bun and you have ... well, not a Big Mac so much as a big *addition* to MAC – and a supremely welcome one at that!

David Gunn
Contributing Editor