

# Executive Director's Message

It is that time of year again – time for Town Fair, VLCT's annual conference! It is a pleasure to share this special issue of VLCT News with you, to showcase the events and programs we have in store for Town Fair 2018. Each year, VLCT staff looks at ways to improve Town Fair, surveying our members about the previous year's event. Member input helps determine which topics and issues will be covered during the next Town Fair. It is gratifying to read so many positive comments about the value that this event brings to members, and to receive such excellent suggestions for training topics or changes to the event's format.

Based on member input, we made several positive changes to recent Town Fairs, and 2018 will be no different. The most noticeable change for 2018 is a new venue: the DoubleTree by Hilton, located just off I-89 in South Burlington. Not only is the DoubleTree a top venue for professional conferences and conventions, one that will readily accommodate our extensive agenda of trainings, presentations and meetings, but it is also located only a short drive from downtown Burlington and that city's many attractions. I know that local officials who do not make their way to the area often will enjoy the easy access to one of our state's top destinations.

Another change to Town Fair is the continued expansion into two full days of programming. This has been in the works for a few years, as Town Fair's Thursday schedule of trainings and expert presenters continues to grow. This year, the VLCT annual meeting and the annual meeting of the PACIF and VERB Trusts are all scheduled on Wednesday. I encourage members to attend these important meetings and lend your voice to the discussion as we chart a course for the year ahead.

Two days can be a considerable time commitment for you so, to ensure that your time at Town Fair is valuable, we have scheduled a special training session on Wednesday morning, "Planning Ahead: Strategies to Meet Your Future Staffing Needs." This session will offer tips and best practices for hiring, retaining and planning for the eventual retirement and replacement of staff. During this interactive two-hour session, attendees will explore this workforce development topic that is a common challenge for many municipal governments here in Vermont and around the country. Wednesday concludes with a reception, featuring delicious food and lively entertainment, all made possible thanks to the generosity of

our Town Fair sponsors. It is always a wonderful way to end the day and get ready for Thursday!

Perhaps the biggest benefit of Town Fair – but a benefit that you won't find listed on the event's agenda – is the opportunity to connect with your peers and colleagues from across the state who you do not have the chance to see regularly. Sharing ideas, talking through challenges, and connecting with officials and employees who, like you, are dedicated professionals with a passion for local government has always been at the heart of what makes Town Fair such a popular event.

I hope that you can join us in South Burlington on October 3 and 4. I look forward to seeing you there!

Maura Carroll  
Executive Director, VLCT