

New VLCT Board Member Ken Linsley

What Does a JP Do?

Danville, Vermont, has a population just shy of 2,200, one traffic light, a world-renowned corn maze (yes, it's in *North* Danville, but still), and a post office named after a native son who led efforts to pass a constitutional amendment to abolish slavery in the U.S. Further, the town is home to both the American Society of Dowsters and the Joe's Pond Ice-Out contest (What, you say that's *West* Danville?) and, as of October, has a townsperson on the VLCT Board of Directors.

Ken Linsley has served on the Danville Selectboard for six years and is currently its chair. He's been a member of the Danville Fire District #1 Prudential Committee Member since 2005 and a board member of the Vermont Educational and Health Buildings Financing Agency since 2009. From 2007 to 2014, he was president of the Danville Chamber of Commerce. He has, for six years, worked with the Vermont Center for Independent Living's Meals on Wheels program. And, since 2007, he's been a Justice of the Peace.

Which raises the question: What does a JP do?

"You serve on the board of civil authority," says Ken, "so you have to validate the checklist for the voting, plus handle appeals to the BCA, tax abatement, and assessment."

"And you marry people. I've married two couples so far, one of which lasted less than a year but the other is still going strong. That's about average. And that's really about all JPs do today – interesting, but not a lot of activity," he adds, laughing.

For sure, *a lot* of activity accompanied his nearly 40-year career in various technical and general management positions that took him to Sharon, Pennsylvania; South Boston, Virginia; Goldsboro and Raleigh, North Carolina; St. Louis, Missouri; and, in 1997, to St. Johnsbury. (Currently retired, Ken still does private consulting in the field of power and distribution transformers.) And it's his experience from working in such disparate locations and settings in his professional career – as well as his more recent governmental and non-governmental

experience on the local level – that have made him aware of the challenges that smaller, rural towns face and the opportunities that they can also provide. This knowledge prompted Ken to offer his services to the VLCT Board of Directors.

Danville, where Ken has lived for two decades, is facing challenges of its own. The town is trying to decide what to do with its former railroad station, a historic building that has fallen into disrepair but whose proximity to the Lamoille Valley Rail Trail offers the possibility of becoming a way station on the trail. One side of the building also functions as the town's recycling center. At an upcoming open house, the public will be asked for ideas of how best to re-invent the structure.

Earlier this year, the agencies of Transportation and Commerce and Community Development awarded the town a Better Connections grant to help “figure out how to bring more commercial activity into Danville,” says Ken, “and the train station [renovation] is a key part of that.”

Another issue facing the town is Act 46, the 2015 legislation designed to move school districts throughout the state toward merger. By November 30, the State Board of Education is to approve, amend, or disapprove the Secretary of Education's proposal for mergers he issued in June. (The board is currently deciding on more than 40 proposals from approximately 90 districts that have not voluntarily merged, some of them adamantly opposed to a merger. Danville is one of those districts.) “What will happen to Danville?” asks Ken. “Will we be forced to merge with somebody else? We have no debt now, but if we merge with a town that has debt, it would become [Danville's] responsibility.”

As a new VLCT Board member, Ken has no agenda, and wants to become more familiar with the organization before suggesting any courses of action. “At this point, it's a clean slate,” he says. “I certainly invite anybody who has an issue I might be able to help with to contact me. My email is posted on the Danville website (danvillevermont.org/) so it's not a problem to touch base.”

In his spare time, Ken enjoys fly fishing, though he says he no longer ties his own flies. “When my eyes were much younger, I did tie my own,” he says, adding “my quarry is exclusively trout!” Ahh, but now that he has joined the VLCT Board, chances are he'll soon find *many* different quarries to pursue.

David Gunn
Editor, VLCT News

(Special thanks to Danville Town Clerk Wendy Somers for taking the picture of the railroad station and verifying the Danville history.)