Get Acquainted with Josh Hanford

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In early October, Josh Hanford joined VLCT with a completely new title – Director, Intergovernmental Relations – keeping the proportion of VLCT employees whose first name begins with J at an unusually high 14 percent despite nary a John. (This stat is currently topped only by the "S"es, which are stacked because of the four Susans.) Josh comes to VLCT after working for the State of Vermont. But don't take our word for it! Here are Josh's answers to the questions we posed to help our readers get acquainted with him.

What got you interested in working for VLCT? Do you have any background in municipal government?

VLCT is a well-respected organization with a great reputation. Over my career I have relied on VLCT to best represent the needs and interests of Vermont communities. After decades working at the state and federal levels developing and implementing programs to help communities, I wanted to work where the rubber meets the road. I believe in this new role I can help each individual community get the traction it needs to be successful. In the end, all government programs and policies become successes or failures at the local level.

I have experience working at the local level in Vermont, serving a short stint as a lister, school board member, and on the town parks and recreation committee in the Town of Rochester.

What will you be working on at VLCT? What most excites you about working in this position?

I will be working on what our members feel is most important to them. I believe our communities need more support and resources from the state to be successful.

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Vermont municipalities need more revenue sharing and for the state and federal government to better understand the constraints and opportunities that exist in each community. I'm excited to work toward common goals and gather the support to make positive change in our communities, big and small.

Tell us a little bit about yourself, your interests, a fun fact about you, etc.

Having lived in Vermont for almost 25 years, I feel a great sense of connection and understanding about what is most important. At the same time, I feel the perspective I gained from living in both New Hampshire and California and from traveling throughout the world provides a good balance and helps me be open to trying new approaches.

I am the oldest of five brothers from a working-class family, and I love to be outdoors skiing, mountain biking, and fishing. I'm always up for an adventure, and I place a high value on fairness, self-reliance, and mutual respect for differences of opinion.

What do you want members to know about your work? Are there any common misconceptions or misunderstandings about what you do?

I want members to know that although I'm known as the former "Housing Commissioner", advocating for more housing and regulatory reform to allow more appropriate growth in our communities, I have also worked for many years implementing projects to support economic, community, and human development

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and also natural resource conservation. I am very practical and pragmatic about my approach to getting things done.

If you had an unlimited budget, what would you most want to focus on in your work?

With an unlimited budget, I would provide a one-stop shop for Vermont municipalities to get the full financial and technical support they need. Before any new program, policy, rule, or law was implemented, I would ensure that the total cost of local implementation was calculated and the necessary support was provided.

How are you committed to justice, diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging in your work?

I feel one of government's most important jobs is to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to be successful. I also believe we must treat everyone with the respect and dignity that they deserve regardless of any differences we may have or perceive. Understanding different perspectives and learning about implicit bias and injustice ends up benefiting everyone. We all have more in common than we think.

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