

Report from Town Fair 2024: A Full and Engaging Day

Town Fair 2024: **Making Connections & Sharing Solutions** excelled with a bumper crop of interesting and informative sessions, hundreds of attendees who serve in a variety of municipal roles, scores of exhibitors, and seasonably cool and bright weather in the beautiful Killington setting. The photographs in this short summary align with the written flow.

Getting Started

In a change from previous even-numbered years, the registration table was adjacent to the Killington Grand's hotel lobby, making room for more exhibitors downstairs – where most of the conference took place. People who registered early enough could head down and over to the main exhibit hall, pick up a full breakfast, and settle in at one of many roundtable discussions, each facilitated by a specialist in the stated topic. Exhibitors were located in the Oscar Wilde room, the fireplace lobby, and *en route* to the training rooms. At Registration, every attendee received one free ticket for the extra-special Grand Raffle and could buy more to benefit the Municipal Service Scholarship fund. Ticket holders could choose which of dozens of excellent prizes – all donated – to put their ticket(s) toward.









Weather Report

The keynote speaker was Jim Cantore, meteorologist for The Weather Channel, who spoke engagingly about the effects of climate change on Vermont and other parts of the east – especially those affected by hurricanes this summer and fall. Cantore was raised in Vermont and became a weather hound at a young age. In the large upstairs room of the Snowshed Lodge, he showed and explained a variety of tables and charts to present weather statistics – in addition to photographs showing the extent of flooding – from as long ago as 1927 and as recently as July 2024. What's the upshot? The statistics confirm what many of us are experiencing: Vermont's rainfall is increasing year over year, and significant rain events are becoming more common. Cantore and members of the audience agreed that the only way to get ahead of it is to prepare for even rainier circumstances as we rebuild after floods.



Standout Breakout Sessions

All of the day's trainings – morning and afternoon – were well attended. This observer postulates it was largely due to three of the five tracks addressing topics related to either statutory changes following the busy 2024 legislative session or the need to keep up with cultural shifts that require new techniques for success. In addition, the Facilitated Discussions track provided dedicated time and space for peers to share ideas, questions, and knowledge with each other. The fifth track focused on practical solutions to election administrators' needs for effective and reliable tools, cyber security, and emergency preparedness. The variety of options and relevance of content helped attract attendees from many levels of experience as well as areas of responsibility. (Review the complete list of trainings and presenters at vlct.org/town-fair-2024-tracks-and-sessions.)





The Last Town Fair Meal in the Snowshed Lodge

Lunch was accompanied by additional information, several professional acknowledgements, and more opportunities to buy extra tickets for the Grand Raffle. At the podium, Sky Barsch, CEO of VTDigger, shared her observations about the changing media landscape in Vermont, and how important local news coverage is for both municipal government and citizens.

Next, VLCT President and Montpelier City Manager Bill Fraser presented VLCT's 2024 awards.

- Vermont Senator Jane Kitchel of Danville won the 2024 Legislative Service Award (although she was not present to accept it in person).
- Fraser presented not one but two 2024 Municipal Service Awards. One was to former Burlington Mayor Miro Weinberger, who was on hand and happy to accept it in person. The other was to all Vermont municipal road crews in appreciation for their hard work in making local roads passable despite the flooding of 2023 and 2024. Accepting this award on behalf of all city, town, and village highway departments were Killington Selectboard Chair Jim Haff and Killington Public Works employee Gerald Pfeifenberger.
- When the winner of the Lifetime Achievement Award was announced, Killington Town Clerk and Treasurer Lucrecia Wonsor, who is well respected and liked by her colleagues and counterparts, received the day's only standing ovation. The crowd's joy was spontaneous and quite moving. The photograph of it below also helps us say goodbye to the Snowshed Lodge, which the Killington Grand plans to replace soon, meaning this year's lunch was the last Town Fair meeting to be held in this room.

(See [this news item](#) to learn more about the awards and recipients.)

The closing acknowledgement was for Kathleen Ramsay, until recently Middlebury Town Manager (and before that Killington Town Manager), for her longstanding service on boards of VLCT's trusts. After being President of VLCT's original Unemployment Insurance Trust and subsequently a member of the VERB Trust board, Kathleen recently relinquished her board position and became a VLCT staff member. (You will be able to read about Kathleen's new job in the November 2024 *VLCT Journal*.)



2024 VLCT Legislative Service Award



Vermont League of Cities and Towns









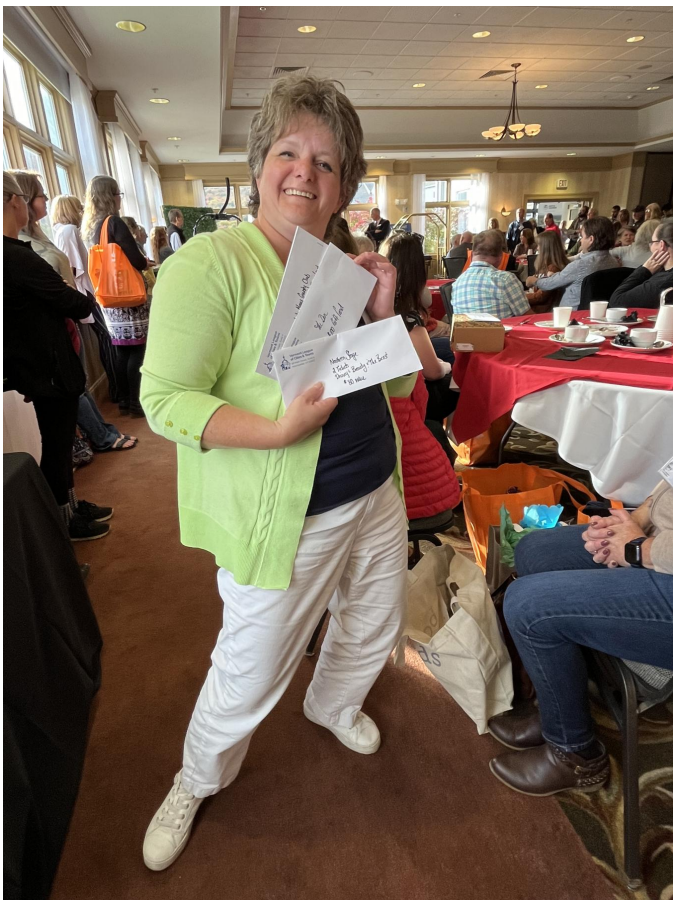
More Prizes Than Ever, Plus Ice Cream

The day's last event was drawing the winners of the grandest Grand Raffle to date, accompanied by an ice cream social. More than fifty prizes were handed out, some as physical loot and many as

certificates.









This year's success was thanks in part to the Town Fair 2024 Planning Committee: Cynthia Stoddard, NEMRC; Jenny Prosser, Office of the Vermont Secretary of State; Julie Hance, Town of Chester; Maggie McCormick, Town of Panton; Terri Gildersleeve, Property Valuation and Review division of the Vermont Department of Taxes; Tim Arsenault, Town of Vernon; and VLCT staff members Joe Damiata, Abby Friedman, Lisa Goodell, and Adele Taplin.

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