

# **Town Fair 2025**



# NextGen Vermont: Navigating 21st Century Governance

**TOWN Fair 25**  
October 8 | DoubleTree by Hilton, South Burlington

Join municipal officials from across the state for **Town Fair 2025**, VLCT's annual flagship event celebrating local leadership, community collaboration, and the future of municipal governance in Vermont.

This year's theme, **NextGen Vermont: Navigating 21st Century Governance**, explores how towns and cities can rise to today's challenges and embrace the opportunities ahead – from digital innovation to workforce transformation to inclusive civic engagement.

Hoping to partner with VLCT and exhibit at Town Fair? Join VLCT's [Business Alliance Program \(BAP\)](#), the only program that connects businesses to the spending power of 10K+ local and state officials affiliated with our membership and network.

**AGENDA for ANNUAL MEETING and Pre-Conference Dinners – Tuesday, October 7**

## Tuesday, October 7



# VLCT Annual Meeting: Virtual & Vital!

**3:00 PM** | *Held via Zoom*

Don't miss this once-a-year opportunity to help guide the work of **VLCT**, **PACIF**, and **VERB**. At this official **annual business meeting**, members will vote on officers, review the past year's work, and take action on items that affect every Vermont municipality.

- **All VLCT, PACIF, and VERB members are invited.**
- **Voting Delegates\* and attendees must register.**
- Meeting materials, including the agenda and rules, are available at [vlct.org/vote](https://vlct.org/vote).

Whether you're there to vote or just to stay informed, your participation matters.

**There's no cost to attend. Just bring your voice and your vision.**

*\*Each member organization can designate a Voting Delegate to cast votes on behalf of their municipality.*

## Pre-Conference Affiliate Dinners



## **6:00 PM | DoubleTree, South Burlington**

### *Invitation-Only Gatherings for Board and Association Members*

We look forward to welcoming you for an evening of connection and camaraderie.

## **VLCT, PACIF, and VERB Boards Dinner**

### *Invitation Only*

Join your fellow board members for an informal dinner the evening before Town Fair. This is a chance to relax, reconnect, and enjoy meaningful conversation with colleagues who help guide the work of VLCT, PACIF, and VERB.

There's no formal agenda – just an opportunity to reflect on the year's work, share ideas, and connect outside the boardroom. We hope you'll join us for this evening of good food and thoughtful company.

## **Listers, Assessors, and VALA Members Dinner**

### *Hosted by VALA*

Gather with your fellow listers and assessors for a casual, pre-conference dinner hosted by VALA. This is a great opportunity to connect with colleagues from across the state, share stories, and unwind before Town Fair.



Dinner attendees will also hear the first of a two-part verbal de-escalation training. During the first session, participants in this training gain skills and knowledge to help them to better identify who is at risk of becoming violent or aggressive, and what the behavioral signs are that someone may be potentially assaultive. Participants learn skills and techniques that can help to de-escalate high intensity situations verbally. The role of Respect as a protective factor is discussed throughout the training as well as some basic brain science that can impact our attempts at de-escalating a situation.

Whether you're new to VALA or a longtime member, this relaxed evening promises good food and even better conversation with peers who understand the unique challenges – and value – of your work.

## **Managers, Administrators, and VTCMA Members Dinner**

*Hosted by VTCMA*

Join your fellow municipal managers and administrators for a relaxed evening of connection and conversation before the start of the conference. This dinner is a great chance to talk shop (or not), swap ideas, and enjoy the company of others who do the work of local leadership day in and day out.

There's no program – just good food and the camaraderie of your VTCMA colleagues. We hope to see you there.

### **AGENDA for TOWN FAIR – Wednesday, October 8**



# Wednesday, October 8

8:00 AM

## Breakfast Roundtables

**Start your Town Fair day with conversation and connection.**

Fuel up for the day ahead with a **full hot breakfast** – eggs, pancakes, coffee, and more – while diving into the issues that matter most to Vermont's municipal officials.

At our popular **Breakfast Roundtables**, you'll choose a table focused on a topic relevant to your role or interests – ranging from governance and compliance to community development, employee benefits, leadership, and beyond. Tables are hosted by experienced facilitators who help guide conversation, answer questions, and share practical insights.

Whether you're there to ask questions, share your expertise, or just listen and learn, the roundtables offer a great way to start Town Fair with meaningful discussion and peer connection in a relaxed, informal setting.



## 9:00 AM

### **Keynote Address: Strategies and Skills for Bridging Political and Cultural Divides**

**Speaker:** Tami Pyfer, Co-Creator of The Dignity Index and Chief External Affairs Officer at UNITE

As tensions rise across the country, local government leaders are increasingly on the front lines of navigating political and cultural divides. In this timely and inspiring keynote, Tami Pyfer – former city council member, state school board member, and senior advisor to Utah's governor – will share how dignity can be a powerful tool to help leaders ease divisions and solve problems in our communities and our country.

With insight and deep experience in both policy and community leadership, Tami will explore how embracing dignity in our discourse can help build communities that are stronger, more connected, and more resilient.

## 10:30 AM

### **Concurrent Sessions**

#### **The Dignity Index Interactive Workshop**



An extension of the keynote address, this hands-on workshop is an excellent way to learn more about The Dignity Index and to practice using it to improve how you communicate. **(Part of the Selectboards Track)**

Speaker: Tami Pyfer, Co-Creator of The Dignity Index and Chief External Affairs Officer at UNITE

## **Capital Planning: Your Path to Long-Term Improvements**

Are crumbling asphalt, unreliable vehicles, or tired buildings overwhelming you and your legislative bodies? Take some tips from finance experts: make a plan, follow the plan, and start small. Most Vermont cities and towns have informal capital plans – but a *formal* planning process, combined with discipline around following that plan, could improve your ability to get things done. Join the Vermont Bond Bank and VLCT to learn about resources available to help your community do capital planning right. **(Part of the Managers and Administrators Track)**

Speakers: Michael Gaughan, Executive Director, Vermont Bond Bank; Marguerite Ladd, Municipal Finance Specialist, Vermont League of Cities and Towns

## **Building a Municipal Road Crew: Tips to Recruit and Retain Talent**





A good road crew is hard to find, and long-term vacancies are operationally frustrating and costly. This session will focus on how to set your town up for hiring success, including tips from members who have had success in highway hiring. This will include a live tour of VLCT's new hiring resources, including the [Highway/DPW Hiring Guide](#) and the [Vermont Town Careers website](#). **(Part of the Roads and Public Works Track)**

Speakers: Kathleen Ramsay, Municipal Operations Specialist, Vermont League of Cities and Towns

Elena Esteban, Director of Communications, Vermont League of Cities and Towns

Julie McKenzie, Assistant General Counsel, PACIF, HR and Employment, Vermont League of Cities and Towns

## **Breaking the Busy Barrier**

This workshop will look at how to break out of the "crazy busy" culture. We'll unpack the language and mindset of our too-busy world, then explore strategies to help grow capacity and resilience so you can handle the many demands you face – without succumbing to stress and burnout. You'll leave able to work (and lead) in a way that is healthy, steady, and productive. **(Part of the Listers and Assessors Track)**

Speaker: Porter Knight, Principal, Productivity Vermont



## **Tips and Tricks for Collection and Remittance of Education**

### **Property Taxes**

Vermont cities and towns are responsible for collection of both school and municipal taxes which must be done in accordance with a long list of state laws, rules, and processes. Seasoned Maidstone Town Treasurer Bob Champagne-Willis will discuss how to work with the education fund's cash flow statements, offer a refresher on important deadlines and remittance dates, and provide attendees with a few key tricks of the trade. **(Part of the Town Clerks and Treasurers Track)**

Speaker: Bob Champagne-Willis, Maidstone Town Treasurer

## **11:45 AM**

## **Lunch and Awards Presentation**

### **Celebrate Excellence in Local Government**

Join us as we honor individuals who exemplify dedication and leadership for local government.



- **Lifetime Achievement Award** – honors a career of distinguished public service
- **Municipal Service Award** – celebrates exceptional contributions to local government
- **Legislative Service Award** – recognizes a lawmaker who champions municipal priorities

Enjoy your lunch while we celebrate people who go above and beyond to serve Vermont communities.

## 12:30 PM

### Visit Exhibitors

Explore the tradeshow floor, pick up some fun giveaways, learn about new products and services, and chat with vendors and colleagues.

## 1:30 PM

### Concurrent Sessions



## Should Your Town Office Be Using AI?

Vermont municipal officials are using artificial intelligence (AI) in both their personal and professional lives. Now available as personal assistants, note takers, graphic designers, and more, AI has likely already reached even our smallest members. Cassandra Madison of the Center for Public Sector AI provides government leaders with the knowledge, tools, and resources they need to responsibly explore AI and other emerging technologies. Join her for a discussion about expanding AI in your town office. **(Part of the Selectboards Track)**

Speaker: Cassandra Madison, Launch COO, Center for Public Sector AI (Invited)

## How to Comply with Public Records Requests Legally and Efficiently

The number of Public Records Act requests seems to be increasing exponentially. Attend this session to better understand how to comply with the law and to hear ideas being debated for ensuring transparency while fulfilling a high volume of requests. **(Part of the Managers and Administrators Track)**

Speakers: Susan Senning, Staff Attorney II, Vermont League of Cities and Towns; Jim Harrison, Representative (Rutland 11), Vermont General Assembly; Lauren Hibbert, Deputy Secretary of State, State of Vermont

## Improve Your Roads' Resiliency



Making your roadways more resilient can save your municipality money, improve safety, and reduce disruption. This workshop will help you understand roadway rigidity, how to conduct risk assessments and identify vulnerabilities, and how to enhance roadway resilience. **(Part of the Roads and Public Works Track)**

Speaker: Todd Eaton, Branch Manager, Vermont Local Roads Program, Vermont Agency of Transportation

## **Verbal De-Escalation Part 2 (Lister Track)**

Join us for dinner October 7 to hear part 1 of this training. During the second session, there will be a brief review of session one. After the review, specific communication skills will be presented as well as methods for improving staff communication around and during a crisis. The remaining time will be used to practice some of the skills presented from both sessions.

## **Municipal Bonds: Best Practices to Get Voter Approval**

When a municipality needs financing for large-scale infrastructure projects, its voters must approve a bond (or other debt tool) at an annual or special town meeting. Preparation for such a vote is a complicated process with many legal requirements often coordinated between the town clerk and municipal bond attorney. This session will review best practices to stay on track and not miss any important steps ahead of and beyond the voter authorization. **(Part of the Clerks and Treasurers Track)**



Speakers: Elijah Emerson, Esq., Vice President; Primmer, Piper, Eggleston & Cramer PC; Corinn Julow, Town Clerk and Selectboard Executive Assistant, North Hero Town

## 2:45 PM

### Concurrent Sessions

#### Bring Your Own Problems: A Facilitated Selectboard

##### Discussion

*(This session is **open only to members of legislative bodies** i.e. selectboards, city councils, etc.)*

Join selectboard members, city council members and alderpersons, and village trustees and others for a facilitated discussion about the issues facing your community. This session is designed to give you time to talk with your peers, share your challenges, and explore viable solutions. **(Part of the Selectboards Track)**

Facilitator: Ted Brady, Executive Director, Vermont League of Cities and Towns

#### Around the Cracker Barrel: A Facilitated Discussion for Managers and Administrators



*(This session is **open only to municipal managers and administrators.**)*

Join fellow municipal managers in a facilitated discussion about the issues facing your community. This session is designed to give you time to talk with your peers, share your challenges, and discuss viable solutions. **(Part of the Managers and Administrators Track)**

Facilitator:

## **Heard Around the Garage: A Facilitated Discussion of Municipal Transportation Challenges and Solutions**

Join fellow road crew and public works staff to discuss the issues facing your municipality. This session is designed to give you time to talk with your peers, share your challenges, and explore various solutions. **(Part of the Roads and Public Works Track)**

Facilitator: Brittney Kohler, Transportation and Infrastructure Policy Lead, National League of Cities

## **The Future of Assessing in Vermont: A Facilitated Discussion**

Major changes are in store for the way Vermont conducts property valuation. Join representatives from the Vermont Department of Taxes and your lister and assessor colleagues to discuss the proposed new appraisal system and the new classification system. along with the future of listers, assessors, and the grand list.



### **(Part of the Listers and Assessors Track)**

Facilitator: Jill Remick, Director, Property Valuation Review Division, Vermont  
Department of Taxes (Invited)

## **Workplace Matters: A Facilitated Discussion for HR**

### **Professionals**

#### ***By Invitation Only***

Join fellow HR professionals to discuss the unique challenges of municipal HR.  
Contact [Julie McKenzie](#) to learn more.

Facilitator: Julie M. McKenzie, Assistant General Counsel, PACIF Labor and  
Employment, Vermont League of Cities & Towns

## **Vermont's Ethics Law: Overview and New VLCT Conflict of Interest Decision Tree**

Act 171 of 2024 created a significant shift in the ethical regulatory framework for municipalities by removing municipal authority to enact conflict of interest prohibitions specific to their communities and instituting a new statewide Municipal Code of Ethics. The State Ethics Commission, which is responsible for advising and training municipal officials on these changes, suspended their municipal services earlier in the year. To help our members, VLCT's Municipal Assistance Center has developed a Conflict of Interest Decision Tree that





municipal officials can use to guide themselves through the complicated analysis of determining whether they have a conflict of interest and, if they do, what to do about it.

This session will provide attendees with an overview of the new state ethics law and walk them through how to use VLCT's decision tree tool. **(Part of the Clerks and Treasurers Track)**

Facilitator: Garrett Baxter, Senior Staff Attorney, Vermont League of Cities & Towns

## 4:00 PM

### Sundaes & Surprises: Town Fair's Grand Raffle Finale

Back by popular demand, the **Ice Cream Social and Raffle Drawing** returns for its second year!

Create your perfect treat at the **build-your-own sundae bar**, then stick around for the drawing of **50+ fantastic Vermont-based raffle prizes**. From ski weekends and pool passes to gift baskets, local dining, and more, there's something for everyone.

- All attendees receive one grand raffle ticket at check-in.



- Additional tickets can be purchased throughout the day, with **100% of proceeds benefiting [VLCT's Municipal Service Scholarship](#)**, which supports future leaders in Vermont local government.

Join us as we wrap up Town Fair with something sweet, something fun, and maybe something lucky!

**4:30 PM**

**End**

- [Register for Town Fair](#)
- [Annual Meeting Registration](#)

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