Town Fair 2026

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Current as of: 9/16/2026

Celebrating 250 Years of Local Leadership

October 7 | DoubleTree by Hilton, South Burlington

Join municipal officials from across Vermont for Town Fair 2026, VLCT's annual flagship event for learning, networking, and celebrating the people who serve Vermont's cities and towns.

This year's theme, **Celebrating 250 Years of Local Leadership**, honors the dedicated local officials, employees, and volunteers whose leadership has shaped Vermont's towns and cities for generations. As Vermont and the nation commemorate 250 years, we'll reflect on the enduring effect of local government while exploring the opportunities and challenges that will define the next chapter of municipal leadership. Together, we'll celebrate the past, strengthen today's communities, and inspire the local leaders who will guide Vermont into the future.

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 VLCT Annual Meeting – Tuesday, October 6

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Tuesday, October 6

VLCT Annual Meeting: Virtual & Vital!

More information coming soon.

1:30 PM | *Held via Zoom*

Don't miss this once-a-year opportunity to help guide the work of **your League**. 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.

- **Voting Delegates* and attendees must register at vlct.org/vote.**
- Meeting materials, including the agenda and rules, are available online.

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.*

AGENDA for TOWN FAIR – Wednesday, October 7

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Wednesday, October 7

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 your community.

At our popular **Breakfast Roundtables**, 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 lively way to start Town Fair with meaningful discussion and peer connection in a relaxed, informal setting.

- **How Are You Reaching and Engaging Your Community** – Hosted by Elena Esteban, Director of Communications, VLCT

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- **What Are Your Municipal Priorities for The Legislative Session** – Hosted by Josh Hanford, Director of Intergovernmental Relations, VLCT
- **Is Your Municipality Housing Ready** – Hosted by Katie Buckley, Director MOS, VLCT
- **Engaging and Retaining Employees** – Hosted by Jessi Hill, Director of Operations, VLCT
- **Effective Communication to Govern All with Skill** – Hosted by Abby Friedman, Director MAC, VCLT
- **Discussion with the Vermont Artificial Intelligence Economic Task Force: Bring Your Ideas on How AI Could Help You Increase Municipal Capacity, Engagement and Resiliency** – Hosted by Cass Madison, Task Force Member, Executive Director of the Center for Civic Futures
- **Healthcare Landscape: Trends, Challenges, Perspectives and Opportunities Shaping the Future** – Hosted by Sally McKenzie, Client Advisor, Acrisure
- **Lister Talk: Auxiliary Dwelling Units** – Hosted by Ed Clodfelter, Director of Assessor Services, and Chris Miele, Vice President, NEMRC
- ***More to come!***

*Roundtables are subject to change.

9:00 AM

Keynote Address by Historian Howard Coffin

Bennington: Vermont and the Great Revolutionary Victory

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Howard Coffin explores how leadership from the Green Mountains helped shape the American Revolution. From Ticonderoga and Hubbardton to Bennington, discover how Vermonters and their neighbors helped derail British General John Burgoyne's 1777 campaign to seize the Hudson Valley, pave the way for victory at Saratoga, and influence the course of the nation. Coffin is a seventh-generation Vermonter, acclaimed author, and historian who has delivered more than 1,200 talks on Vermont and American military history.

About Howard Coffin

Howard Coffin, a seventh-generation Vermonter, is the author of four books on Vermont and the Civil War and another on Revolutionary War battle sites along the Lake Champlain corridor. He has spoken extensively on the campaigns of 1775–1777 and led military tours throughout the region, while also earning national recognition for his battlefield preservation work with longtime friend Senator James Jeffords, his service on the National Civil War Sites Advisory Commission, and his founding board roles with the Civil War Trust and the Association for the Preservation of Civil War Sites. Coffin has delivered more than 1,200 talks in Vermont alone, spoken at events including the 150th anniversary of the Battle of Gettysburg, and received an honorary Doctor of Letters from Northern Vermont University and UVM's 2026 Lifetime Achievement Award.

10:00 - 10:20 AM

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

10:30 AM

Concurrent Sessions

Municipal Innovations in Public Health and Public Safety

Some of the best solutions to our society's problems come from local officials. This session will discuss replicable and effective municipal innovations in public health and public safety. Learn about community nurses in Hartland, Tunbridge, and Hartford. Find out how "situation tables" are helping towns like Springfield address homelessness, substance abuse, and repeat offenders. See how Windham County is piloting a new governance model to deploy a regional policing model. This session should help inspire local leaders to create different types of innovation in public health across Vermont's cities and towns.

Speakers: *Kristin Barnum, Executive Director, Community Nurse Connection; Michael Arace, District Manager, Springfield Probation and Parole; Mark Anderson, Sheriff, Windham County Sheriff*

Living Within the Levy – Big Needs, Real Budgets

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Every municipality faces the same challenge: community expectations often exceed available resources. Residents want safe roads, reliable infrastructure, quality public services, and investments that strengthen their communities. At the same time local leaders must make difficult decisions about what can realistically be funded today, while protecting the community's financial future.

This session explores the art and discipline of living within your means in local government. Join us for a candid conversation with peers about responsible stewardship, strategic decision-making, and ensuring your municipality can continue delivering essential services, not just this year, but for generations to come. We'll discuss strategic abandonment, priority-based budgeting, incremental capital planning, and more.

Speaker: *Michael Gaughan, Executive Director, Vermont Bond Bank; Jordan St. Onge, Highway Superintendent, Town of Morristown; Rick Ufford-Chase, Mayor, City of Newport; Ronald Rodjenski, Owner and Founder, Stone Shore Municipal Consulting LLC*

When Engagement Becomes Disruptive: Tools for Municipal Leaders to Protect Staff from Workplace Interference

Public-facing municipal work invites community contact, but not all contact is constructive. This session addresses the full spectrum of a municipal employer's response when interactions turn disruptive, from early leadership intervention and de-escalation, to understanding your legal authority over municipal spaces, to knowing when and how to involve law enforcement.

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Speakers: *Julie McKenzie, Deputy General Counsel and Director of PACIF Field Risk Services, VLCT; Christine Trombley Marsh, Senior HR Consultant, VLCT; Susan Senning, Staff Attorney II, VLCT; Trevor Whipple, Law Enforcement Consultant, VLCT*

Cybersecurity Starts Here: Recognize Risks and Protect Municipal Operations

As a user of your municipality's network, you are subject to a variety of cyber threats. Learn more about the types of threats faced and practical steps you can take to protect yourself and your municipality from them.

Speakers: *Phil Latvis, Director of Risk Management Services, VLCT; Emmanuel Ajanma, Director of Technology, VLCT; Marguerite Ladd, Government Finance Specialist, Municipal Operations Support, VLCT*

Planning Ahead: Understanding the New Homestead Classification Requirement

Municipalities are often asked to implement changes that begin with data collection but may have broader impacts in the future. The new Homestead Classification requirement is one such change. Although it does not alter current property valuation, it establishes information that may be used in future education property tax policy decisions.

This session will explore the purpose of the new requirement, potential effects on municipal operations, and what local officials should understand as

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Vermont prepares for possible future implementation.

Speakers: *Jill Remick, Director, VT Dept of Taxes – Property Valuation and Review; Ryan Silvestri, Managing Partner, New England Municipal Consultants (NEMC); Chris Miele, Vice President, New England Municipal Resource Center (NEMRC); Mimi Burstein, Vermont Master Property Assessor, Vermont Assessors and Listers Association (VALA); Jake Feldman, Senior Fiscal Analyst, Vermont Department of Taxes; Rebecca Sameroff, Deputy Commissioner, Vermont Department of Taxes*

11:30 AM

Visit Exhibitors

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

12 PM

Lunch and Awards Presentation

Celebrate Excellence in Local Government

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

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- **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.

1:30 PM

Concurrent Sessions

Wellness in Public Safety: Building and Supporting Health Resiliency

Public safety professionals routinely carry the weight of critical incidents, cumulative stress, and repeated exposure to trauma while continuing to serve others. Over time, these demands can affect wellness, performance, retention, morale, and organizational culture. The good news is that trauma is treatable, and wellness can be intentionally supported at both the individual and agency level.

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This session will explore practical approaches to strengthening wellness within public safety organizations, including the role of Critical Incident Stress Management, peer support programs, and evidence-informed trauma treatment approaches. Participants will gain an understanding of how peer support functions within public safety agencies, why it matters, and how leaders can foster environments that promote resilience, recovery, and long-term sustainability.

Speakers: *Lori Gurney, MS, CCISM, CTS, Lic Clinical Psychologist - Master, Public Safety Consulting of New England; Beth Jacobs MA, LCMHC, CCISM, Lic Clinical Mental Health Counselor, Public Safety Consulting of New England*

Beyond the Grand List: New Ways to Fund Local Government

Municipal costs are climbing and residents expect reliable services, but property taxes can only stretch so far.

In this session we will explore the practical revenue options that are available to local governments, including local option taxes, user fees, enterprise funds, impact fees, special assessment districts, and other funding mechanisms, and examine how communities around Vermont are using them to support infrastructure, public safety, recreation, utilities, and other essential services.

Whether you're searching for ways to ease pressure on the property tax or simply want to understand what's possible under Vermont law, this session will provide practical ideas to help your community build a more resilient financial future.

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Speakers: *Brent Raymond, Town Manager, Town of Morristown; Katherine Schad, Chief Administrative Officer, City of Burlington; Samantha Shehan, Municipal Policy and Advocacy Specialist, VLCT*

Mock Selectboard Meeting

Members of the **Braver Angels' Vermont chapter*** will facilitate a mock selectboard meeting and demonstrate communication strategies to navigate challenging conversations. During this interactive session, attendees will learn and practice helpful techniques to interact with meeting attendees when tensions escalate. Gain knowledge about civil discourse while complying with the Open Meeting Law and how to accomplish the board's business and engage with participating members of the public.

****Braver Angels' Vermont chapter*** *provides training on using civil discourse to stay engaged in difficult conversations with those who hold different views to citizens, educators, and elected public officials in the state. Model agendas, notices and rules of procedure developed by MAC attorneys provide the structure for Braver Angels' training.*

Speakers: *Beth Malow, Braver Angels Vermont; Shanna Ratner, Braver Angels Vermont; TBD Selectboard Member; Staff Attorney, Municipal Assistance Center, VLCT*

Be Ready for New Website Accessibility Requirements

Learn what your municipality needs to do to prepare and comply with upcoming website accessibility standards. Compliance with WCAG 2.0

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standards was postponed until April 2027, but municipalities should learn about the requirements and prepare now. These standards ensure all residents have access to the information on your website and can participate in local government.

Speaker: *Peter Jewett, Accessible Web*

2:30 - 2:45 PM

Visit Exhibitors

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

2:45 PM

Concurrent Sessions

It's the Law! Or Is It?

Some Vermont laws have stood the test of time for more than a century, while others seem to change every year. Can you tell the difference? Join VLCT staff for an interactive Jeopardy-style game that challenges your knowledge of municipal law, uncovers common misconceptions, and explores the legal requirements every local official should know. Whether you're new to municipal government or a seasoned veteran, you'll walk away with useful

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insights, practical tips, and maybe even a few bragging rights.

Speakers: *Staff Attorneys, Municipal Assistance Center, VLCT*

Beyond the Ballot: Strengthening Election Security in the Age of AI

Gain a clear understanding of artificial intelligence and its growing role in election-related threats. This training helps participants recognize AI-generated content and understand how it can be used to misinform or disrupt. Attendees will learn practical strategies to prepare for and respond to emerging AI-driven risks.

Speakers: *Will Senning, Election Security Consultant (Contractor), Election Security Exchange; Chris Piper, Election Security Consultant (Contractor), Election Security Exchange*

Creating and Sustaining an Effective Safety Committee

This interactive session provides the framework for establishing a safety committee. Participants will learn how to set up the committee, have structure, engage employees, and ensure that safety recommendations lead to measurable results.

Speakers: *Larry Smith, Sr. Loss Control Consultant, VLCT; Wade Masure, Sr. Loss Control Consultant, VLCT; Zander Yensan, Sr. Loss Control Consultant, VLCT*

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Neighbors Helping Neighbors: The Value of Shared Resources

Vermont Local Roads will lead a panel discussion about the benefits, challenges, and necessity of municipalities pooling resources, contracting efforts, and projects. When the job is big or staff is small, resource sharing can increase capacity, stretch limited resources, and help control costs.

Speakers: *Todd Eaton, Branch Manager, Vermont Local Roads (VT LTAP); Ray Stapleton, Road Foreman, Town of Weathersfield; Otis Ellms-Munroe, Transportation Planner, Mount Ascutney Regional Commission (MARC)*

3:45 - 4:00 PM

Visit Exhibitors

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4:00 PM

Sweets & Social: Town Fair's Grand Raffle Finale

Back by popular demand, the **Sweets & Social and Raffle Drawing** returns for its third year! Have a treat and stick around for the drawing of **fantastic Vermont-based raffle prizes**.

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

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

Join us as we wrap up Town Fair 2026 with something sweet, something fun, and maybe something lucky!

4:30 PM

End

Register for Town Fair | Annual Meeting Registration | Sponsors

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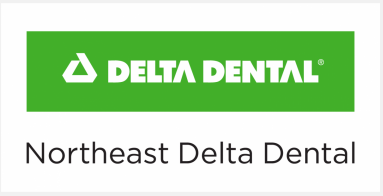

Efficiency Vermont	**Minuteman Press**
M&T Bank	**Union Bank**
Vermont Housing Finance Agency	

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