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[Home](#) > VLCT Board of Directors Meeting Minutes 2018 04-15

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Vermont League of Cities and Towns Board of Directors Meeting Thursday, April 5, 2018

Minutes

Members Present: President Cloud, Vice President Weinberger and Members Beckett, Cadwell, Elwell, Fraser, Goulette, Pinsonault, Safford, Simmons, and Whittaker.

Others Present: Commissioner Michael Snyder of Vermont Forests, Parks and Recreation, John Brabant, Vice Chair, Calais Selectboard; VLCT staff members: Karen Horn, Gwynn Zakov, Mike Gilbar, Jessica Hill, and Maura Carroll.

Agenda Item 1: Call to order by the President. President Cloud called the meeting to order at 12:20 p.m. and welcomed all to the meeting.

Agenda Item 2: Additions and Deletions to the Agenda. Member Whittaker asked to bring an item to the Board under Member Initiatives, regarding emergency management. On motion duly made by Member Safford and seconded by Member Cadwell, the Board unanimously voted to approve the agenda as amended.

Agenda Item 3: Consent Agenda Items. On motion duly made by Member Simmons and seconded by Member Pinsonault, the Board unanimously voted to approve the consent agenda items.

Agenda Item 4: Current Use - Forestry. Member Whittaker introduced and welcomed Michael Snyder, Commissioner of Vermont Forests, Parks and Recreation. Commissioner Snyder provided an overview of the work of his department and offered background on current use issues related to forestry. He stated that there are 2 million acres of land in forestry current use and that parcels enrolled in the program must be actively forested. Forest management plans must be developed for each parcel and reviewed by one of the 13 county foresters in Vermont, with plan updates required every 10 years. As a result of a listening tour and a subsequent report prepared for the department, the forest management plan process is being streamlined, with a template for preparing such plans. Commissioner Snyder answered questions posed by members of the Board.

Agenda Item 5: Organizational Update. Maura Carroll reported that the VLCT Finance Symposium

and Spring Selectboard were well-attended and that the Institute had a large majority of new board member attendees. She also informed the Board that an employee survey was recently distributed to staff and that the 2017 Annual Report will be presented at the May Board meeting.

Agenda Item 6: Auditor Bid Process. Mike Gilbar requested a decision from the Board about going out to bid for auditing services, beginning with the 2019 audit, or negotiating a new contract but retaining the services of VLCT's current auditor, Johnson Lambert. Discussion ensued and on motion duly made by Member Cadwell and seconded by Member Pinsonault, the Board unanimously voted to direct staff to issue a request for proposals for auditing services, to convey to the current auditing firm that they have been satisfied with their services, and to support having one firm do the audits for all the VLCT related entities. The Board also asked staff to structure the bids to show both separate and combined pricing.

Agenda Item 7: Legislative Session Update. Karen Horn and Gwynn Zakov offered updates to the Board on education funding, the Vermont Clean Water Act, municipal roads general permit funding, transportation funding, lease lands, open meetings, zoning exemptions and rental housing and responded to inquiries from the Board.

Selectboard member John Brabant of Calais advocated that the Board take a position in support of allowing citizen lawsuits to enforce adherence to the Clean Water Act as part of S.260. After considerable discussion the Board unanimously voted, on motion duly made by Member Safford and seconded by Member Cadwell, to support S.260 (Clean Water Authority) without the citizen suit provision. Further, the motion included a caveat that if the citizen suit provision remained in the bill, the Board is opposed to allowing lawsuits to be filed against municipalities.

Agenda Item 8: Listening Sessions. Maura Carroll reported that, although attendance is low, to date, the information conveyed by local officials attending the sessions is very valuable. The next sessions are scheduled Wednesday, April 11 at 10:30 a.m. in Randolph and at 5:00 p.m. in Burlington; and on Thursday, April 12 at 2:00 in St. Albans City.

Agenda Item 9: Other c. Member Initiatives. Member Whittaker expressed concern about a recent briefing by the Office of Emergency Management to small towns in the Northeast Kingdom. Since disaster relief depends on having an emergency management plan, he was concerned about the ability of small towns to develop and carry out such plans. Discussion ensued.

President Cloud suggested that the Board give staff more authority to propose items to legislative committees to assure that the policies presented to the committees, the Board and membership are appropriately updated and reflect current municipal and legislative activity. There was Board consensus with that suggestion.

On motion duly made by Member Pinsonault and seconded by Member Beckett, the Board unanimously voted to adjourn the meeting at 3:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Maura Carroll
Executive Director


