

# VLCT NEWS

A PUBLICATION OF THE VERMONT LEAGUE OF CITIES & TOWNS

SERVING AND STRENGTHENING VERMONT LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

December 2002

## THE 2003 LEGISLATIVE SESSION A GLIMPSE AHEAD

Happy New Year! And welcome to the 2003 Legislative session where things, of course, will be different.

### CRUNCHING THE NUMBERS

Vermont will have a new governor and lieutenant governor. The Senate has 19 democratic members of 30 total and the House has 74 republicans out of a total of 150 members. There are also 69 democrats in the House, four progressives and three independents in the House.

As we all know now, the election outcome surprised even the most veteran of political

pundits. Beyond that, many members of the Legislature are freshmen, sometimes a more telling attribute of the body than party affiliation. Of those new legislators, at least 37 that we know of have served in local government, a definite boon to attempts to explain the outlook of local government when under the golden dome.

We wonder, really, how much will be different? There is still a balance of power between democrats and republicans when you put the whole picture together. Such a balance forces thorough discussion before issues are put to rest and bills are passed into law. To a certain extent, a balance of power among political parties assures that the more extreme ideas from either end of the political spectrum seldom come to fruition.

### THE ISSUES

The 2003 session promises to feature some of local government's perennial favorites. There are plenty of problems to discuss with the way federal and state **stormwater permitting processes** are being implemented and coordinated. The **septic law** will certainly be

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## RUNNING A TOWN, GUIDING A STATE

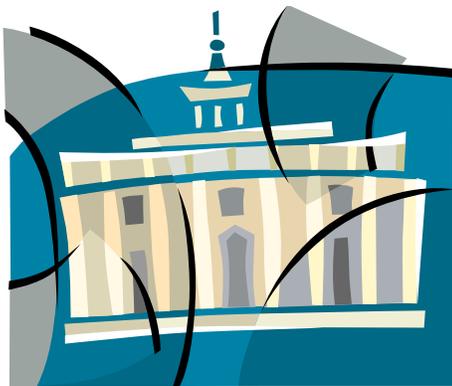
### A PRE-SESSION CHAT WITH SENATOR VIRGINIA LYONS

*Chittenden County Democratic Senator Virginia "Ginny" Lyons took some time earlier this month to speak with VLCT News Editor Katherine Roe. Senator Lyons, who is also a member of the Williston selectboard, is Vice-chair of the Senate Agricultural and Health and Welfare Committees, and a member of the Senate Natural Resources and Energy Committee. She is one of many legislators who have experience in local government, and we thank her for sharing this special perspective with VLCT members.*

**VLCT: All levels of government work within a system of shared responsibilities. How do we sort out who does what?**

Senator Lyons: That's the ongoing tension that we have in Vermont because we don't have home rule. I see the State making a balance

*(Continued on Page Twelve)*



## NEW VLCT TREASURER'S HANDBOOK READY

VLCT is excited to announce that it will begin printing its first-ever *Handbook for Municipal Treasurers* early next month. This handbook was created to provide municipal treasurers with a comprehensive guide to the duties of their positions, and is easily referenced for when questions arise.

The handbook summarizes the important Vermont statutes that define the treasurer's responsibilities and his or her legal obligations to Vermont municipalities. It also addresses the treasurer's relationship with other local officials.

Also coming soon is a new handbook on land use decisions and the property tax. Recognizing that there is a great deal of confusion and uncertainty about the relationship between land use decisions and property taxes, VLCT and the Vermont Natural Resources Council jointly sponsored production of *The Land Use - Property Tax Connection*. This handbook examines the relationship between the municipal tax bill in each Vermont town and various characteristics of the town, and provides local decision

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# VLCT BOARD OF DIRECTORS PROFILE

## SANDRA GRENIER, CLERK/TREASURER, TOWN OF ST. JOHNSBURY

In talking with St. Johnsbury Town Clerk and Treasurer Sandy Grenier, it quickly becomes apparent that the disgruntled and duplicitous characters in the cartoon strip Dilbert need not apply to work in her office. In fact, it doesn't sound like they would be at home working anywhere for the Town of St. Johnsbury, where negativity is out and positive attitudes are in.

Sandy is very proud of her hometown's local government. Her office handles elections, property transfers, taxes and records, finances and a myriad of other duties. The staff has minimal turnover, great depth of experience and an impressive list of accomplishments.

This is also the case for the rest of the Town's employees. "They take pride in their jobs, respect the citizens and appreciate the leadership of the board and manager," Sandy noted, adding that that respect also flows from manager Mike Welch and the selectboard to the employees.

Sandy observed that St. Johnsbury's Monday evening annual town meeting is well attended by a lively group who asks tough questions and makes frank comments. In the end, she said, the selectboard's budget always passes unscathed. She feels this shows the voters'

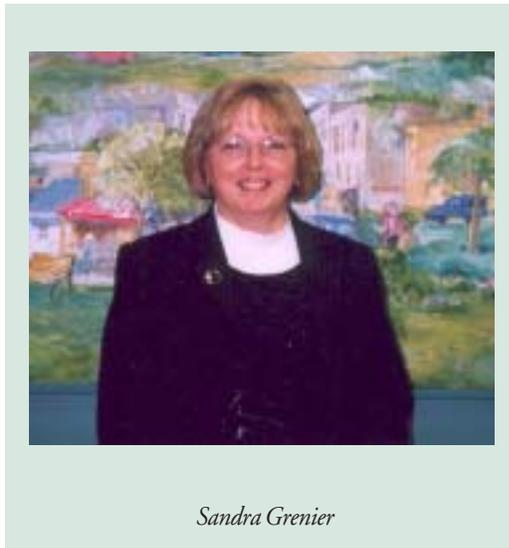
appreciation for the diligence and hard work of the town employees and leaders.

Public service and participation are valued in the community. In addition to its well-attended town meeting, St. Johnsbury never lacks for candidates for public office and has a strong core of volunteers. These include Clara and Andrew Fisher who were honored by VLCT in September

when they won the annual Town Citizenship Award at Town Fair for their efforts at downtown beautification.

According to Sandy, St. Johnsbury has a special sense of community where everyone realizes that working together can be as

*(Continued on Page Eight)*



Sandra Grenier

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# LEGAL CORNER



## MUNICIPAL LIBRARY AUTONOMY

### COURT GRANTS MUNICIPAL LIBRARY TRUSTEES MORE AUTHORITY

The Vermont Supreme Court has overturned a decision of the Windsor County Superior Court, thereby restricting the authority of towns to regulate municipal libraries. In its decision last month, the Court stated, “to the extent that a municipal library can be considered a department of the town, it certainly is not a department over which the town manager has been given direct control.” *Hartford Board of Library Trustees v. Town of Hartford*, No.

municipalities broad authority in regulating personnel, whether it be through personnel policies, setting employees’ salaries, or dismissing them. 24 V.S.A. § 1121.

While the phrase “full power to manage” is certainly indicative of the Legislature’s intent to grant *some* authority to the library trustees, VLCT believes the Court’s interpretation of the law undermines the general powers of the selectboard to control town government. VLCT believes the decision in *Hartford* impinges on the ability of Vermont municipalities to conduct business in a uniform manner,

there are many non-municipal libraries out there that receive public funds and are open to the public – that doesn’t make them “municipal”) may experience increased difficulty in exerting influence over the administration of such departments. The Supreme Court believes there exists a need for a “spirit of cooperation” between library trustees and town managers/selectboards across the state. (Note that while this case addressed the town manager, the decision applies to municipalities as an entity, whether there is a town manager form of government or just a selectboard or other legislative body.) VLCT agrees with this recommendation. However, with the increased funding available to municipal libraries, whether it be foundation grants, private donations, or town appropriations, there will be increased conflict over who has the “full power to manage” library administration. Look for VLCT to suggest a legislative response to this case in order to advance municipal authority in setting town-wide personnel policy.

- Brian Monaghan, VLCT Law Center Staff

*VLCT believes the decision in Hartford impinges on the ability of Vermont municipalities to conduct business in a uniform manner, such as running the town library as a town can run most other municipal departments. ... Look for VLCT to suggest a legislative response to this case in order to advance municipal authority in setting town-wide personnel policy.*

2002-207 (Vt. November 21, 2002). The question presented by this case is whether the town (through its town manager) or the library board of trustees has authority to set the level of compensation for the town librarian.

The Supreme Court sided with the library trustees, stating, “the Legislature could have used the simple infinitive ‘to manage’ in [22 V.S.A.] § 143 (a), but instead chose the phrase ‘full power to manage.’” *Id* at 3. The statute relied upon in this case by the trustees states: The library board of trustees “shall consist of not less than five trustees who shall have *full power* to manage the public library, make bylaws, elect officers, [and] establish a library policy . . .” 22 V.S.A. § 143 (a) (emphasis added).

This case is one of dueling statutes, and the job for the Court was to boil these statutes down into a real world scenario where the power to manage is more clearly defined. The Town relied on a number of statutory provisions in laying out its case: “The selectmen shall have the general supervision of the affairs of the town and shall cause to be performed all duties required of towns and town school districts not committed by law to the care of any particular officer.” 24 V.S.A. § 872. *Hartford* relied on this statute, as well as another statute that gives

such as running the town library as a town can run most other municipal departments.

This opinion turns on its head the legal advice the VLCT Municipal Law Center has been giving to municipalities. Many towns have called the Law Center and asked for advice when they have been in the same situation. The question always sounds something like this: “Who can set personnel policies for the librarian or other library staff?” Because there has never been a clear answer to this question, Law Center staffers were pleased to see that the courts would have an opportunity to set the record straight with this case. Readers may remember reading the June 2002 edition of the *VLCT News Legal Corner*, where the superior court’s decision was discussed. The lower court’s decision seemed to lend some clarity to the library statutes, which are difficult to decipher and don’t clearly delineate with whom the power to manage lies. The lower court decision was also favored by most municipalities, as it reinforced a more cohesive framework of municipal government.

It is not difficult to see the resonance this case will have in municipalities throughout the State. Those towns that have a municipal library (one that is truly an arm of the town;

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# FRATERNAL ORGANIZATIONS

## EXEMPTION HEADS UP FROM STATE TAX DEPARTMENT

What do creatures such as Elk, Moose and Lions have in common with Masons and the Grange? They are all fraternal and charitable organizations located in cities and towns throughout the State. Many of them own property, including meeting halls. In terms of this article, their common thread is that their status for property tax purposes is determined by a couple of interrelated Vermont laws and by the voters in the host communities. For municipalities that currently offer locally-approved tax-exempt status for these organizations, it may be time to consider re-voting the exemptions and what the tax consequences of such a vote are.

Thirty-two V.S.A. § 3840 allows municipalities to exempt the real estate value, in whole or part, of property owned by charitable and fraternal organizations. The initial period of exemption can be for up to ten years. Thereafter, the town voters may extend the exemption for additional periods of up to five years. Prior to the passage of Act 60, when most towns approved this type of exemption, the voters shifted the foregone tax burden from the exempted organization to all other taxpayers in

the town through a slightly higher school and municipal tax rate levied on the grand list reduced by the value of the exempted property.

This changed with the passage of Act 60. Thirty-two V.S.A. § 5404a(a)(1)(A) was enacted as part of Act 60. This provision “grandfathered” an array of locally voted exemptions and stabilization agreements – including those governed by § 3840. *The grandfather status permitted towns to exclude the exempted value of preexisting (i.e., grandfathered) agreements from the education grand list and thereby eliminated any associated school tax liability on the local taxpayers for a specified time period.* The time period, beginning on July 1, 1997, was either for up to ten years or the amount of time remaining on the most recently voted period of a grandfathered agreement, whichever was shorter.

For many of you, the last two paragraphs may sound like a lot of gobbledygook, but the implications can be boiled down to two things. First, it may be legally necessary for you to bring the question of their exempt status before your voters next Town Meeting Day if you wish to extend their exemption for another five-year

period. This would be the case for all § 3840 exemptions that are past their original ten-year approval period and have not been revoked since the spring of 1997. If this is the case, you will have to consider whether or not to include a Town Meeting warning concerning their continued exemption status.

Second, it means that for all charitable and fraternal organizations with voted exemptions that are past their first ten-year approval period, their grandfathered status ends with your 2003 grand list year. In other words, the exempted value for these properties must now go back on your municipality’s education grand list, regardless of whether you vote their continued exemption or not. If your town does not renew the organization’s exemption, it will begin paying both municipal and education property taxes, just like most other property owners. If your town extends the exemption for another five-year period, it simply means that the foregone tax burden must now be raised from all other property owners in your town – as was the case before Act 60, though the process is now somewhat different.

For municipal taxes setting a slightly higher city or town tax rate does this. For school taxes, setting a separate tax rate does this. This rate is called a Local Agreement Tax Rate. Annually, the Vermont Division of Property Valuation and Review (PVR) sends documentation to all municipalities describing the process of how tax rates should be set. Included in that document is information on the local agreement tax rate and how to set it.

This process is not necessary for statutorily exempted properties that do not require a vote of the town for their tax-exempt status.

If you have any questions or would like a copy of our “Setting Tax Rates” document, please let us know. You can contact Property Valuation and Review, P.O. Box 1577, Montpelier, VT 05601, or call 802/828-5860.

- Bill Johnson, Vermont Department of Taxes

## HANDBOOKS -

(Continued from Page One)

makers with the tools to actually measure the tax and service implications of a proposal for new development.

The central conclusion of the handbook is that property taxes should not be the sole driver or justification for land use decisions. The workbook allows readers to estimate the municipal and school tax rates for specific development proposals and for broad development scenarios.

Please watch your mailboxes next month for announcements and order forms for these handbooks.

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# ASK THE LEAGUE

## SHARING ZONING DUTIES; DISTRIBUTING TOWN REPORT; REINSTATING AUDITOR; DELINQUENT TAX COLLECTION

*Our zoning board of adjustment (ZBA) would like to delegate to the planning commission (PC) the review of zoning permit applications that require conditional use approval. For example, when such an application is received, a copy would automatically go to the PC, which would hold a public hearing on the application and recommend approval, approval with changes or denial.*

*The ZBA would then consider the PC's recommendations. If the ZBA makes significant changes in the application, it would refer the matter back to the PC for a re-evaluation. Only after the PC's second review would the ZBA make its final decision.*

*The purpose of the suggested process is to improve communication and accountability. Can the ZBA/PC agree to share conditional use decisions in this way?*

No. The ZBA has the authority to approve conditional uses under 24 V.S.A. § 4407(2). There is no authority to delegate that or any part of it to the PC.

The PC serves mainly as a planning body that collects information and drafts bylaws or recommends action based on the data collected. 24 V.S.A. § 4325. It also has specific duties such as reviewing site plans. 24 V.S.A. § 407(5).

There is certainly an argument to be made for increased or improved communication between the ZBA and PC. The Legislature has recognized this by allowing for the creation of a development review board, or for individuals to be members of both the ZBA and PC. (24 V.S.A. § 4461). Therefore, rather than creating a whole new procedure which is not allowed by statute, the town should consider these other options.

*- Libby Turner, VLCT Staff Attorney*

*The statutes dealing with circulating the Town Report and publicizing the Warning for Town Meeting are a little confusing. Can you clarify?*

The term "Town Report" is used to refer to two different things. First, it refers to the annual financial report that is the responsibility of the auditors, unless the municipality has voted to eliminate the office of auditor, under authority of 17 V.S.A. § 2651b. The auditors or the selectboard, if the office of auditor has been eliminated, are responsible for distributing the financial audit or Town Report. Whether it is sent out by the auditors or by the selectboard, the Report must "be mailed or otherwise distributed to the legal voters of the town at least ten days before the annual meeting." 24 V.S.A. § 1682.

The other, more common use of "Town Report" is the booklet that the town produces each year which contains the financial audit, vital statistics, next year's proposed budget, photographs, and (usually), the warning.

The warning is a public notice that tells people when and where to go for the town meeting or polling places. It must also list the separate articles of business to be transacted. The warning and notice must be posted in two or more public places plus in or near the town clerk's office 30 to 40 days before the meeting. In addition, the warning must be published in a newspaper of general circulation unless it is "published in the town report, or otherwise distributed in written form to all town or city postal patrons at least 10 days before the meeting." 17 V.S.A. § 2641.

So, the situation is that the Town [financial] Report must go to "legal voters of the town" and the warning must be published or sent to "all town or city postal patrons." The latter provision is especially problematic in towns where "postal patrons" of the local post office may not live in that town. For example, a number of residents of Town A get their mail through the Town B post office. So, they might get the Town B warning but not their own town warning.

We think the best practice, at a minimum, is to be sure that the Town Report is sent to every person on the voter checklist, the "legal voters," and that the warning is published in a newspaper of general circulation. That will meet the

statutory mandates. If the town also wants to send direct mail to others or publish or post notices saying that the Town Report and warning are available at the clerk's office or the general store, or somewhere else in town, that's fine. There is no law against over-informing citizens about what is going on in their town with their tax dollars.

*- Libby Turner, VLCT Staff Attorney*

*(This question is reprinted from the December 2001 VLCT News due to the many requests made at our recent Workshop for Town Treasurers and Auditors.)*

*Our town recently decided to eliminate the office of auditor. We*

*(Continued on next page)*

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## ASK THE LEAGUE -

(Continued from previous page)

*have since decided that we do not like that arrangement and we would like to again have elected auditors. How does the town go about doing this?*

The process for reinstating the office of auditor is much like the process for eliminating it: "A vote to eliminate the office of town auditor shall remain in effect until rescinded by a majority vote of the legal voters present and voting, by ballot, at an annual meeting duly warned for that purpose." 17 V.S.A. § 2651b (a).

The way to do this is by placing an article on the town meeting warning, such as: "Shall the town vote to reinstate the office of auditor . . ." Note, also, that this requires a paper ballot.

- Brian Monaghan, VLCT Law Center Staff

*What do you make of all the discussion on the Muninet lately about how towns collect interest and penalties on delinquent taxes?*

Because state law is not very concise on this topic, Vermont towns have different methods

for collecting taxes and related interest and penalties. Generally, the delinquent tax policy is set by the delinquent tax collector; he or she can do this without any input from the selectboard or anybody else in town. However, a town may desire to ask the voters to speak to some of the issues at Town Meeting. This is surely the most democratic method for determining such policies; it also puts delinquent taxpayers on notice that their fellow residents have spoken. Some examples:

### Tax Installment Payments

*Shall the voters authorize the payment of real and personal property taxes to the Town Treasurer in two installments, with the due dates being August 15 and November 15? 32 V.S.A. §§ 4871, et seq.*

### Interest on Overdue Taxes with Each Installment

*Shall the voters authorize collection of interest on overdue taxes from the due date of each installment in the amount of 1% per month or fraction thereof for the first three months and thereafter 1 1/2% per month or fraction thereof? 32*

V.S.A. § 4873. Note that municipalities have the option of assessing interest either after the due date of the last installment due date, or after each installment due date. Be aware that only interest can be charged on tax installments; penalties cannot be charged until after the final tax due date, unless permitted by municipal charter. 32 V.S.A. § 1674 (1).

### Due Date/Postmarked Date

*Shall the voters accept tax payments as timely if postmarked by the tax due date by the United States Postal Service?*

Or:

*Shall the voters authorize tax payments to be accepted as paid when date-stamped received by the town?*

- Brian Monaghan, VLCT Law Center Staff

*(Property tax collection practices are included in VLCT's 2002 Municipal Census, due for release early next year. This survey of municipalities around the State collected information on local government administrative, voting, regional cooperation, budgetary and land use practices and policies.)*

## 2003 LEGISLATURE -

(Continued from Page One)

up for discussion now that Vermonters have had six months' experience with its tangled web. Across the state, candidates ran on **permit reform** and **Act 60 reform**. Both are huge issues, and reform of either one has evaded several previous Legislatures. **Transportation, management of corrections populations, homeland security in**

**Vermont and health care costs** will certainly come up as legislators search for new ideas about how to resolve those intractable problems. Defining every discussion will be the **economic situation** nationally and as it is playing out in Vermont, with continued deficits and reduced tax revenues coming in to state coffers.

### MAKING THE MUNICIPAL VOICE HEARD

How can you prepare for January? Please take advantage of the opportunity to read over the *2003 VLCT Municipal Policy*. It was developed by your colleagues and voted at our annual meeting where every city and town has a vote. If you have not yet had the opportunity to meet with your newly elected legislators, make a commitment to do so as a board and community early in the new year. You are the voice of local government that your representatives and senators will listen to above all others. Make sure they know who you are and that you know how to contact them! The *VLCT Weekly Legislative Report* will get rolling again with a preview this month and a first issue mailed out January 10. The *VLCT Weekly Legislative Report* keeps you up to date on the activities of the

week as they might affect local governments. It also maintains a list of bills that have been introduced which address municipal issues. Plan now to attend **Local Government Day in the Legislature on Wednesday, February 12, 2003**. And make clear to your legislators that you are willing to testify before committees on legislation. Many committees will now hear from witnesses on speaker phone. It isn't that hard! We will put tips for effective testimony in one of our first Legislative Reports.

The VLCT web site, [www.vlct.org](http://www.vlct.org), has all the legislative reports on it as well as legislative alerts and comments from members on legislation that is pending. The Legislative web site, [www.leg.state.vt.us](http://www.leg.state.vt.us), has the names, addresses and e-mails of legislators as well as bills that are introduced, committees they were sent to and any action or amendments that are made on the floor of the Senate and House. You may also find contact information for the Sergeant-at-Arms and other State House officials.

Ready? Set, Go! Welcome to 2003.

- Karen Horn, VLCT Director, Legislative and Membership Services

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## BOARD PROFILE -

(Continued from Page Two)

rewarding as it is productive. "It's just a beautiful town – I wouldn't want to live anywhere else," she said. Her children, Allison, who is at medical student at UVM, and Jayme, a graduate of Lyndon State College who is working in Burlington, even want to return someday. Sandy is confident that the town they return to will offer them professional opportunities and a great quality of life, because it is working hard to create the former, while preserving the latter.

"We do have the same problem that others around the State have in enticing new business and industry," she said. For years, St. Johnsbury tried to get new businesses to locate within the Town. Many cited the lack of parking and overall appearance of the downtown as reasons not to locate there. Recently, Sandy said, selectboard chair Reginald Wakeham suggested that the Town try a different tactic, by borrowing a little bit of the "if you build it, they will come," mentality. As a result, St. Johnsbury built a new parking facility that is beautifully landscaped and improved other areas in the downtown. The effort seems to have paid off, as there has recently been some growth in the number of downtown businesses.

Sandy is involved in downtown development as a corporator of the St. Johnsbury Development Fund. She also is active in the Vermont Municipal Clerks and Treasurers' Association (VMCTA) as a member of its Legislative Committee. She sits on the Secretary of State's Town Clerk Advisory Committee and hopes to serve on VMCTA's new committee on federal election reform. She is active in the St. Johnsbury Academy Alumni Association and also helps her husband, Mark, run the restaurant that they own downtown, the Surf 'n Sirloin.

All of this started back in late 1987, when her daughters were in elementary school and she was finishing up her bachelor's degree in Business Administration at Lyndon State College. A selectboard member suggested that she consider becoming St. Johnsbury's new clerk/treasurer, as the current one was retiring after 33 years. She said she happily agreed to run, thinking it would be more like applying for a job than actually running for office. Well, she recalled with a smile, that mindset didn't last long – as soon as she announced her candidacy, two others did as well.

"All of a sudden I was running a campaign, working with a committee to raise campaign funds, and speaking at civic organizations," she said, still with amazement in her voice 15 years later. In March 1988, Sandy was elected in one

of the biggest turnouts in years, and has run unopposed ever since.

There hasn't been a dull day since her election. She credits this to the nature of the job, and to being able to work with three different town managers and many different selectboard members. "Each town manager is interested in different areas," she noted, adding that selectboard members have their own individual agendas as well. "I remember initially thinking with each change, 'hmm, we don't do it this way,' and then realizing, 'but it is ok,'" she observed. "You learn," she added, "to deal with each person's agenda."

Change has also come to her office as it transitioned from one computer in 1988 to many today. Office operations are now all done on the computer, and Sandy is embarking on transferring land records to the computer. One of the projects she is most proud of is a collaboration with the Fairbanks Museum, the St. Johnsbury Atheneum, and the St. Johnsbury Academy to computerize their archives, create climate controlled space for the group's original documents (such as the Town's original 1787 charter) and develop a disaster plan for preservation of the records. "This all started with a \$500 grant to study what could be done," Sandy said. Additional grants and a lot of volunteer time have kept the project going through the years.

Looking ahead, Sandy feels that St. Johnsbury will have to be attentive to how it grows. As the largest community in the area, it has a wide array of social service agencies and a large population that has settled there to use the agencies' services. Finding a balance between that population's needs and the community's as a whole will be tricky, Sandy said.

She is also cultivating the next generation of local government volunteers and officials. Each election year she speaks to the government class at St. Johnsbury Academy about elections, and, right there, registers to vote any students who are eligible. A St. Johnsbury Academy student also attends each selectboard meeting and reports back to his or her government class about the issues.

As to her own continuing growth and education, Sandy is looking forward to her service on the VLCT Board of Directors. Initially, she plans to "listen and learn." Eventually, she would like to become more involved with legislative efforts to streamline Vermont's land use permitting processes, which she feels are an impediment to economic growth. "These economic issues are no longer unique to the Northeast Kingdom," she commented.

Summing up, Sandy expresses the sentiment that so many Vermont local officials feel: "I have the great opportunity," she said, "to work where I was born and educated, and to see my community grow and change." It doesn't get much better than that!

Welcome to the VLCT Board, Sandy.

- Katherine Roe, VLCT Communications  
Coordinator

## TRIVIAL PURSUIT

Well, we stumped you last month with a question about the last election in which the Legislature was called upon to decide the winner, and the person with less than a majority of the popular vote was chosen. The year was 1977. T. Garry Buckley and John Alden were running for Lt. Governor and Buckley was chosen over Alden, who won the majority of the popular vote (48.4% to 47.6%). However, Alden had been under criminal investigation, a secret known to some lawmakers who said privately that this convinced them to vote for Buckley. The legislative votes were 90 for Buckley and 87 for Alden.

December's query is:

**This Vermont county was also named Cumberland County and Unity County before the Legislature finally settled on its current name. What is it today?**

Contact us with your answer: VLCT, 89 Main Street, Ste. 4, Montpelier, VT 05602; 800/649-7915; fax, 802/229-2211, e-mail, [kroe@vlct.org](mailto:kroe@vlct.org).

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# Tech Check

## STATE OFFERS ON-LINE BID OPPORTUNITIES SYSTEM

The Vermont Department of Economic Development has developed a free bid opportunity system, which allows municipal governments to post contracting opportunities for free.

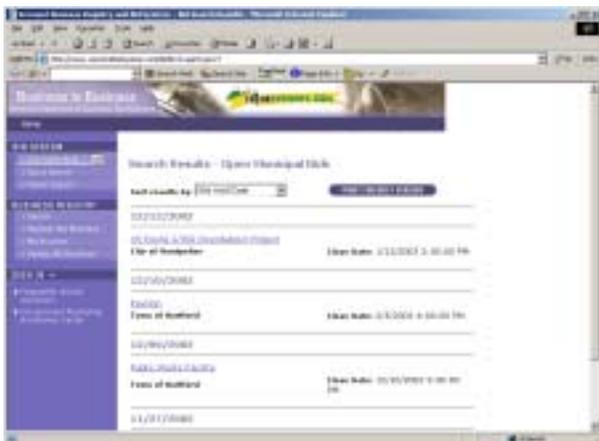
Municipalities that are using or have used the system include the City of Montpelier, Town of Hartford, Burlington Electric Department, City of Winooski, City of Barre, Town of Cambridge and many more.

You can access the website at [www.thinkvermont.com](http://www.thinkvermont.com) and click on Bid Opportunities. Figure 1 shows you the home page. The drop-down list under Bid System (to

FIGURE 1



FIGURE 2



the left of the screen) allows potential bidders to choose the type of open bids they wish to review. The choices are State, Federal, Municipal, and Private. You can also choose to look at all open bids, or just those that have been awarded.

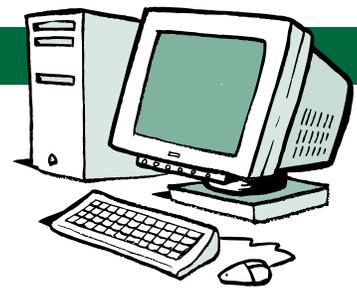
Figure 2 is the Open Municipal Bids. On the day this was done both the City of Montpelier and the Town of Cambridge each had an Request for Proposals (RFP), and the Town of Hartford had two. This list of open bids can be sorted by bid add date, opening date, authoring entity, date award was entered, keywords, or bid work location. This makes it very easy for users to find what they are looking for.

If you click on the Open Bid project name, you will get details for that particular RFP. The detail includes request, open, and closing dates, intent to bid deadline, estimated dollar value, Request for Qualifications (RFQ) number, locations, bid description, special instructions, and contact information. You can also include bid attachments such as Word documents with your original RFP.

This is also a great place for municipalities to find sample RFPs. Rather than reinvent the wheel, you can open and save or print the attachments, using them as templates for your own future bid specifications.

The entire process is electronic: you post the RFP on-line, bidders post their bids on-line and you award the bid on-line as well. It's easy to use, and training is available at no cost.

To start posting your opportunities, contact Robin Miller, Dept. of Economic Development at 802/828-5240 or e-mail [Robin@ThinkVermont.com](mailto:Robin@ThinkVermont.com).



## DO YOUR COMPUTER SKILLS NEED FINE TUNING?

### SIGN UP FOR A VLCT-SPONSORED TRAINING

VLCT's partnership with SymQuest/KnowledgeWave Training, begun last summer, continues to offer a comprehensive technical training program to VLCT members at a substantially reduced cost.

KnowledgeWave Training, Inc. is a Vermont-based computer training firm, with classrooms conveniently located in South Burlington and Montpelier.

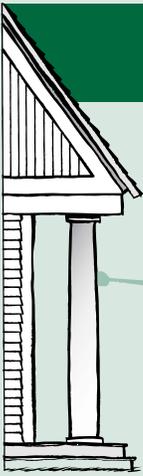
VLCT regular and associate members are able to enroll in one-day desktop application classes at the reduced rate of only \$99/class (regularly \$179), and receive a 25% discount off all other technical classes.

Please visit KnowledgeWave's web site (<http://www.knowledgewave.com>), call 800/831-8449 or send e-mail to [vlct@knowledgewave.com](mailto:vlct@knowledgewave.com) for course information and training dates. Identify yourself as a VLCT member when you do so that you will be sure to receive the reduced rate for your class.

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## RATES AND PERFORMANCE HIGHLIGHT HEALTH TRUST ANNUAL MEETING

The VLCT Health Trust Annual Meeting was held on Friday, November 15, 2002 at the Lake Morey Resort in Fairlee. Seventy people attended to hear reports from Health Trust and Blue Cross Blue Shield officials about the "state of the Trust" and their particular health insurance plans.

As noted last month in the *VLCT News*, health insurance rates for 2003 are up 14-19 percent, depending on which plan your municipality is in. (Last year rates rose only 5 percent.) In light of this substantial increase, VLCT Group Services Director **David Sichel** reviewed health insurance trends and discussed



*Wendy Schroeder, outgoing member of the VLCT Health Trust Board of Directors, was presented with an engraved set of granite bookends as a token of VLCT's appreciation for her many years of service as a Director.*



### ATTENTION UNEMPLOYMENT TRUST MEMBERS

Annual Rate Assessment sheets for 2003 were mailed to you early this month. Statements will be mailed to you in early January, *so there is no need to send payment until you receive your statement.* If there are any discrepancies on your rate assessment sheet, please call Niki White in Member Relations at 800/649-7915. Thank you.

### ATTENTION VLCT HEALTH TRUST MEMBERS

For those groups participating in our Group Life and Disability Program with The Standard Insurance Company, please make sure you have up-to-date beneficiary cards signed and dated by your employees on file in your office. If you need beneficiary cards, please call Niki White in Member Relations at 800/649-7915. If you do not participate in this program and would be interested in obtaining a quote on this valuable employee benefit, please call Suzanne Schittina or Kim Gauthier in Member Relations at 800/649-7915.

### ATTENTION PACIF MEMBERS

Special notice to those of you who were named contact on the 2003 PACIF renewal: The 2003 Coverage Documents and Vehicle identification cards will be mailed out to you during the last week in December. Please make sure the vehicle cards are reviewed and placed into the appropriate vehicles. Thank you!

### WELCOME NEW PACIF MEMBERS

**Town of Barnet**  
**Town of Brownington**  
**Town of Chittenden**  
**Town of Moretown**  
**Village of Orleans**

the four factors that continue to drive up health costs at rates far exceeding the Consumer Price Index (CPI). Those four factors are:

- 1) Rapidly (20 percent per year) rising prescription drug costs.
- 2) New medical technology and treatments.
- 3) Governmental health program cost shifting (Medicare and Medicaid).
- 4) General inflation.

**Gillian Printon**, from Mercer Human Resource Consulting, presented the results of the recently completed claims, operational and clinical program audit of Blue Cross Blue Shield. The Health Trust hired Mercer earlier this year to complete this general audit of the service Blue Cross Blue Shield is providing our members. The audit shows that while generally Blue Cross Blue Shield is meeting or exceeding

industry standards there are areas that need improvement. We will be working with Blue Cross Blue Shield to develop a work plan to address these areas of concern.

**Fred Duplessis**, from Sullivan, Powers and Company, reviewed the FY 2001 financial audit, which showed the Trust to be financially solid.

Health Trust members closed the meeting by electing **Mike Welch**, St. Johnsbury Town Manager, to fill a Board vacancy created by the retirement of long time Board member **Wendy Schroeder**. Wendy was recognized for her 14 years of service to the Health Trust. The Health Trust Board will meet next month to consider nominations to fill the Alternate Director seat previously held by Mr. Welch.

*- David Sichel, Director, VLCT Group Services*



## REPORT FROM THE FIELD: THE BENEFITS OF WORKING TOGETHER

Looking to keep training fresh for its employees, the Town of Bennington's Water Resources Department found being creative helped.

In the past, hands-on confined entry training sessions consisted of training in the town's manholes, with the use of both human and manikin victims. Water Resources staff **George Leblanc, Mark White** and **Gail Tiffany** commented that after doing this type of training many times, it loses its effectiveness. Being creative, they enlisted the Fire Service Training Academy in Pittsford, Vermont, for help with fulfilling the Department's training requirements.

The Fire Academy has a tractor-trailer they can take to a site, along with instructors to help with hands-on training. During my visit, they were helping the Water Resources Department train in the use of its self-contained breathing apparatus while traversing a confined area. Soon the trailer will have a tank so actual confined entry and rescue training, with tripod, atmosphere testing, and self-contained breathing apparatus, can be completed.

The trailer's interior is completely dark, so it can be used in a fire-training mode as well.

Even though dark, there is a console that allows one instructor to monitor a student's progress with the use of three cameras. A public address system is part of the console so an instructor can assist a student by voice when necessary. The cameras allow for taping the training for documentation and review purposes. At the end of the training in Bennington there were six hours of tape!

In the majority of cases, there is a fee for Fire Service Training assistance. For more information, contact Dan Zimmer, the Fire Academy's Training Coordinator, at 802/483-2755.

*- Arthur La Pierre, VLCT Senior Loss Control Consultant*

**Editor's Note:** *In another joint effort with the Fire Academy, Art is currently an Adjunct Defensive Driver Course 4 Instructor for the Academy and is working toward full certification as an instructor by the National Safety Council (NSC). He hopes this will lead to future regional defensive driver training sessions for VLCT PACIF members. "It's one more tool we can offer our insureds," he commented. The training is a classroom-only course leading to certification by the NSC. It is meant to enhance, not replace, VLCT PACIF's annual Stevens Advanced Driver training.*

*The Stevens training is, as anyone who has taken can well attest, very hands-on!*

### 2003 VLCT PACIF RATES

#### HOLDING STEADY IN A DIFFICULT MARKET

VLCT PACIF members received their annual renewals earlier this month, bringing the good news that property and liability rates are unchanged from last year and that workers' compensation rates are increasing by an average of just 5 percent. These rate changes are more than modest in the face of a hard insurance market. In addition, the PACIF Board recently voted to distribute \$500,000 of surplus back to the members. Over \$7.8 million has been returned to the membership over the years.

During the past year, PACIF has grown by over 25%. We are excited by this growth, and look forward to serving our members in 2003.



### VLCT Property and Casualty Intermunicipal Fund, Inc. (VLCT-PACIF)

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## SENATOR LYONS -

*(Continued from Page One)*

between municipalities for needs. Especially for transportation, bridge work and so on, certainly local governments can't raise sufficient money to provide the infrastructure that everyone uses. I think we [at the State level] need to see where there is the greatest need and to put our investment into those places. Especially for infrastructure needs and for capital expenses, because they are usually one-time things. Towns need to be helped through that. And, actually, I think we do a pretty good job at that. But there is always that tension.

### **VLCT: What do you believe are the appropriate roles in Vermont for the state and local governments?**

Senator Lyons: I think it is important to have state oversight of some things that cross town borders. On the other hand, I think it's right and good for local communities to determine under what rules they are going to live – the ordinances that local communities put in place. I think it's very important that we have that level of home rule. Beyond that there are some efficiencies of administration that can be reached at the state level. For example, the important services like roads, voting policies and public safety in general.

On charter amendments, I think that local communities ought to be able to set the tone for [their] governance. The good thing about having legislative oversight in that is to make sure that nothing is being done that is going to harm or that will be against state law, and that whatever is being considered in the charter is ethical. I firmly believe that there is some oversight that is important. But I think basically that if it has been hashed out at the local level and has gone through all the planning process, and been through a town meeting, I don't think the state really has a right to change how a town does something. If a town wants to elect the town clerk, than it should do that. If a town decides that it is an appointment process, then the town should be able to do that. I don't think that a different opinion should rule.

### **VLCT: What are the strengths and weaknesses of both?**

Senator Lyons: I actually think that people always want to have local control. They want to be able to determine what goes on in their communities, how fast their community grows, how many walking paths they have or what kinds of ordinances are in the community. The local communities really need to do that. On the other hand, if you have too many of those individual fiefdoms, then it becomes really

difficult for something like a liquor control board to go in and know what every single ordinance is in every single community on liquor control, cabaret licenses, or something like that. If [a town] becomes too parochial in nature and ignores the needs of neighboring communities then I think that we've gone too far on the side of local control. I think it is really important for local communities to work together with their adjacent towns. But we don't have anything like county government in the state and, for that reason, I think that the state sort of plays that role of trying to bring towns together. When it gets to be too much of a role - telling towns what they have to do - I think then we need to have the balance in place. It is a constant balancing act.

### **VLCT: Given the balancing act the State finds itself in, what can it do to enhance local governments' ability to**

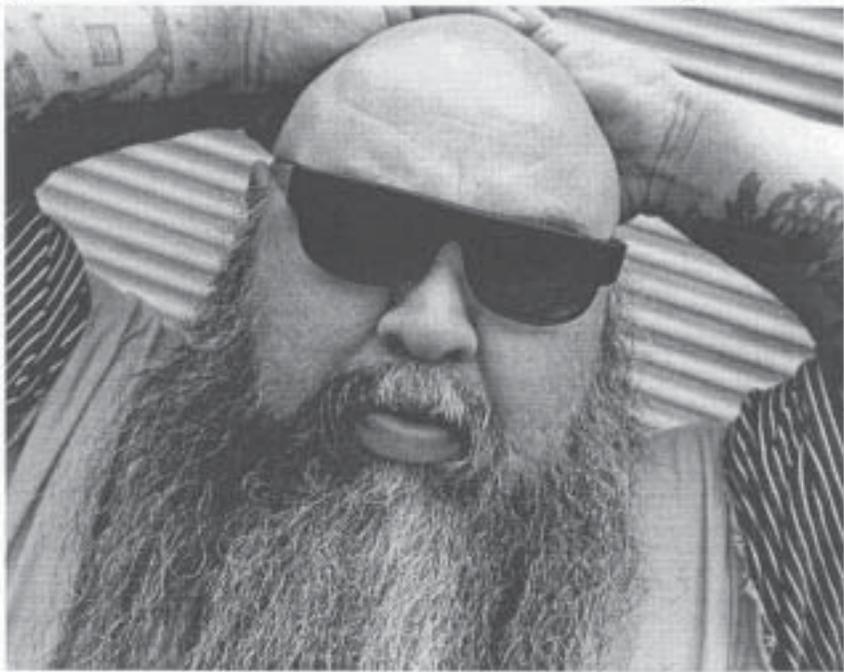
### **serve their constituents?**

Senator Lyons: Be responsive. One of the things that I have valued very much from the state level is the Secretary of State's (and VLCT's) efforts at training sessions and informational pieces in newsletters. Both of those really focus on legal issues, local rights and what the State is doing. Also, being responsive to what local communities say. For example, last session there was a bill that I was working on in agriculture on roads and farm vehicles. VLCT was great in providing me with feedback, as was the state transportation department. Knowing what local communities think across the State when making decisions is key.

Standardizing things that can be standardized throughout the State is also important so that, for example, we don't run into the same issues with voting that Florida does. I think a

*(Continued on next page)*

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## SENATOR LYONS -

*(Continued from Previous Page)*

lot of that has to do with the connection that is made between state and local offices. We know when a bridge is due to be fixed and that is because there is a constant, well, you could call it a battle, but it is actually constant communication. Again, it is the balancing act because it is not going to satisfy all the communities all the time.

**VLCT: What are the differences that you find working in municipal and state government, as you shift between your selectboard hat and your legislator hat?**

Senator Lyons: You know, on the selectboard, you are doing everything. You are balancing the budget, keeping track of a capital plan, working on institutions and transportation, social services and personnel issues and



*Senator Virginia Lyons*

public safety. So you are doing all of it – a little bit of everything all the time. And you are worried very much about the person at the end of the road that is not getting electrical service or getting plowed out in time.

When I get to the Senate, I am treated to the broad perspective of a lot of different communities that may have similar problems. I am learning about how those problems may have been solved in different ways, and maybe from that jumps a policy that will help people.

Another big difference is that at the local level I am dealing with people on a daily basis. It is one to one. At the state level I am dealing with policies and possibly groups. I think it is extremely challenging to sit on a selectboard and sit across the table from someone and say, no you can't do that. It is much harder than sitting at a table and making a policy when you don't see the people.

The challenge at the state level is to really understand and know the consequences of any policy that you pass. You can find out two months later that it was the worst thing in the world or it was much better than you anticipated. At the local level you have a much more instantaneous ability to respond. So if you do something and you make a mistake you can go out and fix it.

But, probably most importantly, by working in state and local government simultaneously, I am forced each and every day to think about the proper role of government in the lives of our citizens.

**VLCT: What are the disadvantages and advantages posed by your selectboard and legislator hats?**

Senator Lyons: Certainly the advantage for me is that I understand local government. And

as you look at our democratic process, the local governing bodies are significant in leading whatever happens. We know what the problems and issues are.

You really learn from being on a selectboard to distinguish between what is policy and what is management. I see so many people who go into the State House and they want to fix management. They want to fix the administration and how laws are implemented. And really, what we're all about at the State House is devising a policy that is then implemented. Just knowing the difference between those two things is important.

I just want to give one other advantage. I  
*(Continued on next page)*

## FEDERAL GRANT HELPS PURCHASE DEFIBRILLATORS

Rural police and fire personnel in Vermont will soon have the resources to better respond to one of the most critical medical emergencies – cardiac arrest – thanks to a grant awarded to the State from the federal government.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services recently announced that the Vermont Department of Health will receive \$260,359 for rural communities to purchase automated external defibrillators (AEDs) and to train first responders in their use. The grants, authorized by the Rural Access to Emergency Devices Act, total \$12.5 million nationwide to help rural communities purchase AEDs.

The Vermont Department of Health's 13 regional Emergency Medical Services (EMS) districts will begin work next month to identify and prioritize organizations that are eligible for the AEDs. The organizations include first responders who provide care, but not transport of ill persons; certain ambulance services; fire and police personnel; certain medical clinics; and facilities (businesses, stadiums, etc.) that attract large crowds.

AEDs are small, easy-to-use devices that provide an electric shock to restart a heart that has suddenly stopped beating. Their presence is often beneficial because, for every minute that passes after cardiac arrest occurs, chances of survival decrease by 10 percent.

For more information about the AED grant program, contact Dan Manz at the Vermont Department of Health, EMS Office, at 800/244-0911, or at [dmanz@vdh.state.vt.us](mailto:dmanz@vdh.state.vt.us). Dan was instrumental in writing and obtaining this grant. VLCT, on behalf of all our municipal members, appreciates his hard work.

### Where Is Your Community Headed ? Where Do You Want It To Head ? What Can Be Done To Head It That Way ?

The best answers rest with citizens themselves. But bringing out the answers requires experience and skill in assembling facts, getting diverse views, and achieving consensus.



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## SENATOR LYONS -

*(Continued from Page Nine)*

had a bill in last year about the criteria for allocating sewer, which was the result of a lawsuit in our town. The bill would have clarified the law and selectboards would not have been as susceptible to lawsuits if someone felt that they were arbitrary in their sewer allocation process. That law didn't go through. However, one of the advantages that I took into the State House was that I knew there had been a lawsuit and that we could correct that portion of law.

Besides bringing my selectboard experience to the State House, I also see advantages from my work in Montpelier. At the municipal level, we deal with municipal issues. Being at the state level means that I can begin to work on state education policy, and that is very important to my community. So it expands what I can do in a lot of ways, to health care or natural resources or other policies across the state.

As to disadvantages, you become parochial in your interests. You think only about your local community to the exclusion of statewide issues. And so there are times when I should not be putting on my Williston hat. It might help me to understand positions but I should be able to look at Guilford and Rutland and every other town in the state and form policies that help them all.

**VLCT: How do you keep in touch with your constituents? What is the most effective way for them to communicate with you?**

Senator Lyons: My e-mail address! What I like from my constituents is a letter or an e-mail that informs me about an issue and their position – who they are and why they feel the way they do. If they are communicating with me about prescription drugs and they let me know they are on a fixed income, have a chronic illness and spend half of their income on prescription drugs, that is much more compelling to me that someone who has had one prescription drug in the last ten years and thinks the price is awful. Putting it into personal context is important. Giving reasons for their position is very important. History is also important.

If they are happy with just letting me know their position, and I don't have to respond, that's particularly helpful [to tell me] during the session when there are millions of things going on.

I like any type of communication, though telephone calls are not the greatest, unless someone absolutely needs to talk with me if there is a problem that we need to solve and we

need to talk about it. [It's just that] I'm working from eight in the morning until seven at night on State House issues during the session and returning calls is very difficult.

**VLCT: In your first term, what was your greatest accomplishment? Disappointment? Biggest surprise?**

Senator Lyons: The greatest accomplishment was feeling that I was effective. I did that in different ways. Two or three of my own bills were passed. And one of my disappointments was that one of them didn't pass, and that was my sewer bill. Of the ones that were passed, my own personal bills were generated from my experiences on the selectboard. So I felt a real sense of accomplishment in taking something back to my town.

I have to say that defending the Champion Lands bill in the Senate was a huge accomplishment. Another one is the statewide program for health communities, called CHAMP, the Coalition for Healthy Activity, Motivation and Prevention Programs. CHAMP is an assessment that is going on now and that will ultimately help all Vermont towns, all Vermonters, in preventing chronic diseases – heart disease and stroke. That was a big accomplishment.

The biggest surprise was how really slowly the process works. And how really honest people are. I am always pleasantly surprised to work with the people I work with. Everyone is so committed and sincere about their public service. That was refreshing.

**VLCT: What do you think the important issues will be in the upcoming legislative session?**

Senator Lyons: Obviously, the adjustment to a new administration. The administration sets its tone and its values through its budget. The template that we get is the Governor's. We don't start from scratch. That will be very interesting. I think we will also see some legislative initiatives coming to us that wouldn't have come otherwise, and we're going to have to work on some of these things together. Included in that may be permitting, changing the way health care is delivered, changing education, maybe school choice. It is all percolating.

[The] new Senate and new House learning to work together, because I think that will be critically important. This is one very important issue – how to move forward cooperatively and to respect the differences we now have between the administration, the majority in the Senate and the narrow differences in the House.

At the local level, I think a very important issue is going to have to do with the permitting

process. Because I think, while everyone is talking about Act 250 as "the permit," the reality is that it is the local permit process that a lot of developers, builders and citizens have problems with. It is going to be very interesting to see if there is a way to improve the permit process without taking away from local communities' ability to have their own permit process. Some of the proposed legislation that I have seen so far suggests that local communities will be working regionally rather than independently. Part of me says that's a good thing to look at, and part of me says this is not going to work! [There is also the state agency permitting process] and whether or not local communities are capable of pulling in any of the Agency of Natural Resources pieces.

The other thing that I think is going to be important is the large farm operation issue. Currently, that is all under the agriculture umbrella, and local communities don't have much of a say. Obviously, if your heart is in the elected government process, you have to think that the elected government at every level should have some sort of role to play, and currently it doesn't in some of these areas.

Health care is another big issue. Local communities can't continue to afford the health care that they have.

**VLCT: Do you have any other thoughts to share with VLCT members?**

Senator Lyons: I think VLCT members need to know how hard their legislators work. And that local governance issues are critically important to legislators. Having said that, we also know that there are other areas that aren't touched by local government and we try to do our best to understand what people want. We've got businesses to think about, we've got health care providers, hospitals, all of those things that are regulated differently from local government. So we work very hard.

I personally wear my selectboard hat all the time, and it is hard to take it off. The heart and soul of government begins in the local communities. I think there are a lot of us who walk around with that all the time. It is important.

## CONGRATULATIONS

A record three members of the VLCT Board of Directors were elected to the Vermont Legislature last month. **Senator James Condos**, Chair, South Burlington City Council, was re-elected to his second term. **Representatives Gail Fallar**, Clerk/Treasurer, Tinmouth, and **Mary Peterson**, Selectperson, Williston, will be new to the State House in 2003. Congratulations to this strong municipal trio!



## RESUME WRITING -

(Continued from Page Eighteen)

better to establish that early in the process and save everyone a lot of pain as you try to negotiate a match that was not meant to be or end up in a job in which you are unable to make ends meet.

The best resumes we have read total between two and three pages and include name and address, type of position sought, educational background, employment history and other activities.

### REFERENCES

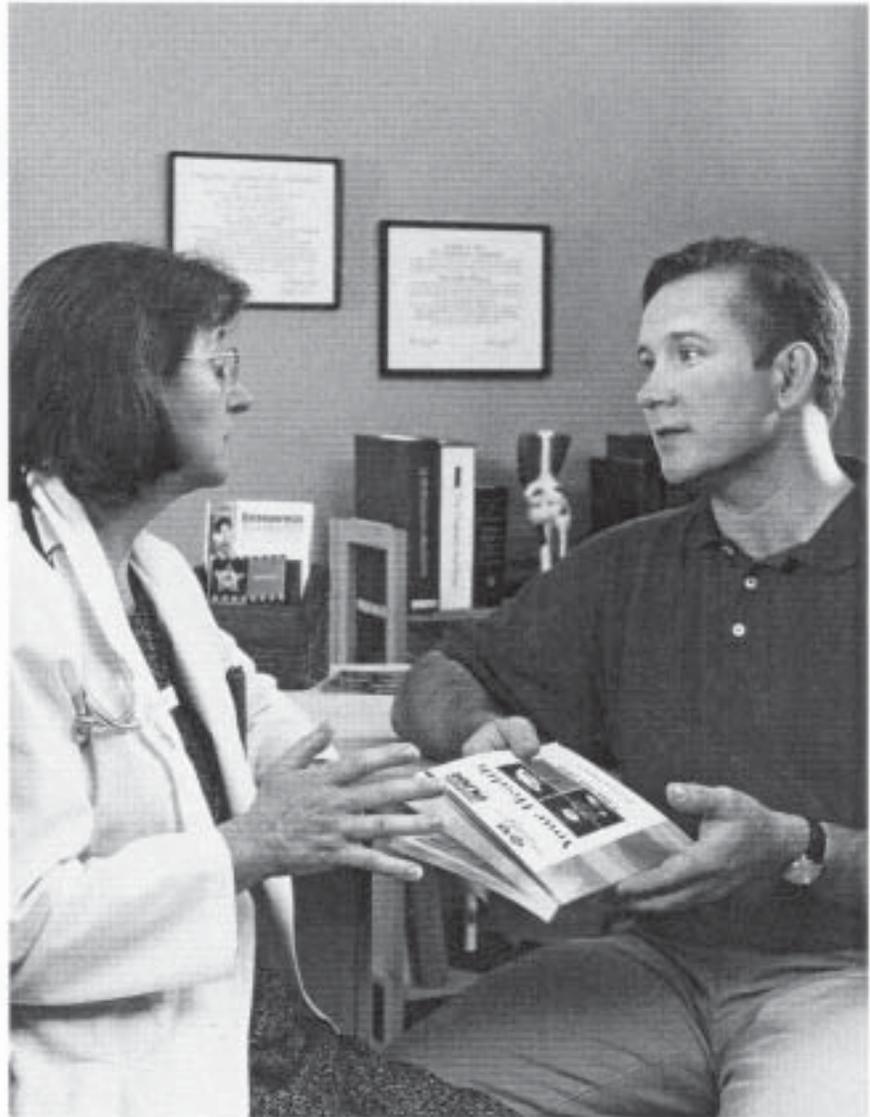
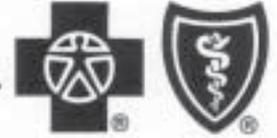
References can be another tricky piece of a resume, particularly when considering your own current employment status. Many job applicants simply state at the end of their resume, *references available upon request*. This is fine as long as you have a list of references that you are ready to provide when the request comes and you are not surprised by it. Take the time to ask your references for their permission or at least inform them that they are on the list you are providing to potential employers so that they are not surprised when they receive a call.

A list of references need not be long. It should include people you know well outside of work (not family members) who can speak about you and your experience knowledgably or people you know in a professional capacity. Listing the U.S. Senators from Vermont is not helpful unless you actually worked for them. The list needs to contain a balance between personal or "character" references (such as someone with whom you served on a planning commission) and professional references, including a current or recent employer. A job applicant should expect that if he or she is a finalist for a job, his or her current employer will be contacted. Please note that this should not be done without your permission! For that matter, if you are a finalist and you have given permission, persons not on your list may be contacted (for instance the members of your selectboard). Generally a list of references need not include more than six people.

Clearly putting your best foot forward when introducing yourself on paper is terrifically important. Following these recommendations is no guarantee of landing the next position for which you apply. But doing so will help to demonstrate your seriousness about the job and your capacity to provide key information in a clear and succinct manner. We wish you the best of luck!

-Karen Horn, Director, VLCT Legislative and Membership Services

the signs of a healthier vermont.



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# FROM PLANS TO REALITY: PERMITTING AND BUILDING AFFORDABLE HOUSING

*(As noted in the October 2002 VLCT News, VLCT is one of 28 members of the Vermont Housing Awareness Campaign. This success story from the Town of Cambridge is shared to help other municipalities learn from its experiences.)*

A little over a year ago, aging residents of Cambridge, Vermont who were in need of housing with support services had limited choices: move away from town to an assisted living facility, or move in with relatives. At the same time, families were increasingly shut out of the local housing market due to rising housing costs and pressure on the market from the local ski areas.

In December 2001, after a two-and-a-half-year development process, Jeffersonville Community Housing was completed, enabling aging residents to stay in town and providing well-managed, affordable housing for families. This is a mixed-income, intergenerational development with three buildings: the senior building houses 22 seniors and ten family apartments are located in two, five-unit buildings.

Although the Lamoille Housing Partnership (LHP) secured site control in the summer of 1999, Act 250 permitting hurdles and local opposition extended the development timeline over a two-year period. LHP, a nonprofit housing development organization, worked with Housing Vermont and community advocates to address the concerns of Cambridge residents during the design and predevelopment process.

## STEPS TO SUCCESS

1. The Town of Cambridge supported the development, first by sponsoring an application for funding from the Vermont Community Development Program, and also by granting a sewer allocation for the project. According to LHP Director Lucy Leriche, "Really, from the beginning, the Town was always very supportive."
2. In order to get feedback from the townspeople, LHP invited Jeffersonville residents to join a Citizens' Advisory Council. Public meetings were scheduled and LHP held mediated discussions with opponents and responded in writing to their concerns. Comments from the public meetings were printed in the local papers.
3. Without zoning, the Act 250 process

became the other principal forum for comments on the proposal. A few residents appealed LHP's Act 250 permit request, citing concerns that the buildings would negatively impact the historic character of the Village of Jeffersonville, that the senior building was too large, and that the buildings were to be built in a floodway. LHP worked through each of these concerns in the design and development process. The design of the senior building was altered slightly, and the neighbors' concerns were addressed. Ultimately, the Environmental Board approved the Act 250 permits.

## A NEW HOME

Today, all the hard work has paid off and Jeffersonville Community Housing is becoming part of the community. In the senior building, the new residents come from a variety of backgrounds and bring with them different life experiences. Still, they seem to be coming together beautifully.

"We have such a nice community here, and the whole group gets on so well," said Beatrice Desjardins, a resident on the second floor.

According to Cambridge selectboard member Dana Sweet, "It had some opposition from a few people in town, but in the end, it did the most good for the largest number of people. I'm very proud of it, myself. A home for our seniors and they don't have to move out of town. All I see in the paper is good things happening over there. It's unbelievable the happiness coming out of there."

The kitchen, dining room, conference room, and sunroom are common areas where residents can get together for movie night, slide shows, exercise classes and community potluck dinners. The residents have remained active in local community organizations, something that would have been difficult or impossible had they been forced to move out of Cambridge.

The ten-family rental apartments at Jeffersonville Community Housing are affordable to households earning between 30% and 80% of median income, which in Lamoille County translates to between \$13,000 and \$34,700 of annual income for a family of four. (A family with one adult working full-time at minimum wage has an annual income of \$13,000.) Two accessible units accommodate residents with physical disabilities.

The experience of developing Jeffersonville Community Housing was not unlike the process developers might experience in any part of the state. Although a long time in the works, the result is 32 new units of housing that fit in and add a new dimension to this small community.

*- Pam Boyd, Vermont Housing and Conservation Board*



JEFFERSONVILLE COMMUNITY HOUSING



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Vermont Housing Awareness Campaign

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# IN THE JOB MARKET? TIPS FOR PRESENTING YOURSELF ON PAPER

In good economic times, people frequently want to work in the private sector because the pay can be very good. In bad economic times, people often prefer the public sector because the work may be more secure than private sector jobs. Despite this rule of thumb, the present sluggish economy has resulted in even some local government employees finding themselves in the job market.

What should you do to make a good impression when you look for a job? First impressions are critically important in a tight job market. That means you must present yourself well on paper. Over the years we have seen a lot of applications for jobs, either for positions here at VLCT or as a result of the job searches we often conduct for Vermont municipalities. A few things jump out as we review potential employees for jobs ranging from attorney to municipal manager to public works director to the occasional police chief. Here are some pointers to keep in mind.

## COVER LETTER

This is the first product that your potential employer will see. The impression it makes is all-important! Your cover letter should introduce you briefly and describe your interest in the particular job for which you are applying. Be specific with respect to the job. Nothing turns off an employer faster than a sentence that tells him or her that you are applying for some other job – in some other town. It is crucial to succinctly get across to the reader what *you* can do for the employer. At this introductory point, the reader really does not care about what this job can do for you.

Would a potential employer deduce from your address that distance from the job might be an issue? You might mention your willingness to relocate, or the fact that you are in the process of relocating.

Keep the letter to one page if at all possible. Your resume will tell the rest of the story. And be sure that you are using personal letterhead paper, not the letterhead of your current employer. Grammar and spelling are very important in a cover letter. Often we cannot see our own mistakes once they are written – instead we see what we *wanted* to write. As a result, it is a good idea to ask someone else to read the letter at least for spelling and grammar if not for content. Also, be sure to use Spell

Check on your computer when reviewing your letter, even though it does not catch words that are spelled correctly but misused in a sentence.

Use of e-mail to deliver cover letters and resumes is common today. However, if you are using that medium, because of either time constraints or convenience, there are some idiosyncrasies to consider. The text of your e-mail may look quite different when it is received than it did when you carefully formatted and sent it. For example:

To Whom It May Concern:  
Please consider me for the position of manager. Attached to this document please find my resume and cover letter.

To Whom it may Concern:  
Please consider me for the position of manager. Attached please find my resume and cover letter.

As well, sometimes the attached documents don't come through those computer wires at all or they come through in some hieroglyphic that does not impress the recipient. If you must send attachments, try to send them as PDF files. This format is easily accessible to anyone using Adobe Acrobat software and will preserve the formatting that you chose. Regardless of how you send your resume electronically, make sure your name is on every single sheet of paper that the recipient will be printing out. Don't leave a potential employer sifting through a pile of resumes, trying to match up the pages!

Finally, it is always a good idea to send along a hard copy as well and to note that you are doing so in your e-mail.

## RESUME

There are lots of books around that tell job seekers how to write resumes. While some of those methods are quite effective, others can confuse potential employers more than they help. Maybe because we are Yankees, we

recommend putting your name, address, telephone number and e-mail address (if you have one) at the top of the resume in a not too ostentatious typeface. In the same vein, while you want your resume to stand out, you probably don't want it to do so because of its screaming pink or day-glow green color.

If you are going to put a line at the top of the resume regarding the kind of job you are seeking, make very sure, as you did in the cover letter, that the kind of job your resume says you want does in fact match the job for which you are applying.

Resumes can be too short or, at great length, tell someone more than he or she ever wanted to know about you. A potential employer does not need to see every single thing you have accomplished in your professional life. A potential employer does need to see your educational background and any degrees received. Certifications, on the other hand, can be tricky. You do want to let people know of any professional certifications that are necessary to your eligibility for a job. You probably don't need to let them know that you received a certificate of completion for that one-day time management class five years ago. Judgment is key here. What would *you* be interested in knowing about a person?

An employer needs to see your employment history arranged in chronological order, with names of organizations for which you worked, dates of employment and explanations of any gaps in employment. The best resumes we have read contain a short paragraph about the candidate's responsibilities in each of those positions. Generally you don't need to list all the jobs you held in high school unless you are a recent graduate and need to establish a record of reliable employability.

As is the case with certifications, you will need to exercise judgment in compiling a list of items such as hobbies (which some people include and some ignore) or volunteer activities. These lists can be very helpful to potential employers in giving them a picture of you as a whole person, but if everything under the sun is on the list it loses some of its utility. Providing information such as marital status, number or ages of children is entirely up to you and, of course, employers may not request such information in an interview situation.

Some recruitment advertisements request your salary requirements. If you are going to include these, it is worth investigating what similar jobs in the state pay. In the end, pay is likely to be negotiated between the hiring entity and the prospective employee. Nonetheless, if you are out of the employer's price range, it is

*(Continued on Page Fifteen)*



# Classifieds

## HELP WANTED

**Group Services Assistant.** VLCT has an immediate need for a Group Services Assistant to perform a wide range of administrative and technical duties to assist in the underwriting and general administrative services of its insurance trust division. Responsibilities include general administrative support in addition to such duties as processing workers' compensation payroll audits, assisting in gathering and analyzing underwriting information, maintaining member files and data, assisting in the annual renewal process, fielding phone calls regarding underwriting and coverage issues, preparing agendas and taking minutes at board meetings, and providing backup receptionist coverage. We seek an organized individual who is a team player with good oral and written communication skills and the ability to work independently to set and meet deadlines. A high school degree is required, as is general administrative experience or training. Experience with MS

Office, insurance related experience and knowledge of local government operations are preferred qualifications. VLCT provides a competitive salary and exceptional benefits package. Interested candidates should send cover letter, résumé and names/telephone numbers of three references to [jobsearch@vlct.org](mailto:jobsearch@vlct.org) with GS Assistant as subject line or by mail to Human Resources, VLCT, 89 Main Street, Suite 4, Montpelier, VT 05602-2948. VLCT is an equal opportunity employer.

**Special Programs Assistant.** The Central Vermont Solid Waste Management District (CVSWMD) Special Programs Assistant works with the Special Programs Coordinator in planning and implementing the District's ReUse, Recycling, and Illegal Dumping and Burning programs. This position requires considerable contact with the public in a variety of situations. Please send resume and references to Ela Abrams, Special Programs Coordinator, at: CVSWMD, 137 Barre Street, Montpelier,

VT 05602 or to (preferred) [specialprograms@cvswmd.com](mailto:specialprograms@cvswmd.com). **Field Programs Coordinator.** The CVSWMD operates a variety of collection facilities and programs, inclusive of recycling depots and hazardous materials handling facilities. The Field Programs Coordinator is responsible for the ongoing operations at these field sites. These responsibilities include: staffing; supervision and development of staff, volunteers and contract workers; site maintenance, safety and improvements; oversight of daily operations; developing and maintaining good working relationships with contractors providing service at the District facilities, and adherence to District policies and procedures. Please send resume and references to Donna Barlow Casey, Executive Director, at: CVSWMD, 137 Barre Street, Montpelier, VT 05602 or to (preferred) [director@cvswmd.com](mailto:director@cvswmd.com). See our website for more information: [www.cvswmd.com](http://www.cvswmd.com). CVSWMD is an equal opportunity employer.

**City Manager.** The City of St. Albans is seeking applications from qualified candidates for the position of City Manager. The City has a population of approximately 7,600, with 60 full-time employees in the following departments: administrative, full-time fire and police departments and public works, water, wastewater, recreation and community development. Candidates should have a bachelor's degree and/or a minimum of five years of management experience in the public sector. The City Manager is responsible for the daily operations of all departments of the City and reports directly to the City Council. A competitive benefits package to include health, vision, dental and retirement is available. Letter of application, including a detailed resume, salary requirements, and three letters of reference should be forwarded to Mayor Peter DesLauriers, City Hall, P.O. Box 867, St. Albans, VT 05478 to arrive not later than 3 p.m. on 1/17/03.

## FOUND

**Ladies' blue wool coat.** ¾ length, Ashley Scott, gold buttons. Left at VLCT Health Trust Annual Meeting. Please call Niki White at 800/649-7915.

# Calendar

**Compliance 2003: Are You Ready for NPDES?** Wednesday, January 8, 2003, E.J. Prescott South Burlington Facility and (repeats) Thursday, January 9, 2003, E.J. Prescott Barre Facility. Sponsored by Everett J. Prescott, Inc., this workshop will discuss the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Storm Water Regulations that will be implemented in March 2003. Those involved with construction activity/land disturbing need to understand the implications of this landmark legislation. For more information, or to register, contact E.J. Prescott at 802/865-3958 or 802/223-2385.

**Local Government Day in the Legislature.** Wednesday, February 12, 2003, Capitol Plaza Hotel, Montpelier. Sponsored by VLCT and the Vermont Municipal Clerks and Treasurers' Association, this popular annual event offers municipal officials a chance to hear from VLCT's

lobbying staff and VMCTA's legislative committee. Meetings with legislators and hearings at the State House are also scheduled. For more information, please contact Jessica Hill, VLCT Conference Coordinator, tel. 800/649-7915, e-mail [jhill@vlct.org](mailto:jhill@vlct.org). Beginning in January, you may also register on-line for this workshop at [www.vlct.org](http://www.vlct.org), in the Calendar section.

**Town Officers' Educational Conferences.** April 3, Lyndon State College, Lyndon; April 15, Lake Morey Inn, Fairlee; April 21, St. Michael's College, Colchester; April 24, Educational Center, Springfield; and April 29, 2003, Rutland. Mark your calendars and watch for registration materials to arrive in the mail in late winter. For more information, contact Mary Peabody, UVM Extension Specialist, tel. 802/223-2389 or e-mail, [mary.Peabody@uvm.edu](mailto:mary.Peabody@uvm.edu).



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