WELCOME HOME
WILLISTON TOWN CLERK RETURNS
AFTER YEAR OF NATIONAL GUARD
SERVICE IN KUWAIT

Deb Beckett is a busy person these days as she prepares for Williston’s upcoming town meeting and annual elections. As town clerk and chief election official for her town, Beckett is in charge of ensuring that the ballots are prepared correctly, available on time, filled out by properly registered voters, and meticulously tabulated. Once the election is over, she will report the results to the State, selectboard, treasurer, and media, and safely store them for the required post-election period.

Most importantly, she will do all of this without the threat of assassination, car bombs or abduction hanging over her, her poll workers or the voters they will greet on Town Meeting Day.

Beckett is keenly aware of this good fortune because she recently completed a year of National Guard service in Kuwait, with a trip into Iraq. “Over here,” she said, “we worry about what we are going to give the poll workers for lunch. In Iraq, they prepare

(Continued on Page Five)

PUTNEY HOLDS A PARTY

In mid-January, as the clock ticked toward the end of the month deadline for filing local office nomination petitions, Putney selectperson Lyssa Papazian was getting more and more nervous. There were two vacancies on her three-member selectboard, and no one had yet filed papers to run for either seat. Additionally, no interest had been shown in the open school board seat, a lister seat, and the three auditor positions.

Papazian was having a local democracy crisis.

The solution came in the form of a local democracy party. Papazian hatched the idea as she thought about traditional

(Continued on Page Five)

LOCAL GOVERNMENT DAY 2006

Almost 300 local officials were joined by seventy-five legislators at last month’s annual VLCT/VMCTA Local Government Day in the Legislature. Also attending, and pictured left from top to bottom, were Governor Douglas, student members of the middle school civics program, Project Citizen, and a delegation of six mayors visiting the United States from Turkey. Special guests Ray and El Clavelle also attended to watch their son, Burlington Mayor Peter Clavelle, receive VLCT’s Lifetime Achievement Award at a special luncheon ceremony.

VLCT urges those who met with their legislators individually, over lunch, or in a committee hearing to follow up on their Local Government Day experiences with a thank you note to their representative or senator. And, remember to keep those lines of communication open for the remainder of the legislative session!

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NEW SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL PROGRAM

The Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans) is in the process of implementing a new statewide program called Safe Routes to School. This program, as required by the recently passed federal transportation bill, SAFETEA-LU, is intended to benefit children in primary and middle schools (K-8). Safe Routes to School (SR2S) is about kids walking and biking to school—regularly, routinely, and safely. SR2S integrates elements of transportation, economics, health and physical activity, environmental awareness, and safety into one program.

The Vermont SR2S program will provide support in the form of funding and services to participating schools around the state. Under SAFETEA-LU, Vermont will be getting $1 million per year for the next five years. Schools will conduct self-assessments, actively promote walking and bicycling by students and will identify infrastructure projects to make walking and bicycling safer. The Vermont SR2S program is being coordinated with other statewide initiatives such as the Vermont Department of Health’s Obesity Prevention Plan and the Fit and Healthy Kids program.

Safe Routes to School is not just about funding individual projects, but rather using the new funds to develop a broad, sustained campaign to make communities safer, healthier places for children (and adults). Based on a review of successful local and statewide SR2S programs from the United States and abroad, it takes more than simply providing a sidewalk or encouraging kids to walk or bike more. It takes a comprehensive approach involving the “5 Es:”

- Engineering
- Enforcement
- Education
- Encouragement
- Evaluation

This Spring, VTrans expects to send out a solicitation to schools in Vermont to sign them up for support with their non-infrastructure SR2S activities. These activities would most likely be initiated with the beginning of the 2006-2007 school year. It is very likely that the Regional Planning Commissions and the Chittenden County Metropolitan Planning Organization will be partners in implementing the program.

This program is an exciting opportunity to have schools and communities work together to solve some of our pressing transportation, environmental and health challenges. Selectboards and public works departments will play a key role in improving the infrastructure that connects neighborhoods with schools. Each participating school will be expected to form a committee that includes school and municipal officials, together with parents and other interested parties. If you have any questions about the Vermont Safe Routes to School program, contact Jon Kaplan, VTrans Safe Routes to School Coordinator, at 802/828-0059 or by e-mail at jon.kaplan@state.vt.us. Jon will be doing a presentation on SR2S at the upcoming Town Officers’ Education Conference workshops around the state.

- Jon Kaplan, VTrans Safe Routes to School Coordinator

Nationwide, in one generation, the number of children walking or bicycling to school has dropped from over seventy percent to less than fifteen percent. Nowadays, many school systems offer widespread school-bus transport; at the same time, the number of school kids routinely driven to school by their parents has been as high as sixty-five percent in Vermont. This trend has resulted in increased traffic congestion around schools, decreased community quality of life, and rising health problems in today’s youth.
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(Editor’s Note: This month, the Legal and Regulatory Notes column makes a brief departure from its normal focus on new case law and new or revised state and federal regulations. Instead, it looks at how larger municipalities are complying with federal stormwater regulations and how smaller ones are implementing local regulations to protect water quality. It also explains the concept of riparian buffers, the land use tool that is being used by both large and small municipalities in their efforts to improve water quality.)

Municipalities should take note of the increasing attention being paid to riparian buffer zones as a tool for protecting lakes and streams from stormwater degradation, especially in places where stream banks and shorelines have not yet been developed. It signifies a renewed focus on natural infiltration as the most desirable and least expensive option for stormwater management.

The Vermont General Permit for stormwater discharges from MS4 municipal separate storm sewer systems provides a case-in-point. (MS4 municipalities are those with populations greater than 10,000 and densities greater than 1000 people per square mile. They are: Burlington, Colchester, Essex, Essex Junction, Milton, Shelburne, South Burlington, Williston and Winooski.) As part of a settlement agreement between the Agency of Natural Resources and the Conservation Law Foundation, these nine municipalities regulated under the MS4 permit are required to include riparian buffer protection strategies in their stormwater plans. As a result, most of these Chittenden County municipalities already have some form of riparian buffer standards in place.

According to the agreement, by April 1, 2007, each MS4 municipality must prepare and submit to the state a report on the ordinances or other strategies it has adopted to protect and regulate development in stream corridors. By January 1, 2008, the MS4 municipalities must submit a comprehensive plan including a map indicating developed and undeveloped areas within each stream corridor. The plan must include options to ensure enhanced protection of stream corridors that have not been developed as well as stream corridor restoration options for those that have been developed or otherwise converted to impervious surfaces (i.e., human-made surfaces such as roads, parking areas and roofs, where precipitation runs off rather than infiltrates).

Riparian buffers are finding their way into the forefront of Act 250 permitting as well. A state guidance document for Act 250 projects adopted on December 9, 2005 recommends a minimum riparian buffer zone width of 100 feet for lakes, and 50 or 100 feet for streams, depending on the physical and biological characteristics of the stream, its banks and the floodplain. Where a wetland or critical aquatic or terrestrial wildlife habitat area extends beyond the edge of the buffer width, the buffer zone may need to be wider.

Even municipalities that are not required by law to adopt riparian buffer ordinances should consider the benefits of doing so. Establishing local riparian buffer zones (Continued on next page)
maintains reasonable distances between development and adjacent lakes and streams. Riparian buffers are simply the strips of grass, shrubs, trees and naturally vegetated ground along the banks of lakes, rivers and streams. A clearly written riparian buffer ordinance can lay out, in no uncertain terms, what uses are permitted within the buffer zone and under what conditions other specific uses may be appropriate.

Local officials have long heard how naturally vegetated riparian buffers serve many laudable environmental purposes: they filter pollutants delivered in urban stormwater, reduce erosion and control sedimentation, stabilize stream banks, contribute organic matter that is a source of energy for aquatic ecosystems, provide a tree canopy to shade streams and promote desirable aquatic organisms such as trout, provide riparian wildlife habitat, and furnish scenic value and recreational opportunity.

Riparian buffers can also protect valuable property, including municipal infrastructure such as roads, bridges, recreation facilities and trails. When sediment accumulates in streams and rivers, their capacity to carry runoff is diminished. The gradual build-up clogs natural channels, resulting in increased flooding and property damage. Using vegetated buffers to set development back from stream banks and shorelines is a cost-effective protection against the hazards caused by flooding, unstable streams, and shoreline erosion.

Now is the time to consider developing a local ordinance to protect the undeveloped stream corridors in your municipality. VLCT MAC is currently working on a model riparian protection ordinance and is ready to work with you on incorporating buffer standards into your zoning regulations. Please contact the Municipal Assistance Center if you are interested in this free service.

- Milly Archer, VLCT Water Quality Coordinator

- Katherine Roe, VLCT Communications Coordinator

Putney -

(Continued from Page One)

candidate forums. Lacking candidates and somewhat desperate by this time, she had to come up with another model. “I had heard of candidate forums, which, of course, are events where voters can question declared candidates on their positions,” she recalled. “… the words rattled around in my head and I thought, why not a forum to get candidates, and help inform people about what is entailed in these offices?”

Papazian went to work. She organized an evening “Town Forum for Potential Candidates.” She wrote a letter to the editor of the local paper and submitted an article with all the details. She lined up current board members to answer questions about their responsibilities, and even promised to bring cookies. All her work paid off as the evening was, in her words, “a screaming success.”

Around forty people attended, and two selectboard candidates were recruited on the spot. “People came … who were thinking of running, who thought they should participate, but didn’t know how, who felt sorry for me, and also people who didn’t want to run but wanted to support the process and sign petitions,” she recalled. And throughout the evening, everyone was signing petitions and eating cake and blondies. By the time everyone went home, a school board candidate had also emerged, as well as two auditors. Not bad for a quiet January night!

Papazian was so pleased with the results of the forum/party that she would like to hold it every year. “It was a truly inspiring event that surprised all of us,” she said.

- Katherine Roe, VLCT Communications Coordinator
If a town highway is discontinued, do the persons owning property adjoining the former highway have a right to use the discontinued highway to access their property?

Yes, but the extent of that right is not clear. The Vermont Supreme Court has said that under the common law, property owners have both a private right to access public roads abutting their property and a right to use the road in common with other members of the public. When a public highway is discontinued or abandoned, the public right of use is lost, but the abutting landowner retains his private right of access, entitling him to reasonable and convenient access to his property. *Okemo Mountain, Inc. v. Town of Ludlow*, 171 Vt. 201 (2000).

The Court has said that what constitutes reasonable and convenient access is a question of fact. Therein lies the difficulty. The Court would leave it to the landowners to work out the details of the access right among themselves, including who should bear the expense of maintaining the former highway, the degree to which the former highway might be improved, and the extent to which persons who subsequently purchase land abutting the former highway can use it to access their land.

Vermont’s municipal highway statutes are no help, providing only that if a discontinued highway is not designated as a trail, the right of way shall belong to the owners of the adjacent land. If the former highway is located between the lands of two different owners, it shall be returned to the lots which it originally belonged, if the can be determined and if not, it shall be equally divided between the owners on each side. 19 V.S.A. § 775.

In any case, while a selectboard can discontinue a public highway, it has no legal authority to decide what constitutes reasonable and convenient access for those owning land abutting the highway after the highway is discontinued. This is an issue for that the landowners must resolve among themselves. The final option available for those landowners unable to come to an agreement is to seek a declaration of the scope of their rights from a court.

- Jim Barlow, Staff Attorney, VLCT Municipal Assistance Center

Our road foreman keeps a town-owned truck at his home. Typically, he just drives the truck to and from the town garage, but sometimes he drives the truck directly to a jobsite. Is this use of the truck a taxable fringe benefit?

It could be. Under IRS regulations, a fringe benefit is a form of pay for the performance of services. Unless the law provides a specific exclusion, any fringe benefit provided to an employee must be included in the employee’s pay and must be
ASK THE LEAGUE -

(Continued from previous page)

reported on the employee’s W2 form. The most well known exclusion is probably an employer’s contribution to a group term life insurance plan on behalf of an employee.

Generally, providing an employee with a company vehicle to commute to and from work is a taxable fringe benefit. However, the so-called working conditions benefit applies to exclude an employee’s use of a qualified non-personal use vehicle. A qualified non-personal use vehicle is defined as any vehicle the employee is not likely to use more than minimally for personal purposes because of its design.

Commonly recognized qualified non-personal use vehicles include clearly marked fire and police vehicles, school buses and ambulances, but the category can also include vehicles designed to carry cargo and having a loaded gross vehicle weight (GVW) over 14,000 lbs. This would probably include most large municipal dump trucks, but may not include smaller, one-ton style trucks. You should check a truck’s rating to confirm its GVW.

A pickup truck with a gross vehicle weight of less than 14,000 lbs may be a qualified non-personal use vehicle if it is permanently marked as a municipal vehicle and is equipped with certain equipment, such as a hydraulic lift gate, permanent tanks or drums, or permanent side boards.

In your case, the town truck might be a qualified non-personal use vehicle. If so, the working conditions benefit exclusion would apply. It is strongly urged that you consult IRS publication 15-B, *Employer’s Tax Guide to Fringe Benefits*, for a more complete explanation of the working conditions benefit and the IRS definition of a qualified non-personal use vehicles. The *Employer’s Tax Guide to Fringe Benefits* is available at [http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p15b.pdf](http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p15b.pdf).

- Jim Barlow, Staff Attorney, VLCT Municipal Assistance Center

WORKPLACE POSTER
PACKETS UPDATED

The VLCT Municipal Assistance Center recently reviewed and updated its packet of posters that municipal employers are required to display in the workplace.

The posters cover a wide range of information that the state or federal government has decided must be available for employees to view in their place of work. Many municipalities choose to display them in an employee lunchroom, or other location where employees often gather. Several sites within one municipality, such as the town garage and the town office, are also commonly posted with duplicate posters. The minimum wage, smoking regulations, parental and family leave, workers’ compensation, child labor, and reinstatement are just some of the topics covered by the posters.

Many of these posters are available from state and federal government Web sites. For the convenience of VLCT members, MAC staff has determined which are required, located and reproduced them, and packaged them together for easy compliance with the posting regulations. If you would like to purchase a packet, please call VLCT at 800/649-7915 or visit our Web site Bookstore at [http://www.vlct.org/bookstore/store/index.cfm](http://www.vlct.org/bookstore/store/index.cfm), where you may place an order and be billed for the packet.
for an election by rehearsing what-ifs. What if the military security is food-poisoned? What if the poll workers are assassinated, blown up or otherwise attacked? What if voters are attacked? Over there, they are rehearsing for what actually might happen.”

Despite these threats to their fledgling democracy, Beckett said the Iraqis are committed to the process — so much so that their voter turnout reached eighty percent. “If five were to die administering an election, there would be fifty willing to take their place. They are very committed to forming a government and having a voice,” she observed.

Indeed, Iraq held three different elections while Beckett was in Kuwait. The first was for an interim government, followed by votes for the interim constitution and for the official government for the next four years. In Kuwait, Beckett watched in amazement as women were granted the right to vote independently of their husbands, parliament approved allowing women to run for national office, women gained the right to run for local office, and the country’s Chamber of Commerce allowed women for the first time to run for leadership positions within the organization. At the same time, she noted, women in public life must still be covered head to toe and are not permitted to maintain eye contact with men.

Beckett made an effort to read Kuwait’s English-language newspapers and was impressed with the detail in which they covered parliamentary elections. “They print entire biographies of every candidate and list every vote they ever took,” she noted. “They take it very seriously — no sound bites!”

After spending a year in this environment, Beckett said that her biggest change in perspective upon her return to her own job as town clerk is on voting. “When you look at what it is costing [Iraqis] to cast a ballot, a lot of us over here could take a lesson from them on the value of casting our vote.” She was particularly dismayed to find that many in her battalion of 600 didn’t bother to vote in their own elections in the United States.

Beckett got to know her fellow battalion members better during the second half of her year of service, when her job duties changed from security detail to battalion photographer. She has served off and on in the National Guard since 1981, just after she graduated from college with majors in journalism and business. She has always worked in public affairs with, as she put it, “a slight detour into accounting” in the mid 1980s.

Her public affairs duties in Kuwait meant that she was free to travel among the six American bases in the country, and into Iraq. She is, she said, still working on the yearbook for her battalion, which has a photo of each member and a history of their service together in Kuwait.

In retrospect, Beckett feels that her time abroad went by quickly. However, she didn’t feel so optimistic back in November 2004, during her six weeks of pre-deployment training in Mississippi. “During those six weeks,” she recalled, “I realized that I had two choices: get the most out of it and do what I could with a positive attitude, or be miserable, bored and whiny. My second choice would have made the year too long!”

Beckett left behind her husband and two children, then ages 16 and 13, when she left for Kuwait. She was worried about her kids, but says they handled the long separation surprisingly well. “They got pretty independent. My son even began his college search while I was gone,” she said proudly. And, in a testament to the strength of her own community, Beckett said that thanks to the Williston Church, the Boy Scouts, and her colleagues at the Williston Town Hall, her family “was pretty much provided with an evening meal the whole time I was gone.”

Beckett also has kind words for her three assistant clerks who took over her duties while she was away. “They did a great job!” she said. Her new cell phone helped her keep in touch with both her family and her assistant clerks, as the lines for telephone and Internet access could be three hours long on the American bases. “I learned the country codes and how to add minutes very quickly,” she joked.

Thankfully, Beckett no longer needs a country code to dial home. She is happy to be back in Vermont and eager to run a successful election in March. Her only wish might be that Williston’s voter turnout reaches Iraq’s impressive eighty percent.

- Katherine Roe, VLCT Communications Coordinator
The Vermont Community Development Program (VCDP) is excited to be joining other states throughout the country in celebrating April as Community Development Month. In an effort to highlight the significant community-based initiatives and leadership that help improve the quality of life in Vermont communities, the Department of Housing and Community Affairs (DHCA) will be recognizing all VCDP Implementation Grant and Access Modification projects completed in the 2005 Program year. Additionally, DHCA will honor the most creative and highly effective projects of the Implementation and Access Grants completed in 2005 by soliciting nominations from municipalities, regional organizations, project partners, and private citizens for awards in four categories:

1. Economic development
2. Housing
3. Public facility/public service
4. Access modification

A municipality may nominate itself.
A committee comprised of DHCA staff knowledgeable in the community development field will judge all nominations. Governor Douglas will announce the winners at an awards ceremony tentatively scheduled for April 18, 2006 in the State House, along with the certificates of project completion for all the outstanding VCDP-funded projects completed in 2005.

To obtain a complete listing of VCDP projects eligible to be nominated and a nomination packet, please contact Cindy Blondin at 802/828-5219 or cindy.blondin@state.vt.us.

Nominations must be postmarked (or e-mailed) by March 21, 2006.

The Commissioner’s Award for 2005 recognized three VCDP-funded projects that were particularly significant for meeting two distinct needs within Vermont’s downtowns – affordable housing and commercial space. The HowardBlock in Bellows Falls, the Daniels Block in St. Johnsbury and 11-13 Lake Street in St. Albans. Each of these projects made use of underutilized space in existing buildings and brought much-needed activity and life to their downtowns through the combination of housing and retail space.

The Vermont League of Cities & Towns
Serving and Strengthening Vermont Local Governments
89 Main St., Ste. 4, Montpelier, VT 05602; tel., 800/649-7915; fax, 802/229-2211; e-mail, dcloud@vlct.org.
CPR NOTE

The VLCT Safety and Health Promotion Department would like to remind members that the American Heart Association has changed its CPR instructions. You may find a news release explaining the changes at http://www.americanheart.org/presenter.jhtml?identifier=3035517. Note that the Red Cross has not made the same changes to its CPR program.

WELCOME

The Rutland County Sheriff’s Department has joined the VLCT Health Trust, bringing its membership up to 296.

VLCT Group Services staff members Heidi Joyce, Brian FitzPatrick, and Shawna McNamara have been traveling around the state over the last four weeks to conduct workshops for municipal wellness coordinators.

This year, the workshops focus on two VLCT Health Trust programs: the new Leader health promotion program and the 2006 Winter Olympics Pedometer Challenge. Both programs encourage employee wellness, with the Leader program offering the possibility of rate credits for successful participation. Here, the participants at the Montpelier workshop gather for a group photo. Approximately 150 of their colleagues from around the state also attended the workshops.
OFFICE SAFETY
Do’s and Don’ts Checklist

**DO:**
- Put materials away when not in use and keep file and desk drawers closed.
- Stack cartons and supplies carefully so that they won’t fall.
- Clean up spills right away.
- Be careful when using office equipment, and check cords and plugs frequently to make sure they are in good condition.
- Use proper lifting techniques: Lift with your legs, not your back.
- Get help lifting or carrying heavy, bulky materials, or use appropriate materials handling equipment.
- Report burned out light-bulbs and flooring problems, such as torn carpet or damaged linoleum.
- Be careful with sharp, pointed objects like scissors and box cutters.
- Use a ladder or stepstool, not furniture or boxes, to reach high places.
- Smoke only in designated areas and extinguish cigarettes and matches.

**DON’T:**
- Leave cords, boxes, and other materials in aisles or in emergency exits.
- Use extension cords unless necessary.
- Overload electrical outlets.
- Carry loads you can’t see over.
- Smoke in unauthorized areas.

For more information about the safety and wellness resources available from the VLCT Safety and Health Promotion Department, please contact Brian FitzPatrick at bfitzpatrick@vlct.org or Shawna McNamara at smcnamara@vlct.org, or call 800/649-7915.
Like people, every town has a story and a self-image arising from it. That story changes over time, generating positive or negative sentiments, and a formal or informal town “brand.” Whatever the tone, these stories represent a town’s identity, and they have everything to do with promotion, well-being, and economic development.

Six months ago, the Town of St. Johnsbury – through its Downtown revitalization organization St. Johnsbury Works – began mining its story. St. Johnsbury knew it must differentiate itself from other small New England towns by identifying and building on its strengths. These are many, but their value for economic and cultural development may have been temporarily sidelined by worry over being left out of current development trends.

St. Johnsbury Works launched a branding study to uncover themes about the town, and gaps between the brand goal and actuality. Two themes strongly resonated with poll respondents: St. Johnsbury as the Gateway Community for the Northeast Kingdom, and St. Johnsbury’s reputation as “The Very Essence of Vermont.” As these ideas are transformed into specific promotional efforts, the result is a brand that credibly describes St. Johnsbury, especially its Downtown. Additionally, a ten-step action plan was developed to back up the brand; it happens to meld remarkably well with St. Johnsbury’s independently evolved, new Town Plan.

The branding process uncovered a true story about St. Johnsbury, a town with innovation in its blood. Through the ages, remarkable people have moved here, fallen in love with the valley, and found a way to stay. It happened with the Fairbanks, Ide, and Cary families and is happening today with its creative economy business sector. Interestingly, current facts and figures about the Downtown’s well-being (gross sales, wages, etc.) fly directly in the face of some discouraged perceptions. These facts are part of the story and are just as true (or more so) than the negative versions. They are also much more useful.

The story and brand provide the basis for promotional and educational work. For example, St. Johnsbury’s history and architecture are rich with unspoiled Victorian-era assets. It makes sense, then, to pour energy into preservation, our Victorian Holidays event (December), excursion train rides, a SummerWorks festival that supplies plenty of old-fashioned summer fun (and extended shopping hours), and the like. Innovative small businesses and a retail base that caters to the customer fit into this identity. The key is to be more and more of the best of St. Johnsbury, not to vaguely scramble after something it is not. As a result, the brand and the story become stronger. People are attracted to a positive, asset-rich, and proud community.

In addition to specific promotional efforts and the ten-step action plan, an interactive CD-ROM has been created that explores St. Johnsbury’s people, places, past, and future. St. Johnsbury Works saw the potential of spreading this positive image more widely and for using it as an educational tool. St. Johnsbury: A Great America Love Story is available at downtown outlets or from St. Johnsbury Works (stjworks@kingcon.com).

St. Johnsbury Works and the Fairbanks Museum plan to create a grade school curriculum based on St. Johnsbury’s history and the CD. An earlier effort – a comprehensive pictorial façade inventory across the eras within the Design Review District – also can add to the curriculum. These efforts help new and current residents understand St. Johnsbury.

Besides its products, the very process of branding has been useful to the Town. St. Johnsbury’s branding project was funded entirely with private money, but involved a broad constituency of private and public officials. Networks were created and partners aligned over a common effort. People are drawn to action that is positive and results-oriented.

Branding research is just the beginning. It will be followed by work to back up the brand, make it useful and get it adopted into the culture. It’s a long process, but it does yield results from the get-go. As branding consultant Bill O’Neal advised, “Take up a task and keep moving down the list. You will make some mistakes. Inertia is your enemy.”

Inertia was not a restraint on little St. Johnsbury over 100 years ago, when a Fairbanks brother wrote, “I know a village, in a city set upon a hill, which might be truly called the light of the world.” St. Johnsbury can surely benefit from telling its story and promoting its brand to a new generation. And so can other Vermont towns, each with its own assets and identity.

- Barbara Morrow, Executive Director, St. Johnsbury Works

10 Steps to Our Winning Brand Identity

- Enhance the visual appeal and shopping experience of historic downtown St. Johnsbury.
- Attract more visitors to St. Johnsbury.
- Celebrate our rich past!
- Generate more downtown foot traffic.
- Establish St. Johnsbury as a new business incubator.
- Improve telecommunications infrastructure.
- Clean up Bay Street approach.
- Construct a compelling story for St. Johnsbury.
- Market St. Johnsbury to residents, visitors and business prospects.
- Set measurable goals and track success.
The State Archives Department of the Minnesota Historical Society has published a guide to electronic records management that should be read by everyone who manages electronic data. This document, which is available on-line at http://www.mnhs.org/preserve/records/electronicrecords/erguidelines.html and runs about 120 pages long, defines terms, discusses strategy, and identifies issues that may arise as you develop your own records management system. Each section of the guide ends with discussion questions to help you think through the process, plus an annotated list of resources. A summary of the guide is the focus of this brief article.

Records management begins with strategy. Think about how to work within the bounds of state law, technology as it exists today, and processes you’ve used that have worked well in the past. You need to define what a record is and decide how to group records into related “series,” storing those together that result from the same function or activity. Consider how you will convert and migrate your data for long-term preservation and be sure to develop retention schedules. Storage media may have much more capacity than they did in the past, but they aren’t limitless. You must determine what data to store on your network, on a “near-line” source (media not directly linked to your network) or somewhere off-line. Knowing how the records are to be used will help you decide how to store them.

The first step in planning the long-term preservation of your data is to develop a needs analysis to determine the value of the data, its given retention requirements, and demand. Creating the metadata (information necessary to find and manage your records) to accompany your data must be done with a clear understanding of what the records are and what they will be used for. The next step is to decide what storage media and file format should be used.

(Continued on Page Sixteen)
STATE EQUIPMENT FUND OFFERS LOW, OR NO-INTEREST LOANS

As the Chair of the Municipal Equipment Loan Fund Committee, I would like to encourage local officials to consider whether utilizing this loan fund would be beneficial to your municipality for the next purchase of construction, fire, emergency, or other heavy equipment and vehicles. The Fund was created by the Legislature to provide loans for this purchase on very favorable terms. The program has been quite successful over the years.

In 2005, thirteen loan applications totaling $669,642 were approved. For loans to a single municipality, the interest rate is two percent. For loans to two or more municipalities jointly purchasing equipment, no interest is assessed. The maximum loan amount is $90,000 and must be paid back in no more than three years. Our Committee has asked the Legislature to consider raising the maximum loan amount to $110,000 and extending the repayment period to five years. We do not yet know how this proposal will be received.

We act on applications twice a year. Applications for the next round should be in the State Treasurer’s Office by April 17, 2006. You can find out more details about the process and requirements, and download an application, by clicking on the “Local Government” link at www.vermonttreasurer.gov. For more information, call Gayle Rowe at 802/828-5187 or 800/642-3191.

We are always open to suggestions on how to improve this program. Feel free to call me at 802/828-1452.

-Jeb Spaulding, State Treasurer

MUNICIPAL ENERGY EFFICIENCY EFFORTS GET FINANCIAL BOOST

Vermont Department of Public Service (DPS) Commissioner David O’Brien recently announced that DPS has been awarded a $100,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Energy to assist municipalities with efficiency improvements in buildings, vehicle fleets, street and traffic lighting, and other infrastructure.

The grant will help fund a full-time Municipal Energy Specialist, Alison Hollingsworth. She will assist municipalities in reviewing their energy usage, with the goal of making the most efficient use of electricity and heating and transportation fuel.

VLCT is a partner in the project along with DPS, Efficiency Vermont, Vermont Gas Systems, and the Burlington Electric Department. The partners will work closely with Hollingsworth to coordinate a statewide energy efficiency effort.

Hollingsworth will identify energy efficiency opportunities in municipal buildings through on-site visits and encourage the installation of improvements that will yield the highest energy and cost savings. She will also conduct outreach and training for municipal governments, promote high performance building design, introduce energy management tools, and provide strategies for financing projects. Hollingsworth has extensive experience in developing and managing energy efficiency projects in new construction and existing buildings throughout Vermont.

Municipalities interested in receiving assistance should contact Hollingsworth at 888/921-5990, ext. 1105, or at aholingsworth@veic.org.

TREES FOR LOCAL COMMUNITY GRANT

The Vermont Urban and Community Forestry (U&CF) program is pleased to announce the availability of competitive grant money. This year, up to $65,000 dollars will be available through the Trees for Local Communities (TLC) Cost-Share grant program. TLC grants are designed to encourage citizen involvement in creating and supporting sustainable, long-term community forest projects throughout the state. Five different grant options are available: Community Planning Grants, Educational Grants, Tree Planting Grants, Tree Maintenance Grants, and Mini Grants.

Since the program’s inception in 1991, U&CF, a program within the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation, has provided over $965,000 in competitive grants to municipalities and volunteer organizations across the state. Past projects include the development of urban forestry management plans, municipal forest plans, shade tree inventories, large and small-scale tree plantings, and educational publications. Grants may be awarded to municipalities, community tree boards, local volunteer organizations, educational institutions, civic groups and approved nonprofit organizations. Applications are available for download at http://www.vtcommunityforestry.org or by calling 802/241-3678. They must be postmarked by March 20, 2006.

For more information, contact Danielle Fitzko at 802/241-3673. This grant may be all your community needs to start or revitalize a community forestry program.
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Different media have different storage characteristics and life spans that should be considered carefully. Various file formats should also be examined thoroughly to ensure the longevity of all of your records. To ensure that your records stand the test of time, you need to either “refresh” your data by converting and migrating them to new hardware and software, or establish the means to maintain and read the data using the original hardware and software.

The nitty-gritty details of creating metadata to locate and evaluate your records, developing file naming conventions and determining appropriate file formats may be painful and challenging to those of us who have few organizational skills, but are certainly the foundation for a solid system of records management. The guide outlines specific metadata standards, file name elements and format types. Your records must be accessible and kept in compliance with state and federal law. Be sure that you understand who your users will be as you develop file names and formats, and remember that your records must last for many years.

Planning for storage includes determining a suitable location with adequate climate controls and deciding on the appropriate media that will best meet your needs and conditions. How quickly data needs to be accessed, the capacity, longevity, and portability requirements, and compatibility and extent of use should all be considered before you determine what storage media to use.

Document management and imaging systems are available to help you manage data and store and index documents. These are discussed in some detail in this guide. If you decide to supplement your management system with these tools, be sure that you choose products that best suit your workflow (assuming it is as efficient and effective as you’d like). Check out vendors carefully. You will want someone reputable who has been in business for a while and is likely to still be there as long as you are using his or her product.

And finally, e-mail and Web content can create some real headaches for local officials if policies are not put in place to regulate their use. Legal and public relations problems can result from libelous or inappropriate content. Understand the laws regarding public accessibility and establish some control over what gets e-mailed or dumped onto your Web site.

For further information on electronic records management, see UVM’s Center for Rural Studies at http://crs.uvm.edu.
- Michael Gilbar, VLCT Chief Financial Officer

Municipal Assistance Center

VLCT’s Municipal Assistance Center specializes in the issues confronting Vermont municipalities today. Please give us a call if we can provide your municipality with any of the following services:

• Advice from municipal experts and attorneys.
• Technical assistance with the preparation of policies, ordinances, job descriptions, etc.
• On-site workshops on topics such as financial management, land-use planning, and the proper functioning of municipal boards and commissions.
• Consulting services such as meeting facilitation, mediation, and personnel recruitment.
• Manuals and handbooks which provide a plain-English guide to state and federal laws.
• Regular surveys on salaries and benefits, municipal practices, rates and fees, etc.
• Model ordinances, bylaws, and policies.

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89 Main St., Ste. 4, Montpelier, VT 05602; tel., 800/649-7915; fax, 802/229-2211; e-mail, dcloud@vlct.org.

Trivia

We had a little bit of Trivia excitement this month – another popular question resulted in our first-ever tie. As our biggest fan, Royalton’s Jackie Higgins correctly answered via telephone that cheddar cheese, maple sugar candy, and common crackers are considered Vermont’s traditional fare. Graffton’s Jackie LeBlanc faxed in her correct answer as well. Jackie Higgins commented that the three foods were “my grandfather’s favorites.” Congratulations to both Jackies.

Mike Gilbar has dipped back into his history files for the March question. Under orders not to be too obscure, he posed this question:

This Vermont church was built by five denominations who eventually decided that “divided” trumped “united” and withdrew to build their own. The building was also of great interest to an automaker in later years. Where was the church, what were the denominations that built it, and who was the automaker that wanted it?

Contact us with your answer: VLCT, 89 Main Street, Suite 4, Montpelier, VT 05602, tel. 800/649-7915, fax, 802/229-2211, e-mail, kroe@vlct.org.
New Spay/Neuter Program Available

Vermont Volunteer Services for Animals (VVSA) recently announced a new cat and dog sterilization program that will allow income-eligible families to have their cats, dogs, and wolf hybrids neutered at a reduced cost.

The program is a result of a law passed during the 2003-2004 legislative session. Recognizing that the cost of sterilization surgery can be cost-prohibitive for low-income households, the Legislature created a fund that will be utilized to assist families with the fees associated with this surgery and distemper vaccinations. The program operates under the direction of the Vermont Department of Agriculture, which has contracted its administration out to VVSA.

Vermont has a surplus companion animal population that each year forces the euthanasia of otherwise healthy, adoptable animals. According to the latest available statistics, nearly 4,000 dogs and cats were euthanized in our state in one year, due to our overpopulation problem.

A similar program was instituted in New Hampshire eleven years ago. The state saw a decrease in the euthanasia of their shelter animals by seventy-five percent in just ten years! VVSA is optimistic that Vermont can achieve these same results in half that time.

Applications for the program will be distributed to town offices this spring. They will also be available from social welfare agencies and participating veterinarians, or by calling VVSA at 802/672-5302.

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Customer Service
relevant experience may be substituted for degree. Good problem solving skills and working knowledge of employee benefits plans (health, Section 125 plans, disability, life, long term care) extremely helpful. Excellent verbal, written, organizational, and presentation skills and a clean driving record are needed. Travel throughout Vermont, including night meetings, is required.

Administrative Assistant, Claims. Provides support for Property, Casualty, and Workers’ Compensation claims division including new file setup, payment processing, maintaining files and forms, data entry, preparing letters and invoices, maintaining databases and logs, transcribing recorded statements and notes, supply ordering, report preparation. Maintaining confidentiality is essential. Requirements include strong computer skills, including Microsoft Office software. Must be reliable, accurate and self-motivated. High school diploma or equivalent necessary; business school certificate a plus. Clerical experience in a claims office and working knowledge of insurance concepts are helpful but not required.

VLCT offers competitive salaries with a superb benefit package. To apply, please send a confidential cover letter, resume and names and/or phone numbers of three references via email to jobsearch@vlct.org, with position title as subject. Resume review begins February 20, 2006. Applications accepted until filled. Equal Opportunity Employer. (1-31)

Deputy Police Chief. The Town of Hinesburg, Vt. is accepting applications for a full-time Deputy Police Chief. The successful candidate should be certified as a full-time police officer, possess supervisory skills and have leadership potential. The Hinesburg Community Police Department consists of three full-time (including the Police Chief) and four part-time officers, and provides 108 hours of coverage/week to the Town of Hinesburg, population approximately 5,000, located in southern Chittenden County. The position offers a competitive salary (hiring range $42,000 - $45,000, based upon qualifications and experience), excellent benefits and growth potential. To request an application packet, call 802/482-2096 or e-mail to hinesburgtown@gmavt.net. For more information regarding the position or the Hinesburg Community Police, contact Chief Chris Morrell at 802/482-3397. Applications accepted until the position is filled. EOE. (2-17)

Town Manager. Plaistow, NH (pop. 7,906) is seeking a progressive, proactive, community-oriented leader to serve as Town Manager (four since 1988). The Manager reports to a five-member Board of Selectmen and operates under an Official Ballot Town Meeting form of government. Requires experience and knowledge of municipal operations, finance and budgeting ($7.5 million annual budget; $1 billion in total valuation), labor relations, staff development (44 full-time and 62 part-time employees), and community-oriented problem solving. BA/BS required, MBA/MPA preferred, with five years progressive management and leadership experience. Salary DOQ. Residency is not required, but is encouraged. Plaistow is an equal opportunity employer. For additional information, go to www.municipalresources.com/careers.html. Application Deadline: March 17, 2006. Send resumes, in confidence, to: Plaistow Town Manager Search, Attn Gail Schillinger, Municipal Resources, Inc., 120 DW Highway, Meredith, NH 03253. Electronic correspondence preferred: recruitment@municipalresources.com. For additional information about the Town of Plaistow, please visit http://www.plaistow.com/

FOR SALE

Bolt-on Bucket Teeth. For John Deere 544E Payloader. Although several years old, the teeth are in like-new condition. Asking $400, or best offer. Contact the Town of Bridgewater at 802/672-3334 for additional information. (2-2)

Free Buildings. Fletcher Allen Health Care (FAHC) has two temporary buildings on the FAHC campus in Burlington to give away. Both are modular pre-fab buildings, which currently sit on sonna tubes.

Selectboard Institute: Part 2. Saturday, May 6, location TBA. See April 22 description above.

Conducting Effective BCA Hearings. Thursday, May 11, 2006, Town and Country Resort, Stowe; Thursday, May 18, 2006, Dover Town Hall, Dover. Sponsored by VLCT Municipal Assistance Center. This popular workshop will be delivered once in northern Vermont and once in southern Vermont. It will focus on the legal and practical considerations for conducting tax appeals.

VTDMA Spring Conference. Thursday and Friday, May 11 and 12, 2006, Hartzell House, Springfield. Sponsored by the Vermont Town and City Managers Association. This is the annual meeting of the VTCMA. All managers and administrators are invited to attend.

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Solid Waste Management District Manager. The Southern Windsor/Windham Counties Solid Waste Management District, which serves fourteen municipalities in southern Vermont, seeks a full-time Manager. The Manager is responsible for implementing the District’s Solid Waste Implementation Plan as well as managing contracts and the District’s finances. Minimum BS/BA degree plus five years of solid waste experience required. Send cover letter and resume by March 10, 2006 to forrand@vermontel.net, or to Forrest Randall, 94 Wall Street, Springfield, VT 05156. Full job description available by e-mail. The District is an Equal Opportunity Provider. (2-14)

Insurance Positions. Due to tremendous growth, the Vermont League of Cities & Towns seeks to fill the following positions to serve its municipal insurance trust funds:

Manager, Safety & Health Promotion. VLCT seeks a Manager to oversee its Safety and Health Promotion efforts in order to manage and reduce risk for its member owned insurance pool. Responsibilities include: analyzing and evaluating members’ experience; performing loss control consulting and assisting members with development of appropriate action and improvement plans; promoting participation in PACIF; fostering member communications and followup; recommending and administering annual budget; supervising and training of staff. Requirements include: Bachelors degree in related field; ten years loss control, safety or health promotion experience including supervisory experience. High level of property, casualty and workers’ compensation knowledge. CSP, ARM certifications preferable. Valid state of Vermont drivers license in good standing required as is good driving record. Travel throughout Vermont required including occasional night meetings.

Manager, Member Relations. Responsibilities include program marketing for VLCT’s various programs and employee insurances; ensuring effective message to members; managing and resolving customer service issues; maintaining strong communication with members through conducting annual workers’ compensation audits; ensuring member retention through member visitation and educational seminars to ensure member retention. Requirements include Bachelors degree in related field or equivalent experience (five years of substantive commercial underwriting or marketing/underwriting combination). Excellent verbal, written, and organizational skills and a clean driving record are needed. Travel throughout Vermont, including occasional night meetings, is required. We will consider hiring an individual with lesser qualifications at an Underwriter Trainee level.

Manager, Underwriting. Responsibilities include providing direct underwriting service to large and/or complex members of Property, Casualty & Workers’ Compensation fund; member retention through education and promotional programs; preparation and implementation of annual operating plan; reinsurance placement; development and revisions to programs and new lines of coverage; supervision, training and development of staff; state compliance and filings. Requirements include Bachelors degree in related field, plus at least five years experience in a commercial insurance supervisory position. Seven years of relevant experience may be substituted for degree. Excellent verbal, written, presentation, organizational and supervisory skills, and clean driving record are needed. Travel throughout Vermont, including occasional night meetings, is required.

ADVERTISING POLICY

The VLCT News welcomes classified advertisements from municipal entities, public agencies, businesses and individuals. This service is free for VLCT members (regular, contributing and associate); the non-member rate is $37.00 per ad. Ads are generally limited to 150 words.

The VLCT News is published eleven times per year and generally reaches readers by the third week of the month. (The August/September issues are combined.) Ads are also placed on the VLCT Web site as soon as they are received.

The copy deadline for advertisements is the first Friday of the month for the next month’s issue. However, space is occasionally available for late additions. Please feel free to check with the editor for availability.

For more information on classified and display advertising in the VLCT News, please contact Katherine Roe, Editor, VLCT News, 89 Main Street, Suite 4, Montpelier, VT 05602, tel. 800/649-7915, fax 802/229-2211, e-mail kroe@vlct.org.
For more information about the following workshops or events, please contact Jessica Hill, VLCT Conference Coordinator, tel., 800/649-7915; e-mail, jhill@vlct.org. Or visit www.vlct.org, select the Calendar, and select a workshop for more information or to register on-line. The on-line registration option is available for VLCT workshops and events only.

Planning & Zoning Series #3: The Zoning Decision. Thursday, March 16, 2006. Sponsored by VLCT Municipal Assistance Center and your local regional planning commission, and offered at several Vermont Interactive Television sites throughout the state. This year's planning and zoning series is focusing on the zoning process from application through decision, over the course of three evening sessions. This third, and final, session will focus on making, writing, and distributing a decision.

Town Health Officers Workshop. Friday, March 24, 2006, Cortina Inn, Mendon. Sponsored by VLCT Municipal Assistance Center. This annual workshop will focus on the fundamentals of the town health officer's role, including issuing and serving health orders and administering the rental housing code.

Municipal Attorney’s Forum. Friday, April 7, 2006, Capitol Plaza, Montpelier. Sponsored by VLCT Municipal Assistance Center. This semi-annual workshop provides an opportunity for municipal attorneys to discuss pressing and perennial issues in municipal law.

Selectboard Institute: Part 1. Saturday, April 22, 2006, location TBA. Sponsored by VLCT Municipal Assistance Center. The Selectboard Institute is a pilot program that provides Vermont selectboards with the fundamental skills needed to manage the affairs of the town. Delivered over the course of two Saturdays, the program will focus on the skills selectboard members need to serve as leaders, managers and local legislators.

Reducing and Preventing Beach Closures on Lakes and Rivers. Friday, May 5, 2006, Lake Morey, Fairlee. Lake Champlain Sea Grant and EPA New England are co-hosting this workshop to provide tools and guidance for town managers, town elected and volunteer officials, state and local health officials, public works departments, local and state park and beach managers, and regional planners inter-