

VTC

VIRGINIA
TOWN & CITY

VOL. 58
NO. 2
MARCH 2023

THE MAGAZINE OF THE VIRGINIA MUNICIPAL LEAGUE



Great Chemistry

The ingredients for a successful
mayor/council-manager relationship



Inside:
Innovation Awards
call for entries





VRSA

Virginia Risk Sharing Association

TOWN HALL

Public Officials' Liability

**As a governing official,
are you covered?**

Public officials' liability broadly covers **management liability, professional liability, and employment practices liability.**

VRSA provides the broadest property and liability protections without **mandatory deductibles or primary aggregates (caps)** to ease our members' worries. As the first and most financially sound provider, we provide unmatched **stable rates and dependable coverages.**

**You buy insurance,
but do you have coverage?**



www.vrsa.us | 800-963-6800



THE MAGAZINE OF THE VIRGINIA MUNICIPAL LEAGUE

VOL. 58 NO. 2 MARCH 2023

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Michelle Gowdy

EDITOR & ADVERTISING MANAGER
Rob Bullington

CONTRIBUTING EDITOR & GRAPHIC DESIGN
Manuel Timbreza

CIRCULATION MANAGER
Keyara Johnson

EXECUTIVE BOARD

- Chuckie Reid (President), Town of Farmville
- Derrick Wood (Vice President), Town of Dumfries
- Jon Stehle (Past President), City of Fairfax
- Kelly Burk, Town of Leesburg
- Phil Miskovic, Town of Crewe
- Stephanie Moon Reynolds, City of Roanoke
- Robert C. Ike, Jr., City of Chesapeake
- Bill Rush, Town of Marion
- Steven Trivett, Town of Ashland
- Randy C. Eads, City of Bristol
- D. Dwayne Tuggle, Town of Amherst
- Katie Cristol, County Arlington

Virginia Town & City (ISSN0042-6784) is the official magazine of the Virginia Municipal League. Published 10 times a year at 13 E. Franklin St., P.O. Box 12164, Richmond, VA 23241; 804/649-8471. E-mail: e-mail@vml.org. Reproduction or use of contents requires prior approval of the Virginia Municipal League and if granted must be accompanied by credit to *Virginia Town & City* and the Virginia Municipal League. Periodicals Postage paid at Richmond, VA. (USPS 661040) Subscription rates: members - \$16 per year, non-members - \$32 per year. Single copies - \$4 each.

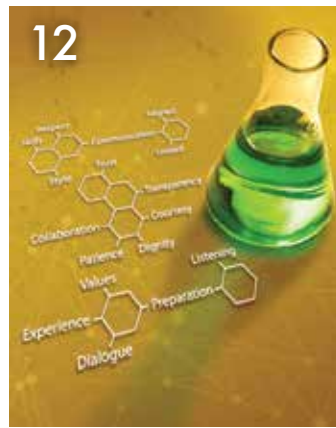
Postmaster: Send address changes to *Virginia Town & City*, P.O. Box 12164, Richmond, VA 23241-0164.



BETTER COMMUNITIES THROUGH SOUND GOVERNMENT



Visit www.vml.org or scan the QR code to download the VML app.



12

ABOUT THE COVER

For 123 years the mayor/council-manager form of government has gotten things done in Virginia's localities. When it works, it works really well. In this issue we explore the perfect chemistry that makes local governments operate at their best.

DEPARTMENTS

- DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE 2
- CALENDAR 3
- PEOPLE 3
- NEWS & NOTES 7
- COMMUNITY BUSINESS MEMBERS 31

FEATURES

Combine five parts mayor, five parts manager, one part professor; agitate with interviewer.

VTC Editor Rob Bullington explains how he created a new chemical compound during the month of March..... 12

Great Chemistry: The ingredients for a successful mayor/council-manager relationship

A curated conversation with some of Virginia's most experienced (and least experienced) mayors and managers yields some great insights into the composition of a successful local government concoction 13

Essential elements: What you need to know about the mayor/council-manager system for good governance

Dr. Ron Carlee from Old Dominion University educates on the building blocks for the relationship at the core of local government success 20

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

VML Partner Spotlight: Polco

Director of Strategic Partnerships Chante Martin explains how Polco can help small localities use big data to get ahead 26



CALL FOR ENTRIES

See pages 28-30 for full details and enter on-line at www.vml.org



Spring is about so much more than pollen...

...it's also about policy committees, General Assembly wrap-ups, and Broadband Together.

HAPPY SPRING! WHILE I AM GRATEFUL for the mild winter; I would like to see warmer spring weather! This issue is all about mayor/council-manager relations and I hope that you enjoy the varying perspectives on this topic.

It sounds so simple: council provides policies that the manager implements – DONE! However, as you will read in this issue, mayors, councilmembers, and managers do a lot of work to manage expectations and maintain their relationships. It is always good to step back and talk about how these relationships work.

This month VML will begin our policy process by creating the 2023 policy committees. These committees are not the governing body, but they do set out the legislative policy that VML staff uses to operate during the subsequent General Assembly session. The committee members also update VML's policy statements each year. You can check out the current policy statements from each committee on our website at www.vml.org/advocacy/general-assembly/policy-statements.



The policy statements outline the items that VML members agree are most important to local governments. The policy statements generally address broad, long-term positions which are then approved by the entire membership at the annual meeting each October. It is always refreshing to have questions or suggested changes at the annual meeting because it demonstrates how these statements are more than just words on

a page (or a website!). These are living documents that deal with issues with real world implications for our members. Thank you for reading them, thinking about the ramifications of what they propose, and expressing your opinions!

VML's policy committees are comprised of elected and appointed officials from VML's full-member local governments. There are five committees: Community and Economic Development, Finance, General Laws, Human Development and Education and Infrastructure. These committees meet virtually during July to discuss statewide issues and develop recommendations for our Legislative Committee to consider. Our goal is for each committee to have honest and robust conversations about statewide issues so that VML can learn what our local governments want and need.

Your clerk and manager should have received the information on how to volunteer for these committees – please take the time to volunteer!

I will share with you that I was on the Eastern Shore earlier this week and I was so grateful to the people that I met with because they shared real-life challenges in their communities. These discussions allow me to advocate better and to learn who to call when I need real life examples of how decisions made in Richmond affect localities across the state!

VML staff work hard to keep our members informed of how the decisions being made in Richmond will affect them. To this end, on April 26 and 27, VML will host virtual webinars on the 2023 General Assembly session during which we will flag items affecting localities that you should take into consideration prior to July 1st when most of the legislation goes into effect. Both sessions will be conducted via Zoom and are free of charge to officials and staff from VML member localities. The April 26 session will focus on items of interest to towns while the April 27 session will consider items most important to our city and urban members.

Our next in-person event will be the Broadband Together conference being held May 17- 18 at the Hilton Short Pump just outside Richmond. This conference will be held in conjunction with VACo and the Broadband Association of Virginia.



May 17 - 18 | Richmond, VA

The preliminary agenda and registration are available at www.broadbandtogether.com.

So, whether we see you online or in-person (or both!), we look forward to seeing you this spring!





- April 26** **VML 2023 Legislation Update (Town Section)** - virtual event
- April 27** **VML 2023 Legislation Update (City & Urban Sections)** - virtual event
- May 17-18** **Broadband Together Conference** - Richmond, VA
- Aug. 21** **Innovation Award Entry Deadline** - www.vml.org/innovation-awards
- Oct. 7-10** **VML Annual Conference** - Norfolk, VA

PEOPLE



In Memoriam: Rocky Shane Wood

Rocky Shane Wood, age 53, of the Town of Haysi passed away Thursday, March 9, 2023. Chief of the Haysi Volunteer Fire Department, and member of the Virginia Department of Forestry Honor Guard, Wood died while fighting a 15-acre wildfire near the Roseann community in Buchanan County. Born in the Town of Wise, Wood was a 1987 graduate of Haysi High School. He was elected to the Haysi Town Council in 2008 and was serving as the town’s vice mayor at the time of his passing. Wood was a seven-year employee of the fire department who originally joined the department as a forest technician. Before that, he had served as

a part-time wildland firefighter with the department and the Virginia Department of Corrections. He also served as chairman of the Building Code Committee of Dickenson County and was the owner and operator of Wood Construction Company. Wood was a member of Grace Fellowship Baptist Church. Services were held at Ridgeview High School on March 13.

Foster is Roanoke County’s new economic development specialist



- Foster -

On February 27, **Karli Foster** began her new role as Roanoke County’s economic development specialist. Previously, Foster was with the Virginia State Police where she had been a Virginia Management Fellow, conducting research and analysis, evaluating the agency’s website, and developing presentations. Foster has additional experience within local government including as an intern for both the Franklin County Administrator’s Office and the Henry County Administrator’s Office.

“I am truly looking forward to joining Roanoke County’s Economic Development team,” said Foster in a press release. “I am excited for the opportunity to work alongside some of the best to help Roanoke County reach new heights.”

Foster earned a Bachelor of Science in Smart and Sustainable Cities from Virginia

Tech and a Master of Public Administration from James Madison University. She has several affiliations, most notably the Virginia Economic Development Association and the International Economic Development Council.

Culpeper promotes Settle to new police chief



- Settle -

In February, Culpeper Police Department Major **Christopher Settle** was promoted to police chief to fill the vacancy left by Chris Jenkins who retired in January. Settle has been with the Culpeper Police Department since 1997 and has held the rank of major since 2015. Settle holds a Bachelor’s degree in Criminal Justice from Radford University and will be completing a Master’s degree in Public Safety from the University of Virginia in May 2023.

In a press release, Town Manager Chris Hively said “It has been an honor and privilege to work with an amazing police de-

partment with such dedicated and talented employees. Chief Jenkins did an amazing job leading the police department to where it is today, and I am fully confident in Chief Settle taking the baton and leading the department to new heights as we move into the future.”

During his career, Settle has had the opportunity to work in a variety of areas within the police department including patrol, investigations, and the narcotics and gang task force. He has also served as the accreditation manager for the department. He has attended the Department of Forensic Science Training Academy, the Institute on Leadership in Changing Times, and the Professional Executive Leadership School at the University of Richmond.

Roanoke City Councilmember Stephanie Moon-Reynolds appointed to serve on NLC Council on Youth, Education, and Families

Stephanie Moon-Reynolds, councilmember for the City of Roanoke and board



- Moon-Reynolds -

member of VML, has been appointed to the National League of Cities (NLC) 2023 Council on Youth, Education, and Families. Councilmember Moon-Reynolds was elected to a one-year term to develop and guide programs among local elected officials from similar communities. The appointment was announced in February by NLC President Mayor Victoria Woodards of Tacoma, WA.

In a press release, Councilmember Moon-Reynolds observed: “My appointment to NLC’s Council on Youth, Education, and Families will allow me to share how Roanoke is working collaboratively with community partners in removing barriers to workforce development for youth and families, as well as with its school division

to close the opportunity gap by preparing all students for college readiness and success in a global society. In addition to steering students toward a rigorous academic curriculum, Roanoke City Public Schools implemented the Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) program that focuses heavily on college readiness that is built upon the idea that students need more than content knowledge to be successful in a post-secondary experience.”

As a member of NLC’s Council on Youth, Education, and Families, Councilmember Moon-Reynolds will play a key role among a diverse group of local leaders to encourage collaboration, networking and the development of resources and programs beneficial to communities that share demographics, size or location that can be replicated across the country.

“Our member councils give voice to what’s happening on the ground in our communities,” said NLC President Victoria Woodards. “I am proud to have Councilmember Moon-Reynolds join NLC’s Council on Youth, Education, and Families. Together with a team of local leaders from around the country, we will work to address the toughest challenges facing our communities and ensure that America’s cities, towns and villages have the resources they need to thrive.”

The leadership of this year’s council will consist of Co-Chairs Van Johnson, mayor, Savannah, GA and Gloria Solorio, councilmember, Avondale, AZ; Vice Chairs Vanessa Fuentes, councilmember of Austin, TX and Becky Hayes, councilmember, Forest Hills, TX.

Prince George County welcomes Bear as new deputy emergency management coordinator



- Bear -

In February, Prince George County hired **Brian Bear** to be its new deputy emergency management coordinator. Born and raised in the Tri-Cities, Bear began his career in Fire and Emergency Management Services in 1989 as a volunteer at Station 5. He was one of the original founders of the Crater Regional Technical Rescue Team. Started in 1996, this highly trained team is comprised of five jurisdictions that specialize in confined space rescue, rope rescue, building collapse and water rescue.

Bear came to the county after retiring from the Fort Lee Fire and Emergency Services with over 29 years of service. Fort Lee Fire and Emergency Services provided him with the opportunity for continued growth and learning. At the time of his retirement, he was the assistant chief. When former President Obama visited Fort Lee in 2016, Bear was part of the coordination team.

Bear is responsible for the overall coordination and administration of Emergency

Movers and shakers

Do you know someone who’s on the move? Send your announcements about new hires in local government, promotions, retirements, awards and honors to Rob Bullington at rbullington@vml.org.

Management for Prince George County. His responsibilities include, but are not limited to, implementing the county’s Emergency Operation plans, organizing the Local Emergency Planning Committee, and coordinating the Community Emergency Response Team.



altumint
AUTONOMOUS VISUAL INTELLIGENCE

Optotrafic is now part of Altumint Inc. the leading provider of Artificial Intelligence driven visual solutions to state and local agencies for automated traffic law enforcement, traffic monitoring, and forensic investigations. Our Pro ATE (Automated Traffic Enforcement) systems automatically capture and process speed, red-light and stop arm violations in all weather conditions, with IR illumination when needed. Full back-office support e.g., printing & mailing of citations, payment processing, customer service and court scheduling are included in a turnkey package. These solutions deliver the optimum balance between increasing public safety while decreasing negative law enforcement interactions with the motoring public.

Virginia Code § 46.2 – 882.1 Authorizes Photo Speed Enforcement in School Crossing Zones

Key Provisions

- \$100 civil penalty
- 10+ mph over posted speed
- Signs within 1000 feet
- No points, no insurance impacts
- Penalties collected paid to locality
- Unpaid citations eligible for collections

To Learn More

Contact Mike Phelan
michael.phelan@altumint.com
(301) 520 6405

Bluefield selects Hanson as new town manager



- Hanson -

the Army's Human Resource Command at Fort Knox, KY.

The Town of Bluefield council recently voted to hire Col. **Andrew S. Hanson** as the new town manager. Hanson, a native of Buffalo, NY, now serves as the Army Special Operations Forces Division Chief within

Hanson is expected to start work in August or September this year. Bluefield has not had a town manager for about three years, according to Mayor Linkous in a press release. Hanson and his wife, who is a veterinarian, are currently buying a home in Bluefield.

Hanson entered the United State Military Academy in July 1990. He graduated in May 1994 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Mechanical Engineering and was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the infantry.

After moving up through the ranks, Hanson attended the United States Army War College in Carlisle, Penn, and graduated was a Master's Degree in Military Art for Strategic Studies in June 2016.

Hanson served as the Garrison Commander at West Point, NY from July 2016 to July 2018. Following command in July 2018, he was assigned as the Military Assistant to the Assistant Secretary for Defense for Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict.

Hanson's awards and decorations include: the Defense Superior Service Medal; the Legion of Merit with Bronze Oak Leaf Cluster; Bronze Star Medal with Silver Oak Leaf Cluster; Meritorious Service Medal with four Bronze Oak Leaf Clusters; Joint Service Commendation Medal; Office of the Secretary of Defense and Army Service Badges; Combat and Expert Infantry Badges; Master Parachutist Badge; Military Free Fall Parachutist Badge; Air Assault Badge; Special Forces Tab; Ranger Tab; President's Hundred Tab; and the United States Army Distinguished Rifleman Medal.

City of Roanoke hires two assistant city managers: Police Chief Sam Roman to take new city leadership role along with Angie O'Brien

Announced in March, Roanoke Police Chief **Sam Roman** is being hired as an assistant city manager along with lifetime city employee **Angela O'Brien**.



- Roman -

O'Brien and Roman will tag-team the role recently vacated by Clarence Grier, who departed a deputy city manager role to become county administrator in Cumberland County, NC. This is the first time there will be two Roanoke assistant city managers.



- O'Brien -

O'Brien has already begun as the assistant city manager and Roman will step into his new position in July, to give the city time to find a new police chief. O'Brien and Roman have each spent more than two decades working for the city.

Roman has more than 25 years of service with the city, which has included a variety of roles, most recently as police chief. He has earned certificates from the FBI National Academy, the Senior Management Institute for Police at Boston University, the Profes-

Celebrating Our 20 Year Milestone

Thanks to all of our 308 (and counting) Virginia local government participants!

- ▶ More than 300 loan closings*
- ▶ \$4 billion in invested assets
- ▶ Over 200 accounting engagements and actuarial studies

VIRGINIA

* Includes loans and Municipal Advisory engagements | valocalfinance.org

PEOPLE

sional Executive Leadership School with the University of Richmond, the Executive Command College with the University of Virginia, and in Leadership and Collaboration in Government with Harvard University, according to the city release.

Roman has served on boards including Total Action for Progress, the Community Services Board, Region 1, and the Roanoke Rescue Mission. Roman will support the city manager by providing leadership to city operational departments including public works and general services, according to the release about his hire.

O'Brien has dedicated her entire career to the city of Roanoke. On Aug. 20, 2002 — fresh out of college — she started as a benefit program worker in the city's social services department. O'Brien spent about 15 years with the city in social services, before moving over to the city manager's office where she has been involved in the city government's DEI efforts, STAR city safe response and staffing several council-appointed boards, including the Gun Violence Prevention Commission, the Equity and Empowerment Advisory Board, and the Youth Services Board. O'Brien has also been managing the city's communications and community engagement efforts and coordinates the city's CARES Act and ARPA COVID relief efforts.

O'Brien will support the city manager by continuing to provide leadership on several strategic initiatives and to community development departments including social services, planning, building and development, parks and recreation, libraries and others.

O'Brien holds a Bachelor's degree in Education from Emory & Henry College as well as a Master of Public Administration and Graduate Certificate in Local Government Management from Virginia Tech.

Albemarle County Deputy County Executive Walker announces retirement

Recently, Deputy County Executive **Doug Walker** announced his retirement, effective August 1, 2023. Walker will have worked for Albemarle County for ten years at his retirement, capping a career of more than 33 years in local government management in the Commonwealth of Virginia.



- Walker -

"I join all Albemarle County staff in congratulating Doug Walker," shared County

Executive Jeff Richardson in a press release. "Doug's breadth of knowledge in Virginia local government is truly remarkable. Our organization has been so fortunate to have Doug for the final ten years of his career. His ability to adjust on the fly in almost any situation, with a focus on true organizational and community problem-solving and improvement, is rare. He leads by example, making all of us better."

"Doug Walker set the gold standard for public service. Our community has benefited beyond measure from his commitment in so

many areas and, in particular, housing. His care and compassion for everyone is a goal to which we should all aspire," said Supervisor Donna Price, chair of the board of supervisors.

Walker began his career in Albemarle in 2013, as the assistant county executive, and was promoted to deputy county executive in 2015. Throughout his tenure, Walker provided leadership for a portfolio of departments that cut across the core functions of local government as well as through service on regional boards and commissions.

WWW.BROADBANDTOGETHER.COM

BROADBAND TOGETHER

PUTTING THE PIECES TOGETHER TO CONNECT VIRGINIA

Register! 2023

Join us May 17-18 at the Hilton Short Pump in Richmond, Virginia for Broadband Together 2023. Once again we will explore topics that help us expand broadband throughout the Commonwealth.

BROUGHT TO YOU BY

VCTA
Virginia Council
of Telecommunications
Associations

VCo
Virginia Council
of Counties

VML
Virginia Municipal
League

HILTON SHORT PUMP | RICHMOND, VA
12042 West Broad Street
Richmond, Virginia 23233

BROADBAND TOGETHER

Register! MAY 17-18

WWW.BROADBANDTOGETHER.COM

Contact Kimberly Voxland for more information and for sponsorship opportunities | kvoxland@vcta.com

City of Virginia Beach celebrates 60th anniversary

THE CITY OF VIRGINIA BEACH is celebrating its 60th anniversary with a new community network initiative, a modernized logo and a variety of community events for residents throughout the year.

A new community network initiative. Mayor Bobby Dyer's Helping Our People Excel (H.O.P.E.) Initiative seeks to recognize and strengthen those who are committed to making their community and Virginia Beach an even better place through a certification program and cross-group networking.

Individuals, community groups, faith-based organizations and corporate entities are encouraged to apply to become "Champions of H.O.P.E." Applicants will receive a digital certificate, promotional social media graphics package, notifications for collaboration opportunities based on their needs and invitations to tabletop discussions with the mayor. Applications for this ongoing initiative can be received on a continuous basis.



A new organizational logo. The city logo has been refreshed in 2023. Key features include a fresh color palette inspired by the city seal; a modernization of the "VB" wave symbol and the use of a contemporary font to improve readability and compliance.

Community events throughout the year. Throughout 2023, City departments will join through a myriad of events through diverse activities such as the unveiling of a 21st Street/Pacific Avenue surfboard art installation, the recognition of 60 partner organizations/individuals who are making an impact to make homelessness rare, brief and nonrecurring, and naming stranded turtles rescued in 2023 after well-known VB landmarks, areas and icons.

Learn more about all these offerings (and more!) at www.virginiabeach.gov/experience/special-events/60th-anniversary.



City of Norfolk recognized for pollution prevention, wildlife habitat efforts

IN EARLY 2023, NORFOLK'S Department of Utilities received the Elizabeth River Project's River Star Business Achievement Level Award, recognizing businesses and organizations that have documented significant results in pollution prevention and wildlife habitat efforts.

According to the city media release, the department's Reservoir Management Crew received specific recognition for its use of an aquatic plant harvester to mitigate the growth of invasive aquatic plants. The harvester removed more than 200,000 pounds of harmful aquatic plants from Lake Whitehurst last year, which significantly contributed to the health of a vital local water source.

The department was also recognized for its work with lakeside homeowners to promote responsible shoreline management and upgrades made to HVAC and electrical systems at the Moores Bridges Water Treatment Plant to improve its efficiency and resilience.

More information about Elizabeth River Project's River Star Businesses is available at www.elizabethriver.org/river-star-businesses.

Town of Ashland contest names snowplows

ON JANUARY 31, the Town of Ashland announced the winning entries for its "Name a Snowplow" Contest. The winners were: Carpathia, Plowabunga, Salter of the Universe and Ashland Thaw Enforcement.

Applications were accepted in the first half of January and the rules were pretty simple. Each person could submit only one entry; entries were accepted in the order received and duplicate entries/names were eliminated; no profane, vulgar, or inappropriate language; and no politically inspired names.

The relative lack of snow in 2023 did not put a chill on the contest. In fact, each winner was warmly rewarded with a \$25 Town of Ashland gift certificate!



City of Danville’s “Project Imagine” graduates two classes (so far) in 2023!

IN JANUARY, FIVE MORE teenagers completed life skills training and goal-setting exercises through Danville’s Project Imagine, a community violence intervention collaborative that steers gang-prone kids off the streets and toward pursuing something greater in their life, such as completing school and becoming employed.

Then, in March, another cohort of five teenagers completed the program.

Since the program’s inception, 16 classes, totaling 100 teens, have graduated. Project Imagine started in 2018 to create a positive “image” in the youth’s mind so that he or she can “imagine” a life without gangs or crime. Initially, the program consisted of a nine-week paid work experience and mentoring while on the job with a partnering agency.

The focus now is developing and maintaining those relationships as each teen progresses in meeting their goals, such as finishing school and becoming employed. A Project Imagine outreach worker is assigned to mentor each teen in the program for a minimum of one year.

As part of the program, the participants receive strength-based assessments using the Casey Life Skills and Clifton Strengths tools that aim to set youth on their way toward developing healthy, productive lives.

Project Imagine has received national recognition. In 2020, Robert David, the city’s youth and gang violence prevention coordinator, was named a winner of the Frederic Milton Thrasher Award by the National Gang Crime Research Center. The award recognizes his accomplishments in gang prevention and intervention. The program also received the President’s Award from the Virginia Municipal League in October 2019.



March graduates Dre Campbell, Daequan Smith, Daeshaun Smith, Amarvion Thompson and Tywon Mosley.



January graduates Terrance Adkins Jr., Ja’Zyon Fitzgerald, Jayden Harrington, Tashawn Simmons, and Jaylen Valentine.

Fairfax’s Parks and Rec offers “Everybody Plays” grant

WITH THE IMPACT OF THE COVID-19 pandemic on youth participation in group sports, and enrichment activities still being felt nationwide, the City of Fairfax Parks and Recreation Department announced a one-time grant of up to \$10,000 to support organizations in their attempt to recruit and retain youth in local sport, theater, STEAM, or other youth enrichment programs.

The goals of the program are:

- Expand access to free, low-cost or subsidized youth development opportunities.
- Develop a culture of representation and inclusion that enhances youth enrichment.
- Assist in returning youth participation numbers to at or above pre-pandemic levels.
- Build social capital among youth (ages 3 to 18), and intergenerational bonds with coaches and mentors.

This grant is available to registered 501(c)3 Organizations. The grant encourages these community organizations to think creatively. Organizations could apply for any program that seeks

to jump start youth participation or increased access. The organizations funded for this round are:

- **The Fairfax Police Youth Club (FPYC)** to purchase new helmets for their football program.
- **The City of Fairfax Theatre Company** to provide camp scholarships and purchase improved sound equipment
- **Nova Labs** to cover 25 summer camp scholarships at \$400 each. These are full ride no pay scholarships.
- **Pozez Jewish Community Center of Northern Virginia** to cover scholarships for teen participants and be used to create recreational teen programs, primarily pickleball.

The Play it Forward Grant program is funded through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). The next round of funding will open in the fall.





Virginia Opioid Abatement Authority's "Best Practices for Local Governments in the Allocation of Opioid Settlement Funding"

VIRGINIA HAS ALREADY RECEIVED settlements worth more than \$500 million from prescription opioid manufacturers and distributors, and that number could double. Most of these funds will flow to Virginia's cities and counties for efforts to abate the opioid crisis. As Virginia's cities and counties develop local and regional plans for the use of these funds, some best practices are beginning to emerge.

The first of these is establishing a local abatement committee comprised of various stakeholders including prevention and treatment specialists, public health, behavioral health, law enforcement, and people with lived experience.

Some communities are holding town hall style public meetings or listening session so that local leaders can hear from residents who have been directly affected by the prescription opioid epidemic, as well as from service providers and community-based organizations. The OAA's Board of Directors has been following this approach and has already conducted six public listening sessions around the state. The feedback from these sessions has been instrumental in informing the Board's strategy for allocating grants.

Local governments are encouraged to engage with community partners, especially those that have already been fighting the opioid epidemic for years. This certainly includes the local Community Services Board, but in addition there are many non-profits, grassroots organizations, treatment providers, and recovery support organizations that want to be involved. During its listening sessions the OAA Board heard numerous examples of such organizations that have been barely surviving financially, working off donations and volunteer effort. These organizations often know exactly how to reach the people who are sick and suffering and have a track record of stretching dollars for maximum impact. The OAA is only able to provide funding to cities, counties, and state agencies. This means the opioid settlement funds will not reach these non-government organizations unless there is a partnership with the local government.

The OAA is committed to assisting cities and counties in developing their abatement plans. They offer planning grants and are in the process of launching a series of best-practice webinars and workshops. For more information, please visit the organization at www.voaa.us.

4th annual Shenandoah Valley Artfest to be held in Woodstock June 24, 2023

WOODSTOCK ENHANCEMENT, in partnership with VEC-CA (Valley Educational Center for the Creative Arts), Shenandoah County Tourism, and Shenandoah County Chamber of Commerce, is hosting the fourth annual Shenandoah Valley Artfest in Woodstock on Saturday, June 24, 2023. The Shenandoah Valley ArtFest (SVAF) seeks to attract and showcase established and emerging artists alike from the Shenandoah Valley and beyond. The event will offer the community and visitors the opportunity to view and purchase original artwork in all mediums and to connect with talented Shenandoah Valley artists. The free event runs from

10:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m. and includes a children's art show, food vendors, music, and interactive art activities/experiences are also a feature of the event.

Artist applications are due April 30 and can be found online at www.townofwoodstockva.gov/DocumentCenter/View/1037/ArtFest_application_fillable.

www.townofwoodstockva.gov/DocumentCenter/View/1037/ArtFest_application_fillable.



Town of Tappahannock making progress on Central Park

IN THE EARLY MONTHS of 2021, the Town of Tappahannock reached an agreement with St. Margaret's School regarding



the proposed transfer of two properties. The properties consist of an athletic field on Virginia Street, the adjacent property containing three tennis courts and the former residence of a prominent businessman of Tappahannock. The town council's commitment to acquiring this property will prove to be an asset to the community by providing a much-needed green space and public park, known as Central Park.

In March, the Town of Tappahannock was excited to announce that it has officially signed a contract with a vendor for the construction and installation of the playground equipment and splash pad for Central Park. Construction is expected to begin in the later part of 2023.

Town of Bowling Green unveils new LOVE sign

ON APRIL 1, the Town of Bowling Green and Virginia Tourism celebrated the unveiling of Virginia's newest LOVE sign at the Bowling Green Town Hall.

With the help of community input and the immense generosity of Tom Ball of Precision Welding and Fabrication who donated time, materials, and funds to create and install this impressive sign, Bowling Green now has a LOVE sign that truly reflects the deep history of its area and its community.

Tourism is an instant revenue generator for Virginia. In 2019, tourism generated \$27 billion in revenue, supported 237,000 jobs and provided \$1.8 billion in state and local revenue for the



Commonwealth. The LOVEworks program is an extension of the iconic Virginia is for Lover's brand, designed to promote travel throughout the Commonwealth.

Images of LOVEworks from around the Commonwealth are available at www.pressroom.virginia.org.

Town of Leesburg Recognized as 2022 Tree City USA

THE TOWN OF LEESBURG has been recognized as a 2022 Tree City USA by the Arbor Day Foundation. The town first became accredited in 1989 and has continued to receive this recognition every year since.

To qualify, the town has to meet the program's four requirements: have a tree board or commission, a tree-care ordinance, an annual community forestry budget of at least \$2 per capita, and an Arbor Day observance and proclamation.

"Leesburg takes great pride in being named a Tree City USA by the National Arbor Day Foundation for the 33rd consecutive year," said Parks and Public

Space Planner Bill Ference in a press release. "We are continuing to work with our town residents, along with the Leesburg Tree Commission, to plant an increasing number of trees throughout the town and strengthen our tree maintenance and record keeping processes."

The Tree City USA program is sponsored by the Arbor Day Foundation, in partnership with the U.S. Forest Service and the National Association of State Foresters.

About the Tree City USA Program

The Tree City USA program has been greening up cities and towns across America since 1976. It is a nationwide movement that provides the framework necessary for communities to manage and expand their public trees. More than 3,400 communities have made the commitment to becoming a Tree City USA.



EPA issues best-practices memo for assessing cybersecurity risks in water and wastewater utilities

THE U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL Protection Agency issued a memorandum to states and public water systems (PWS) proposing best practices for evaluating water and wastewater utilities' vulnerabilities to cybersecurity attacks.

The EPA's March 2023 memo, "Addressing PWS Cybersecurity in Sanitary Surveys or an Alternate Process," offers guidance to utilities to assess current cybersecurity practices, develop risk-mitigation plans to address identified vulnerabilities, and offer technical assistance for both evaluations and remedies to reduce risks.

Federal regulations require states to conduct periodic sanitary surveys of public water systems to protect drinking water. EPA interprets the regulations to include opera-

tional technology, such as industrial control systems and cybersecurity systems. As part of a state's periodic sanitary surveys of public water systems, the state will assess the cybersecurity adequacy of a PWS, and if deficiencies are found then the state must require the utility to address them.

The EPA's 100-page memo offers best practices for cybersecurity self-assessments or third-party assessments, a cybersecurity checklist, information on training and other technical assistance, and suggestions for financial assistance to assess and improve cybersecurity controls.

The EPA memo can be found at www.epa.gov/waterriskassessment/epa-cybersecurity-water-sector#rule.



Selling Surplus With GovDeals

The leading online marketplace to sell your surplus assets virtually – anytime, anywhere.








If you've found yourself with a backlog of surplus assets, we are here to help with options and solutions for all your needs!

The GovDeals Solution

- "AS IS" auctions from anywhere
- Complete control over auction times
- Fast and straight-forward bidding process
- Comprehensive marketing
- Over 4.8 million qualified buyers
- Personal service to meet your unique needs

The GovDeals' Process

-  Surplus item is declared ready for auction
-  Surplus item is then listed on GovDeals
-  GovDeals markets your items across targeted sites
-  Surplus item is sold on GovDeals
-  Buyer makes payment and picks up item

Call on me today:

Chris Lassiter
Business Development Manager | Mid-Atlantic Region
828-527-7705 | classiter@govdeals.com



The Numbers

Sellers in Virginia have held over **150,000** auctions resulting in over **\$150 million** in sales partnering with GovDeals.

Virginia Assets Sold on GovDeals



\$58,600
in Fairfax



\$104,556
in Portsmouth



\$112,000
in Alexandria



\$43,500
in Roanoke



\$28,500
in Alexandria



\$4,075
in Chesterfield



\$30,477
in Fredericksburg



\$86,500
in Portsmouth



\$22,600
in Yorktown

Testimonial

"GovDeals has proven to be an invaluable service for our Real Estate Tax Sales that we conduct for the City of Portsmouth, VA. In the past 18 months, we have conducted 60 online real estate auctions using this service and have had outstanding results with over \$2.3M in sales." - Jason A. Dunn

Scan For More Information



Combine five parts mayor, five parts manager, one part professor; agitate with interviewer.

By Robert Bullington

YOU MAY HAVE NOTICED that here at VTC we don't publish negative news. When local governments are experiencing difficulties, VML's job is to help, not shine a spotlight. However, we can't help but notice that there are some local governments that rarely (if ever) are in the headlines for the wrong reasons. These local governments seem to be able to stay positive and work together without too much trouble. What's their secret?

Over the course of two weeks in March, I endeavored to crack the chemical code for good local governance. "What elements are necessary?" I wondered. "How do successful localities maintain the delicate balance between creative energy and reliable consistency?"

I believed that the secret lay somewhere in the complex covalent bonds that form among mayors, councilmembers, and managers in Virginia's local governments. To aid my search, I assembled a crack team of local government leaders. To be sure, they represented only a portion of the local governments that are successful at good governance. But space and time are not unlimited, so I had to keep my pool of experts relatively small.

And, if I'm being honest, I didn't exactly "assemble" them. But I did send lots of emails which led to phone interviews. These were followed by many hours spent transcribing those conversations hoping to distill the essence of good governance as it resides in the mayor/council-manager form of local government. I hoped that my questions were not too bothersome, although many of our sessions began something like: "Uh, so, how do you make sure y'all get along?"

Although I feared my agitation might upset or annoy my participants, I found, to the contrary, that they were all too eager to share their knowledge. Indeed, I quickly learned that given the opportunity most mayors and managers jump at the chance to explain their work processes, governing methodologies and, unsurprisingly, the virtues of their locality. On more than one occasion I was encouraged to visit their town or city and in one instance I was invited to move there!

In the end, I wound up with more material than I could possibly use. To help me make sense of it all, I reached out to Dr. Ron Carlee of Old Dominion University – himself an experienced local government leader. Dr. Carlee labored day and night, pausing only to take light refreshment (and probably to teach a class or two), to produce a guide which aided in my understanding. It is included here for your benefit as well.

So, what is the secret? How can local governments make the best possible mayor/council-manager chemistry to achieve good governance? Read on...



GREAT CHEMISTRY:

The ingredients for a successful mayor/council-manager relationship

Meet the chemists

Note – all population figures from 2020 census.

Town of Amherst (pop. 2,580)

Mayor Dwayne Tuggle. I've lived in Amherst since 1988. I retired after thirty years in law enforcement and a close friend of mine talked me into running for mayor. I was elected in 2016 and here we are! I also serve on the board of the Virginia Municipal League because I asked Sara about it and she reached out to VML's director and said, "hey I've got this mayor, he's a pain but I like him."

Town Manager Sara McGuffin. I have had been interested in local and state government for my entire life. My father was the publisher of the *Virginia Review* which was very focused on local and state government topics. So even as a child I remember going places and meeting people that were doing local government. I'm one of those weird people who, even in high school, knew they wanted to be involved in local government. Although I came up in the world of planning, I have also been an elected and appointed official at different times. I started in this role in January of 2018. I'm happy to be back on the staff side!



City of Fairfax (pop. 23,300)

Mayor Catherine Read. I grew up in Southwest Virginia and left to be a theater major at Emerson in Boston where I took a class called Political Thought with an amazing professor named Mike Brown. I was on the forensics team at Emerson. In those days George Mason University had the #1 debate team and the #1 forensics team in the nation in the category of small schools. I needed in-state tuition, so I went on to major in Government Politics at George Mason. In 2007 I started my own social media consultancy and hung out my shingle to teach businesses how to use online tools. I've worked with so many organizations and groups on public policy in the last decade. I've done a lot of legislative advocacy, mainly with nonprofits trying to get good public policy locally and at the state and federal levels. When our mayor, David Meyer said he wasn't going to run for reelection we thought "surely somebody will step up and run against the one declared candidate?" Nobody else did, but I was able to get my paperwork to run submitted on the last day possible. I was a surprise candidate!

City Manager Rob Stalzer. My education was in business administration and regional and city planning. I was Fairfax County's deputy executive for 18 years which included 12 years as the county's deputy for public safety, planning and development and six years as the deputy for planning and development. And before all of that I was the town manager in Herndon from 1988 to 2000. I've also taught graduate students as an adjunct professor of public administration at both



GMU and Virginia Tech. I was hired by the city in November of 2018. We recently completed the third council orientation that we've done since I've been here. The second one was in the middle of COVID, so it was a little bit weird. The first one was literally my first week that I was city manager. So, this orientation was different because I had been here for a while, and we weren't in the middle of a pandemic!

City of Lexington (pop. 7,320)

Mayor Frank Friedman. I was a financial advisor mostly minding my own business when the mayor at the time – who was a successful businessman – put his hand on my shoulder after a meeting and asked me to stop by his office. I was euphoric because I thought I'd be able to pick up one of the wealthiest men in town as a client. But when I arrived at his office he asked if I had ever thought about being on the school board! After consulting with my mother, who was a schoolteacher in a neighboring municipality, I put myself forward in 1999 and started the journey of public service: school board, council, and now mayor. I was elected to council in 2006; was unsuccessful in a reelection in 2010; and was successful again in 2012 and then elected as mayor fall of 2016.

City Manager Jim Halasz. When I was doing my bachelor's degree, I was not particularly knowledgeable about public administration, but I had a professor who said, "you know, Jim, your talents and interests seem to be something that might lead you in that direction." I researched a little bit and then went on to do my master's in public administration. I did find that it suited me. I like contributing to the community by using my talents and abilities to make a positive difference in people's lives. I began as manager here in November of 2019. I was fortunate enough to be here for several months before COVID came into play.



Town of Middleburg (pop. 669)

Mayor Bridge Littleton. I've lived in Middleburg basically my entire life. Getting involved in local government was from a sense of duty to give back to the community that's meant the world to me. My father served on town council for 34 years. He served in his first council meeting six weeks after I was born! I got appointed to the Planning Commission in 2014 and then I got elected to council in 2016 and then elected as mayor in 2018. From my perspective, Middleburg is an incredibly special place thanks to the people in this community. I personally know all these folks and I deeply care that we maintain the town and the community that's so special to them for the next generation.

Town Manager Danny Davis. I began my career in local government as a senior in college interning with a member of the Board of Supervisors for Loudoun County and ended up spending almost 12 years with the county before going to work in the Town of



Purcellville. I've been in Middleburg for nearly 4 1/2 years. I absolutely love local government. I love the impact that you can have on a community by improving and enhancing the quality of life for the residents. I love interacting with citizens and businesses and helping people understand why this is such a wonderful place.

City of Poquoson (pop. 12,460)

Mayor Gordon Helsel. When I got out of the Army in 1971, I was a volunteer firefighter and eventually became volunteer chief. I had been to some of the city council meetings and saw how they operated. I got very interested in decision making in the City of Poquoson and wanted to be part of that. I ran and won by 283 votes and began serving on council in 1982. I was vice mayor from 1990–1994 and mayor from 1996–2010. I was in the General Assembly from 2010–2019. When I got through in the General Assembly, I decided that I wanted to go back and do a little bit of politicking, so I ran for mayor again and was fortunate to be elected by the people...and here I am!

City Manager Randy Wheeler. I've been in local government in Virginia for about 34 years. I started in local government probably as kind of a search for community. When I was growing up, we moved a whole bunch all over the country and so I never really had a hometown. I was heavily influenced in that by my grandfather who was the longtime chairman of the Amelia County School board and at one time chairman of the Virginia School Board Association. I've been Poquoson's city manager almost 14 years. The two managers that preceded me were each here about 12 years, so that sort of tells you about the stability of the manager's position here.



“What makes the mayor/ council-manager relationship work in your locality?”

Know your role. Stay in your lane.

Dwayne Tuggle: We all know our lane – we respect each other but we stay in our lane well... we don't try to jump over into somewhere we have no business being.

Sara McGuffin: We're fortunate to have a very explicit charter that clearly outlines everyone's role. I think that the hard thing is how you communicate with each other when someone is leaving their lane. It can become emotional or angry, but it's just factual. We're all going to stray sometimes a little bit and we need to be able to communicate and say, “I appreciate the input and I will take that under consideration but that's my world.”

Danny Davis: At the end of the day my job is to let the council make the decision. Once they make whatever decision they make, my job and my staff's job, is to execute on that decision. A manager must let go of personal feelings on whether a decision should go in this direction or that direction. It's an important piece of this relationship.

Bridge Littleton: You have to respect one another and know your swim lane. I know that myself and the council, we go over into Danny's swim lane plenty of times, but we really try to be thoughtful about it. Our job is not to run the town; our job is to give Danny and his team a strategic vision so can put a plan together and execute it. If he comes to us and asks for resources, we try really hard to be as clear with him as we can be with our expectations.

Trust. Respect. Communication.

Sara McGuffin: Trust and communication are essential because ultimately you need to have a relationship with each other that is based on trust, and we communicate appropriately with each other, and when you do that the relationship part comes along. I mean you have to start with trust.

Frank Friedman: The words that come to mind are “respect” and “communication” and when I think about communication also “style” – some people like to get e-mails some people like telephone calls and being able to understand how to communicate are essential ingredients for making good progress.

Jim Halasz: Communication, trust, courtesy, and respect for their role and in the work they do. Be friendly and ready to discuss what's on their mind. Always respond to questions.

Bridge Littleton: Treat each other as human beings with dignity and respect. I see Danny as an equal, not as a staff person that must do as I say. There are certainly times where he might disagree with something and I'll say, “OK I understand you. I disagree. This is what we're going to do.” That's fine and he does a great job of executing on that. Those times are rare though. I respect his opinion, his view, and the things that he's trying to achieve for the town. So, nine times out of ten he's probably going to be better at knowing those things and making sure we get to the right outcome.

Gordon Helsel: I trust Randy not to tell me just what I want to hear, but to level with me and tell me the truth. He's always done that, and we do that with the staff. I would put the City of Poquoson against any city, town, or county in the Commonwealth in terms of how we operate and how we have complete dedication to each other. Randy and I talk every day – whether by phone or in person – so we're always on the same page. Then my job is to make sure the council is on the same page. We don't keep anything from them.

Randy Wheeler: The council and the mayor work hard on their relationship every day, not just council meeting day, and so that relationship is based on mutual respect and trust. When there is an honest disagreement, the relationship is in a good place it's neither personal nor long lasting. If your house is in order before you have that kind of conflict, I think that you're in better shape to go through it.

Rob Stalzer: I don't want any council member or the mayor – or any of our boards and commissions for that matter – wondering whether the staff is providing full disclosure. I don't want anybody thinking that there's something that we're not sharing and that we're not being completely descriptive. Trust is a just a fundamental aspect of everything that we do on the staff and I'd like to think that we don't screw too much up. In fact, I'm going to be as above board with what we have not done well as what we have done well. Also, we are not relying on the governing body to ask us questions for us to be prompted to provide information. We're going to provide the information whether prompted it or not and if there's additional information that needs to be provided as a result of that conversation then we'll do it.

Be available. Be responsive.

Catherine Read: I'm really committed to building relationships with each of the council members by communicating with each of them in the way that they prefer. One of the council members will text me and ask if I have 5 minutes for a phone call. I have another who will call me, and I have another who will always e-mail very well thought, out very detailed messages with whatever question needs to be answered.

Danny Davis: You have to understand who your council members are and how they receive and process information. There are times when that means a deliberative discussion that focuses on key details

that are important to them and sometimes it means laying out a very quick statement of facts and then letting the council dive into it. So really, it's understanding those dynamics and being able to prepare yourself ahead of time for what you expect those questions are going to be.

Randy Wheeler: I think that we really benefit from the size of our community and how it's configured. We're small, which means we're accessible. I have a personal relationship with every council member. He or she knows that we're always available by phone by text whatever they need. Like the mayor, I prefer to meet and talk in person wherever is most convenient for councilmembers and members of the community. We do a lot less of our work via e-mail than other communities. I think that for us it's about that personal touch we've always had during my time here.

Embrace new perspectives.

Gordon Helsel: When I ran for council the first time there were all kinds of morale problems and department squabbles. When Randy came just prior to me going to the General Assembly he brought a whole new attitude and very quickly the staff in the city responded.

Danny Davis: To be fair – and I believe all the members of council recognize this – they are not here forever. They might choose not to run again, or they might not get reelected. So, a manager can't just be tied to individuals but going in the direction of the council as a whole.

Catherine Read: My style is very collaborative, so I work with Rob. I ask questions. In fact, I think it would be stupid not to ask a lot of questions. Two of our city council members are new. In fact, one of them, Billy Bates is nineteen years old! He's in his senior year as a physics major at George Mason University. He's lived in the city all his life and people have been stunned at not only how plugged in he is but also by his great questions. The other new member is Kate G. Doyle Feingold who has her own perspective and asks unique questions. In some ways the conversation is probably different than it has been because we don't know how it's always been done here so we're just asking the questions. If Rob finds that refreshing, I think that's great because you need to have new people and new perspectives all the time.

Rob Stalzer: Every governing body I've ever worked for has its own personality in terms of how it does business. I've never worked

with two council members and a mayor who have not held elected office before so that's been a new experience for me, but it's been really refreshing. Obviously, everybody who runs for office is a unique individual and has their own experiences and perspectives, but I have found that it's been really eye opening to work with a governing body that kind of sees their role in a little bit different way.

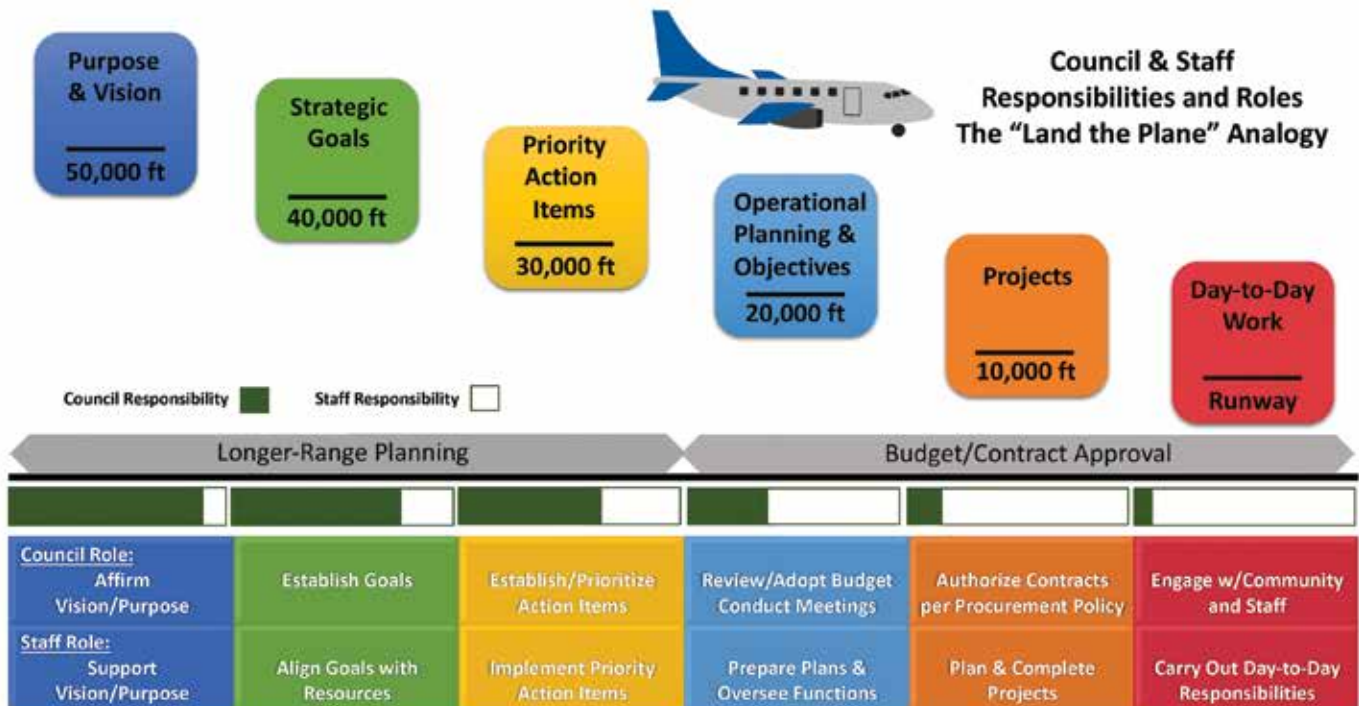
One thing this council did that I found very helpful in developing their strategic plan was to identify 25 priority action items – that's five priority action items for each of the five strategic goal areas. The analogy that we used was to the process of landing a plane [see graphic]. I think understanding roles and responsibilities at those various levels has been very helpful. The impetus for that came from one of the newer members and from the mayor.

Remember, we're all in this together!

Randy Wheeler: Even though the council members have been different from one another and have not always agreed, they've always had the same core values of public service and love of community. When you have shared values, it makes everything else you do so much easier because you have the same objective: To act in the best interest of our community. The council and staff really do have a sort of "we're all in this together" attitude. We trust each other and I think that that is a force multiplier for us that makes everything we try to do more achievable even for a small community.

Bridge Littleton: Local government is a team sport. It doesn't matter if you're mayor or you're a patrolman, if the team isn't rolling together towards the same goal, you're never going to make it.

Sara McGuffin: There have been some of those divided contentious issues that the minority has agreed to move forward with the majority view, but they've asked to evaluate in a year how it is going and the majority has respected that. So that's been a really great way for everybody to say "OK, I understand that this is where the majority of citizens are, I understand this is where the majority of council is, but I'm concerned about the externalities and so I just want to make sure that we're not going to just let this go by and not pay attention to how it's working." It makes it so it feels like once you lose you've haven't lost forever.



Graphic adapted by the City of Fairfax from "Council & Staff Work Flight Analogy" by Mike Baker (Apr 27, 2018 | PM MAGAZINE)

Frank Friedman: You should ask of any decision that you're making for city council "how is this in the best interest of all the citizens of our community?" When you can answer that, you'll see a good path forward.

Relax (and maybe have a little fun).

Gordon Helsel: I think too many politicians just flat out don't want to listen. They go to a meeting once a month, maybe twice a month, and that's pretty much it. They've got a title and they wear it. I mean, you can really see it! We don't we don't do that. If you could see us right now, you'd see that Randy is just as casual as he can be and I'm in my traditional shorts and sweater and that's how we operate. Randy does a great job; he's got a great staff. They let me wear my shorts and I do change my sweatshirt every day! We have our playtime, but we've got a staff that can get serious in a heartbeat.

Bridge Littleton: We have fun with one another, we enjoy spending time with one another. So, while we take the job seriously, we don't take ourselves too seriously. We wanted a manager who we could enjoy being around. In another locality it could be that they're looking for some different things. But for us, it was just as much about personality as it was about skills and experience.

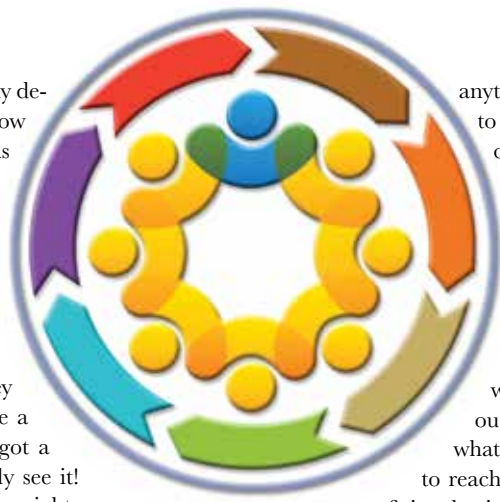
Danny Davis: Alignment is so important. When I interviewed with this council, I walked in the door, and they were all laughing and getting along with each other, and you could just sense that there was a commonality in their purpose and in their desire of why they were doing what they were doing. That spills over into their council meetings and their interactions together and that means a lot for a manager coming in the door.

"What are successful strategies for preparing for a council meeting?"

Know the agenda. No surprises!

Dwayne Tuggle: The manager puts together a proposed agenda and I'll go over it and then we meet at least twice. We usually meet Thursday and I ask questions and sometimes I'll change the order of things. We'll meet again usually on Wednesday morning just to finalize it to see if there's any surprises. Maybe a citizen called with a question about something. I think that's why our agenda flows so well is because you know we just don't say it once and go with it. We keep an eye on it.

Sara McGuffin: Recently, one of our newer council members said that they were struggling with understanding what was coming up on the agenda. They said that as a new member they knew others had talked about some of these things in the past, but they were new to him, and he felt like it wasn't enough time between Friday and Wednesday to process everything. So, I started adding at the bottom of the weekly report I do for council a bulleted list of all the items that I know are floating out there for future council meetings. It is a written report that I e-mail out to all the members of council and all the full-time staff on Friday, so everybody knows the issues that have come up during the week, the important meetings that occurred that week, what's on the calendar coming up in the next couple weeks, and the future agenda items. It's short – just 2-3 pages of bullets – not



anything that is going to take anybody a long time to read or process. That's my way of communicating to council: "Hey, here are the things you might hear about when you go to the grocery store." Some of those things might sit on that list for two or three months and some of them might come up during the next council meeting.

Catherine Read: On Friday afternoons Rob and I have an in-person meeting about what's going to be on the agenda two weeks out. It also gives me a chance to think about what votes are going to happen on what date and to reach out to the council members. We spend a lot of time having one-on-ones. Of course, it's issue dependent because some issues are relatively routine, and some issues are not. For example, we have a vote coming up about a very controversial project where the public has been very vocal and so I've reached out to each council member individually* to ask if they believe that they will have the information necessary to vote on this issue at the meeting following the report and the presentation. There should be no surprises on the dais.

Gordon Helsel: We get our information packets and agenda delivered the Thursday prior to our Monday night meeting. So, we've got Friday, Saturday, and Sunday to go through that packet and make sure we understand everything that will be covered. I find myself here practically every Monday just prior to the meeting to make sure that I understand the agenda and if we have any sort of controversial items then my job is to alert members of council so that I know when I sit down exactly how this meeting is going to go and I almost know how

Frank Friedman's Five Points to Follow for Successful Council Meetings

- #1 – Always review the material prior to the meeting.** It's always so disappointing when somebody opens a packet for the first time sitting on the dais.
- #2 – Alert the mayor and/or the staff of any questions or concerns ahead of time.** The old "gotchas" in the open session really don't benefit anybody and are only good for political theatrics.
- #3 – Engage peers to understand their position.** I have found that there are times when council members may not like one another or may not communicate very well, and they end up at odds with each other. We had a circumstance where one council member nominated someone for the school board, and she assumed everyone would agree with her choice. It sort of broke her heart when the vote came about and she lost. Plus, we had to vote down someone before we voted up someone, which was awkward for the rest of council as well.
- #4 – Use the bathroom before the start of the meeting!** You never know how long they're going to last.
- #5 – Do not schedule a vacation on a meeting day.** You signed up for the job and you know when they are!

**It's important to keep in mind here, and elsewhere when interviewees refer to "one-on-one" meetings, that if three or more councilmembers are present then the interaction is considered a meeting of council and is subject to all meeting requirements.*

votes are going to go. Although I'm not trying to talk anybody into either voting for or voting against an item – they may mention that to me in our conversation but that's their decision to make. Randy and his staff spend an awful lot of time trying to make me and the council look good.

Danny Davis: They like to joke about how verbose I might be during council meetings. I do that not because I like to hear myself speak but because I feel I need to give the council the full context of the issue at hand. There are sometimes where it really does take doing the “1-on-1 briefing” ahead of time. Sometimes it's just an e-mail, a heads up of what's coming up. Or it might be I've done a call to each council member ahead of time. I never want them in a position where they're feeling like they're under pressure to make a decision and haven't had a chance to fully digest the issue at hand. No surprises!

How do you deal with citizen complaints? What about those who are uncivil during meetings?

Listen and acknowledge... but don't engage.

Gordon Helsel: I stay close to my constituents because that's how government ought to work. If I get a complaint from a citizen – which is pretty rare to be honest – I'm one of those people that's going to knock on your door find out what the problem is and how can we help you.

Randy Wheeler: Every community has people that are concerned, sometimes very impassioned, about things. Part of why people can get so agitated at times is because they feel like nobody's listening to them. In this city, we listen and if there's an issue or someone has a concern, there's a good chance that one of my key people or I will be there standing in their front yard talking to them about it. We're honest about what we can do and what we can't, so we don't overpromise.

Sara McGuffin: The mayor is very judicious and lets people know we'd put their issue on a future agenda because it deserves a full hearing and we're going to make sure we've got time to think about it and look and see what other folks are doing.



Rob Stalzer: In my experience with the city the public discourse has been very civil even though we've dealt with some emotionally charged issues. For example, we just went through a 2½-year process where we looked at about two dozen streets that had Confederate related names. There was a lengthy community dialogue and education process which culminated in a series of public discussions. Even people who were adamantly opposed to what we were doing were very respectful when they spoke before council. I think they recognized where they were. Of course, we got a couple of emails that were uncivil, but I don't even know if they were necessarily from people who lived in the city.

Catherine Read: Bottom line: people want to be heard. We did three hours with people talking about their angst and how upset they were over renaming their neighborhood streets. That was a catharsis; It had to happen. People wanted us to feel and understand their pain. The council must be ready to do that. But at the end of the day, we're there to make difficult decisions. We are there to look at what it means for the city as a whole. But we will listen; we will always listen. It's probably our first job to make sure we are listening carefully to the staff, to the experts, to the people who live in the neighborhoods, and to the businesses that operate in our city. And after we've listened it's incumbent on us to make the best possible decision.

Jim Halasz: I don't know that there's a real role for me to comment during the meeting other than to follow up very carefully and closely with individuals. My role to provide that type of support and I think if you do it regularly enough the citizens understand that and accepted that they may not be completely happy when they walk out but they know they've got an avenue to pursue to get questions answered. There's little to be gained by speaking up at that moment and I don't want to answer off the cuff; I want to take time with that individual to establish a relationship.

Frank Friedman: I think that we have an obligation to hear people but what's most important is how we react. We're not going to respond or engage in debate on questions that we are asked. It takes two to fight, so if somebody comes in spitting and fussing and fuming and just looking for a fight we can certainly fall into that trap. Just to give you a real-life example – we have been working to develop some property into an apartment complex over the past two years. There are many people who don't want that property developed. During the public hearings there were multiple members of the community who stood up and made accusations that Jim was on the take because he used to work in Halifax County and the developer is from Halifax County. I was proud of Jim because he sat quietly as he was being dragged through the mud and it gave me the opportunity to educate anybody who wanted to be educated that the developer was brought to Lexington by the former city manager and Jim just happened to be in that seat now. It was certainly my role to provide him some cover and it was his role to resist the urge to pound on the table and defend himself because people were just making assumptions.

Bridge Littleton: The most powerful tool is listening. We let everybody ask questions respectfully, even if they are angry, we listen to them and hear what they need. If I know what the answer is, I can say “well let me take just five minutes to walk you through this and explain to you why that's happening.” Almost every time it helps keep things civil. Maybe they don't like my answer, but at least they understand why we are doing what we are doing. Then there are the people who are unprofessional or don't show a level of respect. Those are less than 1% but it does happen. I listen, that's my job, and I assure them that I hear them and – even though I disagree – we will take your feedback and consider it as best we can. It's a small enough community that everybody knows everybody, so you don't get really the right to be combative or disrespectful to others.

Know what works for your locality.

Dwayne Tuggle: We run a pretty tight ship. In our meetings council does not engage with the citizens during citizen comments or public hearings so they come in and say what they've got to say, and we just acknowledge it and digest it. We follow Robert's Rules of Order and have kind of a regimented way of discussions to keep everything moving in an orderly fashion. Public comment is three minutes, so after three minutes they get cut off and they take their seat. I think that helps because this is what is expected, and you know this is what's going to happen. One of my favorite sayings that we use a lot is "slow our roll" and I'll say that to council and to Sara if something's going on that's contentious. This way we can chew on it for a little while before we come back to give everybody time to calm down and process it instead of making a heat-of-the-moment decision.

Bridge Littleton: We're not like county board or council meetings in larger localities where everybody has three minutes, you only get to go once, and it's very regimented. We have a conversation and anybody that wants to speak is welcome to speak, two or three times if they want. Sometimes I will ask somebody in the room specifically if they have something to say about a particular topic. We do it this way because we respect everybody's opinion and I think that's a big component of being on a small town council.

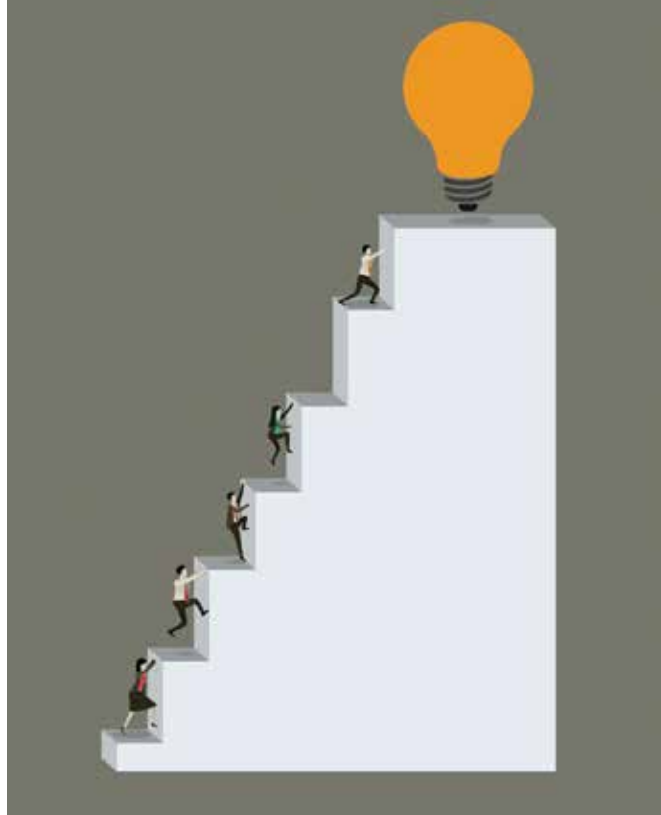
Sara McGuffin: The enemy of temper is time; the more time that goes by the more people become detached from the position they come in with and the better it goes. I mean we've had a few things that some of my staff – the supervisors of the different departments – come to all the council meetings and there have been a few times that they've been frustrated. "Why don't they just make a decision on this and be done with it!" Well, because we're not trying to get to 3-2 vote. We're trying to get to a 4-1 vote or a 5-0 vote. So, if we can take two or three extra months and get to the place where we've got a 5-0 vote those are two or three months well spent.

Randy Wheeler: What works in Poquoson I think works really well, but it may not work as well in another place. Each community has to find what works for them. But when you can get that that blend of core values and sense of community you can do great things.

"What's a project or accomplishment in your locality that wouldn't have been possible without a strong manager/mayor-council relationship?"

Town of Amherst: How trust makes it possible to be nimble for those "little crisis moments".

Sara McGuffin: There's always those little crisis moments that require fast action and because of the mutual trust that exists I can call the council and say, "we have this situation going on that requires immediate action, this is the action I would like to take, and I'm planning to come to your next meeting and ask to spend the money that I'm already going to have spent!" For example, we had a sewage pump station leak and our guys tried to fix it, but the wet well was so deep that we did not have equipment capable of doing the work. I called the councilmembers and asked for authorization to move



forward. I never have council members who don't call me back. I always get a call back or a text back and they are always willing to hear me out. I feel like because of the good relationship we are very nimble at handling crises and taking advantage of opportunities.

City of Lexington: The time a mutual agreement to go "radio silent" prevented fracturing under pressure.

Frank Friedman: One of the more exciting times we had was when The Red Hen asked Sara Sanders to leave their restaurant. We became internationally recognized for that overnight. It was truly amazing. At the time Noah Simon was the city manager and he had my respect and that of the council. So, instead of becoming fractured with everyone on council going on CNN and doing their own interviews, we worked together and made Noah the point person for all communications while the rest of us basically went radio silent. We didn't have six council members and a mayor and about 27 personalities projecting on radio, TV, social media, etc. I'm the son of a teacher and I love to educate people. So, I desperately wanted to go on any microphone that was available and pitch our story and explain what a wonderful loving place Lexington is you know – not focusing on the one political experience there. It was a big gulp on my part to ask Noah to just say "no comment" and turn down the *New York Times* and the *Wall Street Journal* and the *Washington Post* and so on.

City of Fairfax: Because of cooperation, a campaign promise is becoming a reality.

Catherine Read: I've only been mayor for a few months, but I can tell you when I ran for city council in 2012, I did not win a seat. However, at that time Old Town square was being considered and there was so much opposition from business owners downtown who wanted to keep their temporary gravel parking lot. I went before city council and told them that this is going to be integral to the economic development of the city – you have to have a city center; you have to

have a gathering place. I pushed for the city to see itself as having a downtown gathering place. Later, they considered putting a bathroom there and then voted against it because they were so afraid that homeless people might use that public bathroom. So, when I ran for mayor in 2022, I ran on the issue of sidewalks and bathrooms! I pointed out that we had no municipal bathrooms in the city. Go to any county park and there are public restrooms. I asked, “at what point did educated and affluent people who own very expensive homes decide that plastic outhouses were acceptable?” Now we are putting a temporary restroom at Old Town square with running water, a changing station, and a flush toilet. We will eventually build permanent ones.

Town of Middleburg: Why being aligned made big efforts to help the community during COVID possible.

Bridge Littleton: The first couple months of our responses to COVID. We spent several hundred thousand dollars purchasing meal vouchers from the restaurants that we then gave to citizens so they could buy meals and support the businesses. We did a retail support program. We helped people with their water bills and rental assistance. We bought thousands of COVID test kits. We bought boxes of masks and gave them out to people. You’re talking about a town of around 700 people with an annual budget of three and a half million dollars in the general fund and here we are spending hundreds of thousands of dollars from our fiscal reserve to do everything we can

to help the community. We all worked together. I remember going business to business and talking through the cracks doors to ask if it would help if we did a certain thing. We never had to have a fight, a debate, a discussion, or a compromise. We knew we were going to do something and were going to do it now and we were taking ownership to do it. Danny and his staff killed themselves to make it all work. So, if we had had a contentious environment or an environment where people didn’t respect one another it would not have worked.

City of Poquoson: How a strong relationship among staff and officials earned the city a AAA bond rating.

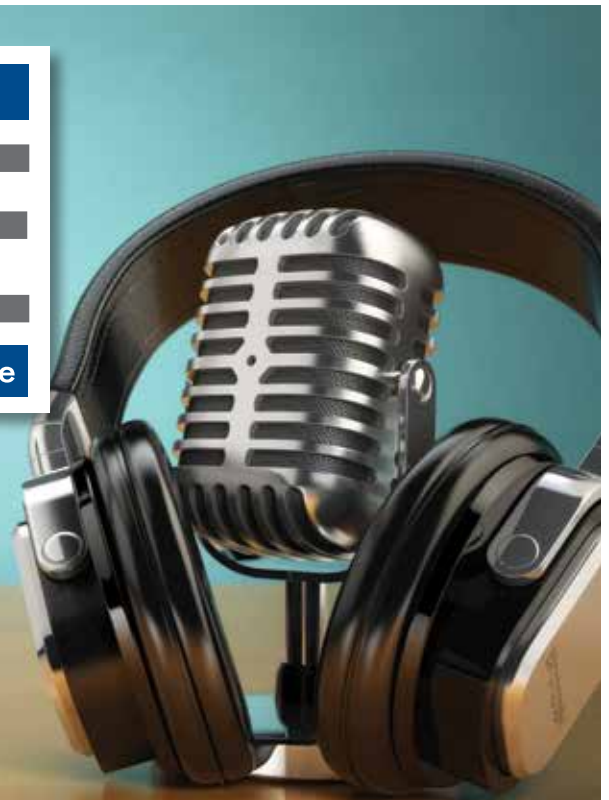
Randy Wheeler: Like a lot of communities, we had to shore up our financial underpinnings as we pulled out of the 2008 recession. We presented a plan to fully address all our structural budget issues. The council had faith that we knew what we were talking about, and we had correctly diagnosed the challenges facing us. We worked together to come up with a plan to make this community even stronger and the council embraced a three-year plan with some very significant decisions. We completed the three-year plan in two years and, although it wasn’t the specific objective, as a result we achieved, and still maintain, an S&P AAA bond rating. We didn’t even have our own bond rating when I when I came here, and we went from no specific rating to AAA in about six years! That had everything to do with our relationship and councils’ actions in support.



The VML Voice is the official podcast of the Virginia Municipal League. Each episode explores a different locality or issue but the focus is always on Virginia and the local governments that make the Commonwealth work for everyone.

Contact Rob Bullington, rbullington@vml.org to suggest topics, ask questions, or inquire about sponsorship opportunities.

New episode featuring members of the Bristol city council now available. Subscribe to the podcast at www.vml.org.



ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS: What you need to know about the mayor/ council-manager system for good governance

LOCAL GOVERNMENTS IN Virginia operate under the mayor/council-manager form of government, with few exceptions. What does this really mean? Localities still have mayors and councils, so what is the role of a manager? How do the mayor and council assert their leadership in this form of government to ensure that the local operations are not only efficient but responsive and equitable? What is the appropriate role of the manager? How do the mayor, council, and manager work together to achieve the community's goals?

This article explores these questions, examining how localities can achieve the benefits of the council-manager plan and enhance the likelihood of successful governance. After briefly exploring the background of the council-manager plan, six questions for effectively using it are explored:

- What is the local government manager's role?
- What should be the policy role of the manager?
- What are the governance duties of the mayor and council?
- How do the mayor and council provide oversight of the manager?
- How important is professional development?
- How do we hire the right manager?

The most important elements for effective governance are intent and hard work. The mayor and council, working with the manager, develop a well-articulated plan for governing the locality. The mayor and council give the manager clear performance and role expectations, reinforced through frequent communication. The manager uses their experience and skills to faithfully execute the plan, keeping the elected officials and community informed, and adjusting as needed.

Why the council-manager form of government?

This novel governance model was born out of the necessity to bring ethics and competence to municipal governments that were beset by inefficiency, nepotism, and other forms of corruption. Rapid population growth in cities created denser living arrangements and interdependence. Waste, fraud, and abuse became luxuries that cities could not afford.

Discussions about finding another way to manage cities began in earnest in the late 1800s. Reformers and academics created the National Municipal League (now the National Civic League), which led to the first model City Charter in 1900. Frederickson, Wood, and Logan report that the charter's goal was to reduce corruption by eliminating the diffused ward system where legislative and executive

functions overlapped without accountability. The initial recommended form was the mayor-council model to unify administration under the mayor, but according to the writers, it was not attractive because "there was reluctance to give the mayor such extensive powers." The shift to recommending the council-manager plan did not come until 1919 (Frederickson, Wood, and Logan, 2001).

Staunton, VA. Meanwhile, Staunton, VA faced the same problems of inefficient and unethical governance, according to a 1954 report authorized by the city to document its governance history. In

the early 1900s, Staunton, like other cities in Virginia with populations over 10,000, had a bicameral legislative body: a board of aldermen (eight members) and a common council (fourteen members). Thirty committees of both bodies provided policy and administrative oversight over the individual department directors and other city activities. According to a 1954 report, the city was a mess: "...because of the multiplicity of committees and the total lack of harmony between the two bodies, there was actually little, or no control exercised over municipal function."

The city was in debt, streets could not get paved, streetlights were not being installed, and contracts were costing more than they should. Over the objections of department directors, unified administration

was implemented through the adoption of a novel form of government borrowed from the way businesses operate. Administrative oversight was transferred from various committees of different elected officials and consolidated under a single, appointed administrator, who was officially known as the "general manager." The term "city manager" was popularized in Staunton through the newspaper and common usage. Thus, Staunton became the first local government in the U.S. to implement the council-manager form of government in 1908 (City of Staunton, 1954).

In 1912, Sumpter, South Carolina implemented its version of the council-manager plan. In 1914, Dayton, OH became the first larger city to adopt a similar plan. Also in 1914, the City Manager's Association held its first meeting. The council-manager plan achieved national prominence when the National Municipal League revised its Model City Charter in 1915, recommending this new approach. By 1919, over 100 cities had adopted the plan (ICMA, n.d.).

Mayor or manager? Today, the council-manager and mayor-council forms of government, in diverse iterations, are the dominant governance models in the U.S. The mayor-council form unifies administrative oversight but concentrates executive and political power in the hands of a single person, the mayor. Unlike a manager, there are no professional qualifications to be mayor. One only needs ability to run a successful campaign. There may be many people in a locality



with executive skills who could successfully be mayor, but they first must be willing to run and then win and keep winning. Every election is a game of chance. This is not to say that mayor-council forms of government cannot work. Many cities have had great success, at times, but more by luck than by the design of the model.

What does the “business model” applied to local government really mean? Rather than being the chief executive of the municipal corporation, the mayor is the chair of the board of directors. The council is the board of directors, elected by the shareholders (i.e., the voters). The chair and board of directors (i.e., mayor and council), then choose a chief executive officer (CEO) to manage the corporation based on the needs of the corporation and the experience, skills, and traits needed for effective executive leadership. The local government CEO is the “manager.”

Nothing is cookie-cutter in local governments resulting in no two localities being identical. For example, the term “manager”, though commonly used in cities, towns, and counties, has variations: chief administrative officer (the term used in the Code of Virginia), administrator, executive, executive, general manager, and chief executive officer. Likewise, depending on the type of government, the council may be called a board, a board of supervisors, aldermen, and others. The mayor may also be called chair or chairman. The different terms are largely based on local and state customs. The specific authority of the local government manager will also vary based on state codes, local charters, and the delegation of duties from the local governing body.

The adoption of the council-manager business model of governance recognizes that localities are municipal corporations that provide tangible services on which the functioning of society depends. Rather than depending on the outcome of local elections to determine who will manage the local government on a day-to-day basis, elected representatives recruit a professional manager from anywhere in the world who they think can best serve their locality based on the manager’s track record of executive management. If the mayor and council make a bad choice, they are not stuck with the manager; they can dismiss the person and hire someone better.

In 2021, the National Civic League (NCL) released its 9th edition of the Model City Charter, which was last updated in 2000. The Model City Charter continues to recommend the council-manager form of government, which is now the most common form of local governance in the U.S.

Periodically, localities will become infatuated with the idea of the mayor-council system in a desire for a strong political leader who can bring the city together, especially if a change is needed. While the mayor under the political governance model does not work for the council, the mayor still needs a consensus on the council for budget and legislative action. A highly qualified mayor working collaboratively with the council can have great success; however, many different pieces must align for this form of governance to work.

In the council-manager form of government, the manager unquestionably works for the mayor and council, within whose control lies the ability to align the different elements for successful local governance. The council-manager form of government carries less uncertainty than the mayor-council form. At the same time, a politically strong mayor who can build consensus on the council is just as valuable in the council-manager form of government. Eminent local government scholar James Svava explains the importance of the mayor in his prologue to the 2121 Model City Charter:

The mayor is a comprehensive leader who draws on the features of the council-manager form of government to make it even more effective. The mayor is a community leader who interacts extensively with the public. The mayor strives to create a shared vision for the city with the support of the entire council. (NCL, 2022, p. 8)

Despite being around for over 100 years, most people still do not understand the council-manager form of government because it is so different from the federal and state forms that dominate the news. It is not uncommon for local government managers to be asked by community members and even their own families to explain what a manager does.

The mayor-council political model remains a more recognizable form of government. Many large cities (Richmond, New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Atlanta), which dominate media reports have the mayor-council form. The form also exists in Virginia towns. Adding to the confusion, both forms of government use the same terms of “mayor” and “council.” Furthermore, it is common for the mayor in mayor-council governments to appoint a professional to serve as their chief operating officer. That person may also be called a manager or administrator, achieving some of the same benefits as the council-manager form of government.

What is the local government manager’s role?

This question has long perplexed the city management profession and the elected officials for whom they work. The original motivation for the creation of the council-manager plan was to rid cities of corruption and incompetence. This goal has driven the profession from the beginning. But how should this goal be achieved? Should the local government manager be a visible leader or a “behind the curtain” operator?

Ethical local government. Ethical government has been the foundation of local government management since the inception of the profession. City managers first convened as a profession in 1914 when thirty-two managers gathered in Springfield, OH. Ten years later, the group adopted its Code of Ethics, which has been revised by amendments and accompanying guidance throughout the years. All members are subject to the twelve tenants of the code. Tenants 3, 11, and 12 speak to the personal and professional qualities that a manager is expected to display as matters of honesty and integrity:

- **Tenet 3.** Demonstrate by word and action the highest standards of ethical conduct and integrity in all public, professional, and personal relationships in order that the member may merit the trust and respect of the elected and appointed officials, employees, and the public.
- **Tenet 11.** Handle all matters of personnel on the basis of merit so that fairness and impartiality govern a member’s decisions, pertaining to appointments, pay adjustments, promotions, and discipline.
- **Tenet 12.** Public office is a public trust. A member shall not leverage his or her position for personal gain or benefit.

Tenants 7 and 10 address the issues which led to the original creation of the council-manager plan by requiring that the manager safeguard the administration of government from political favoritism or the appearance:

- **Tenet 7.** Refrain from all political activities which undermine public confidence in professional administrators. Refrain from participation in the election of the members of the employing legislative body.
- **Tenet 10.** Resist any encroachment on professional responsibilities, believing the member should be free to carry out official policies without interference, and handle each problem without discrimination on the basis of principle and justice.

Managers who violate the code of ethics are not only subject to actions that may be taken by the mayor and council, but they are also subject to professional sanctions. Written complaints are peer-reviewed and investigated by the Committee on Professional Conduct Actions and the committee's recommendations are taken up by the ICMA Board. In 2022, ICMA issued two public censures with a membership expulsion, two public censures with the members' participation in the credentialed manager program revoked, three public censures, and nine 9 private censures (ICMA).

Competent local government. Beyond ethical leadership, the pillars of public administration as articulated in the early years of the profession are the “three E’s” – efficiency, effectiveness, and economy. They can be summarized as follows (adapted from Norman-Major, 2011):

- Economy is providing services at the lowest reasonable cost.
- Efficiency is getting the most or best services within the resources available.
- Effectiveness is achieving the intended outcomes for the services.

Together these three pillars are considered politically neutral and universally applicable to professional management.

Equity. More controversial than the original three E’s is the fourth “E,” added in the 1960s: equity. As described by the National Academy of Public Administration, social equity “addresses fairness, justice, and equity within a variety of public contexts” (NAPA, n.d.). For many years, there has been a spirited discussion among city managers on where equity falls between the administrative role of the manager and the political roles of the mayor and council.

The debate over the role of equity in local government came to the forefront after the murder of George Floyd by Minneapolis law enforcement officers in 2020. ICMA, NAPA, NLC, and other professional organizations re-examined their equity records and policies. Numerous cities did the same. Many local governments created a position to focus attention on equity, using several different titles: chief equity officer, chief diversity officer, and chief inclusion officer.

There is currently a backlash against equity efforts in some states and localities growing out of today’s hyper-partisan politics. Consequently, local government managers have to negotiate issues related to equity in ways they never faced with economy, efficiency, or effectiveness. Beyond the political rhetoric, the questions that equity demands that local government managers ask of any action are: Is what we are doing fair? To whom is it fair and to whom is it unfair? Who benefits and who is burdened?

The administrative-political continuum. Historically, the role of the professional manager has been characterized by the myth of an administrative/political dichotomy, with the two functions demarcated by a bright line. But the role of professional managers vis-à-vis elected officials has never actually functioned in this way; rather, it has always existed on a continuum.

At one end of the continuum are the unambiguous administrative functions, such as hiring and managing personnel based on objective criteria. This end of the continuum should be in the domain of the manager, with no political involvement other than providing meaningful oversight. At the other end of the continuum are unambiguous partisan political activities that are the domain of the mayor and council and with which the manager should have no involvement. For example, managers must stay out of local elections, and many managers would argue that they should not involve themselves in any election.

When the mayor, individual council members, or the mayor and council collectively stray into purely administrative areas, the form of government can become politicized and undermined. When man-

agers stray into the political arena, the form of government is also undermined, and the managers have violated their code of ethics (ICMA, Tenant 7). Between these two ends lies the vast, ambiguous area of policy, some of which is more administrative (implementation) and some of which is more political (policy development). Managers can get pushed and pulled along this continuum.

What should be the policy role of the manager?

The mayor and council need to have a full discussion among themselves regarding the expectations of the manager in the policy arena. There is no one right answer. The role depends on the personalities and skills of the manager, mayor, and council members, as well as the history and culture of the locality and the local government organization.

There is a broad consensus among professional managers that they are most respected when they are seen as apolitical; however, being apolitical does not mean avoiding difficult issues or not making a professionally informed recommendation. It is the manager’s job to put a wide lens on issues and provide the mayor and council with a balanced analysis. As stated in Tenant 5, the manager should:

Submit policy proposals to elected officials; provide them with facts, and technical and professional advice about policy options; and collaborate with them in setting goals for the community and organization.

Depending on the expectations of the mayor and council, it may be appropriate for the manager to make and advocate for policy recommendations. In most cities, however, this would not include the manager advocating directly with the public. “Getting ahead of the council,” whether intentional or not, can cause a sudden end to a manager’s tenure.

How the manager functions in the policy arena may vary by the specific policy issue, the mayor’s and council’s expectations of the manager, the level of consensus among the mayor and council, and the manager’s comfort with the expected role. Rather than relying on intuition and assumptions, the mayor and council should have explicit conversations with the manager on the overall policy expectations and on specific policies as they arise, especially on emotionally charged issues such as COVID-19, gun control, abortion access, racial justice, and equity. There are administrative and political dimensions to each of these hot-button issues, around which the mayor and council should define the boundaries.

Should the manager be visible in the community? Beyond the development of specific policies, there is a broader question about the role the mayor and council expect the local government manager to play on a regular basis in the community. A manager in one Virginia community was told that the mayor and council expected them to be at most community events, including marching in the annual parade. At an adjacent community, the manager was told to avoid showing up and to leave community events to the elected officials. Managers are similarly conflicted. Some are comfortable with a public presence and others prefer to work behind the scenes. The point is that the role of the manager should be an open area of discussion among the manager, the mayor, and the council.

What are the governance duties of the mayor and council?

The Virginia Code states succinctly that the governing body is responsible for exercising “all powers vested in a municipal corporation” by the Code (§ 15.2-1100, Title 5.2, Chapter 11, Article 1). Among the governing body members, the mayor has expanded responsibilities:

In addition to being a presiding officer, the chairman or mayor, as the case may be, shall be the head of the local government for all official functions and ceremonial purposes. He shall have a vote but no veto. (§ 15.2-1423).

While the mayor has elevated leadership duties, the underlying premise of the council-manager form of government is that the mayor and council will act collectively. Councils are designed to represent the diverse perspectives of the locality's population. As such, it is expected that there will be differences among members on a wide range of policies. In the end, the locality will function best if the mayor and council can arrive at a shared vision for the locality and work collectively.

Regardless, the mayor and (the majority of) the council are in control of the government. The manager works for them. To get the full benefits of the council-manager form of government, however, the mayor and council must respect the form and adhere to its fundamental premise of unified administrative control delegated to the manager. To put it another way, the mayor and council should not undermine the manager.

Constituent issues. One of the most common concerns raised by managers is dealing with mayors and council members who circumvent the manager. This can happen on minor constituent issues, such as a zoning violation in a council member's district. A council member may go to the zoning administrator or, even worse, go directly to the code inspector. Actions such as these politicize service delivery and make it impossible to hold the manager accountable.

The timely and effective handling of constituent issues is essential for a responsive, representative government. That constituent system should go through the manager. It should be formal, transparent, and equitable for the mayor and all council members. Information shared with one council member should be shared with all council members.

Personnel matters. A more concerning area of political interference is when elected officials undermine the manager on personnel actions. In one instance, a manager was told by one member of the council that the manager would be fired if the manager did not fire a particular department head and was told by another council member that the manager would be fired if the manager did fire the department head. It is appropriate for the mayor and council members to let the manager know of their concerns with department heads or other municipal employees. However, the manager should then be allowed to do their job in a professional manner, ultimately being held accountable for the consequence of their actions.

This brings us to one of the most important responsibilities of the mayor and council...

How do the mayor and council provide oversight of the manager?

One of the best ways for the manager, mayor, and council to create a clear understanding of the manager's role and expectations is through regular, structured feedback. Too often the mayor and council defer performance discussions to an annual review, losing the value of timely feedback.

Virginia's closed meeting law provides a way to have these conversations; unfortunately, when a closed meeting is announced on a personnel matter, there tends to be the assumption that someone is about to get fired. "Performance" is a broad term that enables the mayor and council to have a robust and confidential discussion about performance and performance expectations. The opportunity to have an informal and frank discussion can occur whenever the manager's performance is noteworthy (good, bad, or uncertain) and should be routine. However, it is important to ensure that the meeting meets the spirit and letter of the open meetings act. A collective discussion with the local government attorney about what is permitted and not permitted is advisable.

The annual review – retrospective and prospective.

To be effective, the review process needs preparation and structure. The feedback should be balanced, meaningful, and actionable. If mayors and council members have not served on boards of directors that had the oversight responsibility for a chief executive officer of an organization the size of a municipality, getting formal or informal outside assistance on the process would be valuable.

The mayor and council (or manager on their own) may consider getting feedback from department directors and other key stakeholders. This works best with a neutral consultant and is not a recommended role for the human resources director.

Reviews – annual and more frequent – are best if used routinely and not just when a problem arises. Effective feedback systems prevent performance problems from occurring and provide recognition and encouragement for work done well.

An important part of the annual review is the prospective setting of expectations, perhaps even more so than the retrospective evaluation. The annual review can be a good prelude to a public mayor-council policy workshop that adopts a policy plan for the year.

While the annual budget process and periodic updates to the elements of the comprehensive plan are both essential parts of strategic planning, an annual policy workshop (preferably off-site) can help pull everything together. The purpose of the workshop is to set the direction for the year, prioritizing both the urgent and long-range work of the locality. In a performance meeting with the manager after the workshop, the mayor and council can make clear their performance expectations for the manager and how they will be evaluated.

How important is professional development?

Local governance is a constantly changing environment. COVID-19 is the most recent compelling example of a challenge for which few were well prepared. Now local governments and other organizations are dealing with evolving worker expectations and the balance between face-to-face and remote interactions. In the virtual world, artificial intelligence continues to evolve, and social media is as viral as ever. In the real world, the slow rise of the ocean along Virginia's coastline is no longer a theoretical threat, nor is the reality of extreme weather events that can occur anywhere in the state at any time.

This list of problems that can arise goes on and on.

Often when a locality faces a new issue or crisis, one will hear the manager or mayor lament that "there was no playbook for this." Most of the time, however, there actually is a playbook. For example, there were multiple playbooks on how to deal with a global pandemic developed in the early 2000s. In fact, there are playbooks on how to recover from most emergencies – mass shootings, wildfires, major floods, and so on. The key to knowing what to do isn't a matter of wishing for a playbook, it's knowing that the playbook exists and where to find it.

For this reason, and so many more, participation in ongoing professional development is essential for managers, mayors, and members of the council. Professional development allows people in these roles to stay current, learn about what works and doesn't, and build a professional network that can be called upon in times of need. Professional development is how they can find the playbook they need when they need it.

Rather than managers asking the mayor and council to support professional development, the mayor and council should insist upon a professional development plan. Minimally, local government managers should be active in the International City/County Management Association (ICMA) and the Virginia Local Government Management Association (VLGMA). The mayor and council members should be active in the Virginia Municipal League and/or Virginia

Association of Counties. Involvement with the National League of Cities and the National Association of Counties provides exposure beyond the Virginia way of doing things.

Professional development means more than merely being a member of an organization. It means intentionally accessing professional learning opportunities, such as the ICMA Credentialing Program. If your manager does not have a master's degree in public administration, consider supporting the manager in earning the degree through one of the online programs offered at Virginia's universities.

How do we hire the right manager?

Everything we've covered so far is for naught if the locality does not have a successful recruitment process for its manager. The key to a successful municipal manager recruitment is the ability to balance three important values: confidentiality, transparency, and participation. A locality will attract a strong pool of top candidates if there is an assurance of confidentiality. Unfortunately, confidentiality gets juxtaposed with transparency and participation as either/or propositions. It is possible, however, to successfully balance all three: :

- **Transparency** is public disclosure about the process. This is the plan for "what", "how", and "when" the mayor and council will conduct the recruitment process.
- **Participation** is the opportunity for the public and key stakeholders to provide input to the mayor and council on the selection process at the appropriate times.
- **Confidentiality** is ensuring that candidate information is not inappropriately disclosed and thereby putting candidates at risk in their current positions.

These three values apply to every phase of the recruitment process (outlined below):

Hiring a recruiter. The mayor and council should select a professional recruiter to manage the selection process. The recruiter should know managers for the type of locality doing the recruiting. The recruiter should present the right image for the locality; and establish a strong rapport with the mayor and council. The selection is not just about the firm; it is about the specific person assigned to the recruitment. Remember, the recruiter is not a cost but an investment in one of the most important decisions the mayor and council will make.

Determining qualifications of the manager. Many of the qualifications for a local government manager are generic: professional knowledge (MPA or related degree), executive experience in

local government management (as a manager, deputy, or equivalent in a comparable locality and environment), and member in good standing with ICMA. Other qualifications are situation specific. There is no generic right or wrong answer to the following questions:

- Does the locality expect the manager to play a more or less publicly visible role or operate behind the scenes?
- Does the locality want a manager who is more or less hands-on with the departments and the workforce?
- Does the locality want the manager to be a change agent or maintain the status quo?
- Does the locality need specific technical skills or experiences, such as financial recovery, economic development, community relations, organizational development, intergovernmental relations, emergency management, environmental management, town and gown relations, etc.?
- What traits are most important to the mayor and council: professional competence, cultural competence, emotional maturity, communication skills, integrity, empathy, equity, and/or caring?

This stage is an opportunity for input from the community and the local government workforce.

The recruiter will take the information gathered during this step and develop a recruitment profile that the mayor and council will approve.

Candidate selection and negotiation. Once the mayor and council select their consensus top candidate, the recruiter should then assist the mayor and council with a detailed background check (criminal, financial, medical). The human resource department and local government attorney should be involved at this stage.

If the background check reveals no disqualifying information, detailed reference checks should then be conducted. The recruiter should do the initial checks; however, it is recommended that a small committee of council members have direct conversations based on a predetermined set of questions with the most critical references, such as elected officials with whom the person has worked.

Negotiation of the employment agreement can be done in a variety of ways. Most importantly, only a few people should be involved in the actual interactions with the candidate. This could be the recruiter, the local government attorney, the mayor, and/or one or two members of the council. The human resource director should be an advisor to the negotiator(s). The person or team doing the negotiation should operate only with the parameters approved by the mayor and council and the recommended agreement should be presented and approved by the mayor and council.

It is advisable to memorialize the selection and negotiated agreement in person. The more time the mayor and council spend with the selected candidate, the greater the likelihood of making the right choice. It is also wise to include the candidate's family at this stage. More than once has a manager been selected and has accepted a position in good faith only to become conflicted after their family arrives. This is especially a concern if the manager is relocating from an area that is significantly different in climate and/or culture.

As a matter of respect and reputation, the recruiter should connect with the other applicants for the position, especially the finalists not selected. You never know when one of them may be the right candidate if negotiations fail or it becomes necessary to go through the process again at a different time.

Introducing the manager. This is an exciting and nervous time for the locality and for the candidate. The candidate is typically introduced at a council meeting with a press opportunity either im-



mediately before or after the meeting. Introductory meetings should include senior administrative officials and key stakeholders. Upon the manager's arrival to start the job, open public forums, receptions, and individual stakeholder introductions are appropriate.

Don't forget the intent and the hard work!

Virginia has a sound local government. The quirky system of independent cities gives all local governments more control over their destiny than the system of overlapping city and county governments in other states. The council-manager form of government enables the elected leaders to collectively select a chief executive officer who has the skills and temperament to match the needs of their locality. If the manager does not meet expectations, their contract should provide a smooth process to make the change that is needed. Even in the mayor-council form, a professional administrator can still be hired to provide professional management.

None of the preceding comes automatically. Effective governance requires intent and hard work. Sometimes this requires outside assistance, which can be a financial challenge for some communities. In these cases, look to the state universities and to larger and wealthier communities for assistance. This is why having a professional network is important, which is an essential role played by the Virginia Municipal League (VML) and other local government associations.

The success of the local government depends on the elected leaders' focus on successful governance. This is why the position of mayor is so important. The mayor provides policy direction with the council and builds the coalition and consensus for effective policies and for effective governance.

Periodically, the mayor and council would be well served to work with the local government attorney, VML, and state universities to review the their form of government as structured in Virginia and specifically within their charter. Opportune times for such a workshop include after an election that results in a new mayor or new council members or when there is a change in the manager. This public discussion can help get the mayor, council, and manager on the same page and can serve to educate the public. Working together, the city can get the most out of its form of government and create their shared future.

About the author: *Dr. Ron Carlee is a clinical assistant professor for the School of Public Service at Old Dominion University. Prior to his current role, Dr. Carlee had a career as a local government executive, including city manager of Charlotte, NC; county manager of Arlington, VA; and chief operating officer, of ICMA. He previously taught at George Washington University and is a NAPA Fellow.*

Resources

City of Staunton, Virginia. (1954). *The Origin of the City Manager Plan in Staunton, Virginia.*

Commonwealth of Virginia, House Clerk's Office and Senate Clerk's Office (n.d.). *Virginia Government in Brief 2018-2022.* Also see the website, *Local Government in Virginia.*

Frederickson, H.G., et al. (2001). *Governments Have Changed: The Evolution of the Model City Charter.* National Civic Review, Vol. 90, No. 1, pp. 3-18.

ICMA. (n.d.). *ICMA History: Information about ICMA's history, mission, and strategic plan.*

ICMA. (n.d.). *The ICMA Code of Ethics with Guidelines.*

ICMA. (n.d.). *Enforcing the ICMA Code of Ethics.*

ICMA (n.d.). *ICMA Voluntary Credentialing Program.*

National Academy of Public Administration. (n.d.). *Grand Challenges / Foster Social Equity.*

National Civic League. (2021). *Model City Charter, 9th Ed. 2021.* Note the Introduction by James Svava for an overview of the current recommendations.

Norman-Major, K. (2011). *Balancing the Four Es; or Can We Achieve Equity for Social Equity in Public Administration?* *Journal of Public Affairs Education*, 17(2), 233–252. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23036113>

Virginia Museum of History and Culture (n.d.). *Industrialization in Virginia*

Roberts, D. (2009). *Separate, but Equal? Virginia's "Independent" Cities and the Purported Virtues of Voluntary Interlocal Agreements.* *Virginia Law Review*, 95(6), 1551-1597. See pp. 1556 – 1559.

Relevant Code of Virginia excerpts:

§ 2.2-3711. Closed meetings authorized for certain limited purposes.

A. Public bodies may hold closed meetings only for the following purposes:

1. Discussion, consideration, or interviews of prospective candidates for employment; assignment, appointment, promotion, performance, demotion, salaries, disciplining, or resignation of specific public officers, appointees, or employees of any public body...

§ 15.2-1100. Powers conferred; exercised by council.

A municipal corporation shall have and may exercise any or all powers set forth in this article, regardless of whether such powers are set out or incorporated by reference in a municipal charter. All powers vested in a municipal corporation by this chapter shall be exercised by its governing body.

Code of Virginia § 15.2-1423. Powers of chairman or mayor.

In addition to being presiding officer, the chairman or mayor, as the case may be, shall be the head of the local government for all official functions and ceremonial purposes. He shall have a vote but no veto.

In the event that there is no chief administrative officer, it shall be the duty of the chairman or mayor, as the case may be, to see that the functions set forth in § 15.2-1541 are carried out if the governing body has not acted otherwise.

Code of Virginia § 15.2-1540. Chief administrative officer.

The governing body of any locality may appoint a chief administrative officer, who shall be designated county, city or town administrator or manager or executive, as the case may be.

Code of Virginia § 15.2-1541. Administrative head of government.

Every chief administrative officer shall be the administrative head of the local government in which he is employed. He shall be responsible to the governing body for the proper management of all the affairs of the locality which the governing body has authority to control.

He shall, unless it is otherwise provided by general law, charter or by ordinance or resolution of the governing body:

- 1. See that all ordinances, resolutions, directives and orders of the governing body and all laws of the Commonwealth required to be enforced through the governing body or officers subject to the control of the governing body are faithfully executed;*
- 2. Make reports to the governing body from time to time as required or deemed advisable upon the affairs of the locality under his control and supervision;*
- 3. Receive reports from, and give directions to, all heads of offices, departments and boards of the locality under his control and supervision;*
- 4. Submit to the governing body a proposed annual budget, in accordance with general law, with his recommendations;*
- 5. Execute the budget as finally adopted by the governing body;*
- 6. Keep the governing body fully advised on the locality's financial condition and its future financial needs;*
- 7. Appoint all officers and employees of the locality, except as he may authorize the head of an office, department and board responsible to him to appoint subordinates in such office, department and board;*
- 8. Perform such other duties as may be prescribed by the governing body.*

POLCO

By Chante Martin

Big data and small localities: How to stay ahead

What if leaders in local government of all sizes could have representative community input and all their key data indicators pre-analyzed and available in one place?

DATA-DRIVEN DECISION-MAKING may sound unreachable for smaller local governments. But the consequences of acting upon pure assumptions risk stifling progress or worse. The good news is getting ahead with data no longer requires hours of your staff's time, outsized budgets, or hiring teams of analysts.

With a little strategy and the right tools, local governments can take the next steps with data in decision-making, balancing resources, and even winning grants. The bottom line: Organizations that can mine this resource will have a tremendous advantage over those that don't.

In recent years, more funding and federal grants have become available to local governments, with a 40% increase in 2021 alone. This means it is critical to have the right data to access over \$1.5 trillion in grant funds and measure results, especially for jurisdictions with limited resources to start with.

"The majority of cities across America are small and don't have the funding they need to embrace technology the way they want to," says Michelle Kobayashi, Principal Research Strategist for Polco. "But there are things we can do with data regardless of our resources."

Government Performance Action and Learning (GPAL)

Known for their community engagement platform, survey research, and civic analytics, Polco aims to make data-driven decision-making accessible and practical for all localities. To support this mission, Polco initiated the Government Performance Action and Learning (GPAL) partnership and data network. GPAL brings together leaders in local government, data science, and performance measurement. These include the National Research Center at Polco, the University of Wisconsin-Madison's COWS, Arizona State University, the Hoover Institution at Stanford University, and the International City/County Management Association (ICMA).

Together, the group rigorously assembled the nation's most comprehensive public sector data set.

Polco now curates these community insights into data dashboards (called Track) available to local governments. The dashboards show more than 100 indicators measuring community livability. The measures are a mix of public data, resident survey results and organization resources. The dashboards show community insights covering a range of the most important topics to local governments including:

- Safety
- Economy
- Land Use
- Community Health
- Community Connection
- Education, Arts & Culture



The System is simple and powerful.

100+ actionable indicators measuring community livability

Measures are a mix of public data, resident participation, and organization inputs

Data are standardized, benchmarked, and presented over time

Data dashboards and advanced analytics will assist in summary and action planning tools



Small localities, big data, and government grant writing

Community data is also useful for government grant writing. There is an unprecedented amount of money coming in from the federal government. Simultaneously the grant application process has become more sophisticated. Grant applications typically require more detailed information demonstrating need and performance.

“Even if your funders say you don’t need to prove it, I would argue that your residents want you to show that you’re a good steward with their money,” Kobayashi says.

While showing data can help with grant applications, those dollars can also further fund data collection tools like Polco’s. Which is to say that community data tools and grant writing can co-exist as a cycle. Small communities might not be aware that they can use grant funding to purchase Polco for data collection and engagement. That’s what the Village of Flanagan, Illinois, did.

The Village of Flanagan’s grant writer, Roseanna Davidson, applied for and won a Research in Illinois to Spur Economic Recovery (RISE) grant through the state’s Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO). RISE grants help local governments create or update plans to boost economic recovery post-pandemic.

Davidson then started researching ways to gather data for drafting a new economic recovery plan. That’s how she found Polco.

Davidson understood that small communities don’t have access to the kind of data that large cities do. This creates a gap in the information small cities can use to inform their decisions. The Village of Flanagan opted to use a Polco community survey to understand Flanagan’s economic climate, among other factors of livability. “To write our plan, we need both qualitative and quantitative research,”

Davidson explained. “The RISE grant allows the Village to get reimbursed by DCEO for Polco costs.”

A welcome byproduct is that the Village of Flanagan now has access to reliable community data to demonstrate need and apply for more grants. Davidson says having grant-writing experience helps with the process but isn’t necessary. For those who don’t, she recommends starting with www.grants.gov to find federal grants that your locality might qualify for, as well as checking your state’s grants website.

Your small community can succeed in data-driven decision-making too!

Many small governments could not access or analyze the abundance of public data without greater resources or staff – until now. Polco is looking to invite 100 small communities (under 15k) to be pilot organizations and move forward with their data decision-making journeys.

The first 100 pilot communities are eligible for special lower pricing and savings on tools dedicated to the program. Learn more at www.info.polco.us/small-communities.

About the author: Chante Martin is the director of strategic partnerships for Polco. She can be reached at chante.martin@polco.us.



Polco

2023

VIRGINIA MUNICIPAL LEAGUE INNOVATION AWARDS

Enter on-line at www.vml.org/innovation-awards



RECOGNIZING EXCELLENCE IN VIRGINIA LOCAL GOVERNMENT

CALL FOR ENTRIES

2023 VML Innovation Awards

THE PEOPLE WHO MAKE local governments work do so much for their residents with little or no expectation of recognition. That's why 47 years ago, the Virginia Municipal League launched our "Achievement Awards" to recognize outstanding work being done by local governments across Virginia. The program went on to become Virginia's highest honor in local government creativity. In 2017 the name was changed to "Innovation Awards", but the purpose remains the same: To celebrate all that you do to make your city, town, or county a great place to live!

It's time again for our members are to spotlight programs and individuals that have made a big difference to your residents by creating innovative solutions to address emerging needs.

The awards will be presented at VML's Annual Conference in Norfolk in October.

Criteria

Projects and programs are judged on how well they demonstrate the following:

- **Innovative problem solving**
- **Improved quality of life**
- **Excellence in management**
- **Making the most of local resources**
- **Increased citizen participation**
- **Long-term value to the community**
- **Adaptability to other communities**

Award-winning projects typically demonstrate innovative ways of delivering services, addressing community needs, or significantly improving an existing service.

CATEGORIES

AWARD CATEGORIES are based on broad topics with local governments of all sizes competing within these categories. The entries will be judged based on the scope and effect of the project in relationship to the community's size, thereby putting all localities on a level playing field.

Many projects relate to more than one category. When deciding what category best fits your project, consider the primary goal of the project and which components of the project demonstrate the greatest innovation.

Localities may submit only one entry in each of the seven following categories (i.e., a maximum of seven submissions total per locality):

Community Health

Includes building healthy community environments through active lifestyle programs, nutrition education and improving access to healthier food choices.

Economic Development

Includes business development and retention; international competitiveness; infrastructure development and investment; planning, land use and zoning; blight; enterprise zones; housing; transportation; workforce development; and historic preservation.

Environmental Quality

Includes natural resources and the authority of local governments to manage the environment, including water resources and quality, solid and hazardous waste management, air quality and the Chesapeake Bay.

Public Safety

Includes police, fire, rescue services, emergency planning and coordinated response, building code enforcement, jails, health, and mental health related to public safety.

Working with Youth

Includes civics education, pre-k-12 education, summer programs, parks and recreation, and literacy programs.

Communications

Includes promotional campaigns, branding campaigns, crisis plans, events, customer service programs; media can include online, video, print, social and other formats.

Risk Management

Includes the process of identifying, assessing, and controlling threats to a locality's capital, earnings, information technology, and data. This can include, but is not limited to, investments in risk management and diversification of risk management strategies used to mitigate threats.

President's Award for Innovation

One winning project from the category winners will be selected for the top prize – the President's Award for Innovation – and will receive this top honor in addition to the award in their category. The President's award can come from any of the categories.

Deadline

All entries must be received via e-mail by 5 p.m., Monday, Aug. 21, 2023.

Rules for entering

The competition is open to all VML local government members.

All entries must be submitted electronically via email. Localities must download the entry form at www.vml.org/innovation-awards and fill in all of the requested information directly on the form. The completed form must then be e-mailed to mtimbreza@vml.org.

Entries must cover **new projects** or programs completed between Jan. 1, 2022 and June 1, 2023, or – for **existing projects** – entries must cover major enhancements during the same time period.

Each entry form must be fully completed and must be signed by the local government's chief administrative or elected official.

A local government can only submit one entry in each of the seven categories. The President's Award for Innovation is not a separate category.

Supporting materials totaling no more than 10 pages, including photos, brochures, charts, or other information, can be included in a separate document. This document must also be e-mailed.

A video is also required as part of your supporting materials, include the URL (or web address link) to that video (i.e., YouTube, Vimeo, etc.). Maximum length of video is five minutes.

Questions?

For more information about completing your entry or other details, contact VML's Manuel Timbreza at mtimbreza@vml.org or call 804-649-8471.

The judging

Entries are screened by VML staff and judged by a panel of judges chosen for their expertise in local and state government. The judges generally represent a variety of backgrounds, including small and large localities and state agencies.

The winners

Awards will be presented at the 2022 VML Annual Conference in Norfolk, Oct. 8-10. All winning entries will also be featured in *Virginia Town & City*.

Don't miss this premiere opportunity to spotlight innovative programs that make your town, city or county a great place for people to call home!



Enter on-line at
[www.vml.org/
innovation-awards](http://www.vml.org/innovation-awards)





Join VML

Set your organization apart in the local government marketplace of product, services, and ideas by joining the VML Community Business Membership (CBM) program. For more information contact Rob Bullington at rbullington@vml.org or check under the "Corporate Engagement" tab at www.vml.org.



Dominion Energy®

www.dominionenergy.com/virginia



www.virginiahousing.com

DIAMOND MEMBERS

lumos™

www.lumosnetworks.com

ICMA-RC is now

MissionSquare

RETIREMENT

www.icmarc.org

MITRE

www.mitre.org

GOLD MEMBERS

TOMI™

ENVIRONMENTAL SOLUTIONS

STERAMIST™

POWERED BY BINARY IONIZATION TECHNOLOGY™

www.tomimist.com

VIPC

VIRGINIA INNOVATION PARTNERSHIP CORPORATION

www.virginiaipc.org

SILVER MEMBERS



www.aetna.com



www.altumint.ai



www.apus.edu



www.bluelinesolutions.org



www.cunninghamrec.com



www.ctcdisaster.com



www.ddallc.com



www.firstnet.com



www.generalcode.com



www.jjmassociates.com



www.matternandcraig.com



www.mwcllc.com



www.moseleyarchitects.com



www.arlington.northeastern.edu



www.pmaarchitecture.com



www.segra.com



www.southernsoftware.com



www.sparksatplay.com



www.spatialdatalogic.com



www.springcity.com



www.thedecorgroup.com



www.timmons.com



www.vacorp.org



www.amwater.com/vaaw



www.vig.coopercenter.org



www.virginiareources.gov



www.watershedgeo.com



About the VML Community Business Membership (CBM) Program

As a CBM organization you hold a sustaining membership in VML and keep your firm or organization connected with the issues that are important to municipalities around you. Being a CBM places your organization at the forefront in the minds of VML members, ensuring you the visibility, access, and awareness that will help move your organization forward.

Please note that each level of membership includes both year-round benefits as well as benefits specific to VML's Annual Conference held in the fall.



**You've got vision.
We've got resources.
Let's solve this.**

Virginia Housing offers a variety of grant and loan programs to help local governments, nonprofits and developers revitalize neighborhoods and solve workforce housing needs.

To learn more about partnering with us, contact us at Resources@VirginiaHousing.com.

