

# VERMONT ASSESSORS AND LISTERS ASSOCIATION

VALA Newsletter

Winter 2016

## Mission 2015

- **Mission Revisited:** The VALA Directors and members carefully considered revising the mission statement. The new mission and vision statement was approved at the annual meeting to read:
- **Mission:** *The Vermont Assessors and Listers Association's mission is to advocate for the recognition of Listers and Assessors as qualified property valuation authorities throughout Vermont.*
- **Vision:** *The Vermont Assessors and Listers Association's vision is to continue the advancement of fair and equitable property assessment standards through continuing education and member support for all property valuation professionals, in conjunction with advocating for fair and equitable taxation practices as it relates to property assessment.*

*- "Those who invalidate reason ought seriously to consider whether they argue against reason with or without reason."*

*Ethan Allen*



## Transitions of Leadership:

Leadership has been handed forward for three of the key organizations in the state: VALA, Vermont League of Cities and Towns (VLCT), and Property Valuation and Review (PVR).

**VALA:** John Fike of Reading to President Todd LeBlanc of So. Burlington Vice President Camilla Roberts Secretary Tamsin Coon Treasurer Bob Vickery

**PVR:** Bill Johnson to Jim Knapp (interim) to Douglas Farnham.  
**VLCT:** Steve Jeffries to Maura Carroll.

## Appreciation

**John Fike and Penny Allyn:** Have worked to further the VALA organization for many years now, together from the Reading town Listers office. They have leapt VALA into a more active and effective organization, including a website, newsletter, expanded membership, and better attended meetings. Their work has been so collaborative that they were honored with the Lister of the Year award in duo for 2014! We are very grateful for their dedicated service and hope we can continue building on their success. With their help membership is continuing to expand with 104 Towns with members totaling 285 including professionals in the field.

# **VALA Goals 2015/16**

**By President Todd LeBlanc**

January 15, 2016

**Boost interaction with Property Valuation and Review, Vermont League of Cities and Towns, and Municipal Clerks and Treasurers:**

**New leadership** at both PVR and VLCT this is an opportune time to increase communication and develop symmetrical goals with regards to fair and equitable property valuation. Recent developments in both organizations are currently expediting this goal with PVR and VLCT.

## **Property Valuation and Review (PVR)**

- Increase presence of District Advisors at VALA meetings - Done
- Analyze the State Hearing Officer process – in process
- Seek to have Certificate of Public Good for solar projects sent to Listers/Assessors – in process

## **Vermont League of Cities and Towns (VLCT)**

- Co-sponsor Local Government in the Legislature along with VLCT, Clerks/Treasurers association – Done
- Increase appeal of Town Fair by having programs for Listers as in past. – In process

## **Municipal Clerks and Treasurers:**

- Promote cooperation between Listers/Assessors and Clerk/Treasurers – in process

## **Membership:**

- Continue to solicit new members – in process
- Continue to maintain current members – in process
- County Representatives – increase involvement with local Listers/Assessors – in process

## **Education:**

- Coordinate education offerings with PVR & VLCT – in process
- Continue to provide quality education offerings for all levels of learning – in process

## **Website:**

- Convert to new domain – in process
- Find new Website controller - Done
- Develop e-mail list for VALA Directors – in process
- Research the possibility of selling ad space



## **Finances:**

- Acquire accounting software – in process
- Research obtaining VALA credit card for purchases – in process

## **Meetings:**

- Continue success of annual meeting – in process
- Streamline bi-monthly meetings – in process
- Add February meeting to address when Legislature is in session - Done

## **Legislative:**

- Assure good communication regarding legislative initiatives with legislators, members, and partners such as PVR, VLCT, and others. In process.

## Legislature Consults with VALA

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Finally, the significance of the Listers and Assessors experience in the trenches of the property valuation and tax system is recognized as an important resource to legislators! For years VALA has been sending members to speak in the legislative committees, by dedicatedly watching the board for new bills, and showing up in the halls and rooms when the topic is on deck. However, VALA is now being asked proactively by legislators to speak to committees on new bills, and included in study groups where proposed changes are being developed. In 2015 Randy Viens has worked on two such study groups, one to examine ways to use the current year grand list and tax rate to establish the Property Tax Adjustment claim amount for property owners, and the second group to examine the effects of Current Use changes on the Hold Harmless payments to towns.

This switch is a tribute for Randy Viens, Todd LeBlanc, and Tom Vickery as a result of their years of vigilance and articulate understanding of the diverse proposals that emerge in Montpelier.

The Current Use Advisory Board again includes a Lister, Randy Viens of Essex. Bruce Shields of Eden is also on that board, although in a different capacity officially.

To read about the legislative changes that affect Lister and Assessment work from the 2014-15 session, please go to the April newsletter on the VALA website.

VALA continues to be present for the current 2016 Legislative session!



*"Don't expect to build up the weak by pulling down the strong."*  
**Calvin Coolidge**

**Statewide procedure changes are collaboratively handled:** There were several new procedures in valuation and reporting of data that were undertaken this year as a result of legislation. To implement any revision of statute is an undertaking that ripples through multiple organizations, all of which work collaboratively to get the job done for the common good for the common good. Those organizations are: PVR to systematize the changes of law, NEMRC to utilize the power and efficiency of computer systems, Listers and Assessors throughout the state who bring it all down to earth parcel by parcel, with VLCT as town advocate, resource, and watchdog.

Here are the many ways we cooperated in 2015:

- Solar valuations
- Funds for towns are now handled by a single grant process
- Non-Taxable and exempt property values and reporting related data
- Current Use “easy out” of enrollments are nearly all completed due to downright heroic efforts by PVR staff.
- We were also asked to work together with PVR on a methodology for valuing camps on leased land. PVR, with the support of a VALA approval, will be issuing a directive to help with keeping this methodology consistent throughout the state.

## Welcome to the Education Committee for VALA!

The EC provides educational opportunities related to property assessment and administration. This is a primary objective of the VALA organization. VALA understands the importance of enhancing the professionalism of Vermont Assessor/Listers.

Currently, the Education committee has five primary tasks which help meet VALA's educational objectives. They are as follows;

1. **TOEC**: Work with the UVM extension office by commandeering property assessment workshops at the Town Officer's Educational conferences (TOEC).
2. **Assessment Courses**: Set up 1-day, 2-day or week long property appraisal courses for the VALA membership on a needed basis.
3. **Annual Meeting**: Work with the VALA annual meeting committee to present property assessment workshops at the annual meeting.
4. **Scholarships**: Manage the VALA scholarship program.
5. **Advise VT Tax Department** division of Property Valuation and Review (PV&R) on the assessment certification program.

Work with PV&R, NEMRC, VLCT and others in providing property assessment education for the

Task	Designee	Phone	Email
Education Chair	Michelle Wilson	w.802.295.3077	<a href="mailto:mwilson@hartford-vt.org">mwilson@hartford-vt.org</a>
TOEC	Michelle Wilson	c.802.359.2183	
Courses	Lisa Truchon	802.453.2980	<a href="mailto:lisaTnemrc@gmail.com">lisaTnemrc@gmail.com</a>
Courses	Louise Ferris-Burt	w.802.234.9340	<a href="mailto:bethel@tax.state.vt.us">bethel@tax.state.vt.us</a>
Annual Meeting workshops	John Vickery	w.802.865.7112 c.802.881.9230	<a href="mailto:jvickery@burlingtonvt.gov">jvickery@burlingtonvt.gov</a>
Assistance	Robin Chapman	w.802.849.6111	<a href="mailto:fairfaxlister@yahoo.com">fairfaxlister@yahoo.com</a>
VALA President	Todd LeBlanc	w.802.846.4103	<a href="mailto:rtleblanc@surl.com">rtleblanc@surl.com</a>
VALA Treasurer	Robert Vickery	w.802.264.5671	<a href="mailto:rwickery@colchestervt.gov">rwickery@colchestervt.gov</a>

### TOEC:

During the month of April the UVM extension office hosts the Town Officer's Educational conferences (TOEC). These conferences are held in multiple locations throughout Vermont. The coordinators typically host a 1-day conference for Vermont town officers in Southern Vermont, North Central Vermont and East Central Vermont. Approximately, 100 town officers attend each conference site.

## **VALA Education Committee**

The largest group of town officers is Vermont's Listers/Assessors. VALA participates in the planning of these conferences.

Members of the VALA Education committee attend the planning meetings typically held in Berlin, Vermont. Planning meetings are held one time each month from September – December. In addition, the Education committee works with PV&R and NEMRC to determine the property assessment workshops at the TOEC. Often members of the education committee will host the Lister Forum and conduct a workshop on an assessment topic.

### **Assessment Courses:**

Approximately one time per year the Education committee will host an appraisal workshop put on by an IAAO certified instructor. Typically this will be a 1-day workshop held in late summer or early fall. However, if need arises a 2-day or 5-day property appraisal course can be scheduled.

It is important to coordinate the class at a time when other classes are not taking place. Therefore the committee needs to talk with PV&R, NEMRC and VLCT about the dates other courses are being offered.

(Last Year VALA offered the course "Excel for Assessors", which was very well attended. VALA provided workshops in three locations during the TOECs. Listers were there in high numbers, even though the overall town officer attendees were down slightly.)

### **Annual Meeting:**

The VALA annual meeting is made up of two parts. The morning is the business meeting for elections, officers and awards. The second part is for small one hour assessment workshops. The EC works with the annual meeting committee on the schedule of events and setting up educational workshops.

The final workshop is the so called "Lister Forum". Listers/Assessors are give 3 x 5 cards so they may write questions related to the assessment profession. The Host collects the cards and reads the questions to the audience. Then there is a discussion on the question. The other two workshops take some discussion with NEMRC, PV&R and the committee.

### **Scholarships:**

**The Chairperson receives the request. Each member of the committee should weigh in and vote. In an effort to expedite the decision process the correspondence between the EC is typically through emails, by phone or in a meeting after a VALA bi-monthly meeting. The EC considers the individuals financial need. The guidelines should be reviewed by each member prior to a decision.**

### **Certification Program:**

The Certification program was developed by Property Valuation and Review. PV&R administrates the program. The Education committee supports the Certification program because it gives recognition for the assessment courses passed and years of experience of an individual. Moreover, the certification is a statement to taxpayers, individual appraisers, brokers, lawyers, town managers and other of the professional level of the individual. The EC should review the program rules and course requirements from time to time, and advise PV&R with recommendations to improve the program.

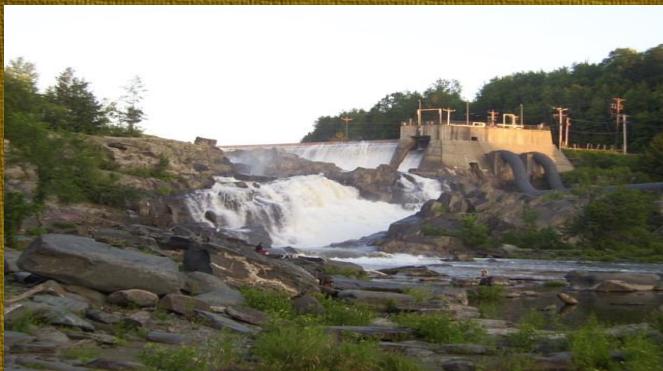
## VALA MEMBERSHIP



Before you know it Spring will be springing and Listers will be listing, and yes the VALA memberships will be due.

Membership forms are in the process of being updated, you will notice a change in who and where applications and payments will be sent.

They should be sent to Mr. Val Almosnino, PO Box 83 W Rupert, VT 05776. Please feel free to contact him at [vajewa@myfairpoint.net](mailto:vajewa@myfairpoint.net) if you have any questions or concerns about membership



## Office tip from the Fairfax Listers

We Listers at the Fairfax Town office try all the time to find better ways to make our town office run a little smoother and offer convenience for everyone.

Researchers are usually looking for information that is provided on our CAMA Property Record Cards and we decided to place this information on card stock paper giving the records greater longevity over that of paper.

Our office is only open 3 days a week limiting researcher's availability to information when we are unavailable. So we decided to create a file cabinet with data sheets in it for all the properties in our town. We were able to locate this cabinet in our town vault with the cooperation of the town clerk and treasurer. Now anyone can retrieve property information 5 days a week and not have to wait till the Listers are in the office. It's worth a try! The researchers will appreciate it and your office workers will too!

Fairfax Listers: Tamsin Coon  
Robin Chapman  
Patricia McNall