

08/01/2018

# VALA SUMMER 2018 NEWSLETTER

## New VALA President VALA BY-LAWS

Updating the BY-LAWS

## VALA Annual Conference

The upcoming details on  
the annual conference by  
John Vickery

## VALA Education & Membership

by Val Almosnino &  
Michelle Wilson

## PVR New Director Update

Mission of PVR and goals  
of the future by Jill  
Remick.

## Lister Tips

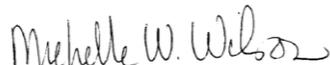
Have you ever had to  
value a unique feature???  
Take a look at fixr.com  
info to keep in mind by  
Jeremiah Sund.

## New Presidency

I am very excited about our association! VALA has been making great strides over the past decade. With our new presidency, Michelle Wilson- President, Karen Lemnah- Vice President, Cheryl Tudhope- Secretary and Joyce Scribner- Treasurer we are committed to keeping VALA on the course of positive growth both in education and professionalism.

Thru great leadership we have become visible and even included in many of the conversations at the state level. We have participated in increasing the professionalism of our industry by becoming an association of the International Association of Assessing Officials (IAAO) and formally becoming the sponsor for IAAO education in the state of Vermont. We have deepened our relationship with our state and local leaders as well as other affiliates that now support our organizations goals.

I look forward to working with you to continue building our profession and supporting our communities with great opportunities in fair and equitable assessment.



Michelle Wilson, President

## Educational Opportunities

### IAAO FORUM 991 – UNDERSTANDING AND USING COMPARABLE TRANSACTIONS- **Limited Space left!**

Date: September 7, 2018 - 8:00am – 5:00pm

Location: Town of Essex Building, [81 Main St, Essex Junction, VT 05452](#)

### IAAO COURSE 102 – INCOME APPROACH TO VALUATION – 25 max

Date: October 1 – 5<sup>th</sup> 2018 - 8:00am – 5:00pm

Location: Town of Hartford [Building, Room 2, 171 Bridge Street](#), WRJct, VT 05001

### IAAO COURSE 311 – RESIDENTIAL MODELING CONCEPTS – 25 max

Date: October 22 – 26<sup>th</sup> 2018 - 8:00am – 5:00pm

Location: Franklin Conference Center at the Howe Center, [1 Scale Ave. Ste. #92, Building #3](#) Rutland, Vermont 05701 (Richardson Room)

To register, please go to VALA's web site [www.valavt.org/](http://www.valavt.org/) and click on Education Opportunities and the NEW 2018 VALA EDUCATION FEE SCHEDULE:

Karen Lemnah, Education Coordinator



**SEPTEMBER 14, 2018**  
**VALA ANNUAL  
CONFERENCE**

**Come meet your fellow Assessors/Listers**  
Special Guest, Sean Sargeant to present two workshops on the ABCs of fee appraising and the basics of the Sales and Income methods to valuation. Listen to a panel of Keynote speakers from the VT House Ways & Means offering their perspectives and outlook on the future of education financing.

Vermont Assessors & Listers Association  
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1 Clubhouse Road  
Fairlee, VT 05045

Friday, Sept. 14, 2018

# TENTATIVE ANNUAL CONFERENCE AGENDA

8:00 – 9:00 am	Check – in Light breakfast	
9:00 am	Meeting called to Order Secretary Report Treasurer Report Audit Report President Report	Michelle Wilson Cheryl Tudhope Joyce Scribner Auditors Michelle Wilson
9:20 am	Statistical Reports of the Committees for 2017 Annual Conference Education Legislative Membership  New Business    By-Laws	John Vickery Karen Lemnah Randy Viens Val Almosnino  Todd LeBlanc
10:00 am	Election of 2018-19 Officers	
10:15 am	Select County Delegates	
10:30 am	Break	
10:45 am	Presentations PVR- Presentation of New Designations A New Lister Award Outstanding Lister of the Year, the Michael P. Cyprian Award	
11:15 am	Guest Speaker - ABC's of Real Estate Appraising Sean Sargeant, General Real Estate Appraiser	
11:45 am	Lunch 45min    Lake Morey Room	
12:30 pm	Keynote Speakers <b>H. 911: Overview of tax system and How money flows to towns</b> <b>Gabrielle Lucke, Cynthia Browning, Jim Masland</b> <b>Member of the VT House Ways and Means Committee</b>	
	Break-out sessions	
1:15-2:00 pm	Sargeant –Highest/best Use	Jake – Education Fund Flows
2:00-2:45 pm	Sargeant – Income Approach	Merriman- Deed Reading
2:45-3:00 pm	Break	
3:00-4:00 pm	Lister Forum and Conclusion - prizes	
	Adjournment	

-----Agenda subject to change-----

# COMMITTEE REPORTS

## The VALA Conference is Almost Here!

If you are like me, you are anticipating the biggest day of the year. It's not Halloween or the Battle of Bennington day, it's the VALA Annual Conference day! Some are calling it LISTER CON!! This year's conference will be held at the Lake Morey Inn and Resort on Friday, September 14<sup>th</sup>.

This conference will be bigger and better than all previous conferences. Thanks to the hard work of many VALA volunteers, and Vision Government Solutions Inc. the Gold Conference Sponsor.

The Conference committee has asked three members of the Vermont House Ways and Means Committee to provide an overview of the education tax system. Haven't you always wanted to know how funds are provided to towns? The Keynote panel is comprised of Gabrielle Lucke, Cynthia Browning and Jim Masland.

I am very excited about the conference workshops! We have one of Vermont's most respected appraisers coming, Sean Sargeant, MAI, SRA appraiser. He will have two interactive workshops covering some of the foundations of appraisal methods and concepts. Charlie Merriman, Vermont's best Legal Eagle will demystify deeds, trust and life estates. Pro Bono! In addition, Jake Feldman, MS a research statistician for the Vermont Department of Taxes will breakdown the education formula for us. Don't forget to bring your assessment questions to the perennial Lister Forum.

If you want to go and have not registered yet, please register by September 1st. You can obtain the registration form at this link: <http://www.valavt.org/members-only-test/>

See you at VALA Conference! John Vickery

## By-Laws Update

Every once in a while, there comes a time when all the previous thoughts and actions just don't add up to quite enough. You know, you think, prepare, think some more, act, think some more only to find that some little gremlin rears its ugly head and throws all the work into disarray. Well, yes you guessed it, the By-Laws have had a gremlin show up, a gremlin who shall remain nameless but could possibly be the most recent past president.

Speaking of past presidents, there are a couple of places in the VALA By-Laws where the past president is referred to. Up until now the most recent past president has been a member of the board and up to now it has never been a problem

GREMLIN ALERT! What happens when the most recent past president chooses to take a position in life that might just have the possible appearance of a conflict of interest with being a VALA Board member? What to do, what to do.

Well, you guessed it, we need to address the gremlin head on and make some changes. At the 2018 Annual Conference the VALA members will be voting and some By-Law changes which will remove references to "most recent past president" and make reference to "a past president". All corresponding language is being adjusted and all will be well in the universe.

There are also some minor changes to the county/regional chapters' language. For specific changes please visit the VALA website at <http://www.valavt.org/category/meetings/>

Todd LeBlanc, Previous Past President  
(One of the past presidents but not the gremlin reference in the article.)

## Education

There have been great strides this year in education funding for assessors and listers! For years we have been asking for affordable, more accessible professional training.

VALA has worked with PVR to further ensure greater professional progress for assessment. VALA has contracted with PVR to offer IAAO educational courses at a greatly reduced price making the challenge of trying to get funds from our towns possible. And we are now able to expand where the courses are hosted, along with a few creature comforts such as coffee service, lunch and associate with hotels for discount rates, if available.

We still have scholarship monies available for those towns that still struggle to get their town officials to see the necessity of assessment education and PVR also provides supplemental funding for overnight stays if you are traveling more than 50 miles and/or for registration, gas and housing to attend course held out of state

There has been a cooperative effort between VALA and PVR to set a course that will be self-sustaining, affordable, consistent and available to all assessing officials.

Michelle Wilson, Education Chair

## Membership

In mid-June invoices were mailed to all member municipalities. Of the approximately 140 invoices sent, less than 5 renewals have been misdirected to previous treasurers or membership coordinators. Great job! As of July 19<sup>th</sup>, about half the membership has renewed their membership. That is awesome! If your municipality hasn't renewed yet, please urge your selectboard/treasurer to process your renewal. Invoicing was based on last year's counts for members and Annual Conference attendance. If you did not attend last year and would like to, please add your registration to the invoice that I emailed you. If you have already renewed your membership, you can still register for Annual Conference at ([Registration Form](#)) down- load and mail with your payment. Registration deadline is September 1<sup>st</sup> – don't delay!

Recruiting letters are being sent out to non-member municipalities. I would ask all County Representatives to contact your non-member towns and encourage them to join. If you need contact information, email me at [membership.coordinator@valvt.org](mailto:membership.coordinator@valvt.org).

Making contact with your towns will give you information about what's happening in your area. That information is vital to our association! Bringing this to our bi-monthly board meetings is critical so can better represent our constituency. If you have any questions about membership or conference registration, please feel free to contact me.

So, Get your memberships and registrations TURNED IN! If you have, thank you!!  
Enjoy your Summer! We'll see you all in Fairlee in September!

VAL Almosnino, Membership Chair



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# VISION FOR PVR 2018

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As the new Director for Property Valuation and Review for the Department of Taxes, I have been asked to provide VALA with my vision for our division, and how that relates to our work with the listing and assessing community.

I see my role as Director as one of advocate, for both the staff at PVR and the listing and assessing community at large. I don't think it is an exaggeration to say that the current statewide structure of property assessment is reaching a crisis point. Specifically, the tasks being asked of the listing and assessing community are expanding every year while the resources available, such as experiences, tools and finances, get less adequate.

The job of the lister continues to expand in scope and difficulty. Some of these changes are driven by legislative statute; others are driven by new demands placed upon them by the evolving nature of technology; while still others are simply new duties and demands being placed upon these elected officials, resulting in an ever-expanding job description.

Towns struggle to find individuals willing and capable of serving in this role, and individuals who do step up are easily thwarted by poor internet access, lack of compensation and overwhelming tasks. It is a full-time job in most cases, yet individuals cannot make a living at it, so those with the assessment and organizational skillset find that their better off making other career choices. As with so many businesses and offices, we are cresting the wave of retirees that will leave many of these offices without individuals willing or able to serve. The current system is unsustainable and inequitable at best.

**Therefore, my number one priority is to articulate to the administration and to lawmakers the complexities and demands we place on municipal offices to carry out the statewide mission of an equitable assessment and collection of education property taxes.**

Internally, the small but mighty division of PVR (reduced now that Property Transfer Taxes have been moved out of our division) has a lot of work to do. We are working to keep our team of District Advisors fully staffed and mobilized to serve all towns across the state. We too are fighting the battle of losing folks to retirement and seeking qualified candidates to fill their roles, especially in the northern half of the state.

We recently conducted one of the Governor's Lean events, wherein we spent three days in a facilitated brainstorming session working on ways to streamline our equalization study. We made great headway in significantly changing how we will operate as a division to carry out this work, and we believe you folks will experience the differences on your end as well. The Sales Verification process, as you know, has been moved into the online system myVTax, in conjunction with Property Transfer Tax Returns. This means that the initial pass of sales verification for your town can happen in real time, rather than waiting until this summer to do it all at once. We appreciate your patience and feedback as we work to make this change, which we hope will significantly improve the outcomes and save a great deal of time on both ends.

Another priority of mine in the coming months is to work with our Current Use division to improve timing of processing applications, in order to avoid the end-of-the-year scramble of files going back and forth to complete the process. Last week, we conducted another Lean event with Forest, Parks and Recreation and the County Foresters to see how we can improve the back and forth of paper maps for forestry parcels. In May another Lean event was specifically conducted on the Current Use file exchange, and volunteers from VALA participated in that review.



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CONTINUED.....

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Lastly, we cannot do any of this work without some basic tools and systems. I am becoming more engaged in the contracts with the NEMRC Grand List, MicroSolve Appraisal Software, and Marshall & Swift product, as well as learning more about Vision, Patriot's AssessPro, ProVal.

PVR will be moving forward with an RFP for Grand List Software in the coming months. I need your feedback on what specifically could be improved, what is working well, and what you need to see on your end to best take on your duties. Please don't hesitate to contact me with thoughts and suggestions.

I assure you that in taking on this role, I see it as my responsibility to improve resources and outcomes for the work that we all do. It may require legislative suggestions, operational improvements, and an eye to the future. I look forward to working with VALA to articulate changes we can propose to the Legislature and advocate for with other partners to ensure we can continue to carry out our work.

Thank you for all you do,

Jill Remick, Director PVR,

Vermont Department of Taxes

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Labor Estimates

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Generators

Security Systems

Landscaping

Custom Pools

Heated Patios

Heated Driveways

Underground Power



What are the differences??? How much does it cost to install??? These questions can be daunting this isn't simply looking in Marshall and Swift to get an idea of this. This is not going to be as simple as taking a number that pops out of a website and fill it as a miscellaneous adjustment.....sorry assessing is more difficult than that.

I have found this to be a great starting point to get costs and start the ball rolling as the right questions to ask okay I have an elevator.....what kind of elevator?? Hydraulic elevator, pneumatic elevator How many floors?? 1, 2, 3, installation costs??? These are all items which impact the cost and will impact the potential value. Having print outs of sources and articles in you work file help when going over valuations with tax payers/appraisers and going through appeals whatever the level. I hope this can help others as it has me and let's make sure our estimates have educated opinions as opposed to educated or uneducated guesses.

# LISTER TIPS

By Jeremiah Sund

( <https://www.fixr.com/> )

Common questions I have as a Lister is what is something worth...this may be in fact the questions asked to me the most. The question in itself can range from really simple vacant land typical site in town to very complex 4 dwelling mixed use commercial residential with 300 acres and a music studio.....not to vent to much but these questions get quite complex in a hurry. This article is not going to give you a simple method to handle these situations however while trying to determine unique features I have begun using a website Fixr.com. This website I can get ideas to what something costs along with installation estimates for items such as elevators generators what are they worth??

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