

# VALA

<http://www.valavt.org/>

## A note from the President:

The holiday season is upon and so is the snow!! As we all tidy up and closing out of this years' grand lists, don't forget to send PVR your GL by January 15<sup>th</sup>!

We have seen some changes in VALA this year. A great conference was held in September with our highest attendance to date and a new addition, a Gold Conference Sponsor, Vision Government Solutions. We have a new way to provide affordable education by working with our partners at PVR, which lead to full classes and a relatively quiet legislative session. We have mourned the loss of some of our fellow listers/assessors and celebrated with those that 'got out' (retired).

2019 looks to be a great year with housing stabilizing and some sectors even modestly rising.

I hope you take some time and enjoy your friends and family this holiday season.

Best wishes!!

*Michelle Wilson, President*



## Articles

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## Who Owns What Where?

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By Tim Terway (Vermont  
Center for Geographic  
Information (VCGI))



**60<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL IAAO**

**CONFERENCE & EXPOSITION**

SEPTEMBER 8-11, 2019 🍁 NIAGARA FALLS, ONTARIO, CANADA

*Celebrating 60 Years of International Partnerships*

The banner features a stylized illustration of a city skyline with a prominent tower on the right, set against a blue sky with clouds. Below the skyline is a green grassy area, and at the bottom is a large, blue waterfall representing Niagara Falls. The text is arranged in a clear, bold font, with the event name and dates prominently displayed.

# Membership Committee Report

There were 143 invoices sent to municipalities and non-municipality members. We had 115 municipality and non-municipality members, join or renew for the 2018-2019 fiscal year. The majority of members renewed, there were a few new members and some members did not renew because of shifts in how municipalities do their assessing. Most members paid the invoice I sent with a few municipalities asking for reprints or downloading the membership form from the website. Our first Municipality to join this year was Tunbridge, way to go!

Annual Conference was held at Lake Morey Inn on September 14th. We had 143 individuals sign up to attend and 128 individuals attending. The business meeting went well and the workshops presented were very informative. The Annual Conference next year will be held in Rutland.

Invoices for membership will be emailed again in late-May or Early June so you can have them in to your treasurers for payment in July. Please make sure your accounts payable (a/p) person has the correct remittance address for membership and education payments. Payments should be sent to me (membership) or Joyce Scribner (education). Payments sent elsewhere are not always forwarded and this has resulted in payments having to be stopped and new checks being issued. This can cause deadlines to be missed, which can incur late fees and/or not being able to get into a course being offered by VALA. Again, please make sure you're A/P person has current mailing addresses!

Respectfully,

Val Almosnino, Membership Coordinator

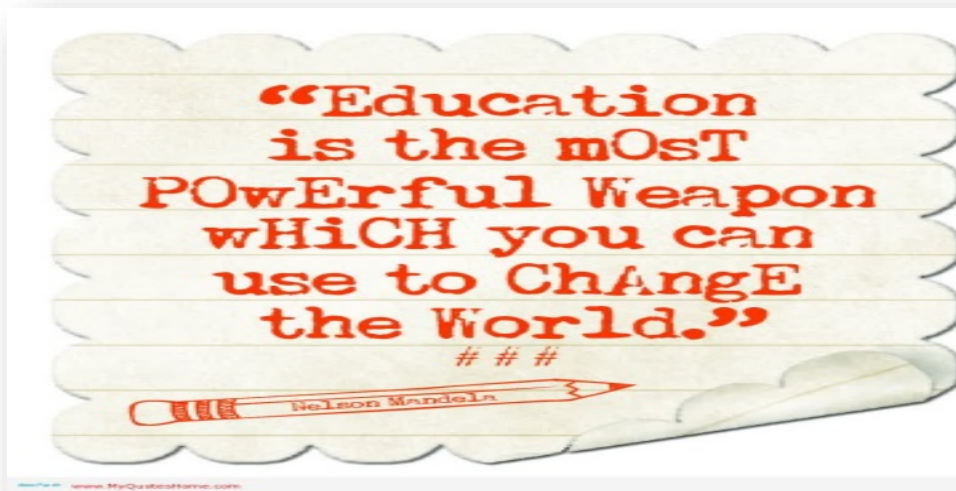
[membership.coordinator@valvt.org](mailto:membership.coordinator@valvt.org)



## In the Community Membership

<i>Membership Type</i>	<i>Count</i>
<i>Members</i>	<i>280</i>
<i>Municipalities</i>	<i>116</i>
<i>Affiliates</i>	<i>17</i>





On Friday, September 7, 2018, thirty two (32) attendees got the opportunity to learn more about "Understanding and Using Comparable Transactions"; Forum 991, which was held at the Essex Town Office and taught by Patrick Alesandrini, IAAO Instructor.

From October 1<sup>st</sup>-5<sup>th</sup>, 2018, twenty-three (23) attendees had their minds expanded by Anthony Hagenstein, IAAO Instructor, who taught the week long Course 102 "Income Approach to Valuation".

### Up Coming Education 2019:

- Course 452 - Fundamentals of Ratio Studies - 2 1/2 day - 10/23-10/25, 2019 - Hampton Inn & Suites, Manchester VT- Instructor - Dave Cornell
- Course 300 - Fundamentals of Mass Appraisal - 5 day - 9/30-10/4, 2019 - Hartford Town Office - Instructor - Rick Stuart
- Course 171 - Professional Practices & Ethics - 1 day - 9/26/2019 - Middlebury Regional EMS Building - Rosie's Restaurant - Instructor TBD

Achieving a higher education has become more accessible for those who want to change the world of assessing. There is no reason not to participate and become an expert in your job given the new fee structures, opportunities for scholarships from VALA, and grants from PVR. Remember grants can be used to cover courses that may not be on the state sponsored list. Please check out the following links

PVR - <https://tax.vermont.gov/municipal-officials/certification-education-programs/tuition-information>

VALA - <http://www.valavt.org/educational-opportunities/>

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# VALA 2018 ANNUAL CONFERENCE FEED BACK

The Vermont Listers and Assessors conference delivered on their promise of giving a bigger and better conference. Feedback from attendees indicated that the speakers were well prepared and interacted with the audience. This conference was an informative, collaborative and a fun event overall. Kudos to all the conference planners for working hard to make this conference a success, and Kudos to Vision Government Solutions for their Gold level Sponsorship.

The conference committee has already begun to prepare for the 2019 VALA Conference. It will be held at the Franklin Conference site in Rutland on Friday, September 20, 2019 so mark your calendars!

VALA Conference Coordinators,  
*John Vickery and Phyllis Hayward*

## Real Estate Jargon

Where did that word come from Parlour? Am I even using it right?? Well apparently according to Wikipedia "Parlour derives from the [Old French](#) word parloir or parler ("to speak"), and entered English around the turn of the 16th century.<sup>[1]</sup> In its original usage it denoted a place set aside for debating people, an "audience chamber".

The first known use of this word was in Europe during the 18th century and was used in monasteries at which point there were actually 2 room an inner parlour and outer parlour. During this time period when homes were becoming larger (expanding beyond one room and two rooms) the middle class started using the term to describe a room that was set aside to greet guests. This room typically displayed the family's best furnishings and or best artwork to demonstrate social status.

In North America if a home does not have a parlour, typically the room most synonymies with it would be a "living room". The word Parlor seems to have evolved into its more common use of describing businesses and the activity/service that is performed in the space examples would be; tattoo parlor and ice cream parlor.

*By Jeremiah Sund*

# Legislative Notes for 2019

These are areas that PVR are looking to address this legislative session:

## 2019 Anticipated Legislative Topics for PVR: Current Use

We will be proposing some technical changes, i.e. settlement in divorce; 'exceeds 999 years' from definition of owner; cleaning up notification requirements from 2015; withdrawal and then partial development calculation.

- We are also planning to propose a change to the definition of housesite to allow for more clustered development without 2-acre per housesite exclusion.
- We are also planning to propose an update to the income related to farm crops, from \$2,000, which was set in 1977.
- We anticipate legislation regarding the Annual Agriculture Certification – to either stagger it or in some way reduce the requirement.

## 2019 Anticipated Legislative Topics for PVR

- We will be proposing legislative language requiring reappraisals for CLAs above 120 percent, in addition to current requirement for below 80 percent.
- We are requesting an increase in the per diem for Property Valuation Hearing Officers, which has remained unchanged since 2006

**VALA** was asked to provide a position on some of these items by VLCT in conjunction with preparing the Miscellaneous Tax Bill. This response was also sent to PVR. Sometimes issues come up that need immediate addressing, the legislative committee has the authority to respond on behalf of VALA as needed. The items will be presented and discussed further at the January board meeting:

1.) CLA upper limit change proposed by PVR. All present felt that this is a much needed correction, but believed the 120% was too high a limit to be an accepted level of equity. Vermont law is very explicit that a town cannot assess over 100% of FMV and when a municipality's GL is higher than 100%, appeals occur resulting in an unequitable base. The base must be looked at and corrected by a municipality, not individual properties which unfortunately is the current procedure done. VALA believes that the upper limit should be 110%, but the trigger or mandate for a reappraisal should not occur until two CONSECUTIVE equalization studies show a CLA of over 110%, with a warning given the first year. This would give the towns a chance to correct the problem without a mandate. VALA recommends the following correction:

(b) If the Director of Property Valuation and Review determines that a municipality's education grand list is at a common level of appraisal below 80 percent, or above 110 percent for two consecutive years, or has a coefficient of dispersion greater than 20, the municipality shall reappraise its education grand list properties. ....

2) VALA believes that the definition of FMV as defined in Title 32, Section 3481 (a) should also be updated to current standards. This definition will help PVR, the municipalities, and the Appeal Courts to better administer the law. The following is proposed:

(a) The estimated fair market value of a property is the most probable price that the property will bring in a competitive and open market between a buyer and seller, each acting prudently, knowledgeably, and assuming the price is not affected by undue stimulus, taking into consideration the availability of the property, its use both potential and prospective, any functional or economic deficiencies, and all other elements such as the location of the property, the age, quality and condition of the improvements thereon which combine to give property a market value.

3) VALA believes that the definition of "Parcel" as defined in Title 32, Section 4152 (a)(3) is not being consistently used throughout the state. Clarity of this definition is needed to ensure that all taxpayers are being treated the same. The following is proposed:

(3) A brief description of each parcel of taxable real property in the municipality. "Taxable real property" means the sum total of the fair market value of all contiguous parcels in the same ownership, together with all improvements thereon.

Respectfully,

Todd LeBlanc, Legislative Committee Chair

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# Who Owns What, Where?

Easing access to parcel information with Vermont's Statewide Property Parcel Program

I recently had the opportunity to share an update of Vermont's Statewide Property Parcel Program ([19 V.S.A. § 44](#)) at VALA's board of directors meeting in November 2018. This effort supports the digital conversion or creation of GIS parcel data [to a common standard](#) that requires at least a 99% match to a town's grand list via a parcel's unique SPAN number. [The project](#) is currently midway through its three-year run to cover all of Vermont's municipalities. [73 completed towns](#), as well as forthcoming towns that pass review, are made publicly available via [the Vermont Open Geodata portal](#) and serve web mapping applications such as [the interactive map viewer](#).

There are [multiple state agencies and other groups working together](#) to make this statewide, grand list-joined parcel dataset a reality. Yet the VALA meeting reminded us of the importance of people on the ground in each town—particularly listers and assessors—that are also key to ensuring a useful and ever-improving public account of property ownership information.

In other words, the collection and stewardship of parcel data goes beyond its technical specifications and capabilities. Yes, it is now possible to have a statewide parcel map with a near real-time connection to the grand list and make it available to all with an internet-connected computer. Other states such as neighboring Massachusetts [have built a similar system](#). Yet maintaining standardized parcel data throughout Vermont also involves the many ways in which mapping and recording play out town by town. The long-term viability of a useful, current, accessible and reliable statewide parcel dataset depends on these practices.

This is why we are working with groups such as VALA to clarify how their members could play a role in maintaining grand-list joined parcel data after the three-year funded project [is complete in December 2019](#). Starting in January 2019 we will be working with the Tax Department's District Advisors to support them as a resource for assessors and listers regarding the parcel program, while also encouraging them to provide us valuable feedback from their interactions in return. We will also be making upgrades to our Geodata portal [and website](#) in early 2019 that clarify how to access and use parcel data—our most frequently requested dataset.

Although parcel data is not perfect, it can be continuously improved. Those at the VALA meeting voiced concerns regarding out-of-date or incorrect maps, highly varied resources by municipality, and possible confusion about different versions of parcel data for each town. It is helpful for us working on the program to hear these concerns so that we can build ways for them to be addressed in long-term parcel upkeep.

For example, and in addition to our plans for keeping standardized, SPAN-attributed parcels current by joining them with weekly property transfer data, there ideally also needs to be a way to keep track of line work changes. We have heard from groups such as the Vermont Society of Land Surveyors that having a single, statewide online digital survey library would be highly beneficial for both land records research and updating line work. We are thus developing legislative proposals to require digital copies of surveys of boundary line adjustments and subdivisions to be submitted to a newly-created online survey library at the time of their recording in the land records. These two updating mechanisms will help us maintain the standardized parcel data set and



ensure that the 3-year effort to match all of Vermont's municipalities to the grand list will remain useful. They will also create new public resources for understanding who owns what lands where and even when, as documented by whom.

One of the challenges with easier access to parcel data is that with more attention there may come more disputes. Although parcels are only ever an index for ownership and are not an authoritative source, increasing access to them through user-friendly sites such as the forthcoming Vermont Parcels Viewer (see Figure 1) will benefit from markup tools for suggesting edits with evidence and clear statements of who to be in touch with if and when mapping issues arise. These are key functions we are building into the standalone, statewide parcels viewer web mapping application.

We envision the parcel program to ultimately add transparency to information about land ownership in Vermont. This will likely come with the growing pains of learning any new process. Yet the upside of high quality, current, easily accessible and reliable grand-list joined parcel data statewide—be it for the purposes of emergency management, creating public notifications, land use planning, fiscal impact analysis, public health improvements, or others—is hard to deny. We look forward to working with listers and assessors to enable such publicly beneficial uses of parcel information now and in the future.

Tim Terway

Vermont Center for Geographic Information (VCGI)

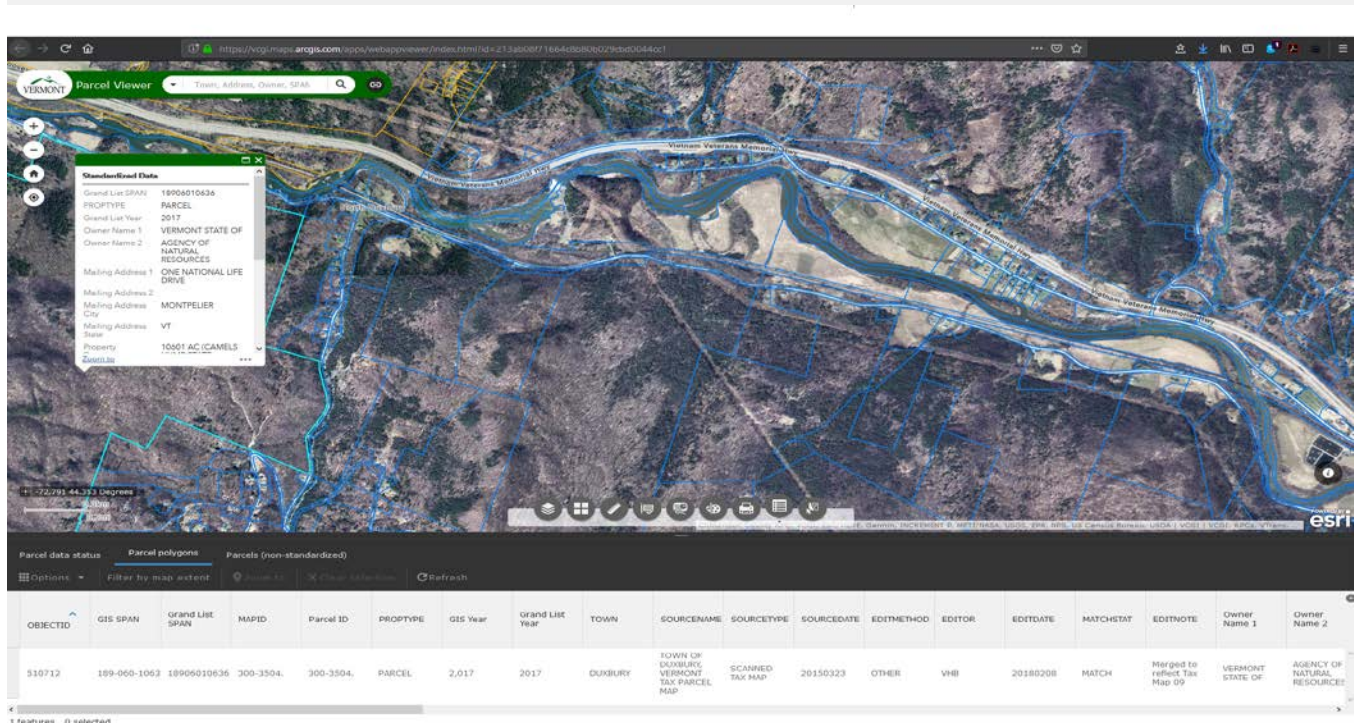


Figure 1: Screenshot of the Vermont Parcel Viewer displaying the standardized, grand-list joined parcel information for Camel's Hump. The viewer enables the creation of reports, The viewer is to be released for public use in early 2019.

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