

Fall Newsletter

Oct 17, 2022



President's Note On the 2022 Annual Conference

by Lisa Wright

What a wonderful conference we had this year! Thank you to all of our attendees, sponsors, and presenters. It was just terrific to see you all in person.

I enjoyed all of the presentations and I think our keynote was a great team effort by John Fike and John Valente. It seemed that John Fike captured the history of where we have been as Listers and Assessors and John Valente equally captured the future of where we are going. My sense is that being a Lister or Assessor mirrors life in that we need to honor our roots as well as embracing change.

We have started some productive conversations about the future of our profession, and I am delighted to meet some of our younger assessors at the conference, and to introduce them to each other. Thank you for joining us and I encourage you to continue as the future will likely be full of opportunities in this profession. As we are making initiatives towards “fair market value” pay for assessors throughout the state, I feel strongly that we must continue to tie these initiatives to qualifications and experience. Let’s strengthen

rather than weaken the requirements and rewards for attaining better qualifications. And let's reward those of us who are still working after many years in this industry and encourage those professionals to remain in the industry and share their expertise with the next generation.

I think VALA and PVR have made great strides in this effort and this was the reason I was delighted with our team effort of a keynote. I'd like to continue that theme throughout the year and beyond, embracing and learning from our history and our experienced professionals as well as inviting the next generation and the innovations they will bring to the work.

Lisa Wright
President, VALA

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Note From The Editor

By Bob Quaderer

The conference was great, not only because of the presentations but also to meet people you only saw online (remember, I am relatively new) and make new connections.

We have had a wonderful response for articles for this issue, so this Newsletter is much larger than the last!

I have generally organized the newsletter into three groups: *News*, *Information* and *Initiatives*. Many articles blend all three to varying degrees!

We hope you find this issue informative and thought-provoking!

VALAVT.org

NEMRC Conference Feedback and Reminders

By Chris Miele

It was great to see so many over the past few weeks at the annual VALA, Clerks/Treasurers, and Town Fair conferences. Thank you to all that stopped by and chatted with us. It was really great getting your feedback on some of our new changes we are developing.

We want to remind you of a couple of things as well.

Apex sketching: If you have not updated to Apex 7 please contact us to do so. It only takes about 15 minutes to get it updated.

As Billed Grand List: We are coming down to the last couple of months of our grand list season so make sure you keep reconciling your 411, keep up with your Current Use files, and Homestead declarations.

Tax Billing: If you produce tax bills in your office. Reconcile your tax book, and keep up with your State Payments files. If you have any State payments that are on an inactive parcel, or incorrect parcel, make sure you follow up with Taxpayer Services to get these resolved before December.

Form 427: Make sure this form gets submitted by the appropriate person in your office. It shows PVR what your municipal tax rate and due dates are for your municipality.

Updating Software: As you know we have been developing a new Web based MSOL CAMA program that will interact with the VTPIE software. NEMRC has regular meetings with Patrick at Axiomatic and PVR. Now that the tax billing season is pretty well behind us, we can continue to focus on this project as we get ready for the 2023 grand list season.

Current Grand List and MSOL CAMA: NEMRC is also working on changes to this software so it will be able to send and receive data to VTPIE until everyone can migrate to our web based system as well.

Thank you
Chris Miele Vice President NEMRC
800-387-1110 www.nemrc.com



Jean Newell Receives LOTY Award at Conference

Jean Newell received the Michael P Cyprian Lister of the Year Award in recognition of outstanding service to the assessment profession. Her family and associates were there in honor of the event.



Any individual may nominate anyone to the VALA Awards Committee in writing, no later than July 1st (AUGUST 15th) of each year. The recipient shall be a member in good standing of VALA.

Here is a link to the award application on the VALAVT.org website: [\(LOTY\) Award Application](#)

“Things I Wish I Knew Earlier” Department

Submitted by Jeanne Johnson, Cabot Board of Listers

At the end of tax year, before tax bills go out, compare PVR's Current Use list of names and acres with your NEMRC Grand List Current Use acres on the Value/Exempt tab to make sure transferred parcels with CU reductions do not maintain the reduction with new non-enrolled owners or new owners who do not own the full number of acres. And don't just check CU yes/no – ensure acres are correct- sometimes the purchase is less than the full parcel.

We had one owner of over 100 acres sell 30 acres and house – so the SPAN remained the same but the acreage greatly reduced. We failed to reduce the Current Use exemption in time, and the new owner received a very tiny tax bill. Oops. Very uncomfortable months between the first tax bill and the corrected tax bill because it had to be processed through the Current Use exchange with PVR before all was said and done.



VALA Annual Conference 2023

VALA's 2023 Annual Conference will be on Friday, September 8th at the Killington Grand Resort Hotel in Killington, VT.

This will be a chance to reconnect with other assessing professionals from around the state, to experience the beauty and hospitality of the Killington Grand, learn about new services and products with our amazing vendors and enjoy another wonderfully educational VALA conference.

Here are a few early details about 2023 VALA Annual Conference:

- **REGISTRATION / SPONSORSHIP / EXHIBITORS:** The 2023 Annual Conference forms will be posted to the VALA website by the middle of November. (After the business meeting on November 12th)
- **LODGING:** VALA has a block of rooms reserved at a discount conference rate. This discounted rate is only available through VALA directly and not through the hotel.
- **FOOD:** As usual, your conference registration will include breakfast, lunch and snacks.

Hope to see you there.

Questions? Contact Elizabeth at VALAVermont@gmail.com



VALA 2022 Education

This has been a wonderful year for VALA education and it is exciting to look forward to education in 2023. (Some statistics for the lovers of numbers)

Here are the totals of Vermont students who attended each of the classes this past year:

- 101: 10 of 23 were Vermont students
- 155: 20 of 20 were Vermont students
- 171: 11 of 11 were Vermont students
- 300: 18 of 35 are Vermont students
- 452: 10 of 12 are Vermont students

We have the prospect of in-person classes along with continuing the online option for most of our IAAO classes. The VALA IAAO classes for the 2023 year will be the following:

- 101 Fundamentals of Real Property Appraisal
- 102 Income Approach to Valuation
- 112 Income Approach to Valuation II
- Possibly 155 Depreciation Analysis (depending on demand and instructor availability)
- Possibly 158 Highest and Best Use (depending on demand and instructor availability)
- 171 IAAO Standards of Professional Practice and Ethics
- 300 Fundamentals of Mass Appraisal (repeating due to popular demand)
- 311 Real Property Modeling Concepts

Here is a link to the 2023 VALA Education page: valavt.org/education/training/

Have VALA Education related questions?

Contact Elizabeth Curran: Call 802-349-3825 or Email: VALAVermont@gmail.com



IAAO Benefits

By Edgar Clodfelter

I have recently been re-appointed as the International Association of Assessing Officers (IAAO) Representative for Vermont. I will also serve as the Representative to NRAAO (Northeast Region).

I am approaching my 35-year membership to IAAO and have long promoted the benefits of IAAO membership to Vermont Listers and Assessors. Invoices for 2023 Dues will begin being distributed in October.

Membership dues rates for 2023 are:

Regular/Associate	\$240
Entry Level	\$160
Student	\$55
Retiree	\$85

IAAO benefits the assessment community by providing quality educational courses and webinars. The IAAO Research Library provides access to thousands of books, articles and research on various assessment topics. The monthly Fair and Equitable magazine provides insights into topics of interest around the country. And the biannual Journal of Property Tax Assessment and Administration presents in depth research on appraisal and assessment issues. Finally, IAAO sets the technical standards (literally) for many assessment topics, such as the Standard of Verification of Adjustment of Sales, Standard on Ratio Studies, Standard on Mass Appraisal of Real Property, and many others.

I just returned from the IAAO 2022 conference held this year in Boston. It was four days of educational sessions and networking with 1,500 peers from around the country and world. Having attended several IAAO conferences through the years I am always surprised that many of the issues and topics of concern we have in Vermont are the same or like those of our peers around the country; frequently it is just a matter of scale.

I would urge anyone involved with or interested in the assessment world to visit the IAAO website at IAAO.org. If you would like a membership application, it is available at the web site, or contact me at ed@nemrc.com.

EdgarClodfelter, VMPA NEMRC Sr. Appraiser



Assessing In 2022: Where Are We Going?

By John Valente

“Are you ready for more good than you can possibly imagine?” This was the question I asked all of you to consider on September 16th at the VALA conference. The next 10 years in assessment will expand upon existing technologies and offer radical changes in the industry. We can be open to these changes or we can repeat the way we have always done it.

At the conference we discussed that the rapid decline in CLA and increase in COD due to property appreciation will necessitate needed reassessments in 206 communities or 79% of the State in 3 years. The cost of all these reassessments could approach 27 million dollars. At the same time, Vermont has a limited number of appraisers and revaluation contractors. Faced with this tsunami wave of PVR ordered reassessments, many Listers may become fear filled and decision weary finding a contractor, selecting software and scheduling the year of a future reassessment.

Admittedly, all these ordered reassessments do not sound like more good than you can possibly imagine. So, what’s the solution? Simply put, we are being asked and required to change the way we have always done reassessments.

Perhaps it’s time to consider:

- Conducting a needs assessment for reassessment practices in Vermont.
- Removing the CLA/COD trigger and adopting a reassessment cycle like many of the States in New England.
- Clustering many Towns under a single reassessment contract to garner contractor interest and reduce cost.
- Expert witness assistance funding from the State to face the increased appeals.
- Contracting and sharing technologies, such as oblique imagery, street level imagery, and sketch detection to assist in reassessment.
- Using the 2021 Burlington model which replaced the full measure and list by inspecting sales, inspecting permits and using data mailers and sketch verification to gather information. After all, we only can seem to inspect 30% of the properties due to taxpayer COVID reticence and the fact that folks simply are not at home.
- Using reassessment contractors who can work on multiple types of CAMA systems as opposed to just their own software.
- Using virtual hearings and desktop review.

These changes are accepted by IAAO and will help communities get contractors, save money, and reduce carbon footprint while maintaining accuracy and equity. Some of these changes are simple to make, others more challenging. But they are all possible given technology and the Vermont spirit of collaboration and cooperation among residents.

We are being invited to change and improve the way we have always done reassessments in Vermont. Churchill once said *“To improve is to change, so to be perfect is to have changed often.”*

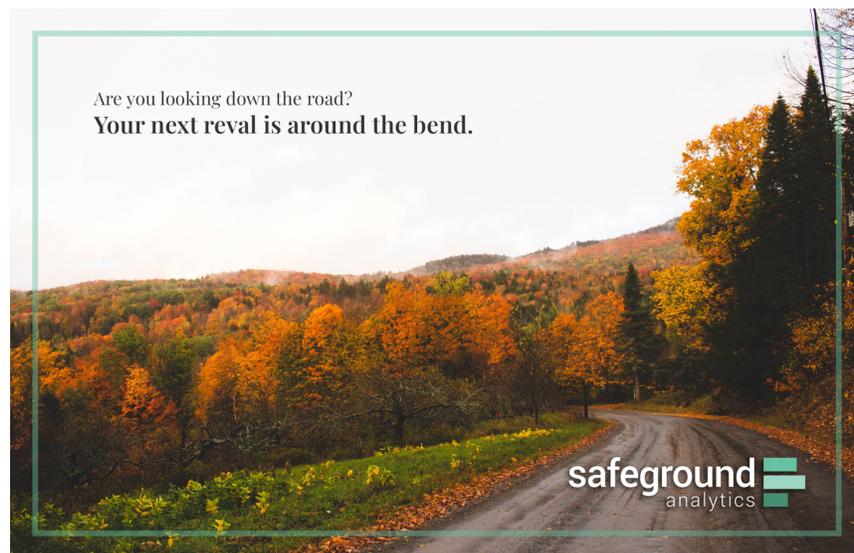
So, I invite us all to embrace the path of change and yes, receive more good than we can possibly imagine!

For a detailed copy of my presentation please see the VALA site.

If you just want to chat about your reassessment future give me a call or send me an email!

John Valente, CEO & Senior Appraisal Consultant

Safeground Analytics, Inc 413-387-3428 johnvalente@safegroundanalytics.com



Banks' Relationship With Municipalities

By Sheila Jacobs, Mascoma Bank

In September I attended the VALA annual conference in Montpelier. Some attendees asked why a bank was at the Lister's Conference.

My answer is that each Municipality is an umbrella to the many departments within the Town that allows it to function and serve the residences of the Town.

The Lister's are an important part of that umbrella and at Mascoma Bank we want to show our support. Mascoma Bank realizes that each municipality is unique. We have a dedicated Municipal team that is focused on being able to meet the needs of the Town from collateralizing Public Funds to acquiring equipment, financing construction projects, or simply covering cash flow timing differences.

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As a certified B Corp:

- We create benefit for all stakeholders-not shareholders
- We conduct business knowing that people and places matter.
- We aspire both to do no harm and to benefit all.
- We recognize that we are dependent on and responsible for each other as well as future generations.

Thank you for all you do for the Town's you serve. Mascoma Bank looks forward to continuing to support your annual conferences.

Please reach out to me if I can ever be of assistance.

Sheila Jacobs, Mascoma Bank VP Business & Municipal Services Manager
603-276-0871 Sheila.Jacobs@MascomaBank.com

“Tips for Listers” Department

by Christie Wright, PVR Field Director

Do you know what the Common Level of Appraisal is used for and how important it is?

The Common Level of Appraisal (CLA) is not only used to determine whether or not a town will be required to reappraise (below 85 or above 115 CLA will trigger a reappraisal order according to Title 32-4041 (b) [Vermont Laws](#)) but it is also used for many other purposes.

- The CLA is applied to the new inventory of utility values each year to equalize those values to other properties in town up to 100% (not above).
- The CLA is used to equalize the town 411 values for the town for liability for the education tax rate calculation.
- The CLA is used in appeals (beyond the lister level) to equalize the fair market value found as a result of the appeal
- The CLA is used to equalize use values for current use each year

Because the CLA is used for so many purposes it is very important that the information is correct in our equalization study and that the sales are investigated thoroughly to make sure the information in the study is accurate.

I would be remiss if I did not mention the Coefficient of Dispersion (COD). The COD is used to determine whether or not a town will be required to reappraise (above 20 COD triggers a reappraisal order according to Title 32-4041 (b) [Vermont Laws](#)). This is an equally important measure of your sales versus assessments. This calculates the distance or spread of the sales ratios relative to the median. It is the measure of assessment equity and fairness (as some taxpayers pay more or less than their fair share when compared to others?)



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How the Property Appraisal Industry Navigated the Pandemic October 11, 2022

By Gio Giordano

As we look forward to 2023, I would like to take the opportunity to reflect on how assessment offices were tasked with adapting to numerous challenges while serving property owners effectively and efficiently. Adjustments to typical processes and new service levels ultimately required more electronic collaboration, virtual meetings,

online permitting, and improved remote engagement opportunities for staff and property owners alike. Organizations capable of shortening timelines to implement technology enhancements were able to reap the efficiency benefits earlier than others.

Specific Appraisal Challenges

Appraisers, for example, faced significant challenges in valuing properties from a distance. With limited access to home or business interiors, reduced resources, fewer comparable properties, a turbulent market, and ever-changing guidelines, arriving at accurate valuations became significantly more difficult. Unavoidable delays and volatile construction costs likewise continued to cause valuation fluctuations. Foreclosures and rising interest rates also threatened to bring about significant changes in economic obsolescence.

While these challenges affected property valuation staff, homeowners felt the impacts as well. Individuals were physically separated from necessary information when buildings were closed. Purchases and sales were uncomfortably delayed, and the appeals process becomes challenging when virtual options do not exist for organizations. What's more, explaining or sharing interior home modifications became cumbersome due to ineffective contact strategies and lack of collaborative capabilities.

Enter, Technology

According to this Cohen & Co. article, "Savvy valuers quickly turned to technologies, like Google Earth, Street View and drones, to help fill in the gaps created by the inability to physically access properties. They're also taking advantage of the online databases of municipality property assessment records to obtain necessary information." The Appraisal Institute concurred, stating, "Since many appraisers aren't conducting in-home inspections during state-ordered stay-at-home restrictions, they have taken advantage of the benefits that technology provides."

Thanks to modern technology, alternative appraisal options – ones that have certainly remained post-pandemic – do exist. Drive-by imaging, aerial photos, data analysis, remote desktop appraisal, and other solutions keep property assessments moving when standard, in-person walkaround options fail. Specific tech innovations already at work in appraisal offices around the country include:

- **Mass Appraisal Services**

These services include features like high-quality, street-level imaging, thorough data review, validation of CAMA sketch accuracy, virtual in-the-office inspections, and more. Employing a team to handle appraisal services functions can mitigate challenges with access to physical properties, reduce costs and conserve resources, and ensure proper procedures are followed.

- **Virtual Appeals**

Online and remote tools can assist with the entire appeals process to keep taxpayers engaged with offices while unable to visit in-person. This helps to reduce paper cost, limit in-office staffing, and improves the customer experience.

- **Data Aggregation and Analysis**

Data-aggregation and analysis solutions for assessors ensure accurate, fair, and equitable valuations. Solutions capable of delivering easy-to-understand insights and charts from robust data allow offices to streamline processes, act fast, and ensure confident decisions.

- **Public Information Access**

Public-facing, online access to property data and assessment information serves residents at home, maintains positive relationships with constituents, and often reduces appeals.

What's Next?

I have no doubt the appraisal environment will continue to change. As artificial intelligence, drones, and other highly advanced technologies emerge, new challenges are unavoidable. Regardless of the transformation, the need for efficient and accurate property valuation remains critical for any county aiming to thrive. Leveraging technology to overcome challenges ensures fair, equitable valuations and gives organizations the ability to capitalize on efficiencies, enhance customer service, and be prepared for any challenge ahead.

Gio Giordano
Tylertech.com



IAAO Class Experience

Submitted by Phyllis Hayward

Feeling Good, just completed another IAAO class called Depreciation 155 and passed the exam. The instructor was great. He presented material concisely and slowly. The class was delivered remotely, making the class available worldwide.

The class is conducted with the participants having the ability to ask questions, to approach the instructor with any issue and to get into the conversations easily.

Participants were given ample breaks, which made the time move faster and kept the interest level high. I will be taking the IAAO 300 Mass Appraisal next week and looking to repeat the experience.

Thank You VALA for making these courses available!

Ideas to Improve the Effectiveness of Assessment in Vermont

By Cristina Tardie

I have been an Assistant Assessor in Hartford, VT for 5 years, with no background in real estate or appraisal industry. My education in Economic Studies and ability to grasp new concepts have helped me grow in the assessment land.

Below are some concepts and issues I struggle with, or find they can improve.

Standard Parcel Identification System

The SPAN number is a great standardized system; however, the definition of parcel and use of SPAN (active “parent” / “inactive” combined child lot) produces errors in matching parcel information, is not great at keeping historical records and produces GIS mapping issues (keeping track of layers for active/inactive lots).

The Property Transfer Return

I see no reason why the PTTR form cannot contain a clear set of questions regarding the sale, that would assist in determining whether a sale is valid or invalid for use in both equalization and assessment. Considering the PTTR form is the only source for sale information and is needed in equalization study - there is no reason why the sale questionnaire cannot become part of the PTTR - to automate the sale validation process. It

would be AMAZING if in the near future we would be able to download a Sale Report straight to the CAMA system and skip the manual data entry of sales. Yes, that is a big part of my job when I deal with 600 sales / year or so.

Sales Chasing

Procedures should be put in place to prevent sales chasing being part of General Grand List Maintenance. Value changes should be tracked for physical changes and revaluation of sub-division (and combination) of land and the changes on building due to sale should be heavily questioned (changing building condition, grade, depreciation, etc.).

State Assistance

There needs to be a big discussion over FAIR per parcel payment for municipalities. Should state assistance take in consideration the complexity of parcels in town, education of Lister/Assessor and today's cost for complete town reappraisal project?

Compensation and staffing

What is a good pay for today's Vermont cost of living and complexity of job?

What is a "healthy" per parcel pay for an Assessor/Lister office or what is a "healthy" percent of Grand List the Assessor/Lister office should be budgeted with?

What is today's standard for staffing an office? One person per 3000 active parcels or active and inactive plus exempt ones?

Is it ok for Listers/Assessors to accept "multiple hats" within the municipality (Town Clerk, Finance Clerk, Treasurer, etc.)?

Education

Why is it that Towns/our employers don't understand it's their best interest to support the Lister/Assessor's education? A town would not hire anything under a CPA for Finance Director, why would they want anything under VPA level IV? And if they do, why isn't it standard procedure to allow at least 2 courses a year with mileage and hotel included in the budget?

Legal advice

In general, I feel like every time I have a serious question on a statue's application, PVR and VLCT will give general advice and are not very specialized.

In case of appeals, legal advice ends up costing my town lots of money and I wonder how fair is it that the municipality ends up paying 100% on defending the value the state will use for the Equalization Grand List. Should the state pay half of it or at least some?

IAAO Professional Consulting Services

Was IAAO ever asked to audit the state of VT Assessment standards and procedures? Should we reach out to our state representatives and ask for an Audit? The last one performed was in 1999 around the time Act 60 was passed. This is a great time because the Equalized Grand List produces a good chunk of state revenue and Education funding is a hot topic. If we want change, this is the time to ask for it.

I have many other struggles, but I'll stop here for now. Let me know what you're having a hard time with. Maybe we'll start a column in the newsletter or a VALA monthly topic.

With respect,
Cristina Tardie ctardie@hartford-vt.org

Ed. Note: In addition to the suggestions above, we may consider a specific email list or action group dedicated to prioritize and develop ideas put forward for consideration.

Bob Quaderer bquaderer@hartlandvt.org



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