President's Message May 2023

Greetings all,

It has been an interesting year thus far. Within the  Vermont Assessing community, nothing has ignited us, and perhaps unified us, like the debate surrounding the H.480 bill.

A wise person once told me that conflict and an outside threat to one’s community will often have the silver lining of uniting that community and forming bonds between community members that are lifelong. The conversations and mutual support among us Listers and Assessors over the past year are evidence of that phenomenon. I am also encouraged for the future by the newer assessors among us who have gotten involved and engaged with the legislature.

Conversations around H-480 have also given us an opportunity, if you will, to educate others about what we do, and to promote our profession. There was a clear bias I heard through this process that “Listers” are inferior in qualifications and ability to that of “Assessors”. This is an unfortunate bias which demeans so many hard working Assessors who happen to be elected Listers and also makes the erroneous assumption that the title of Assessor automatically makes one more qualified to do this work. The fact is we are all Assessors and the only difference in what we do is that of acting under the authority of a Board of Listers rather than that of an individual Assessor. Further, consider that a Board of several elected Listers might have more ability to be impartial than a sole individual and might have more autonomy to operate in a fair and impartial manner than an Assessor who is hired and must report to a Select Board.

This work needs to continue in promoting our qualifications and expertise as a separate issue from our elected versus appointed status. Working together and sharing our knowledge and experience, we all are empowered to do better work as assessors. I look forward to continued informed discussions with all of you.

Lisa Wright

President, VALA