

February 2021 eNews

Mester's Message



As we start the second month of 2021 we are in the position to support our communities in restoring our faith in public service now that the federal transfer of power to the next administration has occurred. I am hopeful again, after experiencing the Inauguration tradition, that we will regain respect, commitment and honor to democracy as well as unity. I recently came across this quote and it resonated with me as a good analogy for our democratic experiment:

“A perfect marriage is just two imperfect people who refuse to give up on each other”
[Attribution: Dave Willis, author; Winston Porter, artist]

While I pondered the events of the last few months, I realized we need to remain forward-focused and project an attitude of possibilities and democratic commitment. It is our responsibility. We cannot give up on democracy and the delivery of local government. A quote by RBG reinforces this for me:

“I don’t judge the past harshly, because they couldn’t perceive things as we do today. But I hope the main theme of the United States- that it welcomes all people, respects all religions, all creeds- that fundamental value will remain and flourish.”

[Attribution: Ruth Bader Ginsburg, National Press Club, July 10, 2013]

It is our local government profession that provides the vision and leadership foundation to move us forward, where the rubber hits the local road as they say. So we must continue focusing on the VLGMA framework of **V** for leading with our **Vision, Values** and **L** for delivering strong community-based and collaborative **Leadership**. Two relevant Code of Ethic tenets to ponder this month are:

Tenet 1. We believe professional management is essential to efficient and democratic local government by elected officials.

Tenet 2. Affirm the dignity and worth of local government services and maintain a deep sense of social responsibility as a trusted public servant.*

*review associated Guidelines at: <https://icma.org/icma-code-ethics>

Let’s continue to connect these tenets to the Declaration of Ideals (adopted in the early 1980s, <https://icma.org/declaration-ideals>) given relevancy to today’s society, culture and community challenges. Of the eleven ideals two resonated with me this month as aligned with the above tenets:

Ideal 1. Provide an environment that ensures the continued existence and effectiveness of representative local government and promotes the understanding that democracy confers privileges and responsibilities on each citizen.

Ideal 2. Recognize the right of citizens to influence decisions that affect their well-being; advocate a forum for meaningful citizen participation and expression of the political process; and facilitate the clarification of community values and goals.

To translate these tenets and ideals into the intersection of our professional and personal roles consider answering these questions:

- 1) Do you refuse to give up in the face of policy or funding challenges requiring new research or direction?
- 2) Do you really respect everyone by action not just words? Have you truly assessed your own implicit biases?
- 3) Are you a leader and voice for democracy in your community?
- 4) Are you open to polar opposite opinions and perspectives?

Turning questions into Action, here are some ideas:

- 1) Consider implementing the City of Richmond’s concept for citizen’s local choice on \$3M budget allocation;
- 2) Implement an Equity Lens diagnostic tool such as the City of Roanoke model;

- 3) Contemplate the full text of Amanda Gorman's inaugural poem;
- 4) Obtain and recertify under the [ICMA Voluntary Credential Program](#); and
- 5) Complete a 360 degree evaluation and develop annual improvement goals.

So as we renew our commitment to democracy, at the local community level, let us execute on key words from Amanda Gorman's inaugural poem:

“But while democracy can be periodically delayed,
it can never be permanently defeated.”

and

“The new dawn blooms as we free it,
For there is always light,
if we're brave enough to see it
if we're brave enough to be it.”

[Attribution: Amanda Gorman, Youth Poet Laureate, January 20, 2021]

Welcome to our newest VLGMA members: Alan Brewer Director, Bldg & Development, County of Loudoun and Saige Hill, P.A. & Policy Ph.D. Student, Old Dominion Univ.

Looking forward to seeing everyone at the virtual 2021 Winter Conference which will be rich in educational and networking opportunities. The content is well timed: “Leading in Challenging Times: Local Impacts of Civil Unrest and A Global Pandemic”.

Stay safe, healthy and remain strong, Cindy

[Contact Cindy Mester](#)

Focus on the Future – A Look at VLGMA's Strategic Plan



Focus on the Future – A Look at VLGMA's Strategic Plan

By Craig Meadows, VLGMA President-Elect

Greetings from a cold and snowy Montgomery County! I hope the winter weather has not created any significant challenges for you, and that you are looking forward to a productive week, and a good month. We're in full budget development mode here, which means lots of meetings ... I hope your budget season is going well!

For this month's article, I'd like to review with you the fifth strategic focus area for the VLGMA Strategic Plan – Professional Development. Within this focus area, VLGMA leadership has identified two strategic goals. The first goal is to improve the quality of our professional development programs. VLGMA seeks to do this by utilizing training tracks to address diverse needs of the membership; encouraging continuation of Deputy, Assistant, and Others (“DAOs”) semi-annual meetings, ensuring that managers are aware of these meetings, and encouraging the appropriate next generation personnel to attend meetings; and by actively engaging VLGMA affiliate partners to expand and enrich professional development opportunities for VLGMA members at our events and conferences.

[Contact Craig Meadows](#)

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Community Conversations



Community Conversations

Connecting Fairfax For All

*Connecting Fairfax City's Past and Present to Build a More
Equitable and Inclusive Future*

Melanie Crowder, Chief of Staff/City Clerk, City of Fairfax

The City of Fairfax, Va., recognizes there is strength in diversity and acknowledges the need for a broader community conversation around the issues of racial and social equity. During a City Council work session on Tuesday, October 6, the Mayor and Council members voiced their support for a broad plan to begin a candid and open community dialogue around these issues.

To discuss this concept further or ask questions contact Melanie (Melanie.Crowder@fairfaxva.gov)

Have a topic for a future Community Conversations article to suggest?; please contact Cindy Mester (cmester@fallschurchva.gov)

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A DAO in the Life



Stretch and Lift

Michelle Bixler, Strasburg Director of Community Development

At times, the two pages or so that outline the essential functions, knowledge, skills and abilities of my position (and probably yours too) could be better summarized by the one line at the end: other related duties as assigned. Even though these are the exact duties that keep us at the office late, I am here to defend one specific “other duty” and advocate for intentionally taking on, but more importantly, *assigning* at least one stretch assignment per year.

[Contact Michelle Bixler](#)

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Civic Engagement - City of Lynchburg



Engage in Self-Care

John Hughes, Assistant City Manager, City of Lynchburg

As a home-grown resident of the City of Lynchburg, the opportunity to serve in our local government is truly appreciated. From working at the Lynchburg Regional Juvenile Detention Center over 20 years ago, (I left for a few years to work in the insurance industry) to Foster Care Social Worker, Children’s Services Act Coordinator, and the Assistant City Manager, I’ve had a myriad of experiences with a diverse group of colleagues. All positions have been excellent learning tools that helped broaden my scope of public- administration knowledge.

Finding our way in public service can seem daunting, especially as we navigate COVID-19, civil unrest, and personal obligations. Every team should include players who share responsibilities and are able to focus on a specific goal. To that end, our mental, physical and spiritual health are factors that matter to a successful organization. All components transcend individual preferences, cultural differences, and social constructs.

[Contact John Hughes](#)

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Institute of Government Update

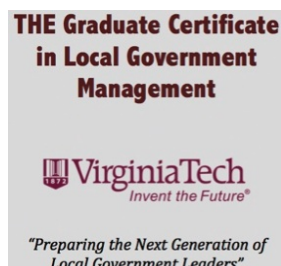


Thanks to all of you who are actively participating in AskVIG. From September-December, VIG member localities submitted 51 inquires and we received over 313 total responses from those requests. If you are not active in the listserv and would like to participate, please contact AskVIG@virginia.edu. Examples of topics covered included COVID testing and policies, FFCRA, and CARES funding.

[Contact Charles Hartgrove](#)

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Certificate News



The Local Government Certificate Program is off to a great start for the Spring 2021 semester. We are gearing up for the Summer semester and continuing our recruitment efforts and answering questions about the Local Government Certificate Program through a virtual webinar led by Dr. Stephanie Davis. The **Summer application deadline is May 1, 2021** with a \$25 application fee and students who work for local governments can apply for the Bob Stripling Scholarship program (more details below) for tuition assistance. For more information, please find our spring session below:

- **Thursday, February 18, 2021 12 pm – 1 pm**
Zoom: <https://virginiatech.zoom.us/j/85993871400>

- **Thursday, March 18, 2021 12 pm – 1 pm**
Zoom: <https://virginiatech.zoom.us/j/89307397976>

- **Thursday, April 15, 2021: 12pm-1pm**
Zoom: <https://virginiatech.zoom.us/j/83551852911>

VACORP



VACORP

Do you have the Cyber Risk Coverage you need?

VACORP has the most comprehensive Cyber Risk coverage of any local government insurance pool with zero deductible and no sublimits.

Cyber event frequency has escalated since the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic. According to the FBI, instances of Cyber crime have jumped as much as 300% since last year. The Bureau’s Internet Crime Complaint Center (IC3) says it receives between 3,000 and 4,000 security complaints every day, up from around 1,000 complaints per day. In addition, attacks against public entities have intensified (SolarWinds).

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Mel's Poetry Corner



Ground Hog Day

From the secure ground of home’s retreat,
an uncomfortable disturbance interrupts this insular peace.
The choice to come out into the bright light
or return to sleep for a long winter’s night.

What will Mr. Ground Hog decide to do?
How will he respond to the panoramic view?

Will he venture out of default mode
and let life spontaneously unfold?
Will he respond to an inconvenient truth
and not, in ignorance, take refuge?
Will he choose to answer the call
and welcome the challenge of it all?

Or will he burrow back down and pray
for all the commotion to go away?

Will I choose to burrow deep inside
and hide
or accept the invitation to assist
in co-creating a world of fellowship?

Contact Mel Gillies



Position Changes And Other Events

January 2021

- Neiman Young, King George County administrator since 2017, announced his resignation effective after the February 16 board meeting. He has accepted a position in North Carolina. Dr. Young previously retired from a 23-career as an officer in the Army.
- Keith Barker, Galax city manager since 2009, has announced his retirement effective June 14. He has served in various positions for the city since 1992.
- John Blair, Charlottesville interim city manager since 2020, has been appointed Staunton city attorney effective this March. He previously served as the city attorney. Chip Boyles, Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission executive director, has been appointed city manager effective February 13.
- Sherman Stovall, Roanoke deputy city manager, has announced his retirement later this year. He has been with the city since 1994 and has served in a variety of leadership roles.
- Kenneth Miller has been named Petersburg interim city manager effective February 20. He retired last September as the public safety director for the city.
- Jason Tyree, Buchanan town manager since 2018, has been appointed as city manager of Buena Vista

effective March 15. He previously worked for Lynchburg in the community development department.

- Angela Clem, Woodstock town manager since 2016, has been named human resources director for Harrisonburg effective March 1. She has served the town in various roles since 2006.
- Ronnie Roark, Nottoway County administrator since 1974, announced his retirement this past December effective April 1. He will take vacation starting January 1 through the end of his tenure. John Prosize, assistant county administrator since 2005, has been promoted to deputy county administrator effective January 1.
- Letitia Shelton, Charlottesville deputy city manager since 2019, has announced her resignation effective February 19. She previously served in multiple leadership roles for DeSoto, TX and Richmond, VA.
- Brad Rinehimer, James City County police chief since 2013, has been named assistant county administrator effective January 16. He has been with the county police department since 1995.

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