

# VERMONT LEAGUE OF CITIES AND TOWNS BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

Thursday, September 11, 2025

## MINUTES

**VLCT Board Members Present (in person):** Mayor Kristine Lott, Jessie Baker, Mayor Mike Doenges, Charlie Hancock, Karen Godnick Barber, Ann Lawless, and Mike Hogan.

**VLCT Board Members Present (via Zoom):** Delsie Hoyt, Mayor Mulvaney-Stanak, Georgette Wolf-Ludwig, and Julie Hance.

**VLCT Staff Present (in person):** Ted Brady, Josh Hanford, Seth Abbene, Jessi Hill, Katie Buckley, Abby Friedman, Phil Latvis, and Samantha Sheehan.

**VLCT Staff Present (via Zoom):** Jeremy Weiss.

**Guests Present (in person or via Zoom):** None.

### **Agenda Item #1: Call to order by the President**

Vice President Charlie Hancock called the meeting to order at 12:24 p.m.

### **Agenda Item #2: Additions and Deletions to the Agenda**

Ted shared there were no staff recognitions in this month's consent agenda. Karen Godnick Barber moved to approve the agenda as presented. Mayor Doenges seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

### **Agenda Item #3: Consent Agenda**

Mike Hogan moved to approve the consent agenda, including: meeting minutes of August 21, 2025, the September Personnel Report, the updated personnel policies, and SimpleRoute contracts. Mayor Doenges seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

### **Agenda Item #4: Organizational Update**

Ted provided an organizational update, including recent developments with the VLCT Association Hub, the Municipal Service Scholarship raffle, and the Tunbridge Public Trails amicus brief. He also discussed the upcoming launch of "Muni Pal," an AI-assisted chatbot that will be available on VLCT.org, as well as ongoing health insurance investigations. Ted shared that the Budget Advisory Committee recommended approval of the staff-presented FY2026 VLCT budget with no changes and shared updates on recent changes to manager recruitment efforts. In addition, he provided updates on the work of the Municipal Operations Support Team, the Municipal Assistance Center, and highlighted upcoming training opportunities.

### **Agenda Item #5: Building Committee Update**

The board reviewed a briefing on three potential building options for VLCT, based on three key constraints: the desire to remain in the downtown core of Montpelier, the requirement for approximately 15,000 square feet to support the Association Hub concept, and the preference to own the facility.

The first option presented was a vacant lot known as the Lauzon lot next to the Pavilion Building in downtown Montpelier. The concept included a four-story pedestal-style structure with parking underneath, but the estimated cost for construction was approximately \$11 million, exceeding budget expectations.

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The second option was 110 State Street, currently housing the State's Attorney's Office. While the building is architecturally appealing and located nearby, it includes only 9,000 square feet, much of which is lost due to a large central staircase and an inflexible layout, making it unsuitable for the Association Hub.

The third and most viable option discussed was the Federal Building at 87 State Street, where VLCT could potentially become a central tenant on either the first or third floor, each offering the needed 15,000 square feet. The estimated cost for purchase and renovation of a floor was \$8 million. While VLCT's stated budget was \$5 million, the building team noted that revenue from leasing space to other Association Hub members could potentially offset operating costs and align them with current expenses.

Board members were informed that the Federal Building is currently under consideration for purchase by the State of Vermont. If the state and the federal government are unable to reach an agreement, the building could go to public auction. It was noted that VLCT, as an instrumentality of government, may have an opportunity to act before the auction phase, though there remains a risk that other buyers may outbid or underutilize the property.

Additional discussion covered the ownership structure, where VLCT would likely enter into a condominium agreement to own and manage a floor of the building, with terms negotiated as part of a turnkey arrangement with a developer.

Ted and another staff member recently toured the Federal Building and shared observations, reinforcing the site's potential and highlighting its location. The timeline is considered urgent, as decisions regarding the building are expected to be made in 2025. There is also a possibility that 7 Court Street, another prominent Montpelier property, could be added as a fourth option for consideration.

The Executive Committee previously reviewed the matter and recommended that the Building Committee be tasked with re-evaluating the core criteria (location, ownership, and programmatic needs), and returning with updated recommendations, including consideration of any new properties.

Additionally, the committee currently has a vacancy due to a member's departure. There was interest in expanding representation by including a member from the PACIF/ VERB Board, especially given their relevance to ongoing budget and space planning discussions.

Mayor Lott moved to appoint Maryann Goulette to the Building Committee and authorize Ted Brady to invite a PACIF member to the committee. Karen Barber seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

## **Agenda Item #6: Accept Q2 2025 Financials**

Seth Abbene presented Q2 financials. Karen Barber moved to approve the Q2 Financials. Mike Hogan seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

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## **Agenda Item #7: Approve Executive Director as Authorized Official to Apply for Northern Border Regional Commission Grant**

Karen Barber moved to authorize Ted to apply for the NBRC funds of \$500,000. Jesse Baker seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

## **Agenda Item #8: Appoint Opioid Settlement Advisory Committee Representatives**

Josh Hanford, Director of VLCT Intergovernmental Relations discussed the openings on the board representing VLCT and the process to evaluate applications. Mayor Doenges moved to appoint both Amie Wunderlich and Thomas Davis to the Opioid Settlement Advisory Committee as VLCT Representatives. Karen Barber seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

## **Agenda Item #9: Legislative Discussion About Public Safety and Homelessness**

Josh and Samantha provided an overview of the evolving conversation around public safety and related issues, including homelessness, based on feedback from VLCT members. Every two years, VLCT sets municipal policies through a formal policy-setting process. Each year, legislative priorities are identified for advocacy. Public safety has remained a persistent concern, prompting continued member engagement and collaboration with external stakeholders.

Samantha and Josh explained that they have been facilitating meetings with interested, self-selected municipal members to discuss public safety and homelessness. These meetings have been supplemented by outreach to community stakeholders, including community justice centers, prosecutors, public defenders, and other relevant organizations. Law enforcement executives have not yet been formally consulted but would be included if the work continues.

A memo was shared with the board outlining background information, member concerns, and examples of potential legislative policy actions under consideration for the 2026 session. Some proposals originate from past VLCT or Vermont Mayors' Coalition agendas, individual municipalities' legislative priorities, or are newer ideas submitted by members seeking VLCT's support.

Samantha clarified that the purpose of the memo and discussion was not to seek endorsement of specific proposals, but rather to ensure the board supports staff continuing to explore targeted policy actions. These may include law enforcement support, mental health interventions, or other system-level responses, and could involve significant and potentially controversial legislative advocacy.

Board members were invited to provide direction and share their perspectives. One board member affirmed that public safety should be a high priority, emphasizing that even municipalities not currently facing significant public safety issues are likely to feel broader effects if the needs of urban centers go unaddressed.

It was also noted that action may already be underway within the Executive Branch on this topic, and it would be wise to track those developments and assess alignment with member concerns. Board members encouraged staff to engage targeted legislators to evaluate which initiatives are

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politically and practically viable in the upcoming session.

The discussion also included a reminder that while mental health services are often cited as a solution, there must be clarity about what that entails. For example, civil commitment and hospitalization are intended to stabilize individuals, not serve as long-term or involuntary detainment solutions, which often diverges from what some stakeholders may expect when advocating for mental health interventions.

The Board expressed support for continued exploration of these issues by staff and appreciated the opportunity to review and help shape the direction of VLCT's advocacy priorities.

## **Agenda Item #10: Break**

At 1:43 the Board took a break. No business was conducted during this time. The Board reconvened at 1:55.

## **Agenda Item #11: Name Recipients of the 2025 VLCT Municipal Service Awards**

Charlie Hancock provided a summary of the nominating committee's report and recommendations. The committee considered nominees for both the VLCT Lifetime Service Award and the VLCT Municipal Service Award, which are presented annually at Town Fair. After reviewing the materials and nominations submitted, Mayor Doenges moved to accept committee report and present Bill Fraser the 2025 VLCT Lifetime Service Award and present both Farley Brown and Linda Martin with the 2025 VLCT Municipal Service Award. Mayor Lott seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

## **Agenda Item #12 VLCT Board of Director Vacancies**

Jessie Baker provided a summary of the nominating committee's report outlining their recommendations. Mike Hogan moved to accept the nominating committee report, recommending the membership elect the following slate of candidates:

- Karen Barber, Selectboard, Town of Huntington
- Tracy Borst, Town Clerk / Treasurer, Town of Thetford
- Jacqueline Higgins, Town Manager, Town of Williamstown
- Tom Leitz, Town Manager, Town of Waterbury
- Brian Shupe, Selectboard, Town of Waitsfield
- President: Mary Ann Goulette, Town Manager, Town of West Rutland
- Vice President: Charlie Hancock, Selectboard, Town of Montgomery

Ann Lawless seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

## **Agenda Item #13: Town Fair Preview**

Allison Buckley, VLCT Events and Partnerships Coordinator, provided an overview of Town Fair.

## **Agenda Item #14: Executive Session**

No executive session was needed.

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**Agenda Item #15: Other Business**

Mayor Doenges shared an update on the Public Safety Communications Taskforce as VLCT's designee.

**Agenda Item #16: Adjourn**

Mayor Doenges moved to adjourn. Karen Barber seconded the motion. The motion was approved and the meeting adjourned at 2:41.

*Respectfully submitted,*

*Jeremy Weiss,*

*Membership and Administrative Coordinator*

*As approved by the VLCT Board of Directors on October 7, 2025.*

**View Meeting here:**

<https://us06web.zoom.us/rec/play/kSxTqj1fcOP4qg3iNFHNUwUY0f6BiqSX37tgVLYlUnbuJthJmIKgGaUB2Gp3mN4JpzbpmDKgbsgX3G.YI6UMJPAsm8b8xpa>